THE DEVIL PREFERS LIVESTOCK

Season 1 - Episode 2

"Monkey Island"

Written by Edward Jamison

INT. VIETNAM STREET – LATE MORNING (FUTURE)

Bright, humid sunlight. EDWARD walks LOUIE and GINGER down a narrow street. KEITH walks beside him, still half-jetlagged, scanning the neighborhood.

Louie stops and pees near a gate. Edward pulls out a water bottle and pours water over the spot, dispersing it. This is routine for him.

Suddenly, a door slams. A VIETNAMESE MAN storms out, butcher knife in hand, shouting at Edward in rapid-fire Vietnamese.

EDWARD
FUCK YOU.

The man comes forward, knife raised. Edward stands his ground, watching the distance, gripping the leashes, watching the knife. He is ready to react if needed.

KEITH
Are you serious?

Neighbors peek from behind curtains. The street is silent except for the man's shouting and Ginger's low growl.

There is a long moment of tension. The man, still yelling, stops at the edge of the gate, knife wavering.

Edward does not flinch. He meets the man’s gaze, then slowly backs away, making sure Keith and the dogs are behind him.

The man finally lowers the knife, still muttering. Edward and Keith keep walking, adrenaline still in their veins.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. LOS ANGELES BEDROOM – DAY (PRESENT)

Edward sits on his bed, suitcase half-packed. The room is silent except for the soft whine of a dog toy. He stares at a travel checklist on his phone. His hands are steady, but his mind is somewhere else.

INT. WEST LA CAFÉ – DAY

Edward sits across from ISA, his best friend. Coffee between them. Sunlight cuts shadows across the table.

Isa studies Edward, concern in her eyes.

ISA
You’re really doing this.

EDWARD
Yeah.

ISA
Vietnam. For her?

Edward shrugs, eyes on the cup.

EDWARD
It’s not just her. Everything here feels stuck. The business, this city. I need a reset.

ISA
You could reset here.

Edward shakes his head.

EDWARD
Not this time.

Isa leans in, voice low.

ISA
Promise me you'll be careful.

Edward manages a smile.

EDWARD
Always.

A quiet beat. Isa reaches across, squeezes his hand.

ISA
If you need anything, call. Doesn't matter what time.

Edward nods, grateful.

EDWARD
I know.

They sit in silence, the weight of goodbye settling between them.

INT. EDWARD'S HOUSE – DAY

Louie and Ginger pace by the door, tails wagging. Edward kneels, sorting through bags of dog food, toys, and care instructions.

A PET SITTER stands nearby, clipboard in hand.

EDWARD
Food's labeled by day. Vet's number is on the fridge. Louie needs his meds with breakfast. Ginger just wants attention.

The pet sitter nods, taking notes.

PET SITTER
How long will you be gone?

EDWARD
Seven weeks. Maybe longer.

He scratches Louie behind the ears, then kneels to hug Ginger.

EDWARD (soft, to the dogs)
You two behave. I’ll be back before you know it.

The dogs nuzzle in, sensing the change.

Edward stands, hands the leash and keys to the pet sitter.

EDWARD (to the sitter)
Call if there’s any problem. Any problem at all.

The pet sitter smiles, reassuring.

PET SITTER
They’ll be fine. I promise.

Edward lingers at the door for a moment, then steps into the hallway, alone.

INT. LAX – DEPARTURES – DAY

Crowds swirl. Announcements echo overhead. Edward stands with Isa near the security line, suitcase at his feet.

Isa checks his phone, then looks at Edward.

ISA
Call me when you land.

EDWARD
I will.

ISA
And if anything feels off, you’ll call?

EDWARD
I promise.

They stand in silence for a moment. Isa nods, hands in his pockets.

ISA
Don’t disappear on me.

Edward gives a small, wry smile.

EDWARD
Not planning on it.

They shake hands, a quick and firm grip. Edward picks up his bag and joins the line. He glances back once. Isa gives a nod, then turns away.

Edward faces forward and moves toward the security checkpoint.

INT. HONG KONG INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT – DAY

Edward steps off the plane, the air thick with humidity and airport noise. He moves through customs, passport stamped, and follows signs to the ferry terminal.

EXT. HONG KONG–MACAU FERRY – DAY

Edward sits by the window as the ferry cuts through gray water. He watches the skyline fade behind him, suitcase at his feet, face set and unreadable.

EXT. WYNN MACAU – ENTRANCE – DAY

Edward exits a taxi at the Wynn. Jeff is waiting, leaning against a pillar, sunglasses on.

JEFF
You made it.

Edward nods, taking in the city.

JEFF (CONT'D)
Just remember what I said. You need to be careful here.

Edward gives a small smile.

EDWARD
I know. I am.

JEFF
Honestly, you would be better off moving to Macau. If you are with Hong, do it here, not in Vietnam.

Edward raises an eyebrow.

EDWARD
Why?

JEFF
Vietnam is rough. It is more dangerous and the living is harder. Macau is safer, at least for someone like you.

Edward absorbs this, silent for a moment.

