

Criminal Overlord

by
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FADE IN:

TITLE CARD: CRIMINAL OVERLORD

EXT. NEAR PARK ENTRANCE - DAY

THE JOURNALIST (late 20s, female, pony tail, earnest) consults her phone as she enters the park.

She looks around expectantly. She is clearly looking for someone.

EXT. PATHS. PARK - DAY

The Journalist walks up and down the many paths of the park, searching...

EXT. CAFE STAND. PARK - DAY

Increasingly deflated, the Journalist finishes paying for a coffee and sits down on a nearby bench.

Weary, she rubs her temples and consults her notes and her folder of evidence.

Beep. A text has arrived. It reads: HE IS HERE.

She looks around, suddenly excited. Where is he? She eagerly gathers her things and dashes off to start the search again.

EXT. TOWARDS THE POND. PARK - DAY

The Journalist walks along a curved path with increasing urgency - searching. She looks up...

JOURNALIST P.O.V.: Up ahead a lone DAPPER FIGURE by the pond, feeding the birds.

As she approaches the Dapper Figure she starts to hear his barely understandable chant-like whispering:

THE PIANO TEACHER
(sing-song; insane pan-European accent)
A-Greg-Greg-Greg-a-Greg-a-Gregory-a-Gregory...

She arrives just behind the dapper figure, breathless.

THE JOURNALIST
(stage cough)
I...

The Dapper Figure instantly swivels around and shushes her, one finger to her confused lips.

This is THE PIANO TEACHER. A well-turned out, anachronistically dressed man in a 1940s suit, spatz and a deep red handkerchief in his top suit pocket.

He espies the initials on her evidence folder - G.C. - his eyes widen in fervent excitement which he tries to check.

She notices this. He in turn notices her noticing this.

He smiles a benign, kindly smile. Tears well up in his eyes. He has to steady himself for a moment.

THE PIANO TEACHER

I. I. I... I knew! I knew you would come.

Abruptly disinterested in ducks, he throws the rest of the loaf into the pond all in one go. He grabs her arm...

INT. WIDENING PATH. PARK - DAY

The Piano Teacher takes The Journalist along with him, down the path, pointing at all and sundry - PEOPLE, trees, the coffee shop, the sky - with his little tiny baton.

All the while repeatedly singing his operatic interlude:

THE PIANO TEACHER

He knows; she knows; we knows, THEY knows: Greg-ory Chi-nos! ... Greg-Gregory-Chino-Greg-Greg-Greg-a-Greg-a-Gregory-a-Gregory-Chi-nos!

INT. BANDSTAND. PARK. DAY

The Piano Teacher suddenly turns The Journalist to face him and he leads her in an oddly romantic dance. The Journalist, despite herself, is utterly entranced.

THE PIANO TEACHER

Chino-Chino-Greg-a-Greg-CHINO-CHINO-GREGOR-GREGORY-GREGORY-GREGORY-CHINOS-CHINOS-GREGORY-CHINOS!

The chanting and energetic dance reach their sudden crescendo. The Piano jumps back from his dancing partner as if a gymnast dismounting, and bows deep and long.

He points his baton to her top pocket before smiling kindly again, tipping his imaginary hat at her, and tap dancing off into the distance...

THE PIANO TEACHER (CONT'D)
 (chanting operatically)
 Chino-Chino-Greg-a-Greg-CHINO-CHINO-
 GREGOR-GREGORY-GREGORY-GREGORY-
 CHINOS-CHINOS-GREGORY-CHINOS!

The Journalist hesitantly looks in her pocket. Inside is a London address on a Post-it - and a separate, very carefully folded small piece of thick paper.

She looks up to see the fast disappearing Piano Teacher dancing off into the distance, still pointing his tiny baton at anything that moves.

She ever-so carefully opens the small piece of paper: it contains The Mark of the Chinos.

Aghast but excited, The Journalist quickly (but delicately) folds it away again.

She nods wisely, she is getting somewhere, she can feel it.

EXT. CITY STREET. NIGHT

The Journalist stands underneath a street lamp on a bleak inner-city street. Night is falling.

She consults the Post-it with the address. She looks up, suddenly paranoid that she is being followed. She quickly moves on.

EXT. GRIM ESTATE. NIGHT

The Journalist walks hurriedly through a grim estate, council flat blocks tower above her. The sound of kids shouting barely audible ABUSE. Police SIRENS ring out.

She shivers and consults the address again. She looks up at the tower block directly in front of her. This is it.

INT. STAIRWELL. TOWER BLOCK. NIGHT

The Journalist gingerly walks up the grim stairwell, the strip-lighting above flickers... She comes to a sudden stop. Is she really supposed to meet him here - in a stairwell?

Suddenly a dramatic COUGH comes from the shadows. This is The Snitch. He remains in the shadows the whole time. His accent is a deranged combo of over-the-top Hispanic and Italian.

THE SNITCH
 So, friend, what brings you to my
 door? ... I am no gangster. I
 assure you!

