

THE LEASE OF NATURE

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INT. CLASSROOM - (SOME YEARS AGO) - AFTERNOON

A CLOCK. It's hands near 3:15 and the day's liberation of TEN SECOND-GRADERS. The children sit in a semi-circle near the front of the room. A TEACHER (50's) waits for restless hearts to settle. She beckons the closest child, MAYA COPELAND. Maya rises. OWEN BARDO, end of the semi-circle, watches her.

The teacher WHISPERS a brief message. Maya returns to the circle and begins a game of "telephone". Whispers weave from ear to ear, the message lengthening. Excited giggles. Owen and Maya blush at one another. The message arrives at Owen.

TEACHER

And what is the message?

OWEN

The big brown bear with pretty eyes
jumps over the moon to find its way
home.

The child next to Owen leans in to whisper the intended coda.

OWEN (CONT'D)

And eat broccoli.

The class laughs.

TEACHER

And Maya, what did I say to you?

MAYA

(looking at Owen)
The quick brown fox.

TEACHER

That's right. We rarely end where
we begin. Much is added and lost in
between. And sometimes, if we're
not careful, our intended message
can be lost entirely.

The bell RINGS.

TEACHER (CONT'D)

And eat your broccoli, my little
ones.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY - LATER

Maya and Owen walk down a bucolic corridor. Autumn-kissed trees line the road and foliage dusts the sidewalk. He gently teases her; Maya kneels to tie Owen's shoe.

INT. COPELAND HOUSEHOLD - ATTIC - DAY - SOON AFTER

Owen and Maya huddle in front of an attic window. They fiddle with a board game neither know how to play.

MAYA

If you had a nickname for me, what would it be?

OWEN

Mmm...Koala.

MAYA

Why "Koala"?

OWEN

You remind me of a koala. Koalas are cute. How do we play?

MAYA

We lost the instructions. My dad says he'll teach me.

They gaze out the window. BELOW: Maya's father, DENNY COPELAND, paces the backyard. He stares to the horizon.

OWEN

What's your dad doing?

MAYA

I don't know.

OWEN

I think he misses your mom.

MAYA

I know he does.

OWEN

(a beat)

I wish I was older.

MAYA

Why?

OWEN

So I could understand things. Do you want to go to the clearing?

MAYA

(muted)

Sure.

EXT. MEADOW - DAY - LATER

Owen and Maya lay in tall wheatgrass, angled in opposite directions. Their heads touch. Frogs bellow; cicadas chirp.

MAYA

I wish I was older too. I can't wait.

A distant voice: "Ooowen". Owen's mother hollers him home.

OWEN

I better get back for dinner.

They stand up, dust themselves off, grab their bikes.

MAYA

Do you want to come over this weekend?

OWEN

Sure.

Owen wheels his bike away. He turns back to her.

OWEN (CONT'D)

Hey Maya?

MAYA

Yea?

OWEN

Will you be my girlfriend?

MAYA

What does that mean?

OWEN

It means I have to be sweet to you and remember all your birthdays.

MAYA

You are sweet to me Owen. Sure.

Leaves hiss; saccharine air. Owen mounts his bike and pedals off. Maya watches him go.

INT. COPELAND HOUSEHOLD - DINING ROOM - EVENING - LATER

Maya and her father sit quietly at the dinner table. An empty chair sits nearby where, one imagines, Maya's mother used to sit. A dinner plate is set for her.

DENNY COPELAND
(breaking into song)
When I was a little-bitty-baby my
Momma used to rock me in the
cradle, in them old cotton fields.

MAYA
(joining in)
It was down in Louisiana, just
about a mile from Texarkana, in
them old cotton fields back home.

They both laugh.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - THE NEXT DAY

Maya walks down the same bucolic corridor, homeward bound from school. She pauses, looking back for any sign of Owen. She scuffles a few acorns with her shoe.

INT. COPELAND HOUSEHOLD - HALLWAY/KITCHEN - EVENING - LATER

Beckoned by RUSTLING, Maya creeps through a hallway, peers around the kitchen doorway. Denny searches for a flashlight.

MAYA
Daddy?

Startled, he turns to her.

MAYA (CONT'D)
What's wrong?

DENNY COPELAND
Sit down sweetheart.

She climbs into a chair. He sits down next to her.

DENNY COPELAND (CONT'D)
You know I'm your buddy right?
(Maya nods)
As long as I'm here I'll protect
you. God as my witness. But I won't
be here forever. This world has
sharp teeth. So will you, my girl.

MAYA
You're scaring me.

DENNY COPELAND
Don't be scared. I just wish I
could give you time. Carefree time.
(MORE)

DENNY COPELAND (CONT'D)

(long beat)

Remember when Mommy left?

MAYA

Yes.

DENNY COPELAND

Remember how much we hurt?

MAYA

Yes.

DENNY COPELAND

And remember how we were strong?
How we got through it?

MAYA

(almost silent)

Yes.

EXT. SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD - DUSK - SOON AFTER

We FLOAT over the neighborhood. Flashlights flicker and sway. People comb the streets. Dogs bark. "OWEN" can be heard ad nauseam from maybe a dozen people.

EXT. COPELAND HOUSEHOLD - DUSK - SOON AFTER

Denny Copeland hustles down the front porch stairs to join neighbors passing with flashlights.

DENNY COPELAND

Maya, I'm not going to tell you again! Go inside, lock the door, and go to your room.

Maya crumples to the porch stairs.

DENNY COPELAND (CONT'D)

(softening)

Honey, you're not in trouble. But you must listen to me. Don't answer the door. Turn on some cartoons. I'll be home in a bit.

MAYA

Did something happen to Owen?

Denny saunters over and places a hand on her shoulder. He kneels and cradles her cheek. He wipes a tear with his thumb.

PARALLEL TO:

INT. HOSPITAL - OPERATING THEATER - (PRESENT) - DAY

Maya (now 40's) stands over a patient in an operating theater.

NURSE
We're losing him.

MAYA
Unclamp me.

NURSE
Doctor...

MAYA
Unclamp me now or this kid dies.

The nurse obliges. We hear vitals RAMP to a state of alarm. Maya lets out a steady breath and we hear two successive SNIPS. Vitals begin falling back to the normal range.

NURSE
(long beat)
Stabilizing.

Maya's eyes dart around in this critical moment.

NURSE (CONT'D)
Patient stable.

MAYA
Let's close him up.

CLAPPING from within the theater; perhaps from surgical team, perhaps from onlookers in the above unseen viewing area.

INT. HOSPITAL - SCRUB ROOM - DAY - SOON AFTER

Maya stands over the scrub sink. She smiles and gives a relieved sigh, nodding her head. The door opens. ZHONG JIAN (60's, Chinese, gentle) walks in.

JIAN
Kid may be president one day.

MAYA
He's twelve. Let's not doom him to that fate.

JIAN
That was a risky move.
(a beat)
(MORE)

JIAN (CONT'D)

But I couldn't have done it better myself. I mean that.

MAYA

Thank you Jian.

He turns to leave, opens the door, speaks as he exits.

JIAN

Big meeting today. Haven't lost a patient yet, Copeland. Be proud.

The door shuts behind him. Maya looks upward and sighs.

INT. HOSPITAL - LECTURE THEATER - DAY

Maya sits in a hospital lecture theater, next to Jian, surrounded by other HOSPITAL BOARD MEMBERS. LANCE (40's) paces before them and pitches his sale.

LANCE

They say to run a factory all you need is a man and a dog. A man to feed the dog, and the dog to bite the man should he touch anything. A charming notion. A *false* notion. Your factory, as we'll call it, is the beating heart of the American medical vanguard. One that understands the *human element*. Yet, to achieve new heights in mankind's battle with death, you will need the tools. I'm here to give you the skeleton key to the future.

Jian smirks to Maya.

LANCE (CONT'D)

Imagine, if you will, a machine so advanced it prints living bone marrow, living bone, living muscle. It's just a prick of the finger. A skin graft for a burn victim...it's just a swab of the mouth. Welcome to the "New Industrial Revolution". Fabricorps Industries presents to you...*the Panopolis*.

Lance whisks a large canvas from a SLEEK MACHINE. A compartment aligns at its true center. He dons latex gloves, retrieves a printed heart, faces everyone.

LANCE (CONT'D)

Ladies and gentlemen. I give you nothing less than my own heart. If God were to strike me down for my vanity, I'd have a fighting chance.

Maya and Jian catch each other's glance.

LANCE (CONT'D)

This magic will soon populate every American hospital. I'd like you to be written to history first, alongside me. This is about changing the world and I'm here to allow you to do just that.

INT. HOSPITAL - MAYA'S OFFICE - DAY - SOON AFTER

A CHECK for \$5,000,000 spits out of a laser-jet printer. Maya sits behind her desk, typing into a ledger. Lance eyes her.

LANCE

How about some coffee?

MAYA

Today isn't good.

LANCE

No, how about you get me, your guest, some coffee. A courtesy.

MAYA

We're almost done here.

LANCE

Why'd you even ask for me Maya?

MAYA

Because the people I needed to convince are receptive to pageantry. And once you open your mouth you believe whatever leaves it, Lance.

Lance rises, closes the door, sits at Maya's desk edge.

LANCE

There was a time when you would have moved mountains for us. What happened along the way, I still wonder...

He slides the check towards himself, caressing her hand.

LANCE (CONT'D)

Could be the same reason you've
watched the less qualified lap you
time and again as the years tick
onward. Waiting for the one who's
not coming home. Loyal to a fault.
I like that.

Maya feigns interest. Lance takes the opportunity and moves
in closer. With previously unseen shears, Maya cuts his tie.

MAYA

Get out of my office.

Jian knocks on the door and enters.

JIAN

Are we good?

Lance stands upright and straightens his coat. The previously
sharp huckster appears childlike with his castrated tie.

LANCE

You'll take delivery on Monday.
Please have your old machine ready.

Lance sneaks by Jian and exits. Maya trashes Lance's tie.

JIAN

Optimistic to assume we can wash
our hands of him?

MAYA

Optimistic.

JIAN

A drink to the future?

MAYA

God, yes.

INT. TRIAD CLUBHOUSE - BATHROOM - NIGHT

ZHONG DAIYU (40, Jian's sister) stands before a mirror. She
sighs. Beads of water dot her face. She dips her face into
the water-filled sink basin.

INT. TRIAD CLUBHOUSE - BASEMENT DEN - NIGHT - SOON AFTER

Cardinal red light bathes the room. HONG, the SUMMIT MASTER,
presides over a Triad crime-family initiation.

TWO MEN with CARBINE RIFLES flank a central long table that hosts an ornate chalice and empty bowl.

TWO MORE with crossed DAO SABERS create a symbolic gateway in front.

SEVEN INDUCTEES (mostly Chinese, some multinational) kneel. DAIYU, the lone female, reads OATHS along with the others.

INDUCTEES

I shall never betray my brothers,
for I will die one-thousand deaths.
I must never reveal the identity of
my brothers, or may I die one-
thousand deaths...

HONG takes the chalice and a knife, approaches the inductees. Each inductee offers an open palm, into which Hong CUTS a TRIANGLE. Their blood trickles into the chalice.

INDUCTEES (CONT'D)

I shall never disclose the secrets
of this family, or may I die one-
thousand deaths. I shall never lie
to my brothers, or may I die one-
thousand deaths...

We arrive at the INDUCTEE before Daiyu. He offers his palm. HONG inches the knife forward and frowns. With a swift motion, Hong SLITS the inductee's throat. A standing Triad shoulders his carbine rifle, grabs the inductee's legs and drags him to another room. Daiyu offers her palm and Hong slits it. She squeezes her hand. Her blood trickles into the chalice; a few drops speckle her pants. She doesn't notice.

INDUCTEES (CONT'D)

If I have supplied falsities for
the purpose of joining the family,
may I die one-thousand deaths, at
the hands of my brothers.

HONG smiles at Daiyu.

INT. TRIAD CLUBHOUSE - BASEMENT DEN - NIGHT - SOON AFTER

Daiyu awaits passage through the threshold. She's the last.

HONG

Daiyu. Enforcer.

She steps forward and accepts the chalice from Hong. Daiyu takes a sip, crosses beneath the swords, places her oath paper into the now-aflame bowl. Hong returns to the table.

HONG (CONT'D)

Having passed mind, body, and
spirit through the gate, you are
now born again into the Zûfû
Family. The Golden Mirror's family.

(pause)

Now get to work.

INT. TRIAD CLUBHOUSE - BASEMENT DEN - NIGHT - SOON AFTER

Inductees stand in even distribution across the table. Raw, weapon-like materials now cover it. An assembly line. Triads press powder and lead into STRANGE RECESSED CASINGS, meant for no ordinary gun. Triads with rifles circle the table. Daiyu stamps lead deep into these casings. The "family crest", an ouroboros, adorns each lead slug.

INT. BAR - NIGHT - THAT MOMENT

Maya and Jian sit at a sparsely populated bar. Live jazz coils through the dimly lit room.

MAYA

It should feel like victory. All I
feel is pressure.

JIAN

Why do you say that?

MAYA

(tipsy, punctuating)
Five, little, million, reasons.

JIAN

Please now. The board was committed
to the purchase long before...
whatever you call that. *The great
Lance Diedrich's* demonstration. You
did great.

(leans in)

On your birthday no less.

MAYA

(surprised)

Well done. I spend much energy
suppressing that information.

JIAN

Happy birthday. I mean it. As
someone I view as a surrogate--

MAYA

Sister?

JIAN

Pain in the ass, I was going to say.

MAYA

(smirks)

You know, all this time together...

JIAN

Don't get maudlin on me. A birthday's no rightful excuse.

MAYA

Jian let me finish!

JIAN

That's *Dr.* to you.

MAYA

All this time together and I don't even know your wife's name.

JIAN

I divorce the sanctuary of home from the rest of this unforgiving world. What's your excuse?

MAYA

I never miss a good chance to shut up.

JIAN

(long beat)

Her name is Evelyn. My true north.

MAYA

I don't know how you do it. Raise children and navigate our world.

JIAN

We give them the best of us and hope they never come to know the worst. Even now... for them I'd walk away in a heartbeat.

MAYA

Always thought I'd have some by now. Boys. I couldn't watch a young girl's heart break its first time.

JIAN

Everyone's heart breaks the same.

MAYA

(unconvinced)

Maybe.

JIAN

Can I ask you something?

(Maya nods)

The job in Cambridge. Why'd you turn it down. Triple pay. True oversight. No one enjoys my company this much.

MAYA

I made a promise long ago. And here I stay.

JIAN

For a person.

MAYA

A person, yes.

JIAN

Perhaps it's time this person sets you free. Life awaits.

MAYA

It was a promise to myself.

JIAN

I do know this. We all have our void, Copeland. You cannot fill it with virtue and receive happiness.

(a beat; pivots)

But, if you decide to take on the burden one day, the *endless* burden of child rearing, you'll wonder how you ever took a breath without them. No future breath will feel the same. Life's greatest chapter.

MAYA

Beautiful.

JIAN

Sappy. But true nonetheless.

(playfully)

The little bastards.

INT. MAYA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT - LATER

Maya, tipsy, labors with her door. She enters and places a few items on a hallway bench. We DOLLY BACK to reveal a large floral arrangement sitting on a living room table, partly illuminated. Maya draws closer and, seeing it, recoils.

OWEN

Hey you.

Startled, Maya turns to see Owen (40's, alive) sitting in a corner. His eyes, though burdened, brim with life.