EDWARD
I will keep it in mind.

Jeff claps him on the shoulder, then leads the way inside.

INT. WYNN MACAU – CASINO FLOOR – DAY

The casino buzzes with life. Edward and Jeff walk the floor, Jeff pointing out changes, old haunts. They blend into the crowd, but Edward's eyes are always moving.

INT. MACAU LAW OFFICE – DAY

Edward sits across from a local lawyer, documents spread on the desk. The conversation is halting, formal.

LAWYER
You plan to stay in Macau long-term?

EDWARD
Not sure yet. Just want to understand my options.

The lawyer explains residency, visa requirements, local regulations. Edward listens, taking notes, asking precise questions.

MONTAGE – MACAU DAYS 1–3

- Edward eats breakfast alone, watching the city wake up through the hotel window.
- He wanders crowded streets, noting surveillance cameras and unfamiliar faces.
- Late nights in the casino lounge, Jeff recounts stories, Edward mostly listens.

- Edward calls Isa, brief check-in. "All good," he says, though his tone is flat.
- He visits tourist sites but never fully relaxes, always scanning, always inventorying exits.

INT. WYNN MACAU – LOBBY – DAY 3

Edward checks his phone. A message from Hong: "Landing soon."

He pockets the phone, heart pounding, and heads for the Macau airport.

INT. MACAU INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT – DAY

Edward waits at arrivals, scanning the crowd. Hong appears, suitcase in hand. She spots Edward and pauses. There is a quiet look of despair in her eyes, soft and sad, as if she already knows how this will end.

She walks toward Edward. As soon as she clears the customs exit, they hug. The embrace is real and lingers.

They pull apart. Hong gives Edward a gentle smile, still tinged with sadness. Without a word, she takes his hand.

They walk out together, fingers intertwined, silent but close.

MONTAGE – MACAU WITH HONG (FIVE DAYS)

- Edward and Hong walk the neon-lit streets. Hong is affectionate, but her eyes sometimes drift, lost in thought.
- At dinner, Hong reaches for Edward’s hand. Her grip is gentle and lingers.
- They visit 7’s condo. In the noisy living room, 7 and several young women from Vietnam talk and laugh. Hong sits close to Edward, translating for him, but sometimes falls silent, gaze far away.
- At night, on the balcony, Hong leans against Edward. She talks softly about her life in Vietnam and hopes for the future, voice quiet and uncertain.
- Edward tries to lighten the mood, but Hong’s sadness is always there beneath every smile.

EXT. MACAU INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT – DAY

Edward and Hong check in for their flight to Ho Chi Minh City. Hong handles the tickets, efficient and calm.

INT. TAN SON NHAT AIRPORT (SGN) – ARRIVALS – DAY

The air is thick, heavy with heat and humidity. Edward and Hong collect their bags and head outside to the taxi stand.

EXT. TAXI – MOVING – DAY

Edward and Hong sit in the back seat, watching the city blur past. Motorbikes swarm around them. Hong gives the driver directions in Vietnamese.

INT. DISTRICT 1 HOTEL – RECEPTION – DAY

Edward stands at the front desk, passport in hand. The receptionist checks their paperwork, then shakes her head.

RECEPTIONIST
You need two rooms. Not married.

Edward glances at Hong, who shrugs, resigned.

Edward signs the forms. The receptionist hands over two keys.

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY – DAY

Edward and Hong stand outside their assigned rooms, suitcases at their feet. They share a look, equal parts amusement and frustration.

HONG
Vietnam rules.

Edward nods, unlocking his door.

EDWARD
See you in the morning.

Hong smiles, then slips into Edward’s room with him, leaving the second room empty and untouched.

INT. HOTEL ROOM – DAY

Edward sits on the bed, unpacking. Hong's phone rings. She glances at the screen, frowns, and silences it. Moments later, it rings again.

Edward watches. Hong's jaw tightens.

EDWARD
Who keeps calling?

Hong shrugs, avoiding his eyes.

HONG
My cousin. He is annoying. I don't want to talk to him.

Edward doesn't push, but the phone keeps buzzing. Hong grows more frustrated, silencing each call, never answering.

INT. HOTEL ROOM – NIGHT

Edward lies awake. Hong's phone lights up on the nightstand again. She turns it face down, sighs.

EDWARD
You sure it's just your cousin?

HONG
Yes. He always wants something. I don't want to talk to him.

Edward nods, unconvinced. Hong rolls away, silent.

EXT. SAIGON STREET – MORNING

Three motorcycles idle at the curb. Hong sits behind Edward on the third bike. Tuoi, Hong's sister, rides with one tattooed thug on the second. Kiwi, Hong's cousin, rides with the other thug on the first.

The engines roar to life. The group weaves through city traffic, heading toward the ferry terminal.

EXT. FERRY TERMINAL – DAY

The motorcycles roll onto the waiting ferry. Edward stands by the railing, watching the water. The two tattooed men smoke, eyes always scanning. Hong stands close to Edward, quiet.

The ferry crosses to Monkey Island. The group mounts up and rides off the boat together.

