

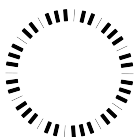
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CONCORD
THEATRICALS

Acting Edition

Golden Shield

by Anchuli Felicia King

|| SAMUEL FRENCH ||

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GOLDEN SHIELD was first produced by Melbourne Theatre Company at The Sumner, Southbank Theatre, Melbourne on 12 August with the following cast and creatives:

CAST

RICHARD WARREN/LARRY MURDOCH.....Nicholas Bell
EVA CHEN/DEPUTY MINISTER TAO
FUZH.....Jing-Xuan Chan
MEI HUANG/DEPUTY MINISTER GUO
SHENGWEI Gabrielle Chan
JULIE CHEN Fiona Choi
LI DAO Yi Jin
MARSHALL MCLAREN Josh McConville
AMANDA CARLSON/JANE BOLLMAN Sophie Ross
THE TRANSLATOR Yuchen Wang

CREATIVE

Director Sarah Goodes
Dramaturg..... Chris Mead
Set & Costume Design The Sisters Hayes (Esther Marie & Rebecca Hayes)
Lighting Designer Damien Cooper
Composter & Sound Designer.....Luke Smiles
Voice & Dialect Coach.....Geraldine Cook-Dafner
Associate Designer..... Kat Chan
Assistant Director Alice Qin
Stage Manager Pippa Wright
Assistant Stage Manager Lisette Drew
Design Secondment.....Jemima Johnston
Voice & Dialect Secondment Matt Furlani

CHARACTERS

RICHARD WARREN/LARRY MURDOCH

EVA CHEN/DEPUTY MINISTER TAO FUZHI

MEI HUANG/DEPUTY MINISTER GUO SHENGWEI

JULIE CHEN

LI DAO

MARSHALL MCLAREN

AMANDA CARLSON/JANE BOLLMAN

THE TRANSLATOR

SETTING

Washington D.C., Beijing, Yingcheng, Dallas, Sydney.

TIME

2006–2016

AUTHOR'S NOTES

Text Note

Bold text is spoken in Mandarin and synchronously translated into English by the Translator.

Bold and underlined text is spoken in Mandarin, and not necessarily accompanied by a translation.

Where noted, a 'staggered' translation occurs with a slight delay, as though being translated in real time.

Whenever the / symbol appears within the dialogue, it is to indicate an overlap of speech with the previous line of dialogue.

A Note About the Translator

The Translator is an intermediary between the audience and the action.

They intervene in the action only when their presence becomes essential.

They are otherwise engaged in an act of self-abnegation.

Playwright's Note

I read something on the internet.

This is how most of my plays start. It's also how the majority of the world's population gets its information. As of April 2019, 56.1% of the world's population was online. 55% of that content was written in English, and 800 million of those users were Chinese, making it by far the largest national population online.

And yes, I got those statistics from the internet.

It's easy to balk at statistics like these, but how can we actually conceptualize the human cost of this mass global digitalization? Indeed, how can we conceptualize the internet? As a nebulous cloud of data? As a vast, interconnected web of servers, data processing centers, household objects (the internet of things)? Or should we think of it as pure math – algorithms that determine what we see or don't see, algorithms written by an emergent class of technocrats who increasingly define our political, social and cultural lives?

To my mind, the theatre is really good place to grapple with impossibly big phenomena like the internet and globalization – what some contemporary philosophers, borrowing terminology from computer science, call 'metaobjects.' Theatre is uniquely suited to dealing with metaobjects because it's an aggressively immediate and analog form. It's a space where big issues can be transformed into little stories, where the epic and the quotidian don't just coexist but coalesce. In theater, the personal is always political, and vice versa.

In 2016, I read something on the internet. A group of Chinese dissidents were mounting a class action lawsuit against an American technology company for their purported criminal collusion with the Chinese government. The plaintiffs alleged that this billion-dollar corporation had knowingly helped the Chinese government build systems that would enable online censorship and digital surveillance as part of the Golden Shield project, the national security policy that has since become synonymous with China's Great Firewall.