MAYA

Owen?

OWEN

Am I in the right place?

MAYA

Oh my God!

OWEN

Happy birthday, Koala.

He rises and they slowly approach one another.

MAYA

You haven't called me that in ages.

OWEN

Not to your face, at least.

She traces her fingers over his face. Owen kisses her hand.

OWEN (CONT'D)

So tell me about your year--

Maya doesn't let him finish. She lands a passionate kiss.

EXT. TRIAD CLUBHOUSE - NIGHT - LATER

Daiyu studies her hand wound. It weeps blood. Nearby a ring of three Triads (PAVEL: Russian, ADRIEN: American, HONG: Chinese - all 40's) smoke cigarettes and joke under the cover of night. Daiyu stands a few paces away smoking her own.

PAVEL

(whistles)

New blood. Come closer.

A beat. She approaches their circle.

PAVEL (CONT'D)
How's it feel 'Enforcer'? Playing
with the big boys now.

DAIYU
I'll tell you when I meet them.

ADRIEN
Want to meet my big boy?

Daiyu slaps the cigarette out of his mouth. TENSE BEAT, then Pavel and Hong laugh at the gall.

ADRIEN (CONT'D)
That's a ticket to a concrete bath,
new blood. I was joking.

Daiyu takes a cigarette from her pack, places it into his lips, lights it, pats his cheek.

DAIYU
Me too.

PAVEL
You're nervous.

DAIYU
(shrugs)
Kind of liked that guy you iced.

PAVEL
He was a plant. Accountant with the
Dixie Mafia out of Tuscaloosa. *Tus-*
ca-loosa. Don't you love these
American cities.

DAIYU
Always liked Savannah.

HONG
You're alright Daiyu.

ADRIEN
How'd you get this far anyway?

DAIYU
By keeping my mouth shut.

PAVEL
No. Boss tells me you pulled your
weight in Sydney. I've heard the
stories. Hard to impress the boss.

ADRIEN

Tough group down un-dah. They don't fuck around.

Daiyu nods.

PAVEL

You're with us now. We play hard, but don't be fooled. We've got your back, understand?

HONG

Always wanted a little sister.

WE HEAR THE WHOOP of a SIREN. The four snap focus to it. PAVEL, HONG, and ADRIEN reach into their jackets. Maybe posturing, maybe true armament. SPECIAL AGENT FREDDIE GAUMONT, (50's, African-American) exits his car.

PAVEL

Fuck.
(louder)
What do you want?

S.A. FREDDIE GAUMONT

That's a loaded question.

ADRIEN

Go away. Private property.

Gaumont saunters toward the group, speaking as he goes. He affectedly lurches over the property line.

S.A. FREDDIE GAUMONT

Frankly, I don't have anywhere to go since you sad-sacks turned me into a walking cliché. Empty house with a grandfather clock that ticks too loud, reminding me of every failure as a husband. I thought maybe we could hangout. Maybe y'all could point me in the direction of a stiff whiskey. Moonshine, even better. Not so talkative are we?

As he nears the group he automatically flashes an FBI badge.

PAVEL

(mocking)
Are you a cop? You have to tell me if you're a cop.

The other Triads share a sinister smile.

S.A. FREDDIE GAUMONT

(smirks)

Bunch of boys, and girls it seems,
feigning Cosa Nostra like a fuckin'
sandbox playdate. Untraceable
printed weaponry. Carfentanyl, 2C-
I, N-BOM--every analogue under the
sun. Gone are the days of busting
meth-and-pistol-pushing
hillbillies, whose 'fuck you' to my
government almost made me smile.
Man I miss those hillbillies...but
I digress.

No one moves. Gaumont whistles.

S.A. FREDDIE GAUMONT (CONT'D)

Never thought I'd see the day when
Triads allowed white faces. Now a
woman...I must say, I'm impressed
with this show of progress.
Congratulations, sugar.

Pavel nudges Daiyu back.

PAVEL

Get lost before you make things
worse on yourself.

S.A. FREDDIE GAUMONT

I'll keep it simple.

(addressing Daiyu)

As an inductee, you're in the game
now. You are a soldier in
opposition to everything I hold
dear in my tired, fucked-up,
beautiful country. The rules of
engagement are different now.

(addressing individually)

Are we clear, Pavel of Moscow? And
you, Adrien of Los Alamos, and you,
you must be...Hong from Shangrao?

HONG

I'm from Savannah, asshole. Don't
know what you're talking about.

DAIYU

(in Mandarin)

Who is this pig?

S.A. FREDDIE GAUMONT
(in Mandarin)
Watch that language or we'll get to
know each other real quick.

Daiyu spits directly in his face. Shocked, Gaumont forcefully SPINS her around, SLAPS on handcuffs. The surprised Triads cheer support as Freddie leads Daiyu to his car.

INT. CAR - NIGHT - SOON AFTER

Freddie drives, occasionally glancing in the rearview mirror. Daiyu sits in the back seat. Moments of silence.

S.A. FREDDIE GAUMONT
Did you have to spit in my face,
Dee?

DAIYU
It occurred to me I might not get
another opportunity.

For a second it appears he might be offended, until he CACKLES uproariously and at length. Daiyu smiles.

INT. MAYA'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - LATER

Maya and Owen lay in bed partially covered by a duvet. She traces scars along his oblique up to his neck.

MAYA
Your scars are fading.

OWEN
He died last year. Heart attack in
the prison commissary.

MAYA
I know. Let's not pollute tonight
with the past.
(pivoting)
So a breeze could knock you over.
What'd you do with my Owen? I
thought the military fed well.

OWEN
If you maintain an appetite.

MAYA
The flowers are perfect.

OWEN

Who says they're for you?

She kisses his cheek.

OWEN (CONT'D)

I got you something else. Under
your pillow.

Maya searches and pulls out a sealed birthday card.

MAYA

(smirking)

Assumed we'd end up in bed?

OWEN

Wasn't wrong.

She opens the card. Dozens of names and well wishes adorn it.

MAYA

What is this?

OWEN

Everyone I met this past year. My
way of saying I spoke of you often.

MAYA

That's the loveliest thing.

She kisses his hand. A beat.

OWEN

Maya I'm so sorry about your Dad.

Owen hugs her close. Maya sighs.

MAYA

I held his hand. He wouldn't go
until I said I'd be alright. I
smiled and I lied. And now I walk
by that hospital room every day.

OWEN

Last I saw him he told me "world's
got enough hard men with soft
hands. Quit the life and make me a
granddaughter". Made himself laugh.
That musical laugh. You can prepare
for most things, but...not this.

(subdued)

I'm glad you talked me out of kids.

MAYA

Why?

OWEN

To save them this pain.

(Maya hides disappointment)

Listen, I thought maybe I'd stick around this time. Say no, but--

MAYA

I'd like that.

OWEN

OK then.

MAYA

You said you saw my father. When?

OWEN

He was the first to sign your card.

She bolts up and retrieves her card from the night stand, then searches out his final message: "*The world has sharp teeth, but so do you my love. Always with you, in them old cotton fields. Happy birthday - Dad*". She breaks out crying in a mix of grief and elation; a gift of a few stolen words.

MAYA

(muted)

Thank you. Thank you.

OWEN

Always, Koala.

Maya hugs Owen tight. She plants kisses all over his face, which grow passionate. SUDDENLY Owen begins MOANING and SHAKING violently. Blood trickles from his nostril.

MAYA

Owen!

OWEN

N-no...h-hospital. Let..me...go.

INT. FBI FIELD OFFICE - GAUMONT'S OFFICE - NIGHT - LATER

On a cluttered desk a customized name plate reads "S.A. Freddie Gaumont". Daiyu sits across from Gaumont. He eyes her sliced hand. He produces tumblers and pours a nice Scotch.

DAIYU

Did you have to be so...transparent, Freddie?

S.A. FREDDIE GAUMONT
Provocation will make them
reckless. Let's not hit the panic
button. Jesus Dee, wrap that hand.

Gaumont removes a handkerchief from his blazer pocket and passes it to her. We clearly make out his monogrammed initials 'FG'. Daiyu wraps her hand.

DAIYU
I could've used a heads up.

S.A. FREDDIE GAUMONT
Dee, that's--

DAIYU
Daiyu tonight.

S.A. FREDDIE GAUMONT
Daiyu, tonight was the night.
They'll want to know what you said
when I brought you in. Could be
tomorrow, could be weeks from now,
but the '489' is going to want to
meet you. Probe you. Any intel?

DAIYU
They call him The Golden Mirror.

This registers with Gaumont. He tries to hide it.

DAIYU (CONT'D)
Possesses a...*sanguinary*
reputation. The muscle speak of him
with reverence and dread. Word is
he'd retired to a monastery before
agreeing to come back. Makes you
wonder...
(testing Freddie)
...if he even exists.

Gaumont says nothing.

DAIYU (CONT'D)
Thanks to your stunt we'll find out
soon. I'll set the hook. I promise.

S.A. FREDDIE GAUMONT
You gone over your cover lately?
He'll know your fake life.

DAIYU

(disinterested)

Born in Fairbanks, Alaska to a mother I never knew. Adopted at five weeks by a Mr. and Mrs. Luther and Wendy Coleman. No siblings. Happy childhood along the Yukon River but I fell out of step early. Four years at Hiland Mountain for assault and battery. Upon release I chased love to Australia and, wanting for work, fell in with the Zûfû Dragonhead. Rest is history.

(long beat)

What. You want my fake first love? Fake social security number?

(facetiously)

I work deep cover for the Bureau and only drink fine Scotch. Or should I leave that part out?

S.A. FREDDIE GAUMONT

Leave that part out.

DAIYU

OK. Don't mention the Scotch.

S.A. FREDDIE GAUMONT

Good to see there's still piss in your blood. I'm going to make you an offer, Dee. And I don't do this. Ever. Look, these men are going to put the press on you hard.

DAIYU

Freddie I can take care--

S.A. FREDDIE GAUMONT

(interrupting)

It's Agent Gaumont tonight, and it's my turn to talk. They're going to press you hard. If you want out, I will get you out. We'll run you through the system, keep you in county a few weeks, then get you out of town. The things you saw in Sydney, they don't compare. These men find leisure in the grotesque. As your boss I suggest these years shouldn't be in vain. As your friend, I suggest you take my offer and flee this shitty life. It's zero hour. The choice is yours.

DAIYU

Are you done?

(he nods)

I'm not turning back, Freddie.

S.A. FREDDIE GAUMONT

(long beat)

Alright then. The plan's changed.

DAIYU

What?

S.A. FREDDIE GAUMONT

What do you know about the Red Market?

DAIYU

American Zûfù Triads don't deal in organs. I'd know.

Gaumont senses she's not telling the truth.

S.A. FREDDIE GAUMONT

Would you?

INT. JIAN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - EARLY MORNING

An upscale traditional neo-siheyuan home with Western trappings. Jian sports a robe, reads a newspaper on a plush couch. FOOTSTEPS PATTER overhead and travel down a staircase.

JIAN'S DAUGHTER

Papa!

His young SON and DAUGHTER leap into his arms and squeal.

JIAN

Good morning lovelies. Did you have a good day at school yesterday?

JIAN'S SON

Yes Papa.

JIAN'S DAUGHTER

No, Papa.

JIAN

(in Mandarin)

Why no, bumblebee?

JIAN'S DAUGHTER

(in English)

Because if he had a good day at school I don't want to have a good day at school.

JIAN'S SON

Hush!

He swats at his sister. Jian tickles both children.

JIAN

(smiling)

You two will be the end of me.

EVELYN, Jian's wife, enters, kisses his forehead, places a fresh cup of coffee nearby.

INT. MAYA'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - MORNING - LATER

Early morning light infiltrates the room. Maya sits next to the bed, watching Owen. Fury and heartbreak. Owen, grimacing, rustles awake. Maya shakes a medicine bottle she's found.

MAYA

How long?

OWEN

(raspy)

Months, maybe. I don't know. I'm still clean, for what it's worth.

MAYA

No. How long have you known.

No response.

MAYA (CONT'D)

You don't get to die, Goddamnit!
Did you know when I last saw you?

OWEN

I couldn't bring myself to tell you. I've fought this heart for two years. I've tried everything.

MAYA

You told me you were on the battlefield.

OWEN

I lied.

MAYA

That's the one thing we don't do.

OWEN

Maya.

MAYA

I could have done something.

OWEN

Maya.

MAYA

I still can. I can still save you.

OWEN

Maya! I don't want saving. I'm tired. My only regret--

MAYA

No...

OWEN

My only regret is not giving you my all years ago. I took the best thing about this life for granted.

MAYA

How can you give up? There are options.

OWEN

I'm done with doctors.

MAYA

I said options.

OWEN

I accept this. Allow me that.

MAYA

Oh God. I thought there was time. I don't want you to go.

OWEN

I love you. More than anything.

MAYA

You've never said that to me.

OWEN

Of course I have.

MAYA
Not like that.

INT. HOSPITAL - LABORATORY - A FEW DAYS LATER - MORNING

A watch face reads 7:59. Jian removes his watch and adorns two surgical gloves. The 3-D printer sits in deep focus.

INT. HOSPITAL - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Maya stands at the entrance to the laboratory. She wears scrubs and a surgical mask. Mind preoccupied. She collects herself, straightens her spine, opens the door.

INT. HOSPITAL - LABORATORY - CONTINUOUS

Maya enters. Jian turns to her.

JIAN
Good morning Dr. Copeland.

MAYA
Good morning doctor.

JIAN
I've loaded your profile. I'm afraid this heart will need your stubbornness.

Jian motions towards a computer monitor. A 3-D schematic of Maya's heart emanates in neon.

JIAN (CONT'D)
We'll start with a simple closed circuit system. Priority on organ self-governance with recombinant carbon-morph circuitry to follow. Given a successful first trial, we will focus on layered vasoconstrictors within artificial muscle. Maya? You with me?

MAYA
Oh. I...just...we're finally ready.

JIAN
Birthday's over, Dr. Copeland. I need you with me.

MAYA
Of course.

JIAN

Peers say it will take twenty years. Detractors claim it impossible. Let's not prove them wrong, but rather ourselves vindicated. Please prepare the stem-cell chain feed.

INT. HOSPITAL - LABORATORY - MONTAGE - DAY

Through a window we see the 3-D printer's complex grid arms adding layer after layer to a nascent form.

INT. TRIAD CLUBHOUSE - MONTAGE - DAY - DAYS LATER

Daiyu, Hong, Pavel and Adrien retrieve recessed bullet casings from their own industrial 3-D printer. In an assembly line they stamp lead slugs into casings. Though now, at the end of the table, we see for what they're intended: an incomplete, intimidating PRINTED COMPOSITE WEAPON.

INT. HOSPITAL - LABORATORY - MONTAGE - DAY - DAYS LATER

Maya's gloved hands feed a delicate, rope-like chain of stem-cell composite into one of the Panopolis feed chambers.

INT. TRIAD CLUBHOUSE - MONTAGE - DAY - DAYS LATER

Daiyu, Hong, Pavel and Adrien snap pieces of printed weapons together. They work feverishly.

EXT. MAYA'S APARTMENT - PATIO - MONTAGE - DUSK

Owen watches the sunset with pained eyes. Maya dips into frame and kisses him on the cheek. He brightens.

INT. HOSPITAL - LABORATORY - MONTAGE - DAY

From WITHIN the Panopolis we see grid arms above us moving with constructive speed. Nearby Jian solders a circuit board.

