

IT WAS YOU

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FADE IN:

DOCUMENTARY STYLE FOOTAGE

A CHINESE AMERICAN COUPLE, PETER and GRACE, 60s, on a street bench, looks straight at the camera.

PETER

It was actually her auntie who introduced us. Like a matchmaker.

GRACE

First, she set him up with a friend. When we met, I say, "Do you want an easy life? Or happy one?"

PETER

They don't do it like that anymore. So hard to find someone.

GRACE

Chinatown was better then.

FADE OUT.

OVER BLACK:

BRANDON (V.O.)

Dating apps were supposed to make life easier.

EXT. LOWER EAST SIDE - NEW YORK - NIGHT

MILLENNIALS, late 20s, hop up subway steps, step out of Lyfts, and exit buses onto Ludlow and Stanton Street.

BRANDON (V.O.)

You set your location. Preferences. And you're off.

A CHINESE AMERICAN WOMAN, 28, sophisticated, strides down the block. This is SOPHIA CHAO. We'll learn more about her later.

INT. STANTON SOCIAL - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

A hip bar. As Sophia takes a seat, THREE COPIES of Sophia enter behind her. Different outfits, seats. FOUR dates.

THE SOPHIAS

Tequila soda with a twist.

Four MEN, late 20s, approach them. Big "Is that you?" energy.

BRANDON (V.O.)
 Maybe you're not looking for
 something serious. Maybe you are.

PREPPY MAN, lanky, trips over himself. Steps up to her.

PREPPY MAN
 Sophia.

CUT TO:

BOHEMIAN MAN, boisterous, too eager, says hi.

BOHEMIAN MAN
 Sophia!

CUT TO:

SHY MAN taps her shoulder. Barely ekes out a:

SHY MAN
 Sophia?

CUT TO:

STREETWEAR MAN daps Sophia up with a complicated handshake.

STREETWEAR MAN
 Soph?

Each suitor takes a seat. They start CHATTING away.

BRANDON (V.O.)
 One in five couples that meet
 online get engaged. Did you know
 that?

EXT. STANTON STREET - NIGHT

Sophia 1 and Preppy Man hug goodbye. As soon as Preppy Man is gone, a SHIVER takes over Sophia. Glad that it's over.

BRANDON (V.O.)
 One in five.

Sophia 2 and Bohemian Man share a kiss. He invites her home. Sophia 2 shakes her head "No".

BRANDON (V.O.)
 If you think about it-

Shy Man, tongue wagging, goes for it. Sophia 3 curves him.

BRANDON (V.O.)
Love is just a numbers game.

Sophia 4 and Streetwear Man, all smiles, step out. But when he palms her butt, Sophia SLAPS him! Hops in a passing cab.

INT. CAB - NIGHT

Sophia, flustered, lets her anger fade. Before long, she's swiping on guys again. DING! A new match alert.

BRANDON (V.O.)
You match. Meet. Move on.

As the cab zooms by, we MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. CHINATOWN - NIGHT

A cab zooms by an old shop: WONG DOYER OPTICAL.

INT. WONG DOYER OPTICAL - NIGHT

A family-owned glasses shop. Waxed floors. Glass counters. B&W photos of OWNERS/FAMILY MEMBERS from generations past: Fists raised. Shouting. Loud. Bold. An activist family.

A PROTEST SIGN leans by BRANDON WONG, 28, Chinese American, a VINTAGE LEICA CAMERA strapped around him. He focuses on his phone. A dating app open. Brandon swipes left.

And left.

And left.

Finally, a profile of a SMILING WOMAN appears. Her bio: "3rd yr med school / yes i know a lot about human anatomy / love outdoorsy stuff"

Cute. Brandon takes a deep breath. This is it.

He grips the phone tight... Closes his eyes...

He swipes right... He cracks open an eyelid.

Nothing.

Just another profile staring back at him.

BRANDON
Unless you're me. Then it's just an endless spiral of disappointment.

YE YE (O.S.)
No girl wants drama boy. Let's see.

YE YE, 80s, Brandon's grandfather, mischievous eyes, hobbled by his cane, eases onto a seat. Ye Ye taps Brandon's phone.

NOTE: Chinese dialogue will be italicized.

YE YE (CONT'D)
Why you only say "Hi" to these girls? "Hi." "Hi." "Hi." You should ask the best part of their day!
(beat)
When I saw Nai Nai, I walk up to her, said, *"You're beautiful. Do you want to be my girlfriend?"*
Months later, we were married.

BRANDON
That's different! You met on a blind date! And it's not like there were so many women to choose from then. You're lucky she chose you.

Brandon turns to his grandmother, NAI NAI, 80s, burdened with experience, as she sorts through receipts.

BRANDON (CONT'D)
Nai Nai, weren't there other guys who wanted to date you?

NAI NAI
Only two of them our age owned their own store.

BRANDON
What happened to the other guy, Ye?

YE YE
Car accident. You see, that's why Chinatown is magical. If you stay open, any dream can come true.

BRANDON
You're talking about Nai Nai right? Not the guy getting hit by a car-

YE YE
(checks watch)
Closing time. Don't you have the-

Brandon JOLTS out of his chair. Grabs his sign on his way out. Nai Nai eyes the messaging on it.

NAI NAI

So vulgar.

BRANDON

Whatever it takes to keep Chinatown
Chinatown.

EXT. WONG DOYER OPTICAL - NIGHT

Brandon pops headphones in. Hits PLAY on Jay-Z's "Can't Knock The Hustle". SPRINTS. His protest sign - A GIANT CARTOON PENIS saying, "GENTRIFY THIS!" - gets caught in a tree!

Brandon tugs. Just a young man shaking a penis out of some leaves. He finally frees it. Nearby, a HOMELESS MAN SHOUTS:

HOMELESS MAN

Nice dick, baby!

EXT. CHINATOWN - NIGHT

Brandon hurries along. Kiosks and markets close. Upscale bars and cafes open. The old making way for the new.

TITLE: IT WAS YOU

EXT. PROTEST AREA - NIGHT

As a gaggle of PRESS and INFLUENCERS enter a trendy co-working space, PROTESTORS gather outside across the street.

Wading through them, Brandon gets preoccupied snapping photos of the old rooftops around him. SH-CLICK. SH-CLICK.

FRANCIS MA, 29, Chinese American, a goofy schlub, shovels a slice of pizza down his gullet as he dons an ID lanyard that says 'VIBELY' on it. Slides over for Brandon.

FRANCIS

Maybe if you didn't let these
buildings distract you, you
wouldn't be late.

BRANDON

Sorry, Ye Ye was judging my dating
app openers. Why can't it just be
like a regular conversation?

FRANCIS

It's not! It's kill or be killed.
But you decide not to do battle
before even seeing the field.

BRANDON

Which also means I die less often.
Why can't we do things the way past
generations did? A polite "Hi", a
couple romantic dates, and then
happily ever after. I can't even
make it past step one.

FRANCIS

Didn't your grandparents meet on a
blind date?

BRANDON

You know what I mean.

FRANCIS

No one's perfect. You never know if
they fit if you don't put yourself
out there.

BRANDON

So how do you put yourself out
there then? What's your opener?

Francis MUMBLES something.

BRANDON (CONT'D)

What?

FRANCIS

I invite them to Target! Any home
decor store works actually. Home
Goods. Marshalls. West Elm is too
far, you're not a sociopath.

BRANDON

And this works?

FRANCIS

At first, but we almost never do
anything after. I don't know why.

Brandon turns his attention to the protest crowd.

BRANDON

Feels like half the size of the
last protest. Who've we got today?

FRANCIS
 Seriously? You don't know?

BRANDON
 All you start-ups are the same.

FRANCIS
 OpenSpace is on another level entirely. Their Series B raised triple times the funding of any other co-working venture.

BRANDON
 So it's another WeWork.

FRANCIS
 A WeWork on steroids.

BRANDON
 They're all the same. Invade communities. Oust locals. Profit. What do you actually do again?

Francis struggles to get over the steel stanchion. Flops over. Tries to play it off. He flashes his lanyard badge.

FRANCIS
 I'm the CEO of Vibely!

BRANDON
 Babies fresh out of the womb are CEOs. That doesn't mean anything.

FRANCIS
 Trust me, I'm on your side. But Vibely's YouTube channel creates viral content. Viral content makes me money. My money funds your beer tab. You should want me in there.

BRANDON
 I'll pay you back. Eventually!

We pass Francis and now track along with a WOMAN who greets ATTENDEES, exchanges air kisses, and enters

INT. OPENSOURCE - NIGHT

POP MUSIC VIBRATES this millennial co-working heaven!

Cold brew, kombucha, AND craft beer on tap. Modern art. Private phone booths. So many white boards. Beautiful wooden conference tables. All pastel everything.

The WOMAN continues on. Snags champagnes. KNOCKS ON a door.

SOPHIA (O.S.)

Come in.

INT. PREP ROOM - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

SOPHIA CHAO, the dater from the opening, constantly pushing her glasses up, rehearses a speech. Nervous. Glances at a

MONITOR SCREEN - AN IMAGE OF THE CURRENT CHINATOWN...

SOPHIA

This is just the start of our expansion. As OpenSpace's founder, I will lead the next round of funding for our most ambitious urban innovation project for working professionals: OpenPlaza.

She clicks. In place of the old buildings, a FUTURISTIC, 3D AUTOCAD RENDERING reveals a modern, minimalist PLAZA with vertical gardens, electric scooters, and muted earth tones.

An 80-acre work campus meets utopian city hybrid. OpenPlaza.

SOPHIA (CONT'D)

Chinatown is the next frontier.
It's good to be home.
(to TEDDY)
You'd invest in us right?

TEDDY, 5, chubby, sticks out a supportive thumbs up. MICHELLE CHAO, 33, the woman we've been following, a PR machine, enters. Kisses her boy's cheek.

MICHELLE

Stop pressuring your nephew. Just remember to keep it simple. Press and investors are waiting. Relax.

SOPHIA

You see how that's counter-intuitive, right? What do you mean keep it simple?

MICHELLE

When you first pitched OpenSpace. How did you describe it?

SOPHIA

Your own personal Apple Store you can do office work out of.

MICHELLE

Perfect!

SOPHIA

I don't know about the "good to be home" line.

MICHELLE

Why? We did grow up here.

SOPHIA

Then left when I was nine.

MICHELLE

Semantics! Let's take a question.

Michelle whispers in Teddy's ear. He raises his hand.

SOPHIA

Yes, the handsome gentleman.

TEDDY

How- What's the plan?

Sophia DOUBLE CLICKS. ON THE MONITOR... THREE ELDERLY CHINESE WOMEN appear! A candid photo of them that we ENTER...

EXT. DOYER STREET - DAY

As the three elderly women head down the street, BYSTANDERS pay their respects, bow deeply, and make way for them.

SOPHIA (V.O.)

The THREE NAI NAIs. Zheng, Lam, and Wong. Small business owners in Chinatown, but don't let that fool you. What they say, the neighborhood does. If we get them to sell their shops, the path to OpenPlaza is that much easier.

MICHELLE (V.O.)

Who's first?

SLOW ZOOM on MRS. ZHENG, 80s, stern.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. ZHENG CERAMICS STORE - DAY

FREEZE FRAME of Mrs. Zheng, eyes ablaze with fury. UN-FREEZE.

MRS. ZHENG

*You think I'm here to give money?!
How dare you ask for a hand out!*

SOPHIA (V.O.)

Generationally, Mrs. Zheng is newer on the scene. Fujianese. Her temper's only matched by her desire to make money fast.

ANGLE ON her victims: TWO GIRL SCOUTS, 10, ready to cry.

MRS. ZHENG

Get out of here!

EXT. ZHENG CERAMICS STORE - DAY

The Girl Scouts sprint away as fast as they can.

MICHELLE (V.O.)

So cash is a motivator for her. We can work with that. Next?

Moving halfway down the block, we stop at HAPPY BAKERY.

INT. HAPPY BAKERY - DAY

CLOSE ON a tray of egg tarts as it bakes in the oven. The crust crisping to perfection while the egg filling bubbles.

SOPHIA (V.O.)

Mrs. Lam finds joy in perfecting her family's recipe for the most popular egg tarts in Chinatown.

Through the oven window, MRS. LAM, 70s, a youthful energy, peers at the tarts. JENNY, 25, her granddaughter, an ultra-contoured face and multi-colored hair, opens the door-

MRS. LAM

Wait. Not yet.

Jenny grabs the handle- Mrs. Lam smacks her hand! Finally-

MRS. LAM (CONT'D)

Now. Open now!

Jenny yanks the door open. Pulls the tray of egg tarts out. Mrs. Lam inspects the tarts. Pouring love into each one.

SOPHIA (V.O.)
 She loves what she does. We'll need
 to get creative. And lastly,
 there's Mrs. Wong. Old school
 Cantonese. Of Wong Doyer Optical...

INT. WONG DOYER OPTICAL - BREAK ROOM - NIGHT

OVER THE SHOULDER of Francis, facing MRS. WONG, aka Nai Nai,
 Brandon's grandmother!

MRS. WONG/NAI NAI
*I have known you since you were a
 young boy, dear Francis, but this
 is the first time you ask for help.
 You never bring treats, or offer to
 carry my groceries. I see you go by
 the window, you don't stop in to
 say hello. You are my grandson's
 best friend. Yet you don't even
 call me Nai Nai, like I've asked.*

Nai Nai EXHALES. Francis avoids her gaze.

MRS. WONG/NAI NAI (CONT'D)
 I will introduce you to the elder
 chefs at Jing Fong. They will do
 your video for your Vibely team.

FRANCIS
 Thank you. I'm sorry. I'll do
 better.... Nai Nai.

NAI NAI
*Wei! Bring them sponge cakes when
 you go. They like something sweet.*

Bowing profusely, Francis topples into Ye Ye, who enters.

NAI NAI (CONT'D)
This is who we leave the future to?

YE YE
Oh, he's a good boy.

Off Nai Nai, unsure.

SOPHIA (V.O.)
 Zheng we can get on board. But Lam
 and Wong are trouble. If our
 expansion is going to happen, we
 need them to see that it's best to
 sell to OpenSpace.

MICHELLE (V.O.)
How're you going to do that?

BACK TO:

INT. PREP ROOM - NIGHT

Sophia, eyeing the monitor, turns to her sister.

SOPHIA
Make them offers they can't refuse.

EXT. PROTEST AREA - NIGHT

His camera pointed back up to the rooftops, Brandon backs up into Jenny, flour dust from the bakery on a wild outfit.

BRANDON
Jenny! Your- Um- Hair!

JENNY
Thanks! I'm trying something new.
Our egg tarts miss you!

BRANDON
I'll be by tomorrow. But your
grandma's gotta let me pay!

JENNY
Never. She still thinks she owes
your grandparents. And she loved
the photos you took of the shop!
Now we can remember it forever.

INT. PREP ROOM - NIGHT

Sophia refuses an offered champagne from Michelle. Michelle JOLTS up. She hunches her back. Pantomimes a pregnant belly.

TEDDY
What are you doing, mommy?

MICHELLE
Mommy's holding a fishbowl.
(to Sophia)
Or did you have a bad reaction to
one of those desserts from outside?
I know you hate pastries.

SOPHIA

They don't serve any function.
They're just... Extra.

MICHELLE

Just tell me you're not-

SOPHIA

No! You know me. Love is a numbers game. And batch dating is efficient. Hooking up optional. I ran the data. Eight million people in this city, so four million men-

MICHELLE

Yes, I've seen the spreadsheet.

SOPHIA

Besides, most people settle down when they hit thirty. I'll settle down when OpenSpace IPOs. Everything else is just a fun distraction. I play the numbers, maybe the right guy comes along. But I'm not counting on it.

MICHELLE

Then what's worrying you?

Sophia slumps. Thinking of what it's taken to get here.

SOPHIA

I don't know. Me with my last failed venture...

MICHELLE

So people don't want to buy luxury garbage bags. Lesson learned.

SOPHIA

You taking time away from T-E-D-D-Y-

TEDDY

I can spell.

SOPHIA

(faux shock)
What?! Since when?!

MICHELLE

I told you. I'm happy to help.

SOPHIA

Then there's this whole launch for OpenSpace. I'm not good at the whole schmoozing bit, it feels like lying. That's why I hired you.

MICHELLE

You're just- Smoothing out the edges. Putting on a positive spin.

SOPHIA

Sometimes, I wonder if putting OpenSpace above everything is the right choice. I don't know. I just don't want to let anyone down.

MICHELLE

Look, I went a more traditional route and still ended up alone. Don't get me wrong, that boy is my world, but finding your person isn't the answer to everything. It doesn't always work out.

(shakes it off)

This is your baby, you have to give it everything you've got. We're here because you have vision. You have presence. And you are so- So... Ugly when you get emotional.

(beat)

You got this.

INT. OPENSOURCE - NIGHT

Hearing the PROTESTORS, Michelle gestures to the DJ (who is playing the greatest hits of Flo-Rida, Black Eyed Peas, and Pitbull): Turn the volume up! She guides Sophia to the PRESS:

REPORTER 1

For start-up OpenSpace, this Chinatown return for CEO Sophia Chao-

CUT TO:

REPORTER 2

- has locals worried about what urban campuses mean for the future -

CUT TO:

REPORTER 3
 - and rumors of a potential
 expansion to homes and residences -

SOPHIA
 That's ridiculous. We're a co-
working company. If you think-

MICHELLE
 We appreciate your coming.

Michelle cuts off the interview. Sophia grabs a champagne.
 Gulps it down. She glances over at the DJ: Lower the volume!

SOPHIA
 I had it.