For some ineffable reason, I knew I wanted to write a play about this. And I knew that the play should be written in both Mandarin and English, so the play would need a translator. And if it needed a translator, why not make them The Translator, who could not only translate literal text but also subtext and context, revealing the total sum of semiotic misfires that can happen when two parties try to bridge a communicative chasm?

I read everything I could find about the lawsuit. Then I read a lot more. I read public documentation on the numerous cases *Golden Shield* is based on. I read transcripts of civil trials, theses on the Great Firewall, books on digital filtering, on Mandarin-to-English translation, on the surveillance state and linguistics and technocracy... and then I threw it all out and tried to write a compelling piece of drama.

So how “real” are the events in this play? I would say the broader circumstances and events are based on fact, while individual characters and events are heavily fictionalized. In this sense, the play is itself an act of translation. Complex global issues are mapped onto fictive human stories – the core of which is the story of Julie and Eva, two Chinese-American sisters struggling to navigate their fraught relationship and shared trauma. The Chen sisters are in many ways my metaphor for the toxic sisterhood of China and America, two economically codependent superpowers that continue to struggle with their profound ideological incompatibility.

I am, of course, painfully aware of the hubris of a 25-year-old Thai-Australian playwright thinking she has anything meaningful to say about Sino-American relations (or indeed, about international litigation or human rights abuses in China). My hope is that *Golden Shield* gives you an impressionistic sweep of these metaobjects, and if you want to learn more about them, please consult an actual expert who will have far more interesting and nuanced things to say than I ever could. That is after all the wonderful thing about the internet – the enlightened texts of linguists, engineers, activists and lawyers are just a click away.

The only thing we’re really qualified to do as artists is ask questions about what it means to be human. The heart of this play is a universal human predicament: the failure to communicate. *Golden Shield* explores how we fail to translate effectively on all fronts – not just between different languages and cultures, but between technologies, judicial systems, lovers and family members. I hope that what people take away from the play is that the *attempt* to translate, as fraught as it is, is what counts – that as multivalent and impossible as communication is, we have to keep trying because it’s the best mechanism we have.

With a \$4.6 million investment by MTC and MTC's Playwrights Giving Circle, the NEXT STAGE Writers' Program has introduced the most rigorous playwright commissioning and development process ever undertaken by the Company, setting a new benchmark for play development in Australia.

Golden Shield was the first NEXT STAGE original produced by the company.

Thank you to MTC's Playwrights Giving Circle for sharing our passion and commitment to Australian stories and Australian writers.

Louise Myer and Martyn Myer ao
Maureen Wheeler ao and Tony Wheeler ao
Christine Brown Bequest
Allan Myers ac qc and Maria Myers ac
Tony Burgess and Janine Burgess
Dr Andrew McAliece and Dr Richard Simmie
Larry Kamener and Petra Kamener

Thanks to Ian Potter Foundation, Naomi Milgrom Foundation, Myer Foundation, Malcolm Robertson Foundation, University of Melbourne.

ACT ONE

TRANSLATOR. The most difficult... the most difficult.

I guess it would be the proverbs.

I generally opt for a literal translation

‘Stone’ to ‘stone’

And let the hearer extrapolate

Well, take something like ‘every rose has its thorns’

That’s pretty universal.

But for something culturally entrenched

Or by some degrees removed

That’s a little trickier

An example:

三个和尚没水喝 (Sān gè héshàng méi shuǐ hē.)

Three monks have no water to drink.

Any thoughts?

(*Laughing.*) Right. Doesn’t work so well.

So what do I do with that?

I can try to find an English equivalent, if one exists.