INT. TRIAD CLUBHOUSE - MONTAGE - NIGHT

Daiyu smokes a cigarette, deep in thought. Pavel, Adrien, and Hong enter from a deeper interior RED DOOR. They wear surgical masks, gloves and bloodied scrubs. She looks to them. Pavel waves her off as if to say, "you can go now".

INT. MAYA'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - MONTAGE - NIGHT

Maya and Owen make love, with care and passion.

INT. HOSPITAL - LABORATORY - MONTAGE - DAY

An artificial heart pulses and constricts. Dyed saline pulses through a plasticine, simulated closed-circuit vascular system. With microscopic surgical loupes, Maya and Jian study a micro-board of carbon morph circuitry, meant for the heart.

INT. TRIAD CLUBHOUSE - MONTAGE - DAY

Daiyu FIRES a PRINTED WEAPON at a target, tearing it to shreds. From above, a SILHOUETTED FIGURE watches. It must be THE GOLDEN MIRROR.

EXT. JIAN'S HOUSE - BACKYARD - MONTAGE - NIGHT

Jian, Evelyn, and their children lay on grass as he spins stories, gesticulating towards the stars above.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

Owen and Maya walk down the country road from their youth.

MAYA

Where are we going?

OWEN

The only place I hear you can't go again.

Maya halts.

MAYA

Owen I've got to admit you to a hospital, it's time. It's my duty.

OWEN

Can't we just enjoy this?

MAYA

I'm trying to understand. I am. But listen, I can help, if you just--
let me. I'm onto something big.

OWEN

(nodding)
I watch the news.

MAYA

Then you'd know just how real this is. Don't you want to try? To live? To be happy?

OWEN

That crooked smile is all I need. What's a man gotta do to see it.

MAYA

(skulking)
You're a coward.

OWEN

Ask yourself who this is for, Maya.

MAYA

It's for me Owen! My whole fucking life I've waited for you! I've killed chance after chance of happiness while you searched the world for that stolen piece of you!

He backs off a bit.

OWEN

If you're saying I don't deserve you, then today we agree. But I go out on my terms. Not in a prison.

MAYA

A hospital. Where I can give you a chance.

OWEN

A prison.

MAYA

(impatient)
What did you want to show me.

Owen turns away from her and kneels.

OWEN

(hurt)
Remember that little sapling we marked up with your daddy's knife? Cut our heights deep into it?

A tall, gnarled pine tree towers over them.

MAYA

I...barely.

OWEN

Look just above the largest branch,
about twenty feet up. I had hoped
to bring you here down the line.

The tiny cuts have become larger flaws in the tree over time.

MAYA

(surprised)

Owen.

OWEN

I just wanted to show you how tall
we've grown.

INT. HOSPITAL - LABORATORY - SOME DAYS LATER - DAY

Maya and Jian circulate around the laboratory in mid-
argument. The Panopolis machine looms heavy in the frame.

JIAN

Haste has never been a weakness of
yours. What's this really about?

MAYA

It's about...it's about being bold
in a moment required. If we don't
act now we'll lose our momentum.

JIAN

I'll grant you Mrs. Bloom is a
decent candidate. But--

MAYA

Zero present contraindications.

JIAN

But...if we lose a life, it's over.

MAYA

I know this will work. I've never
been so sure. How long does she
have? Weeks? A month?

JIAN

Her life is not ours to wager.
Listen to yourself Maya.

MAYA

And if we can give her twenty
years, what's that?

JIAN

We took an oath. I'm not placing
our ambitions over a life.

A beat. Jian studies her.

JIAN (CONT'D)

That man I saw you with, at the
commissary. He's dying isn't he.

MAYA

Yes.

JIAN

I'm sorry. But speaking candidly I
should remove you. You're clouded.

MAYA

Do what you must Jian.

JIAN

(capitulating)

I'm not going to fire you.
Technically there's nothing
preventing the patient from taking
the risk. Ethically, our advocacy
is unfathomable.

MAYA

This is the moment. We're ready.

Long beat. Jian sighs.

JIAN

Compassionate use guidelines will
allow it. If the patient wants
this, I will make you head of
program. But for the record, this
is a terrible idea. You'll answer
for your choices. I believe in you,
Maya. I just hope you're right.

INT. TRIAD CLUBHOUSE - ANTECHAMBER - NIGHT

Daiyu and Adrien sit in chairs against a wall. They wait in
the antechamber to THE GOLDEN MIRROR's office. Strangely,
side tables host timely magazines and reading ephemera.

ADRIEN

Nervous?

(Daiyu shakes her head)

You will be. This is the end of the
road for us.

INT. TRIAD CLUBHOUSE - CHAMBER - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

We SLOWLY DOLLY back on a seated man's face. This is THE GOLDEN MIRROR (60's, Chinese). His eyes are closed and headphones rest upon his crown. We hear HEARTBEATS coursing through the headphone receivers, source unknown. It's as if he's locked in an odd form of meditation. He removes them.

THE GOLDEN MIRROR
I accept your terms.

INT. TRIAD CLUBHOUSE - ANTECHAMBER - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Adrien leans in closer to Daiyu. He continues baiting her.

ADRIEN
You've heard the stories. The evil temper. I once spilled a water--a *fucking water* on his desk, and he damn near choked me to death. I'm American. He doesn't like me. And you're a woman. We're done for. Do you think death will be painful?

DAIYU
I'll go first and let you know.

ADRIEN
(smirks)
Meeting him cements you as family. Don't be nervous. Be respectful, but don't be nervous.

DAIYU
I'm not.

She is. The door to The Golden Mirror's chamber opens. Out walks LANCE, the corporate huckster, who carries a briefcase. Daiyu and he lock eyes without recognition. He breezes by and exits. Her focus lingers on him for a beat.

INT. TRIAD CLUBHOUSE - CHAMBER - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Daiyu enters. Displays of regality pepper the walls. A fireplace ROARS and CRACKLES. Shadows bandy about the walls, her face, and that of The Golden Mirror, who sits behind a polished desk. An open folder sits on the table before him.

THE GOLDEN MIRROR
Please sit down.

DAIYU

It's an honor to know the face of our leader. How may I address you?

THE GOLDEN MIRROR

We're on a first name basis. My first name is 'sir'. Deandra, aka Daiyu, Coleman. Born in Fairbanks, Alaska. Adopted only child of Luther and Wendy Coleman. Social security 991-04-3367. Wayward youth of petty crime and failed reformation. Four years served at Hiland Mountain Penitentiary for Women. And so forth.

DAIYU

That's correct.

THE GOLDEN MIRROR

Impressed?

DAIYU

With due respect, sir, most of that is public record.

THE GOLDEN MIRROR

And the birthmark on your inner thigh, the one that looks like a butterfly. Is that public record?

She's startled. The Golden Mirror fires up a fine cigar.

THE GOLDEN MIRROR (CONT'D)

(probing)

This is a \$1000 Gurkha. You'll forgive me if I don't waste another on a woman's constitution.

DAIYU

I prefer cigarettes. I have no need for overcompensation.

Long, tense beat. The Golden Mirror cackles, impressed.

THE GOLDEN MIRROR

(leans in)

If you speak to me in that manner when I haven't brought it upon myself, I'll pull your spine through your navel. Understand?

He starts laughing again. Daiyu stays cool, with effort.

THE GOLDEN MIRROR (CONT'D)

I must wonder why a woman with your charming sense of humor courts an environment most would label "the lower depths".

DAIYU

My father's heroes were outlaws.
And family is everything to me.

THE GOLDEN MIRROR

And your native tongue?

DAIYU

(in Mandarin)

Heritage is important. I taught myself. Shall we speak it?

THE GOLDEN MIRROR

No.

DAIYU

Very well.

THE GOLDEN MIRROR

You made quite a name for yourself in Sydney. I've had my eye on you.

DAIYU

I'm flattered.

THE GOLDEN MIRROR

Allow flattery into your life at your own peril. You were Dragonhead Vinny Lao's primary woman. I hear he met a violent end. What separated your fate from his?

DAIYU

I don't betray. And I don't frequent brothels past midnight.

THE GOLDEN MIRROR

Now you're my soldier--*my property*--thousands of miles removed from that life. What's it like to go from queen to pauper?

DAIYU

An improvement.

THE GOLDEN MIRROR

(amused)

And what of your friend, Special Agent Frederic Gaumont? You are friends, no?

DAIYU

First time I'd laid eyes on him. I spit in his *hak gwai* face and...he didn't like that. Do you think someone tipped him off?

THE GOLDEN MIRROR

You wouldn't be here if I didn't.

DAIYU

You're convinced it's me?

THE GOLDEN MIRROR

You wouldn't be here if I was.

(sighs)

What would you say to this worm?

DAIYU

It's not what I'd say, but do.

THE GOLDEN MIRROR

(studies her)

You're special Daiyu.

DAIYU

Why?

THE GOLDEN MIRROR

Blood type AB-. Very rare. What did you tell agent Gaumont?

DAIYU

Nothing.

The Golden Mirror pulls a large knife from a drawer.

THE GOLDEN MIRROR

(punctuating with knife)

What. Did. You. Tell. Him.

DAIYU

I told him to go fuck himself.

THE GOLDEN MIRROR

From the moment you walked through his field office doors, until the moment you called a cab at 6:52 A.M...simply, 'go fuck yourself'?

DAIYU

You could have sent a car.

THE GOLDEN MIRROR

(almost smiles)

You're lying to me Deandra.

DAIYU

About what?

THE GOLDEN MIRROR

About your entire life, I think.
And if I find this to be true, I'm
going to remove your heart and
auction it wholesale. If you tell
me everything, *everything*, you'll
leave with a scar and your life.
Are you working for the FBI?

DAIYU

I have loyalty to one family, sir.
But let me make something clear. I
don't like being called a liar. By
you...especially by him. I brought
you something from our enemy.

Daiyu pulls Gaumont's handkerchief from a pocket. The Golden Mirror observes its dried blood and monogrammed initials.

THE GOLDEN MIRROR

Place that on your hand until I
tell you otherwise. A memento of
where you need not go.

She nods then ties it around her hand. He rises with the knife, walks to the chamber door, opens it.

THE GOLDEN MIRROR (CONT'D)

Come in. Sit down.

Adrien enters, noticing the Golden Mirror's knife. He sits down in the chair next to Daiyu, steals a glance at her.

ADRIEN

Nice fire, boss.

THE GOLDEN MIRROR

Don't speak.

The Golden Mirror stands between the two chairs. The fireplace CRACKLES and POPS. He gesticulates with the knife.

THE GOLDEN MIRROR (CONT'D)
I run a business. Nothing in
business is personal. Problem is,
this is a *family* business.

Adrien looks between his boss and Daiyu.

THE GOLDEN MIRROR (CONT'D)
Can you imagine my consternation
when confronted with betrayal, in
my *family*?

ADRIEN
(nervous)
Is the heat watching us?

THE GOLDEN MIRROR
Someone is certainly watching.

The Golden Mirror moves to his desk. He drops the knife,
picks up his desktop phone. He walks back behind the two.

ADRIEN
(suspicious, studies Daiyu)
Boss I would never...

THE GOLDEN MIRROR
The FBI put surveillance on the
load point for our carfentanyl
shipment to the Templar cartel.

ADRIEN
I'm no snitch.

THE GOLDEN MIRROR
After Daiyu was released from
custody I instructed you to tell
her and *only* her about this
shipment. Did you do as I asked?

ADRIEN
Yes, of course. I don't understand.

Adrien looks to Daiyu, pain in his eyes. He knows.

THE GOLDEN MIRROR
I've had eyes and ears on Daiyu.
More importantly, I haven't on you.
The shipment never existed.

ADRIEN
She--

The Golden Mirror wraps the telephone cord tightly around Adrien's neck and SQUEEZES with TERRIFYING INTENSITY. Adrien GURGLES. Sounds of UNNATURAL TORQUE against FLESH AND BONE as The Golden Mirror tightens the cord. Further and further. It seems to go on too long. Unsettling POPPING while Adrien GRUNTS, STRUGGLES, SLOWS, then STOPS altogether with a CRACK.

The fireplace SNAPS and POPS amidst sudden quiet. The Golden Mirror walks around the desk, sets down the phone, sits. Breathing heavily and sweating lightly, he looks into the large mirror behind his desk and delicately coifs his hair.

DAIYU

Sir...couldn't he have slipped and told one of the others?

He locks eyes with her as he picks up the telephone receiver.

THE GOLDEN MIRROR

Possibly. But he spilled water on my desk.

(into phone)

Yes, get me an extraction unit.

DAIYU

A proper loss, then.

Daiyu rises and turns to leave. She's struck with heat-lightning guilt. She must hide it a little longer.

THE GOLDEN MIRROR

Aren't you forgetting something?

Daiyu looks at him blankly. Long awkward pause.

THE GOLDEN MIRROR (CONT'D)

Take this shell of a man to Pavel. We wouldn't want time ruining opportunity. And make sure they're working on the new prototype. I have clients to please. Welcome to the family. My family.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT - LATER

Theresa Bloom (late 60's, fraying) lays in bed attached to various apparatuses, knitting feverishly. Maya enters.

THERESA

Hello.

MAYA

Hello Mrs. Bloom. I'm Maya
Copeland, director of experimental
programs. How are you?

THERESA

I keep catching my needles in my IV
line. The nurses think I'm trying
to escape. They're not wrong.

Theresa touches her nose. Maya smiles and sits down.

THERESA (CONT'D)

Bad news or good news? I protest
each the same.

MAYA

Well, I wanted to talk about--

THERESA

(interrupting)

That's my son. Daughter-in-law.
Granddaughter in the middle.

Theresa grabs a bedside picture and passes it to Maya.

MAYA

Beautiful family.

THERESA

This was the moment. This was as
good as it got. Grab yours if you
see it. Make it last.

MAYA

I wanted to talk about your
transplant request. As you know, it
can prove difficult for former
intravenous drug users--

THERESA

(interrupting)

I'm scared, Dr. Copeland.

MAYA

Call me Maya.

THERESA

...Maya...I'm scared.

MAYA

I've come with an opportunity.

THERESA

What kind?

MAYA

As I mentioned, I'm in charge of an experimental program, overseeing the implementation of artificial organs into host patients, with the purpose of extending their lives.

THERESA

Experimental.

MAYA

Yes.

THERESA

A new liver?

MAYA

We would take some healthy stem cells, composite them with a strong, resilient material in a printer, and create a new organ for you. Better than new.

THERESA

(long beat)

We all grow into a world unrecognized, don't we. What's your success rate?

MAYA

You'd be the first.

THERESA

Oh...

MAYA

But I assure you I've spearheaded this program for years with one of the nation's finest surgeons.

THERESA

How long.

MAYA

Pardon?

THERESA

I'm no fool, no matter what you hear from reception. I'd really like to see one more summer. Finish this for my granddaughter.

MAYA

Well, with regimented treatment, maybe additional surgeries, you could very well live ten, fifteen years. Maybe more. But I must tell you there are risks. Death is one.

Long beat. Then, Theresa reaches for the clipboard. Maya passes it, points to a signature line which, uncomfortably, hosts a "SIGN HERE" sticky. Theresa signs the document.

THERESA

Wouldn't mind being the first at something.

MAYA

I'll visit you each day. I promise.

THERESA

Thank you, Maya. If just for hope.