MICHELLE
 Or were you about to tear heads?

EXT. PROTEST AREA - NIGHT

As the CROWD GETS LOUDER, Brandon and Jenny catch up.

BRANDON
 You taking the bakery over soon?

JENNY
 I'm actually trying to move west.

BRANDON
 (can't hear)
 What?

JENNY
 I'm saving up for California!

Off Brandon, shocked. The crowd CRESCENDOES around him.

INT. OPENSOURCE - NIGHT

Sophia, signaling to the DJ to turn it down again, chats with
 Francis, vibing to Flo-Rida, mouth full of shrimp cocktail.

Francis grabs a cannoli off a passing WAITER'S tray. Offers
 it to Sophia, who refuses.

FRANCIS
 Have you tried one? So good.

SOPHIA

Vibely videos are so good! The couples sharing love fears? Tears.

FRANCIS

Long way since college, right? You know, I was worried that Flo-Rida peaked after this album, But he outdid himself with Wild Ones- Sorry, I just love Flo-Rida. Back to Vibely. If you're avail, we'd love to cast you in our next video-

MICHELLE

We would LOVE that. Right, Sophia?

GLORIA (O.S.)

Just saying a quick hello.

GLORIA RODRIGUEZ, 40s, elegant, swoops in. Francis pops a shrimp in his mouth. Misses. Hits another GUEST in the back.

SOPHIA

Gloria, you're here!

GLORIA

Congrats on tonight, Sophia. Let's keep it up, shall we?

Just like that, she's gone. Sophia melts from the praise.

FRANCIS

You have Gloria fucking Rodriguez on as an early investor?!

MICHELLE

She's been a mentor for Sophia.
(sotto)
Can you say protégé?

FRANCIS

Wow. Well! Give the video a think?

Sophia and Michelle regroup. Michelle signals the DJ: Louder!

MICHELLE

It'd show we're real. Human.

SOPHIA

We are human! It feels clickbait-y.

MICHELLE

But it's soft, mushy clickbait.
Like baby Panda videos or cats that
learn how to pee on the toilet-

SOPHIA

(to the DJ)

OH MY GOD PLEASE TURN IT DOWN!

The DJ obliges. A PROTESTOR CHANT can now be heard.

SOPHIA (CONT'D)

What's going on out there?

Sophia storms out. Leaving Francis alone.

FRANCIS

What's wrong with Flo-Rida?

EXT. OPENSOURCE - NIGHT

Sophia takes in the protest. She spots Brandon, now with a
loud speaker. Leading a CHANT.

BRANDON

I SAVE CULTURE! YOU SERVE PROFITS!
WE ARE NOT THE SAME!

EXT. PROTEST AREA - NIGHT

Sophia, seeing the cameras recording, steps to Brandon.

SOPHIA

I'm Sophia Chao. CEO of OpenSpace.
This is my event. And you are?

BRANDON

Brandon Wong. None of us want a
part of what you're doing here.

Michelle pulls Sophia away. It doesn't work.

SOPHIA

My investors inside do.

BRANDON

And how many of them are from
Chinatown? We've been here since
1870. Over 100,000 residents.
Hundreds of small businesses.

SOPHIA
All with stagnant growth. Dying.
I'm from here, I've seen it.

BRANDON
You live here?

SOPHIA
Used to. We moved when I was young.
(Brandon smirks)
And where do you work?

BRANDON
Wong Doyer Optical.

SOPHIA
Not everyone is lucky enough to
sell glasses for a living. I know
your store, your grandparents must
be retiring soon.

BRANDON
You can stay away from our shop.
Chinatown doesn't need you.

SOPHIA
What does your shop do? A few
hundred thousand in revenue?
OpenSpace increases local business.
It brings spending. New jobs. We
bring real benefits to Chinatown.

A SHOCKED SILENCE. Brandon raises his fist.

BRANDON
I SAVE CULTURE! YOU SERVE PROFITS!
WE ARE NOT THE SAME!

The CHANT GROWS. Sophia and Michelle back up into OpenSpace.

INT. OPENSOURCE - NIGHT

EVERYONE stares at Sophia. Suddenly, My House by Flo-Rida
BLARES. The DJ nods to Michelle in solidarity.

MICHELLE
That go how you wanted?

INT. OPENSOURCE BATHROOM - NIGHT

Sophia locks the door. Her chest HEAVES. Nerves shot. She
opens a dating app. Messages a recent MATCH.

SOPHIA (TEXT)

9:30pm?

BLOOP! A THUMBS-UP EMOJI response. Off Sophia, relieved.

EXT. MR. FONG'S - NIGHT

Deep Chinatown. LOUD MUSIC leaks out of a modest dive bar.

FRANCIS (PRE-LAP)

Don't butt heads with Sophia Chao.

INT. MR. FONG'S - NIGHT

Low-key trendy. Wooden blinds. Leafy green plants. Brandon flips through his rooftop photos as Francis berates him.

FRANCIS

She's relentless! At a college hack-a-thon, she created a tool that organized and awarded participants' ideas. She hacked a hack-a-thon!

BRANDON

Does she even know Chinese?

FRANCIS

Your Mandarin sucks more than mine.

BRANDON

Whatever. The bottom line is: If we want to drive her out, then we need to get the Three Nai Nais on board.

FRANCIS

Elders don't exactly love it when younger gens boss them around.

BRANDON

So then what? We let OpenSpace turn Chinatown into a Google Campus?

FRANCIS

I heard Mountain View has a dinosaur skeleton!

BRANDON

We have to do something.

Francis sips his beer. Remembers-

FRANCIS
And they give you free massages!

EXT. MR. FONG'S - NIGHT

Francis and Brandon, both tipsy, stumble out.

BRANDON
We have to keep what we have right now. The history. Memories. People.

FRANCIS
That's what your camera's for! The only people you know are me and your grandparents! What about Jenny? You should ask her out.

BRANDON
She's trying to move to California.

FRANCIS
Give it some time. See if she's down to... Hold your camera.

BRANDON
This is a vintage Leica! No way I'm trusting this to someone else.

Francis slumps... Lightbulb!

FRANCIS
What about Sillo?

BRANDON
Or maybe I should give up apps altogether. What's the point of trying when its always going to end up with the same shitty result? Maybe I need to go old-school.

FRANCIS
That's the whole point! It's anonymous. No profile pics. No bios. The algorithm just scrapes your data and boom: You're matched.
(beat)
Or I can put you in a Vibely video and we find you a date that way.

BRANDON
Why haven't you found someone yet?

FRANCIS

Because I want it too much. You want to be old-school? The traditionalist? This is how you do it. It's like a digital blind date. Like how Ye Ye and Nai Nai met!

BRANDON

(sotto)
Blind dates...

Francis flags down a passing cab. Just as he hops in-

BRANDON (CONT'D)

What's the app called?

INT. SUBWAY CAR - NIGHT

In the lonely car, Brandon takes photos as the Sillo app finishes downloading. On Brandon's phone:

"Welcome to Sillo! Let's find your perfect match. Remember: Only one person at a time. Now, enter your username."

Brandon thinks. Types in "@tipsyeggtart". Sillo loads...

INT. SUBWAY PLATFORM - NIGHT

DING! Brandon steps off the subway. Checks Sillo. A new match - @ladypemberly05! Brandon smiles. Immediately types-

BRANDON/@TIPSYEGGTART

Hi.

BLOOP! A message: "@ladypemberly05 exited the chat." Shit.

EXT. SUBWAY EXIT - NIGHT

DING! A new match - @dangermama152! Brandon waits. Three grey dots appear. She's typing... BLOOP!

@DANGERMAMA152 (V.O.)

dom looking 4 sub for degradation and servitude long term, u in?

BRANDON

Yuh-oh.

He unmatched with @dangermama152. This isn't going well...

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Brandon approaches his apartment. DING! New match -
@spiderlouise! He remembers Francis's training. He types...

BRANDON/@TIPSYEGGTART (V.O.)
In the market for a candle. Feel
like coming with on a Target run?

BLOOP! A quick reply.

@SPIDERLOUISE (V.O.)
That might be the best worst line I
have ever heard.

BRANDON
Damn it, Francis.

Brandon remembers Ye Ye's words of advice. Goes with:

BRANDON/@TIPSYEGGTART
Haha fair enough. So what are we
celebrating today then?

As the reply comes in, he unlocks the home door. Enters

INT. BRANDON'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

BLOOP! Brandon READS the message OUT LOUD as he takes off his
shoes and neatly files them next to Nai Nai's and Ye Ye's.

BRANDON
(reading)
Well, my nephew and I just figured
out our special handshake.

WE HEAR Brandon's VOICE replaced by a familiar VOICE--

@SPIDERLOUISE (V.O.)
He's five years old and he already
remembers it better than I do.

EXT. OPENSOURCE - NIGHT

It's SOPHIA! She and Teddy do their special handshake.
Michelle drags her sister, against her will, into the car.

INT. UBER XL - NIGHT

Michelle, with Teddy asleep on her lap, watches Sophia read YouTube video comments of her outburst: "Capitalism is a disease" "OpenSpace is ruining Chinatown" "GirlBoss wannabe".

EXT. SOPHIA'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Sophia hops out. Michelle pokes her head out the window.

MICHELLE

Eighty four start-ups in this country are valued over a billion. You know how many have women founders? Two. That's-

SOPHIA

2.4%.

MICHELLE

We hit our benchmarks. Gloria anoints you her future successor. OpenSpace starts looking a lot like a white horse with a rainbow horn.

Sophia whispers the word. Doesn't want to jinx it.

SOPHIA

A unicorn.

MICHELLE

We do that. A big rest. Just you and me. K-Town. Soju. Karaoke.

SOPHIA

(enthusiastic)
Maroon 5?

MICHELLE

You know there are other bands-

SOPHIA

I just think Adam Levine gets a bad rap! And he can act! Have you seen him in Begin Again?

MICHELLE

Just remember. Unicorn.

Michelle's Uber leaves. BLOOP! A dating app message: "Sorry, something came up." Sophia unmatched with the guy. Ugh.

INT. SOPHIA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

An immaculate high-rise. The theme for her interior designer was going with was "Svelte". Extreme minimalism. Large prints of Louise Bourgeois's SPIDER SCULPTURES hang on the walls.

Exhausted, Sophia enters. Flicks the lights on. Kicks off her shoes. Microwaves a Tupperware full of seafood pasta-

BLOOP! A new message from Brandon.

BRANDON/@TIPSYEGGTART (V.O.)
I've never had a special handshake
with anyone before.

INT. BRANDON'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

BLOOP! In bed, Brandon grins at the incoming message.

SOPHIA/@SPIDERLOUISE (V.O.)
Maybe you just haven't found the
right partner yet.

Brandon types away as we...

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

DOCUMENTARY STYLE FOOTAGE

CHANG, late 30s, in his work uniform, scowls as he addresses the camera outside his modest restaurant.

CHANG
My business serves about four
hundred customers a day. Seven
cooks. Nine waiters. We've been
here since the 1930s. Chinatown
doesn't need to change.

VOICE (O.S.)
What would you do if you didn't
work at the restaurant?

CHANG
If I didn't-? I don't know. Every
day, I get to be with family. I've
known our head chef since I was a
boy. She's seen me grow up. There's
nothing else I'd want to do.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

INT. BRANDON'S APARTMENT - DAY

Morning. Cramped ceilings. Buddhist statues. Photos of rooftops and other building exteriors. Brandon tip-toes through the tight hallways. Peeks through an open door.

Inside, Nai Nai and Ye Ye sleep soundly. Brandon enters

THE SHRINE ROOM, home of the ANCESTOR SHRINE. Shelves are filled with objects that honor the deceased: Oranges, Buddhist figurines, incense, a vase with wilting flowers.

Brandon lights a new incense stick. Replaces the old one. A daily ritual. He steps away when- He notices-

On top, a framed portrait of Brandon's father, hangs, a little lopsided. Brandon straightens it.

BRANDON
So you're still here.

BACK IN THE APARTMENT

Brandon grabs his camera. Scribbles a note: "Went for egg tarts. Back soon." As he exits, he types on his phone...

BRANDON/@TIPSYEGGTART (V.O.)
Maybe the right partner hasn't
found me. I mean...

EXT. VARIOUS CHINATOWN - DAY

Brandon, typing, heads out on a Notting Hill-style photo tour and EXCHANGES GOOD MORNINGS with FOLKS at his usual stops...

NOTE: BRANDON WILL ALWAYS BE TAKING PHOTOS OF NON-HUMAN OBJECTS. BUILDINGS. DOORS. STREETS. NEVER FACES.

BRANDON/@TIPSYEGGTART (V.O.)
I've basically lived within the
same twenty blocks my entire life.

-- FISH MARKET. He skips around puddles of melting ice streaming from styrofoam storage boxes onto the street.

SOPHIA/@SPIDERLOUISE (V.O.)
What do you do with your friends?

-- FRUIT STANDS. Brandon greets old NAI NAIs as they load fruit from unmarked vans onto their street carts.

BRANDON/@TIPSYEGGTART (V.O.)
My friends?

-- HAPPY BAKERY. He pops in and out. Carries a white box in a plastic bag. Jenny, from the protest, sprints out with an extra box for him, despite his refusals. He finally relents.

INT. BRANDON'S APARTMENT - DAY

The white boxes lay open. Ye Ye, Nai Nai, and Brandon, slowly savor each bite of their egg tarts.

BRANDON/@TIPSYEGGTART (V.O.)
We eat out a lot.

INT. CHINESE RESTAURANT - DAY

The three of them walk in. Brandon immediately HALTS. This Chinese restaurant has no Chinese people in it. He grabs Ye Ye and Nai Nai by the hands and pulls them out.

BRANDON/@TIPSYEGGTART (V.O.)
Maybe too much.

INT. METROGRAPH THEATER - NIGHT

Ye Ye and Nai Nai sneakily pull out a huge thermos, cans of soda and clementines. Brandon hides his face in shame.

BRANDON/@TIPSYEGGTART (V.O.)
We go to the movies.

EXT. CHINATOWN - NIGHT

Almost home, Brandon observes Nai Nai rubbing Ye Ye's back.

BRANDON/@TIPSYEGGTART (V.O.)
We're there for each other. Always.

EXT./INT. WONG DOYER OPTICAL - DAY

Brandon struggles to open the ancient door. With Ye Ye, Nai Nai, they ready the shop for another day. Dust the shelves.

BRANDON/@TIPSYEGGTART (V.O.)
We're family. What about you?

Brandon flips the door sign to 'OPEN'. No one comes. Nai Nai SIGHS. Brandon and Ye Ye share a look.

SOPHIA/@SPIDERLOUISE (V.O.)
I don't really have many-

INT. SOPHIA'S OFFICE - DAY

Michelle waits for Sophia, who re-types her response.

SOPHIA/@SPIDERLOUISE (V.O.)
I try to find a moment when I can.

EXT. OPENSOURCE - DAY

Sophia and Michelle welcome Gloria and the INVESTORS, all hoodies, polos and khakis, with the exception of Gloria because she would never, as they step out of their TESLAS.

INT. OPENSOURCE - DAY

As Gloria rises, Sophia smiles at Brandon's message: "I have all the time in the world."

GLORIA
Sophia. Michelle. Do you know how many companies I invest in?

Sophia shakes her head "No".

GLORIA (CONT'D)
One hundred and thirty nine. That's one hundred and fifty one founders. You can imagine how many come from a similar background as us.

MICHELLE
(sotto)
Do you think "similar background" means "ivy league" or "has a vagina" here?

Sophia SHUSHES her sister.

GLORIA
We have the same ambition. The same drive. I sold my first company at seventeen. Two years later led my next to an IPO. I want my actions to shake the industry. I don't care whose feelings we hurt. Understand?

SOPHIA
Mhm. Yeah. Yes.

GLORIA

I want to invest in us. Because if this works, we all win.

EXT. COLUMBUS PARK - DAY

Brandon, a regular, and Francis, wobbly and inexperienced, WHISPER as a TAI CHI INSTRUCTOR - smooth, meditative - guides ELDERLY CHINESE PEOPLE through various moves.

FRANCIS

Tipsy Eggtart? Does only dating on the app even count as dating?

BRANDON

How I was feeling plus my favorite snack. And sure. It's anonymous. Tonight is our first date. Why are you here anyway? You never come to tai chi.

FRANCIS

I needed you in a calm headspace when I tell you...

The Instructor GLARES at him. Francis lowers his voice. Improvises faux TAI CHI moves that are definitely wrong.

FRANCIS (CONT'D)

I'm getting a dog!

BRANDON

What! Amazing! What kind-

FRANCIS

~~And-I'm-leaving-Chinatown-I-closed-on-a-condo-in-Long-Island-City-I-can't-wait-for-you-to-see-it-don't-be-mad-the-dog-is-super-cute-~~

BRANDON

You're LEAVING?!

The group wraps up. Exchanges bows.

BRANDON (CONT'D)

"Closed on a condo"? Long Island City? How old do you think you are?

FRANCIS

You were born here. Moved back to help Ye Ye and Nai Nai after your dad passed...

(MORE)

FRANCIS (CONT'D)

But I want my own space. To start fresh. And I- I don't want to end up like you.

BRANDON

What's wrong with Chinatown?

Brandon, irked, checks the time. Hustles off. An ELDERLY NAI NAI angrily leers at Francis, the disturber.

FRANCIS

Sup, Nai Nai? Been to Target?

INT. WONG DOYER OPTICAL - DAY

Brandon grabs a box from a shelf that Nai Nai reaches for.

NAI NAI

I can get those myself, you know.
That's why god created ladders.