But of course, I risk making false parallels

Unwittingly engaging in an act of... linguistic imperialism

Or I can really spell it out –

Here’s the monks, here’s the water

Here’s what that all means

But you do lose some of the beauty

Of the original

It’ll be much the same with this job

I suspect

I tend to employ a kind of... hybrid approach

A bit of one-to-one, a bit of analogy,

Context where you need it
A word of warning though
Things can get... muddy
Once we really get going

I always tell my clients, 'give your mind time to adjust'.
It can be disorienting, hearing multiple voices at once
Just settle into it
Trust that your mind is a machine
Eventually, it'll find a focal point
Having said that,
It is essential that you concentrate

JULIE. (*Out.*) There's a lot of jargon in this case. A lot of legal jargon and a lot of technical / jargon.

MARSHALL. You've got IDS devices at the local router level, you've got provincial ISPs doing their own shit, so by the time you get to the / border AS –

JULIE. My advice to you is this: don't get caught up in the jargon. Jargon is one of many tactics employed by corporations like the defendant –

THE TRANSLATOR. ONYS Systems.

JULIE. – to evade accountability. Because they assume that the layman – and don't be offended, but that's you and me – simply can't understand what it is they do. What they build.

JANE. (*To MARSHALL.*) When I say call me back, you / have to –

MARSHALL. I'm busy, Bollman.

JANE. You have to / call me back.

JULIE. That's not what this case is about.

MARSHALL. I'm busy, someone's suing us?

JANE. Yes, I've been trying / to –

MARSHALL. Who's suing us?

JANE. Eight Chinese dissidents.

JULIE. This is about right and wrong.

MARSHALL. ...what?

JANE. Eight / Chinese –

MARSHALL. I heard you – fucking, what?

JULIE. You don't need to understand jargon to understand that.

EVA. What does that mean exactly, the Law of Nations?

MEI. What did you do?

那你是什么? /你干了什么?

Nà nǐ shì shénme? / Nǐ gànle shénme?

LI. I can't survive without you.

没有你我活不下去的。

Méiyǒu nǐ wǒ huóbuxiàqù de.

JANE. Eight Chinese dissidents are suing us for criminal collusion with the Chinese government.

MARSHALL. The – how? What? In China?

JANE. In... Texas.

MARSHALL. ...*how?*

JANE. It has to do with... pirates.

RICHARD. / It's about *pirates*.

JULIE. (*Out.*) Having said that, I have some legal jargon to get out of the way. The fact is that in this case the plaintiffs are not American citizens. They are eight citizens of the People's Republic of China. And they are suing the defendants –

THE TRANSLATOR. ONYS Systems.

JULIE. – for injuries inflicted in the state of China. So I imagine you're a little confused / I imagine you're wondering what the hell this has to do with you as a resident of Dallas County. And to explain that, I'm going to tell you about a piece of legislation called the Alien Tort Statute.

THE TRANSLATOR. D.C., 2012

RICHARD. It's about *pirates*.

JULIE. I'm aware of / the –

RICHARD. I mean I'd never even heard of this thing, you know why I'd never heard of it? Because it's from the Judiciary Act of 1789. Wherein this statute was included, I'm informed by the best and brightest legal historians, as a means for dealing with / pirates.

JULIE. Pirates.

RICHARD. Pirates. As in 'yarr'.

JULIE. Is that your *pirate*?

RICHARD. Maybe, why, what's your pirate?

JULIE. ...ahoy?

RICHARD. You're a disgrace to the legal profession.

JULIE. You said *yarr*.

RICHARD. Jules, I just don't wanna be that firm.

JULIE. I hear you.

RICHARD. I don't wanna just jump on some fad legal loophole just because every other schmuck on the human rights beat is doing it.

JULIE. It's not a fad.

RICHARD. I mean God knows your little humanitarian hobby is taking up enough billable hours –

JULIE. Well, I'm sorry doing my civic duty isn't proving to be a particularly profitable venture / for you.

RICHARD. That's not what I – don't put words in my mouth, Jules. I just mean that the last thing we can afford right now is some kinda academic exercise –

JULIE. It's / not –

RICHARD. – in whether or not a district judge will uphold an eighteenth-century statute. A statute which, I'll remind you, was not *intended* for a modern court of law but for marauding gangs of Vitamin-C-deficient *pirates*.

