

LUST, CAUTION

Screenplay by
Wang Hui Ling and James Schamus

Based on the short story "Se, Jei" by
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EXT. YEE'S RESIDENCE - SHANGHAI - WINTER 1942 - DAY

A German Shepherd guard dog, straining at his leash, sniffs the ground.

Yu Yuen Road. Lane #1136. A cluster of elegant residences sits under gray skies. Once the height of Shanghai fashion and wealth, but now slightly seedy.

In front of every house there stands a security guard with a gun. And on the rooftops, guards with binoculars, keeping watch.

Plainclothes security, in their short coats, idle, cold and surly. An air of menace.

By the high wall, two chauffeurs smoke and chat idly, leaning on their fancy cars.

INT. YEE'S RESIDENCE - SHANGHAI - DAY

Wontons float in bowls of chicken soup. Amah, the housekeeper, picks up the bowls and heads down the corridor. Laughter mixes with the noise of mahjong tiles clacking -- a game in progress.

MA TAI-TAI (O.S.)

Aiya! And I was waiting to nab your '2'!

(A "Tai-tai" is a married woman with a certain social status - "Ma Tai-tai" means something like "Madame Ma.")

YEE TAI-TAI (O.S.)

Shameless! Like I didn't know you were missing a '2'? If only Mai Tai-tai didn't block me...

LEUNG TAI-TAI (O.S.)

Aiya! Don't you know three 'pung' can't beat one good 'stash'! So much for that! Come, come! Let's shift the wind and change seats!

Amah enters the chamber, lit by a pool of light over the mahjong table.

Amah sets down the tray while signaling for another servant to remove leftover bowls of red dates and sticky rice. The white porcelain spoons and bowls are all stained with red lipstick.

On the mahjong table, the ladies' smooth white hands are busily shuffling and sorting the tiles, their diamond rings sparkling under the sharp light.

MA TAI-TAI (O.S.)

Talking about wind shift, I almost forgot to congratulate you! -- on Mr. Leung's promotion!

LEUNG TAI-TAI

What promotion, really!
(snickers)
An officer in charge of rice!

MA TAI-TAI

Look, these days we can't even get Indian rice through our connections! Controlling rice is more powerful than guarding gold!

Just you listen to our Yee Tai-tai.

YEE TAI-TAI

(laughs)
Listen to me? Why, I'm no living Buddha! If anyone, your husband should have listened to me, and not taken on Transportation. Now he's away from home two, three days a week --and lets you run wild!

We now get a look at the ladies. Yee Tai-tai, the hostess, is a grand dame, older than the others, and jealous of her superior status. Leung Tai-tai is corpulent, avaricious and grasping. Ma Tai-tai is younger, attractive and sharp-eyed.

MA TAI-TAI

Me, wild? His relatives come over every day for one thing or another, till my hallways are crammed with in-laws. Finding odd jobs for them is not enough, I have to feed them too. We don't earn enough for all that bother.

LEUNG TAI-TAI

You said it!

YEE TAI-TAI

Aiya! We can't give our Mai Tai-tai the wrong impression -- she'll think Wang Ching-wei's government is run by us wives over the mahjong table!

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

But it seems you're only telling the truth!

LEUNG TAI-TAI

Those little Japanese devils will never know -- that there's another heaven above the Emperor's head!

The women crack up.

We now see to whom Yee Tai-tai is referring. Mai Tai-tai is only in her early twenties, delicately beautiful, and wearing hardly any make-up besides the bright shiny lipstick on her chiseled lips. She smiles demurely at Yee Tai-tai, something slightly secretive in her manner -- in fact, more than slightly, as we shall discover. For her real name is Wang Chia-chih, and the money she is gambling on mahjong today is not her own....

YEE TAI-TAI

Eat it while it's still hot.

LEUNG TAI-TAI

I really shouldn't eat any more! So fat already -

YEE TAI-TAI

Everybody is hoarding these days! Since we can't do much else, we might as well hoard fat on our bodies!

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

What's good to hoard these days, Yee Tai-tai? My Little Mai is always looking for the next trend in imports. Even with the port closed, you can still do a lot of business in Hong Kong.

YEE TAI-TAI

You said you already sold out all your Western medicine? What a shortage! I'd just have him get more of that for you.

From the corner of her eyes Ma Tai-Tai watches the two confer.

MA TAI-TAI

I heard you all went to that Szechuan restaurant Shu-yü yesterday?

YEE TAI-TAI

Yes, we did, the whole group -- Mai Ta-tai had never been there before.

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

When I told them, they all laughed -

YEE TAI-TAI

They've already opened two branches in Hong Kong -

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

I know --

YEE TAI-TAI

They said the Sichuan chefs couldn't get along with the Hong Kong chefs, so business was bad. Hong Kong people can't take it too spicy hot anyway, right? It was plenty hot yesterday --

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

Very hot indeed! --So hot that I--

YEE TAI-TAI

The colder it gets, the hotter one eats -- to take the chill out! Their spicy bean fish was so good! Why, who just discarded the '5 dots'? Aiyo! Thank you very much!

She puts down her bowl to rearrange the tiles.

Ma and Leung both sport fashionable black capes, closed at the collar with a thick gold clasp.

LEUNG TAI-TAI

So Ma Tai-tai didn't go yesterday?

YEE TAI-TAI

She's been hiding from us for quite a while!

MA TAI-TAI

I was tied up at home!

YEE TAI-TAI

(laughs)

You promised to treat us, couldn't back down, so instead you vanished!

MA TAI-TAI

And who was busy when I called a few days ago?

YEE TAI-TAI

(laughs)

That didn't count - I had to fetch Mai Tai-tai. Ask her if you don't believe me.

(to Mai Tai-tai/Wang Chia-chih)

Ma Tai-tai picked that very day to treat us, deliberately!

LEUNG TAI-TAI

(to Mai)

Say, any stockings left from your stock?

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

I'm afraid I'm all sold out of those too.

YEE TAI-TAI

Yesterday Liao Tai-tai alone took away half a dozen!

LEUNG TAI-TAI

That lady is just too...

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

(apologetic)

I'll bring more next time, I promise!

YEE TAI-TAI

Shanghai is short of just about everything these days. Even toothpaste -- you can only get it on the black market. Now that I found you again, you must come more often, and always stay with me when you're in town!

Ma lowers her eyelids and fiddles with the tiles in her hand.

Mai Tai-tai (Wang Chia-chih) follows Ma's every expression. Clearly, Ma makes her nervous.

Sound cut: on the clattering of mahjong tiles, we cut to:

INT. BASEMENT HALLWAY -- SECRET SERVICE BUILDING - DAY

An iron door is pushed open and a man exits into a hallway -- Yee, forties, elegant, pale and weary. He winces almost imperceptibly at the sounds of torture emanating from the room behind him. He is accompanied by his second-in-command, Chang, sinister, oily.

This is a basement prison operated by the Wang Ching-wei regimes's secret service.

CHANG

He won't last much longer - the Japanese military will be here to claim him.

YEE

They didn't say dead or alive. Give him a quick one as a favor.

Chang glances at Yee.

CHANG

Sir, about General Miura Taicho - they are still looking for the American shipment of arms to Chungking.

YEE

I'll see him tonight.

CHANG

His secretary called. He regrets that he will have to cancel tonight's dinner. He asks that you report first thing tomorrow morning - at Japanese headquarters.

Yee pauses, vaguely disturbed.

INT./EXT. SECRET SERVICE BUILDING -- FRONT COURTYARD – SHANGHAI --
DAY

Yee and Chang come down the stairs into the office area.

CHANG

Will you be returning today?

YEE

No...I have an appointment.

As Yee heads towards his car, two bodyguards come quickly forward, checking the surroundings and opening the car door for him. Chang stands beside the car as Yee gets in.

The door closes, a bodyguard gets in the front with the driver.

Chang watches as Yee's car pulls away.

INT. YEE'S CAR – DAY

Yee sits in the back seat, searches his pockets, doesn't find what he is looking for.

The guard hands him a cigarette.

Yee lights it and smokes, thinking. He watches the pigeons circling above.

EXT. YEE'S RESIDENCE— SHANGHAI

Yee's car pulls up at the entrance. Another car is already parked in the alley.

The bodyguard gets out first, looks around, then opens the car door.

Yee gets out, alert, and disappears into the house in a single stride.

INT. YEE'S RESIDENCE—SHANGHAI— CONTINUOUS

Yee pauses in the front hall, hears the women laughing and playing.

In the hallway mirror, he straightens his hair.

He walks upstairs. Amah is passing by.

AMAH

Sir, you're back home.

LEUNG TAI-TAI (O.S.)

Someone helped my cousin buy a yellow diamond
from a Russian aristocrat, some seven or eight
carats.

MA TAI-TAI

Those Russian aristocrats are all over the place,
scrounging for cigarette butts. Are you sure it wasn't
a fake?

Yee enters, nods at the three ladies.

YEE

I see you ladies started early today.

Mai Tai-tai/Wang Chia-chih nods politely at him, and immediately lowers her eyes to sort the tiles in her hands.

Yee smiles, and stands behind Yee Tai-tai watching the game.

Yee Tai-tai discards a '3 character'.

LEUNG TAI-TAI

Oh my god! You must have a great hand. Mr. Yee is here to cheer you on.

MAI TAI-TAI/WANG CHIA-CHIH

Oh --my turn?

She quickly discards a tile.

Yee Tai-tai continues to talk diamonds.

YEE TAI-TAI

(looking at Ma's hand)

Now yours is something else! How many carats is it again? Three?

Ma smiles uneasily, giving Yee a sly glance.

MA TAI-TAI

This old thing? It's so old-fashioned. I'm planning on having it reset in a few days.

YEE TAI-TAI

Our trusted runner P'in Fen was here the other day and showed me a five-carat. It was big all right, but the brilliance was nowhere near yours --

Yee Tai-tai takes another look at Ma's diamond ring.

LEUNG TAI-TAI

And why didn't you call me?

YEE TAI-TAI

I only had time for a quick look myself - 'Pung'!

MA TAI-TAI

They all say P'in Fen brings in better goods than the shops! Mine is quite ordinary.

YEE TAI-TAI

As a runner she brings them to our door, saves us the hassle and lets us check them out for a couple of days. P'in Fen has things that others don't. But the "hot oil" diamond last time? He wouldn't buy it.

Yee Tai-tai raises her yes to her husband with a quick look of disdain.

The mahjong table appears to have become a diamond exhibition. Only Mai Tai-tai has no diamond on her finger, just a jade ring.

YEE TAI-TAI

You have any idea how much these go for now? A flawless yellow diamond can go up to over ten taels, ten taels of gold a carat. P'in Fen claims that yellow and pink diamonds are in hot demand but there's no supply. You just can't find any. Those who have them hoard them rather than sell!

YEE

(smiles)

That "hot oil" of yours must have weighed over ten carats. A diamond is not a quail egg, it's a stone after all. If you wore that on your finger you could hardly play mahjong.

YEE TAI-TAI

Right! You wouldn't buy it and you still give me an earful!

Yee Tai-tai discards a '5 dots' and Leung Tai-tai quickly flips over all her tiles with a crash to declare victory.

LEUNG TAI-TAI

I win! ...

MA TAI-TAI

Aiya! What a slip -- all your fault, Mr. Yee, for saying diamonds are bad for mahjong!

Laughing and bitching, the ladies count their chips.

YEE TAI-TAI

He's here to spoil our game!

LEUNG TAI-TAI

Thank you Mr. Yee!

MA TAI-TAI

That's not nice! Mr. Yee better treat us to dinner!

MR. YEE

No problem. Just tell me where you would like to go.

LEUNG TAI-TAI

Shu-yü.

MA TAI-TAI

Not Shu-yü, someplace more expensive.

Yee suddenly darts his eyes towards the door.

Mai Tai-tai (Wang Chia-chih) turns her eyes from Yee back to her chips as she counts them, keeping one eye on the two black capes. She sips her tea, pauses, then glances at the clock on the wall.

MAI TAI-TAI/WANG CHIA-CHIH

Oh dear! How did it skip my mind? I have a meeting at three and forgot clean about it!

YEE TAI-TAI

(raising her voice)

Impossible. Why didn't you say so before? This is simply not done!

MAI TAI-TAI/WANG CHIA-CHIH

It's an important meeting -- I totally forgot. I'm so sorry. Mr. Yee, please take my place for a few hands -- I'll be back as soon as possible.

LEUNG TAI-TAI

(whining)

And I thought my luck was back!

MAI TAI-TAI/WANG CHIA-CHIH

It's Little Mai's money. After all these years, finally we're getting part of it back.

YEE TAI-TAI

Well, not unless Liao Tai-tai can come.

(calls for Amah in Shanghaiese)

Amah please call Liao Tai-tai!

(to Mai Tai-tai)

When she arrives you may leave.

Ma turns round to light a cigarette, toying with the chips in her hand. Ma's eyes meet Wang's for a brief moment.

MAI TAI-TAI/WANG CHIA-CHIH

Mr. Yee will stand in for me. It's so late already -
I'm afraid they won't wait!

Mai Tai-tai (Wang Chia-chih) checks the clock.

YEE

I'm afraid I can't be of help today. I have another
engagement. I'll play all night with you ladies some
other time.

YEE TAI-TAI

(to Wang Cha Chi/Mai Tai-tai)

You're so bad! All right, all right, just go. But you
have to buy us dinner.

LEUNG TAI-TAI

Yeah, I agree.

MA TAI-TAI

Aiya! Yee Tai-tai is really upset! No more special
allowances, not even for her!

MAI TAI-TAI/WANG CHIA-CHIH

Sure, sure! I promise, dinner is on me tonight. Mr.
Yee, please take my place, or else you won't be
invited tonight!

Mai Tai-tai (Wang Chia-chih) seizes the moment, gets up, apologizes, and quickly leaves.

LEUNG TAI-TAI

Do help, Mr. Yee! Stay awhile -- see, Yee Tai-tai is
already phoning around for a replacement.

YEE

I really am tied up. I came back just to change for
an appointment.

MA TAI-TAI

I had a feeling Mr. Yee would be too occupied.

Wang overhears this last remark as she leaves the living room.

INT. YEE'S RESIDENCE – GUEST ROOM – SHANGHAI 1942 – DAY

Wang quickly goes upstairs to the guest room.

She throws a few make-up items and perfume into her handbag.

She straps on her watch. She hears someone coming up the stairs, lowers her head and keeps stuffing her bag with cigarettes and perfumes.

