

BLOOD LUNGS

Pilot Episode
"Silver Tongue"

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V.4.0

FADE IN:

EXT. LOST CITY - DAY - AERIEL VIEW

Modern city fallen to ruin, an off-green smog filters the light into a muddy, perpetual dusk. Hints of a serpentine river winding around the city, a few bridges line its shore, now blocked with abandoned cars.

The atmosphere is dim, except for a long stretch of road leading up to a 60 story high-rise, fully lit, a glowing beacon in the murk. This is the SILVER TOWER.

EXT. AVENUE OF LIGHT - DAY

Down to street level: shattered windows, mangled cars, and cement blockades. The streets are eerily quiet.

Down closer to: TANG, 16, and ZHOU, 17, who walk cautiously in the direction of the Silver Tower.

Tang in an inside-out jacket, psychedelic ski goggles, and a bandana over his mouth. We connect with Tang through his eyes, cheerful, with laugh lines even at such a young age.

Zhou is wearing Tang's contrast: worn out clothes, all black, with green netting around a gas mask. He always has an observant, cat-like expression. He even glides like a cat, while each of Tang's steps SWISH noisily.

Slung over their shoulders are bulging back packs.

EXT. CAR - DAY

A NOMAD, clothes tattered, also wearing a gas mask, sleeps on the hood, a pack tucked in his arm protectively, a baseball bat gripped in his other. A BLOOD BUG crawls towards him on alien like tentacles, its small body is slimy and glistening, a little red heart beating inside.

It stops, rubs its front tentacles together greedily, and prepares to pounce, a pleasing CHIRP vibrates from its body.

The Nomad jerks awake and BAM, smashes the Blood Bug, leaving a bloody splat.

EXT. AVENUE OF LIGHT - DAY

The noise echoes, Tang and Zhou turn about face, clutching their bags close. Guarded, they scan the smog.

TANG

Think we're being followed?

ZHOU

Let's loose the tail.

Zhou takes off full speed, his footsteps remain silent. Tang follows, the SWISHING louder. Zhou turns back to HUSH him.

ZHOU (CONT'D)

You're making' that sound again!

TANG

I don't hear it...

Tang spreads his arms and runs on his toes like a monkey, barely keeping up.

EXT. AVENUE OF LIGHT - 4-WAY INTERSECTION - DAY

Zhou surveys the intersection, the area is still and quiet. The roads are all lined with dark, steel buildings that disappear into the smog. The Silver Tower looms far ahead, a constant landmark on the horizon.

ZHOU

I don't like this part of the city.
Are you sure we're going the right
way?

TANG

Straight east.

Tang points down the road across from them, it's especially dark.

ZHOU

Then we gotta find another way.

TANG

What's wrong?

Zhou points, Tang slowly follows his finger to a sign, "Keep Out! or Metal Up Your Ass!" Under the words is a crudely drawn butt with a metal pipe sticking out, below that is a deformed American flag, with the 'don't tread on me' rattler added on.

TANG (CONT'D)

Bros!? They're not supposed to be here.

ZHOU
They take up where ever they like.

TANG
But why here!

Tang opens his bag and pulls out a large drawing pad. Zhou pulls Tang behind a cement barricade.

BEHIND BARRICADE

Tang unfolds a detailed city map, with numerical markers.

He puts his finger on the drawing of the Silver Tower and traces down to a red circle he has marked.

TANG (CONT'D)
(under his breath)
Thirty-three blocks.

He then pulls out a high-tech binocular.

TANG'S BINOCULAR'S P.O.V. - SKYLINE

He scans the skyline, arriving on the Silver Tower. "2.7km" BOOP, he pushes a button to mark the spot with a green reticule. A "GPS" icon flashes.

He scans down from the tower, a distance marker and scrolls wildly, till BOOP! He marks again. "324m"

BACK TO SCENE:

On the map Tang draws a curved line from the tower to a street intersection and writes "324m".

TANG (CONT'D)
It's here, only three-hundred and twenty-four meters straight east.

Zhou lets out a SIGH.