JULIE. It's not an academic exercise. Look, *Kpadeh v. Emmanuel*, tried in Florida last month, under the ATS.

THE TRANSLATOR. Alien Tort Statute.

JULIE. Twenty-two million in damages.

RICHARD. Jules, that case was about a Liberian dictator wiping his ass with the Geneva Convention. You wanna use this thing, you gotta have something that's flagrantly violating the Law of Nations.

JULIE. Okay. What about an oppressive government that casually engages in torture, censorship and ethnic genocide?

RICHARD. Well, which government are we talking about here? About seventeen are coming to mind. (*Beat.*)

Aw Jules! Not the China thing!

JULIE. I know it's not much to be going on.

RICHARD. No, no, I'm sorry, just because your comrade at / that Australian NGO –

JULIE. Amanda's not my *comrade*, okay, I / don't have *comrades*.

RICHARD. – has you all hot and bothered about some leaked document –

JULIE. It's an internal ONYS document that explicitly *shows* –

RICHARD. It's a bullet point!

JULIE. But –

RICHARD. A bullet point. You don't mount a case around a bullet point.

JULIE. It proves that they knowingly colluded with the CCP.

THE TRANSLATOR. Chinese Communist Party.

RICHARD. Jules, you've got a stick up your ass about the Chinese government lately, fine, go sign a petition. We don't go suing billion-dollar multinationals under obscure statutes just to make a point, we're not that *firm*.

JULIE. Rich, think of the precedent. If we could get some dissidents willing to sign on as plaintiffs, we get a class action going –

RICHARD. Woah, now we're talking about a class action?

JULIE. We'd have foreign citizens suing a multinational corporation. In a US district court. Doesn't that get you going just a little? Come on. It's the white whale of international humanitarian law.

RICHARD. Which district?

JULIE. I was thinking Dallas.

RICHARD. Dallas? Why Dallas?

JULIE. ONYS have an office in Fort Worth. Plus you passed the bar in Dallas.

RICHARD. You don't need me. Do it yourself, *pro hac vice*.

JULIE. Yeah, but then you wouldn't be my co-counsel.

RICHARD. You don't want me to co-counsel. (*Beat.*) Wait, you want me to co-counsel?

JULIE. It'd be a landmark case, Rich.

(Beat. RICHARD is somewhat persuaded.)

RICHARD. I don't have a problem with the humanitarian stuff, Jules. It's good for the firm. But if you're thinking about a class action here, that's a three, four-year timeline and a helluva lotta resources. It can't just be a gesture. It has to be... you know. Viable.

THE TRANSLATOR. Profitable.

JULIE. I hear you. Gimme a month. I'll dig around, see if it's viable.

RICHARD. Two weeks. And if you have to fly over there –

JULIE. Out / of my own pocket.

RICHARD. Out of your own pocket.

JULIE. Okay, but I want the paralegal.

RICHARD. No, no paralegal.

JULIE. Fuck you, why no paralegal?

RICHARD. I need him.

JULIE. What for?

RICHARD. The corporate liability shit, Jules. The shit that pays the bills.

(Beat.)

RICHARD. How's your Mandarin these days?

JULIE. Shot to shit. Why, you know any decent translators?

RICHARD. *(Knowingly.)* I mean.

JULIE. Rich. That's a terrible idea. *(Beat.)* Hey. That's not a terrible idea.

THE TRANSLATOR. D.C., 2012.

EVA. So it's like –

JULIE. You don't have to –

EVA. No, but I want to. So.

JULIE. Okay.

EVA. Okay, so it's like – a foreign citizen, or, I guess, citizens / plural?

JULIE. Right.

EVA. – can file in a US district court, but, only, or *specifically* if it's a lawsuit?

JULIE. Well, no, in torts.

EVA. Doesn't that –

JULIE. It's –

EVA. No, but a tort means a lawsuit, right?