EXT. MONKEY ISLAND – DAY

The group explores the island on foot. Monkeys swarm the paths and trees, grabbing at bags and snacks. Hong laughs at the chaos, but the two thugs always stay within arm’s reach of Edward.

Tuoi and Kiwi take photos. The mood is happy, but there is an undercurrent of tension.

INT. RESTAURANT – NIGHT

Edward and Hong sit at a crowded table with Jeff’s Vietnamese friend. The two thugs sit across from Edward, speaking quietly in Vietnamese. Hong tries to keep the conversation light, but tension lingers.

Jeff’s friend leans in, voice low.

JEFF’S FRIEND
You need to be careful. Those men are not safe to be around.

Edward nods, eyes on the table.

INT. HOTEL ROOM – LATE NIGHT

Edward and Hong return to the room. Hong is quiet, distracted. Edward checks the locks, sets his bag down, and sits in silence.

INT. JEFF’S HOUSE – NIGHT

Jeff answers his phone. His Vietnamese friend is on the other end, voice urgent.

JEFF’S FRIEND (V.O.)
Tell Edward to watch out. Those guys are criminals. He could be in real danger. I think he’s being set up.

Jeff listens, concern growing.

INT. JEFF’S HOUSE – NIGHT

Jeff holds the phone tightly, listening. His Vietnamese friend’s voice is grave, words coming slow and direct.

JEFF’S FRIEND (V.O.)
I am serious. One day he will end up found dead on the side of the road. Passport and money gone. Maybe missing a few organs too.

Jeff is silent, the weight of the warning settling in. He looks out the window, troubled.

INT. HOTEL ROOM – NIGHT

Edward’s phone rings. He answers. Jeff’s voice is tense, urgent.

JEFF (on phone)
Listen to me. My friend says you’re in real danger. Those guys you went to Monkey Island with. He says he can tell that they are Banditos from their tattoos and that you could end up dead, dumped somewhere, passport and money gone. He even said maybe missing organs.

Edward listens, jaw tight.

EDWARD
Are you serious?

JEFF
He’s dead serious. He thinks you’re being set up.

Edward glances at Hong, who sits on the bed, watching him.

EDWARD
Alright. I’ll handle it.

He hangs up, turns to Hong.

EDWARD
Jeff just called. His friend thinks those guys are dangerous. He says I could end up dead, robbed, maybe worse.

Hong frowns, shakes her head.

HONG
I don’t know why he would say that. They are just friends of my cousin. People talk too much.

Edward studies her, unconvinced.

INT. HOTEL ROOM – LATER

Hong stands by the window, phone in hand. She speaks quietly to her sister Tuoi in Vietnamese, her tone sharp, frustrated.

HONG (in Vietnamese, subtitled)
You need to tell those guys not to come around anymore. It is ruining everything. We cannot have problems like this.

Tuoi nods, understanding the seriousness. Hong hangs up, face tense.

INT. DISTRICT 1 HOTEL ROOM – EARLY MORNING

Edward sits on the bed, checking messages. Hong stands by the window, phone pressed to her ear, speaking quietly in Vietnamese.

HONG
I want you to meet him.

Her father’s voice is low, cautious, barely audible to Edward.

FATHER (V.O., in Vietnamese, subtitled)
Okay. But do not bring him to the house yet. If something happens before he moves here, he could share our location. Be careful.

Hong nods, eyes down.

HONG
I understand.

She hangs up, turning to Edward.

HONG (soft)
We'll go meet my father at my aunt's house. I've never taken a guy to my home before. I will, eventually, with you. But let's just meet at my aunt's house this first time.

Edward nods, accepting her answer, unaware of the deeper caution behind it.

FLASHBACK – CAMBODIA, NEAR VIETNAM BORDER – NIGHT, EARLY 1980s

Dense jungle. Four young Vietnamese soldiers, uniforms faded, sit around a crackling campfire. Among them is Hong's father, younger, face lean and alert.

SOLDIER 1
You know what the old men say? Eat an American's liver, you take his strength. Maybe even his luck.

SOLDIER 2
You believe that?

SOLDIER 3
I do. Power, not just luck. The spirits watch.

Hong's father stares into the fire, silent.

A distant sound. Twigs snapping. The soldiers tense, weapons ready.

They move quickly, melting into the darkness.

EXT. JUNGLE PATH – NIGHT

A lone Westerner, an American military contractor, moves through the undergrowth, flashlight in hand. The soldiers surround him. There's a brief, violent struggle. The man falls, silent.

EXT. CAMPFIRE – LATER

The four soldiers sit around the fire, the body nearby. One cuts into the liver, dividing it into pieces. Each man takes a bite, chewing in silence.

Hong's father eats, eyes fixed on the flames. The jungle is alive with distant sounds, but the circle around the fire is quiet, marked by ritual and survival.

INT. DISTRICT 1 HOTEL ROOM – NEXT MORNING

Edward and Hong pack their bags in silence. Hong folds clothes carefully, Edward double-checks drawers and closets. The second room key sits unused on the table.

