

CENTRAL

中環

"Expats" Episode 5

Written and Directed by

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Based on the novel by

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TEXT OVER BLACK:

"The Hong Kong Observatory has issued a Tropical Cyclone Warning. The Strong Wind Signal, No. 3 is in force."

EXT. WALKWAY, HONG KONG CENTRAL - DAY

Heavy rain covers a very grey Hong Kong, the vertical city.

PURI (Filipina, 40's) sings under a walkway amongst a group of "helpers" (migrant domestic workers) taking shelter from the rain. They seem to be rehearsing.

As Puri's solo kicks in, her voice floats above the rest - a soulful alto with a deep vibrato. She's not just good, she's incredible.

As the chorus kicks in, Puri belts her heart out over the pouring rain. Then, suddenly, someone in the choir makes a mistake. Perhaps singing the wrong verse. The song is interrupted as the women course correct and start again from the top.

TITLE CARD: CENTRAL 中環

EXT. HONG KONG CENTRAL - DAY

Puri rushes down a crowded shopping street, carrying an umbrella in one hand and a folding chair under the other arm.

It's Sunday, and like every Sunday, streets that are home to luxury brands like Cartier and Yves Saint Laurent are transformed by Hong Kong's helpers, trying to enjoy their only day off. A day known as the "Maid's Picnic."

Cardboard boxes, tarps and umbrellas provide a temporary haven for the helpers. Despite the rain, the street is filled with lively chatter in Tagalog, interspersed with laughter and Filipino pop songs. Like any picnic, food is ample and shared amongst these women.

EXT. HONG KONG CENTRAL - DAY

The rain continues to cover the city as ESSIE (Filipina, 60's) hides under the awning of an upscale store. Essie laughs with someone on a video Skype call. [Tagalog. Subtitled.]

ESSIE
[Look at those little sausage
legs...]

Essie coos over a baby on the screen before the mother takes him away. She returns her focus to her son GABRIEL (30's, Filipino). His wife JESSICA (30's) is in the kitchen cooking dinner for the family.

ESSIE
[He's getting so big. What are you
guys feeding him?]

GABRIEL
[How's your day off? Are you
getting some rest?]

ESSIE
[A bit, but I have a catering job
later.]

GABRIEL
[Ma! Why are you working on a
Sunday? We're fine with money. We
really wish you'd just come home.]

Essie grows emotional, seeing her growing grandchild.

GABRIEL
[We miss you...]

ESSIE
[I miss you too.]

Over them, the sound of roaring helicopter engines drown out their conversation.

GABRIEL
[Ma, the baby's crying. I have to
go.]

ESSIE
[It's OK, I have to go too. I
gotta get to work.]

GABRIEL
[Bye Ma! We miss you!]

Essie hangs up, wistful for her family. She opens her umbrella and looks up to the sky. A helicopter circles overhead.

We begin to hear the sound of peaceful protestors in the distance chanting in Cantonese.

PROTESTORS (O.S.)
(pre-lap)
[We want universal suffrage!]

As the helicopter moves on, it takes us to...

EXT. HONG KONG, HIGHWAY - DAY

...A Bird's Eye view of bumper-to-bumper traffic on a winding, elevated highway. One highway stacked above another highway - both packed with cars.

OLIVIA CHU (late 40's, Hong Konger) sighs with frustration inside her Jaguar (or other luxury car), trying to see beyond the traffic. It's pointless. Nothing's moving.

She's not the only one losing her patience. Her two daughters CHLOÉ (13) and FLORA (15) fight with each other in the backseat, both dressed head to toe in Gucci, Dior or some other luxury brand. They speak in Cantonese. [Subtitled.]

CHLOÉ
[I don't see why we have to go to
grandma's when I'm old enough to
stay home by myself.]

OLIVIA
[You're going to grandma's because
I don't know what else to do with
you.]

CHLOÉ
[I told Minda to stay out of my
room and then she quit. You can't
blame me for that.]

Flora doesn't look up from her jewel-encrusted phone.

FLORA
[That's not what happened.]

CHLOÉ
[Yes it is. You weren't there].

FLORA
[You spat in her face! You made
Minda cry.]

CHLOÉ

[She made me cry! She made me cry
all morning! I told her to get out
but she kept moving my things!]

Flora laughs at her younger bratty sister.

CHLOÉ

[Don't laugh at me!! Mom! Tell her
not to laugh at me!!]

OLIVIA

[Girls! That's enough. PLEASE. It's
impossible to drive while you're
shouting! I can't think-]

FLORA

[Mom, just tell Chloe to apologize
to Minda].

CHLOÉ

[Why? She's just going to hire
someone else anyway.]

Honk HOOOOOONK. Impatient drivers lean into their horns.

The NEWS plays on the radio in Cantonese.

NEWS REPORTER (O.S.)

[...hunt for Malaysian Airlines
Flight 370 resumes today more than
six months after the jet vanished
while on its path from Kuala Lumpur
to Beijing with 239 people on board
on the 8th of March this year. The
search zone in this phase of the
underwater search covers a new
region of up to 60,000 square
kilometers in a desolate stretch of
the southern Indian Ocean.

INT. CHARLY'S APARTMENT - DAY

CHARLY LAM (20's, Hong Konger) grabs her umbrella and heads
out the door.

EXT. CHARLY'S APARTMENT / HONG KONG STREETS - DAY

Charly makes her way through the streets in the rain.

EXT. ADMIRALTY, HONG KONG - DAY

A cacophony of honking indicates a large group of pedestrians blocking traffic. Everyone carries umbrellas to shield from the rain.

Charly snakes through the crowd searching for someone. Finally, she spots TONY NG (20's, Hong Konger) and rushes over to him.

They speak Cantonese. [Subtitled.]

CHARLY

[Hey, there you are!]

TONY

[Where were you?]

CHARLY

(defensive)

[I had to take grandma to her doctor's appointment!]

Tony smiles. He loves to get her riled up.

CHARLY

[Wow. There's so many people out!]

TONY

[Yea. It's amazing!]

INT. CHURCH - DAY

PASTOR ALAN MAMBO (30's, Expat) stands at the pulpit before an international congregation, delivering an impassioned English-language sermon.

PASTOR ALAN

The next day, the farmer's son set off to train the new horses, and do you know what happened? He broke his leg after being thrown off. One by one, once again the villagers came... "Oh, what a tragedy you have had! Your son won't be able to help you farm with a broken leg. You'll have to do all the work yourself. How will you survive? You must be very sad," they said. Calmly going about his usual business, the farmer answered. "Who could say? We shall see..."

The entire congregation leans forward, captivated.

PASTOR ALAN

So what do you think happened next?
Well, the war happened and it came
time to draft young men to fight on
the frontlines and of course the
farmer's son couldn't fight in the
war because of his broken leg...
Now, this is actually a Buddhist
story, but I share this story
because we all go through ups and
downs... highs and lows... And we
are quick to attach a value to
these things, when we don't know
God's greater plan. And so, no
matter how good or bad things are
going, we must put our faith in
God, and trust that he has a
purpose for everything... a plan...

INT. CHURCH - LATER

The CHURCH CHOIR sings in unison, with conviction.

INT. CHURCH - EVEN LATER

Pastor Alan greets various members of the congregation after
service, starting with EXPAT PARISHIONER #1.

EXPAT PARISHIONER #1

Thank you Alan, I've spent many
nights thinking about last week's
sermon and tonight will be no
different.

PASTOR ALAN

How is your mother's health?

EXPAT PARISHIONER 1

Her body is weak but her mind is
strong as ever.

PASTOR ALAN

I will include her in my prayers.

A young parishioner, MORGAN (30's, Expat) approaches -

PASTOR ALAN

Morgan. Great to see you.

MORGAN

Hi Alan. Beautiful sermon,
particularly meaningful today,
exactly three years since I moved
to Hong Kong and finding this
church really helped me through
some hard times, so thank you.

PASTOR ALAN

No thanks necessary, but
congratulations on that
anniversary.

MORGAN

(laughs)
Thanks.

PASTOR ALAN

Hey by the way, how's your
colleague Clarke doing? I haven't
seen him here in a few weeks.

MORGAN

Oh well... I'm not sure, he hasn't
been at work either, which is
unlike him. Even when, you know...
everything happened, he came in
sooner than we expected. We all
told him to take time off, but he
kept turning up in his office. I've
reached out but I haven't heard
back. I'm not sure what else to do.

PASTOR ALAN

I see. Thanks for letting me know.

Yet another, EXPAT PARISHIONER #2, steps forward.

EXPAT PARISHIONER #2

Hi Alan, I had a go at your lo-mein
recipe and you were right about the
Mirin-

(laughs)
Oh, and thank you for the prayers.

PASTOR ALAN

Did you get the job?

EXPAT PARISHIONER #2

I don't know yet.

PASTOR ALAN

Then I'll keep up the prayers.

EXT. MONTANE MANSION ROOFTOP - DAY

WEN NG (50's, Hong Konger) pads across the roof in a raincoat, searching for something, or someone.

WEN

Momo Momo... Momo Momo...

Suddenly, she spots him. Momo the cat. Up high on the water tank. He meows, clearly stuck. Wen begins to climb up towards Momo.

Everything is wet. Slippery. A hint of danger.

Little by little, Wen inches closer to Momo.

EXT. MONTANE MANSION, WALKWAY - DAY

As she makes her way to her apartment, Wen cradles Momo in her arms. They're both drenched.

INT. TONY AND WEN'S APARTMENT - DAY

Wen sets Momo on the ground, comforted to have her home safe. The cat arches her back as Wen runs her hand across her body.

Momo meows loudly, rubbing herself against Wen's leg. The sound of hunger. Wen opens a can of cat food.

INT. MID-LEVELS APARTMENT - DAY

Tiered stands adorned with scones and finger sandwiches. Essie brings out a platter with an assortment of pastries to refill the stands. For Hong Kong, this apartment is massive. Beyond luxurious.

A PREGNANT WOMAN grabs a cucumber cream cheese sandwich and shoves it in her mouth. Her FASHION DESIGNER boyfriend sits beside her. He's French.

Unopened gifts and friends surround the couple. Behind them is a giant balloon that reads "It's a girl!"

EXPAT FRIEND #1

I don't understand... You don't
have any permanent residence? You
just *live* in a hotel?

Essie refills everyone's tea and champagne glasses.

FASHION DESIGNER

It's fantastic. I don't like to be tied down.

EXPAT FRIEND #1

But is that like... just in Hong Kong that you don't have an apartment?

EXPAT FRIEND #2

I think the last time Jonathan paid rent was when we were in school together at NYU.

EXPAT FRIEND #3

That must get expensive. How long have you been in HK and how many hotels?

FASHION DESIGNER

Three hotels in four years.

PREGNANT WOMAN

I keep asking Jonathan what we're gonna do when the baby comes. Like... if we need to warm the milk or something.

EXPAT FRIEND #1

And?

FASHION DESIGNER

(matter-of-fact)

Just dial 0.

Essie leaves with a few empty plates. We follow her into the house.

INT. MID-LEVELS APARTMENT - DAY

Essie makes her way to the kitchen where a full staff of help work diligently.

The HELPER IN CHARGE barks some orders at Essie and she quickly complies.

EXT. PARK PAGODA, HONG KONG CENTRAL - DAY

Puri runs towards a pagoda, still holding her folding chair.

She joins friends REYNA (20's, Filipina), CICI (20's, Filipina) DIANA (30's) and AMALIA (30's) along with a few others, in the midst of a BINGO game.

They all speak in Tagalog. [Subtitled.]

PURI
[Sorry sorry... rehearsals went long.]

REYNA
[Thank god, you have too many cards and I could barely keep up!]

Reyna gestures at several Bingo cards for Puri. Puri sets down her folding chair while her friends sit on the floor.

Several groups play nearby, as the CALLER yells out numbers.

CALLER
[Letter G, *"groped by the boss"*, 56!]

Puri quickly assesses her five cards, while others around her only play one or two cards. A serious player, she searches each card with intense focus. No 56.

She curses silently under her breath.

CICI
[Anyway, as I was saying, open audition means anyone can go!]

DIANA
[What are you gonna do, make your brownies? It's a talent show not a cooking show!]

The Caller pulls a new number.

CALLER
[Letter I, *"Aye, I've been jilted!"* 22!]

Puri finds 22 on one of her cards. Excitedly marks it. A few friends also mark their cards.

Everyone laughs.

DIANA
[The only one who actually has a shot at this is Puri.]

PURI

[A shot? I'm gonna win the whole thing!]