JULIE. Torts is a whole branch of – Evie, you really don't have to *understand* the case.

EVA. But I –

JULIE. Because I'm not asking you / to –

EVA. And – 'in violation of the Law of Nations' –

JULIE. Evie.

EVA. What does that mean, exactly, the Law of Nations?

JULIE. Well, there's some debate about – that's why it's a sort of a loophole. I told you, right, it's kinda funny, it was actually, what it was *intended* for, was a way of dealing with –

EVA. Pirates. / Yeah.

JULIE. Yarr.

(*Beat.*)

EVA. It just doesn't seem like much to be going on.

JULIE. ...right.

EVA. And if the only evidence is this bullet / point –

JULIE. Actually, Evie, I didn't come for your legal opinion, okay, I'm a lawyer, I can form my own legal opinion, fuck.

(*Beat.*)

EVA. Okay.

JULIE. So can you do it, or...

EVA. You are aware... this is D.C. Like, translators aren't few and far between.

JULIE. What, does it offend you, that I came to you with this?

EVA. I just like don't need a bailout.

JULIE. That's not what this is.

EVA. Like, I'm okay.

THE TRANSLATOR. 'I'm not okay.'

JULIE. It's not – it's not a bailout, okay? I gotta have someone I trust over there, we'll be dealing with some sensitive shit, some anti-CCP shit.

EVA. I just don't want you to think, like, because the last time we –

JULIE. No, I'm not – funerals are *weird*, dude. I'm not – I mean – water under the bridge.

THE TRANSLATOR. 'An idiom that generally refers to events that have happened in the past and are consequently no longer a source of concern. However, in this case, it means something like 'I'm still mad at you but let's not talk about it.'

JULIE. Just, you're being fucking weird, what is it, Evie? Did I offend you? I just... you kept up with the language and I didn't, so... that's all. That's all. I'm in a position, like I said, I have some new evidence and

Richard's supporting me in this, I mean he's not exactly *supporting* me, but you'd get a per diem and shit.

EVA. I don't know if I can. Timeline-wise.

JULIE. Timeline-wise, what does that mean, timeline-wise?

EVA. With my – you know I, like, applied to programs.

JULIE. Oh, uh.

EVA. What?

JULIE. I mean, it's – we've had this conversation.

EVA. What?

JULIE. It wasn't *programs*, you submitted a half-hearted application to Georgetown.

EVA. I might get in.

JULIE. (*Laughing.*) I admire your optimism.

THE TRANSLATOR. Roughly, 'you spent three years at Berkeley getting wasted, there's no way you're getting into Georgetown.'

(*Beat.*)

EVA. Yeah, so, I gotta go.

JULIE. Aw, what, you can't take a joke, come on, Evie.

EVA. That wasn't – you can't just –

JULIE. Lighten the fuck up, dude, DUDE, it was a joke.

EVA. You can't just, you can't just be a dick, and call it farce.

JULIE. Can't take a joke, Evie, shit.

EVA. This is a tired argument, so.

(*Beat.*)

JULIE. So what are you doing, then?

EVA. As in?

JULIE. As in, like, regular human survival shit. Do you have some kind of, I don't know, revenue stream?

EVA. I'm freelancing.

JULIE. Translating?

EVA. Translating isn't the only thing you can do with an Asia Studies major.

THE TRANSLATOR. 'I regret my choices and I'm essentially unemployable.'

JULIE. So what, you're temping? *(Beat.)* What are you, being fucking *coy*? What?

EVA. I don't wanna talk about it.

THE TRANSLATOR. 'I'm not talking about it.'

JULIE. The fuck, Evie, why not?

EVA. I just... I can't talk about it.

THE TRANSLATOR. 'I'm not talking about it, to *you*.'

JULIE. Because it's me?

EVA. Because a lot of things.

JULIE. Why?

EVA. As *I just said*. I *can't* –

THE TRANSLATOR. – 'won't' –

EVA. – *talk about it*.