They check out at the front desk, hand over both keys, and step out into the busy street.

EXT. TAXI – MOVING – DAY

Edward and Hong sit in the back seat, bags stacked beside them. The city changes as the taxi leaves District 1. Traffic thins, buildings become more local and less polished.

INT. TAN BINH HOTEL – RECEPTION – DAY

The lobby is smaller, quieter. Hong checks them in, speaking Vietnamese with the receptionist. Edward scans the lobby, noting exits and the unfamiliar surroundings.

The receptionist hands over one key. Hong gives Edward a reassuring look.

INT. TAN BINH HOTEL ROOM – DAY

Edward and Hong set down their bags, barely settled. Hong checks her phone, then turns to Edward.

HONG
We should go see my father today. He's waiting at my aunt's house.

Edward nods.

EXT. SAIGON STREET – MORNING

Edward and Hong exit the hotel. A small, crowded 10-seater van taxi waits at the curb. Edward and Hong squeeze in with ten other passengers, knees pressed together, the van weaving through traffic and out of the city.

EXT. RURAL ROAD – DAY

The van drops them at a dusty intersection. Two motorcycle taxis wait, engines idling. Edward and Hong each hop on the back of a bike. The drivers wind through narrow roads, rice paddies blurring past.

EXT. AUNT'S HOUSE – DAY

They arrive at a modest house, shaded by trees. Hong's father waits outside, arms crossed, expression guarded but curious.

INT. AUNT'S HOUSE – DAY

Edward and Hong sit across from her father at a low table. Edward calls Tan, puts the phone on speaker.

EDWARD
Tell him I love his daughter. I want to be with her.

Tan translates. Hong's father listens, then replies. Tan relays the message.

TAN (on speaker)
He says, just treat her good. That's all he asks.

Edward nods, grateful.

EDWARD
Tell him I promise.

Tan translates. Hong's father gives a small nod, eyes steady.

They share tea, the conversation brief but sincere. After thirty minutes, Hong stands. They say their goodbyes.

EXT. RURAL ROAD – DAY

Edward and Hong take motorcycle taxis back to the van stop, then ride the crowded van all the way back to Tan Binh.

INT. TAN BINH HOTEL ROOM – EVENING

Hong sits on the edge of the bed, scrolling through her phone. It rings. She answers, speaking in Vietnamese. Edward watches her face shift from surprise to concentration.

Hong listens, nods, then glances at Edward.

She hangs up and sets the phone down.

EDWARD
Who was that?

HONG
That was 7. Her wedding is next week. She wants to know if you can be the best man for her husband, John Lam.

Edward blinks, caught off guard.

EDWARD
Me? Best man?

Hong nods.

HONG
John does not have many friends here. She says you are a good choice.

Edward is silent, suspicion rising.

INT. TAN BINH HOTEL ROOM – EVENING

Edward sits by the window, watching the city outside. Hong stands nearby, arms crossed.

EDWARD
Why me? I barely know John.

Hong shrugs, avoiding his eyes.

HONG
7 trusts you. John has no close friends here. It is a big honor.

Edward turns from the window, searching her face.

EDWARD
Feels strange. I don’t know what they expect.

Hong sits beside him.

HONG
Just be there. Smile, say yes. It will be fine.

Edward nods, but tension lingers. He looks at Hong, trying to read her, but she offers nothing more.

He glances at his reflection in the window, unease written across his face.

INT. TAN BINH HOTEL ROOM – NIGHT

Edward sits at the small table, phone in hand. Hong is folding laundry nearby.

EDWARD
Tan is coming to Vietnam in two days. He’s visiting his family, but he’ll spend some time with us too.

Hong looks up, recognition in her eyes.

HONG
Tan from America? The interpreter?

EDWARD
Yes. He helped us talk so many times before. He wants to meet your family in person. And he’ll be here during 7’s wedding.

Hong nods, a small smile.

HONG
That’s good. He can come to the wedding. 7 already knows about him.

Edward relaxes, grateful.

EDWARD
It will help to have him here.

Hong continues folding clothes, thoughtful but at ease.

INT. TAN BINH HOTEL LOBBY – DAY

Edward waits near the entrance, scanning the street outside. A taxi pulls up. Tan steps out, carrying a small bag. He spots Edward and waves.

Edward smiles, genuine relief on his face. They shake hands.

EDWARD
Glad you made it.

TAN
Good to see you, man. It’s been a long time.

They head inside. Hong is waiting by the elevator, already smiling.

HONG
Tan! Welcome back.

Tan greets Hong in fluent Vietnamese. The three of you ride the elevator up, comfortable in each other’s presence.

INT. TAN BINH HOTEL ROOM – DAY

The three of them sit together, catching up. Tan and Hong slip easily into conversation, switching between English and Vietnamese. Edward listens, grateful for the connection.

EDWARD
I’m glad you’re here. Makes everything easier.

Tan nods.

TAN
Happy to help. And I’m curious to see this wedding.

Hong laughs, tension eased for the moment.