REYNA

[Here she goes again...]

Everyone laughs, not taking Puri seriously. It's clear that this gets under Puri's skin.

PURI

[You can laugh all you want, but one day I'll be a famous singer and I'll show you.]

The Caller pulls another number.

CALLER

[Line 0, "Oh my god!" 74!]

Puri scans all her cards - nothing. Reyna and a few others mark the 74 box on their cards. Puri studies their cards - the fire of competition in her eyes.

PURI

[Shit!]

Puri takes this game more seriously than everyone else.

AMALIA

[Let me guess - Did Ms. Hilary put all these ideas in your head?]

Puri's face says it all. *So what if it is?*

REYNA

[Don't get confused, Puri. Dreams are not the same for you and her. She comes from money.]

PURI

[That's not her fault. I like Ms. Hilary.]

AMALIA

[Why, because she gave you a folding chair?]

Indeed, Puri does have a folding chair, when all the other ladies are sitting on cardboard. And Puri is proud of it.

CALLER

[Letter N, "*fooled by a lover*,"
34!]

Puri marks two of her cards. She smiles, satisfied.

PURI

[Ms. Hilary says it's important to
have self-respect.]

AMALIA

[And what? We don't have self-
respect because we sit on the
floor?

(pause)

Or because we're helpers and that's
all we'll ever be?]

As the group gangs up on her, Puri grows increasingly
defensive.

PURI

[Look how dirty it is! A lady would
never sit on the floor!]

Amalia jabs one of the other women with her elbow and smiles.

AMALIA

[Now she thinks she's a lady
because of a folding chair.]

CALLER

[Letter B! "*Boss, give me a cash
advance!*" 12!]

DIANA

[So tell us... why can't Ms. Hilary
hold onto her husband with all that
self respect?]

Puri lets out a surrendering sigh. She shakes her head.

PURI

[Poor Ms. Hilary, she's having a
hard time. The other day, she
opened all the windows and let the
rain into the living room.]

DIANA

[Who wouldn't go crazy? If I knew
my husband was sleeping with a much
younger woman, I'd go crazy too.]

Puri sits up. This is news to her.

PURI

[What?]

DIANA

[Don't act surprised. You know he's
seeing someone else.]

Puri's look of shock makes it clear she didn't.

CALLER

[Letter G, *"groped by the boss!"*
53!]

PURI

[Who? Who??]

DIANA

[That Korean woman. The one who
lost the kid... what's her name?]

CICI

[Mercy. She comes into the
restaurant all the time, and
sometimes they come in together.
Always take out. Never to dine in.]

Puri reels from this gossip.

PURI

[I wonder if Ms. Hilary knows...]

REYNA

(a warning)

[Doesn't matter if she does or
doesn't, you stay far away from
it.]

Puri says nothing, but her eyes are wide with confusion.

CALLER

[Letter N, *"discovered by the
boss!"* 42!]

DIANA

[Puri. Do not get involved. She is
your boss and you need to keep
boundaries.]

Suddenly, someone yells "BINGO" in the background.

Reyna and the others throws her hands up in frustration. Puri stares at all 8 of her cards, calculating her loss.

Everyone grumbles about their loss. Puri pulls out a wad of cash from under her leg. Counts her money.

PURI
[It's not like that with Ms.
Hilary. She's my friend...]

The word 'friend' sends the group into hysterical cackling as if Puri's just told the world's funniest joke.

REYNA
[Don't be dense. She's not your friend. You know too much about her. Remember when Bianca thought she was friends with her ma'am? And then she was fired for no reason, and now she works for a woman with five cats.]

AMALIA
[Exactly. You can't get too close. We know everything about these people... things their closest friends don't even know. Imagine if we all told them what we knew!]

CICI
[I could tell my ma'am that I know she's fucking Diana's mister!]

DIANA
[And I'll tell my mister that ma'am is sleeping with our neighbor's twenty-year-old son!]

REYNA
[And I'll tell my ma'am that her mister's fucking Cici!]

They explode into laughter. Cici's face turns tomato red, eyes turned to the floor. Reyna playfully slaps Cici's butt.

REYNA
[Look at this ass. Whose mister wouldn't wanna fuck her?]

These women's deep belly laughs and physical closeness indicate a familial bond. They've also developed thick skin around each other.

Even Puri gradually rejoins in the laughter and communion.

INT. ARTSY RESTAURANT - DAY

Olivia rushes towards a table against the window. The flawless HILARY STARR (40's, Indian-American) is already seated with a gin martini. Twist, not olives.

OLIVIA
Hey, hi - oh my god, it's pouring,
Have you been waiting long?

She takes off her oversized sunglasses and waves them around.

HILARY
(holds up her martini)
Long enough to have had two of
these.

OLIVIA
Aah, the traffic was a nightmare, I
had to come all the way from New
Territories after dropping the
girls off with my mom because Minda
quit yesterday. So now on top of
everything else, I have to find a
new helper.

HILARY
Good help is hard to find.

OLIVIA
(changes the subject)
Did you do something with your
hair?

HILARY
No.

Olivia waves her hand at a nearby WAITER.

OLIVIA
Hello, Kevin. Chrysanthemum tea.

HILARY
She'll have champagne.

OLIVIA
I'm not drinking.

HILARY
(joking)
Are you... pregnant?

OLIVIA
No! Ha! Thank you.

HILARY
-You're welcome-

OLIVIA
I'm doing a cleanse.

Hilary turns to KEVIN, the waiter, who's still waiting for the final order.

HILARY
She'll have champagne.

OLIVIA
Yes. And a chrysanthemum tea.

Kevin leaves with the order.

OLIVIA
You sure you didn't cut your hair?
Something's different. Did you lose weight?

HILARY
Yea, 170 pounds.
(beat)
I filed for divorce this morning.

OLIVIA
What?

Olivia is legitimately taken aback.

HILARY
That's why we're drinking. To toast my freedom.

OLIVIA
But everything was fine. You guys were fine...

HILARY
We weren't. And you know we haven't been for a long time... He got out of the car on the way to Clarke's birthday party and hasn't been home since.

HILARY (CONT'D)

I'm sorry I didn't tell you then. I guess I was embarrassed, or in denial. Maybe I thought I could fix things...

OLIVIA

Has David said he wants a divorce?

HILARY

No, but he doesn't need to. He's sleeping with someone else and hasn't been home in weeks.

OLIVIA

Oh, come on- they all have affairs... It doesn't mean your marriage is over. Did I tell you about the Australian woman from my book club who caught her husband cheating with a girl from some karaoke bar? I mean, she could live with the cheating but then she found out he bought the girl Van Cleef jewelry... while he was buying her Chow Tai Fook!

Hilary blinks, confused.

OLIVIA

My point is as long you're getting the better jewelry, you're fine.

HILARY

I buy my own jewelry.

OLIVIA

I get it. You're independent and self-sufficient. But are you really ready to be in your forties and divorced? To be part of the long procession of expat marital destruction? I can count them on my fingers...

As Olivia holds up her fingers -

OLIVIA

Mandy King, Tara Connelly, Kathleen Li, Padma Singh...

HILARY

Please don't.

Kevin brings over Olivia's champagne. Hilary glances at it - this celebration is not going how she planned.

OLIVIA

It's just that... it seems like the woman is always left worse off and the man just starts his life anew, the man gets to start his life over with a younger model of the wife. Sure, sometimes he might have a slightly smaller apartment but pretty soon his new life begins to look like his old life- while at home, the wife starts working again- depending on what kind of financial arrangement they have- So now she has the kids *plus* the demands of her work and that makes her start to look gray-haired from the stress of it, so that when her ex-husband comes to pick up the kids he can see the stark contrast between what he's left behind and what he has now and he congratulates himself that he's made the right decision. And to make it worse, he's so determined not to mess things up again, because it was so painful the first time, and he never wants to go through that again or put anyone else through it... so when he has more children, he vows to really do things right this time. He pitches in to an unimaginable extent, he does more with the kids, since he feels like he missed out the first time so this new family gets the benefit of a shiny new improved man- and the old family is forced to watch. It's terrible.

Hilary stares at Olivia's untouched flute of champagne.

HILARY

Are you going to drink that?

Olivia picks up the flute and tosses it back. She waves to the waiter for a refill.

EXT. ARTSY RESTAURANT, VALET - DAY

Olivia and Hilary make their way outside to the valet, where an older CAUCASIAN MAN walks past with a young Asian GIRLFRIEND and his three teenage kids.

HILARY

Ugh, men are so predictable.

A look between Olivia and Hilary as they watch the family get inside their car.

HILARY

Whoever David's fucking is probably half his age.

OLIVIA

Look, whatever he chooses to do outside your home, you're still his wife and he shouldn't be so careless.

A BLACK TOWN CAR pulls up. The driver SAM (40's) gets out and opens the door for Hilary. She hugs Olivia goodbye.

HILARY

I know... I deserve better.

OLIVIA

I'm worried about you.

Hilary smiles.

HILARY

Don't be. I'm fine... I'm relieved. It's like, the moment you decide to leap, you leave everything behind. You know?

These words strike a chord with Olivia. Contemplative, she watches as Hilary gets in the car and drives off.

INT. TAXI - DAY

Pastor Alan sits in the back seat, staring out the window at the city far below. The rain is light but consistent.

EXT. THE PEAK NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

The RED TAXI drives up the winding roads of the lush, tree-lined streets of the peak.

EXT. MANORS ON THE PEAK - DAY

The taxi is stopped at the gate of this private community. Pastor Alan walks towards the front door.

INT. MANORS ON THE PEAK, WOO HALLWAY - DAY

Knock knock knock.

Pastor Alan stands at the front door of an apartment unit. So far, there's no response. He knocks again, peering through the window.

Finally, we hear someone approaching and unlocking the door.

CLARKE WOO (50, Chinese-American) opens the door. He's unshaven and in sweatpants. His T-shirt has sweat stains.

PASTOR ALAN
Clarke, hi.

Clarke stares at him.

CLARKE
Hey Alan.

PASTOR ALAN
Thank you for letting me come by.

Clarke stares back, apprehensive.

CLARKE
What can I do for you?

PASTOR ALAN
Well like I mentioned on the phone,
we've been missing you at service,
so I just wanted to check on you.
May I come in?

CLARKE
Everyone's out, but they'll be back
soon...

PASTOR ALAN
I won't be long.

Clarke hesitates, then opens the door enough for Pastor Alan to step inside. Alan leaves his wet umbrella and shoes at the door.

PASTOR ALAN
Beautiful community you live in.

CLARKE
Can I get you something to drink? A
coffee? Tea? Grape juice?

PASTOR ALAN
Tea would be great. Thank you.

As Clarke disappears into the kitchen, Alan scans photos on a nearby credenza. Images of the children. His eyes land on a photo of a 3 year old boy. GUS WOO.

INT. WORLDWIDE HOUSE - DAY

Puri rides the escalator inside the indoor mall, packed with Filipino stores selling local foods and goods.

She stops at one stall selling SILK FLOWERS. Puri watches the STALL OWNER (Filipino, 40's) attending to other customers.

STALL OWNER
I always say... You don't need a
special occasion for flowers. It is
the flowers that make any occasion
special.

He's handsome. Charming. Easy to laugh with.

He finishes with the customers, notices Puri and grins.

They speak in Tagalog. [Subtitled.]

STALL OWNER
[It's you!]

PURI
[I was just passing through...]

STALL OWNER
[Oh and here I thought you were
coming to see me.]

PURI
[Oh no, I... didn't. Of course
not.]

Puri blushes, looks down to the floor.

STALL OWNER

[That's OK. Still you are looking lovely today and I'm glad you passed by.]

He points to her bright-colored shawl.

STALL OWNER

[This color suits you very well.]

PURI

[Oh. Thank you. Actually, I uh... wanted to buy some flowers.]

19-22 He smiles. She watches him with a glimmer in her eye as he picks out a few flowers for her. 19-22

INT. WORLDWIDE HOUSE, WESTERN UNION - NIGHT

Puri stands in line for a Western Union counter. "Happy" by Pharrell (or some other time appropriate pop song for 2014) plays in her headphones, and we hear it.

As she bops her head to the music, she notices Essie a couple people behind her. She lets a few people pass her, until Essie catches up. They speak in Tagalog. [Subtitled].

PURI

(re: line)

[It's moving fast today.]

ESSIE

[Yes.]

PURI

[I heard last week they only had one person at the counter so it was very slow.]

Essie nods, more shy than Puri.

PURI

[How are you?]