BRANDON

There's too much changing in Chinatown. Can you believe Francis is leaving? Nai Nai, you and Ye Ye wouldn't sell the store, right?

Ye Ye and Nai Nai, guilty, exchange a glance.

NAI NAI

Brandon, do you know Florida?

YE YE

Just tell him.

BRANDON

Florida?

YE YE

We're thinking about retiring.

NAI NAI

Not "we". Don't say we.

The news HITS Brandon. A visceral reaction.

BRANDON

But we've been here for generations. This is home.

YE YE

*A shopkeeper's life lasts so long.
This place is falling apart.*

(MORE)

YE YE (CONT'D)

I bought a "speedo". Do you know what a "speedo" is?

NAI NAI

Business is slow. Always losing customers...

BRANDON

If we need more customers, then let's get some! We can use social media. Digital. Google Chrome!

NAI NAI

You know how to do that?

BRANDON

Our family has fought so hard to be here. Is that how we want to be remembered? Like people who cared more about getting dogs and moving to Long Island City? Like Francis?

YE YE

Francis is getting dog? How old does he think he is?

Brandon, synapses firing, speaks with increasing fervor.

BRANDON

Give me the summer. If business improves, I'll send you to Florida! If not, go to whoever wants to buy. Just promise you won't sell the shop before then.

Nai Nai weighs the offer. Glances at Ye Ye for reassurance.

NAI NAI

Change the store. But if nothing improves, we will do what we must.

YE YE

And I get to wear my speedo.

Brandon winces at the thought. Nai Nai goes back to work.

NAI NAI

Even if I don't know anyone. Or if they even speak Chinese there...

YE YE

This is America! They speak Chinese everywhere!

Off Brandon, processing. It's on.

INT. OPENSOURCE - CONFERENCE ROOM - NIGHT

Investors gone, Sophia stares out the glass wall when- A MARKER FLIES AT HER FACE! Michelle stands before a whiteboard that says "REVAMP IMAGE -> GAIN NEW MEMBERS".

SOPHIA

Sorry! What's Teddy doing?

Teddy, outside, runs from table to table. He gives a thumbs up or thumbs down to the few MEMBERS present.

MICHELLE

He's been really into asking people to pitch him since the event...

As Michelle DRONES, Sophia types on her phone-

MICHELLE (CONT'D)

Sophia! Who are you even talking to? Have you even been hearing me?

SOPHIA

I need to show people the human me.

MICHELLE

The baby panda you.

SOPHIA

(relenting)

Okay. Call Francis over at Vibely.

MICHELLE

Already did. Yay! We'll have to rehearse. And make your face look less... Like that.

Off Sophia, unaware of her scrunched expression.

INT. OPENSOURCE - LATER

The only light on is in Sophia's office. Sophia pulls a pillow, blanket, and an eye mask from her desk drawer-

BLOOP! A new message from @TopsyEggtart.

BRANDON/@TIPSYEGGTART (V.O.)

Sorry for the late reply. It's been a crazy day.

SOPHIA/@SPIDERLOUISE (V.O.)
Baby panda attack?

BRANDON/@TIPSYEGGTART (V.O.)
They were everywhere. It was a
bloodbath. They don't just eat
bamboo it turns out.

SOPHIA/@SPIDERLOUISE (V.O.)
I had a long one too. And besides,
when did online dating become only
about instant gratification? We can
be better than that.

BRANDON/@TIPSYEGGTART (V.O.)
We can! Dating moves so fast. You
barely get to know someone...

INT. WONG DOYER OPTICAL - NIGHT

Brandon, doing inventory, messages Sophia.

SOPHIA/@SPIDERLOUISE (V.O.)
Or it just drags forever and ever,
when you know it's not going to go
anywhere. Not a great use of time.

INT. OPENSOURCE - NIGHT

Sophia gazes at a portrait of Michelle and Teddy. The absence
of a father figure is noticeable to us.

INTERCUT BETWEEN SOPHIA AND BRANDON.

BRANDON/@TIPSYEGGTART (V.O.)
Sometimes, I wish...

SOPHIA/@SPIDERLOUISE (V.O.)
You could go on a date...

BRANDON/@TIPSYEGGTART (V.O.)
Without ever having to...

SOPHIA/@SPIDERLOUISE (V.O.)
Actually meet.

Both of them hold their breaths. Is this actually possible?

BRANDON/@TIPSYEGGTART (V.O.)
What if it doesn't work?

SOPHIA/@SPIDERLOUISE (V.O.)
Blame it on the algorithm.

She snuggles up in her makeshift bed. Pulls the eye mask on.
Takes a moment to EXHALE when- BLOOP! She grabs her phone.

BRANDON/@TIPSYEGGTART (V.O.)
I think the algorithm knows what
it's doing.

Sophia grins. Starts tapping her reply when-

PING! BOHEMIAN MAN, from the opener, messages: "You free tn?"

Sophia jolts out of her seat! Trips over her blanket as she
throws off the eye mask. Is headed to the door when-
MICHELLE, also on her way out, bumps into her.

MICHELLE
Glad you're not spending another
night in the chair. Headed home?
(Sophia, guilty silence)
Or seeing the guy you've been
talking to all day?

SOPHIA
Not exactly the guy, more like a
guy I'm talking to.

MICHELLE
Sophia. You do this. It's always
about what's new. Or better.

SOPHIA
It is not! This guy is 100% coming
over in the next half hour. It can
also be about what's easiest.
(Michelle deadpans)
What? It doesn't mean that I'm
giving up on Sillo guy.

MICHELLE
But if there's a chance that Sillo
guy is a good match, don't you want
to see that through?

Sophia SIGHS.

SOPHIA
Yes, there may be a slight
possibility that it might turn into
something meaningful.
(beat)
(MORE)

SOPHIA (CONT'D)

But given the time, the number of characters in his message, and what I'd say is a pretty face but a very generous height listing, there's a roughly 80% chance this guy can be convinced to buy a nice bottle of wine on his way. So...

Sophia trots out of the office. Head held high.

INT. SOPHIA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Sophia, as cool as can be, opens the door to Bohemian Man, holding a bottle of wine.

SOPHIA

Hi.

As they start making out, we see the tornado of tried-on outfits and discarded accessories thrown about the room.

INT. SOPHIA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Sophia and Bohemian Man, spent, lie in bed together.

BOHEMIAN MAN

Dinner tomorrow?

SOPHIA

I'm with my sister and her kid.

BOHEMIAN MAN

I'm great with kids. We can double with her and her husband.

SOPHIA

That's going to be tough.

BOHEMIAN MAN

How come?

SOPHIA

He left seven years ago.

Oh. Bohemian Man picks up his clothes on his way out.

BOHEMIAN MAN

This is enough for you then?

SOPHIA

You messaged me at 10pm. Was there something I missed?

Bohemian Man closes the door shut. Sophia strokes the empty space on the bed he left behind. Longing for something else.

INT. WONG DOYER OPTICAL - DAY

Brandon frowns as he pulls down on his phone screen to refresh. Refresh. Refresh. The frown deepens.

ANGLE ON the screen. The shop's Instagram page. Random photos. No cohesive design. He taps over to OpenSpace.

Hundreds of thousands of followers. A clear visual language. Brandon's going to have to step his game up. Big time.

EXT./INT. - WONG DOYER OPTICAL - DAY

Brandon drags Wong Doyer Optical into the digital age.

START MONTAGE

-- LIGHT STORE. Brandon walks out with several lamps. The wind takes a light bounce out of his arms! He runs after it.

-- WONG DOYER OPTICAL. A makeshift photo studio set up. Brandon, camera in hand, takes product photos. Each FLASH blinds a CUSTOMER working with Ye Ye and Nai Nai.

-- ONLINE STORE. Now with HUNDREDS of shots, Brandon, a stack of glasses next to him, uploads them to the newly created e-Commerce store. Struggles to stay awake.

-- SNACK BREAK. Brandon, Nai Nai, and Ye Ye munch on their usual egg tart order. Brandon, finished, grabs his camera.

-- FACEBOOK. Brandon watches Sophia in a Vibely video. He creates an event. Another anti-OpenSpace protest.

END MONTAGE

BLOOP! Brandon checks Sillo. A message from @SpiderLouise: "We still on for Metrograph tonight?"

Brandon replies: "I'll be there."

EXT. METROGRAPH THEATER - NIGHT

Brandon hurries in with the crowd.

INT. METROGRAPH THEATER - FOYER - NIGHT

An intimate indie theater. Brandon steps to JUDGY CASHIER.

BRANDON

Two for Princess Mononoke, please.
Actually- is it possible to leave
the other ticket here for her?

Judgy Cashier stares quizzically.

BRANDON (CONT'D)

I told my date- girlfriend- movie
watching person I'd get here first.
That way we could watch the movie
without ever meeting each other.

JUDGY CASHIER

Are you sure this... "her"...
actually... you know... exists?

BRANDON

Just the two tickets. Thank you.

JUDGY CASHIER

And what name should I put the
other ticket under?

BRANDON

Spider- Spider Louise.

JUDGY CASHIER

Spider Louise.

BRANDON

Yes.

JUDGY CASHIER

Two tickets for Princess Mononoke.
Theater 8. We'll have it waiting
for her when she swings in. Thwip!

Judgy Cashier shoots webs like Spider-Man. Brandon heads into

INT. THEATER 8 - NIGHT

Brandon, at the front of the packed house, taps his foot. He
keeps glancing back. Someone takes an empty seat. Not her.

VOICE (O.S.)

Is this seat taken?

ANIME WOMAN, 40s, wearing a Princess Mononoke t-shirt, slurps on a massive ICEE drink.

BRANDON

Yes- No! No. All yours. Sorry.

As the lights go down... BLOOP! @SpiderLouise: "I'm here."

OVER TO THE BACK WHERE

Sophia is smushed between two COUPLES getting hot and heavy.

SOPHIA/@SPIDERLOUISE (V.O.)

So what's this about?

BRANDON/@TIPSYEGGTART (V.O.)

A prince gets caught up in a war
between humans and the forest gods.

CUT TO:

ON-SCREEN: LADY EBOSHI deftly wields a rifle.

Sophia SHOVES the horny couple. They barely notice. A torn condom wrapper lands in Sophia's lap.

SOPHIA

Seriously???

Someone SHUSHES her. Sophia refocuses on her phone.

SOPHIA/@SPIDERLOUISE (V.O.)

Lady Eboshi is a QUEEN.

BRANDON/@TIPSYEGGTART (V.O.)

But she started all the mess!

ANIME WOMAN

Really?

ON Anime Woman, now annoyed by the glare of Brandon's phone. Brandon lowers the brightness. Angles the phone away.

CUT TO:

ON-SCREEN: A MASSIVE battle rages between nature and man.

Sophia and Brandon are glued to their seats. Mouths agape.

SOPHIA/@SPIDERLOUISE (V.O.)

Holy shit.

BRANDON/@TIPSYEGGTART (V.O.)

Right?!

Sophia bites her lip. Types...

SOPHIA/@SPIDERLOUISE (V.O.)
 You know, if we were together, I
 might want to hold your hand.

Thinking dots appear... A HOLDING HANDS EMOJI pops on the screen! From Brandon. Sophia smiles, but then-

SOPHIA
 Why is my arm wet? Why is it wet?!

She throws her sweater on the Couple next to her. They simply take it. Incorporate it into their make-out session.

Sophia returns with the same emoji. Brandon smiles. Next to him, Anime Woman rolls her eyes.

CUT TO:

Tears stream down Sophia's face during the film's finale.

ON-SCREEN: SAN and PRINCE ASHITAKA look out as new life sprouts from the once desolate hills.

SAN (ON-SCREEN)
 Even if all the trees return, it
 won't be his forest anymore. The
 Forest Spirit is dead now.

PRINCE ASHITAKA (ON-SCREEN)
 Never. He is life itself. He isn't
 dead, San. He is here with us now,
 trying to tell us something. That
 it's time for both of us to live.

Sophia lets a GUTTURAL SOB escape. The couples stop hooking up. *Is she okay?* Even Brandon reacts. He types...

BRANDON/@TIPSYEGGTART (V.O.)
 Did you hear that?

SOPHIA/@SPIDERLOUISE (V.O.)
 So embarrassing.

Credits roll. Lights come up. The horny Couple rises.

SOPHIA
 I'm glad you kids are being safe.
 But maybe try a bathroom next time?

Getting up, Anime Girl slaps Brandon's phone from his hands!

ANIME GIRL

The whole movie?! Rude. Just rude.

As Brandon bends down to get it, Sophia scans the crowd.

Nothing. She rises. Heads out. But just as she does...

Brandon turns around in his seat. Searching.

INT. METROGRAPH THEATER - FOYER - NIGHT

Brandon, in a huff, bee-lines to the JUDGY CASHIER.

BRANDON

She showed up! She! Showed! Up!

STONED CASHIER turns. It's a different person.

STONED CASHIER

Can I help you, sir?

BRANDON

Sorry. I left a ticket for a-
Friend. To pick up.

STONED CASHIER

(so stoned)

I know exactly what you mean. One
time. I dropped a dollar bill on
the ground. And when I went back to
find it, it was still there!

He's really proud of this story. Brandon moves on.

BRANDON

By any chance do you know what she
looked like?

STONED CASHIER

What your friend looks like?

(Brandon pleads)

Let me see who was on duty then.

EXT. METROGRAPH THEATER - NIGHT

Outside, Sophia looks for an Uber. We can see through the
glass doors as the Cashier comes back to Brandon. No luck.

As Brandon exits the theater, Sophia recognizes him.

SOPHIA

Protestor guy.

Brandon turns her way. Steps toward her-- She readies--

SOPHIA (CONT'D)

You had some nerve--

And he passes Sophia without so much as a thought! Sophia SCOFFS. How could he not recognize her?

INT. SUBWAY PLATFORM - NIGHT

The train leaves just as Brandon gets to the platform.

SUBWAY ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

Next train arriving in... Two...
Minutes.

Sophia swipes through the turnstile. Doesn't take long to spot Brandon, taking a picture of the station. She pokes him--

SOPHIA

You!

BRANDON

Jesus! Who does that?

(places her)

Sophia. OpenPlace.

SOPHIA

Space. OpenSpace.

BRANDON

You're all just a pastel and sans serif font away from each other.

Did you follow me?

SOPHIA

I was at the Metrograph. Went to watch Princess--

BRANDON

Mononoke. By yourself? What did you think?

Sophia blushes. Lies.

SOPHIA

My sister was with me. But she lives uptown. It was... Surprising. What about you?

BRANDON

On a date. With a person. Woman. A very real woman.

SOPHIA

Then the lights came up and she realized that, while not unattractive, there wasn't really much else to work with?

AN INCOMING TRAIN interrupts them. The doors open. Brandon steps on. Sophia sticks her arm between the closing doors.

BRANDON

This evening was going so well.

SOPHIA

Oh, I'm sorry. Do you not like it when someone invades your space and berates you in public?

BRANDON

You looked like you knew how to handle yourself.

The doors close... But surprisingly, they open back up!

SUBWAY ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

Ladies and gentlemen, we are delayed due to an investigation.

With a SCOFF, Brandon hops off the train. Sophia follows.

EXT. CHINATOWN - NIGHT

Sophia searches for the nearest subway station on her phone.

BRANDON

I know the way. It's just a few blocks north from here.

SOPHIA

My maps app says the next train leaves in twelve minutes. Says to hang right first, then head up.

Brandon walks his way. Notices Sophia isn't with him. Fine.

EXT. SIDEWALK - MOVING - NIGHT

As Brandon heads to the subway, we see Sophia catch up next to him, riding a BIRD SCOOTER. He rolls his eyes. Of course.

BRANDON

You know how dangerous those are?
(Sophia pays him no mind)
(MORE)

BRANDON (CONT'D)

I assume ignoring people who know better than you is how OpenSpace became such a success story.

SOPHIA

I'm running a business. Same as you. I don't know why we can't just be civil about all of this.

BRANDON

Protests are civil. And at least my business doesn't have to destroy others to stay afloat.

SOPHIA

It's just shouting. What do you think business is? If I win, you lose. I sell an experience.

BRANDON

Cold brew is not an experience!

Sophia speeds up. Brandon power walks. Brandishes his camera.

BRANDON (CONT'D)

That's why I take pictures. So we can remember the way things were.
(beat)
You should slow down.

SOPHIA

Maybe what you're feeling is fear!

BRANDON

Of what?

SOPHIA

Of failing if you ever tried to really make something of your own.

Brandon brushes the line off.

BRANDON

I'm part of something bigger. We've been here for generations.

SOPHIA

People used paper maps for generations! If we followed your lead we'd be stuck MapQuest-ing places. Instead, I can get around here as well as you do. Better!

They arrive at a crosswalk. The Walk Light reads DON'T WALK.

BRANDON

You think you know Chinatown better than me? You get to the station before me, I drop this whole thing. No more shouting. No more protests.

SOPHIA

And if I lose?

BRANDON

You leave Chinatown.

SOPHIA

Come on-

BRANDON

Okay, okay... If I win, you pay for some renovations for the store. A new door, some wallpaper.

Sophia considers.

SOPHIA

Done. When do we start?

She follows Brandon's gaze to the Walk Light. Grips the scooter handles. Brandon readies to run. The light turns...

GREEN! Sophia hangs right. Brandon shoots forward!

EXT. CHINATOWN - MOVING - CONTINUOUS - DAY

WITH SOPHIA:

DRUM BEATS and CYMBAL CRASHES nearby. Ignoring the SOUNDS, Sophia checks her MAP APP: Her blue arrow quickly moving along the prescribed route.

