



WT
WRITERS
THEATRE

Tiger Style! SYNOPSIS

Act One

While sitting on a park bench, Albert is approached by Tzi Chuan, who attempts to bond with Albert over a shared “Chinese-ness.” Albert is perturbed by these attempts at kinship given his third generation status, but answers the man’s volley of questions about his life anyway. Tzi Chuan leaves without Albert noticing and Russ the Bus, Albert’s coworker from a medical technology company, enters hearing the last part of their conversation. Russ the Bus annoys Albert, renaming him Albro and trying to guess his ethnicity before getting Albert to give him the coding that he was meant to write himself.

Meanwhile, Jennifer, Albert’s sister and an Oncologist, is being broken up with by Reggie, her live-in boyfriend who installs sound systems. They work through the variety of reasons they are breaking up: her living with her brother, her wanting to have a baby, her not having told her parents yet about their three year relationship, but ultimately Reggie says that he is unhappy with her high expectations for him despite his laid-back approach to life. Jennifer questions why they even got together in the first place, her explaining how they were a 96% compatible on OkCupid and him explaining how at first he found her exotic, thinking she would be both submissive and domineering. Reggie leaves and Jennifer yells insults after him.

Back at Albert’s office, Albert is undergoing an annual review with Melvin, his boss. Melvin reports that his work is good but that the company is undergoing a restructuring so now Russ the Bus will be his boss. Albert is outraged because he believes his pedigree and his work output would make him a better candidate for that job, and he attempts to convince Melvin of that. Melvin stays firm, thinking that Russ is more “relatable.” Albert attempts to appeal to their shared Asian heritage but Melvin thinks that Albert should stop using race as a crutch. Russ enters at the end of the scene to celebrate his position as Albert’s new boss.

Later, Jennifer and Albert each talk about their struggles. Albert tries to convince Jennifer that she is way better than Reggie, and Jennifer tries to get Albert to stick up for himself. Albert talks about avoiding confrontation and swallowing his emotions, but then coughs up blood because of a suspected ulcer. Through their conversation, the siblings decide that their parents ill equipped them for life; what good is being classically trained pianists and cellists after all? Clearly all their problems are their parents fault, and Jennifer and Albert schedule a dinner with their parents to confront them about this.

Act One, continued...

Outside their mom and dad's house, Jennifer and Albert discuss their game plan, which accidentally boils down to an apology, before they decide to scrap that and just go in. Their parents are warm and welcoming but Albert storms to his room to grab his trophies. He then begins yelling about how all his academic achievement was for nothing and confesses that he didn't get a promotion at work. His parents are non-plussed, so Albert turns to Jennifer to reveal her secret about her secret boyfriend of three years breaking up with her. Her mom thinks it's a dumb secret to keep, and though Jennifer was initially worried that they wouldn't like him because he wasn't Chinese, they actually don't like him because he repairs car radios. Though Albert and Jen try to convince their parents that all their problems are their parents' fault, mom and dad turn it back on their children, offering them a glimpse into their perspectives and the lives of their grandparents before finally telling them to suck it up. Albert then has a realization that they must abandon the "old world America" that their parents raised them in to enter the "new world America." They must go "Full Western" which for Albert means confronting Melvin and for Jennifer means going to therapy.

The next scene swaps back and forth between Albert trying to get Russ to give him his job and Jennifer's first trip to a therapist. Albert insults and cajoles Russ until Melvin gets called in. Meanwhile, Jennifer is over-prepared for therapy, thinking that she could crush it within a given time frame. Her therapist emphasizes to her that the process takes time, but Jennifer wants to have a romantic comedy life in short order. Melvin ends up telling Albert to go back to where he came from, causing Albert to pour a bottle of Coca-Cola onto his laptop. Jennifer is still arguing with her therapist when Albert calls to tell his sister he got fired and his failing to go "Full Western." Jennifer decides that maybe if they can't go Full Western, they should go "Full Eastern." The act concludes with them deciding to go to China.

Act Two

Act two starts with the siblings having arrived in the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone, China. They're unsure of where to begin, so Jennifer asks if they should call Cousin Chen, the only relative they know in China. Albert dismisses the suggestion, assured in his position, particularly because of the three million yuan he carries in his money belt. They step forward into a dense throng of people and in a panic Albert throws the money belt into the crowd despite it containing both his and Jennifer's passports. The siblings fight and sit apart from one another before Tzi Chuan enters as an ambassador for The Party to aid them in their journey. He starts by offering Albert Chòu yàowù (allegedly a Chinese herbal medicine) for his ulcer and then tells Jennifer and Albert about the jobs that he has secured for them as a research fellow at a major university and an anonymous hacker, respectively. Tzi Chuan also offers to arrange a marriage using their database of partners, an opportunity that Jennifer jumps on but Albert passes over. Tzi Chuan's final gift is a new money belt with three million Renmenbi in it and a pair of breathing masks for them to use as they explore modern China.

The pair arrive at their new apartment after having explored the city, purchasing scarves and dumplings along the way. They are elated by their newfound position in life before being visited by their Cousin Chen who advises them to turn the radio on loudly, then warning them that they are always being watched and to not mess with the Party. She takes away the dumplings for having melamine in them and the scarves as they contain mercury. Before leaving for another sixteen-hour shift at Foxconn, she warns the siblings that the medicine that Tzi Chuan gave them is actually opium.

Later, Albert is at his new hacker job and Jennifer is meeting with a matchmaker. Albert's new boss, General Tso, asks him to demonstrate his skill as a hacker, so Albert gets revenge on those who've wronged him and Jennifer by hacking his old workplace and Reggie's sound systems. General Tso is unimpressed and asks Albert to shut down the power grids in Sacramento, San Diego, San Jose.

Act Two, continued...

Meanwhile, Jennifer is excited at first by the potential matchmaking but ends up disappointed that the system relies primarily on economic factors rather than thinking of her happiness. Though the matchmaker finds a prospective match and the wedding is immediately scheduled for Friday, Jennifer rebels against the process and attempts to delete the whole database. Albert also rebels and pours Coca-Cola over his laptop instead of shutting down the power grids.

The next scene finds the duo in prison. Tzi Chuan arrives to yell at them for squandering the new life he offered them, deriding them as “cacophonous deviant freaks.” Jennifer and Albert try to convince Tzi Chuan that they can be harmonious, and he agrees to let them out if they can play him a beautiful sonata. He offers them a children, to play a beautiful sonata that evokes memories of their upbringing. At the end of the sonata, Tzi Chuan is in tears, but because he hated it, proclaiming that his ears are accustomed to the pentatonic scale rather than the Western heptatonic scale. Tzi Chuan announces that they will be sent to re-education and leaves. Jennifer is proud of their performance and grateful for what their family gave them, but Albert doesn't feel the same way. They hear Tzi Chuan scream off stage and Cousin Chen enters covered in blood. She gives them new passports to escape China with before dying.

At the U.S. Customs desk in Los Angeles International Airport, Jennifer and Albert are using their new passports to get back into the country. They realize that using these new passports will mean that they have to abandon all the accomplishments of their old names and yield to the racist preconceptions of the Customs Guy who is interrogating them. Jennifer is alright taking the new name to accomplish entering the country, but Albert wants to challenge the Customs Guy. The Customs Guy goes for a cigarette break and Jennifer and Albert's parents arrive and discuss the situation with them, attempting to get them to take the new names. When the Customs Guy returns, Jennifer uses the new name and is allowed through the gate. Albert, however, proudly declares that he is Albert Chen, and the play ends.