ZHOU
Maybe if we hoof it...do you think...

An engine RUMBLING cuts him off. He looks down the street, a Jeep painted in stars and stripes is swerving around debris.

ZHOU (CONT'D)
Down!

The ENGINE grows louder as it passes by and turns down the road they pointed to.

ZHOU (CONT'D)
Forget it, road ends here. We got
enough leftovers as is.

Zhou pats his backpack.

TANG
No! We're going.

ZHOU
No? It's plans be...

Tang speaks in unison.

TANG & ZHOU
(unison)
...fore action.

Tang laughs.

TANG
The cover of night, we run in and
run out. Three-hundred and twenty-
four meters... that's about four-
hundred and fifty steps. Straight
that way. No turns. We count it
out, turn back if we don't see it.

ZHOU
What? That's too complicated. We
have what we came for.

Zhou holds up his backpack.

TANG
We run in. Run out.

ZHOU
It's a terrible plan.

TANG
We can't turn back now, not when
we're right here.

Zhou lets out a SIGH.

ZHOU
How long does it take to run that
far?

TANG
We can do it all in less than five
minutes.

Zhou leans back, closes his eyes to imagine it all.

ZHOU
You're the only person who can make
me to do something this stupid.

They fist bump.

TANG
It's going to be worth it.

Zhou LAUGHS.

ZHOU
Don't talk nothing up. If nothing
is there, we leave immediately. No
hesitating. Understand me?

TANG
Yeah...got it.

ZHOU
I'm shutting my eyes for a bit,
keep watch. Less than an hour till
nightfall.

TANG
Sure thing.

Zhou nuzzles up to the back of the barricade. Tang looks around, his eyes fall on the Silver Tower. A BUZZING sound builds, he tenses up--

INT. ACCESS TUNNEL - NIGHT

Tang stands before a metal shutter that blocks the path, a BUZZ spooks him, and the shutter starts to raise slowly.

The buzz and door lifting SOUNDS continue over--

SERIES OF SHOTS- TANG'S MEMORY OF THE SILVER TOWER

1) CLASSROOM

50 desks with built in laptop screens are all empty. A smart board with, "No More Homework!" printed on it.

2) MEDICAL LAB

Rows of blinking and BEEPING equipment, pristine under the sterile light. An X-ray machine HUMS as it rotates around Tang, a readout of his lungs on the machine's screen.

A YOUNG GIRL (10) CRIES off screen, Tang turns to look.

3) COMMUNICATION ROOM

A lone squawk box installed next to a shuttered up door. Faded orange graffiti spells out, "Let us in." Tang, wearing a neon-blue, glowing gas mask, pushes a button.

TANG

Tang Xu reporting in.

A CRACKLE and then a scratchy male VOICE.

VOICE

You did not follow your orders again.

Tang steps back, afraid.

END SERIES OF SHOTS- BACK TO SCENE

Tang jerks his gaze away from the tower, letting out a startled SQUEAK, catching Zhou's attention.

Zhou looks from Tang to the tower.

ZHOU

I knew you would like getting this close.

TANG

It scares me.

ZHOU

Sit down. Smog's thick today. No one will see us.

Tang snaps out of his daze and ducks behind the barricade and takes out two tubes of liquid food. He opens one, a pink liquid oozes out, and he hands it to Zhou.

Tang opens his and they put the tubes under their masks to SLURP it up.

EXT. CHURCH - DAY

The sun is creeping down the murky horizon behind a mid-1800's stone, French-style church that is peculiarly built among rows of glass and steel skyscrapers.

A lone figure, NOTO, 33, emerges from the smog. He is pencil thin with a zig-zag buzz cut. His mask is painted pure gold and he wears a collection of mismatching rings with many complex sigils on them.

He stops at the Church's threshold, hesitant to go in.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Noto scans the church's interior: rows of dusty pews, a podium up front, and a decaying fresco portraying Christ's resurrection give a deathly feeling.

NOTO
(shouting)
I am alone.

His nasally voice ECHOES back to him. A red dot lines up on his forehead. 4 more line up on his heart. Noto takes off his long coat and holds up his arms, and slowly turns in place.