She grins. Turns onto a block where-

A LION DANCE UNFOLDS! Facing a store, two DANCERS - one controls the head, the other the rear - jump back and forth, while PERCUSSIONISTS carry the beat. Sophia taps a BYSTANDER.

SOPHIA

What's this for?

BYSTANDER

This store just opened up! The local lion dancers come and bring good luck! Ward off evil spirits!

Sophia checks her app. Her optimal route takes her right through the block. She hops off the scooter. Pushes through.

SOPHIA

Excuse me- Sorry- So sorry-

WITH BRANDON:

Brandon jogs through a back alleyway.

Skips down the block.

Even stops to peek at a fruit stand.

He checks his phone. Yeah, he has time.

BACK TO SOPHIA:

Finally through the crowd, Sophia hops back on the scooter.

Checks her phone. Three minutes away.

She REVS the accelerator. Speeds down the road.

BACK TO BRANDON:

He sees the subway entrance ahead. Doesn't see Sophia anywhere. Brandon strides forward-

SOUVENIR VIVIAN

Brandon!

SOUVENIR VIVIAN, 50s, a portly, boisterous hawker of fine tchotchkes, springs forward. Blocks Brandon's path.

BRANDON

Auntie Vivian! So great to see you-

SOUVENIR VIVIAN

I've been meaning to come by the store. My glasses- What do you call them- They sit on your nose-

BRANDON

Nose pads.

SOUVENIR VIVIAN

Nose pads! They're always slipping-

Brandon spots Sophia, her scooter whizzing closer.

BRANDON

Great-come-by-the-store-we'll-fix-it-I-have-to-go-good-to-see-you-

Brandon sprints away! Sophia spots him. Sees her victory path. She's won. But she doesn't see-

The BICYCLE DELIVERY MAN speeding at her!

An impending collision- Sophia hits the brake. Braces herself-

Brandon tackles Sophia back onto the sidewalk!

The Delivery Man SWERVES BY. Unleashes CHINESE CURSE WORDS.

Brandon and Sophia lay on the ground. Faces inches away.

BRANDON (CONT'D)

Are you hurt?

SOPHIA

I don't think so. How did you-

BRANDON

A few emergency room trips as a kid, you learn to look out for them. Are you sure you're okay?

SOPHIA

Yes. Fine. Completely.

BRANDON

We can call an ambulance. Or take you to the hospital-

SOPHIA

Brandon. See? Not a mark on me.

She means it. She's completely fine. They share a moment.

BRANDON

Okay... Expect an invoice in the next five to seven business days.

SOPHIA

What?

Brandon sprints into the station! Sophia chases after him.

INT. SUBWAY PLATFORM - NIGHT

Brandon slides past the closing doors just as Sophia makes it to the platform. He waves at her as the train rolls out. Defeated, she takes an empty seat on a nearby bench.

SUBWAY ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
The next train will be arriving in
four...ty-two... minutes.

SOPHIA
Oh, come on!

INT. SUBWAY CAR - NIGHT

Brandon, smug, takes a seat as the train pulls out. He feels his side... And his face FALLS as he raises his camera up.

His reflection mangled in the lens, cracked and broken.

INT. BRANDON'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Brandon takes off his shoes. Nai Nai and Ye Ye read the newspaper at the dining table.

NAI NAI
Did you eat? I'll cut some fruit.

BRANDON
Nai Nai, I'm fine.

NAI NAI
You don't like fruit now? I cut.

YE YE
Didn't the movie end an hour ago?

BRANDON
I took the subway.

YE YE
The subway? It's a ten minute walk!
What a waste of \$2.75! You know
what you could have bought with
that? Two slices of pizza, ten
Trader Joe's bananas, a new sink
sponge for Nai Nai...

Ye Ye rattles on with his list. Off Brandon, content with taking the long way home.

INT. OPENSOURCE - NIGHT

Sophia, in her office, already set-up for another all-nighter, recounts the date to Michelle over FaceTime.

MICHELLE (FACETIME)
It's exciting. He could've been anyone. For all we know, it could have been Bob!

BOB, a hopelessly awkward guy, passes by Sophia's door. He points to himself: *Are you talking about me?*

SOPHIA
Doing great, Bob! Love the Crocs!

MICHELLE (FACETIME)
Are you at work right now?

SOPHIA
I'm prepping! Our pitches to the Nai Nais tomorrow have to be tight.

Off-screen, Teddy calls for his mother.

MICHELLE (FACETIME)
The child beckons. You sure you don't want to take care of Teddy for me this weekend? He's at that stage where he's still cute but the patriarchy is starting to seep in.

SOPHIA
You're so funny when you're tired.

MICHELLE
Don't stay there all night.

They hang up. Sophia settles in for a late night.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

DOCUMENTARY STYLE FOOTAGE

Two shy CHINESE AMERICAN GIRLS, JANICE and JANET, 8, share an ice cream cone in front of their mother's DISCOUNT STORE.

VOICE (O.S.)
Do you want to help your mom with the store one day?

JANICE
I don't know.

JANET
Maybe.

VOICE (O.S.)
Why "Maybe" Janet?

JANET

Be- Because she says we can do whatever we want to do.

VOICE (O.S.)

Ooh. And why does she say that?

JANICE

Because she loves us.

VOICE (O.S.)

How do you know she loves you?

JANET

Because she- She tells us- Told us to tell you that she does.

The two BEAM. Satisfied with their answers.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

INT. WONG DOYER OPTICAL - DAY

Brandon and Nai Nai, amazed, watch as CONTRACTORS install a new door and wallpaper to the store, courtesy Sophia.

BRANDON

See, Nai Nai? Things are getting better for us, you'll see.

He heads out the door with Francis. Off Nai Nai, impressed.

EXT. CHINATOWN - DAY

Brandon, bubbly, recounts the date night to Francis.

FRANCIS

Sounds kinky. Kinky and sad. So this is it? Holding hands over chat with a complete stranger?

BRANDON

That's not all we're gonna do.

FRANCIS

And what do you have planned for us today? Work has been busy lately-

A SWARM OF TOURISTS sprout out from a shop. Catching Francis on their current as Brandon, not pay attention, continues on.

BRANDON

What do you actually do at Vibely?
It's like all you do is just go to
parties and talk to people. I swear-

He turns. Francis is a block behind him.

FRANCIS

You couldn't stop?! Tourists, man.
Now what's the plan?

INT. SOPHIA'S APARTMENT - DAY

Sophia readies for the day. Like a superhero, she assembles
her power outfit: Power skirt. Power shirt. Power jacket.
Power hair pins. Power purse. Power heels.

Determined, she struts out the door and...

EXT. CHINATOWN/ZHENG CERAMICS STORE - DAY

Down the street! With the confidence of a Wall Street
executive, she cuts through the sidewalk CROWD.

BRANDON (V.O.)

We need to make sure the Three Nai
Nais don't sell to OpenSpace. First
up: Zheng Ceramics Store. Of the
three, Zheng Nai Nai is the most
likely to cut a deal.

Sophia turns the corner. Waves at the expectant Mrs. Zheng,
from outside. Mrs. Zheng waves back.

A few steps behind Sophia, Brandon and Francis stop and eye
the three stores they have to defend.

As they head to Zheng Ceramics Store, we see TWO OTHER COPIES
of Brandon and Francis head to the other stores. Different
outfits. THREE different days of defense.

NOTE: Though we'll see Sophia/Brandon/Francis in the stores
together, they will not interact with each other.

INT. ZHENG CERAMICS STORE - DAY

On her laptop, Sophia, looking very official, lays out
various models and visuals of Mrs. Zheng's property.

SOPHIA

Not only are we prepared to offer you a generous sum for this location, but we will also include a percentage of future earnings.

MRS. ZHENG

And all of this will be gone?

SOPHIA

Oh no. We want to preserve as much of the original building as we can.

Off Mrs. Zheng, impressed by Sophia. Heads into the back.

AT THE SAME TIME BEHIND SOPHIA

Brandon and Francis chase Mrs. Zheng, heated, now interacting with the two men, around the store.

BRANDON

OpenSpace is ruining-

MRS. ZHENG

Don't care!

BRANDON

Corporate America-

MRS. ZHENG

Don't care!

Francis puts a hand on Mrs. Zheng's shoulder.

FRANCIS

Zheng Nai Nai. You're a good woman. Think of your children. The fate of future generations rests in your lovely hands. It's all up to you.

Mrs. Zheng peels each of Francis's fingers off.

MRS. ZHENG

No children. Don't. Care.

BRANDON

Why not?

MRS. ZHENG

Do you know how much OpenSpace wants to offer me to build here? Chinatown needs to join the future. Isn't that the American Dream?

Brandon and Francis leave. Mrs. Zheng returns to her seat across Sophia. Offers her hand. The two shake on their deal.

WIPE TO:

INT. HAPPY BAKERY - DAY

Sophia and Mrs. Lam, Jenny's grandmother, munch on egg tarts. Mrs. Lam, tiny but towering, assesses the woman ahead of her.

MRS. LAM

You're younger than I imagined.
Probably not too far from my
granddaughter's age.

SOPHIA

I get that. I'd love to meet her.

MRS. LAM

Oh, no. I don't think you will.

Sophia stops mid-bite.

SOPHIA

I apologize if I've offended you-

MRS. LAM

I admire your ability. Ambition.
But I am happy as a simple baker.

SOPHIA

And you don't want to share those
egg tarts with others? We can help-

MRS. LAM

No, no. Now, I only want to spend
my years with the people I love and
watch as their dreams come true.

Sophia packs up her things. Hands Mrs. Lam her card. Gently takes her hand. Sincere. No hard sell here.

SOPHIA

In case you change your mind.

Sophia exits. Brandon and Francis, in a fuss, burst in.

FRANCIS

*Lam Nai Nai we need your help we
need to get OpenSpace out of here-*

MRS. LAM

I informed the OpenSpace woman that have no interest in selling. You should stay out of this. Let the grown ups take care of things.

BRANDON

We can do more! Come out to our next protest- Don't you want to repay my grandparents?

MRS. LAM

Young man. Your grandparents didn't help me because they wanted to control my life. They wanted me to choose what was best for my family.

She shoves a large white box in his hands. Shifts to a menacing tone that threatens as only an old grandma can.

MRS. LAM (CONT'D)

Please enjoy these egg tarts and tell your grandparents I hope they're healthy and doing well.

In the back room, we spot Jenny, who's heard everything.

WIPE TO:

EXT. WONG DOYER OPTICAL - DAY

Brandon, exhausted, passes by the shop when he notices a familiar face speaking with his grandparents. Sophia.

INT. WONG DOYER OPTICAL - DAY

Sophia, dressed down and casual, is barely a sentence into her pitch with Nai Nai and Ye Ye when Brandon BARRELS IN.

BRANDON

No! You have to leave! She'll turn this place into a whitewashed matcha cafe if she can-

NAI NAI

Brandon. I already told Sophia her offer isn't welcome here.

SOPHIA

Something about a promise you made to send them to Florida soon?

BRANDON
That's right.

SOPHIA
Where's your camera? Didn't think
I'd ever see you without it.

YE YE
Oh- It broke when he saved someone
from getting hit by a delivery bike
we offered to get him a new one but-

BRANDON
Ye!-

NAI NAI
He's doing such a great job. He
already got the door replaced. And
the entire store re-painted!

SOPHIA
Is that so?

BRANDON
That's... Right.

NAI NAI
Please leave. We don't have any use
for people like you.

With that, Sophia exits. Brandon deflates.

YE YE
She's very pretty, isn't she?

EXT. CHINATOWN ICE CREAM FACTORY - DAY

Brandon and Francis munch on their ice cream.

FRANCIS
So OpenSpace only has Zheng Nai Nai
on board. That's a good start.
How's modernizing the shop going?

BRANDON
I set up a Yelp page. All that's on
there is a three star review from
someone who only wrote "yeet."

Yeesh. Francis looks on the bright side.

FRANCIS

We'll be alright. I bet OpenSpace
is having a tough day.

MICHELLE (PRE-LAP)

Today is the best day!

INT. OPENSOURCE - DAY

In a now BUSTLING OpenSpace, on various TV monitors, a Vibely
YouTube video, entitled "Swipe Love - Start-Up Founder Speed
Dates 30 Guys, featuring Sophia Chao of OpenSpace" plays.

View count: 16,536,005.

IN THE YOUTUBE VIDEO, Sophia puts on a show: She's
charismatic. Approachable. She reads a question off a card.

SOPHIA (ON-SCREEN)

A recent moment I regret? At our
Chinatown opening, I reacted poorly
to a local activist. I only thought
of myself. That's not who I am.

Michelle watches the monitor as Sophia tries to turn it off.

MICHELLE

Wait- Here, the best part-

SOPHIA (ON-SCREEN)

I lost the central pillar of our
OpenSpace identity: Community
transformation.

MICHELLE

Community transformation. I'm so
glad we practiced that.

SOPHIA

So glad.

MICHELLE

And you didn't like any of them?
What about the guy who kept showing
you pictures of his mom- Nope.
Saying it out loud made it worse.

Sophia spots A COUPLE meeting for lunch. GIRL jumps into
GUY'S arms. Excited kisses. Hold hands as they head out.

SOPHIA

They were just... Surface level.

She opens Sillo. No new messages. Her shoulders sink. Michelle looks on as Sophia trudges back to

INT. SOPHIA'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS - DAY

Michelle follows Sophia in. The AutoCAD layout of the block open on Sophia's monitor. Three locations - Mrs. Zheng's, Wang's, and Lam's - highlighted in "IN PROGRESS" YELLOW.

MICHELLE

You're upset. New sign-ups have skyrocketed since the video. Something happen with the Three Nai Nais?

Sophia CLICKS. One location turns to "COMPLETED" GREEN.

SOPHIA

Zheng accepted. I think I can get to Mrs. Lam- What does community transformation even mean anyway?

MICHELLE

Anything! Did you make sure to tell them that we're trying to change as little as possible? Keep the neighborhood intact?

SOPHIA

I still feel bad about what I said to Brandon that night.

MICHELLE

Mr. Wong Doyer Popsicle? Warby Martyr? Lenscrappers?

SOPHIA

The wordplay is stunning.

MICHELLE

Whatever. He deserved it. What about Mrs. Wong?

SOPHIA

A hard pass.

MICHELLE

See? We've got plenty of work ahead of us. Why worry about Brandon?

SOPHIA

I just wish we didn't have to put on this pretend face to get new members.

(MORE)

SOPHIA (CONT'D)

If they don't like me, fine! At least someone like Brandon is honest about his hate for me.

MICHELLE

I'm sure he doesn't hate you.

(beat)

I know what this is about.

SOPHIA

You do?

MICHELLE

You're trying to give yourself more work so you don't have to come with us to the Hamptons next month!

You're going to burn out.

(Sophia feigns guilt)

Teddy misses his Auntie Sophia. You sure you can't come over tonight?

SOPHIA

I told you. I have a date.

EXT. UPPER WEST SIDE - NIGHT

Brandon, slightly more dressed up than usual, steps out of the subway. Strides along the pretty blocks of the mid 70s. He stops in front of a quaint Italian bistro.

MICHELLE (V.O.)

And how exactly are you going to both be on a date... Separately?

SOPHIA (V.O.)

It's all been planned. Should be back home in time to start strategizing for Mrs. Lam and Wong.

MICHELLE (V.O.)

Aw, cute.

SOPHIA (V.O.)

We'll be going to each other's top three spots in the city. So for dinner, he'll be headed to-

MICHELLE (V.O.)

Pomodoro. Of course.

EXT. CHINATOWN - NIGHT

Sophia, a book tucked under her arm, hurries along. She checks her make-up in the window.

BRANDON (V.O.)
She'll be headed to Spicy Village.

FRANCIS (V.O.)
Hope you told her about the wait.

In a long line, Sophia joins WAITING CUSTOMERS who also carry their own books. She readies her book. Looks like a local.

Just then, Francis passes by. He and Sophia spot each other. Exchange small waves. Wait- Francis stops. Could it be?

No. No way. He shakes his head. Continues on.

INT. POMODORO - NIGHT

Brandon waits for his food. The WAITER brings a bottle of red. Pours Brandon a glass.

WAITER
From the ladies in the corner.

Brandon glances over. Two ITALIAN MATRIARCHS. Big hair. Broad shouldered suits. Gold earrings. They raise their glasses.

ITALIAN MATRIARCHS
Salud, darling.

BRANDON
Salud.

INT. SPICY VILLAGE / POMODORO - NIGHT

Sophia opens the Sillo app... She reads Brandon's message: "Order the Big Tray Chicken. And Soup Dumplings."

MICHELLE (V.O.)
You're terrible with spicy foods.

SOPHIA (V.O.)
I'm sure it'll be fine.

As their dishes arrive, the screen SPLITS. As if they're seated on the same side of one table. They take in the food.

In front of Sophia, the big tray chicken is a massive bowl of RED, SPICY BROTH with chicken and rice noodles. The spice alone can set nostrils aflame.

Sophia takes a deep breath.

Sophia moves a chopsticks... Which turn into Brandon's fork! He bites into his LINGUINE FRUTTI DI MARE. Seafood pasta.

They each take a slurp.

BRANDON
Oh my goddd.

SOPHIA
Oh my goddd.

They take pictures of their meals. Send it to the other person. Smile at each other's photos.

EXT. SPICY VILLAGE - NIGHT

Sophia, mopping up her sweat with a napkin, steps out. So full. BLOOP! Sophia receives a message from Brandon. Smiles.

It reads: "Where to next?"

INT. 5 BAR KARAOKE - NIGHT

POP MUSIC and disco lights BOUNCE around the bar. PARTIERS dance around and pound shots. A raucous pre-game for them.