ESSIE

[Oh you know, been busy with the kids since they started school last month.]

PURI

[That's right, school started.
That's why the building's been so
quiet during the day. Everyone OK
back home?]

ESSIE

(nods)

[My son just had a baby. A boy.]

PURI

[Oh congratulations! Do you have
other grandchildren?]

ESSIE

[First one. My daughter is older,
but she's only focused on her
career. She's stubborn like me I
guess. You have children in
Manila?]

PURI

[No. One day, I hope. When I meet
my Prince Charming.]

ESSIE

[You're smart. Better to meet
someone here than to leave your
family at home.]

Essie arrives at the counter. Puri steps aside as Essie fills
out paperwork and hands over her cash.

Essie finishes, rejoins Puri.

ESSIE

[It was nice to see you.]

PURI

[You too... can I ask you... How is
the family? I mean, has there been
any update on the little boy?]

Essie shakes her head.

ESSIE

[No.]

PURI

[I'm sorry. They're lucky to have
you.]

ESSIE

[I'm lucky too. They're a good family. They don't deserve this.]

PURI

[And how about you? Are you OK? You must have been close with him...]

Essie considers this, tearing up.

PURI

[Oh I'm so sorry. I shouldn't have asked, it's not my business.]

ESSIE

[No it's OK. Thank you for asking.]

They suddenly realize that they're up next in line. Puri offers to let Essie go first.

Puri watches as Essie approaches the counter, hands the CASHIER an envelope of cash. She fills out the paperwork to send the money to Manila, Philippines.

Puri clearly feels bad for bringing up the missing child. As Essie returns to Puri -

PURI

[Wait for me? Let's go have a tea. It'll be my treat.]

INT. WOO APARTMENT - LATER

Pastor Alan takes a sip of tea, then sets it on the table between him and Clarke. The silence doesn't bother Alan, but Clarke is clearly less comfortable, shifting in his seat.

PASTOR ALAN

Morgan mentioned that you haven't been at work recently?

CLARKE

I'm taking a bit of personal time.

The Pastor nods.

PASTOR ALAN

That's why I came. We have a lot of expats in our congregation and I know how lonely it can be out here, away from family and close friends.

CLARKE
I'm fine. Really. I just need some
time... That's all. I'm fine.

PASTOR ALAN
Of course. Yes.

Clarke stares into his lap. He is clearly not fine.

Pastor Alan watches as Clarke passes something from one hand
to the other. A small stone. Clarke holds it up to show Alan.

CLARKE
I tried to pray like you told me
to.

Clarke clears his throat, trying to justify himself.

CLARKE
But then I stopped.

PASTOR ALAN
Prayer is a very personal thing.

CLARKE
It's wrong. It was... wrong.

Pastor Alan is trying follow, but he doesn't. Clarke tries
again.

CLARKE
We went to China. There was a body.
They said it could be our son, and
before we went in to identify him,
I took out your stone and I said a
prayer.

The sadness builds up in Clarke.

CLARKE
A prayer is a wish your heart
makes, right? You said something
like that?

Pastor Alan nods.

CLARKE
Well I wished it was Gus.

Clarke looks into Pastor Alan's eyes.

CLARKE

I prayed that Gus was dead. That it was him lying in that morgue.

Clarke's words are both a plea and a challenge. Someone at the end of their rope.

Pastor Alan nods, finally understanding.

CLARKE

What kind of father prays for his son to be dead?

Pastor Alan's eyes reflect his empathy.

PASTOR ALAN

People often think that death is the worst resolution. But it's at least a resolution. There are some things worse than death.

Clarke nods. Relieved to have unburdened this secret.

EXT. HONG KONG NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Charly and Tony make their way home along familiar streets.

[Cantonese. Subtitled.]

TONY

[Did you find your sleeping bag by the way? The tent is big enough for at least 4 people, but you should bring your own sleeping bag.]

CHARLY

[I couldn't find it, but I'll buy one tomorrow. I have to study for an exam tonight anyway, so I'll just come find you guys tomorrow after school.]

TONY

[You're still studying?]

CHARLY

[Easy for you to say. Even without studying you manage to ace every exam.]

TONY

[I'm not taking any more exams.]

Charly looks at him.

CHARLY

[What? Seriously? It's our final year, you want to throw everything away?]

TONY

[I don't see it as throwing away anything. This is important.]

They stop at an intersection in the road. The intersection where they go their separate ways.

CHARLY

[What's up with you lately? You know I'm as committed as you are!]

TONY

[How can you say you're committed when you're not willing to sacrifice anything?]

Charly considers this. Hesitates for a beat too long.

CHARLY

[Why do you think I'm trying to graduate? A degree gets you access to more circles, you have more power and more influence.]

TONY

[It's a distraction... To me, this is what matters now. Every second we spend away from the movement is a betrayal.]

CHARLY

[You're being shortsighted. I'm trying to see the long term.]

TONY

[I don't want to argue, you've changed.]

Charly watches Tony walk away.

CHARLY

[I haven't changed, you have! Hey! Hey!]

INT. TONY AND WEN'S APARTMENT - DAY

Close on Wen's face, as she waits anxiously on the couch. She's clad in a utilitarian janitor uniform, watching a soap opera on her phone.

Suddenly, the door knob turns and Wen looks up as her son Tony returns home. He hands her a bag of scallions.

They speak in Cantonese. [Subtitled.]

WEN

[What do I need this for? I've already finished cooking.]

TONY

[Sorry. There was traffic and the bus took forever.]

WEN

[Where've you been all day?]

TONY

[I told you. At the library.]

WEN

[Why weren't you picking up my calls?]

TONY

[My phone died.]

WEN

[You know I wasn't born yesterday right? Don't lie to me again.]

TONY

[It's better if we don't talk about it, Ma. I don't want to have another fight.]

Wen sighs loudly, at a loss. She watches Tony absorbed in whatever is on his cell phone.

WEN

[Why won't you listen to me, you stubborn child?]

Tony continues typing.

WEN

[Son, I've eaten salt longer than you've eaten rice.]

WEN (CONT'D)

Don't you remember me telling you
why we came to Hong Kong-- Look,
I'm telling you... it's not worth
it.]

Tony looks up from his phone.

TONY

[Yes, and you also taught me what's
right and what's wrong.]

WEN

[You know I don't agree with you
doing this. This is too big, too
complicated. Stop doing these
useless things.]

TONY

[So what? We just sit back and wait
for it to happen? We don't even
try?]

WEN

[And in trying, are you willing to
give your life?]

TONY

[If that's what it takes.]

WEN

[Is your life worth so little that
you can throw it away?]

TONY

[I'm not throwing it away if I have
purpose... This is our home. One
day I'll have my own children. How
do I look my children in the eye
and tell them that I didn't stand
up for them?]

WEN

[I've already lost everyone around
me... I can't lose you too! You
think you're being noble, but
you're just another ant out there,
you're inconsequential. If
something happened to you, nobody
would care! But all I have left is
you. If I lose you, I lose
everything...]

Tony softens as he stares into his mother's pained eyes.

TONY

[Ma...]

WEN

[I have to go. Dinner's on the table. Eat and then do your homework.]

TONY

[I will. Ma, don't worry about me.]

WEN

[How can I not worry? If something happened to you, what would I do?]

She slaps him playfully on the arm.

TONY

[What could possibly happen? I can take care of myself. Your son is very smart.]

WEN

[Stupid child, have some pity on your poor mother.]

Tony watches Wen leave. The second she's gone, Tony scarfs down some food and begins to pack his bag.

INT. OLIVIA'S HOME, THE PEAK - DAY

High vaulted ceilings with an enormous crystal ceiling at the entrance. Best views you can get in Hong Kong. Sound of sports on TV.

Olivia returns to her luxurious home carrying a box of baked goods.

Her husband MAX CHU (50's, Hong Konger) watches a game in the living room. She sidles up to him with a flirtatious grin, opens the box to reveal a dozen perfect RED VELVET CUPCAKES.

They speak in Cantonese. [Subtitled.]

MAX

(without looking up from his game)
[What's this?]

OLIVIA

[I was near the bakery and thought of you. You want one?]

MAX
[Not right now.]

OLIVIA
(slightly desperate)
[You love red velvet. Well, you
used to. Reminds me of New York, we
had a lot of fun that trip].

MAX
[I had a late lunch.]

Olivia's eyes shift up to the ceiling, noticing a slight
water stain in the otherwise impeccable house.

OLIVIA
[Have you looked at the list of
companies I sent you to fix that?]

Max doesn't take his eyes off the TV.

MAX
[Not yet, but they can't fix it
until the rain lets up anyway.]

Olivia goes to the kitchen to put down the cupcakes.

OLIVIA
[I swear it's getting bigger by the
minute. I hate it.]

MAX
[Have you ever heard that story
about the Buddhist master who was
walking in a field with his
disciples? The master pointed to a
large boulder and asked them if
they thought it was heavy. They
said yes. But the master smiled and
pointed out that, in fact, it was
not heavy. Not if you don't try to
pick it up.]

Olivia blinks at Max, incredulous.

The crowd cheers on TV. Max grunts, distracted by his team
losing. Olivia props up beside him, trying to connect.

OLIVIA
[You won't believe what Hil told me
at lunch. She and David are getting
a divorce.]

MAX
[Good for them.]

And that's that. With nothing left to say, Olivia walks out of the room, leaving Max to his sports game.

INT. CHARLY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Charly studies, her parents and her brother watch television in the living room.

Her GRANDMOTHER enters the room, picks up some dirty underwear from the bed. They speak in Cantonese. [Subtitled.]

CHARLY
[What are you doing, Grandma?]

GRANDMOTHER
[I told you to wash it by hand, why don't you wash it?]

Her grandmother sniffs the underwear.

GRANDMOTHER
[Stinky!]

CHARLY
[Don't smell my underwear, that's gross!]

GRANDMOTHER
[You're my granddaughter, nothing about you is gross to me.]

She gives Charly a kiss. As her grandmother joins the rest of the family, Charly tries to return to her math homework. The numbers staring back at her are jargon. Her mind is clearly elsewhere.

Suddenly, her phone buzzes. A text from "Mercy"

MERCY: Hi.

Charly pauses, surprised to hear from this person. She debates whether to write back. Then hesitantly responds -

CHARLY: Hi...

Mercy sends a photo of the Mido Café - a place that clearly has history for them.

MERCY: Meet me?

Charly is torn. Her fingers hover over the phone in hesitation.

INT. MCDONALD'S - NIGHT

Puri and Essie sit across from each other with iced tea and soft serve ice cream.

ESSIE
[My kids want me to go home. They
say I'm old and I should retire.]

PURI
[And you're not ready to retire?]

ESSIE
[It's not that...]

Essie hesitates, processing. Trying to find the words.

ESSIE
[I guess I worry about the family.
The children.]

PURI
[And what about you? You have your
own family and children.]

ESSIE
[But I raised these kids like my
own. I feel a closeness with them.
They've been through so much...
Daisy and Philip need me.]

Puri considers this.

PURI
[I guess it's difficult for me to
understand because I never worked
with a family with children
before.]

Essie's face is full of pain. Regret.

ESSIE
[I don't have the right to feel the
way I do. I am not Gus's mother.
But I should've been there... I was
supposed to go to the market that
night, but Ms. Margaret was upset
with me. So she asked me not to go.
I keep thinking...]

ESSIE (CONT'D)

what did I do wrong? If I could've
done something different, so she
let me come, so that I could have
been there that night, because if I
was there... if I was there...]

Essie's voice trails off, ashamed to say it. Puri says it for her.

PURI

[If you were there, you wouldn't
have lost him.]

This breaks the dam. Suddenly, Essie is flooded with anger. Unrestrained.

ESSIE

[How could she give her child to a
stranger? What kind of mother would
hand their child over to someone
she just met?]

Puri reels at the mention of this stranger. Her name's already been brought up once today.

PURI

[The Korean woman. Mercy.]

Essie nods.

ESSIE

[She is practically a child
herself.]

Puri finds herself once again thinking about Mercy. This woman who brings pain and drama wherever she goes.

PURI

[I wouldn't exactly say she's a
child.]

EXT. MIDO CAFÉ - NIGHT

From outside, we see MERCY KIM (25, Korean-American) in the window on the second floor of the Mido café. Charly stands on the street looking at this woman. She's lovely. At the same time, there's also something sad and lost about her, as she sips on her milk tea.

Charly heads inside.

INT. MIDO CAFÉ - NIGHT

Charly goes through the first floor, then up the stairs. This is not her first time here. She spots Mercy in a booth. Mercy looks up and sees Charly, breaks into a smile.