INT. CREMATORIUM - NIGHT - LATER

Daiyu enters the CREMATORIUM, the Triad's secondary base of operations. She's trailed by KONSTANTIN (40's, Russian) and another fellow inductee, who wheel in a large equipment case containing Adrien's unseen body, then exit. Pavel, Hong and another Triad clap. There's a table with vodka and glasses.

PAVEL

Welcome sister. You met the boss and stand before us.

(long beat)

What's wrong?

DAIYU

It was quick.

PAVEL

What was quick?

DAIYU

I think the FBI turned Adrien. They must have had something on him.

Pavel begins pacing.

PAVEL

What?

DAIYU

I'm sorry.

PAVEL

What?

DAIYU

There was nothing I could do.

Pavel kicks over the table, scattering its items. He kneels.

PAVEL

(to subordinates)

Scrub up.

(confused silence)

NOW!

Hong and the other Triad scramble to another room. Daiyu walks to Pavel and places a hand on his shoulder.

DAIYU

Is this how we treat family?
Dismantle them for sale?

PAVEL

You were there, new blood. Adrien was never family. The boss doesn't make mistakes. Remove your hand.

(Daiyu complies)

Funny though...Adrien told me to keep an eye on you. Guess he wanted scrutiny elsewhere.

He walks off.

INT. MAYA'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - DAYS LATER - MORNING

Owen stands over the sink, concern on his face. We REVERSE to the basin to see porcelain speckled with blood. Owen holds a painkiller bottle. Maya knocks.

MAYA (O.S.)

Owen?

OWEN

Just a minute. Thought you'd left.

He rinses the sink and stashes the pills within the mirror.

INT. MAYA'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - SOON AFTER

Owen exits the bathroom. Maya is dressed for surgery. They kiss.

MAYA
Everything alright?

OWEN
It is now. Are you nervous?

MAYA
Oh, just--

She runs to the bathroom and lightly throws up.

OWEN
Nerves are good.

We hear the faucet come to life in the bathroom.

MAYA (O.S.)
I love you.

OWEN
Love you too.

INT. HOSPITAL - LABORATORY - DAY - LATER

Maya, Jian and TWO NURSES, all in scrubs, busy themselves around the 3-D printer as it finalizes a carbon-morph liver.

JIAN
Please confirm bio-ink and scaffolding integrity. Dr. Copeland and I will return for the vascular test. Dr. Copeland, will you prepare Mrs. Bloom for surgery?

MAYA
Of course.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY - SOON AFTER

Maya enters to find Theresa in bed: excited, smiling.

THERESA
I guess there's only one thing left to do.

MAYA
How are you feeling, Mrs. Bloom?

THERESA
Excited. It's unfamiliar.

MAYA

Shortly, Dr. Zhong Jian will stop
in to talk with you.

THERESA

Thank you, Maya.

MAYA

Don't thank me yet.

THERESA

For the valium.

MAYA

(smiling)

I'll see you when you wake.

INT. HOSPITAL - HALLWAY - DAY - SOON AFTER

Maya and Jian confidently stride towards surgery.

INT. HOSPITAL - SCRUB ROOM - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

Maya and Jian vigorously scrub their hands and forearms.

INT. HOSPITAL - OPERATING THEATER - DAY - SOON AFTER

Maya and Jian stand over CAMERA and move an operating light
into frame.

SMASH TO:

INT. HOSPITAL - SCRUB ROOM - THAT NIGHT

A fluorescent light. It HUMS. Maya and Jian SCRUB blood from
their arms. Jian grabs paper towels, dries his hands.

MAYA

Jian, I--

He kicks a trash bin, disposes the paper towels, and exits.

INT. MAYA'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Owen is asleep in bed. Maya climbs in. He startles awake.

OWEN

(raspy)

I dreamt of you. I couldn't get to
you in time...

MAYA

Just hold me.

He pulls her close.

INT. JIAN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Jian sips a scotch on the couch, locked into a thousand-yard stare. Lights in the house are dim. Evelyn sits next to him and draws him close. He rests his head on her shoulder.

EXT. JIAN'S HOUSE - BACKYARD - THE NEXT DAY

Jian pushes his son and daughter on a swing set. Their delighted giggles echo through the afternoon air. Daiyu crouches at a nearby tree-line and watches. A single tear rolls down her cheek. Her phone BUZZES, startling her. She surveys around for any sign of danger then takes the call.

DAIYU

Hello.

PAVEL (O.S.)

The boss wants to take you out.
Saturday night.

DAIYU

Do I need a burner?

PAVEL (O.S.)

No job. Wear something nice.

The line goes dead. Daiyu snaps her flip phone shut. She looks up to see Jian staring at her from the distance, mouth agape. Daiyu smiles broadly though her eyes emit sadness.

INT. JIAN'S HOUSE - BACK PORCH - DAY - SOON AFTER

Daiyu and Jian sit next to one another on a porch swing. Years of separation don't temper their shared elation.

JIAN

I'm looking at the most beautiful
apparition I've ever seen.

(a beat; no response)

I hired a private investigator.

(MORE)

JIAN (CONT'D)

Years ago. He believed you were in Australia. I knew it couldn't be so. I knew you'd never break our promise. I've had a long time to plan my words. A longer time to consider the worst.

DAIYU

(pivoting)

You've been blessed with new life. A beautiful home and children.

JIAN

You're an aunt, Daiyu.

He searches her face.

JIAN (CONT'D)

There is something in your eyes, little sister. Not just the passage of time. *Where have you been?*

DAIYU

It's a long story.

JIAN

I'm owed a story.

DAIYU

(sighs)

Jian I've known I'm an aunt since the days they were born. I've known everything. It's kept me going.

JIAN

(shocked, in Mandarin)

This lifetime apart?

(apoplectic, in English)

Why didn't you send word? How could you live with yourself?

DAIYU

(in Mandarin)

Much could be different, brother.

JIAN

(in Mandarin)

Meaning what? Our parents would still live?

DAIYU

(in English)

No. My love for you is blameless.

JIAN

Then why have you deprived me of it
for so long?

DAIYU

To protect you.

JIAN

I don't need protection. I need
answers.

She offers none. The weight of it hits him. He begins crying.

JIAN (CONT'D)

I never meant for any of it. You
must believe me. I'm sorry. I'm so
sorry.

DAIYU

Don't apologize to me.

JIAN

So many years. Why now? What have
you brought into your orbit?

She just smiles.

JIAN (CONT'D)

Give me your hands.

DAIYU

Why?

JIAN

We must renew our promise.

Daiyu hesitates.

JIAN (CONT'D)

(suspicious)

Give me your hands.

DAIYU

Jian.

He grabs her hands and forces the gloves off each.

DAIYU (CONT'D)

Jian!

He observes Freddie Gaumont's handkerchief encasing her hand.
He rips it off, sees her Triad scar.

JIAN

(muted)

No...

DAIYU

I've come to this city for the same reason you once did.

JIAN

He will take your soul, Daiyu. You don't know what you're doing.

DAIYU

You must trust me. Would you understand if I told you a story?

JIAN

I'm in no mood.

DAIYU

The one you and father spun for me under the night sky?

JIAN

I've failed them.

DAIYU

I've wanted to hear your voice each day since it was stolen from me. Please. Just awhile longer.

JIAN

Why, Daiyu?

DAIYU

Someone must finish what you started.

JIAN

I chose life. Killing him won't undue my sins. Or his.

DAIYU

If there is a difference between us, brother, it's that I didn't abandon belief in God on that day. One that observes the weight of a life. And a life shared with you is all I've wanted.

She turns to him with watery eyes.

JIAN
(affected)
You've missed a lot, little sister.

He studies his children in the distance. A beat.

JIAN (CONT'D)
How can I reach you?

DAIYU
You can't.

JIAN
I'll dress your hand properly then
you'll say goodbye to your niece
and nephew. Don't return. Maybe
there's time. May God grant you
strength.

Daiyu observes the children. Jian pockets the handkerchief,
unbeknownst to her.

INT. CEMETERY - DAY - LATER

Owen sits beset against a saturated blue sky. We won't know
at first where he is.

OWEN
It's not for lack of your lessons I
do this. They've brought me far.
Farther away from you than I would
have liked. But I remember that
place. Somehow I do. The infinite
regression. You're there. Part of
everything. With recognition I
hope. I hope...you'll offer
forgiveness as readily as you did
love. If I can find you. Soon, or
another life. I've given and taken
enough from this world. Please know
I fought. I fought hard. Maya won't
understand. What I plan will turn
her ire further. But I can't watch
her fade with me. For the first
time in my life I'm fearless,
though it's matched by guilt. It's
possible I should have done this
before re-entering her life. I'm
lost in the etiquette of finality.
But there's nowhere I'd rather be
while here than with her. Forgive
me. I love you Mom.

Owen stands up, walks away from his mother's gravesite. We TRACK to a tombstone, which peaks into the frame.

INT. HOSPITAL - MORGUE - DAY

Maya enters the cold chamber. A PATHOLOGIST stands nearby over a COVERED BODY.

PATHOLOGIST
Dr. Copeland. If it's any consolation--

MAYA
That'll be all.

PATHOLOGIST
You're not going to find--

MAYA
I said that will be all.

The Pathologist leaves. Maya sits down next to a body draped in canvas: Theresa. Maya cradles her own belly. She weeps between words. She reaches out as if to console the body but stops herself before doing so.

MAYA (CONT'D)
(whisper)
Oh God.
(louder)
Oh no...
(louder still)
Please forgive me. Please. I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry.

EXT. PARKING GARAGE - TOP FLOOR - DAY - LATER

Daiyu sits in her car in an open-air level of a parking garage. A lone figure approaches from afar: Gaumont. He carries a briefcase and gets into the passenger seat.

S.A. FREDDIE GAUMONT
What news of the organ trade?

DAIYU
You were right.

S.A. FREDDIE GAUMONT
And?

DAIYU

The muscle are former military surgeons. Plucked from favored nations. That's all so far.

S.A. FREDDIE GAUMONT

The Golden Mirror. You got a name?

DAIYU

No.

S.A. FREDDIE GAUMONT

Dee, I taught you how to lie. Don't fuck with me today.

DAIYU

You don't lie to me Freddie? Divorced wife, dead wife, no wife.

S.A. FREDDIE GAUMONT

Perks of seniority.

DAIYU

He likes expensive cigars. Ghurkas.

S.A. FREDDIE GAUMONT

(long beat; annoyed)

Swipe a brick of carfentanyl. Very least we'll have actionable narcotics. Wear gloves. Specs of that shit will kill you. Don't allow me to lose faith in you Dee. It won't end well.

He cracks his door to get out.

DAIYU

Freddie, I won't put you in danger until I have to.

S.A. FREDDIE GAUMONT

Listen, I run you. You do not run me. I can handle danger. I cannot handle lies from my agent. Your world-class stubbornness and shitty taste in music be damned, I love you, but you *do not tell me no!*

DAIYU

Just trust me. Haven't I earned it?

Freddie shuts his door. A long beat.

DAIYU (CONT'D)

There was a man. Left the compound before...before I met The Mirror. Didn't belong. White boy. Forties. Too clean and scared. Looked like some sort of transaction. He had a briefcase with some company name. Couldn't make it out.

S.A. FREDDIE GAUMONT

Could you identify a photo of him?

She nods. He produces a folder and hands it to her.

S.A. FREDDIE GAUMONT (CONT'D)

Persons of interest. Go on.

Daiyu rifles through photos, one by one. She lands on LANCE.

DAIYU

This. That's him.

S.A. FREDDIE GAUMONT

(sighs)

Lance Diedrich.

DAIYU

What does it mean?

S.A. FREDDIE GAUMONT

It means my job just got harder.

(a long beat)

You ever heard of 'Little Owen Bardo', as the papers called him?

DAIYU

No.

S.A. FREDDIE GAUMONT

National news, thirty years ago. He must be your age now, if he's still alive. A man took Owen. One afternoon, just like today. Locked him up for months, chipped away at the poor child's soul. Well, the kid escaped on one of the rare days he saw sunlight. I was 28. My first undercover case. I never met this kid, but I was told he was tough. And that's a sad thing to say about a child. But there was no trace of this creep. I had a handler. He was an asshole, like me, with my *best interest at heart*.

(MORE)

S.A. FREDDIE GAUMONT (CONT'D)

"Find this monster, Freddie". I lived as you do. Walked a nightmare world without a compass. I know you, Dee. I *am* you.

DAIYU

Why are you telling me this?

S.A. FREDDIE GAUMONT

So it takes me awhile but I think I find this guy. Pretty sure, at least. Real charming, like a lot of monsters. I befriended him. Slowly gained his trust. Eventually, figuring me a kindred soul, he opened his world. Showed me his crimes. I had everything I needed to lock him up, *forever*. But after what I'd seen, it wasn't enough. I saw the radiator little Owen was chained to. I saw that he probably wasn't the first. And I saw the pride in this man's eyes.

(a beat)

I was going to make it look like a suicide. I was going to make it hurt. I was going to lie to my handler.

(a beat; Daiyu gets it)

But then, I remembered myself. Sent him away for life. And, his final sentence came. He died in prison last year. I don't know where that grown child is, but I think about him. I think about him often. I'm not stupid, Dee. Something draws you to our new monster. If you're playing me, stop. The cuffs will stay on you next time.

DAIYU

(long, long beat)

Do you really think I have shitty taste in music?

Freddie looks out the passenger side window and does his best to stifle intense laughter.

INT. HOSPITAL BOARDROOM - DAY - DAYS LATER

Maya sits at the end of an imposing, large circular cocobolo desk. A full constitution of board members sits around its expanse, primarily men. Jian sits closest to Maya.

MALE BOARDMEMBER

Dr. Copeland, we're not discerning whether or not you possess the skillset for the job, that is clear, but rather if your judgment is clouded by ambition. Or otherwise. Please explain.

MAYA

Though the organ was created with Mrs. Bloom's bio-print--

MALE BOARDMEMBER

(interrupting)

We're aware of the particulars. Please explain *yourself*. What would compel you, doctor, to test an experimental procedure without a formal trial protocol and board authorization?

MAYA

I...I've made a terrible mistake. I'll carry this with me for the rest of my life. But what we're doing is too important. This is a sea change for modern medicine.

MALE BOARDMEMBER

The progress you've made is highly promising, yes, but at worrisome loss of capital.

MAYA

And life. I would like to dedicate our program to Mrs. Bloom, with your permission.

MALE BOARDMEMBER

If the program continues. But since this was not an approved procedure, there will be no insurance coverage. You've incurred a great loss. As much as technical expertise, this job requires a...multivalent mind. A...

FEMALE BOARDMEMBER

(interrupting)

Look we don't want to belabor this. We're going to find a replacement.

JIAN

(interjecting)

No, you won't. Dr. Copeland is one of the finest humans with whom I've had the pleasure to know and work. I've spent my entire American career at this hospital. It's been my home. But I'm getting old. Losing my partner would leave me no choice but to consider the nature of permanence.

MALE BOARDMEMBER

Jian, elevating Dr. Copeland was your decision. You'll punish the hospital for your mistake?

JIAN

If Maya sits, I walk.

INT. FABRICORPS INDUSTRIES - LANCE'S OFFICE - DAY - LATER

Lance sits at his desk, staring out the office window. Freddie knocks twice, then enters.

S.A. FREDDIE GAUMONT

Mr. Diedrich? Freddie Gaumont. I don't have an appointment, but your secretary said you've always got time to make some coin.