AMAH

(in Shanghainese)

Tai-tai says to let you use her car. It's waiting in front.

MAI TAI-TAI/WANG CHIA-CHIH

(mildly surprised,in Shanghainese)

Oh, that's very kind of her - but today Yee Tai-tai doesn't need to - very well then, thanks!

(not wishing to offend)

I'll be right down.

Wang checks herself in the mirror.

INT./EXT. YEE'S CAR - DAY

The car drives along a road flanked by bare plane trees.

MAI TAI-TAI/WANG CHIA-CHIH

(in Shanghainese)

So few cars -- in Hong Kong there's always so much traffic.

CHAUFFEUR

(in Shanghainese)

No one can afford gas anymore.

(curious, looks into rear mirror)

Mai Tai-tai's Shanghainese is quite good.

MAI TAI-TAI/WANG CHIA-CHIH

(smiling)

My mother's from Shanghai. My family moved to Hong Kong when the Japanese came.

CHAUFFEUR

I see.

EXT. CONCESSIONS GUARD STATION -- CONTINUOUS

Traffic slows as they approach the French Concession. Wang waits in the car at a checkpoint manned by Japanese soldiers.

Cars with Japanese flags are waved past. The others wait in line.

Wang sees a bayonet pointing at a kneeling man whose luggage is being searched. At his side there is a dead body, lying in a pool of blood.

INT./EXT. YEE'S CAR -- CONTINUOUS

The car enters the French Concession.

Long lines of people queue on the street, many of them foreigners wearing arm bands, waiting for bread, bracing themselves against the autumn chill. Wang Chia-chih ponders them.

CHAUFFEUR

(in Shanghainese)

Look! For their love of bread these foreigners have to stand in line! They are only allowed to withdraw twenty yuans a day from the bank. They can no longer afford ham, so they settle for dry hard bread!

INT./EXT. YEE'S CAR - KEISSLING'S CAFÉ – SHANGHAI - DAY

The car pulls over in front of the café. Wang gets out.

CHAUFFEUR

(In Shanghainese)

Shall I come back for you later?

MAI TAI-TAI/WANG CHIA-CHIH

No, you don't have to bother. I'll get a cab, no problem - thanks again!

Wang watches the car leave. She walks over to the café on the other side of the street. Cautiously she takes in her surroundings.

INT. KEISSLING CAFÉ – SHANGHAI - DAY

Wang pushes open the door and enters the posh Russian café.

A waiter approaches and motions her to an empty table.

WAITER

(in English)

Please.

She removes her hat and coat, looks out the window and checks that the car is gone, then turns and sits down at a table.

The café is practically empty, except for an elderly Western couple. Tango music plays on the radio. A waiter saunters over.

MAI TAI-TAI/WANG CHIA-CHIH

(in English)

Coffee please.

WAITER

Sure.

She looks out the window. Coffee is served. She looks at her watch - it's almost four.

WANG CHIA-CHIH

May I borrow your phone?

WAITER

Of course.

The waiter points at the counter. She looks up and sees the phone on the bar counter. Two Russian chefs on break are drinking liquor and chatting in Russian. She hesitates for a moment, then walks over to the phone.

She picks up the phone and dials.

A waiter behind the bar is drying glasses. After four rings, Wang hangs up. She mutters to herself before dialing again.

WANG CHIA-CHIH

That's odd - did I dial the wrong number?

Wang dials again. It rings, a click is heard and someone answers.

K'UANG YU-MIN (O.S.)

Hello?

Wang speaks in Cantonese.

WANG CHIA-CHIH

Hi! Second Brother! It's me!

Wang deliberately turns her back to the two Russian chefs who have been eyeing her with interest.

WANG CHIA-CHIH

I'm calling from Keissling Café. Everything okay at home?

Two new customers walk in the door. Wang stiffens a bit.

WANG CHIA-CHIH

I'm fine! - Just too busy to call!

Wang eyes the couple, now seated.

WANG CHIA-CHIH

I plan to pick up that package today. Yes, it's all set
- for now!

Wang stops for a moment and glances at the bare trees outside. The air is cold and damp. Passersby walk on briskly.

WANG CHIA-CHIH

(pause)

Yes...

A moment of silence.

WANG CHIA-CHIH

Anything - else ?

Intercut:

We finally see who she's talking to:

INT. SUNRISE BOOKSTORE - UPSTAIRS ROOM – SHANGHAI - SAME

We're in the stockroom upstairs of a crammed bookstore -- piles of books everywhere. A handsome young man, K'uang Yu-min, speaks into the phone.

K'UANG YU-MIN

...No...nothing.

INT. KEISSLING CAFÉ - CONTINUOUS

WANG CHIA-CHIH

...I guess I'd better leave now... All right. See you
later!

Wang Chia-chih holds the phone in her hand, then gently hangs up, and walks back to her table. She sits, and stirs her coffee.

INT. SUNRISE BOOKSTORE - UPSTAIRS -- CONTINUOUS

K'uang Yu-min hangs up the phone and is silent for a moment.

Wide:

A group of men, some standing, some sitting on makeshift seats, waits for him to say something. A young woman stands among them.

He nods.

K'UANG YU-MIN

It's now.

The men rise. A couple of them check their guns in their holsters. Two others take small axes, hide them in their long sleeves. There are others in the room, watching the preparations nervously, whom we will recognize later on, including the young woman, Lai Hsiu-chin, and some other young men, Ou-yang, Liang, Huang Lei.

INT. KEISSLING CAFÉ - LATER

Wang sits at the table, takes a bottle of perfume from her purse, dips in a glass rod and puts a few drops behind her ears.

She dips once more and puts some on her wrists.

Wang looks out of the window. We hold on her face, quietly searching the crowded street.

Fade out.

TITLE: Four Years Earlier

EXT. NARROW ROAD IN COUNTRYSIDE-- OCT. 1938 -- DAY

A convoy of trucks, packed with students from Lingnan University fleeing for Hong Kong ahead of the oncoming Japanese troops, pulls over to let pass a military column of young men in uniform heading for the front.

The students cheer them on, waving and shouting. The soldiers wave back.

Lai Hsiu-chin, a vivacious young student, suddenly jumps up, waving her handkerchief.

LAI HSIU-CHIN

(yelling)

Go beat those Japanese and when you come back
we'll marry you!

Everybody tries to pull her back into the truck, while they giggle.

LAI HSIU-CHIN

I said we, not I, right? Well, the men all go off to war. Who'll be left to marry us?

The girls giggle, swaying and bumping against each other.

Wang Chia-chih sits among them, young, almost non-descript. She blushes but smiles along with the other girls.

EXT. ALONG THE ROAD BY A BROKEN BRIDGE. - EVENING

At sunset all the trucks are backed up at a broken bridge. The students mill around waiting for the bridge to be fixed.

The teacher and truck driver study the map looking for alternative routes.

DRIVER

We can take this detour to Hong Kong.

TEACHER

The route doesn't matter, I just have to get these college kids there safely.

K'uang Yu-min, whom we saw at the bookstore earlier, runs and yells to the students.

K'UANG YU-MIN

Those who can help should come with me! Don't just stand there.

Rising smoke can be seen in the distance.

Later:

LAI HSIU-CHIN

The farmers' wives have cooked us sweet potatoes!

Lai and some female students are lugging over big pots of sweet potatoes donated by the peasants nearby.

Later:

The students huddle in small groups, refugees, sharing the food quietly.

Wang looks up at the darkening sky. The mountains slowly dissolve into shadows.

LAI HSIU-CHIN

Isn't your father in England? Why didn't he take you with him?

WANG CHIA-CHIH

He took my brother. After Mother died, he said he'd send for me. I waited for two years, and now, the war.

LAI HSIU-CHIN

I'll never go back home! This war gave me the chance to leave - and from Hong Kong, maybe I'll go and see the world.

EXT. HONG KONG UNIVERSITY -- NOVEMBER 1938 -- DAY

To establish: panoramic view of the city of Hong Kong with Hong Kong University perched in the hills above.

EXT. HONG KONG UNIVERSITY CAMPUS -- LATE AFTERNOON

Hong Kong students file out of the lecture rooms as Lingnan students wait to use their classrooms.

Wang and Lai walk together in the corridor.

LAI HSIU-CHIN

Meet you after class by the pond this evening?

WANG CHIA-CHIH

Okay.

K'uang Yu-min approaches.

K'UANG YU-MIN

Hi, Lai Hsiu-chin. I was hoping to run into you.

LAI HSIU-CHIN

K'uang Yu-min, you remember me?

K'UANG YU-MIN

Of course, I saw you on stage, with the women's theater group at Lingnan.

(hands Lai a flyer)

We just started a new drama club. Auditions tomorrow afternoon.

LAI HSIU-CHIN

But the women's group has never acted with men.

K'UANG YU-MIN

We're guest students here. There are so few of us already - we must work together.

LAI HSIU-CHIN

(excited)

Then let's do Ibsen's "A Doll's House"! I know Nora's lines inside out!

K'UANG YU-MIN

At times like this, who needs that kind of bourgeois drama! We want to put on a patriotic play, something to raise money for the resistance!

(notices Wang)

Why don't you come to the audition too?

WANG CHIA-CHIH

Oh, thank you, but I'm only a freshman. I haven't done much acting before.

K'UANG YU-MIN

Who cares! We must all pitch in. Our soldiers are fighting the enemy at the front, while these Hong Kongers continue with their lives of leisure.

(a sincere smile, a slight wave of his fist)

We have to wake them up with our drums and gongs!

K'uang walks away.

EXT. THE POND, HONG KONG UNIVERSITY -- AUTUMN -- NIGHT

Later, Wang and Lai chat by the pond.

LAI HSIU-CHIN

Typical of directors - never listens to anyone else. But since it's for the resistance, I suppose we women really shouldn't fall behind -- but we'll probably just have to do what he says.

WANG CHIA-CHIH

He seems very passionate.

LAI HSIU-CHIN

His brother graduated from Whampoa Military Academy, but died fighting the Japanese. So his

parents forbade him from enlisting in the army.
That's why he's so worked up.

EXT. HONG KONG STREET -- NIGHT

The girls walk down some steep steps towards the city. Lai Hsiu-chin sings as they walk.

LAI HSIU-CHIN

(singing)

The wind blows my hair.

WANG CHIA-CHIH

I better just concentrate on my studies.

LAI HSIU-CHIN

Come on! I know you want to be on stage just as
much as me.

WANG CHIA-CHIH

But in Lingnan all I did was run lines for you
upperclassmen. The instructor said I needed to work
on my voice.

LAI HSIU-CHIN

Don't worry about it -- just yell so the last row can
hear you!

Lai Hsiu-chin and Wang Chia-chih both begin to sing again.

LAI HSIU-CHIN/WANG CHIA-CHIH

(singing)

How can I not think about him?

INT. HONG KONG UNIVERSITY AUDITORIUM -- EVENING

K'uang Yu-min and some other students in the theater group, including Liang Jun-sheng (pudgy, a bit sleazy looking) and Ou-yang (a bit older, and already slightly balding) are rigging some lighting. They strain to lift the array, as Lai, and some of the other girls stop to watch. Wang Chia-chih is reciting under her breath, trying to remember her lines.

WANG CHIA-CHIH

(mumbling to herself)

I give myself back to the land that nurtured me. In
my soul...

K'uang directs the placement of the lights.

K'UANG YU-MIN

To the left, more to the left, more... That's it!
Good, that's it, now try!

Suddenly, the theater goes dark, except for a dim spotlight on K'uang. Everyone quiets down -- an unexpectedly magical moment.

Wang watches K'uang, enchanted.

The light dims.

INT. STUDENT HOSTEL ROOM – HONG KONG – DAY

The cramped room, filled with bunk beds.

Wang sits at her desk, books and papers spread out before her, a wrinkled letter in her hand, a photograph of a Chinese man with an English woman. She appears to have been crying, or at least holding back tears.

Lai rises from her bed.

LAI HSIU-CHIN

What is it?

Wang holds up the letter.

WANG CHIA-CHIH

My father got remarried. I'm writing him my
congratulations.

Wang seals her aerogram, and walks out alone.

INT. HONG KONG CINEMA. SUMMER. DAY

In the pitch-dark cinema, Wang sits alone, crying, watching the movie, an American melodrama.

EXT. OUTSIDE HONG KONG UNIVERSITY AUDITORIUM -- SPRING -- NIGHT

A large crowd of audience members file into the auditorium.

INT. BACKSTAGE AUDITORIUM -- EVENING

It's a madhouse.

Wang concentrates while she draws three lines across her brow.

K'uang does the same.

K'UANG YU-MIN

Once you put on the make up, you are no longer
yourself.

Liang Jun-sheng, while putting on Ou-yang's make up, steals a glance over at Lai Hsiu-chin changing into her costume.

Wang, dressed in peasant clothes, wends her way to her starting position. The rest of the cast is ready and waiting.

Huang Lei hits the gong three times.

The curtain rises. A packed house. The Village Chief (Ou-yang) enters with the wounded K'uang Yu-min.

VILLAGE CHIEF

(knocks)

Mother Chao -

A village girl (Wang Chia-chih) quickly opens the door.

VILLAGE CHIEF

They found this officer on the mountains.

MOTHER CHAO/ LAI HSIU-CHIN

Little Hong, is that your brother coming home?

WANG CHIA-CHIH

Shhh. Come on -- hurry in.

The Village Chief brings the officer into the house.

VILLAGE CHIEF

Be careful.

MOTHER CHAO/ LAI HSIU-CHIN

Oh my son! Hurry, go put on some hot water. How
can you be wounded so badly?

VILLAGE CHIEF

He is an officer, not your son.

Later:

Evening light and shadow illuminate the stage. The Mother talks to herself on the doorsill, facing the audience.

MOTHER/LAI HSIU-CHIN

My son is coming home tonight, home for dinner!
Let me kill a chicken to make him strong! My son is
coming home, coming home tonight! My son is
coming home, my son is going to come home. -
Here, coo... coo - come here.

The Mother runs around the empty courtyard, clucking for a nonexistent chicken.

Wang Chia-chih has entered from the wings, accompanied by K'uang, dressed in an officer's uniform. After two days' rest, he is leaving. Wang takes her scarf and offers it to him.

WANG CHIA-CHIH

Since Mother learned of my brother's death, she's
been sick.

K'uang nods and looks at her sympathetically.

In the wings Liang Jun-sheng places, with great care, the turntable needle onto an LP. He holds a microphone next to the turntable, and music wafts through the hall.