MERCY

I was just debating which noodles to get. What do you think?

CHARLY

Nobody comes here for the food.

Mercy looks around at all the people eating.

MERCY

Oh.

There's a long awkward pause, as both search for what else to say. A WAITER approaches to take their order. Charly speaks to him in Cantonese. [Subtitled.]

CHARLY

[Red bean ice please.]

Charly hesitantly takes a seat. Mercy is visibly relieved.

The waiter waits for Mercy to add to her order.

MERCY

This place is cool. Old school. I love the neon signs.

WAITER

Tell that to the government. Our city is dying.

(then)

Anything else?

Mercy is taken aback by his deadpan tone for a moment.

MERCY

...Beef curry noodles. And a ham sandwich.

The waiter leaves with the order.

MERCY

I didn't think you'd answer my text.

CHARLY

I almost didn't.

Mercy doesn't seem surprised.

CHARLY
You left the bar so quickly. I was
looking for you everywhere.

MERCY
I just... got tired, I guess.

Charly looks away, questioning whether it was a good idea to come.

MERCY
It's really complicated. That's why
I wanted to see you in person.

Charly can see how hard Mercy's trying. Less defensive.

CHARLY
It's OK. I understand. We don't
really know each other... You don't
need to explain.

MERCY
I know, but I should've called. Or
at least texted.

CHARLY
Eventually you did.

It's an olive branch. Charly is trying for a fresh start.

Mercy lets out a breath she didn't realize she was holding.

INT. WOO APARTMENT - NIGHT

Pastor Alan waits alone in the living room. Quiet.

The front door flies open and the apartment is suddenly
filled with the commotion of children.

Pastor Alan stands to greet the family.

PHILIP (O.S.)
I wanna show dad! Can I show dad?

MARGARET (O.S.)
Yea, go show dad.

PHILIP WOO (8, Asian-Caucasian mix) rolls into the living
room on a SCOOTER. He's a sensitive kid. A keen observer
might see the residual trauma.

MARGARET WOO (40's, American) enters behind him, followed by DAISY WOO (12, Asian-Caucasian mix) who holds a leash to CHAUNCEY, a rambunctious golden-doodle dog.

The energy in the room immediately changes with Margaret's entrance. An undeniable presence. Pastor Alan is taken aback.

Margaret's gaze drifts to the stranger in her living room. By the expression of shock on her face, this is not a common occurrence.

Clarke emerges from the kitchen with a fresh cup of tea. Piping hot.

CLARKE
Margaret, this is Alan...

He hands the mug to Alan.

CLARKE
Here you go.

PASTOR ALAN
Thanks. It's so nice to meet you.
I'm sorry to intrude, I just came
to check on Clarke and your family.

PHILIP
Look dad!

CLARKE
Heeey... What's that?

Margaret keeps her distance.

MARGARET
I'm sorry, who are you?

PASTOR ALAN
I'm the pastor... at International
Baptist Assembly.

Margaret turns her gaze to Clarke with an accusatory stare. Clarke avoids her gaze. It becomes clear to Alan that he's overstayed his welcome.

MARGARET
Philip, Daisy. Go to your rooms.

Philip obeys, carrying his scooter to his room.

Daisy doesn't acknowledge Pastor Alan's presence. She has the aloofness of a typical teenager, but her abrasiveness is far from typical.

DAISY

But I was gonna watch the special report on the plane! You promised I could watch when we got home!

MARGARET

You can borrow my iPad.

Daisy storms towards the bedrooms.

MARGARET

Did my husband tell you we're not church people?

PASTOR ALAN

We... didn't get into that. Like I said, I just came to check in as a concerned citizen.

As Margaret turns her back to attend to something in the dining room -

MARGARET

That's very thoughtful of you Pastor, but we're really not interested in having anything to do with the church.

Clarke gives Alan an apologetic look. Mouths something like 'I'm sorry.'

PASTOR ALAN

It's OK. I was just leaving.

Even as Pastor Alan heads for the door, Margaret can't help herself.

MARGARET

I grew up around people like you. Around believers, and I know for a fact that religion is not the answer. It's usually the problem.
(beat)
Has Clarke told you about the creepy picture our son drew? Of Gus next to Jesus?

PASTOR ALAN

He didn't mention that no... but I only came because I know what you all have been through and sometimes when you're grieving, it's hard to...

MARGARET

(interrupts)

We're not grieving. Gus is still out there. He's not dead and we're doing everything we can to find him.

Sensing the escalating tension, Clarke decides to put everyone out of their misery.

CLARKE

Alan, I appreciate you checking in... Why don't I call you a taxi.

Pastor Alan looks between Margaret and Clarke. Trapped in the middle of something he's not entirely clear on.

PASTOR ALAN

(nods)

That would be great. Thank you.

As Clarke takes out his phone to call, Margaret walks away. Alan stands alone at the foyer, waiting awkwardly for his taxi.

PRE-LAP the sound of the weather report.

INT. OLIVIA'S HOME, THE PEAK - NIGHT

A news report on TV announces that the Hong Kong Observatory has raised its alert from a "No.3 strong wind signal" to an approaching "No.8 storm signal".

The weatherman reports on the storm. *It was heading for China, but has made a sharp turn and is now fast-approaching Hong Kong. Everyone should stay indoors and take shelter.*

Not paying too much attention to the news, Olivia sits at her desk, scrolling through a website of HELPERS. As Max comes into the living room -- [Cantonese. Subtitled.]

OLIVIA

[Do we want someone older again, or should we try a young one this time?]

No response.

OLIVIA
[Since the last two were Filipino,
maybe we should try an Indonesian
one? Or Malaysian?]

MAX (O.S.)
[Up to you.]

OLIVIA
[This is impossible...]

As Max descends the stairs, Olivia sighs with frustration.

OLIVIA
[I can't believe I have to find a
new helper again.]

MAX
[She'll come crawling back, like
she always does.]

OLIVIA
[Not this time. She turned in her
notice and left with all her
things.]

MAX
[Well your daughter spit in her
face. Even the best helper would
break.]

OLIVIA
[Are you blaming me for Chloé's
behavior?]

MAX
[You're her mother.]

Max grabs his keys to head out the door. Olivia looks up from the computer.

OLIVIA
[You're leaving? Now? But there's a
typhoon...]

MAX
[I'll crash at the office if I need
to.]

This is bullshit and they both know it.

OLIVIA

[Max...]

A long beat of silence. He looks at her, confused.

OLIVIA

[Don't go. Can you please stay?
Just tonight.]

MAX

[I can't. I have stuff to do at the
office.]

OLIVIA

[Can you stop saying office. We
both know you're not going to the
office!]

Max swallows, looking at his phone, which keeps lighting up
with text messages... Someone is pressuring him to leave.

MAX

[I gotta go.]

OLIVIA

[It's just, everyone's gone and I
really don't want to be alone
tonight.]

It pains her to admit to this. She looks up, doe-eyed. Max
barely blinks.

MAX

[Can't you find someone to keep you
company?]

Olivia looks down, embarrassed of that time in their history.

OLIVIA

[And what if I'm not here when you
come back? Would you care?]

MAX

[That's not fair. You can't always
have it your way. Don't forget,
you're the one who wanted this. You
made this arrangement.]

A beat.

MAX (CONT'D)

[Fine. You do whatever suits you.]

And with that, Max leaves, closing the door gently behind him. Olivia stares at the closed door, her heart in her throat.

EXT. MANORS ON THE PEAK - NIGHT

Essie and Puri run through the gates of a luxury apartment community.

There's no sign of Hong Kong's wild jungle-scape here. The grounds are dotted with trees and bushes trimmed into rectangular-shaped boxes. Not a leaf out of place.

The two helpers use keycards to enter one of the buildings.

INT. MANORS ON THE PEAK, SERVICE ELEVATOR - NIGHT

Essie and Puri each press buttons for their respective floors. They fold up their umbrellas, wiping away the rain on their faces.

PURI

[It was nice to talk with you...]

ESSIE

[Yes. For me too... Good luck with your singing competition tomorrow. I hope you win.]

PURI

[I don't know. I hope so, but I guess we'll see...]

They arrive at Puri's floor and Puri steps out, waves goodbye.

INT. MANORS ON THE PEAK, SERVICE HALLWAY - NIGHT

Essie makes her way down a dingy corridor.

INT. WOO APARTMENT - NIGHT

Essie enters the apartment through a back door, near the kitchen. Voices can be heard faintly in another part of the house. Essie opens another door - one that leads to her cramped bedroom with barely enough space for a twin-sized bed, a desk and altar featuring Virgin Mary. She drops her purse onto the bed.

Family photos adorn the room - photos of Essie with her husband and children. A few of her grandson. She leaves the bedroom -

INT. WOO APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

As Essie pads towards the living room, we hear the children-

PHILIP (O.S.)
Mom, I'm starving... Where's the
pizza?

MARGARET
Just a little longer, honey...

PHILIP
But I'm huuungry...

Essie enters to find a stranger amongst the family.

ESSIE
Hello. I don't mean to interrupt.
Just want to tell you I'm back...

Philip runs to Essie, jumping into her arms.

PHILIP
Essie! Can you heat up *pandesal*?
Please please please...

Essie wraps her arms around him, speaking in Tagalog with him.

ESSIE
[It's almost dinner time. Aren't
you getting Paisano's?]

Hearing Essie's voice, even Daisy emerges from her room, greeting Essie in Tagalog. Essie touches Daisy's hair affectionately. She clearly has a special bond with these children.

Nearby, Clarke hangs up his PHONE and rejoins the family.

CLARKE
I've called five companies, they're
all booked.
(noticing Essie)
How was your day off, Essie?

Without hesitation, Essie lies.

ESSIE
It was good. Very relaxing.

CLARKE
That's good.

MARGARET
You're drenched. You should change!

ESSIE
Yes, the rain is very bad outside.
There is a storm.

Pastor Alan gestures at the TV weather report: An approaching super typhoon is predicted to become a level 8.

PASTOR ALAN
They've issued a black rain warning.

PHILIP
What about our pizza? I'm gonna starve to death!

DAISY
I'm hungry too.

PASTOR ALAN
Excuse me for a minute. I just need to call my wife.

MARGARET
Essie, can you heat up some pizzas for us?

ESSIE
Yes ma'am.

INT. STARR APARTMENT, PURI'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

Meanwhile, in the downstairs apartment, Puri dries her wet hair with a blowdryer.

The voices in this household are not faint. We hear them clearly. In fact, they're screaming.

HILARY (O.S.)
I wasn't born yesterday, David.

DAVID (O.S.)
Just let me talk.

HILARY (O.S.)
Oh now you want to talk...

Puri finishes with her hair and stands at the door of the bathroom, not wanting to go out and interrupt the scene. Still, she can't stay in the bathroom all night.

Puri opens the door and tries to sneak past, but Hilary catches her.

HILARY
Puri.

PURI
(timid)
Ma'am?

HILARY
Come in here.

DAVID
Don't do that...

Puri is a deer in headlights, frozen in place. She takes a few steps into the kitchen. Timid.

INT. STARR APARTMENT, KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

DAVID STARR (40's, Caucasian) stands there, face to face with Puri. She's not sure what she expected, but his eyes are apologetic. Regretful.

DAVID
Can you please excuse us, Puri?

His plea is gentle. Sincere. Puri is relieved to be excused, but Hilary grabs Puri's hand in defiance.

HILARY
Whatever you have to say, you can say it in front of Puri.

Hilary drags Puri closer, positioning her right between her and David. A Puri sandwich. It's awkward, but Puri knows her job is on the line and wants to do the right thing.

DAVID
Stop it... I came back to talk.
Alone.

HILARY
Why, so you can make excuses?

Puri's eyes are wide with anxiety as Hilary holds her hostage.

DAVID

I'm not... This isn't about that. I just...

HILARY

So what then? You haven't been home or answered my calls for weeks. Are you going to blame your cheating on the Hong Kong curse?

DAVID

What the hell is the Hong Kong curse?

HILARY

It's what happens to a certain kind of man when he moves from an egalitarian American society where the expectations are equal between he and his wife. They both take out the trash and take turns to do the dishes until the day they arrive in Hong Kong and suddenly he doesn't have to do anything anymore because there are women here who cater to his every desire. He has a secretary who knows what he wants before he does, a servant who brings him his morning espresso - just the way he likes it - she irons his boxers and folds his socks... and before he knows it, he's starting to feel entitled enough to believe that this is what he deserves. Then the rot sets in. Because he gets used to his secretary hanging off his every word - or some hostess in Wan Chai fascinated by his every utterance - and so his WIFE starts to feel like a nag in comparison, complaining about his travel and his schedule and his lack of time with the kids and his fucked up attitude in general - so he starts to think, why not change it up?? Trade up? Or down!? Why not have some fun!!