LANCE

Freddie. Lance Diedrich. If you're a man who can subsidize her bonus, I'll make time.

Freddie laughs, plays the part, sits down across from Lance.

S.A. FREDDIE GAUMONT

I represent a well known, major international player in what we'll just call, *prescient acquisitions*.

LANCE

Prescient acquisitions. I like it.

S.A. FREDDIE GAUMONT

This...organization is interested in a large order of your Panopolis machines.

LANCE

Now Freddie, what's large to you?

S.A. FREDDIE GAUMONT
Large is large, Lance.

LANCE
Fair enough.

S.A. FREDDIE GAUMONT
I just worry...well. Can I be honest with you? It's under the radar and over a border.

LANCE
Maybe we should move this to a bar. Unless you have a curfew.

S.A. FREDDIE GAUMONT
Wife passed away, years ago unfortunately.

LANCE
Freddie I'm sorry to hear that. Well, we at Fabricorps pride ourselves on discretion. What our clients do with our products once they've crossed borders, that's none of our concern. We're in the creation business. We don't manufacture negative or positive social solutions. We manufacture the future. Everyone should have access to the future. *Everyone.*

S.A. FREDDIE GAUMONT
The future you say. Well that brings me to another concern. I read Longview Medical lost a patient. Faulty organ printed on a Panopolis.

LANCE
Human error. The Panopolis will save lives in the right hands.

S.A. FREDDIE GAUMONT
The folks I represent aren't too interested in saving lives.
(Lance smirks)
Alright. Say you convince me. Say then, hypothetically, an unauthorized sale to a sanctioned country.

LANCE

Hypothetically, I think this is the start of a friendship, Freddie.

S.A. FREDDIE GAUMONT

Would you like a cigar?

Freddie produces a Ghurka, The Golden Mirror's favorite. He clips and lights it. Lance's eyes widen. He shakes his head.

S.A. FREDDIE GAUMONT (CONT'D)

No? Ok. The Golden Mirror, when's your next meeting with him?

LANCE

(shock)

Excuse me?

S.A. FREDDIE GAUMONT

You heard me.

LANCE

I don't know what you mean.

S.A. FREDDIE GAUMONT

Sure you do. What's his real name?

LANCE

Who are you?

S.A. FREDDIE GAUMONT

I'm your new friend, remember?

LANCE

FBI, CIA? I'd like to see some identification.

S.A. FREDDIE GAUMONT

(produces badge)

Lance, I was just beginning to like you.

LANCE

I don't know who you're speaking of, this, Golden...

S.A. FREDDIE GAUMONT

Mirror. A real specimen.

LANCE

(fidgeting)

You mean to tell me, the fucking Federal Bureau of Investigations doesn't have a face or...uh...uh name of, whomever you assume I know? No one inside?

S.A. FREDDIE GAUMONT

Inside what, Lance?

LANCE

I think it's time we say goodbye.

S.A. FREDDIE GAUMONT

Free country. But the men who visit next won't find you as charming as I do. Do you validate parking?

LANCE

(long beat)

Hypothetically...what could you offer me?

S.A. FREDDIE GAUMONT

You're my only option. A poor option. But a lonesome option.

LANCE

Then I'd say that makes me valuable.

S.A. FREDDIE GAUMONT

It makes you tolerable. Look Lance, we could turn our focus to someone selling American IP to the People's Liberation Army. Must be a venal, *snakelike* individual to dabble in what the courts identify as treason. Got a feeling you're a lot less paperwork than The Golden Mirror. Carpal tunnel's a real problem at Quantico.

LANCE

(a beat)

God Almighty.

S.A. FREDDIE GAUMONT

When will you see him?

LANCE

Saturday night. I'm making a charitable donation to his children's center. Breaks ground next week. Laundry front to his country, I suspect. I want immunity and I *will not* wear a wire.

S.A. FREDDIE GAUMONT

Lance, it's the twenty-first century baby. Give me your phone.
Runs quietly in the background.

Lance hesitates. Freddie stares. Lance hands it over. Freddie produces a plug-in chip and inserts it into Lance's phone.

EXT. FABRICORPS INDUSTRIES - DAY - SOON AFTER

Special Agent Gaumont leaves the towering building and walks to his parked car. As his car exits down the street we drift to The Golden Mirror, who sits on a bench, enjoying a newspaper. He smirks.

INT. MAYA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT - LATER

Owen places a vase of flowers on Maya's hallway table. Beside, he places an envelope inscribed with her name.

INT. HOSPITAL - LABORATORY - NIGHT - THAT MOMENT

Maya, alone, works in front of the 3-D printer. The lights are dim. A knock on the door. Lance enters.

LANCE

Thanks for seeing me.

MAYA

Lance, before you say anything...it should have worked. Even with an older candidate.

LANCE

They considered recall. I convinced them to wait. Bought you some time. But that's not why I'm here.

MAYA

Why are you here?

LANCE

If it wasn't for him...if he didn't
spend his life coming back to
you...could it have been me?

MAYA

It could only be him.

INT. MAYA'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - NIGHT - THAT MOMENT

Owen swallows the last large portion of painkillers he had
stashed in the mirror. He stares at himself, nods.

INT. HOSPITAL - LABORATORY - NIGHT - THAT MOMENT

MAYA

We had our time. But let's not
romanticize it. You're a good
person Lance. You just don't want
anyone to know it.

LANCE

I'm in over my head Maya.

MAYA

(smirking)
What is it this time?

LANCE

(motions to Panopolis)
I don't know that the world is
ready for this.

MAYA

I'm in over my head too.

INT. MAYA'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Owen moves to the trash, and absently disposes the pill
bottle. Something just barely catches his eye. He stares in
shock. He tips over the trashcan, spilling its contents. He
rifles through the detritus.

INT. HOSPITAL - LABORATORY - NIGHT - THAT MOMENT

LANCE

When did you find out?

MAYA

This morning.

LANCE
Congratulations. I mean that.

MAYA
I don't know if I'm going to keep
it. I don't know if I'm going to
tell him.

INT. MAYA'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Owen kneels in front of the toilet. He tries to "pull the trigger" and induce vomiting. It's not working.

OWEN
Please, God. Please, God. Please.

He sticks his fingers down his throat again.

INT. HOSPITAL - LABORATORY - NIGHT - THAT MOMENT

MAYA
I've turned my anger to him for so
long. For not giving me what I
want. But the truth is, he's done
everything for me. Since the start.
And now he's going to die.

LANCE
(long beat)
I'll send an engineer by next week.
I'll help if I can.

MAYA
Thank you Lance.

LANCE
And I'm sorry.

MAYA
For what?

LANCE
For always making things harder
than they need to be.

Maya grabs her purse, retrieves a NEW TIE, hands it to him.

MAYA
I almost forgot. An olive branch.

He smiles, pats the tie in his hands, and leaves.

INT. MAYA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT - LATER

The front door opens. Maya enters.

MAYA

Owen?

Hearing no response, Maya steps further into her apartment. A TENSE BEAT, then she sees him, standing next to the flowers. Perhaps the pregnancy test is sitting next to them. Owen's eyes are welled up. A LONG BEAT. He stands there nodding.

OWEN

I'll fight for this. Even if I fall short, I'll fight.

Tears form in Maya's eyes. She nods her head. They embrace.

INT. DAIYU'S APARTMENT - NIGHT - DAYS LATER

It's a bare den. Could be mistaken for a storage unit; a RECORD PLAYER SPINS in Daiyu's bedroom. Daiyu dances in her undergarments. She takes shots of vodka and dances with abandon in front of a SILVER MIRROR.

Daiyu tries various dress and accessory combinations. We think it's going to be one of "those scenes" UNTIL: Daiyu stands with a floral clutch hanging from her shoulder. She removes a PISTOL. She closes one eye and aims at the mirror.

Then: Daiyu once again stands in front of the mirror, now in a different dress. She produces a SWITCHBLADE from her boot. She swings it with force. The switchblade springs to life. Daiyu, again in her undergarments, rubs her temples. An idea. A CLAM SHAPED MAKEUP CASE. It snaps open. Daiyu blows on it gently; a PUFF OF POWDER radiates.

Daiyu adorns black leather gloves, a dust mask. She retrieves a plastic wrapped block of CARFENTANYL. She PLUNGES the SWITCHBLADE into it.

Daiyu paints her nails a warlike red. She blows on them.

INT. DAIYU'S APARTMENT - NIGHT - SOON AFTER

The door opens. The Golden Mirror stands before Daiyu.

THE GOLDEN MIRROR

Lovely Daiyu. Are you ready?

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT - LATER

The Golden Mirror's car tears down a highway. It's pincerred in by lead and trail cars. The cars peel right and exit, leaving alone The Golden Mirror's car. The moon looms.

INT. BAR ROOM - NIGHT - THAT MOMENT

Maya and Owen slow dance in the middle of an empty bar room. A lovely song plays on the juke.

MAYA

Your young heart and mine. We made something pure.

OWEN

I can't tell you how happy I am.

MAYA

Me too. But somehow the idea of this child...paying its debt of life, in some strange corner of the world, long after we're gone, without my arms for comfort... scares me more than anything. Even more than losing you.

OWEN

For that very reason you'll make a great mother.

MAYA

I'll spoil her til the end, but...the world left to her. I just don't know.

OWEN

Her.

MAYA

What?

OWEN

You said her. We've only just begun this journey.

MAYA

One daddy's girl knows another.

A version of "Cotton Fields" comes on the jukebox. They both look at each other with a cosmic sense of amazement. Overwhelmed, Maya hugs him tightly. Owen starts coughing.

EXT. BUILDING - NIGHT - LATER

A parking lot next to a towering building. Daiyu and The Golden Mirror sit at a table covered in flower petals. They've just finished a previously prepared meal. Candles flicker. Behind, a 7' by 4' hole awaiting concrete fill looms in the frame. A concrete churner sits next to it.

THE GOLDEN MIRROR

Where's your handkerchief, lovely
Daiyu?

DAIYU

(flustered; recognition)
It didn't seem to fit the mood.

THE GOLDEN MIRROR

I'll allow it, if you'll allow me a
dance.

DAIYU

Are you going to tell me why we're
in the middle of a parking lot now?

THE GOLDEN MIRROR

You understand, the things I
do...I'm more.

DAIYU

Everyone's a river.

THE GOLDEN MIRROR

This place...it will give my life
meaning. Children from all walks of
life will populate my creation.
Hospital. Schooling. Recreation. A
center to shape minds toward light.

DAIYU

Being the boss allows such virtue.

THE GOLDEN MIRROR

Everyone has a boss Daiyu. Even me.
Even him. Children's laughter will
fill the halls. In honor of my son.

DAIYU

You have a son?

THE GOLDEN MIRROR

I had a son. He was taken from me.

DAIYU

I'm sorry. How?

THE GOLDEN MIRROR

Nature. I often play his heartbeat.
I have it recorded. Does that
strike you as bizarre?

DAIYU

I'm no stranger to grief's
oddities.

(pivoting)

What's with the hole?

THE GOLDEN MIRROR

We will fill it tonight, mostly.
And at a groundbreaking ceremony
next week, it will be topped off.
It's where I will write my son's
name and place my hands. Now, may I
have that dance?

She nods. They rise. They move to an arm's length from one
another. A protracted moment.

DAIYU

My hands are cold.

She puts on her leather gloves.

DAIYU (CONT'D)

Let me just fix my makeup.

Daiyu removes the CLAM SHAPED CONCEALER case from her purse.

THE GOLDEN MIRROR

You're beautiful.

She snaps open the case. She's a moment away from blowing her
deadly kiss onto his face WHEN: WE HEAR a car pulling up. The
Golden Mirror observes it. PAVEL and LANCE exit the car.

THE GOLDEN MIRROR (CONT'D)

(to Daiyu)

Come with me.

(to Pavel)

You're early, Goddammit.

Daiyu SNAPS SHUT her concealer case. She follows him to the
concrete pit.

PAVEL

Mr. Diedrich just couldn't wait to
see you.

LANCE

(nervous)

That's right. My favorite client.
Preparing for next week are we?

Nearing, Lance observes Daiyu with a spark of recognition.

THE GOLDEN MIRROR

Mr. Diedrich, I'm able to operate
at the elite level I do solely
because I can't be proven to exist.
I earned the skill of nothingness
over a lifetime. Now, if my
nothingness were to be threatened,
that would cause me great distress.

Pavel slowly creeps up behind Lance, wielding a shovel.

LANCE

I don't follow, sir.

THE GOLDEN MIRROR

You've lived your life in a similar
manner. One such that no one will
miss you. Even Agent Gaumont.

Pavel SWINGS the shovel with force, connecting with Lance's head. A sickening THUNK sound echoes throughout the empty lot. Lance tumbles into the pit, groaning. Pavel frees the concrete churner gate, from which a river of concrete flows. Lance's moans become gurgles.

THE GOLDEN MIRROR (CONT'D)

(to Daiyu)

So many needless graves. He won't
be the last to insult my
intelligence. Grant me your loyal
soul, and I'll give you nothing
short of the world.

INT. JIAN'S HOUSE - STUDY - DAY

Maya enters the study. Jian sits in a leather chair flanked by a table hosting an axis globe, next to another chair. Bookshelves line the walls. Maya sits next to Jian.

MAYA

Your children are lovely.

JIAN

I'm guilty every moment they're not
near. But I come here to travel.

MAYA

I'm not sure how to live with this.

JIAN

She had hope in her final hours.

MAYA

It's not enough.

JIAN

(curt)

No, Maya. It isn't.

MAYA

I appreciate what you said to the board. You're a good man. I've drafted my resignation papers. Just do me one a favor...

JIAN

They're allowing you to stay on.

MAYA

What?

JIAN

Beyond that, I've recommended you as my permanent replacement. I'm tired Maya. It's time.

MAYA

I don't know what to say.

JIAN

(pensive)

I was born in the Liaoning province. My parents were both factory workers. Humble and kind. Gave everything to give me something. When I was 25 they received a late life gift. A baby girl. In a very dangerous time to have more than one child. But after 25 years, no one was looking. She was the light of our lives. I rose fast as a young surgeon, driven by a need to please. Then a man came to me with the promise of more. Blind sins arrive quietly.

(pause)

Do you have time for another story?

MAYA

Of course.

JIAN

I used to smoke a pack-a-day.

EXT. GATED ENTRANCE - LIAONING PROVINCE - (1980) - DAY

A YOUNG JIAN smokes a cigarette under an electric-blue sky. He's clad in HOSPITAL SCRUBS. The weight of the world rests in his eyes. WE JOIN HIS GAZE: the words "Court of Law" (in Mandarin) dress the side of a twenty-foot long police bus. We're looking at a death-van notorious to Chinese New Year "Strike Hard" campaigns.

A BELL RINGS. A gate opens. Jian abandons his cigarette. THE EXECUTIONER and a GUARD flank a PRISONER wearing a hospital gown. Jian opens the bus's double doors.

A sterile and unremarkable interior save for accoutrements of death: a stationary gurney with leather straps, a wall panel with primed intravenous tubes, an array of medical tools and, against the bulkhead, a small computer station.

INT. EXECUTION VAN - (1980) - DAY - CONTINUOUS

The Executioner and the Guard guide the prisoner into the van, strap him onto the gurney. Jian hovers.

PRISONER

(in Mandarin)

Don't cut me, please don't cut me.

The Guard exits, shuts the doors. The Executioner sits at the computer station near the bulkhead. We hear the DRIVER'S DOOR OPEN and the ENGINE ROAR. Jian turns to the apparatuses.