WANG CHIA-CHIH

I just finished knitting this for my brother, only -
only he won't need it any more.

(with tears)

Please take it with you!

K'UANG YU-MIN

I can't. You saved my life and I have nothing to
give you in return.

WANG CHIA-CHIH

You've given everything to save China! Every time
you kill an enemy, you are avenging my brother! I
am only sorry that I am a girl. I need to take care of
my mother, and I promised my brother he would
never have to worry...

K'UANG YU-MIN

Your brother...

WANG CHIA-CHIH

He was the same age as you. Since Father died, he
carried the whole family on his shoulders—he was

such a fast worker that during harvest he was always the first to finish and had time to help the others. He was strong like you...I followed him everywhere! He said heaven would always protect honest folks!

(sees tears welling in K'uang's eyes)

He was our only hope!

Suddenly Wang drops to her knees.

WANG CHIA-CHIH

Let me bow to you on behalf of our country, my dead brother, and our nation for generations and generations to come! China will not fall!

Choked with emotion, Wang's voice resonates around the hall. Audience members begin to stand and clap.

K'uang stoops to help her up. The two look at each other, holding hands.

AUDIENCE

(shouting)

China will not fall!

INT. NOODLE SHOP—HONG KONG - NIGHT

Outside, noodles are cooking over high flames. The friends drink up in real celebration.

THE GROUP

Bottom's Up!

HUANG LEI

That was so great! A thousand people shouting "China will not fall!"

(raises his glass)

China will not fall! China will not fall! China will not fall!"

K'UANG YU-MIN

Come on - only six hundred seats...plus some standing in the aisles...Frankly, I underestimated those Hong Kong students.

LAI HSIU-CHIN

The audience back in Lingnan was never this excited!

WANG CHIA-CHIH

(earnestly)

Our story is our own story, which the audience can identify with. That's why they were so moved! I saw many of them still drying their eyes outside, making donations.

K'UANG YU-MIN

A toast to all of you! Finally we raised some donations, now we can really do something!

HUANG LEI

Let's drink it up tonight, and worry about the country tomorrow! Big Brother, Ganbei! Ganbei!

OU-YANG

It's not just the resistance - it's our great acting that moved them...

LIANG JUN-SHENG

We should sell tickets, and on the front of the door have a big poster saying "Hot Ticket."

HUANG LEI

The tickets will be hot, not because of you, but because of her.

(looking at Wang Chai Chi)

Give me the bottle! Come, let's toast to our leading lady!

THE GROUP

Our leading lady - Cheers!

WANG CHIA-CHIH

No, no. I'm not! Cut it out!

Everyone laughs.

EXT. STREET IN HONG KONG - NIGHT

The friends, arm in arm, saunter down the street in the drizzly night, singing patriotic songs.

THE GROUP

(singing)

There are clouds in the sky. Students in sweet youth today, Pillars of society tomorrow. Tomorrow we'll make waves to save our nation, Huge waves,

huge waves, forever surging! Fellow students,
fellow students—
Come forward with your strength now, And take
into our hands the fate of our land! Huge waves,
huge waves, forever surging!

A double-decker arrives and they scramble onboard.

THE GROUP

Hurry Up! Hurry!

K'uang climbs straight onto the upper deck, with the others following.

Ou-yang produces a cigarette ceremoniously from his pocket. Huang Lei proffers a lighter. They crowd around to light the cigarette.

LIANG JUN-SHENG

Is it lit? Ah!—

They take turns smoking the cigarette. Lai also takes a puff and passes it to Wang . Wang hesitates, not knowing how to smoke.

LAI HSIU-CHIN

You can't be an artist and not smoke! Just try - it
comes in handy onstage.

Wang reluctantly takes a puff, and instantly coughs out the smoke.

Lai holds the cigarette and runs back to the others.

LAI HSIU-CHIN

Guys! Wang just smoked her first cigarette! Who's
next?

The young men all reach for it.

LAI HSIU-CHIN

What the...? Oh, the hell with you -

THE GUYS

Me next! Now me! My turn!

Wang closes her eyes as the bus drifts through the night, indulging herself in the soft rain, while streams of bright street lights race by.

K'uang comes up and sits beside her.

She turns to him.

K'UANG YU-MIN

Hey.

WANG CHIA-CHIH

Hi.

K'UANG YU-MIN

Thank you—

WANG CHIA-CHIH

For what?

A good-natured, bashful look on K'uang's face. Without saying anything, they look at each other and smile.

Lai Hsiu-chin watches them from her seat in back.

INT. HONG KONG UNIVERSITY AUDITORIUM - DAY

Wang walks out onto the empty, dimly lit stage. It's strewn with pieces of the half-struck set. No one is there.

She stands there, in silence, for a moment.

K'UANG YU-MIN (V.O.)

Wang Chia-chih!

Wang looks up and sees the rest of the group up on the balcony, Lai among them.

LAI HSIU-CHIN

Come on up!

Cut to later, on the balcony, K'uang is holding forth:

K'UANG YU-MIN

I ran into this guy, Tsao De Hsi, the other day, a guy from my hometown in Tsao Ching. He used to hang around the same school as my brother. We go back a long way. I hear that Tsao now works as an assistant to some bigwig in the Peace Movement named Yee.

K'uang keeps his voice very low. The others have to gather close to hear him.

K'UANG YU-MIN (CONT'D)

He's one of Wang Ching-wei's lackeys -- actually his top agent. Yee is hiding out in Hong Kong now.

HUANG LEI

Wang Ching-wei and his so-called "Peace Movement"— running dogs for the Japanese! He's a traitor!

K'UANG YU-MIN

That's right. They're recruiting all over the place, and Yee is handling it for him in Hong Kong. What luck I bumped into Tsao -- what a chance for us!

A confused silence.

OU-YANG

Uh, a chance for what?

K'uang pauses.

K'UANG YU-MIN

Listen, this is no longer theater club, or shouting slogans. What's wrenching tears from the audience, when we could eliminate a flesh and blood traitor! Summer break is coming. We can do some real acting -- you change your identities, infiltrate Yee's group. I let Tsao believe I was still friendly with him, maybe he'll introduce me. We could get some guns...

They exchange looks, fearful and excited.

LIANG JUN-SHENG

But what do we know about killing people? Our only experience is on stage!

K'UANG YU-MIN

When you are faced with a real traitor, the killing will come naturally. We should rather worry about how many and how soon we will kill! And if we're caught, it's the firing squad! So think it through -- once you're in, you're in all the way! That's what being young is all about!

HUANG LEI

(slaps his palm on top of K'uang's hand)

I'm in!

OU-YANG

Me too!

(joins his hand with the others)

Huang quietly puts his on the pile.

LAI HSIU-CHIN

Then we must also...

K'UANG YU-MIN

I'm not forcing anyone to join.

WANG CHIA-CHIH

(placing her hand on top)

I'm with you.

INT. BROTHEL—HONG KONG—SUMMER 1939 - NIGHT

Two prostitutes sit with K'uang, Liang, and Tsao, drinking and playing a drinking game. This scene is all in Cantonese.

Tsao drunkenly puts his arm around K'uang.

TSAO

Say, brother -- so good of you to look me up --

K'UANG YU-MIN

So great to meet up again after all these years away from home. Let's drink to that!

TSAO

Ah, if we can't go home, at least we can meet somebody from home! Bottoms up!

LIANG JUN-SHENG

Cheers to Brother Tsao! Thanks for looking out for us!

TSAO

I'll see what I can do. Hong Kong's not easy.

K'UANG YU-MIN

Any chance for me with the organization, brother? I could use some work.

TSAO

(laughs)

Tough job—I'll see.

EXT. RED LIGHT DISTRICT-- HONG KONG - NIGHT

K'uang walks down the narrow stairway, looking upset. He meets Huang Lei, Lai and Wang on the street. Huang Lei looks back towards the brothel.

HUANG LEI

Where's Liang?

K'UANG YU-MIN

Still up there.

HUANG LEI

What's he doing? We only have enough money to pay for that Tsao guy!

K'UANG YU-MIN

Maybe he can get more info...

They all look back up at the windows of the brothel. Human shadows from the rooms, whores giggling.

HUANG LEI

From them?

INT. SNACK BAR— HONG KONG—SUMMER 1939 - DAY

An electric fan twirls. Cantonese music on the radio.

LIANG JUN-SHENG

Tsao said the wives stick to their apartments and play mahjong round the clock.

HUANG LEI

A whole session and that's the only dirt you got?

K'UANG YU-MIN

(shoots him a dirty look)

Maybe venturing out is too risky for them, so they don't go out much.

LAI HSIU-CHIN

If they don't come out, what shall we do?

OU-YANG

We should send them a mahjong partner! A fake rich lady to play mahjong in their home -

HUANG LEI

Right! Then lure him out with this pretty lady -

K'UANG YU-MIN

Stop joking around -

LAI HSIU-CHIN

Mahjong—that's beyond me!

K'UANG YU-MIN

Maybe tomorrow I can get—

Before K'uang can finish, Wang suddenly speaks, very softly.

WANG CHIA-CHIH

I know how to play mahjong! We had mahjong at home. I started playing when I was ten, to make up the foursome!

(smiles)

I've seen how those rich ladies behave at the mahjong table, how they talk...

All heads turn to Wang.

EXT. RENTED APARTMENT—HONG KONG—SUMMER 1939—DAY

A car is parked outside an apartment building. The group examines its luxury facade.

HUANG LEI

The foreigners have left for the summer. We can rent the second floor for a couple of months.

INT. RENTED APARTMENT - HONG KONG -- DAY

Huang opens the door with a key. They enter. K'uang pulls Huang Lei aside.

K'UANG YU-MIN

Where's all this money coming from?

HUANG LEI

I told you -- my old man has a pile stashed in Hong Kong. He told me I could use it in an emergency!

K'UANG YU-MIN

I never said such a posh place.

HUANG LEI

But you wanted Ou-yang to be Mr. Mai the business man, with Wang Chia-chih as his rich wife Mai Tai-tai, then they have to be living in an apartment like this!

Ou-yang checks out the place.

OU-YANG

A bit of fixing up here, some new furniture there...
Lai Hsiu-chin can wear a ponytail and be the servant...And a mustache for Mr. Mai, maybe?

Liang discovers some girlie magazines left behind in the bathroom.

LIANG JUN-SHENG

Ou-yang!

Ou-yang pops in.

LIANG JUN-SHENG

The owner left them!

The two settle down to pore over the magazines. Huang Lei joins them.

EXT. YEE'S RESIDENCE— HONG KONG— SUMMER 1939— DAY

A car pulls up at a gated compound. In the front seat sits Yee's assistant Tsao, next to Huang Lei, who drives, dressed in livery. The car stops. Tsao gets out.

TSAO

(in Cantonese)

Wait here!

Two plainclothes guards exchange signals with Tsao as he enters the compound.

Huang Lei looks in the rearview mirror at Ou-yang. He leans over to straighten Ou-yang's tie.

HUANG LEI

And don't wipe your mouth with it - it's my best tie!

K'UANG YU-MIN

(seriously)

Stop horsing around! This is not a rehearsal – there are no do-overs! Always remember what role you're playing before opening your mouth! Say only the

absolute minimum. The more said, the easier it is to slip!

WANG CHIA-CHIH

You too.

K'UANG YU-MIN

Here they come!

From the side mirror Wang watches Yee Tai-tai, accompanied by a bodyguard. Both sport dark shades.

K'uang Yu-min opens the door for her.

TSAO

Mr. Mai, Mrs. Mai, and Mr. Mai's cousin K'uang Yu-min, from my hometown!

YEE

Pleased to meet you.

TSAO

This is Mr. Yee, and Yee Tai-tai!

YEE

(to his wife)

Go with them and have fun.

(to the people in the car)

You'll have to excuse me now.

Yee bends slightly to greet everyone, catching a quick glance of Wang. She smiles back at him briefly before he turns to go.

Yee Tai-tai gets inside the car and immediately notices its posh interior.

YEE TAI-TAI

So sorry to bother all of you! You came all this way to fetch me! Tsao told me you knew Hong Kong well, otherwise we could have used my husband's car.

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

No bother, no bother at all! Would Yee Tai-tai like to shop around Central?

YEE TAI-TAI

After two months in Hong Kong, all I know is Central and Repulse Bay. It's embarrassing!

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI
Then let's go to Tsim Sha Tsui. We can shop there.

YEE TAI-TAI
Okay.

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI
(To Huang Lei, in Cantonese)
To Tsim Sha Tsui!

HUANG LEI
Yes.

Huang Lei starts the car.

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI
(To Ou-yang)
Drop us first and then go back to your office. You
wouldn't mind being a little late, would you?

YEE TAI-TAI
We mustn't retain Mr. Mai from his work!

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI
It's all right - it's his family's company!

YEE TAI-TAI
Mr. Mai's line of business is -

OU-YANG
Eh—export!—some import also -

Ou-yang is stuttering, Wang quickly steps in.

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI
You have such a lovely place here, Yee Tai-tai!
(to Ou-yang)
We didn't see this one when we went house hunting.

YEE TAI-TAI
We're only renting. When the war broke out on the
mainland, we had to move here in a hurry. Mai Tai-
tai is from Hong Kong?

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI
I came over to get married. My hometown is
Kwantung. My mother is from Shanghai.

YEE TAI-TAI

(in Shanghainese)

Then you must know the Shanghai dialect!

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

(switches to Shanghainese)

Yes, I do, but not very well— I've forgotten most of it!

Yee Tai-tai brightens up at the sound of Shanghainese.

YEE TAI-TAI

(in Shanghainese)

I was originally from Anhui province. My Shanghainese is also so-so!

EXT. DEPARTMENT STORE—HONG KONG—DAY

The two ladies, shaded by their pretty umbrellas, shopping. K'uang follows, two shopping bags in hand.

YEE TAI-TAI

Thank you so much! Sorry to bother you! You are even carrying my things!

K'UANG YU-MIN

No bother - my pleasure!

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

He's my cousin—it's quite all right! He also arrived in Hong Kong not too long ago. I let him tag along, so he gets to know the place as well.

YEE TAI-TAI

What was your line of business in Kwantung?

K'UANG YU-MIN

I was a teacher—in a village school.

YEE TAI-TAI

No wonder! I thought you looked educated - either a college student, or a teacher!

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

Yee Tai-tai, you're so observant!

INT. DEPARTMENT STORE—HONG KONG—DAY

Yee Tai-tai picks out a handbag.