Hilary takes a deep breath in, having copied a version of Olivia's earlier rant in one hit at her husband.

DAVID

What are you talking about, we
don't even *have* kids!

HILARY

I'm talking about how you're a
fucking cliché!

Puri crouches lower, unable to escape, unable to hide.

Hilary takes a deep breath and grows calm. Resolute.

HILARY

When do I get to have MY midlife
crisis, David? When do I get to go
off the rails? And what's the point
of doing it now anyway, when
nobody's here to watch me!? Who's
left behind to suffer while I ride
around town in a red Porsche with
my hot secretary, while I-

DAVID

(interrupts)

Hilary. She's pregnant.

The air goes out of the room as shock, then rage bubbles
inside of Hilary. Even in trying to be the bigger person,
David gets to have the last say.

Still caught between them, Puri is absolutely frozen.

DAVID

It's an accident of course... I
didn't think I could... I--- I
wanted to tell you in person, Hils.
I was just...

HILARY

(interrupts)

Can you excuse us, Puri?

Without a word, Puri backs away to the laundry room as Hilary
and David escape to the living room.

We stay with Puri as she tries to eavesdrop from the laundry
room. This is far too juicy to miss.

HILARY

Who is she?

Puri freezes as Hilary asks this, remembering what her
friends told her earlier.

DAVID

That's not the point...

Puri opens her door slightly wider to get a better visual. She sees Hilary leaning against the kitchen counter, as if propping herself up so she doesn't collapse.

HILARY

It's not-not the point. You finally get what you want. And you get to punish me at the same time.

Hilary grows angrier and more resentful by the second.

DAVID

Why would I want to punish you? You think I wanted any of this?

HILARY

Maybe not consciously, but yea... on some level... I think you know exactly what you're doing.

DAVID

You didn't even want a baby. Or me... You filed for divorce in the blink of an eye...

HILARY

That's not what people are going to say. They'll say I couldn't give you a baby so no wonder you left to have one with someone else.

(then)

They'll say I spent too much time at work, that I wasn't a good enough wife, that I couldn't hold onto you, so I deserve to have you run off with some tramp...

DAVID

You know that's not true. Fuck those people and what they think.

HILARY

No fuck you, David. Fuck you for putting me in this situation. Fuck you for humiliating me, for not protecting me. Fuck you for always fucking up harder than I ever can.

DAVID

Hil...

HILARY

Get out.

She screams, completely over it.

HILARY

GET THE FUCK OUT!

Realizing there's nothing else to say, David goes to the kitchen and unplugs the ESPRESSO MACHINE. *His* espresso machine. He picks it up, holding it under his arm and storms out of the apartment.

Hilary slams the door behind him.

Puri stands in the laundry room, not sure whether to retreat or go to Hilary.

Outside, the rain is coming down hard, the storm is building.

Breathing hard, Hilary takes a beat to collect herself. Then, she turns on her heels and goes into the kitchen. She grabs a bottle of wine, gives herself a heavy pour.

Puri retreats to her room, gently closes the door.

INT. STARR APARTMENT, PURI'S ROOM - NIGHT

As Puri backs away from the door to process what just happened, there's a knock -

Hilary holds out a second wine glass.

HILARY

Don't make me drink alone tonight.

Puri stares awkwardly at the glass. She's equally thrilled and terrified. After a momentary hesitation, Puri takes the glass and follows Hilary out of the laundry room.

EXT. DAVID'S HOTEL - NIGHT

David gets out of a taxi, still carrying the espresso machine under his arm. He runs through the rain into the hotel.

INT. DAVID'S HOTEL, LOBBY - NIGHT

A RECEPTIONIST greets him by name.

INT. DAVID'S HOTEL, HALLWAY - NIGHT

Still worked up, David huffs and puffs down the hallway carrying his machine. A man on a mission.

INT. DAVID'S HOTEL, ROOM - NIGHT

David enters, looks for a place to set the machine down. It suddenly dawns on him that there's no counter space large enough.

The room is filled with David's stuff. By the looks of it, he's been living here for a while. Not quite a home - an adult dorm room.

Finally, out of exasperation, David slams the machine on the counter of the bathroom.

EXT. DAVID'S HOTEL - NIGHT

Charly and Mercy run down the soaking wet streets towards a hotel in Kowloon, both drenched.

CHARLY

What are we doing?

MERCY

Don't say anything. Just follow my lead.

As they approach the hotel entrance, Mercy smooths out her hair. She puts on a bit of pink lip gloss. She faces Charly.

MERCY

How do I look?

Charly grabs the lip gloss from Mercy. She dabs a little on Mercy's cheeks. Mercy does the same for Charly - applies a bit of pink on her cheeks.

Gently taps her finger on Charly's lips. Soft and moist.

MERCY

(smiling)

Perfect.

INT. DAVID'S HOTEL - NIGHT

Mercy and Charly stroll into the hotel and walk confidently past the reception desk.

MERCY

It's crazy out there. We got caught
in the storm.

MALE RECEPTIONIST

Welcome back.

Somehow, they recognize her here. Mercy smiles victoriously.
It worked.

CHARLY

Have you been here before?

MERCY

I had a friend staying here. He
might still be staying here, I
don't know...

With a twinkle in her eye, Mercy turns to head back to the
MALE RECEPTIONIST. She puts on her best damsel-in-distress
act.

MERCY

Hi, actually... I left something at
the pool earlier.

MALE RECEPTIONIST

The pool is closed for the day, but
I can tell the staff to look for it
in the morning when we re-open.

MERCY

Oh but it's urgent. It's medication
that I need right away.

The receptionist looks at Mercy with a bit of skepticism.

MALE RECEPTIONIST

What room are you in?

MERCY

2047. It's under David Starr. S-T-A-
R-R.

The receptionist looks it up and it checks out.

MALE RECEPTIONIST

OK. I'll send security up.

MERCY

Oh my god, thank you SO much.

Mercy smiles broadly as Charly watches.

INT. DAVID'S HOTEL, HALLWAY - NIGHT

A SECURITY GUARD opens the door of the pool. Charly seems stunned by how Mercy made this happen.

MERCY

Thank you, I'll be right back...

The security guard doesn't speak English. Charly translates. [Cantonese. Subtitled].

CHARLY

[She'll be back in a moment].

Mercy ducks inside, leaving Charly outside the pool with the Security Guard.

Charly avoids the Guard's eyes, waiting in awkward silence. A bit of movement in her peripheral vision - it's Mercy at the back, emergency exit. She's stuffing something between the door as a door stop.

Charly looks at the Security Guard - on his phone and oblivious. Moments later, Mercy casually exits from the front.

MERCY

Thank you so much.

CHARLY

[Thank you, sir. Sorry to disturb you.]

The security guard nods, unconcerned. He locks up, then turns to leave.

As soon as he's far enough away, Mercy leads Charly to the emergency exit, to the propped door. She leads Charly inside, a mischievous twinkle in her eye.

INT. DAVID'S HOTEL, POOL - NIGHT

Charly follows Mercy down a corridor towards a stunning pool, dimly lit by underwater lights. Floor to ceiling windows showcase the majestic storm outside.

CHARLY

Wow... I can't believe you got us in here.

MERCY

Years of bad behavior gave me all
kinds of tricks.

Charly is in awe and Mercy beams with pride.

INT. STARR APARTMENT - NIGHT

Puri stares at herself in a vanity mirror, with two reddish orange stripes under her eyes. Like war paint, only it's lipstick... being used as concealer.

HILARY

It looks crazy right now, but once
we put concealer and foundation on
top of it, it'll look great. You'll
see.

PURI

(unsure)

OK, ma'am. You can do whatever you
want.

HILARY

It's not for me, Puri. I'm showing
you this so you can learn to do
your own makeup in the future.

Hilary downs her glass of wine. Picks up the bottle and
refills her own glass and Puri's.

HILARY

It's all about highlighting your
assets. You have gorgeous brown
eyes. And great cheek bones. We can
bring that out with a little
highlighter, you'll see.

Puri sips on her wine as Hilary covers the red with
concealer.

PURI

Thank you, ma'am.

HILARY

As a kid, I felt like such the ugly
duckling. I was fat and basically
everyone at my school was white.
The other kids made fun of me, gave
me all kinds of nasty names. It
really gave me a complex.

HILARY (CONT'D)

In college, I stopped eating and realized only later that I had an eating disorder.

Puri nods, drinking her wine.

Hilary is now moving to contour and blush.

HILARY

Anyway, I'm only telling you all this to say... that beauty comes from within, but what you present to the world affects how the world treats you, which in turn, affects how you feel. I've learned that even on days I don't feel so confident, if I still put myself together - a killer outfit, flawless makeup, it helps.

PURI

You always look very beautiful, ma'am.

HILARY

That's not true, but I appreciate you saying that.

Hilary puts the finishing touches on Puri's makeup: A bit of mascara, a bit of lip gloss.

HILARY

There.

Hilary spins Puri around to face the mirror again. Puri touches her face, hardly recognizing herself.

PURI

Wow... you made magic, ma'am!

HILARY

Not magic. Just a little bit of makeup.

Looking at Puri in the mirror, Hilary beams.

HILARY

You're gorgeous, you're smart, you're capable and you can't let anyone tell you what you can or can't do. Not society, not your family, not any man...

Puri looks at herself in the mirror like she's trying to absorb Hilary's words through osmosis. She takes a big gulp of wine and smiles.

Hilary smiles back at her as she tops off her glass.

Suddenly, the lights go out, leaving them in pitch black.

HILARY

Shit!

PURI

It's OK, ma'am, we have candles in the closet.

Hilary and Puri both stand, but unable to see, they crash into each other.

PURI

Ow!

Hilary laughs. They both get on their hands and knees to crawl towards the closet. It's dark and they're drunk.

They bump into each other and both start to giggle. Like teenagers at summer camp.

Hilary's phone rings. She clocks the screen - OLIVIA CHU. She hits decline, and instead, uses the phone as a flashlight.

EXT. HONG KONG STREETS - NIGHT

Mercy and Charly scurry through the street, huddled under Charly's one umbrella. The winds are bad. Mercy keeps trying to hail a taxi, but no one is stopping.

MERCY

Shit!

CHARLY

It's OK, we're only a couple blocks away from the subway.

As they continue forward, increasing winds send a plastic stool flying through the air. Charly and Mercy look up at it and their umbrella instantly turns inside out.

They grapple with the umbrella briefly before giving up.

CHARLY

Come on!

Charly looks around and spots something. She grabs Mercy's hand and runs into the alley where a CLEANER is taking out the trash. The Cleaner leaves the door propped open as he takes the trash outside.

Charly and Mercy quickly duck inside, undetected.

INT. UNDERGROUND CLUB, FIRE STAIRS - CONTINUOUS

Charly and Mercy huddle inside a back stairwell of a club. A bass-driven dance track pumps out from inside the club.

As the Cleaner comes back inside, a fierce gust of wind pulls the door wide open. Rain flies horizontally into the stairwell. The storm is ferocious.

As the Cleaner grapples with the door, Charly and Mercy quickly duck into the club to avoid being seen.

Disco lights flash inside. As they walk in, they spot an EROTIC DANCER on stage and a few others milling about, but no patrons.

A BOUNCER approaches. He could be the manager, but he looks like a bouncer.

[Cantonese. Subtitled.]

BOUNCER

[You can't enter through there.]

CHARLY

[We didn't realize. We just came to it by accident.]

BOUNCER

[You have to leave.]

Put off by his attitude, Charly gets defensive.

CHARLY

[What kind of attitude is that to customers?]

BOUNCER

(aggressive)

[Are you a customer? I don't think you're a customer!]

CHARLY

[We could be customers!]

Mercy looks between the Charly and the Bouncer, confused.

BOUNCER

[You need to leave right now or
I'll call security.]

MERCY

What's going on? Why is he yelling?

CHARLY

[I just told you. We're customers.
We want to go to the bar and order
a drink.]

BOUNCER

[Then you have to come through the
front door.]

Charly grabs Mercy's hand, leads her through the club towards the front door.

BOUNCER

[You can't go that way. You have to
go outside, then back in the
front.]