THE EXECUTIONER

(in Mandarin)

Doctor Zhong Jian carrying out the will of the Supreme People's Court with the execution of Ling Chi, tried and condemned for defaulting on a loan of ¥5,000,000.

YOUNG JIAN

(under his breath)

Are you comfortable?

PRISONER

I'm sorry. I never--

YOUNG JIAN

Shh...shh...

He discreetly takes the prisoner's hand.

YOUNG JIAN (CONT'D)
Please, relax.

PRISONER
Give my family peace. Let them see
me as I am. Please don't cut me. If
I could take it back I would.

Long beat, the van stops moving. We HEAR the ENGINE shut down. A RED LIGHT mounted to the bulkhead HISSES ALIVE. Jian pulls away from the prisoner, who grips harder for spare moments. They stare into each others eyes.

THE EXECUTIONER
Prisoner, remove your hand from the
doctor.

Jian pulls away, retrieves the IV, inserts it into the prisoner's arm.

YOUNG JIAN
Administering sodium thiopental.

The Executioner absently picks dirt from his fingernails.

PRISONER
Please.

Jian hits a red button on the control panel. The sedative snakes its way into the prisoner's veins. Jian pats the prisoner's hand as the man slips into unconsciousness.

YOUNG JIAN
Administering pancuronium bromide.

CLOSE ON: The Executioner's fingernails. He places the nail clippers onto the cart. He shuts off the computer monitor.

THE EXECUTIONER
Not today Jian.

The Executioner tosses Jian a vial.

THE EXECUTIONER (CONT'D)
You will administer this.

JIAN
Heparin.

THE EXECUTIONER
To prevent clotting.

YOUNG JIAN

I'm aware. Why.

THE EXECUTIONER

You will remove the prisoner's heart.

(absently)

In addition to our standard procedures of kidneys, lungs, liver and corneas.

YOUNG JIAN

I will do no such thing.

THE EXECUTIONER

You will.

YOUNG JIAN

This is not what I agreed to. I will not operate until this man ceases breathing.

THE EXECUTIONER

You will. And you'll get used to it.

YOUNG JIAN

(firmer)

This man is still breathing.

THE EXECUTIONER

I heard you. Now begin.

Silence. The Executioner stands.

THE EXECUTIONER (CONT'D)

Begin, or I'll find someone who will. And you can explain yourself to the boss.

Horror in Jian's eyes.

SEQUENTIAL CUTS:

CLEAR LIQUID courses through an IV tube. Jian hovers over the doomed prisoner. A STERNAL SAW trembles in his hand. A TEAR forms in the pit of his eye. A DISCORDANT THRUM as the saw comes alive. The Executioner resumes cleaning his nails.

EXT. CLEARING - (1980) - DAY - LATER

BOOM UP a stack of MEDICAL COOLERS on a hand truck. Jian smokes on the van's bumper. Blood covers his scrubs.

YOUNG JIAN
Where will they go?

The Executioner ignores him and tilts the hand-truck.

THE EXECUTIONER
We have a problem. The family wants
to see the body. Make haste and
deliver the remains to the
crematorium.

YOUNG JIAN
Not my job.

THE EXECUTIONER
You have siblings? Children maybe?

YOUNG JIAN
No.

THE EXECUTIONER
(threatening)
Yet, everyone has parents. You're
never returning to the hospital,
Jian. You're too valuable. Take
pride in that.

The Executioner pats him on the shoulder and wheels the hand truck to a waiting car. Jian bows his head and weeps.

INT. JIAN'S HOUSE - STUDY - (PRESENT) - DAY

The SOUND of a GRANDFATHER CLOCK brings us back.

JIAN
Phantoms exist, with or without our
permission. Perhaps at their
strongest when met with disbelief.

MAYA
I believe you Jian.

JIAN
I made a choice. It splintered my
world.

MAYA
Your family?

JIAN
I hid my young sister with
relatives. My parents...I told them
everything.

(MORE)

JIAN (CONT'D)

Worst of all, they forgave me. I wanted...I tried to find them safe passage.

(a beat)

He killed them.

MAYA

God, I'm so sorry Jian.

JIAN

I know of guilt Maya. Don't let it shape you as it has me.

MAYA

We can only hope to live in a manner that would make them proud. So that our children do the same.

She places her hand on her belly. Jian notices and looks for confirmation in her face. Maya nods.

JIAN

(long beat)

What's his blood type?

MAYA

There's no way the hospital would allow it. He has a past. A different currency in grief.

JIAN

You didn't answer my question.

INT. MAYA'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY

Maya climbs into bed next to Owen. He's completely still.

MAYA

Owen. Owen. *Owen.*

He doesn't budge.

MAYA (CONT'D)

Owen?

Still doesn't move. More concerned, she shakes him.

MAYA (CONT'D)

Owen!

OWEN

What. *What?*

Maya calms.

MAYA
We're going to fix you.

OWEN
(weakly)
How's my baby, baby.

MAYA
Ask her yourself.

She lifts her shirt to expose her belly. Weakly, he blows a "raspberry".

INT. DAIYU'S APARTMENT - DAY - THAT MOMENT

Daiyu lays on her bed. She dials out on her phone.

INTERCUT:

INT. FBI FIELD OFFICE - GAUMONT'S OFFICE - THAT MOMENT

Freddie picks up.

DAIYU
Is the line secure?

S.A. FREDDIE GAUMONT
We're secure.

DAIYU
What happened with Diedrich?

S.A. FREDDIE GAUMONT
He caved to my bluff. Told him I'd be listening to the meeting. Copied his phone instead. Two million in cryptocurrency and dozens of known PLA phone numbers. This might be bigger than stateside Triads. Maybe his whole company is involved. Found no link to The Mirror though.

DAIYU
What does that mean?

S.A. FREDDIE GAUMONT
It means you better get me something, and fast. I've got a career to think about.

DAIYU
(bolting up)
So you didn't tap him?

S.A. FREDDIE GAUMONT
Of course not, Dee. I'd need a
warrant. Why, did something happen?

DAIYU
Give me a quarter of the crypto.

S.A. FREDDIE GAUMONT
Why?

DAIYU
You want him or not?

S.A. FREDDIE GAUMONT
Fine. Make it count. Give me
something. Fast.

INT. TRIAD CLUBHOUSE - ANTECHAMBER - NIGHT

Daiyu and Pavel sit in chairs outside of The Golden Mirror's office. A knock on the opposite entry door. Jian enters.

JIAN
Hello. I'm here to see him.

Mortification on Daiyu's face. She and Pavel rise.

PAVEL
Remove your belongings please.
Daiyu, the men are speaking. Go
monitor the rifle line.

Daiyu exits. Pavel laughs. Jian hands over his coat.

PAVEL (CONT'D)
Spread them. I'll frisk you now.
Results in four to six weeks. Just
a little joke. Take it or leave it.

Jian looks at Pavel uncomfortably then enters the chamber.

INT. TRIAD CLUBHOUSE - CHAMBER - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

Jian sits across from The Golden Mirror. The Golden Mirror pours two glasses of fine liquor, passes one to Jian. He clips a cigar and offers it. Jian takes it.

THE GOLDEN MIRROR

(toasting)

God bless the forefathers, God
guide the present fathers, God save
all future fathers.

Jian snaps his cigar in half and drops it to the floor.

THE GOLDEN MIRROR (CONT'D)

If I were a younger man I'd kill
you where you sit for that. But I'm
not a younger man.

JIAN

You're not a man, Jinjing.

Hearing his birth name, The Golden Mirror's eyes widen.

THE GOLDEN MIRROR

Here we are in the same city, a
world away. Chance? Destiny?

JIAN

I came to America to kill you.

THE GOLDEN MIRROR

Yes. Smartest thing you've ever
done, abandoning that plan. Smart
men never stray from my vision.

JIAN

Let sleeping dogs lie.

THE GOLDEN MIRROR

Precisely. So then...why now
present me with that wretched,
arrogant face?

JIAN

It's not to make peace.

THE GOLDEN MIRROR

Good. I have no tolerance for
peace. Tell me Jian, what's the
greatest power?

JIAN

Excuse me?

THE GOLDEN MIRROR

Power.

JIAN

The kind that keeps my home warm.
Direct current.

THE GOLDEN MIRROR

Time.

(Jian's blank stare)

Men are measured by power. Power is
measured by time. And time is
measured by the greatest of men.
Octavius, October. Julius, July.
Augustus, so forth. This circular
nature confounds me. All this time
and here we are. Men of power.

JIAN

So you want something named after
you...

THE GOLDEN MIRROR

I want everything. Unlike you I
could never settle for a cheap
American family and the straight-
world.

JIAN

I heal now. I don't destroy.

THE GOLDEN MIRROR

Oh? The commodity of the body fed
you for so very long.

JIAN

You introduced evil to utility.

THE GOLDEN MIRROR

I wasn't holding the knife Jian.
Death gives life under my rule.

JIAN

You are a ghost, ignorant of its
own death.

THE GOLDEN MIRROR

Is that a threat?

JIAN

A studied observation.

THE GOLDEN MIRROR

Here's another studied observation.
Justice eluded me when you fled a
coward. Maybe I should just kill
you. Frankly I'm growing bored.

JIAN
I will work for you.

THE GOLDEN MIRROR
(surprised)
Who says I want you? I've got new
blood, curated from the world over.

JIAN
(scoffs)
Like that man out there?

INT. TRIAD CLUBHOUSE - ANTECHAMBER - CONTINUOUS

Pavel rifles through Jian's overcoat, finding nothing. He picks up Jian's JACKET BLAZER and goes through its pockets. Some receipts, knick knacks, AND THEN, he discovers the HANDKERCHIEF. He looks towards the chamber door, uneasy.

INT. TRIAD CLUBHOUSE - CHAMBER - CONTINUOUS

Jian knocks back his whiskey. The Golden Mirror as well.

JIAN
I imagine your success rate at
sixty, seventy percent no? How does
one hundred sound? I will perform
transplants on healthy candidates.
I will never, never again perform
an extraction. Living or dead.

THE GOLDEN MIRROR
Speaking candidly...some back in
the mainland express concern over
my methods. You see, my men are
talented, ambitious, precise. But
they lack a certain *artistry*. I can
control them. You, I'm not so sure.
Such a windfall gifted to me. No.
(imitating headline)
'Prized American doctor resumes
life of crime in golden years'.

JIAN
Stranger things infect the news
every day. I intend to stay out of
the headlines.

THE GOLDEN MIRROR
Maybe you've just renewed your vow
to plunge steel into my chest.

JIAN

Nothing would please me more. Yet, age has softened me and I believe in mutual benefit.

THE GOLDEN MIRROR

Just that easy.

JIAN

I want something from you.

THE GOLDEN MIRROR

More than unimaginable riches.

JIAN

I choose my first patient. His blood type is B negative. And I'll take that woman.

THE GOLDEN MIRROR

Who.

JIAN

Your secretary.

THE GOLDEN MIRROR

Ah. Daiyu. I quite like her.

JIAN

You will remove her from your employ, and I'll take her as mine. If you want my hands.

THE GOLDEN MIRROR

Why her?

JIAN

You took family from me. I take family from you. It will be so.

The Mirror ponders, then pulls a burner phone from a drawer.

THE GOLDEN MIRROR

It seems you've become my life's work, Zhong Jian. I accept your offer. Take this. Encrypted, but--
(passes phone)
Hear me well. I made you an orphan. If you believe yourself clever, I'll make you a grieving parent.

Steely resolve in Jian's eyes says he won't allow The Golden Mirror to live long enough to entertain this threat.

INT. JIAN'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT - LATER

Jian and his wife EVELYN lay in bed. They share a cigarette.

EVELYN

What are you thinking?

JIAN

I'm thinking you are one of the few people who know my sins. I fear I have one more drawing close.

EVELYN

Don't speak like that.

JIAN

You know I would do anything for you and the children, right?

EVELYN

Then come home to us. It's time.

JIAN

I've put plans in motion. I want life as it should be. You and our babies. I'm ready, dear.

EVELYN

(surprised)

You're serious?

JIAN

I'm a 65 year old father of two. I want all of the time I can get. I'm OK. I've done enough.

EVELYN

Don't agree to this if you won't follow through. I'll lose respect.

JIAN

You stopped respecting me long ago.

EVELYN

(laughing)

We can do the things we dreamed my love.

A KNOCK AT THE DOOR interrupts their moment.

EXT. JIAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT - SOON AFTER

Jian cracks open the door. Daiyu stands in front of him, a sweatshirt hood pulled over her head.

DAIYU

Whatever you're planning, stop.

JIAN

My family will not live under threat of a monster.

DAIYU

Your wife and children will never know the pain we do. I give you my word. My word, brother.

JIAN

Daiyu. You're my family.

DAIYU

Don't do this. Please. Whatever you're planning. I forbid you.

JIAN

Your presence here puts us in jeopardy, you know that right?

DAIYU

I don't care. I've missed you.

JIAN

Allowing him to live gave me the life I never thought I'd have. But I was a fool to think I could let him walk this earth.

DAIYU

He trusts me now. I'm so close. Just back off.

JIAN

When you were born I gazed into your eyes and saw a universe of possibility. I still see it. You were a miracle. I love you Daiyu.

DAIYU

Tell me what to do. Just tell me.

JIAN

Meet me tomorrow. I bartered for you. We have a lifetime ahead.

They hug, tightly. She darts off.

INT. TRIAD CLUBHOUSE - CHAMBER - NIGHT - LATER

The Golden Mirror stares at the HANDKERCHIEF sitting atop his desk. Pavel enters through the chamber door.

PAVEL

The mainland boss wants to talk.
What should I tell him?

THE GOLDEN MIRROR

Nothing.

The Golden Mirror's eyes never leave the handkerchief.

PAVEL

Nothing?

THE GOLDEN MIRROR

No. Take this down.

(dictating)

Sir, at times of great severity and trial, loyalty is tested. Nothing in family is more sacred. I must reassure you to the extent of mine. A shipment of 3000 printed rifles will cross the Texas border and arrive in the hands of the Templar cartel next week. Reports of my insolvency are born from those whose loyalty I myself question. I assure you my expanding enterprises are for the good of the family, absent of vainglory. Furthermore, I assure you anyone unaligned with loyalty will meet a singular fate.

INT. HOSPITAL - MEDICINE ROOM - THE NEXT DAY

Jian stares at a vial of potent, liquid CARFENTANYL. Maya enters. He quickly pockets the vial.

MAYA

He's slipping fast.

JIAN

Alright. It has to be tonight.

INT. HOSPITAL - MAYA'S OFFICE - SOON AFTER

Owen sits in a chair, observing Maya's desk, contemplating the side of her life he doesn't know. Daiyu enters.

OWEN
Hello.

DAIYU
Are you waiting for...the doctor?

Owen nods. Daiyu walks over and sits down next to him.

DAIYU (CONT'D)
I'm Daiyu. I'm...assisting the process.

OWEN
Pleasure Daiyu. Owen Bardo.

She's shocked with recognition. Astonishment yields laughter.

OWEN (CONT'D)
(joking)
Should I get a doctor?

DAIYU
Do you believe in fate Owen Bardo?

OWEN
(confused)
I don't know what I believe.

She twirls her hair with a finger. Jian and Maya enter.

JIAN
Owen. I'm Jian. Maya gave me your medical record.
(impressed)
Former Special Forces.

