

S1 D13 / Pang / mysterious postcard -- RCL work day

Union Pang contemplated the cryptic postcard lodged between her two fingers and pondered the intended threat the mysterious object conveyed. Pang wondered if the recent publication of her novel *Somehow* prompted the postcard. The novel was a scathing account of her teenage pregnancy and its aftermath.

Pang refused to jump to any conclusions. Though sending a vague threat via the mail was something the Coleburn Historical Society might do. She opted to hit the modest gym and firing range built into the old brick warehouse housing Richmond City Limits. She changed into her workout clothes and headed to the gym.

She was proud to provide this perk for her staff. But she also had a secret motive. She was preparing for any potential chaos caused by the Century Date Problem in a few years. Those concerns led her to learn to shoot a gun and take up Taekwondo. Pang squeezed off a few rounds with her Glock.

After she finished at the range she did an intense workout. She returned to her office at the paper. The Richmond City Limits office cat Mouthy purred between the two monitors on her desktop. She leaned over and rubbed the cat.

Pang eyed a *Ms.* Magazine that featured her picture on the cover. She was proud that many within the feminist community saw her as a Third Wave Feminist icon. Pang was well aware of how risky some of her recent professional decisions were.

Pang ran the business side of the paper as publisher. But she was known to take a hands-on approach to content when she saw fit. The walls of her office featured a number of her favorite Richmond City Limits covers from its decade of existence. Among them was a close-up photo of a man with the caption, "Is This Man Crazy?"

She spent the rest of the afternoon in her office on production of the newspaper. Pang stood up from her desk after a few hours of intense work. She left the paper and headed into the chilly night air. She began a short jaunt to her destination.

As she walked, Pang dwelled on the state of her life. Her son attended Blackstone Military Academy in Coleburn. She was scheduled to pick him up on Friday. She felt guilty about not having a father figure for him, but she had not found a man worthy of marriage. Pang mulled over her own plans for the coming holiday season. She usually spent Christmas Eve with an ex-husband, who helped her "play Santa" for her son in exchange for a night of intimacy.

The couple had a complex relationship. David Mohlenhoff was a high-functioning alcoholic. He wasted his life DJing for booze at a dive bar located just outside their shared hometown. The thought of Hades Bar made her grimace. The two of them often ran into each other at Cargo in downtown Richmond on nights like this when she had just put Richmond City Limits to bed for the week.

Tonight was different because she had something of a hot date. That Andrew Denton was willing to be seen in public with her piqued her interest. Denton was the CEO of Landpark Media. His company was in a long-term newspaper war with the owner of The Richmond Times-Dispatch.

There were lingering rumors that Landpark was interested in buying Richmond City Limits. Pang worried that Mohlenhoff might crash her date. Mohlenhoff was known to show up at Pang's Fan district apartment so wasted that she was amazed he managed to drive there without killing himself.

She hoped to get lucky. She had not gotten laid in ages and she needed the release. A sign for a club grew larger in her field of vision in the dark. Pang opened the staff entrance with her key. Her ownership of a stripclub was the source of great controversy within the Virginia publishing industry. Her conservative detractors called her a hypocrite to advocate feminism while owning a strip club.

The door opened to a stripper changing room. A large mirror with a series of stations to sit at covered the length of one wall. Lockers for girls to store their street clothes were available. A number of shower stalls were also built into the room.

She waved at the club manager on her way to her office. Once there, she went over receipts. Pang glanced at a dozen small monitors connected to CCTVs strategically positioned all around the strip club. The club's 1995 calendar was on her desk, waiting to be put up. On a board next to her was a small bawdy magnet that purported to show the different types of breasts.

Pang sat down and flipped through the most recent Playboy Magazine with her on the cover. Pang posed for a semi-nude pictorial in conjunction with an interview. The publication of the

pictorial left her son aghast. She promised him to stop stripping completely to make it up to him -- even just to relax.

She opened a desk drawer. Pang pulled out a bottle of Jack Daniels. Pang claimed to be a decade sober. But she continued to fall off the wagon. Her lingering drinking problem was one of her most tightly-held secrets.

Pang gulped down a double of booze. The warmth of the alcohol warmed her body. Pang realized the meaning of the postcard. She pulled the postcard out to study it again. Whomever sent the postcard knew enough about her personal history to make sure it depicted images that would send a very specific message to her. The postcard warned her to steer clear of The Old Free State.

The newspaper served a town of only 3,000 souls. But the publication had a huge emotional significance to her. Ownership of that community newspaper was existential to Pang. Earning the means to own the paper was the basis of her success.

She wondered if something had changed with her hometown newspaper. She had long sought to own the paper. Pang made a point of talking to the current owner of The Old Free State whenever she was in town to pick her son up from military school.

Pang made her way through the club. Pang debated doing a little stripping. She needed to let off some steam after production at Richmond City Limits. Pang checked on girls as she walked around the club and occasionally eavesdropped on conversations.

She waved to the club DJ. Pang helped herself to a Coke at the bar. Pang then turned to look at a stripper named Jasmine working the pole on stage. She walked towards the front of the stage. Pang showered the stripper with dollar bills. She slipped a \$20 inside the stripper's g-string.

Pang returned to her office to attend to some work. Familiar movement on one of the CCTV monitors next to her desk caught her attention. It was Mohlenhoff.