CHARLY

[Wooooow. You really don't want
business, do you?]
(to Mercy in English)
He's saying the only way we can
have a drink is if we leave and
come back through the front.

MERCY

What? Forget it, let's just go.

But Charly's not ready to go. She's amped up and looking to fight.

CHARLY

[What sense does it make to send us
outside in the rain to come back
through the front door when we're
standing right here?]

BOUNCER

[That's the rule. If we let you in
the back, then we have to let
everyone through the back and
that's chaos.]

CHARLY
(screams)
[There's literally nobody
anywhere!!!]

BOUNCER
[If you keep screaming, I'm going
to call the police.]

MERCY
Hey, c'mon... let's just go.

CHARLY
(in his face)
[Fuck you. You're a soulless
bureaucratic asshole!]

That does it. The bouncer grabs Charly's arm.

MERCY
Hey! Stop it! OK, we're leaving!

Mercy grabs Charly away from the Bouncer and pulls her away.

CHARLY
[You just lost a lot of business
because we're super fucking rich
and we would've spent a shit ton of
money!]

As they exit back out into the hallway, Charly is fuming.

CHARLY
People like that are what's wrong
with the world! Ugh, I could
fucking kill him!

Charly sobs and screams from a sense of powerlessness. Mercy
watches, helpless.

MERCY
Hold on. Stay here.

Charly watches as Mercy marches back into the club. Seconds
later, Mercy bolts back out with a bottle of whiskey.

MERCY
Go go go!

Charly's eyes widen. Justice!

Excited but terrified, Mercy and Charly take off. They run
and run without looking back.

INT. OLIVIA'S HOME, THE PEAK - NIGHT

Olivia sits alone in her pitch black living room. She hangs up when she gets Hilary's voicemail.

The storm rages outside. Olivia hugs her knees to her chest. She dials another number.

She speaks in Cantonese. [Subtitled.]

OLIVIA

[Ma... you guys OK? The storm just knocked out the electricity up here.]

DOROTHY (O.S.)

[Oh really? No, we're all fine here.]

OLIVIA

[How are the girls? Are they having fun?]

DOROTHY

[Yea, they're just watching a movie. We had crab for dinner.]

OLIVIA

[That sounds nice...]

A beat, as Dorothy picks up the sadness in Olivia's voice.

DOROTHY

[Are you OK?]

OLIVIA

[Yea. I um...]

Olivia chokes up, unable to find the words.

OLIVIA

[I just feel so alone, Ma...]

DOROTHY

[We're all alone. It'll pass... Everything passes.]

OLIVIA

[But what if I don't want this to pass?]

DOROTHY
[Why not? Once it passes, it
becomes the past.]

OLIVIA
[What if I want more. What if I
want...]

DOROTHY
(interrupts)
[Stop thinking so much. Just go to
sleep. You'll feel better in the
morning.]

Olivia isn't sure how to respond to this. After a long
silence -

DOROTHY
[Goodnight.]

OLIVIA
[Goodnight.]

Olivia hangs up, considering her mother's words, considering
the paths before her.

Her eyes flash with determination as she makes her decision.
She bolts upstairs.

INT. OLIVIA'S HOME, BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Olivia sets the lanterns on the bed, drags several large
suitcases out of the closet.

She throws the open suitcase on the bed and begins to pack.
Despite her urgency, she is meticulous and methodic in her
packing, neatly folding clothes into suitcase organizers.

INT. WOO APARTMENT, DINING ROOM - NIGHT

A hand reaches into frame to light a candle. It's Essie,
lighting the candles on the dining table.

Pastor Alan sits awkwardly at the table, while the kids play
and Clarke lights more candles in the background.

Margaret carries a stack of plates, setting the table.

MARGARET
You know... when Gus first went
missing, I prayed... all the time.

She sets a plate for Pastor Alan. A challenge more than an invitation.

MARGARET
I wasn't sure why. Maybe I just
needed hope, but it's not like I've
never prayed.

Margaret laughs at herself, surprised she's even admitting this.

MARGARET
I prayed out of desperation. I
bargained with the universe, I
prayed to every God there is.

As Clarke approaches the table -

CLARKE
Margaret. Honey...

MARGARET
What? It's true.

She moves away from Clarke's touch and glares at Pastor Alan, daring him to answer. She looks back at Clarke -

MARGARET
It feels so damn lonely... to feel
like the only one still fighting.

CLARKE
We're all fighting!

Margaret and Clarke lock eyes. Essie brings two pizzas to the table, catching the standoff.

Pastor Alan observes silently.

MARGARET
Leaving Hong Kong is not fighting.
It's giving up.

Clarke clears his throat. Uncomfortable with Pastor Alan bearing witness to their family drama. Clarke talks to the Pastor, justifying himself -

CLARKE
I just want to protect the kids we
still have with us. Not to abandon
the search for Gus, but to...

MARGARET

(interrupts)

To what? He could be anywhere at any moment, he could be on the street, around the corner... Every minute that we're not looking for Gus, every second we don't find him is a betrayal...

Clarke shakes his head, looks to Pastor Alan. Desperate for help. He pulls up a chair to sit.

CLARKE

(shakes his head)

I can't... we can't go on like this much longer.

His voice breaks. His whole being is breaking.

Essie walks away from the table to give them space, but she continues to listen, even as she returns to the kitchen.

PASTOR ALAN

I can't imagine how difficult this is for you... There's no easy answer and you're both doing the best you can with the situation. May I ask one question?

Margaret and Clarke both nod.

PASTOR ALAN

Is where you are, what you're doing now, working for you? For your family?

Margaret considers this, but the answer is obvious. No. Things are not working. Her resistance softens.

Essie brings two more pizzas to the table. As she sets them down, she considers what all of this could mean for her own future.

Smelling the pizzas, Daisy and Philip run up to the table.

DAISY

Can we eat already, I'm starving!

The entire Woo family, along with Pastor Alan, sit down around the candlelit dinner table. Pastor Alan is flanked by Daisy and Philip who seem excited by this blackout adventure.

Essie brings one last pizza. Daisy and Philip immediately dig in.

CLARKE

Hey! We have a guest, please don't be rude.

PASTOR ALAN

It's really OK.

Margaret and Clarke exchange an awkward but knowing look.

CLARKE

Alan, perhaps you'd like to pray... over the meal?

Pastor Alan looks around the table, uncertain of his place. He looks to Margaret, who stares quietly into her lap.

The children reluctantly set the pizza back down and stare at Pastor Alan, waiting for him to get this over with.

Pastor Alan bows his head. Essie brings the salad and watches everyone with their eyes closed, heads bowed. She stops what she's doing to do the same.

PASTOR ALAN

Dear heavenly father thank you for this meal and for giving us the opportunity to spend this time together. We are humbled by your ways and ask for your grace to guide us, so that we may continue to follow in your path... to find light when it is dark, to find love where there is hate. We pray in the name of your son, Jesus Christ.

Philip looks up, reacting to "Jesus".

PASTOR ALAN

Amen.

Essie echoes this 'Amen' soundly, while Clarke and Margaret remain silent. The kids have clearly never done this before and look around with uncertainty.

PHILIP

Can we eat now?

CLARKE

Yes, now you can eat.

Everyone begins to dig in, but Margaret isn't hungry. Her mind is racing with thoughts.

INT. LARGE SUPERMARKET - NIGHT

Wen Ng wipes the sweat from her forehead as she mops the floors of the empty supermarket. Bright florescent lighting overhead.

As the storm outside builds, another CLEANING WOMAN rushes up towards her.

[Cantonese. Subtitled.]

CLEANING WOMAN
[Don't finish, you should go. The
storm is getting worse.]

Wen nods, a bit disappointed to not finish her work. She wrings the mop out.

EXT. MARGARET'S STUDIO APARTMENT, BACK ALLEY - NIGHT

Wen exits carrying two wet mops, sticks one, then the other, into a small cement alcove in the alley to dry.

(For those who have seen the rest of the show, this is the same alcove outside Margaret's studio. Her building is adjacent to the supermarket).

The formation of the mops looks almost artistic, but for Wen, it's merely utilitarian.

EXT. BUS STOP, LOCAL NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

Wen runs under a sheltered bus stop. Several locals are huddled beneath, waiting for a bus that seems like it'll never come. They make room for her.

INT./EXT. TONY AND WEN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Wen finally returns home, soaked from the storm. As she enters, she closes her umbrella, but it gets jammed up. As she tries to fix the umbrella, Momo escapes out the door.

Wen curses to herself, finally closing the umbrella. She enters the apartment to find it dark and quiet.

She goes to Tony's bed - it's empty. Her son is nowhere to be found. She checks her watch - it's late and it's still pouring rain from the storm.

INT. TONY AND WEN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Wen is on the phone, desperately waiting for someone to pick up. In the living room, local weather report plays on TV.

EXT. LOCAL NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

Wen rushes through the empty streets. The wind flips her umbrella inside out. She struggles with the umbrella, getting drenched.

INT. OLIVIA'S HOME, BEDROOM - NIGHT

Olivia continues to stuff clothes from her walk-in closet into a suitcase. Two other suitcases are already packed, waiting off to the side. A woman on a mission.

Then suddenly, a loud CRASH makes her jump.

INT. OLIVIA'S HOME, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

She bolts into the living room to find that the wet spot on the ceiling has caved in.

Rain pours into the home, onto the pristine white couch and white rug. Wet muddy dust from the roof, and rotten wood has splattered dramatically all over her living room.

Olivia contemplates the scene in front of her - a mess, but maybe it doesn't have to be *her* mess.

She decides to leave it to return to her packing.

INT. OLIVIA'S HOME, BEDROOM - NIGHT

Olivia continues to fold more clothes into the neatly packed suitcase. But something's different - her focus has shifted... to the hole in the ceiling downstairs.

INT. OLIVIA'S HOME, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Olivia returns to the hole in the ceiling, making a bigger mess by the minute.

Olivia grabs a bucket and towels, trying to stop the rain from coming in, trying to clean up the mess. It's impossible.

And then, an idea. She runs into the kitchen and grabs a box of large trash bags. She digs around for tape and scissors. She cuts the trash bags so they're flat and begins to tape it to the hole in the ceiling.

INT. WOO APARTMENT, DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Essie begins to clean up as everyone finishes eating. Daisy shoves the rest of her pizza into her mouth. The adults are mid-conversation -

PASTOR ALAN

The choice wasn't exactly obvious.
I mean I didn't hear a calling like
some say they do. I had gotten into
law school, actually, but um... I
guess you could say I followed a
girl. Typical.

(laughs)

Or maybe it's that God works in
mysterious ways... We got married
and joined the seminary the same
year.

CLARKE

Is your wife also a pastor?

PASTOR ALAN

She is, but we're not together
anymore. We're divorced.

Margaret seems taken aback by this.

MARGARET

I didn't know you were... allowed
to do that.

PASTOR ALAN

I'm not a priest. We're a lot more
lenient than the Catholics. Alice
and I both remarried since, but it
was tough at the time. Not everyone
was supportive of the divorce. We
lost a lot of members of the
congregation who felt like I was
setting a poor example. I felt like
I had failed them...

MARGARET

So why didn't you quit?

PASTOR ALAN

I almost did. When we split, I left the church and moved in with my friend Ian. He'd just returned from Afghanistan where he flew a Medevac helicopter. He left the service after seeing so many gruesome things... He was getting treatment for PTSD while I was trying to get back on my feet and figure out what to do next.

Pastor Alan realizes Margaret is watching, listening intently.

PASTOR ALAN

Then, after a year of therapy, Ian decided to return to Afghanistan to keep flying the Medevac. I didn't want him to go. I felt like he was abandoning me. I also couldn't bear the thought of losing him. So I asked why he'd go back. After all the horrendous things he saw, all of the trauma... He said they've seen repeatedly that even when soldiers are severely wounded and unconscious, the sound of an approaching Medevac helicopter lifts their vital signs. Just the sound of help coming... brings them back to life. That's why he needed to go back. To be that sound.

The kids stare at Pastor Alan, somehow absorbing this very adult story.

PASTOR ALAN

It was hard to wallow in self pity after that.

(laughs)

And I realized that I never joined the ministry to be an example of moral perfection. I joined because I hoped to be the sound of that helicopter.

When Pastor Alan finishes, the table is silent. The sound of a fork scraping as Daisy plays with the remaining salad on her plate. Meanwhile, Philip doesn't take his eyes off Pastor Alan.

Pastor Alan becomes aware of this and smiles. Giving him permission. Philip puts his glass of milk down. He wipes the milk mustache off his face.

PHILIP

Do you know where Gus is?