NOTO (CONT'D)
And unarmed. Just as I was asked to
come.

The masculine voice of ANGEL ALPHA growls back through crackling speakers.

ANGEL ALPHA (O.S.)
Identify yourself.

NOTO
Whatever you need, I get. Whatever
you want done, I do. I am Noto.

ANGEL ALPHA (O.S.)
Walk slowly to the tenth aisle.

Noto walks until he sees the glow of a tablet screen.

ANGEL ALPHA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Memorize the faces on that screen.

Noto looks up to the voice coming from a balcony, far up in the rafters loom 4 halos of light.

Move in on the frightening details that gradually become clearer: the halos are UV lights hanging in bulbous helmets, high-tech pumps filter the air with an occasional angry HISS, then a white gas is expelled from the tanks strapped to their backs. Like astronauts, the suits are built to be lived in.

In front is Angel Alpha, 41, a badge on his left chest marks his rank as Major.

Noto quickly looks away, as if forbidden to lay eyes on them, he picks up the tablet and studies it.

The screen shows two portrait photos, one is YOUNGER TANG, 15, a few years younger, with clean cut hair. We recognize him by his sparkling, energetic eyes. The other is an adorable 10 year old girl, YOUNGER XIAOYU, 8, with big eyes and round cheeks, holding on her baby-fat a bit too long. Their names printed above their faces, "Tang Xu" & "Xiaoyu Luo."

NOTO
Got it.

Noto gestures to his noggin.

ANGEL ALPHA
Bring us the girl. Unharmed. She is
being kept in the walled community
west of here. Do you know it?

FADE IN:

EXT. RESIDENT'S WALL - DAY

Push in towards a makeshift wall built from scraps of metal and lines of abandoned cars. It protects a community of high-rise apartments. 8 interconnected circles are crudely painted sporadically, marking the territory.

NOTO (V.O.)
That shithole where all the old
people are bunkered up? I know it.

A central gate is the only way in. Perched up high in a birds nest is the gatekeeper WILLY, 15, a tall, wiry teenager. He carries a long pike made from a pool skimmer with a kitchen knife taped to the end. His mask is perforated by metal rods that mimic the fence surrounding him.

INT. RESIDENT'S COURTYARD - DAY

Continue movement forward towards what was once a nice community park, now just dead grass and a dry fountain. A turned over ambulance, its contents spilled on the street, blocks the turnaround. The only nice thing left is a white gazebo where KIDS in gas masks are chasing each other.

NOTO (V.O.)
I have ways in. I'll get the kid.

INT. SURVIVOR PIT - DAY

YASU, 27, tall, MMA body, with a man-bun, sits on a makeshift throne- a lazy-boy where a suit of punk, samurai armor is displayed behind. He stares intensely, into camera.

NOTO (V.O.)
But if Yasu's involved, it'll cost extra.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

A loud CRASH from the front podium, an Angel holds a military crate stacked with boxes.

ANGEL ALPHA
One's months supply of food. This is just the down-payment. Double it after you succeed. I'm sure that's enough.

Noto is shaken by the sight of it. He shuffles forward, pulled towards it, before he finds his composure.

NOTO
That is fair. We have a deal.

Noto looks back at the screen.

NOTO (CONT'D)
What about the boy?

ANGEL ALPHA
Kill him if you have to.

EXT. AVENUE OF LIGHT - 4-WAY INTERSECTION - NIGHT

Zhou and Tang rise back up from behind the barricade, the light of the Silver Tower spills across the city, even with them as far away as they are.

The street before them falls in shadow, pitch, it is a dark zone. Zhou flips on a flashlight.

ZHOU
Check yours.

Tang flips on his light.

ZHOU (CONT'D)
Shoes?

They check their shoe laces, double knotting them.

ZHOU (CONT'D)
Take a breath.

They each take a deep breath, give a quiet moment of reflection.

Zhou raises his fist, Tang gives it a bump, and they nod.

TANG
Go!