INT. 5 BAR KARAOKE - PRIVATE ROOM - NIGHT

Alone, Brandon fiddles with the mic. A song menu open in his lap. Right as he stands to leave- BLOOP! A new message.

SOPHIA/@SPIDERLOUISE (V.O.)
Warm up those vocal cords.

BRANDON
(sotto)
Guess Jay-Z would've been asking
too much...

A HOST comes in with a bottle of soju on his tray. Brandon throws back a shot. Hits PLAY.

The backing track to Maroon 5's SUGAR blasts through the speakers. Brandon tentatively sings along...

BRANDON (CONT'D)
I'm hurting baby/
I'm broken down/
(MORE)

BRANDON (CONT'D)

I need your loving, loving I need
it now...

Through a crack in the door, a couple PARTIERS watch Brandon, wailing alone. The song carries over to...

EXT. CHINATOWN - NIGHT

Sophia, eyes alight, reads Brandon's instructions. She makes a turn at a street sign that says "Mulberry Street".

BRANDON/@TIPSYEGGTART (V.O.)

Head down Mulberry. Past Columbus
Park. You might be able to catch
the grandpas playing chess before
they turn in for the night.

She passes the park. Spots the CHINESE GRANDPAS playing. A GRANDPA catches her watching. Waves her over. Sophia relents.

INT. 5 BAR KARAOKE - NIGHT

Now fully into it, Brandon BELTS OUT the chorus! The Partiers from outside have now joined him! Everyone dances and SINGS ALONG, with Brandon leading them along.

BRANDON

Sugar, yes please/
Won't you come and put it down on
me?/

EXT. COLUMBUS PARK - NIGHT

Sophia, now seated at a chessboard, eyes her pieces. GRANDPA leers from his side. Sophia makes her move. Checkmate. The other GRANDPAS APPLAUD. Her opponent shakes her hand.

INT. 5 BAR KARAOKE - NIGHT

He takes a break. Checks his phone. Types...

BRANDON/@TIPSYEGGTART (V.O.)

It's the rooftops that get me.

INT. CHINATOWN - NIGHT

Walking down the street, Sophia swings her gaze upward.

BRANDON/@TIPSYEGGTART (V.O.)
 There's a lot of beauty in those
 buildings. I'd do anything to make
 sure people don't forget.

Sophia takes in the tenement buildings. The fire escapes. The Chinese American architecture. It's vibrant and warm.

SOPHIA/@SPIDERLOUISE (V.O.)
 It's beautiful.

BRANDON/@TIPSYEGGTART (V.O.)
 That'll take you to your last stop.

An unassuming building. Confused. She opens the door. Enters

INT. KAM HING COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT

LOUD CHATTER greets Sophia as she steps in gingerly. Her eyes adjust to the fluorescent light. Is this the right place?

BEHIND THE COUNTER

LATINX WORKERS, speaking CANTONESE(!) to Chinese CUSTOMERS, craft SPONGE CAKES. A light, creamy, velvety delight.

ALEX, late 30s, longtime staff member, recognizes her unfamiliarity. He waves her over to the counter.

SOPHIA
 Yeah- This- Do you all know
 Cantonese? How?

ALEX
 My family's worked here for six
 generations. Been here so long we
 started picking it up.
 (to an old GRANDMA nearby)
*We're family. Isn't that right
 grandma?*

GRANDMA
*We'd be family if you hurried up
 with my order.*

ALEX
 I've been serving her since I was
 sixteen... Are you... SpiderLouise?

Sophia, shocked, nods. Alex dips behind the counter. Comes back with a box full of fresh sponge cakes.

ALEX (CONT'D)

From TopsyEggtart. At first, I thought it was a prank. Must like you, going through the trouble.

SOPHIA

You think so?

Sophia takes a seat next to GRANDMA. She eyes the sponge cake for a moment. Hesitant to break her anti-dessert bias. Sophia bites. Her eyes light up. So good. Feels Grandma watching.

Sophia hands her new friend a sponge cake.

The pair enjoy their warm treats together.

INT. 14TH STREET/6TH AVE 'L TRAIN' TRANSFER STATION - NIGHT

Brandon takes a seat in the middle of the station. Nearby, a CELLIST plays A MOVING, HEARTFELT TUNE.

BRANDON/@TIPSYEGGTART (V.O.)

Okay. I'm here. This is your favorite spot in New York?

SOPHIA/@SPIDERLOUISE (V.O.)

So impatient.

BRANDON/@TIPSYEGGTART (V.O.)

I've been getting that a lot.

Brandon spots the trickle of people coming from the adjoining L train station. The CLAPPING of shoes on concrete GROWING.

SOPHIA/@SPIDERLOUISE (V.O.)

Do you see it yet?

Brandon is quickly enveloped by the rush of NEW YORKERS. Suddenly, everything SLOWS DOWN. He focuses on this revolving door of ages, genders, ethnicities, styles, and classes.

It's the same city he's grown up in. But a new feeling.

BRANDON/@TIPSYEGGTART (V.O.)

I do.

And just like that, the rush passes. Trains depart.

And just like that, Brandon is left alone.

EXT. BRANDON'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Brandon hops up the steps to his door. He drops his keys.

INT. SOPHIA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Sophia makes it to her door. The heater fans her hair.

START SPLIT-SCREEN. Like they're at the end of their date.

BRANDON/@TIPSYEGGTART (V.O.)
 What a night. I'm just getting
 home.

SOPHIA/@SPIDERLOUISE (V.O.)
 It was definitely... Surprising.

Brandon reacts. Curious.

Sophia stares at her phone. The dreaded "... " appears.

Disappears. Appears.

Disappears. Appears. Disappears.

Brandon SHOUTS into the sky. STARTLES a random PASSERBY.

BRANDON
 What are you supposed to say?! It's
 not like she can come inside. This
 is crazy. I'm crazy. I just-

BLOOP! From Sophia: A SMIRKING FACE EMOJI.

BLOOP! From Brandon: SMILING FACE WITH SMILING EYES.

Sophia leans against her door. Takes a big breath. Hits send.

Brandon picks up his keys. BLOOP! From Sophia: A KISSING FACE EMOJI! Brandon jumps up and down in celebration!

Throws his hands up. Some pop and lock. Heads in.

INT. SOPHIA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Sophia sinks down. Unfamiliar feelings rippling through her.

SOPHIA
 What is happening?!

EXT. WONG DOYER OPTICAL - DAY

Many people walk past the store.

INT. WONG DOYER OPTICAL - DAY

BRANDON'S PHONE RECORDING POV

With Ye Ye in frame, Brandon moves behind the camera. Hits record. We REALIZE it's Brandon's voice in the doc footage.

BRANDON (O.S.)

So, Ye Ye, what do- How- What was your first memory of the store?

It takes forever to come. As he thinks, Ye Ye reaches a finger up to his nose... And starts picking!

BRANDON (ON-CAMERA) (CONT'D)

Cut! Cut!

BACK TO SCENE.

YE YE

What are you doing?

BRANDON

You can't pick your nose, Ye Ye!

YE YE

It's always about what you want! I am the talent. You hold the camera!

NAI NAI

Brandon, come. We need to get rid of some things.

From an old box, Brandon pulls out a photograph: An old photo of Brandon's father, posing with Ye Ye and Nai Nai.

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. CHINATOWN - DAY

Ye Ye now holds the photo as he and Brandon take a stroll. They pass a store with a "Going Out Of Business" sign.

YE YE

He took this with your old camera, you know. He was so talented.

(MORE)

YE YE (CONT'D)

After college, your father was thinking bigger. You should've seen him that summer. Hated every day.

Ye Ye laughs at the memory.

BRANDON

He was ungrateful.

YE YE

Brandon.

BRANDON

You needed him to help. Sometimes, I can barely remember his face.

YE YE

We would've been fine.

(beat)

Your father. He's not the man you assume he is. He brought people together. He wanted to know everything the world had to offer.

BRANDON

If I hadn't dropped out after he passed, who knows what would've happened to you and Nai Nai.

Ye Ye stops. Hardens his gaze.

YE YE

He didn't become the man he wanted to be. Not everyone does. But he was your father. He loved you. You don't get to choose to accept that. *Love isn't something you run out of.* It doesn't fade like a photograph. There's always more.

Off Brandon, wondering if that's true.

EXT. HAPPY BAKERY - DAY

Jenny, heading on her lunch break, exits the shop when-

VOICE (O.S.)

Jenny? Jenny Lam?

Jenny turns. Sophia steps toward her.

SOPHIA

Hi. I'm Sophia. I was wondering if I could buy you lunch?

INT. CHINESE TUXEDO - DAY

A hyper-trendy, high-end East meets West fusion restaurant. Jenny swaps her empty cocktail with another one.

JENNY

There's no way that my grandmother is going to sell to you.

SOPHIA

We don't have to talk about that. Mrs. Lam told me you're finishing up cosmetology school.

JENNY

Make up school. I want to move to California. Work in entertainment. When I can afford it. And when I'm good enough. It's hard to find people to practice on in Chinatown.

SOPHIA

Your grandmother doesn't want to grow her business. I can respect that. But she also said she wants to see those she loves follow their dreams. It makes me wonder...

(beat)

How can I support your dream?

INT. OPENSOURCE - DAY

CLOSE ON the back of Sophia's head as she strides in. MEMBERS and STAFF gawk. Michelle spots her sister. Stifles a laugh.

MICHELLE

You look great. Did the Lams agree to sell?

REVEAL Sophia, sporting an ABSURD BLOWOUT: Bright pink K-Pop hair contorted every which way. Her face is a YouTube make up tutorial gone wrong. Her outfit would put Lady Gaga to shame.

SOPHIA

This all better be worth it.

Without another word, Sophia gets back to work.

INT. JING FONG LOBBY - DAY

Peak dim sum hour. A gatekeeping LINE LADY, 50s, YELLS Cantonese NUMBERS into a mic. A PARTY OF THREE hands her their ticket. Rides the escalator up to the dining area.

Sophia, with her ticket, stares daggers at the Line Lady. She holds Teddy as Michelle keeps her calm.

MICHELLE

Auntie Sophia is hangry. Do you know what "hangry" means?

SOPHIA

She keeps skipping us. Come on, Teddy. Stare her down.

Teddy hides his face in his auntie's neck.

SOPHIA (CONT'D)

Not saying we dislike adorable, but you've gotta do more than SHIT.

She holds Teddy out, Lion King-style. Hides behind him as WE PAN ACROSS the lobby to... Brandon and Francis!

FRANCIS

Why do we never come earlier? It's like this every week. Is this a time loop? Am I Asian Bill Murray?

LINE LADY (MICROPHONE)

One two eight. One two eight.

FRANCIS

That's us! Brandon go.

INT. JING FONG LOBBY - LINE LADY STAND

Sophia, FUMING, shoves her ticket to the Line Lady.

SOPHIA

Here. We're one two four.

LINE LADY

I call one two eight.

Line Lady makes eyes at Brandon as he notices Sophia. She recognizes him. It's awkward. Oh, it's so awkward-

BRANDON

You need help?

SOPHIA
It's fine. We're fine. I'm fine.

BRANDON
Sounds like you're fine.

SOPHIA
She keeps skipping us. Four times.

The Line Lady speaks in BLISTERING CANTONESE.

LINE LADY
*Do you know who she is? Trouble for
all of us. I call one two eight.*

Brandon gives Sophia his ticket.

BRANDON
Here, take ours.

LINE LADY
What are you doing-

BRANDON
I'm sorry for shouting!

Brandon makes a real show of it. EVERYONE pays attention.

BRANDON (CONT'D)
*I'm on your side! I don't want her
in Chinatown either. But not
getting dim sum won't get her out
of here. I'm shouting so she thinks
I'm helping her. But I'm mad too!
So sorry for shouting!*

Line Lady picks up the charade. Accepts Sophia's ticket.

BRANDON (CONT'D)
(to Sophia)
Weren't you the one who said that
"protests were just shouting"? See?
Sometimes change requires noise.

SOPHIA
Thanks. I- Uh- Thanks.

BRANDON
Sometimes we're not always who you
assume we are.

She waves to Michelle as Brandon returns to Francis.

BRANDON (CONT'D)

Five more minutes.

As Francis MOANS, Brandon watches Sophia and Teddy do their special handshake on their way up the escalator. Cute.

INT. JING FONG - SOPHIA'S TABLE - DAY

A large, velvet covered ballroom. Chinese WAITRESSES push carts filled with dumplings, pork buns, and sticky rice.

As Brandon and Francis get seated, Sophia glances over.

SOPHIA

Whatever. He's still trying to push us out of the neighborhood.

MICHELLE

I see some pork buns. Then I want to stop talking about Brandon and hear about your Sillo date.

Michelle bounds after the passing cart. Teddy, so focused, gets a dumpling to his mouth only to have it fall out.

INT. JING FONG - BRANDON'S TABLE - DAY

Francis loads a MOUNTAIN of dim sum onto his plate.

BRANDON

We need to make sure the other Nai Nais don't sell to Sophia.

FRANCIS

I mean, our Nai Nai isn't going to cave. But Mrs. Lam might. We need to make her a definite "No". What do we know about Sophia?

BRANDON

Steamrolls competition. Cares so much about her company that she'll ruin a whole neighborhood. Enjoys the occasional Miyazaki movie.

FRANCIS

So she's a hard worker with decent movie taste. Great. Can we do something to scare her investors? Hire a private investigator? Send a strongly worded letter?

BRANDON
Let's not get too extreme.

FRANCIS
Come on Bran, I saw you at the ticket counter downstairs. Admit it. There's something there.

Brandon chokes on his dumpling.

FRANCIS (CONT'D)
Look - If you really want to take her down, it's going to have to hurt. You ready for that?

INT. JING FONG - SOPHIA'S TABLE - DAY

Sophia eyes Brandon's table. Returns to Michelle's question.

MICHELLE
Oh my god. You like this Sillo guy.

SOPHIA
It's... I don't know! There's a connection that feels... Comfortable. Deeper.

MICHELLE
Or he's taking up precious time and emotions! You need to swipe his- (earmuffs Teddy)
Swipe his ass and move on. Next!

TEDDY
Swipe his ass!

A MOTHER at another table hears the curse words, shocked.

MICHELLE
Who are you? Mother of the year?
(to Sophia)
I need to get out of the city.

EXT. CHINATOWN - DAY

The sidewalk sizzles in the July heat. Families on summer break. Brandon texts as he commutes to work.

BRANDON/@TIPSYEGGTART (V.O.)
I love the city in the summer.

INT. WONG DOYER OPTICAL - DAY

Brandon watches KIDS running and playing in the streets.

BRANDON/@TIPSYEGGTART (V.O.)
For a weekend or two, everything
isn't changing so fast.

EXT. HAMPTON BEACH - DAY

An idyllic summer house behind them, Michelle slathers sunscreen on Teddy before he sprints to the water.

BLOOP! Reading on the beach, Sophia grabs her phone.

SOPHIA/@SPIDERLOUISE (V.O.)
What's changing for you?

EXT. HAPPY BAKERY - DAY

Brandon passes the egg tart bakery. Suddenly, he stops. A sign on the storefront: "Happy Bakery will be closing..."

INT. WONG DOYER OPTICAL - BREAK ROOM - DAY

Brandon and Nai Nai eat lunch. The doorbell JINGLES. Brandon runs out... It's only Ye Ye, returning from the fruit stand.

Brandon checks the store's social media pages, websites, online sales: All have stagnant growth. It's not working.

BRANDON/@TIPSYEGGTART (V.O.)
My business is going under.

SOPHIA/@SPIDERLOUISE (V.O.)
How come?

EXT. OPENSOURCE - DAY

A crowd of PROTESTORS. Noticeably smaller than the one from the opening. A FEW on their phones. ONE holds a portable fan to their sweat-drenched face. No one looks happy to be there.

BRANDON/@TIPSYEGGTART (V.O.)
Not sure the neighborhood wants us
anymore.

Brandon searches around for a friendly face. He spots Jenny - from Happy Bakery - leaving. He catches up to her.

BRANDON
 Jenny! What happened to the
 bakery? I thought your
 grandma was staying.

JENNY
 She was-

BRANDON (CONT'D)
 What did Sophia do? Did she
 pressure her into selling-

JENNY (CONT'D)
 No one pressured anyone. My
 grandma wanted us to be taken
 care of.

BRANDON (CONT'D)
 Us?

JENNY
 She doesn't have to work again. And
 I- I'm moving. You know LA has
 always been the dream. She's
 sending me out there. I'm sorry.

Jenny leaves. Off Brandon, in despair.

SOPHIA/@SPIDERLOUISE (V.O.)
 Maybe I can help? I know a bit
 about business-ing.

INT. BRANDON'S BEDROOM - SAME

Brandon, lying down at home, holds his phone over his face.
 The phone DROPS DOWN! Smashes his nose. Ow.

INT. HAMPTON HOUSE - NIGHT

BLOOP! Sophia, setting up a game of Connect Four for her and
 Teddy to play, reads his message: "fds"

SOPHIA
 What?

INT. BRANDON'S BEDROOM - SAME

Brandon rubs his nose. Types with one hand.

BRANDON/@TIPSYEGGTART (V.O.)
 Sorry. I'm all ears.

INT. HAMPTON HOUSE - NIGHT

Sophia, taking the game way too seriously, eyes the grid.
 Drops a red disc. Teddy drops a yellow. Sophia drops another
 red. Grinning, she eases back. Winner.

SOPHIA/@SPIDERLOUISE (V.O.)
 Don't forget this is everything.
 Fight or die. Ask for forgiveness,
 not permission.

TEDDY
 Mom! Auntie won't let me win.