The air goes out of the room. Everyone is quiet as Pastor Alan selects his words carefully, without pandering to the child.

PASTOR ALAN

I don't, Philip. I wish I did, but I don't. I'm sorry.

PHILIP

But if you know Jesus, why can't you ask him where Gus is?

Pastor Alan swallows and looks to Clarke.

CLARKE

Honey... who told you Gus is with Jesus?

Philip looks up at Essie. Clarke and Margaret also turn to look at Essie. Of course. It was Essie.

Essie walks away to avoid their gaze.

MARGARET

Philip. Jesus is not...

She hesitates, choosing her words carefully.

MARGARET

He's not in a real place. Gus is not with Jesus.

PHILIP

So then where is he?

Margaret inhales deeply. Her voice softens as she steps into the role of the patient, all-knowing parent.

MARGARET

We've talked about this Philip. Somebody took him...

PHILIP

But why? Why would somebody take
Gus? What do they want him for?

The adults can't answer this. They can barely stand to think
about it. Suddenly, Daisy comes in hard. Angry.

DAISY

Why wouldn't God know where Gus is?
Doesn't God know everything? What's
the point of talking to God if he
can't tell us where Gus is?

She has so much rage for such a young girl. It's clear that
this is the first time the kids have had the opportunity to
express themselves.

And then -

PHILIP

Could somebody take me too?

MARGARET

(immediate)

No!

Margaret's resounding NO is instinctual and guttural. Like a
command. But Philip doesn't believe her.

She doubles down. Fierce and protective, desperately wanting
to take away his fear.

MARGARET

I would NEVER. EVER. Let anything
happen to you, Philip. Do you hear
me?

DAISY

Then why did you let it happen to
Gus?

Margaret looks up at Daisy like her daughter just stabbed her
in the heart.

Daisy is so flippant about it, which makes it hurt more.
Margaret's face turns red as she begins to shake.

CLARKE

That's enough Daisy. Go to your
room.

DAISY

I didn't do anything!

CLARKE
(screams)
I said go to your room!

We've never seen Clarke lose his temper. It's scary. Ugly. He quickly catches himself, but it's too late.

Daisy pushes away from the table aggressively.

DAISY
It's not fucking FAIR!

She stomps away and moments later, we hear the loudest door slam. Philip begins to cry.

Everyone quietly stares at the pizza, now getting cold.

Essie stands at the doorway, afraid to move. Margaret is stunned. Fragile. But she's not falling apart this time. She pulls herself together for her family.

After a long moment of silence -

MARGARET
(resolute)
It's time to go... We can't stay
here and keep doing this. We have
to go home.

Clarke looks to Margaret, who seems surprised by her own sudden decision.

MARGARET
I'm tired. We all are...

Margaret picks up her own plate and takes it to the kitchen sink.

As Essie cleans up in the kitchen, we stay on her face as she processes what this means. The job is over. She's finally going home. It's bittersweet, as she takes in this family that she's grown to love.

INT. STARR APARTMENT - NIGHT

Puri hesitantly tries one of Hilary's dress. It's not exactly a perfect fit.

HILARY
How's it look?

PURI
I don't think it fits, ma'am...

HILARY
Let me see!

Puri looks at herself in the full-length mirror. The zipper's not all the way up, she's not used to seeing herself in makeup. She feels ridiculous. Disheartened.

A knock as Hilary pushes the door open.

HILARY
Oh my god, you look amazing! Here
let me help you with that -

Puri turns around as Hilary helps her with the zipper.

INT. STARR APARTMENT - NIGHT

Candles cover the baby grand piano. Puri's soulful voice accompanies Hilary's playing. Now fully made up, Puri stands by it wearing one of Hilary's dresses.

A Cinderella moment - she is glowing. Her voice reverberates and the world feels full of possibility.

INT. DAVID'S HOTEL, BATHROOM - NIGHT

David brushes his teeth, lost in thought. He suddenly stops, toothbrush still in his mouth, reaches for his phone to text someone.

INT. DAVID'S HOTEL, POOL - NIGHT

Floor to ceiling windows reveal the gorgeous Hong Kong skyline. On a lounge chair, Mercy's phone lights up with texts from DAVID STARR.

Charly and Mercy quietly slip out of their clothes, trying to stifle their giggles. Mercy is briefly self-conscious of her growing belly as they glide into the inviting pool.

INT. POLICE STATION - DAWN

Wen stands at the reception counter, talking to a POLICE OFFICER. [Cantonese. Subtitled].

POLICE OFFICER
[Your son broke the law.]

WEN
[Yes you've said that, but can you
tell me what he did?]

POLICE OFFICER
[He broke the law. That's all I can
tell you.]

WEN
[Can I see him? I just want to see
him!]

POLICE OFFICER
[You can't see him. He hasn't been
granted bail.]

WEN
[But when will he get out?]

POLICE OFFICER
[I'm not going to have any more
information for you today. I
suggest you go home.]

Wen stands at the counter, a desperate but powerless mother.

INT. POLICE STATION, WAITING AREA - DAWN

Wen sits with the other families of protestors, waiting.
Hoping for more information.

INT. WOO APARTMENT - NIGHT

With the rest of the family already in bed, Essie makes a bed
on the couch for Pastor Alan. Gets him settled as the storm
rages outside.

INT. WOO APARTMENT, ESSIE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Essie ducks into her room, gently closing the door behind
her. She sits on her bed, getting ready for sleep. Tears
stream down her face, despite every attempt to be stoic.

After a beat, her eyes land on the framed photos of her own
family. Gabriel, Jessica and the new baby. Her grandson.

She takes out her phone, FaceTimes Gabriel.

[Tagalog. Subtitled.]

JESSICA
[What's up, Ma? Gabriel's with the
baby... Why are you calling so
late?]

Essie tries to cover up her emotions, wipes away her tears.

JESSICA
[Is everything OK?]

Jessica sits up in a panic.

GABRIEL
[What is it?]

Gabriel rushes to the phone.

GABRIEL
[Ma, what's wrong? What's going on?
Is it the boy?]

ESSIE
[No, no... everything's OK. I have
good news actually. I'm coming
home.]

GABRIEL
[What?]

ESSIE
[Miss Margaret says they are moving
back to America.]

Jessica immediately celebrates.

JESSICA
[Yay! Mom's coming home!]

Gabriel is in shock. He can't allow himself to believe it.

GABRIEL
[Really Ma? Is it really true?]

ESSIE
(nods)
[Yes, it's true.]

As Gabriel processes the news, he holds the baby up to the camera.

GABRIEL

[Did you hear that? You're gonna
meet your Lola soon! Lola's coming
home!]

Gabriel kisses his baby. Essie smiles through the tears. This is good. It feels bittersweet, but she's ready to go home.

She's finally ready to be with her own family.

INT. OLIVIA'S HOME, THE PEAK - NIGHT

Black garbage bags flutter in the wind, taped over the ceiling.

Olivia sits in the dark with a glass of wine, watching her handy work. A nearly empty bottle sits on the coffee table.

She listens to the sound of the bag flapping in the window, grows emotional.

Suddenly, the lights turn back on and it catches Olivia off guard. She quickly wipes away the tears, as if someone could see them now that the lights are back on. But no... there's still no one else in the house. It's just her.

INT. STARR APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Puri returns to the room, holding a new bottle of wine. Hilary is staring at a BROCHURE about the next day's audition.

HILARY

It doesn't say anything about a
dress code. You've gotta wear this
dress, Puri...

PURI

It's too fancy, ma'am.

HILARY

Don't be silly. You look as amazing
as you sound. Don't underestimate
yourself. Your voice deserves to be
heard.

Puri considers this.

PURI

You don't think it's silly? That I
want to be a singer?

HILARY

Silly? No! It's wonderful to have dreams, Puri.

Puri smiles. Hilary gets her. Hilary opens the bottle of wine, pours them each another glass. They toast.

HILARY

By the way... I've been meaning to ask... Puri is short for something else, right?

PURI

It is what everyone calls me. My full name is Purificacion Cabahug Juntilao.

HILARY

That's beautiful.

PURI

Thank you, Ms. Hilary.

HILARY

You know... Hilary's not my real name.

Puri looks at Hilary, surprised.

HILARY

My real name... is Harpreet Singh. Singh is my maiden name and Harpreet... was my given name... until 8th grade when I couldn't stand being bullied for it anymore and changed it to Hilary.

PURI

Oh...

HILARY

She seems like another person. Harpreet Singh. I think about her a lot... Where I'd be if I was her instead of... Hilary Starr. You know what I mean?

PURI

I think so, Ms. Hilary.

Hilary takes a sip of wine. Watches as Puri does the same.

HILARY

Margaret and I used to do this kind of thing all the time. We were never afraid of a second bottle.

PURI

Are you... not friends anymore?

Hilary considers this, then shakes her head, full of nostalgia.

HILARY

Everything changed after her little boy went missing. Understandable, but I just wish... I knew how to be her friend.

Hilary suddenly seems overcome by emotion.

HILARY

I feel like I'm losing everything... my marriage, my best friend. What am I even doing here...

Hilary looks at Puri, desperate for a friend.

HILARY

I feel so alone here, Puri...

Puri takes her hand and squeezes it.

PURI

You're not alone. You have me.

Hilary smiles.

HILARY

Thank you, Puri. You're a good friend.

These words make Puri's heart expand. She swallows, knowing that real friends tell each other the truth.

PURI

Ma'am...

HILARY

Please. Just call me Hilary.

Puri awkwardly tries it on.

PURI
Hilary...

The name sounds foreign coming out of her mouth.

PURI
I know who Mister David is having
the baby with.

Hilary looks up at Puri. Of course she does. Of course...

Her eyes encourage Puri to go on.

PURI
It's Mercy. The Korean woman who
lost your friend's child. Some of
the helpers have seen them
together.

Hilary reels. First, shock - *how could this be?* And then, it
clicks. *Of course that's who it is. Of course.*

That's how small Hong Kong is. Now it all makes sense. Puri
smiles warmly. Glad she was able to help her friend.

INT. DAVID'S HOTEL, POOL - NIGHT

Everything is dark except for Mercy and Charly's silhouettes,
floating in the pool. They're both in only bra and underwear.

CHARLY
I never skinnied before.

MERCY
(smiles)
Skinny dipped.

Mercy dives into the water. She comes up out of the water
like a seal. Charly floats along the side of the pool, stares
out at the skyline.

Charly notices patches of the city in darkness.

CHARLY
Looks like there was a power
outage.

Mercy gets close to Charly to look out. Under water, her
belly is exposed, but she's not showing much yet.

MERCY

Oh yea... I used to love them as a kid. All the adults became less distracted. Candles come out and we'd play cards.

Charly and Mercy get close, their breathing shallow. They both anticipate what's about to happen.

MERCY

We don't have to... If you don't want to.

CHARLY

I want to.

Charly smiles.

CHARLY

I thought you were one of those girls who only likes white guys.

MERCY

I don't really have a policy.

Charly leans in to kiss Mercy. Mercy kisses her back. Lighting flashes outside. Thunder.

CHARLY

I wouldn't want to be outside tonight.

Mercy immediately thinks of Gus. Wherever he is. Mercy looks out at the stormy night and grows quiet.

Charly watches Mercy retreat inside her own mind.

CHARLY

Hey... what just happened?

Mercy grabs the whiskey bottle, takes a swig.

MERCY

There's something I need to tell you. I'm not who you think I am... I mean, there's a lot you don't know.

Charly looks at her, listening.

MERCY

When I moved here last year, I was so lonely...

MERCY (CONT'D)

I met this family on a boat. At a party. I really liked them, especially the kids. It felt nice to be with them... I was always jealous of my cousins growing up... Siblings are so close, you know. I've never really had that. But this family, those kids, they had that.

Mercy swallows. This is hard for her. Really hard. She realizes she's never actually told this story to anyone out loud.

Charly gets closer to Mercy, her eyes are kind. Encouraging.

MERCY

The mother asked me if I wanted to help her watch the kids sometimes and one night, she invited me out. We had dinner and I wasn't sure if it was like... I was hired officially or she was just being friendly. But we were all having a nice time and we went to the night market. Margaret was with the girl... Daisy. I was with the boys. Philip... and Gus. I was holding Gus's hand. I thought I was anyway, but I sent a text to a friend so maybe I dropped it, I can't remember. It all happened so fast. One second we were looking at these toys at a stall... these red balls... and the next second he was gone. Vanished into thin air.

Charly sucks in her breath slightly. Stunned.