They run out from behind the barricade and across the intersection.

EXT. BRO TERRITORY ROAD - NIGHT

Tang leads, checking the map often. Zhou keeps his light on the walls around him, scanning them. He counts under his breath.

TANG & ZHOU
One... two... three.

He turns sharp, Zhou stays close behind him, pressing through the heavy smog.

JUMP CUT TO:

TANG & ZHOU (CONT'D)
Fifty... fifty-one...

They keep going, the area is darker and darker, the street lights far behind.

JUMP CUT TO:

TANG & ZHOU (CONT'D)
One-ninety-two... one-ninety-three.

The frantic run continues, their lights bouncing around wildly through the dark, smoggy street.

TANG & ZHOU (CONT'D)
Two-hundred and sixty...

They continue their frantic search, going deeper and deeper.

JUMP CUT TO:

TANG
Four-hundred and twenty! Let's search!

Tang and Zhou spread out and use their lights to scan the walls and buildings around them.

They move further and further apart.

ZHOU
We won't find it in the dark.
Backtrack it outta here.

TANG
One more minute.

Tang climbs up on an dumpster, peering between two buildings at the Silver Tower. He takes out his binoculars and scans. The GPS signal blinks red... red... green.

TANG (CONT'D)
We're in the correct location.

ZHOU
But it's not here, so we go!

Zhou takes off. Tang packs the binoculars and jumps down.

A GUTTURAL SOUND rings out from the smog ahead. Tang scans with his FLASHLIGHT.

Tang peers into the murk... something is there, a shadow.

A GROWL, this time louder. Tang takes off running, Too late, from the smog jumps HUNK, 21, a solid built Bro dressed in dazzling stars and stripes, a military-grade gas mask on. He grabs Tang and holds him in an arm lock.

TANG
Zhou!

ON ZHOU

Zhou looks back, but can only see smog.

BACK TO TANG

CARNIE, 20, in studded, spangled armor, comes out from the smog and smashes Tang in the stomach. Tang collapses. Carnie and Hunk stand together, looking like 1980's American Gladiators.

CARNIE

Your friend is the smart one. He knew better than to hang around on *Bro* turf.

TANG

We were lost, thought this was neutral territory.

HUNK

It's the *Bro*'s now.

CARNIE

He knew what he was doing. Looking for something to keep. What do you think Hunk?

HUNK

I think he's going to give it back.

TANG

I didn't steal anything.

CARNIE

Well, you're going to have to give us something.

Carnie grabs Tang's bag and opens it.

IN BAG

There are many high tech devices, flares, and tubes of food-a king's ransom in this dystopia.

BACK TO SCENE

Carni takes out the binoculars, looking at them in awe.

CARNIE (CONT'D)

Holy shit.

Hunk makes a 'what' GRUNT in response.

CARNIE (CONT'D)

He's a Silver Tongue.

Hunk inspects Tang's jacket, flipping it right-side-out to see that it is made of the same material as a solar blanket, a shiny silver, with a Pyramid and Star insignia on back.

HUNK
(gleefully)
Jet is going to...

From the smog, comes a flying boot kick to Hunk's temple, knocking him out. Zhou, like some kind of tricked out Halloween Ninja, lands in a kung fu stance.

Tang makes it one step before Carnie grabs him. He tries to wrestle free, but can't. Carnie throws Tang to the ground and holds him in place with a boot firmly on his back.

Zhou approaches, and Carnie raises his hands, making a faux BRUCE LEE SOUND.

Zhou's movements are tight and controlled. He confidently kicks Carnie's leg off Tang's back, and then lands a kick on Carnie's chest, knocking him back.

Tang stands runs, but then turns back, reaching for his bag.

Carnie leaps up and snatches Tang's jacket collar.

CARNIE
Grab their bags!

A booming voice from the smog answers.

BLAKE (O.S.)
Bros ride together!

Out emerges a tower of a man, BLAKE, 20, dressed in American flag shorts, he wears stuffed animals on each of his fists as boxing gloves, dry blood caked up from use. By his side is his short sidekick, WALTER, 19, wearing a dirt bike helmet.