SOPHIA
 He does the same moves every time!
 What am I supposed to do?

MICHELLE
 Sophia, it's a game.

SOPHIA
 You think he'd learn but nooo-

Teddy storms off. CHUCKLING, Sophia checks her phone.

BRANDON/@TIPSYEGGTART (V.O.)
 That uncertainty doesn't scare you?

SOPHIA/@SPIDERLOUISE (V.O.)
 Sometimes you just have to jump.

INT. HAMPTON HOUSE - NIGHT

Michelle and Sophia, asleep, watch a sappy movie like
 Sleepless in Seattle. Michelle covers Sophia with a blanket.

INT. BRANDON'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Brandon reads Sophia's message OUT LOUD.

BRANDON
 Ask for forgiveness. Not
 permission.

FRANCIS (PRE-LAP)
 No! Bad dog. What are you doing?

EXT. CHINATOWN - NIGHT

Brandon and Francis walk Francis's new SHIBA INU puppy who
 humps Brandon's leg. Brandon refuses to acknowledge the act.

BRANDON
This is part of your post-Chinatown
 life. So to me, it doesn't exist.

FRANCIS

Your Sillo girl is right though.
You've got to adapt. Pivot. It's
like- It's like Ken Jeong.

BRANDON

What?

FRANCIS

Ken Jeong! Like, he went from being
a doctor, to being a stand-up, to
judging singing competitions! Ken
Jeong was taking care of America's
dads, and now he is America's dad.

BRANDON

I'm not going to medical school.

FRANCIS

And he has a beautiful wife and
kids. He is the blueprint.

BRANDON

And if I don't Ken Jeong my life, I
lose my business, my grandparents,
and my home.

The puppy continues thrusting against Brandon's ankle.

BRANDON (CONT'D)

It's still on me, isn't it?

INT. HAMPTON HOUSE - NIGHT

Sophia SNAPS awake. She rolls over. Something's digging into
her side. She reaches. Pulls out her glasses. Badly bent.

INT. WONG DOYER OPTICAL - DAY

The shopkeeper bell JINGLES. Sophia steps in, holding a small
bag with a package inside.

YE YE

Welcome back! You know, my wife and
I were just thinking about you-

SOPHIA

Actually, I was here to see
Brandon. If that's okay.

Brandon steps forward. Ye Ye realizes he's the odd man out.
Retreats to the Break Room. Sophia hands Brandon the bag.

SOPHIA (CONT'D)

Don't open it now. After I leave. I just wanted to say thanks. For dim sum. And sorry. And... Help?

She pulls out a glasses case.

INT. WONG DOYER OPTICAL - BREAK ROOM - DAY

Ye Ye shuffles in as Nai Nai reads the newspaper.

YE YE

There's a girl. A girl!

INT. WONG DOYER OPTICAL - DAY

At Brandon's workbench, Sophia hands him the frames. Their hands touch. He examines the glasses - Bent to oblivion.

BRANDON

You slept on them.

SOPHIA

I have a big day with my investors next week. Can't be blind while giving a presentation.

As Brandon works, Sophia tries on a nearby pair of glasses.

SOPHIA (CONT'D)

No matter how many pairs I try, they never fit as well as I want.

Brandon comes out from his workbench. Grabs a ruler. He tilts her face up. Measures. Gentle but forceful.

BRANDON

Most people don't know what to look for. It's trial and error.

SOPHIA

Guess I just go for what's easiest.

BRANDON

Is that why you're opening up shop in Chinatown? Because it's easy?

She goes for a nearby pair. Chuckles at how badly they fit. Brandon grabs a pair. Holds them to her face. Nope.

SOPHIA

Opening up here- I've had projects that I poured hours and hours of research and preparation into. And even then, they never even made it to market... I'm tired of over-thinking it. Something felt right.

(beat)

Why do you stay here?

Brandon pauses. Scans the walls for a frame for Sophia.

BRANDON

My dad died while I was at school studying photography. I loved learning about people's stories. But I dropped out to help my grandparents.

SOPHIA

I'm so sorry. Did you come back because they asked you to?

BRANDON

I came back because it was the right thing to do.

SOPHIA

That must've been hard for you.

BRANDON

It was the right thing to do.

(lightbulb)

How about this one? Sometimes going the easy route works, but then you might end up missing something-

Brandon places them on Sophia. Checks they wrap around her ears. Pushes her hair back. Stares deep into her eyes.

BRANDON (CONT'D)

That something special.

Sophia sees her reflection. A smile. They're perfect.

BRANDON (CONT'D)

I'll have your frames ready soon.

INT. BREAK ROOM - LATER

Brandon enters.

BRANDON

You'd think she would've remembered
the thing she wanted fixed- What?

Off Ye Ye and Nai Nai, BEAMING.

EXT. WONG DOYER OPTICAL - NIGHT

Sophia, holding a box of her newly purchased glasses,
suddenly stops. She rummages through her purse. Turns back.

INT. WONG DOYER OPTICAL - NIGHT

The shopkeeper bell RINGS. Sophia steps in. Hesitates. She
spots her old glasses case on Brandon's workbench.

SOPHIA

Just forgot my glasses.

Halts at the SOUND of Brandon's voice through the break
room's cracked door. Sophia approaches quietly.

BRANDON (O.S.)

She's an outsider.

INT. BREAK ROOM - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

Through the door's open slit, we spot Sophia eavesdropping.

NAI NAI

She is very pretty.

BRANDON

Sure, she's impressive. But Sophia
doesn't care about Chinatown.
Stores, families, that have been
here for decades. She doesn't
belong here. She only cares about
herself. Trust me. She-

The shopkeeper bell RINGS LOUDLY.

INT. WONG DOYER OPTICAL - DAY

Brandon steps onto the sales floor.

BRANDON

Sorry, we're closed-

The store is EMPTY. Brandon locks the door. Sees someone who looks like Sophia walking away. As he passes his workbench, he sees that Sophia's case is missing.

Brandon now grabs the small bag Sophia gifted him. Opens up the wrapping. His eyes widen-

It's a BRAND NEW LEICA CAMERA. TOP OF THE LINE.

Brandon holds it. It's too much. He knows it. Now it's his.

INT. WONG DOYER OPTICAL - DAY

Another empty day. Another empty store. Brandon buffs a pair of glasses. He sighs. Sees the many pairs that wait for him.

INT. OPENSOURCE - DAY

Sophia heads out for lunch. Michelle holds out an umbrella. Notices Sophia's new glasses.

NOTE: Sophia will always have the new glasses on now.

MICHELLE

Just in case. Those new?

SOPHIA

Needed a change. And it's fine.
Forecast says only a 23% chance of
rain today.

Sophia strides out of the office.

INT. WONG DOYER OPTICAL - DAY

From his work station, Brandon spots Sophia through the window. Waiting for the Crosswalk Sign to change. He rises. Opens the front door. Hesitates-

The Crosswalk Sign changes. Sophia too far to chase after.

YE YE (O.S)

Brandon. We need to talk to you.

BRANDON

Sure, Ye. What is it?
(They hesitate)
What's wrong?

Brandon braces. The words pain Nai Nai to say.

NAI NAI
*I know you're trying. But the
 business is dying. We're going to
 accept Sophia's offer. We're going
 to sell the store.*

KRAKABOOM! Outside, the sky splits. Rain comes POURING down.
 Off Brandon, despair hitting.

INT. OPENSOURCE - DAY

Nai Nai, Ye Ye, and Brandon in Sophia's office. Reading the
 contracts in front of them. On the other side of the desk...

A DRENCHED Sophia. Trying to maintain her professionalism.

YE YE
 Do you need a towel?

BRANDON
 What the hell is this?

NAI NAI
 Brandon-

BRANDON (CONT'D)
 This is at least 25% less than the
 buyouts the other Nai Nais got.

SOPHIA
 You held out and lost your
 leverage. When that happens, the
 terms change. Sorry.

BRANDON
 Let's get out of here.

YE YE
 Get her a towel. For god's sake-

Ye Ye hobbles out. Nai Nai doesn't move. She stares hard at
 Sophia, who unknowingly drips water onto the papers.

NAI NAI
 This is fair?

SOPHIA
 If you want to negotiate, I'll call
 my lawyers. If I've misrepresented
 terms, the deal is void.

NAI NAI
 A skilled liar is one who tells the
 truth to someone who doesn't
 believe her.

SOPHIA

I don't know what that means. I'll be touring my investors next week and showing them our progress. You're welcome to join. Feel free to take the contracts with you.

She grabs the waterlogged contracts, which are promptly crushed in her grip. Ye Ye rushes in with a handful of paper towels. Sophia gratefully accepts them. Pats herself down.

SOPHIA (CONT'D)

We'll get you some new copies.

EXT. CHINATOWN - DAY

Sophia and Michelle lead INVESTORS on an OpenSpace guided tour. Gloria, bringing up the rear, pays little attention to Sophia, and instead eyes various residential buildings.

SOPHIA

As OpenSpace grows, we'll renovate locations so that members can access premium gyms, groceries..

A few paces behind them, Brandon stalks the group. When they turn, he ducks behind a

FISH STALL. Brandon GAGS at the smell of fish guts. Tries to keep focus. For a long moment, Brandon gazes at Sophia. The passion. The fire. She's in her complete element.

HIS PHONE RINGS. Startled, he picks up.

BRANDON

(sotto)

What?

INT. WONG DOYER OPTICAL - DAY

Francis WHISPER SHOUTS into his phone. Behind him, Nai Nai and Ye Ye sit with the tea and sponge cakes Francis brought.

FRANCIS

I came by the store to say hi. But you're not here! And now I have to have tea with your grandparents! Where the hell are you?!

Francis gives them an enthusiastic THUMBS UP.

EXT. CHINATOWN - DAY

INTERCUT THEIR CONVERSATION. Brandon rushes to hang up.

BRANDON

Sophia's touring her investors around the neighborhood today. So I'm tracking her. See if she lets something slip about her plans.

FRANCIS

Brandon, this is bad. Like Parasite going down into the basement bad. No good will come of this!

BRANDON

You were the one who wanted to hire a private investigator!

Brandon glances -- Sophia's group is gone! He sprints...

BRANDON (CONT'D)

I gotta go!

He hangs up. Francis makes for the door.

FRANCIS

I should really be going.

NAI NAI

No no no. A man who doesn't spend time with his friend's family is no real man. You'll stay.

Slumping, Francis takes a seat with Brandon's grandparents. Nai Nai, loving his misery, winks at Ye Ye.

EXT. SOUVENIR KIOSK - DAY

Brandon pretend-window shops at a SOUVENIR KIOSK as he catches up with the group. Using the mirror at a sunglasses stand, he spots Sophia speaking to Investors. Takes a step-

SOUVENIR VIVIAN recognizes him!

SOUVENIR VIVIAN

Brandon! I'm so glad to see you. How are your Ye Ye and Nai Nai?

BRANDON

They're great- Just not right-

SOUVENIR VIVIAN
*Nonsense, you have time for an old
 Auntie like me.*

As Brandon backs away, he crashes into a column of boxes full of STUFFED WIND UP ANIMALS! Barking creatures go flying!

Sophia, hearing the commotion, glances over their way.
 Brandon covers his face with an 'I <3 NY' shirt.

EXT. OPENSOURCE - DAY

As Gloria approaches Sophia, Brandon opens his Camera App.
 Slinks forward. Starts recording...

GLORIA
 Renovations are expensive. These
 buildings are so old, it'll
 probably be more cost-effective for
 us knock them down and rebuild.

MICHELLE
 We have told the local community
 we'd try to preserve-

SOPHIA
 Completely agree with you, Gloria.
 These old buildings are hideous,
 we'd be doing Chinatown a favor by
 knocking them down. Let's discuss.

GLORIA
 Let's.

Michelle pulls her sister aside.

MICHELLE
 We told the owners that we'd do our
 best to keep the community intact.

SOPHIA
 And we will "do our best." But I'm
 not about to put the sentimental
 wishes of some locals who couldn't
 fight hard enough for their stores
 over our next round of funding.

MICHELLE
 What about Chinatown?

SOPHIA

What about it? They'll forgive us
after we've saved what little
they've had.

MICHELLE

You're lying.

SOPHIA

I'm smoothing the edges. Putting on
a positive spin on things.

As they turn back to the tour, we REVEAL Brandon, who has
recorded a video of the entire exchange.

FRANCIS (PRE-LAP)

Are you sure you want to do this?

INT. MR. FONG'S - NIGHT

Brandon shows the VIDEO to Francis. Francis zooms in. The
quality is crystal clear. Unmistakably Sophia.

BRANDON

What are you talking about? This is
it. Something that's going to hurt.

FRANCIS

I know what I said. But there's a
lot at play here. People's futures.
I don't want you regretting this.

BRANDON

Ye Ye and Nai Nai are on the verge
of selling. The dominoes are
falling. Either we act now or we
lose the neighborhood. It's done.

INT. OPENSOURCE - SOPHIA'S OFFICE - DAY

Michelle storms in. Sophia can feel her anger.

SOPHIA

What?

MICHELLE

Check your inbox.

Sophia pulls up her browser. Emails FLOOD in. In every email,
the video of Sophia discussing Chinatown's downfall.

QUICK CUTS OF EMAILS FROM THE THREE NAI NAIS, other local

organizations, media outlets, and investors:

- "Is this true?"
- "I want answers."
- "You gave us your word."

Nervous, Sophia opens an email from GLORIA. A gut punch:

"DUE TO THE NEGATIVE RESPONSE OF THE RECENT VIDEO, WE WILL BE RE-EVALUATING OUR FUTURE INVOLVEMENT WITH OPENSOURCE."

EXT. OPENSOURCE - NIGHT

Sophia emerges. GASPS for air. Calms. Michelle follows.

MICHELLE

Are you okay? Better?
 (Sophia nods)
 What! Were! You! Thinking! You!
 Stupid! Girl! Sister! Idiot!

Michelle UNLEASHES A FLURRY OF SMACKS on Sophia's arm. Pairs each hit with each word. PASSERSBY flinch at the outburst.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)

It's okay! We're related! Nothing to see! My sister just may have completely ruined our chances of becoming a billion dollar company, that's all! We're having fun!

SOPHIA

It's not like I saw a camera.

MICHELLE

All we've worked for is at risk!

SOPHIA

I've worked for! This is my company, my idea, isn't that what you're always telling me?

MICHELLE

You are so selfish!

SOPHIA

Like bossing me around doesn't give you some superior joy? Or trying to force Teddy on me all the time?

MICHELLE
He's your nephew!

SOPHIA
Maybe the reason you've been helping with OpenSpace is so you don't have to figure out how to raise Teddy by yourself! I don't want to end up alone like you!

Michelle reacts like she got slapped in the face.

MICHELLE
I'd start thinking about what you'll say to the investors.

Michelle storms away. Leaving Sophia alone on the sidewalk.

INT. OPENSOURCE BATHROOM - NIGHT

Sophia locks the door. Her chest HEAVES. A similar reaction to the opening protest. But this time, she opens Sillo. Sophia takes a breath. Hesitates. Hits send.

SOPHIA/@SPIDERLOUISE (V.O.)
Maybe it's too soon. And I know we said we'd wait. But...

INT. WONG DOYER OPTICAL - NIGHT

BLOOP! Brandon finishes a sale. Reads Sophia's message.

SOPHIA/@SPIDERLOUISE (V.O.)
Do you want to meet?

BRANDON
Holy shit.

In the back, Brandon spots Ye Ye holding speedos over his clothes in the mirror. Brandon scrunches his face.

FRANCIS (PRE-LAP)
How will you spot her?

EXT. COLUMBUS PARK BASKETBALL COURTS - DAY

Brandon and Francis take turns shooting hoops. They're bad.

BRANDON
She said she'd have a copy of Pride and Prejudice with a rose inside.

FRANCIS
Really?

BRANDON
No!

FRANCIS
You've spent all summer sending
messages back and forth. Why now?

BRANDON
You want me to wait longer?

The ball bounces off Francis' foot. He chases after it.

INT. OPENSOURCE - DAY

Sophia passes Michelle's office. Frowns. It's empty.

BRANDON (V.O.)
Maybe she feels like she knows me
well enough.

EXT. COLUMBUS PARK BASKETBALL COURTS - DAY

Brandon rebounds for Francis. Francis SHOUTS the names of
Asian NBA players as he shoots.

FRANCIS
Maybe her visa is about to expire
and she needs a green card
marriage. Yao Ming!

Miss. Front rim.

BRANDON
Or she's tired of typing.

FRANCIS
And only has a week left to live.
Yuta Watanabe!

Miss. Side rim.

BRANDON
Or wants to speak face to face.

FRANCIS
Because she knows you don't get
that in solitary. Rui Hachimura!

Another miss.

BRANDON

I think she just needs a friend.

A ball rolls from the other court to Francis... As he picks it up, a BASKETBALL WOMAN, 20s, cute, jogs up to him.

BASKETBALL WOMAN

A little help?

Francis, already blushing, freezes. He throws the ball in her direction - But it goes WHIZZING out his hands!

It bounces off a bench- Gets kicked by a passing PLAYER-

Dunks on the fence- Off the top rail of the backboard-

Around and around the rim-

And falls in! Nobody, least of all Francis, can believe it!

BASKETBALL WOMAN (CONT'D)

That was amazing! Where did you learn how to do that?

FRANCIS

H- Home- Home Goods.

Confused, Basketball Woman returns to her court.

FRANCIS (CONT'D)

(sotto)

I'm Francis.

BRANDON

How is this such a problem for you?

Brandon grabs the ball.