JULIE. *(Joking.)* What is it, illegal? *(Beat.)* It's not illegal. Is it? Is it illegal?

EVA. I've said that I'm not talking about it, if that presents a problem to you, then, you know.

(Beat.)

JULIE. Tell me it's not illegal.

EVA. It's not illegal.

JULIE. Are you lying to me?

EVA. No.

THE TRANSLATOR. 'Yes.'

JULIE. Okay.

EVA. It's not.

JULIE. Okay.

EVA. Strictly.

JULIE. *Evie.*

THE TRANSLATOR. There's some debate, as to whether or not Eva's profession is, in fact, legal.

JULIE. Are you –

EVA. This. Is Not. The Venue.

JULIE. Because –

EVA. For this. Discussion.

JULIE. Because I can't cover you under attorney-client privilege if / it's –

EVA. It's – I know this is somewhat impossible for you to *believe*, but I can take care of myself, I have been taking care of *myself*, you know, for *some* time now, I am a *person*, who *functions* independently, of you.

JULIE. But –

EVA. WILL YOU LIKE TRUST THAT I'M NOT BROKEN, FOR JUST ONCE IN YOUR FUCKING LIFE, CAN YOU TRUST THAT.

(Beat.)

JULIE. I don't think you're broken.

EVA. Yeah, yeah, you do. But it's fine.

(Beat.)

JULIE. It's Beijing, Evie. It's just... being there, it'll be so...

EVA. I know.

JULIE. And so soon after mom.

EVA. I know.

JULIE. Just – don't write it off, okay? I... I would like to do this for you. Okay?

(Beat.)

EVA. What's it say?

JULIE. What?

EVA. The bullet point. What's it say?

THE TRANSLATOR. Dallas, 2015.

JULIE. Could you state your name and occupation for the record?

MARSHALL. Marshall McLaren. I'm the President of China Operations at ONYS Systems.

JULIE. Thank you. Mr. McLaren, could you tell us when you had your first consultancy with the Chinese Ministry of Public Security?

MARSHALL. In 2004.

JULIE. And then your contract was renewed in 2006?

MARSHALL. Yeah.

JULIE. And when did you go public?

MARSHALL. Our IPO, was, yeah, the year before that. 2005.

JULIE. You opened at a market value of, let's see here, \$27 billion?

MARSHALL. Pretty cheap, actually. \$45 a share.

JULIE. And these days, that number is closer to, what?

MARSHALL. Look, I'm not a 'market' guy, Ms. Chen, you know, I'm in management, but I got into this as an engineer. So.

(Beat.)

JULIE. Okay then. *(Beat.)* What were you consulting on in 2004?

MARSHALL. ISP Efficiency in Border and Internal AS-Topologies in Greater China.

JULIE. That's a lot of acronyms, Mr McLaren.

MARSHALL. Not for my line of business.

JULIE. Okay, let's start with ISP, what's that?

MARSHALL. Internet service providers.

JULIE. Okay, so ISP Efficiency: you were trying to make the internet faster?

MARSHALL. More efficient, sure.

JULIE. And did you?

MARSHALL. Did we increase network efficiency?

JULIE. Yes.

MARSHALL. I'm proud to say we did that. By around four hundred percent.

JULIE. Congratulations.

MARSHALL. Thanks.

JULIE. Could you be a little more specific about what you mean when you say 'efficiency'?

(Beat.)

MARSHALL. No.

(Beat.)

JULIE. Okay... what aspect, or aspects, of the internet, were you trying to make more efficient?

MARSHALL. That's the thing about networks, Ms Chen. It's all somewhat interconnected.

THE TRANSLATOR. Beijing, 2006.

MARSHALL. The thing with the fucking food, right –

LARRY. I am begging you not to get into this.

MARSHALL. No, because, if every fucking night, we have to sit down to a roundtable with eight ministers –

LARRY. It's a / cultural –

MARSHALL. – this is the twenty-first – what are we, the fucking yakuza, is what I'm saying – I need my fucking laptop, now they're giving us this shit –

LARRY. No one's giving us shit.