Outnumbered, Tang throws Zhou his bag and slips out of the jacket.

They run full speed.

WALTER
You've picked the wrong fight
Ninja.

Walter helps Hunk stand up and the Bros pursue.

AT WALL

Tang and Zhou run just a short distance before nearly slamming into wall.

TANG
Which way is back?

HUNK (O.S.)
The Ninja is mine.

ZHOU
Just run!

Hunk leaps towards Zhou and swings a chain at him. Zhou dodges. Another swing from Hunk, he dodges again.

An opening between the Bros allows Zhou to grab Tang, shoving him through the gap. Zhou barrel rolls through it as the Bros try to close in.

BLAKE
Grab him!

Zhou, who is high on adrenaline, pulls Tang along.

WALTER
We're trying!

Tang scans around in desperation, he spots an open manhole.

TANG
The sewers, it's our only chance!

AT MANHOLE

He rushes to it and dives in.

ZHOU
No!

Tang's head pokes back out.

TANG
(mocking)
They won't follow!

Zhou stops at the hole and looks back at the charging Bros.

ZHOU
Not the sewers!

Walter lunges at Zhou, who effortlessly spins out of the way.

Zhou dives into the manhole as the other Bros arrive, but his bulging back catches him.

INT. SEWER - NIGHT

Zhou hangs in the opening, panic fills his face.

INTERCUT INT/EXT MANHOLE

Blake grabs the bag and lifts.

Inside, Zhou starts to rise up, through the hole, the angry faces of the waiting Bro's visible.

Zhou slides out of the straps and SPLASHES into a puddle.

Blake opens the bag and pulls out a box of dry food.

BLAKE

Looks like I got his dinner.

Hung takes it from him and holds it over the hole.

HUNK

How about a trade? Your food for
the Silver Tongue.

Hunk pulls out a package of chips and makes a gleeful SQUEAL.

He opens the chips and slips one under his mask, a muffled CRUNCH.

Zhou frantically scans his surroundings with his flashlight.

HUNK (O.S.) (CONT'D)

You're dead for sure down there!
Why not take your chances with us?

TANG

We should search...

Zhou HUSHES him sharply. In the silence, a low CHIRPING sound becomes clear, something alien and unsettling.

Hunk bangs his light on the metal lid, the ECHO reverberates down the sewer. The CHIRPING becomes excited.

CARNIE

They sound hungry.

The Bro's muffled LAUGHTER above.

HUNK

Coming out yet?

ZHOU
We're trapped. Tang..maybe you
should...

WALTER
C'mon Silver Tongue, we only want
to talk.

TANG
No way!
(whispers to Zhou)
There's got to be another way out,
follow me.

Tang leads as they run down the dark sewer.

HUNK
Don't let him escape.

The Bros follow the sound of their splashing footsteps.

INT. STORM DRAIN - NIGHT

Tang and Zhou come upon a slit of light. Zhou gestures for Tang to climb out first.

TANG
You should go first!

Zhou shakes his head.

ZHOU
Just go.

He boosts Tang up, who grabs the grate, pulling himself up, and squirms out.

EXT. BRO TERRITORY - STORM DRAIN - NIGHT

Tang pokes his head out and looks back and forth.

TANG (O.S.)
It's safe, come up.

A light pierces the smog and lands on his face.

CARNIE
Bingo!

Carnie emerges from the smog.

TANG
Not safe!

Tang squirms back down.

INT. STORM DRAIN - NIGHT

Tang lands hard at Zhou's feet.

TANG
Keep going!

Zhou takes off sprinting. From above comes light, strobing the tunnel in frenetic energy. Tang takes off after Zhou.

HUNK (O.S.)
That way! Block the drains!

INT. SEWER PASSAGE - NIGHT

Tang and Zhou reach the next storm drain, but the Bros are waiting, lights racing around crazily.

Hunk lets out a long HOOT, it echoes in the sewers and the CHIRPING comes closer and closer.

ZHOU
I want you to climb out next time
and make a run for it.