Daiyu looks to Owen, still in wonderment.

JIAN (CONT'D)
Please verbally confirm your blood type for me?

OWEN
B negative.

JIAN
After hearing from my associate, Daiyu will pick you up tonight.

OWEN
Tonight?

MAYA
Yes, baby.

JIAN
(looking to Maya)
We want to get you back on your
feet to help with that child.

OWEN
Can we trust these people?

DAIYU
(coming to)
You can trust us. My brother and I.

JIAN
This man. This group, they're of no
danger to us. Simply transactional.

DAIYU
This is payment, cryptocurrency.

Daiyu passes a USB drive to Maya.

MAYA
You're...paying?

DAIYU
(a beat)
I'll pick you up at dusk.

JIAN
It's settled. Tonight.

OWEN
Thank you. Both.

DAIYU
The world needs warriors, Owen
Bardo.

Daiyu extends her hand. Owen grasps it and shakes.

OWEN
Who dream of a world that doesn't
need them.

MAYA
(to Daiyu)
It's an honor to meet you.

Maya kisses Jian on the cheek, then guides Owen out.

DAIYU

Its the perfect opportunity for him
to set a trap.

JIAN

He suspects nothing. Vanity blinds
him. He won't risk the money or me.

DAIYU

Have you seen my handkerchief?

JIAN

In my coat at home. It's kept you
near until I no longer need a
substitute. Everything OK?

DAIYU

Just...burn it, please. I don't
need it anymore.

JIAN

Tomorrow, we will drink until we
cannot see. We will laugh again. We
will speak our parents names. We do
this for them.

DAIYU

For them, brother. Home is near.

INT. JIAN'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT - LATER

A HUMIDOR of GHURKA CIGARS. Jian flips it shut. He disposes
of the EMPTY VIAL of CARFENTANYL he earlier confiscated. A
TEXT RINGS on his burner phone. He looks to his JACKET
BLAZER, draped over a chair, decides not to acquiesce to
Daiyu's wishes, and exits without it.

INT. JIAN'S HOUSE - CHILDREN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jian peeks his head in to quietly adore his two sleeping
children. He closes the door.

EXT. JIAN'S HOUSE - PORCH - NIGHT - SOON AFTER

Jian, dressed in scrubs, walks onto the front porch. Evelyn
looms in the doorway. Jian turns to her.

JIAN

Do you know why we first met?

EVELYN

I was there, sweetheart.

JIAN

Not how, but why?

EVELYN

(amused)

Do tell.

JIAN

I saw a woman one day. Floated into the commissary. Turned every head in the room. And each day after. Ordered espresso and blood sausage. Like clockwork. I saw a woman who knew what she wanted. I spent weeks ensuring I would be that something.

EVELYN

What are you saying?

JIAN

I hate blood sausage.

EVELYN

(smirking)

Then why do I still make it?

JIAN

I must keep up the ruse.

She draws him close for a passionate kiss.

EVELYN

Good luck at the hospital. Come back to me soon, cowboy.

He faux tips a nonexistent hat, then walks off.

INT. CREMATORIUM - NIGHT - LATER

Daiyu, Maya and Owen walk into the crematorium. Against a back wall, TWO TRIADS wear gas masks, Tyvek suits, and work a chemistry station of beakers, piping, roto-baths. One oversees a sandbox table, pushes and pulls crystalline powder. Pavel stands at a table with bullet casings and a new PROTOTYPE WEAPON. A firing target hangs near a far wall.

PAVEL

Welcome to our humble operation. You're in good hands. You've met lovely Daiyu. I'm Pavel.

OWEN

Owen.

MAYA

Maya.

PAVEL

Phones and guns please. Daiyu,
tonight requires no armament.

Daiyu reluctantly places her pistol into a plastic bin. Pavel searches Maya's purse. He takes her cell phone. Maya, Owen, and Daiyu sit. Pavel motions to the 3-D printer.

PAVEL (CONT'D)

Never underestimate man's
creativity when it comes to
instruments of death.

(winks at Maya)

Might even make us obsolete. I'm
sure I don't have to tell you that.

DAIYU

Where's the new doctor?

PAVEL

Any minute now.

INT. CAR - NIGHT - THAT MOMENT

Jian drives towards his future.

INT. CREMATORIUM - NIGHT - THAT MOMENT

Pavel loads a magazine with bullet casings.

MAYA

Are you sure these grounds are
sanitary?

PAVEL

You know Maya, in another life I
was a surgeon. Soviet Armed Forces.
A good one for my age.

(eyeing Daiyu)

Our dear friend Adrien--whom you
won't meet--Green Beret. An artist
of scalpel and shotgun. We've saved
many lives. At risk of repeating
myself, you're in good hands.

INT. CAR - NIGHT - SOON AFTER

Jian turns his car off. He stares ahead. He gets out.

INT. CREMATORIUM - NIGHT - THAT MOMENT

Pavel removes a printed lower receiver from the machine, snaps it into the PROTOTYPE. An intimidating weapon.

DAIYU

Pavel, will you please clear the room.

PAVEL

(addressing subordinates)
Go home.

The Triads working the chemistry station pause.

PAVEL (CONT'D)

(in Mandarin)
Get the fuck out of here.
(in Russian)
Now!

The subordinates leave with haste.

PAVEL (CONT'D)

(in English)
Thank you.
(to Owen)
You. What's your story. Besides your broken parts.

OWEN

You talk a lot.

PAVEL

You must excuse my sharp edges.
This path of the American outlaw has magnified my flaws.

EXT. TRIAD CLUBHOUSE - NIGHT - THAT MOMENT

Jian presses the buzzer to the front door.

INT. CREMATORIUM - NIGHT - THAT MOMENT

The DOOR BUZZER RINGS loudly. Everyone jumps. Pavel laughs.

PAVEL
The doctor is in.

The BUZZER RINGS again. Daiyu walks to and opens the door.

EXT. TRIAD CLUBHOUSE - NIGHT - THAT MOMENT

The door swings open. Jian expects to see a familiar face. His eyes widen.

INT. CREMATORIUM - NIGHT - THAT MOMENT

Daiyu's countenance changes. In walk THE GOLDEN MIRROR and HONG. The Golden Mirror wears a fine suit and carries a MEDICAL COOLER. Hong wears full hospital scrubs.

THE GOLDEN MIRROR
A pleasant evening, everyone. The good doctor planned for tonight is indisposed. But we proceed accordingly, with an even more talented set of hands.

Owen and Maya share a concerned glance. Daiyu freezes.

MAYA
Where's Jian?

THE GOLDEN MIRROR
As I mentioned, he's indisposed. Emergency at your hospital.

MAYA
I'd like to call him. This isn't what we planned.

He raises the medical cooler for effect.

THE GOLDEN MIRROR
You insult my hospitality? You may stay, or you may go. But you make no calls in my domain.

MAYA
Then I'd like to oversee the surgery.

THE GOLDEN MIRROR
Unnecessary, Maya Copeland.
(pleasantly)
Mr. Owen Bardo, would you please follow us.

OWEN

(to Maya)

This is what we wanted. I'll be
alright.

Owen kisses Maya, then walks off into uncertainty. Daiyu's eyes dart around the room. Pavel watches all with amusement.

PAVEL

Settle in. The surgery will last
just under four hours.

INT. TRIAD CLUBHOUSE - NIGHT - THAT MOMENT

KONSTANTIN, whom we would recognize as one of the earlier inductees, stands before Jian at the entryway.

KONSTANTIN

Hello doctor. If you'll be so kind,
we'll await the others inside.

JIAN

Alright.

Jian clutches his humidor box tightly and enters. The door closes behind them.

INT. CREMATORIUM - SURGERY ROOM - SOON AFTER

Owen lays on an operating table. The room is full of what appears to be adequate and robust trappings of a real hospital room. Hong prepares instruments for surgery. The Golden Mirror hovers over Owen.

THE GOLDEN MIRROR

Little Owen Bardo.

OWEN

Excuse me?

THE GOLDEN MIRROR

I did my research. Any patient
trusting me with their life
deserves as much.

OWEN

I didn't catch your name.

THE GOLDEN MIRROR

Unimportant.

OWEN

I'd say it is.

THE GOLDEN MIRROR

You'd be wrong.

(pivoting)

I myself had a child who found himself grown too fast. A beautiful boy. He didn't meet such an unfortunate fate as yourself, but he was taken from me nonetheless.

OWEN

I'm sorry to hear that. But I don't need your sympathy.

THE GOLDEN MIRROR

You misunderstand. I don't sympathize with you. I sympathize with your father.

OWEN

(laughs)

I've known men like you my whole life.

THE GOLDEN MIRROR

Successful men? Talented men? I doubt it.

OWEN

Devoid of light in their eyes. Jealous of those with it.

The Golden Mirror moves towards the door.

THE GOLDEN MIRROR

Good luck, little Owen.

INT. CREMATORIUM - NIGHT - THAT MOMENT

Daiyu, Maya, and Pavel all sit and shift their focus around the room as music plays hypnotically in the background.

INT. TRIAD CLUBHOUSE - NIGHT - THAT MOMENT

Jian is led to a central area with an operating table and identical surgical accoutrements as to the other location.

KONSTANTIN

Why don't we fire up those cigars and wait?

JIAN
These are earned.

KONSTANTIN
Big talk.

JIAN
Where is the boss?

KONSTANTIN
Sometimes the muscle must do what
the head cannot.

Jian's eyes widen then dart around. He begins laughing.

INT. CREMATORIUM - SURGERY ROOM - THAT MOMENT

Owen shifts in the bed with discomfort. Hong busies himself.

HONG
Very few people talk to the boss in
that manner and keep their tongue.

OWEN
Heavy crown. I get the feeling he's
desperate to get what he gives.
Where's your team?

HONG
You'll be asleep before the nurses
arrive. Now then, in what theater
did you serve?

OWEN
The unacknowledged theater.

HONG
Then we shared a battlefield.
(reading chart)
For someone with a failing heart,
you have the strongest liver
readings I've seen.

OWEN
(suspicious)
I gave up the bottle.

HONG
I didn't. I'd kill for your liver.

INT. CREMATORIUM - NIGHT - THAT MOMENT

The Golden Mirror returns to the central area. Daiyu perks up. Pavel continues to watch with amusement.

THE GOLDEN MIRROR
On to my favorite matter. Dr.
Copeland, I presume you brought my
blockchain payment.

Maya hands him the USB drive.

THE GOLDEN MIRROR (CONT'D)
Taking payment from the enemy.

MAYA
Excuse me?

THE GOLDEN MIRROR
Your ungodly use of technology may
put me out of business one day.
Though, I suppose if it worked you
wouldn't be here.

MAYA
We both just want to save lives, it
seems.

THE GOLDEN MIRROR
I tease only the clients I like.
You can count on my loyalty.

The Golden Mirror turns to Daiyu, brushes his breast pocket, where we can very clearly see Gaumont's HANDKERCHIEF.

THE GOLDEN MIRROR (CONT'D)
*Loyalty...is important. I bid you
all goodnight.*

He exits. Daiyu is frozen. Pavel unsheathes his pistol.

PAVEL
How about some target practice?

INT. TRIAD CLUBHOUSE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

KONSTANTIN
What's funny.

JIAN
What did you say?

KONSTANTIN

I said, don't mistake me for a fool. I don't care if you're the boss's new toy. I'll cut you.

JIAN

Duly noted. But what did you really say?

KONSTANTIN

I said the muscle must do what the head cannot. Now what's funny.

Jian whips out his phone. The Triads all react.

JIAN

I'm calling my wife. I must tell her I'll be late. Prep for surgery.

KONSTANTIN

No.

JIAN

If I don't call my wife, I don't operate. If you don't prep for surgery, I don't operate. Your choice.

Konstantin signals to the others to relax. Jian walks ten paces away, opens his phone, and dials.

INT. CREMATORIUM - SURGERY ROOM - THAT MOMENT

Owen inspects the IV line in his arm. Hong walks nearer.

OWEN

You guys must be sharp. Found a rare blood-type organ this quickly.

HONG

We're professionals.

OWEN

(lying, testing)
...A negative. You're sure.

HONG

That's what I have. Alright then. Ready to sleep?

The hairs on Owen's neck stand up. Hong draws fluid from a vial into a LARGE NEEDLE.

INT. CREMATORIUM - NIGHT - THAT MOMENT

Maya's phone BUZZES in the distance. She looks to it. It seems miles away. Pavel lifts the PRINTED WEAPON.

PAVEL

You see, the virtue of these weapons cannot be overstated. Penetration of a carbine. Weight of an UZI, recoil of a .22. And you can melt the fucker after using it. No one will ever know it existed. Open sourced chaos. Truly a work of art. Daiyu, you're up.

Daiyu stands. She walks to him, takes the weapon, lines up downstage from the target. Pavel cocks his pistol.

PAVEL (CONT'D)

Wait, wait--wait. We need a real target.

INT. TRIAD CLUBHOUSE - NIGHT - THAT MOMENT

Jian watches two Triads block the exit door in the distance as he speaks into his phone.

JIAN

Maya. Print a gene vectored cardiomyocyte layer responsive to light activation. Light was the answer all along. We'll have reached our goal. Allow the muscle to do what the head cannot.

Jian looks the other way to the "secondary men".

JIAN (CONT'D)

That should work for now. Until you reach the next summit. I know you will. Whatever fate has befallen me, you and your friend will escape. My sister wouldn't allow otherwise. Tell her I love her. Stay out of this world, Maya. Run if you have to. This is goodbye.

Jian hangs up the phone. He dials his wife's number. Voicemail. CLOSE UP of the Cigar Box.

JIAN (CONT'D)

Sweetheart, I've so much to say--

Jian is ripped away from his phone, violently.

JIAN (CONT'D)

No. No!

INT. CREMATORIUM - SURGERY ROOM - NIGHT - THAT MOMENT

Hong approaches Owen. Inch by inch, the LARGE NEEDLE draws closer to Owen's IV. WE HEAR Maya CRY OUT in the muffled distance. Owen and Hong look at one another. Hong SWINGS the syringe towards Owen's neck. Owen BLOCKS Hong's stab and holds him off with every bit of weak force he can muster.

INT. CREMATORIUM - NIGHT - THAT MOMENT

Pavel whisks Maya towards the shooting target.

MAYA

No. No, please! There's a misunderstanding.

PAVEL

(Maya resists)

Don't make me beg. You wouldn't like me when I beg.

MAYA

Please, I don't--

DAIYU

Pavel, enough.

PAVEL

Not a word, Daiyu.

Daiyu stands down sight. Alarmed. Unsure. Maya tries to walk away. Pavel pushes her back into place.

PAVEL (CONT'D)

It's birdshot Maya. It will sting, that's all.

Daiyu primes the weapon.

MAYA

You can't. You can't. Please, listen to me. Please. I'm carrying a child. Please don't do this. Oh God, Owen...Owen.

Daiyu squints her eyes with resolve and AIMS the weapon at Maya. She closes her eyes. Maya COVERS her stomach.

MAYA (CONT'D)
Don't do this.

INT. TRIAD CLUBHOUSE - NIGHT - THAT MOMENT

Konstantin and the other Triads pin Jian to the surgical table. He begins laughing maniacally at the irony. Then, the reality of his life's lost future potential hits him. Konstantin inspects the cigar box.

KONSTANTIN
Make it fast.

JIAN
(to the ceiling)
I love you, darlings.

A sternal saw comes to life.