The Journalist carefully takes out the tiny folded piece of paper and passes it to The Snitch. Reticent, he takes it and nervously unfolds it. He GASPS in terror/excitement.

The paper has the Mark of the Chinos upon it. (Every time The Snitch says "Gregory Chinos" he does so in strange mix of hushed reverence and bombastic excitement.)

THE SNITCH (CONT'D)

Ah! I thought as much. You have come to me to see if there is truth behind the myth of HIM... You have you come to learn of the truth behind the legend that criminals and their children scare themselves silly with, reciting, as they do, the old song: He knows; she knows; we knows, THEY knows: Greg-ory Chi-nos! ... Greg-Gregory-Chino-Greg-Greg-Greg-a-Greg-a-Gregory-a-Gregory-Chi-nos!

The Journalist takes out her Dictaphone. But The Snitch instantly slaps it aside. But continues like nothing happened at all.

THE SNITCH (CONT'D)

I can tell by the fact you have even made it here, this far - and this is pitifully not far - that you are a man of the world. You are a wo-man, and are you not, in this world? And you have done things... And HE (Gregory Chinos!) has done things: terrible things; impressively wonderful terrible things; beyond comprehension! You don't WANT to imagine them, but you CAN imagine them! You're imagining them now! Ah! Take what you are imagining and make it 13.5% more than that. At least! Maybe more! ... Your imagination, you see, it could be weak.

The Journalist nods, accepting his points as wise ones. Pleased to have an audience The Snitch beckons her nearer... She hesitates, then moves a step closer to the shadows.

THE SNITCH (CONT'D)

You see: it is this, this vio-lence that beats deep in amongst him, amongst the folds of his chinos, which is why he is so terrifyingly... terrifying. AND this is why you MUST not search him out. You must put aside your petty jealousies; your blood oaths;
(MORE)

THE SNITCH (CONT'D)
 your award-winning investigative
 journalism... whatever. Put them
 aside!

The Journalist nods, suitably chastised.

THE SNITCH (CONT'D)
 You must have asked yourself: How,
 HOW, can the Gregory (the Gregory
 Chinos!) have always escaped ALL
 the traps that are set for him? And
 for so long? HOW?

The Journalist leans in, eager to know... The shadow of The
 Snitch leans in conspiratorially.

THE SNITCH (CONT'D)
 Where in the world, I ask you,
 where do you not find a man wearing
 the chinos, of some sort? Wherever
 money is, there is the chinos.
 Wherever Man is, is the chinos! And
 vice-a-versa!

The Snitch disappears completely into the shadows again.

THE SNITCH (CONT'D)
 To anyone who tries to reveal him,
 HE will visit discomfort and doom
 upon them - apparently, that's what
 I've heard - it's more that I
 filled in the blanks myself, but it
 doesn't take a Gregory Chinos to
 work out that Gregory Chinos would
 do something bad to... you... Or
 anyone who would ruin his life's
 work, his criminal empire... Which
 we assume is beyond measure,
 because there is a myth... And
 y'know, a myth doesn't come out of
 nothing...

The Journalist is clearly starting to have doubts and looks
 down the stairwell to leave.

THE SNITCH (CONT'D)
 WHAT? You ask: does he LOOK a pair
 of Chinos? Ha!... This... THIS I
 cannot tell you... But there is
 one, ONE, who can...

The Snitch's black leather gloved hand is open and
 outstretched.

Beat. The Journalist doesn't get the hint.

THE SNITCH (CONT'D)

But you will never find this man
without being aided... by a...
friend. Friend.

The Journalist finally gets it and smiles. The Snitch laughs heartily. The Journalist counts out a wad of notes into the eager outstretched gloved hand of The Snitch.

The Snitch clicks his fingers and two THUGS appear from nowhere. The Journalist gulps and is led away.

THE PIANO TEACHER (V.O.)

He knows; she knows; we knows, THEY
knows: Greg-ory Chi-nos! ... Greg-
Gregory-Chino-Greg-Greg-Greg-a-Greg-
a-Gregory-a-Gregory-Chi-nos!

The Snitch's gloved hands re-counts the money.

He laughs maniacally from the shadows.

And it echoes down the stairwell as The Journalist is bundled away - and a hood is placed over her head.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. BACK ROOM. RESTAURANT. NIGHT

A dark back room of a dingy restaurant.

An Old Man waits in the shadows. Grim rattling breathing.

A door suddenly opens and The Journalist is hustled in and shoved down onto a chair by two dark clothed Thugs - and her hood is removed. One Thug turns on the bare bulb light above. It takes a moment for The Journalist's eyes to adjust.

The Old Man grins. He is dressed in a 1970s tracksuit, with garish gold rings on every finger. Everything about him suggest power and threat - but tackily. The Journalist smiles back, she must be close now... The Old Man's accent is brutish, gruff combination of Eastern European and Russian.

OLD MAN

First: we wash ourselves of the
dirt of the world.

He raises his hand and from nowhere his lank-haired DAUGHTER appears with two shallow but long metal trays. She ceremonially fills them with water.