YEE TAI-TAI

Very pricey—but the leather is superb!

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

That price is for foreign customers only. That's Hong Kong for you! Even in the department stores you have to bargain these days. Let me talk to her.

Wang brings the handbag over to bargain with the saleslady.

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

(in Cantonese)

Excuse me! I'd like to get this

(lowering her voice)

for my aunt, but she won't accept it because it's too expensive! Give me a better price so I can talk her into it!

SALES LADY

(giving her a look)

One hundred and twenty.

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

Still so high! I know it's imported, but now with the war, the trend is to buy patriotic goods. People would rather not be seen with imported things.

The saleslady knows she's been had.

INT. RENTAL APARTMENT—HONG KONG—SUMMER 1939—NIGHT

The group is sitting, discussing the day's events.

OU-YANG

You see all those plainclothes security? There's no way to get him at the house.

K'UANG YU-MIN

But you saw, when he left, he had a driver and a guard. We'd still have to deal with them, even if we lured him away. It'll take more than one of us shooting.

OU-YANG

That's still got to be better than trying for him at the house -- it's an armed camp there.

K'UANG YU-MIN

We just have to be patient. We've made contact -- and that Yee Tai-tai has really taken to Wang. She's already asked her back!

Wang Chia-chih stands and turns towards the bedroom.

WANG CHIA-CHIH

Sorry everybody - I'm tired.

She unbuttons her chipao collar as she walks into the bedroom.

K'uang goes to a table and takes out two very old, very clunky handguns and ammo.

K'UANG YU-MIN

Tonight, Huang and Liang will take first shift on guard.

HUANG LEI AND LIANG JUN-SHENG

Of course. No problem.

INT. RENTED APARTMENT -- BEDROOM -- NIGHT

LAI HSIU-CHIN (O.S.)

Wang Chia-chih can I come in?

WANG CHIA-CHIH

Sure.

Wang is carefully taking off her silk stockings as Lai enters, carrying a silk dress.

LAI HSIU-CHIN

I rushed the tailor.

WANG CHIA-CHIH

Thanks.

Wang opens a purse, takes out two cigarettes, offering one to Lai.

They share a match, sitting on the edge of the bed, smoking in silence.

LAI HSIU-CHIN

This Yee guy, what's he look like?

Wang just shrugs her shoulders, thinking.

WANG CHIA-CHIH

I only caught a quick glimpse. Not exactly what I imagined.

INT. YEE'S RESIDENCE— HONG KONG—SUMMER 1939 - NIGHT

The clack of mahjong tiles. Wang plays with Yee Tai-tai and two of her friends, Hsiao Tai-tai and Chu Tai-tai.

HSIAO TAI-TAI

The cook just disappeared on us -- just like that! He didn't steal anything, but poof! He just disappeared. It spooked Old Hsiao, though -- we haven't set foot in the house in five days, been staying at the Peninsula until they find us another house. He says it isn't safe.

YEE TAI-TAI

You can't trust any of them here. And these Cantonese -- they don't understand a word I say!

HSIAO TAI-TAI

What depresses me is there's no one who can cook Shanghainese like that cook. You know how picky that husband of mine is!

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

There's one restaurant in Hong Kong that has great Shanghainese cuisine. They've got the best drunken chicken, and scallion carp too.

YEE TAI-TAI

Really! You must take us there!

Just then, Yee Tai-tai sees her husband at the doorway.

YEE TAI-TAI

Oh, Old Yee! Mai Tai-tai is just telling us about a real Shanghainese restaurant here.

(to the other women)

He's the picky one! Not even the top restaurants excite him.

He enters the room.

YEE

Oh really? Which one?

YEE TAI-TAI

What's it called again?

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

(trying to remember)

Chu Jia restaurant -- it's in Kowloon, run by the cooks from Tan Jia restaurant in Shanghai.

Yee doesn't seem to take notice of her.

YEE

Yes, I think I've heard of it. (to his wife) I will be out late tonight. Please remember that we are having company tomorrow. Good evening ladies.

He leaves again.

CHU TAI-TAI

Oh, a party? And why haven't we been invited?

YEE TAI-TAI

(lowering her voice)

He won't even tell me who it is.

HSIAO TAI-TAI

It must be Chen Pi-Chun! Wang Ching-wei's wife. They want to set up their own government. Lao Hsiao has also been approached.

CHU TAI-TAI

(smiles)

Really! That can only mean one thing - Mr. Yee will be promoted!

YEE TAI-TAI

Aiya!

Yee Tai-tai slams down a tile, smiling like a Cheshire cat.

EXT. YEE'S RESIDENCE—HONG KONG—SUMMER 1939 - DAWN

Wang exits the building and walks across the road toward the car.

She taps on the car window and Huang Lei, dressed as a chauffeur, wakes with a start. She gets in and they drive off.

INT. RENTED APARTMENT - DAY

Huang Lei and Wang enter the apartment, waking the others. K'uang looks worried.

K'UANG YU-MIN

It's late.

WANG CHIA-CHIH

Mahjong. And I lost again.

She walks, exhausted, to the bedroom.

K'UANG YU-MIN

What about Yee? Was he there?

WANG CHIA-CHIH

For a minute. Then he left and never came back.

She takes off her earrings as she goes into the bedroom.

Huang goes to Liang, who is spread out on the couch.

HUANG LEI

Hey, move off. I'm exhausted!

EXT. SEASIDE -- HONG KONG -- EARLY MORNING

Early morning on a deserted beach. A few gun shots.

K'uang, Huang and Liang take turns with the two guns, trying to hit a couple of bottles placed on the rocks in a cove off the beach. They keep missing. The gun shots set off a chorus of faraway dogs barking

Wang and Lai watch them, bored.

Finally, Ou-yang hits a bottle. He's at first startled, then breaks into a big grin.

OU-YANG

One bottle -- assassinated!

HUANG LEI

Hats off to you! It's been a month, and you're so thrilled about killing a bottle or two. Why don't you just kill me, and save my old man the trouble!

OU-YANG

Hey -

Huang shrugs off Ou-yang's arm and starts to walk off.

HUANG LEI

Apartment, car, mahjong, expensive shopping...

(to Liang)

And your whores. Is this hunting down traitors or summer camp? How many fathers do I have? Wang Chia-chih needs her fancy outfits...

(to K'uang)

And you need to play resistance hero. What about me? I'm just a fucking driver by day, and a guard by night. My father has been asking around, to see if I'm shacking up with some dance girl or something. Now I hear he wants to disown me. So guess what? You guys are on your own!

LIANG JUN-SHENG

(to K'uang)

We've got the guns. Why don't we shoot a couple of easy targets before school starts?

OU-YANG

We all joined on our own free will. Why are you attacking K'uang all of a sudden? This takes patience, and planning...

LAI HSIU-CHIN

(referring to Wang)

Yes, but if Yee's not hooked he's not hooked! What can you do? You can't just foist yourself upon him!

OU-YANG

You think you'd have a better chance?

Lai's eyes spit fire.

K'UANG YU-MIN

You're right about the money - if anyone, I should have foreseen the consequences. And let's face it, we're amateurs. But we've spent all this time and effort. We have access to Yee. Are we going to give up now? I know the guards now, maybe I should just go do it, and take the consequences myself.

HUANG LEI

Don't be silly. You think you can survive getting to that Yee guy on your own?

K'UANG YU-MIN

That's my business!

He turns and walks away. Huang runs up and grabs him.

HUANG LEI

Listen, I was just letting off steam. Summer's almost over, I was just worried that time is running out on us.

OU-YANG

(relieved)

All right. Let's head back guys.

EXT. YEE'S RESIDENCE— HONG KONG—SUMMER 1939

An afternoon rainstorm.

Wang gets out of a taxi and runs in small steps towards Yee's residence. Her umbrella flips in the wind.

A black umbrella opens in front of the main entrance. Mr. Yee stands beneath it, talking to his assistant.

YEE

The papers are in my study.

Yee sees Wang approaching. She takes shelter under his umbrella.

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

Oh, Mr. Yee!

Yee looks at her wet face and wet hair. He smiles.

YEE

Mai Tai-tai!

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

My car broke down half way, then this rain.

Without speaking, Yee takes a handkerchief from his pocket and gives it to her to dry her face.

He stands with her for a moment under the umbrella.

YEE
 (to his assistant)
 Accompany Mai Tai-tai inside.

The door opens behind them, and Tsao comes out with a packet of papers. Yee takes them and gets into the car, as Wang goes inside.

INT. YEE'S RESIDENCE—HONG KONG—SUMMER 1939

The downpour continues.

Yee Tai-tai, Wang, and Chu Tai-tai sit languidly, bored.

YEE TAI-TAI
 Hong Kong is so humid! You can squeeze water out
 just by making a fist!

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI
 I must say Shanghai is not quite as bad. After all
 these years, I'm still not used to it here.

They hear the sound of the door.

YEE TAI-TAI
 (yells)
 Aiya, Hsiao Tai-tai, finally! -- I thought you'd never
 come with this typhoon outside!

But it turns out to be Mr. Yee. He brushes the water off his clothes.

YEE TAI-TAI
 Ah, you're back so soon?

YEE
 The storm -- my appointment's been cancelled. Ah,
 I see Mai Tai-tai and Chu Tai-tai are here.

YEE TAI-TAI
 We were waiting for Hsiao Tai-tai. And you're just
 in time! We need a fourth for mahjong!

YEE
 I can't -- too much paperwork.

YEE TAI-TAI
 Come, just this once! Old Yee, when was the last
 time you played?

CHU TAI-TAI
 (chipping in)
 Come on! Look how sweet Yee Tai-tai is with you!

YEE
 Well, if you insist.

Later:

The storm rages outside, almost a typhoon.

The four of them are in the middle of a game.

YEE
 Bei.

CHU TAI-TAI
 Bei.

YEE
 Chiwong.

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI
 Chi. Dongfun.

Wang takes a tile discarded by Yee, fiddling with it innocently. Yee is letting her have it, she knows, but is pretending not to notice.

YEE TAI-TAI
 The fabric we got the other day? My husband actually likes it! But he wants to change the tailor - know of anyone good?

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI
 Yes I do. They're good at both chipao and Western suits. We all go there.

YEE
 Nan.

CHU TAI-TAI
 Pung.

YEE TAI-TAI
 Shall we try them? Old Yee could use a couple of new suits, couldn't you?

YEE

Whatever you say.

He focuses on the tiles before him.

YEE

Chitong.

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

Chi.

YEE TAI-TAI

Pung.

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

But they're awfully busy with the tourists right now.

YEE TAI-TAI

It's not going to take months, is it?

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

No. I'm an old customer, I can tell them to do you first.

YEE

Chitong.

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

Chi. Chuitong.

(takes out a notepad to write)

Why don't we do this - when Mr. Yee has a moment, just give me a ring, all right, Yee Tai-tai?

She tears off the paper with her phone number on it.

YEE TAI-TAI

Mai Tai-tai I have your number!

Wang leaves the paper in a nearby cake dish.

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

Pung. Shutiu.

YEE TAI-TAI

When the sales are on, let's go and get more material!

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

I can tell Mr. Yee likes imported English wool. Too bad it never really goes on sale.

YEE

Is that so?

Yee puts aside a tile he's been fiddling with for a while. He takes a piece of cake and glances at the phone number.

Then casually he discards the tile.

It's Wang's turn. Just as casually she picks up the discarded tile.

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

(looks at the tile with slight
astonishment, then breaks into a
wide smile)

Aiya! Does this mean I won?

She flips over the tiles and glances at Yee Tai-tai.

YEE TAI-TAI

Well, you're lucky today!

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

Really! The god of fortune is indeed here today!

INT. RENTED APARTMENT -- DAY

A gramophone plays loud dance music, as Ou-yang and Lai Hsiu-chin show off some fancy dance steps to the gang.

The telephone rings. Wang picks it up.

WANG CHIA-CHIH

Hello?...Oh, It's you....Of course I recognized your
voice.

The group quiets down. K'uang quickly switches off the music. All look at Wang.

INT. TAILOR SHOP -- HONG KONG -- DAY

A tailor drapes a jacket on Yee.

He stands in front of the mirror, with Wang next to him. Both are reflected in the mirror.

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

(in Cantonese)

The collar can be a little more snug.

TAILOR

Okay. Looks better with the smaller collar.

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

And the sleeves a little bit shorter.

Wang notices him looking at her in the mirror, and blushes slightly.

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

(to Yee)

The shorter sleeves look more energetic.

YEE

Whatever you say. I'm in your hands.

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

It's the latest look - a close-fitting collar.

The tailor notes the corrections. Another assistant comes forward with a beautiful chipao.

TAILOR

Ah, madam. We've made the alterations. Please.

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

I'll be right back.

The assistant leads her behind a changing area behind a curtain.

Yee walks towards the door, and hands some money over to Tsao.

YEE

Go get lunch. Don't wait for me.

TSAO

Yes.

Yee returns to the tailor.

YEE

Mai Tai-tai must be a very good customer.

The tailor looks confused -- perhaps it takes him a beat to understand Yee's Mandarin.

TAILOR

(in Cantonese)

Hmmm?...Oh yes, very good, very good.

Wang walks back into the room in her new dress.

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

(in Cantonese)

Perhaps you took in a bit too much this time, I can hardly breathe!

Wang walks back and forth, showing off her slender body sheathed in the snug chi pao. Yee studies her.

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

Yee Tai-tai actually picked this one first, and then decided against it. She said it made her skin look sallow. So I took it for myself.

(checks her profile in the mirror)

Hmm. I suppose it's fine as is. Let me go and change.

YEE

(quietly)

No. Leave it on.

Wang hesitates - a moment of confusion, then triumph, as it sinks in.

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

Of course.

INT. PRIVATE CLUB AT REPULSE BAY - HONG KONG - DAY

Exclusive. The only other diners are three elderly English ladies at a faraway table. Yee speaks on the phone in a booth near the entrance to the restaurant, while Wang sits and waits for him at a table, dressed in the new chipao.

YEE

All right.

Yee puts down the phone and goes to the table.

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

Nothing serious, I hope! Yee Tai-tai -

YEE

Tsao's taken her to the doctor's. She complained of a headache as she was leaving. I guess it's all that mahjong.

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

Little Mai doesn't like my playing either. We often argue about it. I told him men have endless outside distractions while we ladies have only shopping and mahjong. You'd think Mahjong should be ok, at least it keeps us at home!

Yee smiles and takes a good look at Wang.