MARSHALL. They are, Larry, they're giving us shit, it's polite Chinese shit, but it's shit nonetheless, and what I'm saying is, is – if we could have a meeting, *one meeting*, in an *office*, in an office with *desks*, I don't need another, another fucking five pots of steamed *whatever* or a fucking egg that's been fermented for a hundred years in a silk basket at the foothills of Mountain Fing-fong-fang –

LARRY. They're actually, they're quite good, the century eggs.

THE TRANSLATOR. Century eggs are a Chinese delicacy.

MARSHALL. *Rotten eggs*, Larry.

THE TRANSLATOR. They are not literally fermented for a century.

MARSHALL. They are hundred-year-old *rotten eggs*.

LARRY. It's traditional.

MARSHALL. Traditions die, Larry. Traditions, they just, I'm not saying they aren't *nice*, and, and *quaint*, but traditions, sometimes they need to *die*, and this *food* thing – this is a thing that *needs to die*. The, look, the next generation, the millennial Chinese, you don't see them doing this shit, do ya, you don't see Samsung China having fucking *dumpling meetings*. Because the world, *this* one, that we *presently* occupy, is a world where meetings happen in *offices*, in *office buildings* with *wifi* and, and, I don't know, at the very goddamn least, my laptop, Larry, my goddamn laptop.

LARRY. This is the Ministry of Public Security here, okay, these are not tech-savvy people, these are old-guard communists here.

MARSHALL. And now this, what they are calling it, this exhibition?

LARRY. Oh, *now* you wanna work?

MARSHALL. Woah, hey, you're the one –

LARRY. No, that was – you just caught me off guard.

MARSHALL. I'm not *procrastinating* here, I'm *frustrated* –

LARRY. Sorry, no, you're – you're right.

MARSHALL. I'm always right, Larry. So this, uh, the (*Looking at a document.*) the Comprehensive Exhibition on Chinese Information System. System?

LARRY. I thought it was rude to / correct –

MARSHALL. They not got plurals in Mandarin?

THE TRANSLATOR. They don't.

MARSHALL. Okay, so, what kinda demonstration are we talking about here?

LARRY. I, uh – the description is a bit... vague.

MARSHALL. (*Reading.*) ‘Make efficient and consciously implement system for targeting obscene and harmful materials.’ Lovely euphemism for porn.

LARRY. I think it’s a bit of a mistranslation.

THE TRANSLATOR. It’s not.

MARSHALL. ‘Make efficient.’

THE TRANSLATOR. In Mandarin, the goal of the action is often inbuilt in the verb.

MARSHALL. Jesus.

THE TRANSLATOR. Actually, it’s been suggested by linguists that this reflects two completely different patterns of thought. The Mandarin speaker thinks circularly, in a loop, while the English speaker thinks linearly, in a line. (*Beat.*) That’s not strictly / relevant.

MARSHALL. Larry, what happens when the world’s biggest flow of data – the packets of 1.3 billion users – goes through a single filtering system?

LARRY. Uh, it’s – bad?

MARSHALL. Through one chokehold to the world wide web, Larry, what happens?

LARRY. Things get stuck.

MARSHALL. Things that aren’t *supposed* to get stuck, get stuck. And things that aren’t supposed to get *through*, get through. What else?

LARRY. It’s slow?

MARSHALL. That’s right, Larry. It’s slow as shit. Because trying to sift through the online traffic of the world’s largest fucking population is a pretty fucking *inefficient* process, it is in fact a *necessarily* inefficient – (*A realization.*) Larry.

LARRY. You’re having / a –

MARSHALL. Yeah, I am, I am, Larry, Larry, what if it wasn't a single filtering system?

LARRY. ...you lost me.

MARSHALL. Why did I hire you?

LARRY. I'm the only guy who'll put up with you.