BRANDON (CONT'D)

I'll go for one drink. One. We'll talk. If we happen to stay until the bar closes and want to spend the next few years having more conversations, so be it. Linsanity!

Swish. All net.

EXT. OPENSOURCE - DAY

Sophia, with her morning coffee, slows down as she spots several TESLAS parked in front of the workspace.

INT. OPENSOURCE - DAY

As Sophia steps inside, Michelle appears. A forced smile.

MICHELLE

Sophia.

SOPHIA

You're talking to me now?

Michelle nods over to conference room. The Investors.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Gloria and the INVESTORS wait for Sophia to speak.

GLORIA

What do you have to say Sophia?
It's an appalling error.

SOPHIA

I- I'm really sorry-

GLORIA

That's not going to cut it, honey.
I can understand lying to get a
yes, but what I won't tolerate is
getting caught for it.

Sophia steels herself from the condescension.

SOPHIA

For as long as I remember, I've
wanted to make things... And it was
my sister who showed me how. How to
research. Sketch a prototype. Find
people who knew more than me. How
to build on what's come before. How
to believe in my own ideas.

(connects with Michelle)

I forgot that I'm not just asking
for your trust in the idea, but for
your trust in me. I should have
chosen my words better. I want to
change lives. I'm good at this. And
I will continue to be good at it,
whether it's with this project or
the next.

Off Sophia, as Gloria and the Investors deliberate.

PRE-LAP: A KNOCK AT THE DOOR.

INT. MICHELLE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Michelle opens her door to find Sophia holding out a soju bottle, shrimp crackers, and a Connect Four box.

MICHELLE

Do you know how lucky you are?

SOPHIA

I'm sorry.

MICHELLE

And?

SOPHIA

I should've been more careful.

MICHELLE

And?

SOPHIA

And I'm sorry I lied to you. None of this means anything if we don't build it together.

MICHELLE

And?

SOPHIA

And I promise to let Teddy win a few games and you're the prettiest sister ever and everyone is jealous of how you achieve the perfect single mother work life balance.

(beat; serious now)

I love you. And Teddy. We'll always make it work. The three of us.

Michelle snatches the shrimp crackers.

MICHELLE

These are mine.

INT. MICHELLE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Teddy follows Michelle, munching on shrimp crackers, as she paces by Sophia. Teddy bumps into his mom. She lifts him up.

MICHELLE

Teddy, what's our number one rule?

TEDDY

Stay away from crazy.

MICHELLE

So what do we say when Auntie Sophia decides to meet a stranger?

TEDDY

Stay away from crazy.

SOPHIA

He's not crazy. He's sweet. And kind. And I can be honest with him.

MICHELLE

Isn't this guy a big Chinatown fan? Does he know what you do?

Sophia avoids Michelle's gaze.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)

Sophia! How are you going to start something with someone new, if you can't even be truthful right now?

SOPHIA

So I'll tell him!

MICHELLE

"Hi, nice to meet you. I'm here to overhaul hundreds of years of tradition"! Aren't these apps all about cutting to the chase?

SOPHIA

But in like a you're-hot-eggplant-emoji-kind-of way.

MICHELLE

Saying you're horny isn't honest. If this guy is the guy, then you don't want to start with a lie.

TEDDY

What does "horny" mean?

Yikes. Off Sophia, in reluctant agreement with her sister.

INT. BRANDON'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

Brandon stares at Sophia's message: "Do you want to meet?"

BRANDON

Just say you want to.

INT. SOPHIA'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

BLOOP! As Sophia pours herself a glass of wine, she reads Brandon's message. INTERCUT BETWEEN THEM.

SOPHIA
 "How about tomorrow?"
 (types)
 I should tell you something.

BRANDON
 She's going to jail.

Sophia types: "I work for" She deletes her words.

SOPHIA/@SPIDERLOUISE (V.O.)
 I didn't like Princess Mononoke.

Brandon CHUCKLES as he cracks open a beer.

BRANDON/@TIPSYEGGTART (V.O.)
 I guess I can get over it.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BRANDON'S/SOPHIA'S LIVING ROOMS - NIGHT

Brandon LAUGHS at Sophia's latest message. Empty beer bottles beside him. Sophia's bottle of wine almost empty. Topsy.

BRANDON/@TIPSYEGGTART (V.O.)
 Okay okay. What was the question?

SOPHIA/@SPIDERLOUISE (V.O.)
 Your most recent regret.

BRANDON/@TIPSYEGGTART (V.O.)
 At the end of our date. I wanted to
 kiss you. Like, kiss kiss you. Not
 in fake life.

Brandon drops his phone. Runs out. HOLD on the phone.

Wait...

Wait...

BLOOP! Brandon SPRINTS back in. Jumps on the phone.

SOPHIA/@SPIDERLOUISE (V.O.)
 I wanted to too. Not in fake life.

Brandon pulls up a GIF from a K-Drama of a guy brushing back his love's hair as they stare adoringly at each other. Send.

BLOOP! A message from Sophia.

SOPHIA/@SPIDERLOUISE (V.O.)
What else did you want to do?

INT. BRANDON'S/SOPHIA'S BEDROOMS - NIGHT

START SPLIT-SCREEN.

Brandon takes his sweatpants off before getting into bed.

BRANDON (V.O.)
Are we doing this?

Sophia pulls off her hoodie as she gets under the covers.

SOPHIA (V.O.)
I think so.

BLOOP! Sophia's screen lights up.

Using GIFs from rom-coms through the ages, Brandon and Sophia have GIF sex. It's funny. Awkward. Romantic. Intense.

They emulate the visuals that they send each other, like:

- Meg Ryan and Billy Crystal kiss in When Harry Met Sally.

Sophia and Brandon smile at the clip.

- Miles Teller and Shailene Woodley shyly take their clothes off in The Spectacular Now.

Brandon takes his shirt off. Sophia does the same.

- Quincy and Monica (Love & Basketball) as he puts a condom on while they're in bed together.

Brandon's hand traces down his torso.

Pulls at the elastic of his boxers.

- Constance Wu does the "wowie" thing with her glasses at a shirtless Henry Golding in Crazy Rich Asians.

Sophia's hand moves gently underneath the covers.

- Amy Schumer straddles Bill Hader in Trainwreck.

Brandon takes a deep breath. Closes his eyes.

- Emma Stone jokingly smacking the walls, saying "Oh, don't stop!" in Easy A.

Sophia closes her eyes. The GIFs don't matter anymore.

The two fall back on their beds.

The frame positioned as if they were in bed together.

END SPLIT-SCREEN.

Brandon picks up his phone.

BRANDON/@TIPSYEGGTART (V.O.)

Did you...

SOPHIA/@SPIDERLOUISE (V.O.)

Yeah. You?

BRANDON/@TIPSYEGGTART (V.O.)

Yeah.

They both drop their phones. LAUGH at what they've just done.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

DOCUMENTARY STYLE FOOTAGE

DIANA, CHINESE AMERICAN, 40s, tough, in front of her cafe.

DIANA

I've started four businesses here.
The others folded. This is lucky
number four. Even though four is
not so lucky. But hey, women
business leader is strong! Woo!

Diana slumps. A break in her tough exterior.

DIANA (CONT'D)

It's just- It's hard, you know?
Sometimes it feels like- It feels
like there's no way to win.

VOICE (O.S.)

Then why start over here? In
Chinatown?

DIANA

Because this is our home! We're not
scared. At the end of the day,
we've got each other. This is home.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

EXT. CHINATOWN - NIGHT/DAY

A TIME-LAPSE as night gives way to day.

EXT. CROSSWALK - DAY

The light turns to 'DON'T WALK'. Brandon, pep in his step,
makes it just as Sophia, feeling good, shows up.

BRANDON

Morning. Have a good night?

SOPHIA

(sotto)

I came so hard.

BRANDON

You what?!

SOPHIA

I saw some art. MOMA has a great
exhibition. Louise Bourgeois.

The light turns to 'WALK'. Sophia speeds away.

SOPHIA (CONT'D)

(sotto)

Fucking super ears.

EXT. MR. FONG'S - NIGHT

Brandon, embarrassed, and Francis, curious, head to the bar.

FRANCIS

GIF sex? You had GIF sex. And now
you're actually going to meet her.
You're a pioneer.

BRANDON

Actually, it was more her idea.

FRANCIS
A visionary.

INT. MR. FONG'S - NIGHT

Brandon plops two drinks down - a beer and a tequila soda with a twist. He sits in the booth across from Francis.

BRANDON
Beer, me. Tequila soda with a twist, her.

FRANCIS
Ok, but where's my drink?

BRANDON
(lost in his own head)
That's how she'll know it's me. One drink. Talk. Leave. In and out.

FRANCIS
As long as you both shall live.

BRANDON
Now please watch my one drink while I hit the bathroom. Nerves.

Once out of sight, Francis takes a sip of Brandon's beer.

EXT. MR. FONG'S - NIGHT

Sophia, FaceTiming Michelle, AirPods on, heads to the meet.

SOPHIA
Okay. This is it.

MICHELLE
And where are your expectations?

SOPHIA
Non-existent.

Sophia shows the bouncer her ID. Gathers herself.

MICHELLE
Sophia.

SOPHIA
What? I'm not nervous.

MICHELLE
Sophia.

SOPHIA
What?

MICHELLE
Go inside.

INT. MR. FONG'S - NIGHT

Sophia slinks over to the bar. Sophia gestures the BARTENDER to get out of the way. Her eyes jump from table to table.

MICHELLE (O.S.)
Do you see him?

SOPHIA
He said he'd be in a booth... With my... Tequila soda with a- Twist.

Sophia's eyes widen in shock. She spots her drink. In front of... Francis! Waiting for Brandon to return.

SOPHIA (CONT'D)
Francis?

MICHELLE (O.S.)
Vibely Francis?

OVER TO FRANCIS

Who spots Sophia, hanging up on Michelle, at the last second. Sophia takes the seat in front of him. Sips her drink.

FRANCIS
Sophia! Small world- Oh, that's actually for someone.

She keeps sipping. Francis realizes. Eyes WIDEN.

FRANCIS (CONT'D)
Oh my god. It's-

SOPHIA
Me. It's me.

Francis panics. Knows he needs to get out of there.

SOPHIA (CONT'D)
You know. I've gone on my fair share of online dates, but I was really nervous for this.

FRANCIS

I-

SOPHIA (CONT'D) FRANCIS (CONT'D)
 Then again I've never really Right-
 put off meeting someone for
 so long.

SOPHIA (CONT'D)
 I'm sorry, I'm rambling. I just
 think I'm nervous. Are you nervous?

FRANCIS
 For very different reasons.

SOPHIA
 I mean, I've never had sex and then
 gone on a date, you know?

Red in the face, Francis gets up. Sophia grabs his arm.

SOPHIA (CONT'D)
 This drink is for me, isn't it?

FRANCIS
 Yes! I mean- It is- But I'm not
 supposed to be- It's for someone-

SOPHIA
 I've been talking to all summer.
 (sotto)
 And last night.

FRANCIS
 Yes. I am aware of what happened
 last night. Very very aware. Very.

OVER TO BRANDON

He steps out of the bathroom. He gets a glimpse of Francis
 speaking to SOPHIA, but Francis blocks her face.

BACK WITH FRANCIS AND SOPHIA

Now Sophia stands. Still holding her drink.

SOPHIA
 Wait. Are you...?

FRANCIS
 Am I...?

Sophia launches into rapid fire questions.

SOPHIA
 How many sisters do I have?

FRANCIS

One.

SOPHIA

My favorite spots in the city?

FRANCIS

Italian restaurant. Karaoke. L
train transfer station.

SOPHIA

Our first date movie?

FRANCIS

Princess Mononoke.

The vibe still isn't right. Sophia's stumped.

SOPHIA

Maybe this was too weird.

FRANCIS

No! I should go-

SOPHIA

Honestly you could at least stay
for a minute! I mean I've spent the
summer falling in love with you-

Brandon emerges from the bathroom. Francis's eyes WIDEN.
Brandon freezes. Sophia tracks his gaze. Puts it together.

BRANDON

It was you?

SOPHIA

No... You- It can't be-

Sophia hands Francis her drink. STORMS out. Brandon follows.

BRANDON

(to Francis)

Thanks man.

FRANCIS

What did I do? If you don't want me
to answer questions, don't tell me
things!

Francis, stressed AF, downs both drinks.

EXT. MR. FONG'S - NIGHT

Sophia rushes out. Brandon follows.

SOPHIA

Is this a game? A joke? You lure people into online relationships so you can ruin them-

BRANDON

What- Of course not!

SOPHIA

You start to feel comfortable with someone. Like you really know them. But how can you really know someone behind a screen? I'm so stupid-

BRANDON

What about you?! You never suspected? I mean, Jesus, I sent you on a walking tour of Chinatown!

SOPHIA

A hundred thousand people live in Chinatown! How was I supposed to guess that'd it be you?

BRANDON

Sophia. I swear I didn't know.

Sophia pauses. Tears welling.

SOPHIA

Everything is different now.

BRANDON

Everything?

SOPHIA

What? You think we can just revert back to some time frozen dream land and not deal with reality?

BRANDON

I'm the one not dealing with reality? I don't even recognize the person I've been talking to! She was someone I could tell the truth to. But your entire life is predicated on lies! Lies that only exist to help you climb the ladder to more lies. Your sister. Your members.

(MORE)

BRANDON (CONT'D)

Lying to the Nai Nais when you
don't even care about "what little
they have."

Sophia flinches at "what little they have." Steels herself.

SOPHIA

What did you say?

BRANDON

(caught)

What?

SOPHIA

"What little they have." How did
you know I said that to Michelle?

BRANDON

I... I took the video... And sent
it to the Nai Nais.

Sophia wipes her eyes. Straightens up.

SOPHIA

All you do is hold onto the past.
I'll make it easy. Sillo, this
whole thing. Forget it all.

With that, Sophia speed walks away.

BRANDON

Sophia!

INT. SOPHIA'S HALLWAY - NIGHT

Sophia steps out of her elevator. Pauses at her door. The
heater ruffles her hair again. But this time, she combs it
down. Quickly lets herself in. A firm shutting of the door.

INT. BRANDON'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Brandon flops onto his bed. Thinks on what could have been.

INT. SOPHIA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Sophia does some rapid swiping on a non-Sillo dating app...
DING-DONG! She opens the door to Michelle, a bag of groceries
on her arm, and Teddy, ready for a night of cooking.

INT. WONG DOYER OPTICAL - NIGHT

Brandon hangs a GOING OUT OF BUSINESS/80% OFF sign. Inside, CUSTOMERS clamor for a good deal. Brandon scans the bare walls. Only a few pairs left.

EXT. OPENSOURCE - DAY

Leaving work, Sophia spots Brandon, now only among a couple PROTESTORS waving signs outside OpenSpace. Their eyes meet for a second before breaking off and carrying on.

EXT. SPICY VILLAGE - DAY

Sophia, now with TECHIE GUY, passes a line of CUSTOMERS waiting for Spicy Village. Sophia glances back longingly.

INT. BRANDON'S HOME - NIGHT

Brandon opens up a food delivery. Seafood pasta. It's not bad, but it's not the same. He sets it aside. Sigh.

INT. MR. FONG'S - NIGHT

As Francis invites WOMEN to Home Goods, Brandon mass messages "Hi" to bunch of dating app matches. None of them respond.

EXT. 5 BAR KARAOKE - PRIVATE ROOM - NIGHT

Sophia and HIPSTER GUY sing 'Sugar' together. Hipster Guy really goes for it. Sophia mouths the words. Meh.

INT. JING FONG - DAY

Brandon, disinterested, stares off into the ballroom. Ye Ye hands him the stamp card. Sends Brandon after a passing cart. Ye Ye and Nai Nai share a concerned look.

EXT. CHINATOWN - NIGHT

As a TOUR GUIDE ushers a EUROPEAN TOUR GROUP through the neighborhood, Brandon, drunk, unleashes a tirade.

BRANDON
ENJOY IT. THIS'LL ALL BE GONE NEXT
TIME YOU VISIT. AUF WIEDERSEHEN!

The Tour Group, not understanding, happily waves back.

EXT. FRANCIS'S LONG ISLAND CITY HOME - DAY

Brandon helps Francis unload boxes from a moving truck into a beautiful condo. Brandon can't help but be impressed.

INT. FRANCIS'S LONG ISLAND CITY HOME - NIGHT

Brandon takes a break from unloading Francis's belongings. He opens his Sillo chat with @SpiderLouise. Hits UNMATCH button.

A pop-up appears: "Confirm?" He hits Confirm.

FRANCIS
So what do you think?

BRANDON
I think...

Brandon snuggles Francis's Shiba Inu. Francis waits for it...

BRANDON (CONT'D)
I was thinking of asking you to put
me in one of those Vibely dating
videos, if you're down.

Francis drops his box. Picks Brandon up in a big bear hug!

INT. SOPHIA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Sophia opens Sillo. Registers that @TopsyEggtart has disappeared. She deletes the app entirely off her phone.

INT. OPENSOURCE - DAY

The Three Nai Nais, wholly out of place, enter the co-working space. Sophia, looking a little ragged, welcomes them into

INT. OPENSOURCE CONFERENCE ROOM - CONTINUOUS - DAY

In front of the Nai Nais are several contracts to sign.

NAI NAI
Are you alright? Eating enough?

SOPHIA

Fine, fine. The revised contracts - now with preservation clauses that block any plans to tear down the buildings - are ready to sign.

MRS. ZHENG

When can we expect the first check?

MRS. LAM

Can we see what the block will end up looking like again?

Sophia whips up the AutoCAD rendering on the monitor again. Not as whitewashed as the original. But still semi-dystopian.