YEE

I hope I didn't interrupt anything when I called today...

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

Little Mai is away in Singapore, so his friends came over to keep me company.

(laughs)

More like to keep an eye on me. Your call gave me the perfect excuse to leave.

YEE

Is that right?

Later, dinner is in progress.

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

Sometimes I don't mind doing things on my own. Little Mai and I don't much like the same things.

MR. YEE

What do you like?

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

Going to the movies. Little Mai won't go with me, so I go by myself. He and his friends only talk business. They don't like movies.

YEE

I don't go to the movies either.

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

Mr. Yee you are too busy. Movies are for people with time to kill.

YEE

No, it's not that. You see, I don't like the dark.

Wang gives Yee a quizzical look.

YEE

Would you like a drink?

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

I'll have a little to keep you company.

Yee pours her some brandy.

YEE

You've been so kind to us here in Hong Kong-- we know very few people.

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

Oh please - such trivial things!

YEE

But if you pay attention, nothing is trivial.

Wang sips her brandy. Yee takes in the kiss of lipstick on the glass rim.

Wang looks around and finds no other diners.

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

How come nobody comes here?

YEE

Because the food is so bad.

Wang puts down her fork and knife.

YEE

(chuckles)

My apologies! But it's a perfect place to talk, for no one is here to disturb you... Your husband, he works a great deal?

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

For what, I have no idea. He's always away in Singapore or somewhere on business. But as they say, a man is fine as long as he's not in the house.

(asks smilingly)

True?

Yee smiles.

YEE

And what does he do there?

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

(flirtatious)

Why are you so interested in my husband? If he's so fascinating to you, maybe I should bring him along next time? You men have so much to say to each other, but with women, you just make small talk!

YEE

(laughs)

Small talk like this - you have no idea - it's a luxury for me.

The lights dim. Waiters start placing candles on the tables.

YEE

I listen to men all day, so-called prominent politicians and the like, talking their supposed serious talk. And you know what? No matter what high-sounding words come out of their mouths, I see only one thing in their eyes.

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

And what's that?

YEE

Fear. But you...for some reason, you don't seem afraid... Are you?

Wang keeps her smile.

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

How about you?

YEE

You're smart, but not so smart at mahjong.

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

You're right. I always lose. Except when you let me win.

With a smile, Yee lights a cigarette.

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

May I -

Yee passes her a cigarette. The two move closer together. Yee lights the cigarette for her.

EXT/INT. TAXI—HONG KONG - NIGHT

Wang and Yee sit in the back of a cab. A slightly awkward silence.

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI
I'll pick up your suit when it's ready, or --

YEE
I'll call you.

Again silence. Yee takes another look at Wang.

YEE
Unfortunately, I have another appointment this evening. I still have a bit of time though. Allow me to drop you off first...You don't mind?

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI
Of course not.

EXT. RENTED APARTMENT—HONG KONG— NIGHT

Liang is keeping watch on the balcony, when he sees the taxi pull up and stop in front of the building. He sees Wang and Yee in the back, still talking.

He makes a mad dash inside.

INT. RENTED APARTMENT – HONG KONG-- NIGHT

LIANG JUN-SHENG
They're here!

K'UANG YU-MIN
Lights off! Go out and keep an eye on them.

Lai quickly turns the lights out.

K'uang and Ou-yang run for their guns.

EXT. RENTED APARTMENT—HONG KONG-- NIGHT

Yee gets out of the taxi, comes around, and opens the door for Wong.

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI
Thank you.

YEE

Please, I will see you to the door.

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

You really shouldn't bother.

Yee hands some money to the driver, asking him to stay and wait for him, then walks with Wang up the driveway toward the apartment.

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

Fine with me. It's your appointment - just don't blame me if you're late.

INT. RENTED APARTMENT—HONG KONG-- CONTINUOUS

K'uang cocks his gun and stands in the corridor beside the door.

Ou-yang, gun in hand, presses with the others against the wall in the living room.

EXT. RENTED APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Wang takes her keys from her purse. She turns and leans against the door. With her eyes trained on him, she slowly spreads the keys out in her hand, picks out the right one, turns and thrusts it into the keyhole. Yee watches. With a click, the door is unlocked.

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

You and your appointment - otherwise - you could send the cab away and come in - for a cup of tea.

Wang twists her body around to look at Yee.

Yee smiles warmly.

INT. RENTAL APARTMENT— HONG KONG—AUTUMN 1939 - NIGHT

In the dark, all eyes are fixed on the door. We hear the muffled sounds of footsteps.

Then, silence.

The sound of the key in the door.

The door to the apartment opens slowly. We see Wang's silhouette as light from the hallway spills into the apartment.

K'uang aims the pistol.

Wang closes the door behind her. It is pitch-dark.

She flips on the light. It's just her. The group is backed up against the walls. K'uang's hand shakes -- the pistol is still pointed at her.

She takes it all in.

WANG CHIA-CHIH

I need a drink.

Later:

A few drinks later, everyone is topsy-turvy on the sofas or sitting on the floor, peanut shells all over the place.

WANG CHIA-CHIH

He's so cautious that he sent Tsao and the bodyguard away the minute he got to the tailors! He trusts no one, and that includes Tsao.

HUANG LEI

Simple! Next time you do just like today, and when you get him to come inside, we'll finish him off with one shot!

WANG CHIA-CHIH

He would never come in -- that I know. He probably keeps some secret apartments, hideaways for just this kind of thing. Maybe even Tsao has no idea.

OU-YANG

Did he try anything?

Huang Lei slaps Ou-yang on the back.

HUANG LEI

Hey, Mr. Mai is jealous!

WANG CHIA-CHIH

(lowers her voice)

I knew what was on his mind. Otherwise he wouldn't have seen me to the door. Only he didn't dare come in, but he kept me for a good long while...

Wang's mind wanders off for a few moments. She sips her drink.

WANG CHIA-CHIH

(pretty drunk, almost to herself)

He said he'd call again. I wanted to lure him into a theater, where it's easier for you guys to get away - but he's so cautious he won't go into dark places! When he calls again, then he'll be serious. Then I'll have him hooked. I'll be his mistress. But what shall I do? We have to think now. We have to think what we're going to do with him.

There's an awkward silence. K'uang gets up and goes to the balcony. One by one, the boys follow suit, Liang being the last to go, until Wang is left with Lai.

Lai turns to her.

LAI HSIU-CHIN

Would you know—what to do...

Wang looks at her.

LAI HSIU-CHIN

What to do with a man?

Wang is silent. For a good while. She lifts her head and sees the boys smoking on the balcony.

WANG CHIA-CHIH

So, you've already discussed it.

LAI HSIU-CHIN

Hm.

WANG CHIA-CHIH

Which one?

LAI HSIU-CHIN

Liang is the only one with experience.

WANG CHIA-CHIH

With whores, you mean.

Lai Hsiu-chin nods.

Wang is silent.

Wang gets up and regards the boys outside. A bit unsteadily, she walks back toward the bedroom.

INT. RENTED APARTMENT -- BEDROOM –HONG KONG-- NIGHT

Wang enters the room, and looks at herself in the mirror.

Slowly, she begins to undress, watching herself the whole time.

With the last of her clothes off, she goes to the bed and gets under the covers.

The bedroom door opens, and Liang enters, bottle and glasses in hand.

LIANG JUN-SHENG

Want a drink?

WANG CHIA-CHIH

No.

He takes a big sip and puts the bottle on the nightstand. Nervously, he begins to unbutton his shirt and sits on the edge of the bed.

WANG CHIA-CHIH

The light.

He turns off the light, finishes undressing and then gets under the covers.

In the dark, we hear only his heavy breathing. Wang's eyes glow. He reaches down to feel her but she pushes his hand away. Wang gasps and flinches as he quickly enters her. After a moment of panic, Liang settles in to a grim, mechanical rhythm.

INT. RENTAL APARTMENT— HONG KONG - MORNING.

Lai dries her hair on the balcony.

K'uang and Huang Lei set the table for breakfast.

Wang comes out of the bedroom.

She walks toward the bathroom, pauses, looking perfectly normal.

WANG CHIA-CHIH

I need to use the bathroom - anyone else...

No one says anything. Lai watches from the balcony.

Ou-yang quickly gathers his sudsy clothes and cedes the bathroom to her. He goes into the kitchen to continue his laundry.

Wang goes inside the bathroom and closes the door.

K'uang looks up. A moment later he sees Wang exit the bathroom and return to the bedroom, firmly shutting the door behind her.

INT. RENTED APARTMENT -- BEDROOM -- DAY

Thick drapes block out the sun.

Liang and Wang are in bed, Wang on top, mechanically riding him.

LIANG JUN-SHENG

I think you're starting to get the hang of it.

WANG CHIA-CHIH

Leave me alone.

She keeps at it.

Later:

Wang lies, alone, in the bed.

She gets up and goes over to the window, pulling open the drapes.

A sprig of bright green ivy pokes its head against the windowpane, translucent against the afternoon sun.

INT. RENTED APARTMENT—HONG KONG-- AFTERNOON

K'uang goes over to Wang's bedroom door, hesitates, then knocks.

K'UANG YU-MIN

Wang Chia-chih—

Behind the door Wang is making up her eyebrows.

K'UANG YU-MIN

Time to eat.

K'uang's voice is feeble. He looks awful.

WANG CHIA-CHIH

I'm not hungry.

K'UANG YU-MIN

We cooked congee.

Just then, we hear the phone ring. Wang jumps up and dashes out of the bedroom. Ignoring the others, she grabs the phone breathlessly.

WANG CHIA-CHIH

Hello!

WANG CHIA-CHIH

Ah, it's you, Yee Tai-tai! I called you a couple of days ago, but you were out. I wanted to ask if you wanted to get your dress made? No? Why?

Wang's face darkens.

WANG CHIA-CHIH

Moving back to Shanghai?...My congratulations to both of you! How about I come by? I can be there right now! Haven't heard from you for so many days, I was going to drop by anyway! Then I'll go to the airport tomorrow -

(sounding confused)

I should at least treat you to a farewell dinner!...

You're not leaving just like this? I...I...Oh

well...okay...please give my regards to Mr. Yee.

Have a safe trip. Good-bye!

Wang hangs up and sits there, red lips slightly quivering. Everyone stares at her.

INT. RENTED APARTMENT—HONG KONG-- NIGHT

Lai climbs up to take down the curtains. Rental furnishings are stacked in one corner, trash in another.

Wang sits alone motionless at the table. The others move back and forth in front of her, methodically packing and moving things. No one asks her to help; no one looks at her.

Wang gets up and steps out the French doors onto the balcony. She lights a cigarette with a practiced hand.

At first neither she, nor anyone else in the group, notices a figure slipping into the apartment and standing, his hands in his pockets, at the front door.

He kicks the door closed behind him. Everyone stops at the sound of the door slamming.

It's Tsao, looking around the room, grinning.

TSAO

Moving out? I hope I'm not disturbing you guys.

He lets out a little laugh. The group senses danger.

TSAO

(to Huang Lei)

Little Huang, no longer a driver? Instead he's become a mover?

K'UANG YU-MIN

Tsao! What brings you here?

TSAO

Just thought I'd give my regards to Mr. Mai, and Mrs. Mai, and all the little Mai children. How cute you all are!

K'UANG YU-MIN

What are you getting at?

TSAO

I had my suspicions from the start. But I kept my peace until I could see what your game was. (nodding toward Ou-yang, who is wearing a Lingnan University t-shirt) So Mr. Mai is from Lingnan U?

K'UANG YU-MIN

You don't know what you're talking about.

TSAO

Oh yeah? Then how's this? You see, Yee just fired me -- So it's time for me to switch sides. I think the people you're working for would find me very valuable.

K'UANG YU-MIN

How much do you want?

TSAO

Hmmm. How about 10 taels of gold, for five heads?

(sees Wang on the balcony)

And that's not counting Mai Tai-tai. I'd expect a premium for her from Mr. Yee!

K'UANG YU-MIN

You wouldn't dare!

TSAO

You're something else, brother! I had no idea you were a secret agent! Why didn't you help me instead of using me, huh? After all, we're from the same village!

We cut to Wang, still standing outside, watching the figures in the harsh shadows cast by the lamplights. Through the glass doors, she hears the muffled sounds of conversation. She sees, from behind, K'uang's hand slowly reaching toward the dish rack for a knife.

Suddenly, as, K'uang makes a move for the knife, Tsao pulls a pistol.

K'UANG YU-MIN

Tsao!

Wang's POV, her terrified face fleetingly reflected in the glass:

There's a scream from Lai, Ou-yang leaps and pushes Tsao, the dull thud of a gunshot, an inchoate struggle as a lamp falls and the gang leaps on Tsao, trying to pull the gun from his hands, punching and kicking. The action is almost comical, pathetic, but desperate.

Tsao rolls over and stands, trying to finger the trigger of his gun, as K'uang runs to him, and with all his might, plunges the knife into his stomach.

Wang pulls open the door and takes a step inside, as everyone else steps back from Tsao, stunned, silent.

Tsao looks down at the knife in his stomach.

Amazingly, Tsao, with great pain, pulls the knife out of his stomach. As he holds it up, Ou-yang grabs his arm. Liang takes the knife and slashes him with it. Blood sprays them all. As they recoil, Tsao stumbles to the door and tries to pry it open, leaving a trail of blood.

The group follows him, watching, not quite knowing what to do.

He fumbles with the handle, and starts to bellow in pain.

TSAO

(painfully)

You!

K'UANG YU-MIN

You worked for a traitor, you should know what was coming!

Liang finally rushes after him with the knife, and stabs him in the back, as Tsao falls to his knees. Liang trips over him, and tumbles a few steps, now covered in blood.

LAI HSIU-CHIN

(trembling)

He's still alive.

Tsao still bellows like a pig. K'uang now goes to Tsao, and clumsily tries to break his neck. After a few tries, there's a crack -- then silence. He's done it.

We hear Lai, wild-eyed, swallowing her screams. Everyone is panting, hardly able to take in the horrifying scene.

Wang looks at all of them, each one in shock.

Slowly, she walks to the door, steps over Tsao's body, opens the door, and leaves.

No one says a word.

She doesn't look back.

EXT. RENTED APARTMENT—HONG KONG-- NIGHT

She steps out into the night.

We stay on her face -- impassive, traumatized -- as she slowly walks down the hill and away.

Fade out.