The Old Man shoos her away. He daintily puts just the tips of his fingers in a bowl and sighs, sated. He gestures for the Journalist to follow suit.

She does so eagerly, with hushed reverence.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)

Ahhh. That is better. Is it not?
... But why are you here? I am just
a poor generic fisherman, who just
happens to own a chain of
successful restaurants and other
business interests.

The Journalist takes a salt shaker and pours The Mark of the Chinos onto the table.

The Old Man's eyes widen. He bows his head, as if in prayer.

The Journalist bows her head too, and together they fervently recite the well-worn chant. (Every time the Old Man says "Gregory Chinos" he does so with strange mix of fear and grim triumph.)

OLD MAN (CONT'D)

(quietly, growing in
volume)

He knows; she knows; we
knows, THEY knows: Greg-ory
Chi-nos! ... Greg-Gregory-
Chino-Greg-Greg-Greg-a-Greg-a-
Gregory-a-Gregory-Chi-nos!
GREGORY! GREGORY CHINOS!

THE JOURNALIST

(quietly; timid at
first)

He knows; she knows; we
knows, THEY knows: Greg-ory
Chi-nos! ... Greg-Gregory-
Chino-Greg-Greg-Greg-a-Greg-a-
Gregory-a-Gregory-Chi-nos!
GREGORY! GREGORY CHINOS!

Pause. The Old Man looks up and is pleased by the Journalist's respect of his traditions.

OLD MAN

Good... GOOD!

The Journalist nods sagely.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)

BUT! WHY I ask: WHY are you trying
to find this, this Captain of Evil?
This Oligarch of Corruption. THIS
Gangster of... Gregory? The Gregory
Chinos! Why you try to find him? No
good can come from it! WHY! Even if
you do find him: he will not let
you live... he will not let you
live... Well... No, he will not you
live... SO: Why you look for the a-
Gregory-the-Gregory-the-Gregory-of-
the-Chino-Chinos-Chinos-the-Gregory-
Chinos?

The Journalist pulls out a folder, full of (unseen) evidence. The Old Man grabs at it and looks inside... He begins to smile grimly and nods. He hands back the folder, and thinks.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)
 (staring down at the
 reflective surface of the
 water in his bowl)

Beware. BE-WARE! He will cure the
 problem that is you. And I do not
 mean cure in a good way, to make
 you better, no. NO! I mean cure you
 like a side of beef! He will rub
 salt in you and your wounds, and
 will leave you to hang for days...
 You would taste very, VERY good...
 But that is besides the point.

The Journalist is transfixed. She is so close now.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)
 Ah, you need another vessel? No
 problem. DAUGHTER!

The downtrodden Daughter appears instantly again with two
 fresh trays of water. She shoots a look of forbidden lust at
 The Journalist and then disappears into the shadows.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)
 (lost in the ritual hand
 washing once more)
 You ask for the reason they call
 him... Gregory Chinos? It is his
 name! It is what he has always been
 known as. He is timeless. I
 suppose. Much like the Chinos
 themselves. Yes... Louche but
 terrible! Terrible but louche!
 Yes...

Long silent pause.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)
 IS he a pair of Chinos? No, my
 friend, he is not a pair of
 chinos... Ha!... MADNESS!... BUT,
 he can... make himself LOOK like
 the chinos!

Pause. More hushed silence.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)
 I do not mis-speak! I tell the
 truth! This is EXACTLY the reason
 why he has never been discovered...
 He is not made of the chinos; but
 he can make himself look a hell of
 a lot like the chinos!

The Old Man pulls out his right arm and reveals The Mark of
 the Chinos tattoo on his wrist. He grimaces and nods at the
 stunned Journalist.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)

A TERRIBLE price he has paid to
enact this disguise upon himself!
(leans in; hushed)
It is sometimes said that he
sometimes does not know where the
chinos end and he begins! Oh,
Gregory Chinos!

The Old Man flicks the water and lets his hands drift over
the ripples to add bizarre dramatic effect to his tale.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)

It is true! Why are you arguing
with me on this subject? On this
subject of all subjects! On the
subject of the Gregory-the-Gregory-
the-Gregory-the-Gregory-the-Chinos-
Chinos! WHY you argue with me? WHY
do you doubt me? The Gregory
Chinos! You do NOT doubt me on the
subject the-Gregory-the-Gregory-the-
Gregory-the-Gregory-Chinos... Do
not doubt me.

The Thugs appears ominously in the doorway. The Journalist
shoots an afraid look at the Old Man. The Old Man simply
gestures for the Thugs to leave.

The Journalist sighs in relief. She goes to speak...

JOURNALIST

(dry mouth)

I...

OLD MAN

(interrupting)

Oh, no-no-no! No time left, now.
You talk too much! FIRST, we sleep.
LATER, much later, I tell you more.

He grins and turns off the light. Black.

BLACK.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)

(giggling lyrical mutter
to himself))

He knows; she knows; we knows, THEY
knows: Greg-ory Chi-nos!

The creepy sound of the Old Man dipping his hands in the
water once more. In the dark.

FADE TO BLACK.