TANG
What about...

ZHOU
Rule number one is to survive.

TANG
What about you?

ZHOU
I will find my own way.

Tang and Zhou continue on.

At the next drain, the Bros are there too. HOOTING and HOWLING, loving of the chase.

BLAKE (O.S.)
Two cute little bunnies caught in a
trap.

WALTER (O.S.)
The Blood Bugs 'ill feast tonight.

INT. SEWER PASSAGE - FORK - NIGHT

Tang and Zhou arrive at a fork in the tunnel, Zhou stops Tang and points to the light spilling down from a drain ahead.

ZHOU
I'm not kidding, they just want information on the tower. If you cooperate...

HUNK
Time's running out.

A SPLASH, a can rolls around in the pool of the light.

HUNK (CONT'D)
Last chance to trade.

Zhou turns down the fork, his light scans wildly. A glimpse of SOMETHING STRANGE creeping on the sewer's floor.

ZHOU
I have to keep moving. Do what it takes to survive.

Zhou takes off.

Tang looks to the light above, and the dark tunnel Zhou is blindly running down. He takes a deep breath.

Tang races after Zhou.

Tang arrives at Zhou's side, and they pick up their pace. Ahead is a dim glow, highlighting the threshold of an open chamber.

TANG
An exit?

INT. MURAL CHAMBER - NIGHT

They blow through the archway, entering an open chamber where they come to a jarring halt. It's an intersection, tunnels going off in 4 directions. They look up, colored light reflecting off their goggles.

Stretching before them is a brilliant mural, graffitied with glowing, neon paint, it encompasses the walls and ceilings.

It's a map of Lost City, with a winding red line tracing past landmarks in the city.

They stand in awe, their eyes follow the line on its journey: hordes of blood bugs, an army of zombies, a vicious bear, a volcano, flocks of birds, and a rocket ship spraying electricity from its thrusters.

TANG

Amazing.

ZHOU

They hid it down here?

The red line ends on an X- a green circle of trees surrounds a domed city, on top of the dome sits a gorgeous, voluptuous girl who is in the midst of removing her mask, locks of hair tumble down, her lips visible. A blue sky above.

ZHOU (CONT'D)

Quick!

Tang opens his bag and takes out a camera. He points the lens at the mural. He looks at the screen.

BINK! The camera's flash fires. A blurry picture loads on the screen.

TANG

Too dark. I'll copy it by hand.

He takes out the notebook of maps and starts to sketch, broad, sloppy strokes.

He gets the main details, coming to the trees at the end. He points to it.

TANG (CONT'D)

Where do you think it leads?

ZHOU

It looks like... trees.

TANG

A place without the smog?!

Zhou shakes his head.

ZHOU

Keep dreaming.

A LOUD SCREECH- a Blood Bug lands on Tang's bandana from above.

It wraps its tendrils under the cloth and tries to pry the mask up underneath. Tang YELLS in terror and drops the notebook.

Zhou takes a flare from his belt and strikes it.

A brilliant red light fills the chamber and he inches the flame towards the bug.

ZHOU (CONT'D)
Hands out of the way!

Tang pulls his hands back and Zhou burns the Blood Bug- it SCREAMS and falls with a SIZZLE into a puddle.

From the surrounding tunnels comes SHRIEKING, more Blood Bugs are pouring in, following their brood member's shriek. The flare reveals hundreds coming at them.

Zhou pulls Tang up. Tang turns back and reaches for the sketch.

ZHOU (CONT'D)
Leave it!

Tang grabs the notebook, just before the Blood Bugs reach it.

Zhou and Tang run full speed out of there.

INT. SEWER TUNNEL - NIGHT

The Blood Bugs are coming in from all direction, grabbing the soles of their shoes.

Tang and Zhou press on, winded, they don't let up. A ladder comes into view up ahead.

They slide to a stop and Tang starts climbing, Zhou right behind, the Blood Bugs very close.

Zhou drops the flare, it sears a few Blood Bugs and they scatter, giving a moment for Tang to push a man hole cover out of the way.

They clamber out.