SOPHIA

And you can expect payment once construction on the plaza begins.

NAI NAI

Just promise that you won't forget about Chinatown, yah? Don't forget.

The Three Nai Nais sign the paperwork. It's done.

INT. OPENSOURCE - NIGHT

Michelle closes up shop. Notices that Sophia is still in her office. Michelle spots the eye mask out on her desk.

MICHELLE

I'm headed out. You?

SOPHIA

Just a few more minutes.

INT. WONG DOYER OPTICAL - NIGHT

A somber, defeated mood. The shelves are bare. Designer eyewear posters stripped away. Brandon closes up a final box.

YE YE

Come. Let's have a look.

BRANDON

It looks so... Empty.

NAI NAI

Just because it looks empty now, doesn't mean there was nothing.

They take in the store one last time. Flip the master light off. Brandon takes a last look. Lowers the grate shut.

INT. BRANDON'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

As Nai Nai joins them with a plate of sliced pears, Brandon pours Ye Ye a shot of whiskey. They sip quietly.

BRANDON
When is Florida?

Ye Ye and Nai Nai share an uneasy silence.

NAI NAI
We're going to stay. We're staying.

BRANDON
Ye Ye? The speedo?

YE YE
We just want to make sure that you're going to be okay. With the store and that Sophia girl...

BRANDON
I'm fine! We can't all meet our perfect match. It's not so easy-

NAI NAI
Who said it was easy?

BRANDON
(Ye Ye voice)
"Do you want to be my girlfriend?"
Months later, we were married."

NAI NAI
These stories...

YE YE
It's what happened. Wasn't it?

NAI NAI
Did you tell him about how my aunt called your parents and told them I would make a bad wife?

YE YE
No-

NAI NAI
*Or how taking over that stupid
 store was the only way to prove
 that you'd make a good husband?*

Ye Ye throws his shot back. Nai Nai tidies the table.

BRANDON
 I didn't know.

NAI NAI
 No match is perfect.

Nai Nai rushes to the kitchen. We HEAR the sink turn on.

YE YE
 To be honest, I never wanted you to
 stay at the shop forever... Was it
 my fault? Did I force you?

BRANDON
 I guess I just thought that's what
 you and Nai Nai wanted.

YE YE
 Sometimes we think we know what we
 want. But sometimes it's good to
 just do what you think is best.

Off Brandon, considering.

INT. VIBELY PRODUCTIONS - DAY

Francis tours Brandon, utterly shocked, through the office, a
 full-service marketing agency BUZZING with creativity.

Compared to the goofy, lackadaisical Francis we've seen, this
 Francis is poised, calm. A consummate chief executive.

FRANCIS
 And over here, we have our
 creatives. Copywriters, designers-

BRANDON
 You started this.

FRANCIS
 Execs are over there. Strategists
 and media there.

BRANDON
 This. Started. You.

FRANCIS
(grinning)
Let's show you where the video
taping will be.

INT. PRODUCTION STAGE - DAY

Bright, white lights. A small table in the center. Cushions to sit on. Tall plants for a rustic vibe.

Francis flops onto a cushion. Brandon, lost in thought, barely acknowledges the room, eases onto a bean bag.

FRANCIS
You know you don't have to do the
video if you're not up to it.

BRANDON
No, it's not that. It's just
hitting me that the store's closed.
More places on their way out. I
wish I could have actually done
something to take OpenSpace down.

FRANCIS
Shouldn't there be a different way
to protect the neighborhood?

BRANDON
What do you mean?

FRANCIS
I've been your best friend since
freshman year. I built a whole
company since then. Around people
that I love and want to see do
great things. But you heard "start-
up" and tuned me out. Never wanted
to take the time to know what I do.
And that's fine. But that's not how
you create a community. You have to
commit to the people around you.

The words hit Brandon hard.

BRANDON
Francis, man, I'm sorry.

Francis smiles. Still friends.

FRANCIS

Maybe the problem wasn't trying to shut OpenSpace down, but not doing more to celebrate what makes Chinatown special. Going deeper. It's a lot more than a few rooftops and buildings, you know.

Brandon bolts up. Can't get off the cushion. Finally gets up.

BRANDON

You cool if I borrow a couple of your people?

FRANCIS

What? No! They've got work-

BRANDON

Cool? Cool. Thank youuu.

Brandon runs out. Francis falls back onto his cushion.

FRANCIS

Your video tapes in two weeks! Don't forget- Oh okay he's gone.

EXT. VARIOUS CHINATOWN - DAY

A SERIES OF SHOTS

Brandon running around the neighborhood, with a VIDEOGRAPHER and SOUND GUY in tow. We recognize the places that he stops at as the locations of the Documentary footage. He takes several portraits of the subjects. Captures their faces.

INT. BRANDON'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

As Ye Ye and Nai Nai head to bed, Brandon CLICK-CLACKS away

ON HIS LAPTOP SCREEN: A Humans of New York-style, work in progress website, with interviews of Chinatown locals.

Off Brandon, smiling.

EXT. BRANDON'S APARTMENT - DAY

A cold, autumn day. Leaves gather outside the door.

INT. BRANDON'S APARTMENT - DAY

Brandon, in all black, eats cereal. Ye Ye and Nai Nai, decked in outdoors-y climbing gear, put their shoes on by the door. Packed boxes marked for Florida litter the apartment.

BRANDON
Climbing Everest?

YE YE
Just a walk around the block.

NAI NAI
Light some incense for your father.

The door CLICKS shut. Just Brandon, alone in the apartment.

INT. THE SHRINE ROOM - DAY

Brandon lights some incense. He and his father's portrait have a staring contest. Brandon blinks first.

BRANDON
Happy death day, Dad.

The portrait smiles back.

BRANDON (CONT'D)
It's been six years. Wow. Ye Ye and Nai Nai are doing good. I guess you should know we're selling the shop. Maybe you'd be happy about that.

Brandon fights the instinct to leave the room.

BRANDON (CONT'D)
All I wanted was to help the family keep what we've fought so hard for. Be there for them like you weren't. But now everyone wants to leave.
(beat)
There was this girl... I want to move on. But I don't want to forget. I just want to be better. I don't want to let anyone down.

INT. WONG DOYER OPTICAL - NIGHT

CONTRACTORS gut the store. As she supervises the renovations, Sophia, on her laptop, scrolls through Brandon's website. It features the Documentary footage subjects we've been seeing:

Peter and Grace. Janice & Janet. Chang. Diana.

Going through drawers, she pauses as she finds

BRANDON'S PHOTOS

A collection of beautifully shot images from throughout the film. Outtakes of Ye Ye and Nai Nai portraits, moments from protests, familiar sights from their date nights.

MICHELLE (O.S)
Another date tonight?

SOPHIA
Meeting Gloria for dinner.

MICHELLE
Oh. Good.

Sophia raises her brows. Michelle hesitates. Goes for it.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)
Look. I know the whole thing with
Brandon hurt. I just don't think
going back to the dating
spreadsheet is the best-

SOPHIA
Give Teddy a kiss for me.

EXT. CHINATOWN - NIGHT

Sophia heads to her restaurant. Doesn't notice that she's
headed down Mulberry St...

A few steps down the block, she senses something. The
familiar sights of the walking tour date with Brandon.

But now, the vibrant sights are now boarded up, the non-
Chinese establishments sticking out to her like a sore thumb.

VOICE (O.S.)
Sophia!

Sophia snaps her attention to Nai Nai behind her.

NAI NAI
So skinny. Brandon told us about...

SOPHIA
I'm- I'm fine. I just... I feel a
little lost.

NAI NAI

You do too much. Always best.
Always more. But then what do you
do? Who do you do it for?

(beat)

I hope Brandon works as hard as
you. Maybe then he gets the chance
to ask the same question. You come
by our place sometime, okay?

Off Sophia, reflecting on Nai Nai's questions.

EXT. GREAT N.Y. NOODLETOWN - NIGHT

Gloria, in her abundant chicness, waits. Sophia trots over.

INT. GREAT N.Y. NOODLETOWN - NIGHT

Gloria holds up an iPad. The AutoCAD render of Chinatown now
encompasses the ENTIRE neighborhood. Sophia's face scrunches.

SOPHIA

I'm sorry. What am I looking at?

GLORIA

This is OpenSpace 2.0. The next
step is real estate. A residential
vertical would be massive for us.

SOPHIA

What? No. The vision has always
been for young professionals only.
We're a co-working company. Didn't
you just ream me out for saying I
wanted to pave over Chinatown?

GLORIA

You were caught on the record! We
can't be broadcasting our strategy.
The new customers alone-

SOPHIA

What about the community?

GLORIA

What about it?

Ugh. Sophia bites her lip.

SOPHIA

Do you think... Do you ever think that it's possible to win something without someone else losing?

GLORIA

Isn't that the exact definition of winning?

Sophia stands. Gets her things.

SOPHIA

I don't want this. If I want to move ahead, others shouldn't be left behind. I don't want to forget.

GLORIA

What are you saying?

SOPHIA

I'm saying if this is the only way you'll move forward with OpenSpace, then we'll be looking for future investment from other funds.

As she exits, Gloria SHOUTS after her.

GLORIA

You're about to join rarefied air here. How many other women-led unicorns are there? Sophia!

Before Gloria can get another word out, Sophia is gone.

EXT. CHINATOWN - NIGHT

Sophia storms out of the restaurant. With each stride, a smile of understanding crests across her face.

INT. OPENSOURCE - NIGHT

A late night. Michelle swings by Sophia's office. Frowns at the pile of work on the table. She turns...

To see Sophia and Teddy strolling in! Ice cream cones in their hands. Michelle smiles at the sight.

Sophia runs to answer a RINGING PHONE in her office. Michelle sighs. She's been here before. She gathers her things. But...

Sophia is there! Her phone call all settled.

SOPHIA

It's done.

MICHELLE

You good with this? What happened to always putting OpenSpace first?

SOPHIA

Unicorns are overrated. I'm year of the rooster anyway.

MICHELLE

Maybe you have a horse moon.

Michelle turns to leave. Sophia hesitates.

SOPHIA

Can you give me just a minute? I need to make another call.

Sophia jets back into her office.

Off Michelle, wondering what her sister is up to.

EXT./INT. BRANDON'S APARTMENT - DAY

Brandon, on his way out, opens the door. And there's Sophia, holding the stack of photos she found.

BRANDON

Hi?

SOPHIA

Sorry to just show up like this. I found these at the shop. I ran into Nai Nai, she said to swing by.

(beat)

Are you headed out?

BRANDON

Francis managed to convince me to be in a Vibely video. Figured I'd surprise him and get there early.

SOPHIA

Oh. Ok. I just- Actually, would you come check something out with me?

Brandon checks his watch. He has time. He relents.

INT. OLD WONG DOYER OPTICAL - DAY

Sophia flips on a dim light. Everything is painted in a white primer. She leans against a counter, keys jangling.

SOPHIA

I saw your project the other day.

BRANDON

What are we doing here?

SOPHIA

OpenSpace... We're going to be doing things differently. I've been chatting with local businesses to see how we can support their vision for the neighborhood. Activate the community in upcoming elections. Create grants for local shops to help them renovate.

BRANDON

What about Mrs. Zheng? Mrs. Lam?

SOPHIA

Everyone will be entitled to their payout. But I'm hoping they stay. Support the next gen, if they want.

BRANDON

How did your board take that?

SOPHIA

Freaking out. But they'd rather blame me for the company tanking than having to find a new CEO.

Sophia tosses him the keys. Brandon catches them.

SOPHIA (CONT'D)

I thought maybe we could do something with it. Something new.

BRANDON

"We"? You could flip this spot in a second. Start a new venture.

SOPHIA

I just want one thing. One thing I can give all my attention. I've been thinking about do-overs a lot.

BRANDON

"Do-overs"?

An awkward lull. Sophia musters up the courage.

SOPHIA

About- If you'd known- On Sillo- If you'd known it was me...

BRANDON

And you knew it was me? Even with OpenSpace, the store, my family?

SOPHIA

Would you have stayed matched with me? Because- Maybe- If you did stay. If. Then I might stay too. Even if it's all I can do but think of the ways I might screw this up. But maybe I would.

Brandon can't bring himself to say what she wants him to. What he wants to. It takes everything just to say:

BRANDON

I'm late.

Brandon exits. Leaving Sophia alone.

EXT. VIBELY PRODUCTIONS - DAY

Brandon heads straight in.

INT. MAKE-UP ROOM - DAY

Brandon, lost in thought, sits at a vanity as MAKE-UP ARTISTS put on their finishing touches.

INT. PRODUCTION STAGE - DAY

The same room Francis toured Brandon in. A little brighter.

Brandon gets mic'd up. PRODUCTION ASSISTANTS give the all-clear. Francis approaches Brandon.

FRANCIS

You good? Your date'll be out soon.

BRANDON

You know anything about her?

FRANCIS

She has, uh- A real familiar energy about her. Be right back. The team has to step out real quick.

CREW MEMBERS exit the room. The door knob to the stage turns.

Brandon's head snaps over to see... A PRODUCTION ASSISTANT scurry across the room.

Brandon deflates. The door opens again. This time...

It's SOPHIA! They both let out an EXHALE of relief.

Like that, Brandon and Sophia are in each other's arms.

BRANDON

How did you know I was here?

SOPHIA

I made a call.

Sophia nods over to the corner where...

... Francis gives them a knowing wink. He exits.

SOPHIA (CONT'D)

Is this okay?

BRANDON

I can't keep holding onto the past. I was scared if it didn't stay the same, if I didn't stay the same, then I wouldn't love it as much. But if you love something, someone, and it changes, you don't get to take it back. So then it's just about how much more you can give?

SOPHIA

And what did you decide?

BRANDON

It was you. It's always been you.

They kiss. A gorgeous, light-filled, deep kiss.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CHINATOWN - DAY

A NIGHT MARKET in full swing!

The entire block is overrun with decorations and festivities:

- LION DANCERS prance through the throngs of ATTENDEES.
- CHILDREN running under a SKY FULL OF LANTERNS.
- BOOTHS featuring fish balls, pottery, calligraphy prints.
- ARTISTS paint MURALS on the closed metal grates of stores.
- A revolving door of NEW YORKERS. The Italian Matriarchs. Columbus Park Grandpas. Karaoke Partiers. Sponge Cake shop employees. A scene reminiscent of Brandon's experience at the 6th Ave/14th Street subway stop.

Teddy runs down the block. He passes the now-closed Zheng Ceramics Store, now replaced by a MILLENNIAL PLANT STORE.

We glide by HAPPY BAKERY. Renovated and modernized, the shop continues to serve the best egg tarts in the neighborhood. Under the store's signage: "In partnership with OpenSpace".

Brandon and Sophia, a white box in-hand, step out of Happy Bakery. Meet Teddy. Together, they walk over to the

EXT. NEW WONG DOYER HOUSE - DAY

Decorated in modern graphics and traditional Chinese design, it's a community center and a coffee shop hang out hybrid.

INT. NEW WONG DOYER HOUSE - DAY

A gallery of PORTRAITS hang. Some faces from the Documentary footage. But new people too. The art gallery placard reads:

"CHINATOWN: PAST & BEYOND" by Brandon Wong.

A series of people who will always love Chinatown.

For the love stories.

For the bonds.

For the family.

For the struggle.

For the future.

Across the space is A LARGE MAP OF CHINATOWN: "Our Landmarks. Your Memories." The map features familiar spots. Michelle helps TIFFANY, 20s, Black, tack a small Post-It on the wall.

Back from break, Sophia joins Michelle at the wall. Brandon pins on a name tag as he plates the egg tarts. Nearby, a photo of Ye Ye and Nai Nai, on a Florida beach, hangs.

TIFFANY

69 Bayard. My dad used to take me there for dinner all the time.

Brandon joins. Offers everyone an egg tart. Gives Sophia a loving peck on the head. Tiffany notices.

TIFFANY (CONT'D)

You two are super cute. How did you find each other?

SOPHIA

How did we? Brandon?

Brandon looks back at the love of his life.

BRANDON

We just matched.

Outside, a familiar CLANGING can be heard.

EXT. NEW WONG DOYER HOUSE - DAY

Brandon and Sophia, hand in hand, and Michelle, carrying Teddy, see LION DANCERS welcoming them to the neighborhood.

As the dancers head off, Francis skips up toward them just as Tiffany steps out. They share a glance. THUNDERBOLT.

FRANCIS

(throat closing)

Hi. I- Do- Would you want to go to Target with me stupid so stupid-

TIFFANY

I love Target. But how about I give you my number, and we get a drink?

Francis somehow hands her his phone. She enters it in.

BRANDON (O.S.)

Francis? Francis! What's up?

Francis points to a CHAIN SUPERMARKET BILLBOARD that reads "Coming Soon". Sophia squeezes Brandon's hand.

SOPHIA

We'll be fine.

As everyone heads in, Brandon stops Sophia. They stand in front of the store like the PAST OWNERS once did.

BRANDON
Are you ready for this?

They share a warm kiss. We CRANE OUT from the front door. Taking in the evolving landscape of this new Chinatown.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

DOCUMENTARY STYLE FOOTAGE

DIANA
I want to believe there's a way. A way to keep what's come before.

CUT TO:

JANICE & JANET
We want to stay here.

CUT TO:

CHANG
We're not going anywhere. I don't know what's coming next. But a part of me is excited too.

CUT TO:

PETER
One thing for sure...

GRACE
Chinatown will always be Chinatown.

CUT TO:

Brandon and Sophia, in front of their store.

BRANDON
And if it changes, we'll change together. Right?

SOPHIA
We'll change together.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END