INT. TAN BINH HOTEL ROOM – MORNING

Edward, Hong, and Tan sit around the table. Hong is on the phone, speaking rapidly in Vietnamese, confirming details for the wedding. Tan listens, occasionally translating for Edward.

TAN
She’s talking to 7 about the schedule. There’s a rehearsal dinner tomorrow. The wedding is in Can Tho, so we’ll need to travel.

Edward nods, jotting notes on a pad.

EDWARD
Anything I need to do as best man?

Tan relays the question to Hong, who answers and smiles.

TAN
Just be ready to stand up front and look sharp. They’ll tell you when to do everything else.

Hong hangs up and looks at Edward.

HONG
You will need a suit. 7 says she will have one ready for you.

Edward nods, feeling the weight of what’s coming.

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY – LATER

Edward and Tan walk together, away from the room.

TAN
You trust all this?

EDWARD
I don’t know. But I’m watching everything.

They walk in silence, both aware of the uncertainty ahead.

INT. CAN THO HOTEL – LOBBY – AFTERNOON

Edward, Tan, and Hong step out of the Mercedes van, stretching after the long drive. The hotel is modest but clean. Edward checks in for himself and Tan. Hong signs in as well, but makes it clear she will only be staying briefly.

The receptionist hands over two keys.

INT. CAN THO HOTEL – HALLWAY – AFTERNOON

Edward and Tan walk to their separate rooms. Hong lingers, suitcase in hand.

EDWARD
You're not staying here?

HONG
No. I need to help 7 with the wedding. I'll be at her parents' house.

Edward nods, a little uneasy.

EDWARD
Call me if you need anything.

Hong gives a small smile.

HONG
I will.

She leaves, heading back downstairs.

INT. 7'S PARENTS' HOUSE – EVENING

The house is busy with wedding preparations. Hong arrives, greeted by 7 and several women. The mood is tense.

7 pulls Hong aside, voice low but sharp.

7
Nhung will be maid of honor. You are not cooperating, so you are out.

Hong is stunned. She tries to protest, but 7 turns away, busy with other tasks. Hong stands alone, feeling the sting of punishment and isolation.

INT. 7'S PARENTS' HOUSE – LATER (BEHIND THE SCENES)

7 meets with her inner circle, including Nhung. Their voices are hushed, urgent.

7
We need to act now. He has money and his passport. If he leaves, we get nothing.

Nhung nods, determined.

7
Hong is too soft. That's why you are maid of honor. Make sure everything goes as planned.

Nhung agrees. The group disperses, leaving Hong out of the loop.

INT. CAN THO HOTEL ROOM – NIGHT

Edward unpacks in his room. Tan knocks and enters.

TAN
You notice how tense everyone is?

EDWARD
Yeah. Hong seemed upset.

TAN
Just be careful. Something feels off.

Edward nods, but focuses on his suit and preparations for the wedding, unaware of the plot unfolding around him.

EXT. 7'S PARENTS' HOUSE – FRONT YARD – NIGHT

Dozens of tables and chairs are set up under string lights in the front yard, just off the road. The atmosphere is festive, filled with laughter and chatter. Edward sits at a table near the front with Tan beside him. Hong is at the wedding party table, busy with her duties.

A Vietnamese singer with a microphone stands near a makeshift stage. He glances at Edward’s table, grins, and launches into a lively song. The tune is upbeat, and the crowd laughs louder with each verse.

Edward leans toward Tan, curious.

EDWARD
What’s he singing about?

Tan listens, then shrugs with a smile.

TAN
It’s some old Vietcong war song. He’s saying something like, “We’ll kill you and be victorious.” But everyone’s just having fun. It’s probably a joke, nothing serious.

Edward laughs along, unworried. Tan grins, happy to be part of the celebration. Neither of them senses any danger. The laughter feels like harmless fun, just another part of the wedding festivities.

EXT. 7’S PARENTS’ HOUSE – FRONT YARD – NIGHT

The party continues under the string lights. Plates are cleared, more drinks are poured. Music and laughter fill the air.

Nhung, now the maid of honor, weaves through the tables carrying a tray of small glasses filled with clear liquor. She stops at Edward’s table, smiling brightly.

NHUNG
You must drink. It is tradition.

She holds out a glass to Edward, her smile unwavering. Tan laughs and takes one as well.

TAN
You can’t say no at a Vietnamese wedding.

Edward grins, accepting the glass from Nhung. He raises it in a toast with Tan and the others at the table.

EDWARD
Mot, hai, ba… yo!

They all drink. The crowd cheers, and Nhung moves on, offering drinks to other guests. Edward sets his empty glass down, still relaxed, unaware of any danger.

EXT. 7'S PARENTS' HOUSE – FRONT YARD – LATER THAT NIGHT

The party is in full swing. Music blares from speakers. Guests laugh, dance, and toast at every table. Edward feels the warmth of the liquor, a pleasant buzz settling in.

Tan chats with some of 7's cousins, eager to practice his Vietnamese. Edward watches the crowd, enjoying the moment. Nhung circles back, smiling, topping off drinks and urging more toasts.

