

## **“Bitter/Sweet” Synopsis**

**By**

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**Writer/Director**

Acclaimed American coffee expert Brian Chandler (Kip Pardue – “*Driven*”, “*Remember the Titans*”, “*Thirteen*”) has a seemingly perfect life. At only 31, he is the lead buyer for Emerald City Coffee, the top retailer of premium Arabica coffee in the entire world. He has a beautiful, intelligent, equally-perfect fiancé who, as an extra-added-bonus, also happens to have an incredibly wealthy father. He has the respect of colleagues and competitors alike. It’s a great life. Who can really fault the “middle-class-raised” Brian for feeling good about himself, even if this feeling occasionally borders on snobbery, especially when it comes to coffee? However, Brian’s perfect world is only one phone call away from changing forever...

Brian is in Brazil, just about to close a deal to purchase an entire harvest of one of the best Arabica coffee crops in the world when the phone call comes in. On the other end of the line is Calvert Jenkins (James Brolin – “*Catch Me if You Can*”, “*The Hunting Party*”, “*Traffic*”), the maverick owner/CEO of Emerald City. (The Richard Branson of lattes). Jenkins tells Brian he needs him to immediately to drop what he is doing and head down to Thailand. And, worse yet, Jenkins goes on to tell Brian he needs him to find the best Robusta beans in Thailand. Now, telling a coffee snob like Brian that he has to purchase Robusta beans is like telling a wine connoisseur that he has to pick up a dozen bottles of Boone’s Farm Strawberry Hill on the way home. Brian hates the idea. But, Jenkins is the boss, and Brian soon finds himself angrily booking tickets for Bangkok, Thailand...

Ticha Sungsuwan (Mamee Nakprasit – “*Butterfly Man*”, “*The Coffin*”, “*Mae Bia*”) is all business. This 28-year-old Bangkok-based public relations executive is motivated, focused, driven, and obsessed with being perfect in the business world. She is, however, a basket-case when it comes to matters of the heart. In fact, Ticha has long since given up on the prospect of ever finding love. That would just interfere with singing the praises of her lingerie, diet pill, and cosmetics clients, not to mention those of international recording superstar Tata Young (known as the “Madonna” of Thailand), who’s new album Ticha is actively promoting. Ticha’s busy world comes crashing down on her when she receives an unexpected visit from her parents Surapong (Pong-her father) and Pranee (Nee-her mother), and the *entire population* of her coffee-growing village! They need Ticha’s help...and Pong and Nee will not take “no” for an answer.

Pong and Nee have found out that Brian Chandler is coming to Thailand to look for coffee. They know that Emerald City has deep pockets. And, they know that a sale to Emerald City could get the village out from under the evil clutches of the cut-throat Mr. Kang, a coffee purchaser who, year to year, continues to lower his prices. That’s where Ticha comes in. With her long-since-abandoned coffee farming background and her current take-no-prisoners, be perfect at any cost, business acumen, Pong and Nee feel Ticha is the perfect person to guide Brian from Bangkok down to the family’s village and their coffee. Unfortunately...Ticha doesn’t want the gig. Guilt, however, is a powerful motivator in any language. Ticha reluctantly agrees...

Now, armed with her best friend, the outgoing and daring Mook (Kal Neemyothin – “*Long Khong 2*”) and Mook’s outrageous Austrian ex-pat boyfriend Werner (Spencer Garrett - “*21*”, “*Air Force One*” “*Public Enemies*”), Ticha sets out to find Brian and bring him to her old village. Only problem is...when they meet...they can’t stand each other. Brian sees Ticha as an uptight and angry woman; Ticha sees Brian as an arrogant and conceited man. They are “same sides of a different coin”. It truly is, at the beginning, a match made in Hell...

Ticha and Brian (comically) bang heads as they travel from Bangkok to the coffee fields of Krabi, in rural southern Thailand. They continue to do so as they struggle to find their way through a huge, multi-village coffee tasting competition and also, through the increasingly odd and cryptic

tasks Calvert Jenkins asks Brian to perform in their daily phone calls. Ticha and Brian must also deal with the jealousies and petty prides of Ticha's younger sister Mint (popular Thai singer Pakarami "Tong" Potrananda - "*Kwan Riam*") and her Muay Thai boxer boyfriend Komane (the multi-talented Thai actor Akara "Gof" Amarttayakul - "*Necromancer*", "*Muay Thai Chaya*"). They must also try to defend themselves against the wicked middleman Kang, who will do everything in his power to defeat the Emerald City deal and keep the village mired in poverty but firmly in his control.

Finally, Brian and Ticha must combat the conflict caused when two very unexpected arrivals take place – Brian's fiancé Amanda (Laura Sorenson – "*Bewitched*", "*The Portal*"), and CALVERT JENKINS himself. In fact, it's with the arrival of Calvert Jenkins to the village that Brian and Ticha learn that REAL REASON Calvert sent Brian to Thailand in the first place. And...it has nothing to do with finding coffee...

In addition to being a romantic comedy, "Bitter/Sweet" is also a "fish-out-of-water" tale. Brian must overcome the challenges of operating in a world he does not know; one where he is not the "coffee king". And, Ticha must overcome the disapproval of her parents when she unexpectedly begins to fall for Brian. There are many cultural and generational differences to overcome.

"Bitter/Sweet" is also about reconciliation and reconnecting. Brian must reconcile with the fact that, even though he presents a very attractive, "perfect" package, deep down he is neither happy nor satisfied. He must reconnect to the notion that "what is right" will always beat out "what is perfect". Ticha must reconcile with the fact that, even though she did everything she could to put distance between her old life on the farm and her new life in the city, her village is the only place she's ever truly felt "at home". She learns that simple fact when she reconnects with her parents, her sister, the villagers, and the dark red earth underneath her feet. And... "Bitter/Sweet" is about reconnecting with children... those that are physically ours and those that live deep inside us.

Finally, "Bitter/Sweet" is a love story, but not just a love story between two people. It is a declaration of love to the country of Thailand...its people, its places, its amazing culture and traditions, and finally, to the simple pleasures of a really good cup of coffee.

What's "right" will beat what's "perfect" any day...