INT. CREMATORIUM - SURGERY ROOM - NIGHT - THAT MOMENT

Owen and Hong TUSSELE VIOLENTLY. They fall to the ground next to the operating table. Hong drops the LARGE NEEDLE. This fight is SLOPPY, a dance of survival. Hong pins Owen, then reaches for a pistol on the table above. Owen grabs behind Hong's neck and RIPS him close. Holding him near, he snatches the LARGE NEEDLE from the ground and STABS Hong's neck. Hong screams out. Owen PLUNGES THE STOPPER. Whatever poison was meant for him now courses into Hong's jugular. Hong fades.

INT. CREMATORIUM - NIGHT - THAT MOMENT

Pavel looks on with anticipation. In AN INSTANT, Daiyu pivots and SHOOTS at PAVEL. BAM-BAM-BAM-BAM-BAM. He still stands, laughing. BLANKS. Daiyu appears confused.

PAVEL
The worm presents herself. Blanks,
you bitch.

Daiyu fires the weapon again, until it CLICKS EMPTY.

DAIYU
(steely)
Just checking.

Daiyu moves to Maya and shields her. She grabs Maya's hand. Pavel walks closer.

PAVEL

Close your eyes now, it will be
over soon.

A SHOT RINGS OUT. Pavel's head TEARS APART. Taking with it every memory he's known. Further back, within a doorway, Owen collapses.

INT. TRIAD CLUBHOUSE - NIGHT - THAT MOMENT

Konstantin passes cigars to the Triads. A MEDICAL TRANSPORT COOLER sits nearby. Jian's unseen heart.

KONSTANTIN

For the good doctor.

All light up their cigars.

KONSTANTIN (CONT'D)

Maybe he wasn't so bad.

They puff in rumination. All begin laughing, and start looking around confused. One by one, each of these enforcers drop to the ground, those still standing grow more panicked.

INT. CREMATORIUM - NIGHT - THAT MOMENT

Daiyu moves into action.

DAIYU

Maya. Maya! Listen to me. You're in shock. You have to get your friend to a hospital.

MAYA

I- what- oh- please- don't- hurt- me-

DAIYU

You're OK. You're OK Maya. Time is short. You must wake up.

MAYA

I- I- I-

Daiyu SLAPS her.

DAIYU

Maya! Get your friend and go. Right now.

MAYA
(trembling)
Oh my God.

DAIYU
Get your friend to a hospital.
Right now. Don't call anyone.

Daiyu searches a table for real bullets.

MAYA
(waking up)
Owen?

OWEN
(cheekily)
Did I get him? I was seeing double.

MAYA
(relieved)
Are you OK? We have to go, baby.

Maya runs and lifts him to his feet. He's in a bad sort.

MAYA (CONT'D)
Thank you, Daiyu.

DAIYU
Forget this nightmare. Now go.

MAYA
Your brother...?

DAIYU
Raise that child right.

Daiyu tosses her car keys to Maya. Maya nods, understanding.

INT. TRIAD CLUBHOUSE - BASEMENT - NIGHT - LATER

The Golden Mirror enters the basement and surveys a scene gone terribly wrong. Triads lay on the ground, victim to Jian's cigar ploy. He takes out his cellphone and auto-dials.

THE GOLDEN MIRROR
Ten able men from the Chicago
outfit. Overnight. Make it happen.

He pockets his phone and steps over bodies to reach the medical transport cooler. He notices the cigars.

THE GOLDEN MIRROR (CONT'D)
You took your shot and missed Jian.
I win.

He drops the transport cooler into a nearby large trash bin.

INT. CREMATORIUM - NIGHT - LATER

Daiyu pours a CHEMICAL over every flammable inch. She lights a fire. She snaps a magazine into the printed rifle, fishes keys out of Pavel's pocket and exits as flames grow.

INT. CAR - NIGHT - LATER

Maya drives.

MAYA
Stay with me baby.

EXT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT - LATER

Maya swerves Daiyu's car into the emergency room intake roundabout.

MAYA
I need a gurney and a crash cart!

INT. TRIAD CLUBHOUSE - CHAMBER - NIGHT - LATER

The Golden Mirror sits at his desk. His earphones rest on his head. His son's heartbeat loop THRUMS. His eyes SNAP OPEN. A PICTURE OF HIS SON on his desktop. He makes a few hurried mouse clicks and is presented with a VIDEO FEED of the crematorium. FLAMES and SMOKE cover the frame. The Golden Mirror snaps into action. He grabs a 'go bag' from under his desk and starts loading it with STACKS OF CASH from a drawer.

Daiyu KICKS IN the door. She holds the printed rifle and drops a CHEMICAL CAN.

THE GOLDEN MIRROR
Daiyu. Daiyu!

INT. HOSPITAL - HALLWAY - NIGHT - THAT MOMENT

Owen lays on a hospital gurney. He's being wheeled away. There's an expectant look on his face. Maya follows with him.

OWEN

(muted)

When I drift off...I'll be thinking
of names for her. Goodbye love.

MAYA

(forced smile)

You're going to be fine Owen.

He's pulled away. Maya takes out her phone and clicks into
her voicemail. A nurse hurries past her.

MAYA (CONT'D)

(to nurse)

Keep him alive, *do you hear me?*

Her countenance changes as the voicemail plays out.

INT. TRIAD CLUBHOUSE - CHAMBER - NIGHT - THAT MOMENT

The Golden Mirror fidgets. He removes his earphones.

THE GOLDEN MIRROR

Listen to me. I've saved more lives
than I've destroyed. We're
virtuous, you and I.

DAIYU

My brother. My parents.

THE GOLDEN MIRROR

I'll be replaced tomorrow. We all
will. How far are you willing to
go? You'll come for them too?

DAIYU

Someone will.

THE GOLDEN MIRROR

Let me make you rich.

Daiyu primes the printed rifle.

DAIYU

There is no price, Jinjing.

THE GOLDEN MIRROR

Please. Don't let it all be for
nothing, please.

The Golden Mirror raises the picture of his son. He rips the
earphone plug out of its source. The HEARTBEAT plays aloud.

THE GOLDEN MIRROR (CONT'D)
That's my boy. Listen to him. He's
the reason I've helped so many.

DAIYU
Sounds like every heart I've heard.

THE GOLDEN MIRROR
My boy. My boy!

DAIYU
I'm sorry for your loss.

She FIRES THE RIFLE. It tears The Golden Mirror apart.

INT. HOSPITAL - LABORATORY - NIGHT - LATER

Maya, in a near panic, places several small static-wrapped bags near the 3-D printer. Maya inserts a cell slide into the 3-D printer's chamber.

MAYA
Jian, be with me now. Please.

The machine fires to life.

INT. TRIAD CLUBHOUSE - BASEMENT - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

Daiyu moves to Jian's feet and grasps his shoe, which protrudes from under the tarp. She sobs and begins tying his loose shoelaces.

DAIYU
Let me tell you a story for your journey. Our father's. You were too old for fantasy, yet you wore a smile as he spun fairy tales under the night sky. To prepare me.

INT. HOSPITAL - LABORATORY - NIGHT - LATER

Maya works the 3-D printer as if her life depended on it.

DAIYU (V.O.)
Father spoke of the beast and the little girl. The beast had one drive. Consume everything in its path, altering reality to its liking. Each day the beast passed by, stripping the world more and more.

(MORE)

DAIYU (V.O.) (CONT'D)
And each day, the beast mocked the
little girl as it slithered past,
considering her too small for
satisfaction.

INT. TRIAD CLUBHOUSE - BASEMENT - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Daiyu takes Jian's hands from under the tarp and crosses his
arms over his midsection. She removes his WEDDING RING.

DAIYU (V.O.)
But the girl grew and grew. As did
the beast. It grew so large it
appeared the girl remained small,
when she'd grown strong. One day,
quietly, uneventfully, the little
girl slew the beast when it was too
slow to outrun her. How wise you
and Papa were.

INT. TRIAD CLUBHOUSE - CHAMBER - NIGHT - SOON AFTER

Daiyu retrieves Gaumont's handkerchief and a prized cigar
from the Golden Mirror's breast pocket. She sits across from
her former enemy, tosses away the empty chemical canister
used to douse the room. Daiyu clips and lights the cigar.

DAIYU (V.O.)
(in Mandarin)
I love you brother. Travel well.

She tosses the lighter. Flames EXPLODE on the floor and grow
in every direction. It seems Daiyu has a death wish. She
reclines, savoring each hearty puff. A LONG BEAT, then
something catches her eye. The PICTURE of The Golden Mirror's
son. She takes a last puff, rises, and slowly exits the room.

INT. HOSPITAL - HALLWAY - NIGHT - LATER

Maya races down the hallway, led by nurses with a cart. At
the entry to the operating theater she looks back, as if
Zhong Jian might still be nearby. She enters the doors.

FADE TO BLACK

INT. FBI FIELD OFFICE - GAUMONT'S OFFICE - MORNING

Daiyu sits across from Agent Gaumont. She's exhausted. A hot
cup of tea steams in front of her.

S.A. FREDDIE GAUMONT
Just like that. An entire high-
ranking cell, up in flames. Nothing
left for my sweep team.

DAIYU
Wouldn't know. Wasn't in the area.

S.A. FREDDIE GAUMONT
You must have seen the morning
paper. 'Electrical Fires Burn Local
Businesses in Separate Incidents'.
No? Several fatalities, unknown
males. Really would have liked to
pick the proprietor's brain.

DAIYU
Turns out he doesn't exist after
all. I'm sorry I wasted your time.

S.A. FREDDIE GAUMONT
I should be furious with you, Dee.

DAIYU
But you're not.

S.A. FREDDIE GAUMONT
But I'm not.
(whispering)
Little white lies.

DAIYU
Why the spin?

S.A. FREDDIE GAUMONT
You're intelligent. You know the
newspapers don't lie, like us.

She sips her tea, dazed.

S.A. FREDDIE GAUMONT (CONT'D)
Some things should remain
underground. The cross we bear.

Daiyu nods and traces the scar on her palm.

S.A. FREDDIE GAUMONT (CONT'D)
I guess we should talk next steps.
Obviously we'll have to wash you
clean of this town, but a San Fran
cell just sold a quarter-ton
shipment of printed rifles to--

DAIYU
(interrupting)
You've been good to me Freddie.
I'll never forget you.

He resigns himself, reclines in his chair.

S.A. FREDDIE GAUMONT
As I feared. I'll miss you.

He produces a STEEL ATTACHÉ CASE from under the desk.

S.A. FREDDIE GAUMONT (CONT'D)
Payment. You've earned this. Saved
me a lot of paperwork, anyway.
Before you go, tell me one thing.

DAIYU
Anything.

S.A. FREDDIE GAUMONT
What history did you share with
him? What drove you?

DAIYU
Kind hearts deserve protection.
When protection fails, they deserve
more than that.

Freddie nods.

DAIYU (CONT'D)
I don't know what that makes me.

S.A. FREDDIE GAUMONT
I do.

They rise to hug one another, compassionately. He passes her
the attaché case. She pulls the HANDKERCHIEF from her pocket.

DAIYU
I believe this is yours.

S.A. FREDDIE GAUMONT
Keep it.

DAIYU
No.

Daiyu's eyes radiate pain. Freddie's desktop phone chimes.

SECRETARY (O.S.)
Mr. Gaumont, your wife is on line
one.

She smiles, the best she can.

S.A. FREDDIE GAUMONT
That's my cue to say goodbye, Dee.

DAIYU
Goodbye Freddie.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - MORNING - LATER

Owen wakes to Maya by his side. He smiles; she too.

MAYA
This is the room where I couldn't
save him. The room where my father
left me. It's been a long time
since I've smiled here.

OWEN
Hey.

MAYA
Hey.

OWEN
I'm here.

MAYA
You are.

OWEN
You're here.

MAYA
I am. I assisted the surgery.

OWEN
In that case I better choose my
words wisely. Might be my last.

Her face lights up when she witnesses his humor intact.

OWEN (CONT'D)
I love you. I'd be fine with those.

MAYA
Me too.

OWEN
The doc?

Maya shakes her head "no".

OWEN (CONT'D)

Do you think he found what he was looking for?

MAYA

I don't know. Not sure we ever will.

OWEN

I have a feeling he did.

MAYA

Yea. Me too.

OWEN

We should speak his name. Jian.

MAYA

Jian.

OWEN

It's a great name you know.

He places his hand on her belly. Maya smiles.

MAYA

It is.

OWEN

What now?

MAYA

You don't look back.

OWEN

I'll never let you out of my sight, however long I have.

MAYA

I can do with that.

(a beat)

It's a long road ahead, but don't take it for granted. You have a gift. One that didn't come easy.

She wraps her hands around his, already on her belly.

OWEN

What's mine is yours.

EXT. JIAN'S HOUSE - DAY - SOMETIME LATER

Daiyu walks down the gravel pathway leading to her brother's home, carrying the STEEL ATTACHÉ CASE. She stops at trash and recycling bins, a stone's throw from the house, drops the case, sheds her dark Triad over-clothing, disposes of it. She picks up the case and resumes her walk towards the household.

INT. HOSPITAL - OPERATING THEATER - DAY - SOMETIME LATER

We see a series of unnamed patients, on gurneys, being wheeled into frame in succession. Maya, in scrubs and mask, is seen after all, observing each new life saved by the 3-D printer. There's a distinct missing presence: Jian.

EXT. BUILDING - DAY - SOMETIME LATER

HANDS press into a fresh top layer of cement. WE BOOM UP to reveal the NEW HEAD TRIAD, wiping his hands. Could be Russian. Could be Chinese.

He cuts a ribbon with ceremonial scissors. He shakes the hand of a man who could be LANCE'S REPLACEMENT. Nearby, a CROWD of well dressed people CLAPS. The NEW HEAD TRIAD waves to all.

We see a figure behind a series of heads. Freddie Gaumont steps into focus, clapping. He's smoking a cigar. Determined.

EXT. JIAN'S HOUSE - BACKYARD - DAY - SOMETIME LATER

Daiyu pushes Jian's children on a swing set. Back and forth. Back and forth. Evelyn looks on from the porch, pained. She fiddles with JIAN'S WEDDING RING, loose on her right hand.

INT. HOSPITAL - LABORATORY - SOMETIME LATER

WE TRACK by a 3-D printer. Its center compartment hosts a growing carbon-morph organ intended for an ailing patient.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY - SOMETIME LATER

Jian's daughter crouches while tying the shoe of her younger brother. They both wear backpacks and shortly resume their march towards school. Once again, autumn foliage dusts the landscape in a scene that echoes from Maya and Owen's youth.

Fifty paces behind, Daiyu enters the frame in the foreground. She matches the children's slow saunter, forevermore watching their back. A small pistol protrudes from her backside waistband. Her hand never strays too far from its hilt.

EXT. MEADOW - LATE AFTERNOON

Owen and Maya sit on a blanket, surrounded by rollicking wisps of tall wheatgrass. Maya wears a sundress. Owen sits in jeans without a shirt. A glowing sun. A sepia afternoon.

Maya runs her hand over Owen's chest and draws her fingers down a large scar. Owen's hair is longer now. He places his hand on Maya's growing belly, their shared life inside. He smiles. She stares back with piercing love. They kiss.

Owen WHISPERS something directly into Maya's ear, then drops beneath the canopy of wheatgrass. Maya scans the horizon, breathes in the air, then drops out of sight to lay next to Owen. The sun-blasted field pulses with the wind.

THE END