Nhung leans in, encouraging Edward to drink again.

NHUNG
Another for good luck. You are best man now.

Edward laughs, raises his glass, and drinks with the group. Tan joins in, clinking glasses with everyone at the table.

Hong watches from across the yard, her expression unreadable. She glances at Nhung, then at Edward, tension flickering across her face before she looks away.

Edward remains blissfully unaware, caught up in the celebration.

EXT. 7'S PARENTS' HOUSE – FRONT YARD – LATE NIGHT

The celebration continues. More bottles are opened. Guests grow louder, laughter echoing into the night.

Edward feels the effects of the alcohol. His head swims and his vision blurs slightly. He assumes it is the strength of the local liquor and the relentless toasts.

Tan is at the table, chatting and laughing with 7's cousins. He seems at ease, enjoying the company and the chance to practice his Vietnamese.

Nhung passes by again, offering another drink. Edward hesitates, but the crowd encourages him. He takes a small sip, then sets the glass down.

Hong catches Edward’s eye from across the yard. She looks anxious, almost pleading. Edward tries to smile, but feels a wave of dizziness. He brushes it off, not wanting to cause a scene.

The music grows louder. The night air feels heavy. Edward leans back in his chair, trying to steady himself as the party swirls on around him.

EXT. 7’S PARENTS’ HOUSE – FRONT YARD – LATER

Edward sits quietly, the noise of the party fading into the background. His head feels heavy, thoughts sluggish. He watches Tan laughing with 7’s cousins, oblivious to any tension.

Nhung returns to the table, smiling as she pours another drink for Edward. He shakes his head, trying to refuse. The crowd laughs, playfully urging him on.

Hong appears at Edward’s side, sudden and insistent.

HONG
Come with me. You need some air.

Edward looks at her, confused but willing. Hong helps him stand. The world tilts slightly. She guides him away from the table, her grip firm.

They move toward the edge of the yard, away from the lights and noise. Hong glances back at the party, checking to see if anyone is watching.

HONG (quiet, urgent)
Don’t drink anything else tonight. Just stay with me.

Edward nods, still unsure but trusting her. Hong keeps a protective hand on his arm, watching the crowd carefully.

The party continues behind them, but Edward stays close to Hong, the sense of danger still hidden beneath the surface.

EXT. 7’S PARENTS’ HOUSE – FRONT YARD – LATER

Edward stands with Hong at the edge of the yard, trying to clear his head. The crowd calls him back for another toast. Nhung approaches, holding out a fresh glass, her smile unwavering.

NHUNG
One more, for good luck. Please.

The crowd watches, waiting. Edward hesitates, glances at Hong, then forces a smile and takes a polite sip. The liquor burns going down.

Almost immediately, a wave of nausea hits. Edward’s stomach churns, sweat beads on his forehead. The world blurs around the edges.

Edward steadies himself on Hong’s arm.

EDWARD
I don’t feel well. I need to go.

Hong nods, face tightening with concern.

HONG
We will go now.

She guides Edward through the crowd, ignoring the questions and laughter. Tan notices and quickly follows. The three of them move toward the road, leaving the party behind.

EXT. 7’S PARENTS’ HOUSE – FRONT YARD – NIGHT

Edward, pale and sweating, leans heavily on Tan as they make their way out. Hong stays behind, her face tight with worry. She watches them go, believing Edward may not survive the night.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD – NIGHT

Tan helps Edward onto the back of a waiting motorcycle. The driver starts the engine. Another motorcycle follows, carrying Tan.

The bikes speed down the dark rural road, headlights bouncing over potholes and gravel. The air is thick and humid. Edward clings to the seat, fighting waves of nausea and dizziness.

EXT. ROADSIDE – NIGHT

The motorcycles pull up beside the parked Mercedes van. The driver helps Tan get Edward into the back seat.

INT. MERCEDES VAN – NIGHT

Tan sits beside Edward, who is barely conscious. The van speeds through the empty streets toward the hotel.

INT. CAN THO HOTEL – HALLWAY – NIGHT

Tan supports Edward as they stagger down the hallway. Edward fumbles with his key, nearly dropping it, then stumbles inside.

INT. CAN THO HOTEL ROOM – NIGHT

Edward collapses onto the bed, fully clothed. His heart pounds, vision spinning. He is certain he is dying.

He passes out, the world going black.

INT. CAN THO HOTEL ROOM – MORNING

Sunlight streams through the window. Edward wakes, weak but alive. The memory of the night before is hazy, but the sense of survival is sharp.

EXT. 7'S PARENTS' HOUSE – EVENING

The second day's festivities wind down. Edward returns from his motorcycle ride, feeling better but chalking up his illness to strong liquor, heat, and exhaustion. Tan finds him, both relieved the ordeal is nearly over.

Tan laughs lightly.

TAN
Man, Vietnamese weddings are intense. I don't know how you kept up.

Edward manages a tired smile.

EDWARD
I think I just need some real sleep.