Title: Three Years Later

EXT. SHANGHAI STREET -- EARLY MORNING

A bird's-eye view of Shanghai, 1942. The Bai Du Bridge checkpoint, a rising sun in the distant morning.

Off the Bund, a neat row of tricycles, men off to work during the morning rush hour. Two corpses in suits are sprawled on the blood-stained street. A policeman stands guard. People pass by with barely a glance, as a group of White Russian prostitutes in shabby attire solicit from among the throng.

EXT. FOOD STORE IN ALLEY-- SHANGHAI. SPRING -- EARLY MORNING

The store is not yet open. Outside there is already a long line of people, of all looks and ages. They have been standing in line the whole night.

Wang Chia-chih, expressionless, is among them, her head lowered. Her clothes are flimsy and half her face is hidden behind a head scarf. She looks tired, her innocence long lost.

The wooden shutters of the food store finally are removed. The line begins to stir.

Later: it's Wang turn in front of the counter. She picks up a small sack of low-quality rice. Quickly she turns and walks away, passing by homeless people lying around on the streets. Sanitation workers lift up an emaciated corpse into a cart.

EXT. SHANGHAI STREETS -- MORNING

Wang turns into an alley, passing by people with their night soil buckets to dump into the waiting cart. At the entrance to her building, someone is stoking a coal-fired stove, sending off thick clouds of white smoke. Wang pushes open the back door and enters into the communal kitchen. She pours the rice into her family container and locks it. Then she walks upstairs.

INT. WANG'S AUNT'S HOUSE – SHANGHAI--DAY

Wang opens the door with a key and hears mahjong playing inside. Someone from the third floor greets her good morning.

NEIGHBOR

Good morning.

WANG CHIA-CHIH

Good morning.

Mechanically, she closes the door.

A cramped space with good redwood furniture, betraying a once-glorious past. Two rooms are squeezed out of this tiny space, one of which has in the middle a mahjong table with four players. The table is padded with a thick material, to minimize the noise.

WANG CHIA-CHIH

It's me, Aunt.

A middle-aged woman focusing on her tiles turns her head to look at her.

AUNT

Any mail from your father?

WANG CHIA-CHIH

I'll check later.

She goes into her room, picks up some books and readies to leave again.

WANG CHIA-CHIH

I'm off to class!

MAHJONG PARTNER

(a glance at the aunt)

You still let her go to school?

AUNT

I sold the big house left her by her father! I
promised to let her finish school. I'm one who keeps
her word!

The Aunt, cigarette in mouth and a jade bangle on her wrist, juggles her tiles unhurriedly. From her looks and style, we can tell that she once lived a life of luxury.

INT. LECTURE ROOM -- SHANGHAI UNIVERSITY--DAY

Simple words in Japanese are written on the blackboard. A Japanese teacher in kimono gives lessons to a poorly attended class, Wang among them.

EXT. SHANGHAI. MEICHI CINEMA - DAY

Wang stands in front of a movie poster. She pauses, reaches into her pocket, and finds enough money to buy a ticket.

INT. SHANGHAI. MEICHI CINEMA - DAY

Wang watches the movie in the crowded cinema.

Suddenly, the movie is interrupted by a Japanese war newsreel, full of images of Sino-Japanese friendship. Everyone begins to chat and get up, ignoring the newsreel.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

I'm going to the bathroom.

INT. MEICHI CINEMA LOBBY--SHANGHAI-- NIGHT

Wang walks down the stairs, crosses the lobby and heads for the entrance.

From a corner of the lobby, someone is watching her. It's Lai Hsiu-chin.

EXT. WANG'S AUNT'S HOUSE -- MORNING

Wang comes out of the house.

As she reaches the street, she bumps into someone. Looking up, she's shocked to discover K'uang in front of her -- older, thinner, almost haunted looking.

INT. SMALL TEA HOUSE—SHANGHAI-- EARLY SPRING 1942 - DAY

Wang and K'uang sit in the upper floor of a small tea house.

K'UANG YU-MIN

We've all been through a lot.

WANG CHIA-CHIH

I didn't expect you to be still alive.

K'UANG YU-MIN

I should be dead, if not for...

(pauses)

You never knew, did you?

WANG CHIA-CHIH

What?

K'UANG YU-MIN

In Hong Kong, we were being watched the whole time. That night, after you left, they came and took care of the mess, and smuggled us out of Hong Kong.

WANG CHIA-CHIH

Who were they?

K'UANG YU-MIN

The 'Blue Shirts', from Chungking! The same ones who were responsible for the assassination of the Mayor of Shanghai, Fu Xiao An, the Chief Detective Lu Yun Kui and even the Minister for Foreign Affairs Chen Lu! Now you know - how absurd we were! How childish!

WANG CHIA-CHIH

Especially me - How naive I was!

K'UANG YU-MIN

It was all my fault.

WANG CHIA-CHIH

We've all paid our dues. How is everybody?

K'UANG YU-MIN

They're all still alive.

WANG CHIA-CHIH

Where are they?

K'UANG YU-MIN

Somewhere, I'm not supposed to say. I have been looking for you.

A pause.

WANG CHIA-CHIH

After what happened, I didn't go back to university. I went to teach at a language school. It was like I lost all my memories. My father wrote and said he couldn't afford to bring me to England. He sent me to Shanghai to stay with my aunt. These past years I've felt so empty, so hollow...

(smiles weakly)

So I insist on taking classes, even Japanese!

K'UANG YU-MIN

I'm glad you've gone back to school. That, to me, is closed forever.

It dawns on Wang that her bumping into K'uang was not accidental.

WANG CHIA-CHIH

So you've tracked me down -- just to say you're sorry?

K'UANG YU-MIN

There's a mission.

(in a low voice)

The job we all started with, it's still unfinished. Yee is now in charge of Wang Ching-wei's secret service, really just a watchdog for the Japanese. He murders judges, professors, journalists and our agents. We missed our chance three years ago - that was a bitter lesson. Now it's even more difficult, for he's well protected. We can't get to him.

WANG CHIA-CHIH

And so you bumped into me?

EXT. SUNRISE BOOKSTORE – SHANGHAI-- DAY

To establish. An old derelict neighborhood, watch repairmen and medicine men hawking their wares.

Piles of old books and magazines are stacked in front of a small bookstore.

K'uang is acquiring some used books by weight from an old man. Wang approaches.

K'uang pays the seller and adds the books to a pile.

OLD MAN

Hey boss, come on, you can do better than that.

K'uang gives him a few more coins.

K'UANG YU-MIN

(to Wang Chia-chih)

Come with me.

(to some kids looking around the
store)

Don't touch anything.

INT. SUNRISE BOOKSTORE –SHANGHAI -- DAY

K'uang leads Wang into the back of the bookstore. She notices Ou-yang and Liang from her old Hong Kong days, busily stacking books. They see her too, but avert their eyes.

K'UANG YU-MIN

Chia-chih, this way.

Up some old steps in the back. K'uang gives two short knocks.

The door opens, and Old Wu, a middle-aged man with a hint of dangerous cynicism, greets them, giving Wang a quick one-over.

OLD WU

Ah, Miss Wang, what a pleasure to meet you,
finally! So much to do, of course, so little time.
We'll start from the beginning, but please do sit! I
trust K'uang has already briefed you? Yes, so can
we get straight to the point? Are you ready?

Wang nods, eyes trained on Old Wu.

OLD WU

Good. First things first, but also the last! Before you
go on you mission, you'll sew this into your clothes.

He takes out a tiny capsule.

OLD WU

In case you're caught.

K'UANG YU-MIN

(soothingly)

Just in case.

OLD WU

(eyes on Wang)

It will not be too painful, but you must move fast, before anyone gets to your hands, yes?

Wang nods. Old Wu closely monitors her every reaction.

OLD WU

You have a good memory, yes? I'm going to tell you many things, and you must keep them in your head. Repeat them, until they sink in. Don't ask, don't think, just remember everything, got it? You are Mai Tai-tai, you have no relatives any more in Shanghai - you must remember this important point. For our enemy, I'm afraid, has become even more distrustful and cunning. Once he becomes suspicious, you'll be finished! I must warn you of that right now!

WANG CHIA-CHIH

I can do it.

Old Wu hands her a file.

OLD WU

This is your personal file. You married Mr. Mai four years ago. This is your marriage license, your anniversary date...

As Old Wu continues, we go into a montage of Wang's training and preparation.

A tailor takes her measurements.

An agent shows Wang how to pick locks.

K'uang Yu-min teaches her how to load a pistol.

OLD WU (V.O.)

You moved from Garden Road to Johnston Road, and had to become a runner to help out after Hong Kong fell and business went bad for Little Mai -- here's your home phone, husband's business phone,

some Hong Kong prices, your bank account number, ah yes, so many things to remember! Answer everything without hesitation - that's step number one! Once you're on, there's no turning back, got it?

Wang bids farewell to her Aunt, suitcase in hand.

INT. SUNRISE BOOK STORE -- STOREROOM -- SHANGHAI -- DAY

Old Wu and K'uang wait for Wang. Old Wu is dressed in a business suit.

Wang enters. Old Wu gestures to a couple of expensive-looking suitcases.

Wang opens a suitcase, her hand lightly touching the finery inside, the cartons of cigarettes and packages of medicine.

OLD WU

Go through your luggage - stockings, medicines -- remember their prices. My part is over, now it's your show. Any questions?

WANG CHIA-CHIH

I wrote my father a letter. Please - after you read it - post it for me.

She hands the letter to Old Wu. He nods.

OLD WU

After the mission, we'll send you to England to join your father! All right, now go behind that curtain and change. I'd like to meet Mai Tai-tai.

She takes a chipao and goes to a dressing area in the corner of the room, behind a curtain.

OLD WU

(to K'uang)

Is everything ready on your end?

K'UANG YU-MIN

The car is ready. The hotel, we've paid for one week in advance. Wang Ching-wei's people all meet up there. Yee Tai-tai goes there often, so they are bound to run into each other.

While listening, Old Wu reads Wang's letter. Then he burns it and throws it into the bin.

K'uang keeps quiet -- he expected this -- but he's almost sickened by the offhand cruelty of it.

Wang pulls the curtain back.

She's transformed -- the very image of Shanghai beauty. Old Wu holds out his hand, holding a ring.

OLD WU

Your wedding band.

Wang stretches out her hand. She already has one on.

WANG CHIA-CHIH

My mother's ring, the one I wore three years ago. I'd better keep the same one.

Old Wu smiles.

OLD WU

Mai Tai-tai, pleased to meet you!

INT. LIVING ROOM AT YEE'S RESIDENCE. SHANGHAI. WINTER 1942 - NIGHT

Yee comes home, exhausted and preoccupied. Though more withdrawn and gaunt-looking than in Hong Kong, his eyes remain as piercing as ever.

His assistant Chang follows behind, a dossier in hand.

The usual mahjong clatter.

Yee walks quietly upstairs.

YEE TAI-TAI (V.O.)

Let Mai Tai-tai know what you need and she'll bring it over from Hong Kong.

Yee stops at these words.

YEE

Wait for me in the study - I'll be right there.

CHANG

Yes sir.

Chang nods and continues on.

Yee stays and listens.

YEE TAI-TAI (V.O.)

What a coincidence. I went with Liao Tai-tai to have dinner at the Great East Asia Hotel and bumped into her! She's been back and forth to Shanghai, and we never knew!

MAI TAI-TAI/WANG CHIA-CHIH (V.O.)

It's really my fault. I should have looked you up long ago, but my husband has kept me so busy with business here.

YEE TAI-TAI (V.O.)

We have so many extra rooms. Why waste money staying in a hotel?

Yee turns and walks into the mahjong chamber.

LIAO TAI-TAI

Ah, Hong Kong - haven't been there for a while!

Looking into the mahjong chamber, Yee studies Wang as she pulls up a stool next to Yee Tai-tai to watch the game. He watches her in silence for a moment.

YEE TAI-TAI

Ah, there you are! Look who's here. You remember Mai Tai-tai, from Hong Kong?

Yee nods and smiles, warmly.

MAI TAI-TAI/WANG CHIA-CHIH

How are you Mr. Yee? I'm sure you don't remember me.

YEE

Of course I do. How is Mr. Mai? How's business?

MAI TAI-TAI/WANG CHIA-CHIH

Thanks for asking -- difficult.

(to Yee Tai-tai)

Mr. Yee seems to have lost some weight.

Ma Tai-tai, one of the ladies at the mahjong table, looks Wang in the eyes, studying her.

YEE TAI-TAI

I did ask him to think twice before accepting his post - you pay with your life, and have to step on so many toes!

YEE

Stepping on others' toes is all right, but not on my wife's!

YEE TAI-TAI

(laughing)

Off with you!

YEE

All right - you ladies continue.

With this and a smile Yee leaves.

He heads for the study, looking back once.

In the Mahjong room, the discussion continues.

LIAO TAI-TAI (V.O.)

Listen to him, what a gentleman!

YEE TAI-TAI (V.O.)

He's just performing for you ladies!

Back to the mahjong chamber. Close-up on Wang listening and laughing with the others.

The clatter of mahjong tiles.

LIAO TAI-TAI

Are we still going to East Asia for dinner tonight?
Aren't you tired of it?

YEE TAI-TAI

It's better to go there where we are protected by the Secret Service.

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

It's that bad?

LEUNG TAI-TAI

Those crazy bombs! Things are really getting worse. On the streets, they shoot anybody.

YEE TAI-TAI

(to Wang)

Hong Kong should be better, no? How are things over there these days?

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

Always a scramble. Prices are up twenty percent.
And because of the war even the black market is
drying up.

Yee Tai-tai offers cigarettes to Liao, and then to Wang.

YEE TAI-TAI

Oh wait, you don't smoke, if I recall.

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

(smiles)

In fact, I brought you some Marlboros. I left them in
my bag, I almost forgot!

YEE TAI-TAI

Aiyo! How can I thank you enough! We can't even
get them on the black market here!

NT. HALLWAY IN YEE'S RESIDENCE-- SHANGHAI - NIGHT

Wang takes advantage of a break in the game to go upstairs.

CHANG (V.O.)

(exiting the study)

Minister, I understand.

Wang politely nods to Chang as she passes him in the hall.

Chang returns the courtesy. Wang walks upstairs, aware of Chang's gaze behind her.

INT. GUEST ROOM IN YEE RESIDENCE--SHANGHAI -- NIGHT

Wang enters the room. Her unpacked luggage is stacked by the bed. She opens a suitcase
and takes out a few packs of cigarettes.