MARSHALL. I'm ignoring that. Larry, what if we decentralized the firewall?

LARRY. So – wait –

MARSHALL. The chokehold is at the border AS, right? But what if the filtering wasn't just happening at the national level?

LARRY. Uh.

MARSHALL. Think about it: three-tier structure, right? Local, provincial, national. You've got IDS devices at the local router level, you've got provincial ISP's doing their own shit, so by the time you get to the border AS
–

LARRY. Wait, / Marsh.

MARSHALL. – the packet's already been through, what, twelve, thirteen different checkpoints. More IP blocking, more DNS hijacking, *and* you unclog the whole fucking system. And yes, I will accept my Nobel prize now.

LARRY. I don't know, Marsh.

MARSHALL. Why, cuz their hardware won't cut it? Yeah, that crossed my mind, but here's the fucking kicker, Larry: *we* build the routers. Not just the routers – I'm talking the whole architecture. Data centers, switches, access points. We don't just sell them an idea, Larry. We can sell them the fucking gear to do it.

(Beat.)

LARRY. Marsh, I mean – that’s kind of a different ballgame.

MARSHALL. ...we’re in IT, Larry. Don’t do sport metaphors.

LARRY. You’re talking about giving them a lot more, uh –

MARSHALL. A lot more... what?

LARRY. You know. ‘Mileage.’

MARSHALL. (*Not getting it.*) Yeah. It’s a faster topology.
That’s the point.

LARRY. That’s not –

MARSHALL. That’s the point, Larry.

LARRY. But you’re not just talking about, like, filtering out content from the rest of the world, that’s – you’re talking about internal monitoring. At every level.

MARSHALL. Yeah, I mean, that’s the way they’re headed. They’re just doing it inefficiently. We can make it efficient.

(*Beat.*)

LARRY. Anyway, you’re talking about a huge overhaul, building them new infrastructure, I mean, jeez, we’re supposed to be consulting / on –

MARSHALL. Larry, need I remind you here, we’re building up to the fucking *Olympics* here –

LARRY. What / I’m –

MARSHALL. – you wanna talk about ballgames, that’s the ballgame, Larry, the fucking Beijing Olympics, you heard about that little eight-figure ballgame?

LARRY. All we’re contractually obligated to –

MARSHALL. It’s called the *Golden Shield Project*.

THE TRANSLATOR. ‘金盾工程 jīndùn gōngchéng’

LARRY. They're just talking about blocking porn, for chrissakes, you don't need a total overhaul –

MARSHALL. But it's not called the no-porn project, is it, Larry? It's called the *Golden Shield* Project. That's a pretty fucking superlative name for a no-porn project, wouldn't you say, Larry? Almost like they're aiming at something a little more *grandiose*. And when you see the pharaoh drawing up the plans for the fucking pyramids, it's probably a good time to get into the brick business.

LARRY. Marsh, all I'm saying is, maybe we just give the client what they're actually asking for? Like, I'm just saying, you know, if all they're talking about right now, if all they're *willing* to talk to *us* about, is filtering out some porn, maybe we just deliver some basic ways of, like, filtering out some porn, is all I'm saying.

(*Beat.*)

MARSHALL. You know what I dream of, Larry?

LARRY. Marsh –

MARSHALL. No, no, let me finish, it's a really – it's a breathtaking dream, Larry, you're gonna want to hear this dream, Larry. I dream of a man. I dream of a meeting with a man.

LARRY. There are websites for that.

MARSHALL. Let me finish. This man is from State. No, better yet, Defense. And this man comes up to me, and he says to me, in simple, glorious, American English, 'Mr. McLaren, we'd like you to build the most efficient national network topology the world has ever seen. And if you choose to take on this *monumental* task, says the man from Defense, in addition to our eternal gratitude, we're gonna give you a ton of space, we're gonna give you a round-the-clock team of guys, we're gonna dedicate maximal resources to this endeavor

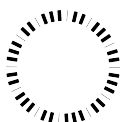
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