Hong quietly gathers her things. The three of you thank 7's family and say your goodbyes.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD – EVENING

Edward, Hong, and Tan catch a ride back to the Mercedes van, then begin the long journey back to Tan Binh. The mood is quiet, everyone worn out from days of celebration.

INT. TAN BINH HOTEL – NIGHT

Edward and Tan stand in the hallway outside their rooms. Tan has packed his things.

TAN
I'm heading back to my family for a few days before I go back to California.

Edward shakes his hand.

EDWARD
Thanks for being here. I couldn't have done it without you.

Tan smiles.

TAN
Take care of yourself, alright? I'll see you back in the States.

Edward nods, watching as Tan leaves down the hallway.

INT. TAN BINH HOTEL ROOM – NIGHT

Edward sits on the bed, exhausted but grateful the wedding is over. Hong is quiet, lost in thought. Neither Edward nor Tan realizes how close things came to disaster.

INT. TAN BINH STREET – DAY

Edward and Hong ride together on a motorbike, weaving through traffic. They stop at various houses, meeting landlords, checking locks, windows, and neighborhood noise. Edward notes details, always practical.

INT. EMPTY HOUSE – AFTERNOON

Edward and Hong stand in the living room of a modest house. Sunlight filters through barred windows. Hong walks from room to room, testing doors. Edward inspects the locks, the yard, the street outside.

EDWARD
This one feels right.

Hong nods, a small smile.

INT. NEW HOUSE – DAY

Cardboard boxes and new furniture fill the rooms. Edward assembles a bed, arranges a desk, sets up a small kitchen area. Hong unpacks clothes, hangs curtains.

They settle into a routine: morning coffee, quiet dinners, walks to the market. The house feels safe, for now.

INT. NEW HOUSE – NIGHT

A week later. Hong’s phone rings. She answers, speaking in Vietnamese. Edward listens from the next room.

Hong hangs up, comes to find him.

HONG
7 is here, on her way back to Macau. She wants us to go to karaoke tonight. Her sisters Nhan and Kieu are coming. Two of their cousins too.

Edward nods, still naive, thinking it’s just another night out.

EDWARD
Alright. Let’s go.

Hong disappears to get ready. Edward changes, checks his wallet, keys, and phone.

INT. NEW HOUSE – LATER

Edward and Hong step out into the night, the city buzzing beyond their gate.

INT. KARAOKE BAR – NIGHT

Private room. Neon lights flicker over a low table crowded with drinks, snacks, microphones. 7 sits at the head of the table, flanked by her sisters Nhan and Kieu, and two male cousins. Hong and Edward sit together, close but quiet.

The atmosphere is lively but charged. 7 keeps glancing at Hong, her face tight with irritation.

A hostess enters with a tray of drinks. 7 leans over, whispers something to her. The hostess nods and leaves, returning moments later with two karaoke girls; both young, dressed to attract.

The girls approach Edward, smiling. One sits beside him, the other tries to perch on his lap. Edward laughs awkwardly, unsure how to react. He looks to Hong, expecting her to find it funny.

Hong’s jaw clenches. She looks away, silent.

7 watches Hong’s reaction, eyes narrowed, a small, satisfied smile on her lips. The others laugh, pretending it’s all in good fun.

Edward remains clueless, sipping his drink and trying to enjoy the atmosphere. The karaoke girls continue the routine, encouraged by 7. Hong grows more distant as the night goes on, but says nothing.

The party continues, tension beneath the surface unnoticed by Edward.

INT. TAN BINH HOUSE – NIGHT

Edward sits on the edge of the bed, suitcase packed. Hong stands by the window, arms folded, silent. The city lights flicker through the curtains.

Edward stands, walks over to her.

EDWARD
I meant what I said. I’m coming back; for good. Three months. I just need to close my office, finish what I started.

Hong turns, searching his face. Her eyes are wet, voice low.

HONG
You promise?

Edward nods.

EDWARD
I promise. I’m not running. I want this.

Hong looks down, wiping a tear. She steps into his arms. They hold each other, quiet, the city noise drifting up from the street.

Edward rests his chin on her head.

EDWARD (soft)
We’ll have a real life here. I’ll make it work.

Hong pulls back, forcing a smile. She touches his cheek, memorizing his face.

HONG
Be careful, okay?

Edward nods. They stand together for a moment longer, unwilling to let go.

INT. MACAU INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT – DAY

Edward steps off the plane, the familiar rush of humidity and neon-lit advertisements greeting him. He moves through customs, passport stamped, and follows the signs toward arrivals.

Outside, 7 waits with a small group: her sisters, a few friends, and John Lam. They greet Edward with smiles and quick hugs. John Lam offers a handshake, sizing Edward up.

7
You made it. Ready for a real Macau night?

Edward grins, relieved to be away from Vietnam’s tension.

EDWARD
Could use a little fun.

They pile into a waiting taxi, city lights flashing past the windows as they head toward the heart of Macau.

INT. SAIGON RESTAURANT – NIGHT

A busy, fluorescent-lit restaurant. Hong sits at a round table with Cuong, her sister, cousin Kiwi, and two other men. The table is crowded with dishes and drinks.