She turns, and is startled to find Yee standing in the doorway.

YEE

The room is small, but at least it's safer than a hotel.

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

I didn't want to bother you or Yee Tai-tai -

YEE

She likes having a mahjong partner around the
house, and I'm hardly home anyway.

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

Still so busy?

(looks him over)

You do seem to have lost quite a bit of weight!

Yee looks at her.

YEE

I find you somewhat changed also.

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

It's been three years, imagine, and the war is still not over. For us to be standing here, both alive, is already something...I've brought a few things with me. The cigarettes are a gift for Yee Tai-tai. I'm afraid I don't really have a gift for you.

YEE

Your presence is itself a gift.

With a slight smile, he slips out the door.

EXT. SHANGHAI STREET -- DAY

Wang descends from a tricycle taxi onto the crowded thoroughfare. She crosses the street and hops onto a passing tram.

INT./EXT. TRAM CAR -- DAY

She sits down next to K'uang Yu-min. Discreetly, she hands him a piece of paper from her handbag.

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

(in a low, fast voice)

Here's the floor plan. Front entrance is sealed, only outlet is back door. Two drivers, Guo and Yao. Guo drives for Yee Tai-tai. Amah and the other servants are all from the same village as Yee. The drivers never leave their cars, probably double as informers. Everyone is searched before getting in or out of the car.

K'uang Yu-min glances at Wang.

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

Yee Tai-tai as always brings people home to play mahjong - wives of high officials. They seem to know a lot. A certain Ma Tai-tai -- she's always watching me, I don't know why...

K'UANG YU-MIN

And Yee?

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

Saw him only once. He's mostly out or in his study. He's got a secretary, last name Chang.

K'UANG YU-MIN

What's his first name?

WANG CHIA-CHIH

I don't know yet.

K'UANG YU-MIN

Be careful!

WANG CHIA-CHIH

(pause)

I need money.

K'uang looks around, and at the same time passes her a magazine; hidden inside is an envelope containing money.

K'UANG YU-MIN

That's all for now.

(looks at Wang and smiles)

How come you play every day but never get better?

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

I can't concentrate.

Wang stuffs the magazine into her handbag.

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

How are they? Huang Lei and everyone?

K'UANG YU-MIN

They're fine. They're thinking of you. You'll see them again after all this.

INT. YEE'S RESIDENCE -- DINING ROOM -- SHANGHAI-- MORNING

Wang is having breakfast with Yee Tai-tai. A Ping-Tan ballad from Soochow plays on the radio.

YEE TAI-TAI

Aiya, you should be glad you didn't go with me to the opera last night. I came back with a headache!

Wang is reading the newspaper.

WANG CHIA-CHIH

Which opera?

YEE TAI TA

Wu Jia Po! Aiya - it was out of tune and off beat, my god! The top artists are all hiding out in Hong Kong. So I told Old Yee, how could Wang Ching-wei's government win the hearts and minds of the people if they can't even bring a good show to town, right?

Yee enters, dressed to go out, a gentle smile on his face.

YEE

Good morning, ladies!

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

Good morning, Mr. Yee!

Yee sits down and sips his tea. He leans over and sees that Wang has circled some movie listings in the paper.

YEE TAI-TAI

(to Yee)

That turtle shell medicine shouldn't be taken with tea.

(to Mai Tai-tai)

His feet are always cold at night. I have to warm them.

Yee Tai-tai smiles and laughs a little.

YEE

(annoyed)

I have a meeting soon. Do you have plans for today?

YEE TAI-TAI

Liao Tai-tai wants me to play Mahjong with her old mother.

YEE

(smiles)

I hope you'll not be forcing our guest along with you.

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

I've already been given leave. I am going to the movies this afternoon.

EXT. YEE'S RESIDENCE - SHANGHAI - DAY

A light drizzle fills the air as Wang walks under an umbrella, searching for a tricycle taxi, when a black sedan pulls up.

Yee's chauffeur gets out to open the door for her.

CHAUFFEUR

(in Shanghainese)

It's rainy. Master told me to give you a ride.

A little surprised, Wang gets into the car.

INT. YEE'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Wang sits in the car, studying the streets.

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

This isn't the way to the Meichi Theater?

The driver says nothing.

EXT. APARTMENT HOUSE - SHANGHAI - DAY

The car turns into a quiet alley and stops by the back entrance of a small but expensive-looking apartment house.

The chauffeur opens the car door, an open umbrella in hand. Wang exits the car. He hands her an envelope. A squeeze and Wang can feel a key inside. The envelope is marked 2A.

The driver takes her handbag and trench coat, searches them, and hands them back to her.

CHAUFFEUR

The car will wait for you.

Wang looks around and enters the building.

INT. APARTMENT HOUSE - HALLWAY -- SHANGHAI -- CONTINUOUS

Wang takes the stairs and stops in front of apartment 2A.

She puts the key into the lock. It fits. The door opens.

INT. APARTMENT 2A -- BEDROOM -- SHANGHAI -- CONT

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

Anybody here?

There is no answer. Wang enters and closes the door behind her.

It smells musty inside the apartment –old velvet drapes, dust all over the place. A photo on the mantelpiece shows a white couple with two kids.

She walks into the bedroom. A window has been left open. It bangs in the wind, rain dripping down the wall beneath it.

She closes the window.

Sensing something, she turns around and gasps at the sight of Yee, sitting in an arm chair, watching her.

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

Don't ever scare me like this again!

Yee just smiles. He lights a cigarette and takes a few puffs, watching her.

Finally, she walks to him, leans over, and, without taking her eyes from him, gently takes the cigarette from his mouth, dropping it to the floor. Yee stands up and grabs her head, trying to kiss her.

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

My hair!

YEE

Are you going to play hard to get?

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

Is that how you like it?

(pause)

Sit down.

Yee reluctantly sits down again.

Wang walks over to the window and, bending over, slowly begins to take off her stockings.

He watches her.

As she begins to unbutton her dress, he suddenly leaps up, grabs her, and pushes her against the wall, ripping the side seam of her chipao.

He flips her around face down onto the bed, unbuckles his pants, and enters her from behind.

What follows is more or less a rape.

Her face opens, first in pain, then in an astonished, anguished mix of anger and pleasure.

Later:

The light outside is dying; the rain has ended.

Yee dressed, sits in a chair by the bed, on which Wang lies, curled up, quiet.

She turns and looks at him. He picks up her coat from the floor and places it on the bed.

YEE

Your coat.

He leaves.

She stares blankly, hardly seeming to notice. But then, an almost imperceptible smile creases her face.

INT. FANCY RESTAURANT -- SHANGHAI -- NIGHT

After a meal, the Tai-tais sit in a private room listening to a pair of Ping-Tan singers spinning their tales. On the floor are shopping bags from Sincere Emporium. In the hallway outside the room their bodyguards pace.

PING-TAN SINGERS

(singing)

They do not speak but secretly they wonder:
 Why feelings go where feelings should not wander.
 One is quiet with lowered head and racing heart
 The other bows formally just to play his part.
 She quivers with voice like honey.
 He yearns with shattering folly
 One says, Please -

The other says, Master -

The song continues throughout the following conversation.

Yee comes in to join them.

YEE TAI-TAI

Well, look who's here! Old Yee, how...

YEE

I'm hosting a party next door.

LEUNG TAI-TAI

Aiya, Mr. Yee caught us shopping!

MA TAI-TAI

What a rare honor. Stay and listen a bit!

YEE

Sure, just a little bit.

Wang barely registers Yee's presence.

MA TAI-TAI

You understand the singers' dialect?

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

A bit. I used to hear Ping-Tan all the time when I was a girl...I miss it, you can't hear it in Hong Kong.

MA TAI-TAI

But now you're here.

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

Only for a while -- I have to go back to Hong Kong soon. Please tell me what you need before I go. If I can make my way back, I'll make sure to bring whatever it is.

Yee overhears.

INT. YEE'S HOUSE -- HALLWAY – SHANGHAI—MORNING

Wang walks down the hall alone. She checks the dining room -- no sign of Yee. His hat is gone from the rack. Lost in thought, she's startled by Amah's voice.

AMAH

Would madame want some breakfast?

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

No thank you, I'm not hungry yet. Where are Mr. and Mrs. Yee?

AMAH

Madame Yee is still sleeping. Mr. Yee has gone to Nanking on business.

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

To Nanking?

AMAH

Yes.

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

For how long?

AMAH

(suspicious)

I couldn't say.

INT. GUEST ROOM IN YEE'S RESIDENCE-- SHANGHAI -- DAY

Wang lies in bed, listening to the sounds of mahjong from downstairs.

INT. YEE'S RESIDENCE - FRONT HALL -- SHANGHAI -- DAY

Yee Tai-tai talks to Amah before leaving.

YEE TAI-TAI

(in Shanghainese)

Liang Tai-tai tripped and hurt herself, so I'm going over to see her. Mai Tai-tai still has her headache - give her two aspirins when she wakes. And if she feels like it, take some congee up for her.

INT. YEE'S RESIDENCE - GUEST ROOM -- SHANGHAI--DAY

From her bedroom window, Wang steals a look at Yee Tai-tai getting into her car. The car drives by the guards in the alley.

Later:

Wang, nervous, sits at her dressing table, putting on lipstick -- then wipes it off. She pauses as she hears the gate open outside, then footsteps coming up the stairs.

She bolts up, grabs a suitcase and starts throwing her belongings into it, pretending that she's packing.

The footsteps stop by her door. Wang takes a deep breath. The door opens.

Yee stands in the doorway. Wang lifts her eyes to look at him, without any sign of surprise.

Yee closes the door behind him and looks at her.

Wang goes and pulls shut the curtains.

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

What if I were to tell you that I hated you?

YEE

I would believe you.

Yee kisses Wang, fondling her breasts.

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

(murmurs)

I hate you!

YEE

I said I believed you. And you know, it would be the first time in a long time that I believed anyone, anyone at all. Let me hear it again, I want to believe...

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

You must be very lonely.

YEE

Perhaps, but I'm still alive...

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

You've been gone without a word for four days. I hated you every minute you were gone.

YEE

Do you still hate me, now that I'm back?

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

(a beat)

No.

YEE

But you still want to go back to Hong Kong?

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

Yes, I want to go back.

They kiss passionately.

Later:

Naked, on the bed, Yee on top of her -- he takes her face in his hands, insisting that she look in his eyes.

Afterwards, they hold each other.

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

(whispers in his ear)

You should get me an apartment.

INT. PEACE CINEMA – SHANGHAI -- DAY

Wang walks into the dark cinema. Suddenly a hand pulls her aside.

It's K'uang. Squeezed into a small corner, they stand very close to each other.

WANG CHIA-CHIH

(talking fast)

I went to the tea house to look for you...

K'UANG YU-MIN

Some of our top people were arrested. They raided a bunch of our safe houses. Ou-yang was in one -- luckily he got away. We must cut all our connections. You are not to go to any of the old places.

WANG CHIA-CHIH

When are we going to strike?

K'UANG YU-MIN

As soon as they give the orders.

WANG CHIA-CHIH

(speaking almost robotically)

Tell them to please hurry up. And then we can all leave, right?

K'UANG YU-MIN

(concerned)

I can't say...I don't know.

WANG CHIA-CHIH

He's gone again. Amah said he went to Nanking, but who knows the truth? Maybe there's another woman. He took me to alley 1237 off Avenue Shi Fei the night before last...

K'UANG YU-MIN

We have it staked out.

WANG CHIA-CHIH

Perfume -- jasmine -- it was in the air. Not recent, though. There was dust on the pillows. I don't know, I don't know.

He touches her shoulder, awkwardly hesitates, his face close to hers, but then holds back.

K'UANG YU-MIN

Wang Chia-chih -- look at me, look at me --

Wang Chia-chih takes a deep breath to calm herself.

K'UANG YU-MIN

You're going to be okay. I won't let you get hurt.

K'uang leaves, leaving Wang alone in the dark. The movie plays on.

MOVIE ACTRESS

Brother, you can not break the law like this.

MOVIE ACTOR

I would never.

INT. YEE'S RESIDENCE - GUEST ROOM - SHANGHAI - NIGHT

Wang, lying awake in bed, tossing and turning.

She sees the hallway light in the crack under her door, and hears footsteps in the hallway. Then the figure on the other side of the door moves on, his footsteps falling away.

INT. YEE'S RESIDENCE - SHANGHAI - DAY

Mahjong playing, chatting.

YEE TAI-TAI

Yesterday Liao Tai-tai was bled dry!

LEUNG TAI-TAI

What happened?

YEE TAI-TAI

She was the sole winner two days straight, so she treated us all to a restaurant. And guess what, the minute we stepped into Shu-Yü, who did we bump into but Mr. Lee and his wife.

(gaffaws)

As it turned out, Mr. Lee already had a full table. We added more chairs but still Liao Tai-tai had to sit behind me like a courtesan! She yelled at me to stop treating her like a piece of old tofu. I said old tofu makes the best Pock-faced Spicy Lady Tofu. Aiyo, we all died laughing!

LEUNG TAI-TAI

When she toasted Mr. Yee on his birthday it was like Pock-faced Lady Offering Longevity in person...by the way, where's Mr. Yee these days?

Wang listens halfheartedly to these old jokes. They reshuffle the tiles, with the usual clattering noises.

YEE TAI-TAI

He's gone to Nanking -- again!... Let's be fair, she does carry her pockmarks well, unlike the wife of Chief Chien. Now her face is really disgusting -- like a pancake dotted with black sesame seeds! No powder can conceal those! It drives me crazy. Oh, I win!

They all laugh.

LEUNG TAI-TAI

It's all because of you!

YEE TAI-TAI

Let me show you something.

Yee Tai-tai exits and then returns with a fur coat.

YEE TAI-TAI

Look, it was fifty percent off!

INT. YEE'S RESIDENCE - GUEST ROOM - SHANGHAI - NIGHT

Wang closes her eyes, and reopens them at the sound of a car stopping outside. The clock on the night table says 4:00.

She listens as a door opens and shuts, footsteps, every familiar sound, all the way till another door closes.

INT. YEE'S RESIDENCE - SHANGHAI - NIGHT

Wang tiptoes barefoot downstairs to the second floor. She passes by the closed door of Yee Tai-tai's bedroom before going down the hallway. She notices a dim light from behind the study door.

She decides to take a risk. She opens the door.

Yee crouching down, burning pieces of paper in the trash can. He looks surprised. The shimmering firelight makes him look weary.

He gets up.