MERCY

It's like he was... swept away.

Mercy's eyes brim with tears in a way we've never seen before. She's trembling as she shakes her head.

MERCY

I looked everywhere. Margaret came and... she made this sound, like a scream, but it was... unlike anything I've ever heard before. We searched all night, they searched for a whole year, but...

Mercy's voice trails off. It's too painful for her to go on. Charly hugs Mercy, trying to comfort her, but Mercy doesn't want it. She doesn't deserve it, pushing Charly away.

Mercy dries her tears, takes a deep breath.

CHARLY
You can't blame yourself.

MERCY
How can I not?

Charly cups Mercy's face in her hands.

CHARLY
It was an accident. It could've happened to anyone...

Charly puts her hands around Mercy's face, pulls her close.

MERCY
I told you, I'm cursed. I did try to warn you. You don't want anything to do with me. I can't shake the feeling that I'll never be happy. I don't deserve it. Not after what I've done... Not when Margaret's missing her kid, and he could be dead or still out there. I don't know what's worse.

CHARLY
You deserve to be happy, and you will be again...

Charly leans in to kiss Mercy again. Deeper this time. A kiss that says she accepts Mercy, for whatever she may have done in the past.

Mercy lets herself be held by Charly, for the first time, she lets herself be comforted.

INT. WOO APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - DAWN

On the couch, the pillow sits neatly on the perfectly folded bedding. Pastor Alan crosses in front.

INT. WOO APARTMENT, KITCHEN - DAWN

From inside the apartment, we see Pastor Alan leaving the building downstairs. Margaret watches him from the window.

Essie comes out of her room, surprised to see Margaret in the kitchen, staring out at the rain drenched city.

She immediately knows that Margaret is searching the edge of the universe for Gus with her mind. Fighting back horrific images - the imagination knows no bounds.

ESSIE

Ma'am?

Margaret turns and sees Essie.

MARGARET

Oh Essie. Hi. I couldn't sleep...

Margaret holds up a glass of water.

ESSIE

Are you OK, ma'am?

MARGARET

I need to talk to you about something, Essie.

Essie nods knowingly. She's prepared for this news to come.

MARGARET

There's something I need to tell you.

Essie nods again, already in a state of acceptance.

MARGARET

You know how much we love you, don't you?

Essie nods silently, looks down to the floor.

MARGARET

The kids... Clarke and I... We could not have made it through these years in Hong Kong without you.

ESSIE

(quietly, almost a whisper)

It's OK, ma'am.

MARGARET

No, it's important that you know that. The kids love you of course, but I do too. You're family.

Essie's eyes well with emotion, anticipating this farewell.

MARGARET

This was not an easy decision to make, but... Clarke and I think it's best if we leave Hong Kong. To be with our families.

Essie nods. She knows this is hard for Margaret, and she wants to ease some of the difficulty.

ESSIE

I know, Miss Margaret. I know... it's OK.

MARGARET

There have been times...

Margaret's voice fades. She wants to address the elephant in the room, but it's hard for her to find the words.

MARGARET

I'm ashamed that I...

Margaret shakes her head, overcome by regret.

MARGARET

You must hate me...

ESSIE

What? No, I don't hate you, Miss Margaret. I could not hate you.

MARGARET

You should've been there that night. If you were there instead of her, he would still be here.

ESSIE

You don't have to say that ma'am.

MARGARET

But you know it's true. I don't know what came over me. I don't know why I... Sometimes... your relationship with the children, your closeness with them... It's complicated for me... They have such a bond with you that made me feel like I... It was my fault. It was my own guilt. Like I wasn't spending enough time with Gus, like I wasn't a good enough mother--

ESSIE
(interrupts)
Please Miss Margaret. It's OK.

Essie doesn't want her to say more. It's too difficult.
Margaret nods, wipes her eyes.

MARGARET
Oh Essie... I don't know what I
would do without you. What our
family would do...

Trying to ease Margaret's pain in delivering this news, Essie
continues to assure her.

ESSIE
It's OK. I know... I understand.

Margaret seems confused by this.

MARGARET
So you'll come?

Now it's Essie's turn to be confused: *Wasn't Margaret just
letting her go?*

ESSIE
Come?

MARGARET
To the States. You'll come with us,
right?

Essie is stunned silent. She obviously didn't see this
coming.

MARGARET
The kids... this is going to be a
big change for them. You have to
come with us. We can't make this
transition without you. Clarke and
I discussed it earlier and we'll
apply for a work visa for you.
We'll pay you US wages.

Essie has no idea what to say.

MARGARET
You don't have to decide now. I
know it's a lot... you should think
about it.

MARGARET (CONT'D)

But not too much time because we'll
need to get the paperwork started
right away. We'll leave before
Christmas.

Essie turns inward, reflecting.

ESSIE

Thank you, Miss Margaret.

MARGARET

Promise you'll think about it?

ESSIE

Yes ma'am.

Essie is quietly devastated. An impossible decision.

INT. MANORS ON THE PEAK, ESSIE'S ROOM - DAWN

Essie opens a small drawer and pulls out a framed photo of
Gus. Sets it next to a small statue of Virgin Mary.

She closes her eyes to pray, her lips moving silently.

EXT. THE PEAK NEIGHBORHOOD - DAWN

Pastor Alan walks down the hill from the Woo's neighborhood,
collecting his thoughts. He sees something along the road and
stops to pick it up.

A new stone. He rubs it between his fingers - not as smooth
as his old one, but it'll get there.

INT. DAVID'S HOTEL, POOL - DAWN

Cuddled on a lounge chair under a pool towel, Mercy stirs.
Fuck, her head is pounding. What did she do? She's nauseous.
From the pregnancy? From the drinking? Who knows... so many
bad decisions.

She suddenly notices Charly - on her feet, getting dressed.
She's on the phone, speaking furiously in Cantonese.
[Subtitled.]

CHARLY

[What do you mean they won't give
you any information? I can't
believe it. No, I wasn't with him
last night...]

CHARLY (CONT'D)

Have you talked to anyone else from
the group? Was anyone hurt? OK, I'm
on my way...]

When Charly hangs up -

MERCY

What's going on?

CHARLY

I need to go. Something's happened.

MERCY

Is there anything I can do?

CHARLY

No. I'll see you later?

Mercy smiles, nods. As Charly leaves, Mercy glances over at
the empty whiskey bottle and feels a wave of nausea.

Two bras can be clearly seen at the bottom of the pool. A
remnant of last night's romance.

INT. OLIVIA'S HOME - MORNING

The sound of Chloé and Flora's voices arriving home as Olivia
emerges from the bathroom. She's fully dressed, her makeup
done perfectly. It's a brand new day and she seems like a
brand new woman.

All of the suitcases are now gone, the bed made, everything
in its normal place.

Olivia comes out to the main room greet her mother, DOROTHY
(late 60's, Hong Konger) with daughters Chloé and Flora.

[Cantonese. Subtitled.]

DOROTHY

[Sorry we're late! Traffic was
blocked and we had to take the
Western tunnel!]

OLIVIA

[Same thing happened to me
yesterday around Central. I'm sure
they'll be gone by next week.]

Not a single shred of evidence reveal the events of last
night... except the fluttering black garbage bag on the
ceiling. Dorothy's eyes immediately focus on the garbage bag.

DOROTHY
[Oh my god!]

OLIVIA
[What?]

DOROTHY
[What happened?]

OLIVIA
[Oh. That.]

She waves her hand, like it's no big deal.

OLIVIA
[The ceiling caved in during the storm. Come on honey, you need to get ready for school, you're late. Go change!]

DOROTHY
[OK, I'll see you later. I'm meeting the girls for tea.]

OLIVIA
[Say bye to grandma!]

CHLOÉ AND FLORA
[Bye grandma!]

Olivia rushes the girls to their rooms to get changed.

FLORA
[Where's daddy?]

OLIVIA
[He's at work already, but he'll be home when you get back from school! Let's hurry up or you'll be late!]

INT. STARR APARTMENT - MORNING

Puri walks down the hallway, still in a great mood. Singing to herself.

HILARY (O.S.)
Puri!

On hearing Hilary's voice, Puri rushes to Hilary's room and opens the door with great expectations.

PURI
You're awake!

Puri is in full makeup - done just like Hilary taught her the night before. Disheveled and hungover, Hilary is a different person.

Puri stands at the door, still as a statue. Hilary doesn't acknowledge her makeup at all. She doesn't address the competition at all.

HILARY
I'm sick. I'm staying in bed.
Please answer the phone and the
door and don't get me.

PURI
Yes... ma'am.

She looks to Hilary, hoping she'll correct the "ma'am" to "Hilary," but she doesn't.

HILARY
I need coffee. And can you make
some eggs? Soft boiled the way I
normally have it.

It's clear to Puri that the dream has faded. They're back to their old dynamics. Her friends were right.

PURI
Would you like your raisin toast?

HILARY
That would be great. Extra butter.

Hilary lies back down on her pillow dramatically, pulling her eye mask back on.

Puri turns away to hide the disappointment on her face.

PURI
(without turning around)
Yes ma'am. You are sick.

INT. STARR APARTMENT, KITCHEN - MORNING

Puri makes Hilary breakfast in full makeup - lipstick and all. But she's still wearing her pajamas. As she cooks, her spirit dampens, feeling sorry for herself.

INT. WOO APARTMENT, KITCHEN - MORNING

Margaret and the kids are at the kitchen table as Essie serves them breakfast. Philip plants a giant kiss on Essie's cheek. She genuinely loves these kids like they're her own.

Everyone chats excitedly to Essie - it's clear how much they need her.

Clarke enters the kitchen, freshly shaved, fully dressed. Margaret clocks this, leans in as he gives her a kiss. He grabs a slice of bacon off the table.

Essie hands a bagged lunch to Clarke.

CLARKE

Thank you, Essie...

Clarke smiles gently. Grateful for her. This family can't function without Essie. And Essie knows it. They've been through too much already.

EXT. HONG KONG STREETS - MORNING

Wen walks down an empty street. Returning home without her son. She sees the destruction left by the storm - fallen branches, a tree uprooted.

Amongst the ruins are remnants from the protest - a hard hat, a mangled yellow umbrella.

INT. CHURCH - MORNING

The sun is out and light pours into the church through a broken stained glass window. A large tree branch is halfway inside the church.

An inch of water floats on the floor of the church as Pastor Alan mops, wiping the sweat from his face.

A CHURCH MEMBER, perhaps someone that's part of the staff shows up with a bucket, nods to Pastor Alan. Alan acknowledges him and they both continue to work with quiet diligence.

INT. MONTANE MANSION - MORNING

As Wen walks down the hallway, toward her apartment, she spots a small figure squatting outside. It's Charly, waiting for her. Petting Momo the cat.

Wen approaches, opens the door and lets Charly and Momo inside.

INT. MERCY'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Door opens to this tiny shoebox apartment. Mercy returns home, puts water in the kettle and starts it.

She goes to her bed and begins to change out of her clothes. As she removes her shirt, she notices her stomach.

Mercy stands in front of a mirror with her top off. Searching for signs of a baby in her belly.

INT. WOO APARTMENT, GUS'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Margaret goes into the boys' room. Two beds, not one. The ghost of her missing child.

She sits on Gus's bed, picks up his pillow and hugs it. She buries her face into it, inhaling his scent, trying to hold on. Her eyes beg for forgiveness.

INT. STARR APARTMENT, MASTER BEDROOM - MORNING

Puri serves Hilary her coffee and breakfast, then leaves the room. The dream is over and the reality of her place in the world sets in. Her eye makeup now slightly smeared.

INT. STARR APARTMENT - MORNING

Puri goes to her room where the beautiful gown from Hilary hangs on a chair.

She picks up the dress on a hanger, returns it to its fancy garment bag.

She returns to work, cleaning the floors. Just another morning, another day. She hums as she continues cleaning.

INT. OLIVIA'S HOME, THE PEAK - DAY

Inside her living room, Olivia interviews a NEW HELPER.

OLIVIA
Tell me about yourself, do you like
kids?

NEW HELPER

I love children, ma'am. I have 3 of
my own at home in Manila. 2 girls
and one boy. I'm also a very good
cook.

OLIVIA

That's good. What do you cook?

NEW HELPER

Oh everything ma'am... Chinese,
Italian, Filipino of course...
Thai. I make a very nice Thai
curry...

As the new helper continues talking, we pull away from her,
fading her voice as "A Simple Prayer" from the Harry Simeone
Choir begins to play over this scene and over the end
credits.

END OF EPISODE.