Cuong speaks quietly, his tone controlling. Hong listens, eyes downcast. Her sister and Kiwi exchange glances, picking at their food. The two men mostly watch, silent but attentive.

CUONG
So, he’s really leaving? He has money, right? You know what you need to do.

Hong nods, emotion hidden behind a blank expression.

HONG
I know.

Cuong leans in closer, voice low.

CUONG
Don’t forget why we’re here.

Hong glances at her sister. The group eats, their conversation coded and tense, each word layered with meaning.

Hong forces a small smile, but her eyes are distant.

INT. MACAU DISCO – NIGHT

Pulsing lights and thumping bass fill the crowded club. Edward stands at a VIP table with 7, John Lam, and the girls. Bottles of liquor and mixers crowd the tabletop. The group laughs, toasts, and dances.

John Lam leans in, sizing up Edward with a practiced smile.

JOHN LAM
Macau is different from Vietnam, yeah?

Edward nods, raising his glass.

EDWARD
It feels a lot safer.

7 laughs, arm around her sister, eyes always scanning the room.

7
Tonight, you just relax. No worries here.

Edward tries to blend in, joining the group on the dance floor. He watches the lights, the crowd, the way everyone seems to know each other. The girls pull him into a photo, arms draped over his shoulders, all smiles.

For a moment, Edward lets himself believe he is just another tourist, just another night out.

But when he glances at John Lam and 7, their conversation is quiet, their eyes sharp.

Edward shrugs it off, focusing on the music and the sense of freedom.

INT. SAIGON RESTAURANT – NIGHT

The meal drags on. Plates are cleared, fresh drinks appear. Cuong grows more insistent, his tone sharper now.

CUONG
When is he coming back? You said he’s moving here for good?

Hong nods, keeping her voice steady.

HONG
He said three months. He has to close his office.

Cuong exchanges a look with the two men. Hong's sister and cousin Kiwi stay quiet, eyes on their food.

CUONG
You need to make sure he trusts you. No mistakes this time.

Hong's jaw tightens. She forces a nod, hiding her resentment.

HONG
I understand.

The group falls into silence, the air thick with unspoken plans. Hong glances at her phone, her mind elsewhere.

EXT. MACAU DISCO – NIGHT

Edward steps outside, the music muffled by thick glass doors. Neon signs flicker in the humid night. He stands on the curb, breathing in the city air, watching taxis and mopeds rush past.

He checks his phone for the time, then pats his pocket, feeling for his passport. Everything is where it should be. He relaxes, letting the city's energy wash over him.

For a moment, he feels safe, just another man in the crowd, anonymous and free. He watches the lights, the movement, the endless churn of Macau at night.

Inside, he can see 7 and John Lam talking, their heads close together. The girls are laughing, taking photos. Edward smiles, thinking about the future, about returning to Vietnam and building a new life with Hong.

He doesn't see the danger, not yet.

INT. SAIGON RESTAURANT – LATE NIGHT

The restaurant has emptied out. Hong sits quietly, barely touching her drink. Cuong leans in, voice low and final.

CUONG
He trusts you. That’s good. Don’t forget what we talked about.

Hong nods, her expression unreadable. Her sister and Kiwi exchange a look, complicit but silent. The two men settle the bill, eyes lingering on Hong.

CUONG
We’ll be in touch. Don’t mess this up.

Hong forces a small, tight smile. She looks down at her phone, thumb hovering over the screen.

The group stands to leave, the plan sealed in silence.

INT. MACAU HOTEL ROOM – EARLY MORNING

Edward packs his bag in the gray light before dawn. He checks his passport and flight details, then zips up his suitcase. The city outside is quiet, the nightlife faded.

EXT. MACAU FERRY TERMINAL – MORNING

Edward boards the ferry to Hong Kong, suitcase in hand. He finds a seat by the window, watching the city recede as the boat pulls away.

INT. HONG KONG INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT – DAY

Edward moves through the terminal, blending in with the crowds. He clears security, boards his flight to Los Angeles, and settles into his seat.

He looks out the window as the plane lifts off, feeling a sense of relief and closure. He lets his eyes close, unaware of what’s been set in motion behind him.

INT. AIRPLANE – DAY

Edward sits by the window, watching clouds drift past. The hum of the engine is steady and soothing. He closes his eyes, finally letting himself relax, believing the worst is behind him.

INT. SAIGON – HONG'S BEDROOM – DAY

Hong sits on the edge of her bed, phone in hand. She types a brief message, her face expressionless. The text sends. She stares at the screen for a moment, then looks out the window, lost in thought.

INTERCUT:

Edward gazes out the airplane window, the world far below. Hong sits in silence, the city noise faint outside her window.

Both are alone, each on the edge of something neither fully understands.

END OF EPISODE

If you'd like to read Episode 3, or if you're interested in bringing this series to life, contact Edward directly at edward@jamisonlawgroup.com or via Signal at: edsignal.99

Seeking representation: Literary and TV/film agents are encouraged to reach out regarding adaptation and production opportunities.