YEE

(quietly)

Close the door.

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

I've been waiting up for you.

YEE

Then you must be very tired. I am.

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

Yee Tai-tai said you were in Nanking again.

The fire dies down. Yee does not switch on the lights.

YEE

Don't believe everything you hear. I've just been busy. We busted a Chungking secret cell. Got more than ten Blue Shirts, alive. Highly trained agents. So I had to interrogate them personally one by one.

Wang trembles slightly.

YEE

Ah, but I forget. You don't want to hear about my work, do you? It's boring. You're so careful never to ask about it.

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

It's your business. Just as you don't ask about my business. All I do is sit here, waiting for you. Maybe you are seeing someone else...I can't sleep. If this goes on any longer, you too will slowly get tired of me.

YEE

So that's what you've been thinking these past days.

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

And losing money at mahjong! Losing all my hard-earned money as runner.

Wang's eyes glitter with tears.

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

(turns)

I better go back up.

YEE

Get some sleep. Let me take you someplace special tomorrow night.

He gives her a gentle kiss. She turns to go. As she reaches the door, she turns at the sound of his voice.

YEE

(soft but stern)

And don't ever come into this room again.

EXT. SUNRISE BOOKSTORE – SHANGHAI -- DAY

Wang sits in a hired tricycle, slowly passing the bookstore. She leans back and takes a surreptitious look.

TRICYCLE DRIVER

Get out of my way!

The store is boarded up.

EXT. SECRET SERVICE BUILDING – SHANGHAI -- NIGHT.

It's dark. The sound of barking dogs. Cold and sinister.

INT. YEE'S CAR -- OUTSIDE OF BUILDING -- CONTINUOUS

Wang sits in the back of the car, shivering. Her eyes scale the high barb-wired wall, to the building behind, where a few lights show through.

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

(to the driver)

Take me back.

CHAUFFEUR

The Minister said I was to have you wait here.

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

It's been over two hours.

The chauffeur doesn't respond, lights himself a cigarette.

Two plainclothes cops exit through the gate, scanning the street. Chang comes out with Yee, who gives him some last instructions.

Yee is let into the car, clearly wound up, taut.

YEE

I had unexpected visitors.

(to the driver)

Let's go!

The car starts.

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

I'm freezing. You might have at least asked me inside!

YEE

(suddenly a restrained fury)

Inside there?! Are you serious? You'd like to make a little visit to my office?

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

(scared)

Never mind. Let's just go.

He looks fiercely at her, studies her face.

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

Why are you looking at me like that?

YEE

(a pause)

You shouldn't be so beautiful.

Yee grabs Wang by the arm and pulls her towards him.

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI
What are you doing?

YEE
I was thinking of you today. Chang, my assistant, complained. He'd come into my office, open his mouth and sounds would come out, but I didn't hear a thing. I could smell you. It was distracting. Two men -- we picked up this morning at the train station, Blue Shirts. One of them stabbed one of our agents when they came to arrest him, sliced his head half off, really. I went with Chang, to the chamber, to question them. One was dead already, his eyes broken. I stared at the other. I knew him long ago --we were classmates at the military academy. I couldn't talk to him, but I watched him. I started to imagine him, fucking you. The bastard... His blood sprayed all over my shoes. I had to clean it off before I came out. Do you understand?

INT. APARTMENT -- BEDROOM -- SHANGHAI -- NIGHT

Wang and Yee in bed, having sex in the dark.

They roll over, Wang on top.

She straddles him, slowly moving.

She closes her eyes, slowly rocking on him, then opens them, looks at him.

On the chair next to the bed, his clothes hang. His gun and holster.

Her eyes drift to the gun, then back to him.

As she rides him harder, tears start to flow from her eyes.

EXT. AUTUMN – SHANGHAI -- DAY

To establish : Circling doves over a working-class residential area in Shanghai.

INT. HOSTEL ROOM – SHANGHAI-- DAY

Wang Chia-chih stands by the window of a room in a run-down old guest house, staring at the gray sky.

Old Wu sits behind her. K'uang stands by the door.

OLD WU

Did he really promise you an apartment?

WANG CHIA-CHIH

We'll see! He was there when I told Yee Tai-tai I was leaving next Sunday. He can't back out now, can he?

OLD WU

That's marvelous. That old wolf is really starting to let his guard down.

K'UANG YU-MIN

Once we have a precise location, we can start moving!

OLD WU

Not so fast.

K'UANG YU-MIN

What are we waiting for?

OLD WU

We need information, information! He broke a cell and stole an important shipment of arms sent by the Americans to us. That was a huge loss.

(mumbles to himself)

It's strange that the Japanese are also trying to locate the goods. I wonder if Mr. Yee would sell information to the Russians in exchange for his future. Wang Chia-chih is a precious lead which we must exploit to the fullest.

K'UANG YU-MIN

But she's not a trained spy. Look at her, she can't take the pressure.

OLD WU

You underestimate her. The best part about our Miss Wang here is that she carries herself every bit as Mai Tai-tai, and not an agent. She's come this far, that's no small feat. Our superiors are extremely impressed. The last two women I tried to snare him with were superbly trained, it's true, and they held his interest briefly, that's for sure. But he sniffed

them out, and that was it for them. They even gave up the names of their entire cell.

K'UANG YU-MIN

You have no concern whatsoever for her safety?
 (worked up)
 She's done what she's supposed to do—get Yee hooked. Now we should take over.

Suddenly, Old Wu drops his harmless demeanor, and takes on a truly menacing tone.

OLD WU

(slams the desk angrily)
 Don't tell me what to do! Now you listen to me! Yee murdered my wife, both my children! But I could still eat dinner with him one table away. This is our work. I'd like nothing better than to kill him, with my own hands. But if he's more useful to us alive than dead, I will let him live for a few more days.
 (turning to Wang)
 But you're going to keep him on the line, and report every word he says until I give the order.

Dead silence. Wang's lip trembles.

OLD WU

As an agent there is only one thing, loyalty. Loyalty to the party, to our leader, and to our country! Am I making myself clear?

WANG CHIA-CHIH

Don't worry. I will do what you say!

OLD WU

(takes Wang by the shoulders)
 Good! Keep him in your trap. And if you need anything...

WANG CHIA-CHIH

You think I have him in a trap? Between my legs, maybe? You think he can't smell the spy in me when he opens up my legs? Who do you think he is?

Old Wu listens, becoming increasingly nervous.

WANG CHIA-CHIH

He knows better than you how to act the part. He not only gets inside me, but he worms his way into my heart. I take him in like a slave. I play my part loyally, so I too can get inside him. And every time he hurts me until I bleed, and scream before he comes, before he feels alive. In the dark only he knows it's all true.

OLD WU

Okay, stop it!

WANG CHIA-CHIH

That's why I can torture him until he can't take it any longer, and I will keep going until I can't go any more.

OLD WU

(yells)

That's enough!

WANG CHIA-CHIH

Every time when he finally collapses on me, I think, maybe this is it, maybe this is the moment you'll come, and shoot him, right in the back of the head, and his blood and brains will cover me!

OLD WU

Shut up!

She stares at him, almost defiantly.

Old Wu storms off. K'uang, almost in tears, looks at her, then follows Old Wu out.

INT. IN THE CAR—SHANGHAI – FALL 1942 – NIGHT

The chauffeur is driving. Wang sits in the back, alone.

Wang looks out of the window. They've passed Wai Bai Du Bridge, already beyond the old Western Concessions.

The car stops at a Japanese checkpoint. The driver shows the Japanese guard his permit. The guard pokes his head in to check.

Wang realizes that they've entered the Hongkou district, a Japanese enclave.

WANG CHIA-CHIH

(uneasy)

We're going into the Japanese area? This was arranged by Mr. Yee?

The driver nods, and continues driving.

EXT. JAPANESE TAVERN IN HUNGKOU – SHANGHAI. - EVENING

Coming here is like going to Japan. The streets are thronged with Japanese. Bright colorful lights are everywhere. People walk around in kimonos.

INT. JAPANESE TAVERN—SHANGHAI -- CONTINUOUS

Wang stoops to enter a small tavern. She can hear Japanese music, and people laughing and drinking. One glance at Wang and the hostess recognizes her, since she is the only Chinese there.

WAITER

(in Japanese)

Good Evening.

HOSTESS

(in Japanese)

Welcome.

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

I'm looking for Mr. Yee.

HOSTESS

(in Japanese)

I know, this way please.

The hostess takes her to a room off the inner court, through a maze of corridors.

HOSTESS

(in Japanese)

Mai Tai-tai, this way please! Mr. Yee is waiting for you over here.

Private rooms along the way are occupied by Japanese officers and their geishas. Some of them have come straight from the front. They look dejected, listening to familiar songs from home sung by the geishas.

A drunken officer beckons her from his room, then rushes out at her.

OFFICER

(in Japanese)

Her! Come! Come in! Over here! Over here right now!

HOSTESS

(in Japanese)

So sorry! Colonel Sato, this is a customer, not one of our girls! Keiko-san! Keiko-san! Come and keep Colonel Sato company! Go get more sake!

The hostess restrains him. The man is unappeased, and storms back into the room in a fit. The hostess apologizes to Wang.

HOSTESS

I'm sorry.

Wang is shown into a room where Yee is already waiting with a smile. On the table are two small dishes of appetizers and a bottle of sake.

HOSTESS

Here is your guest.

She bows out of the room.

YEE

(pours himself some sake)

So...I punished myself, by making myself wait for you!

WANG CHIA-CHIH

Why here?

YEE

I had business.

Yee is slightly drunk, the corners of his eyes look tired.

The shoji is not completely closed. Yee suddenly spots the Japanese commander Miura Taicho walk by with another man.

Yee lowers his eyes and pours himself some sake with his head lowered. Wang catches on, and gently closes the shoji

Yee pours some sake for Wang. They clink their cups.

We faintly hear a geisha singing from a room down the hall.

YEE

You hear that? They sing like they're crying, like
dogs howling for their lost masters!

(laughs)

These Japanese devils kill people like flies, yet deep
down they're scared as hell. They know their days
are numbered, since they got the Americans on their
case. Yet they still hang around with their painted
puppets, and keep singing their off-tune songs - just
listen to them!

Wang listens in silence.

She snuggles up to him.

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

I know why you brought me here.

YEE

Why?

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

You want me to be your whore.

YEE

Whore?

(laughs)

It is I who was brought here...So you see, I know
better than you how to be a whore.

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

(tenderly)

Will you let me sing for you? I'm a much better
singer than they!

YEE

Really? Hm.

Wang lowers her lashes and smiles. She takes a sip of sake, licks her lips, and stands up.

She positions herself in front of him, posing like a classic singsong girl. At first her voice
is barely a whisper, but then we can make out that she is singing "Girl Singing From
Earth's End".

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

(singing)

From the end of the earth
To the farthest sea
I search and search

For my heart's companion
 A young girl sings
 While he plays his harp
 Your heart is my heart
 Looking north from my mountain nest
 My tears fall and fall
 Missing him she will not rest
 Ah! My man, even in hard times
 Love prevails.
 Who in this life does not prize youth as much as
 gold?
 A young girl to her man
 Is like thread to its needle.
 Ah! My beautiful man,
 We're like thread tied together,
 Never to be unwound.

As she sings, she closes her eyes, letting the sentiment take over. Her body moves with the tune.

Yee is at first amused, then attentive, and then he himself, as she finishes, closes his eyes, unaccountably moved, tears flowing.

Silence. He puts his hands together, applauds her, slowly at first, then faster and louder. She sits back down beside him.

He takes her in his arms. They kiss.

INT. YEE'S CAR—SHANGHAI -- NIGHT

The car pulls over in the alley near Yee's house.

Yee and Wang in the backseat.

YEE

You go ahead. I have work.

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

At this hour?

YEE

(quietly)

Look. I want you to do something for me.

He takes an envelope out of his pocket.

YEE

Tomorrow. Take this to the address written on the envelope. Ask for a man by the name of Khalid Udeen Sandhu. You can remember that, yes?

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI
Khalid Udeen Sandhu.

YEE
Yes. If he tells you anything, or gives you anything, you'll tell me, right? Just our secret.

Wang looks at him and nods.

She gets out of the car. It drives off.

INT. HOSTEL ROOM—SHANGHAI -- DAY

A hand holds the letter over a small pot of boiling water. The flap curls and unseals.

Pull back:

K'uang and Old Wu. K'uang takes a small note card out of the envelope.

K'UANG YU-MIN
Yee's name. That's it.

Old Wu takes the piece of paper, holds it up to the light, studies it carefully.

OLD WU
(giving it to K'uang)
Put it back. What do you think?

K'UANG YU-MIN
I worry Wang Chia-chih may have been discovered. If we send anyone in to check it out first, we may be falling into their trap. But if she goes alone, it could be very dangerous. We should stay outside and keep watch.

Old Wu ignores him.

OLD WU
(to Wang)
You'll go, as soon as possible.

Old Wu looks silently at K'uang and then leaves.

K'uang stands speechless, then turns to Wang.

K'UANG YU-MIN
Wang Chia-chih, I'm sorry.

He hands her the letter, in a daze.

Wang Chia-chih walks downstairs. K'uang Yu-min follows her and tries to kiss her. She pushes him away.

WANG CHIA-CHIH
Three years ago you could have. Why didn't you?

K'UANG YU-MIN
You know why, you know the reason, don't you?

Wang leaves silently.

EXT. STREET -- SHANGHAI -- DAY

A taxi stops at a busy corner. Wang gets out.

She spots Ou-yang and another man in front of the Peace Cinema. Lai Hsiu-chin idles in front of the Madam Green House boutique.

Wang carries her handbag with the envelope inside. She checks the address -- a jewelry store.

Cautiously she pushes the door and enters.

INT. JEWELRY STORE -- SHANGHAI -- DAY

She opens the door and enters a small jewelry showroom.

This shop is brightly lit inside, the walls bare like the inside of an igloo. A low glass case at the back displays birth stone charms: yellow quartz and some semiprecious pieces.

An Indian Shopkeeper in a western suit comes forward.

The following scene is all in English.

SHOPKEEPER
May I help you?

Wang freezes momentarily, then speaks.

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

I'm here to see Mr. Khalid Udeen Sandhu.

The man pauses, looks her over.

SHOPKEEPER

Do you have something for him?

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

Oh yes.

She takes out the envelope to show him. Then hesitates.

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

I'd prefer to give it to him personally.

He glances at the envelope, smiles and nods.

SHOPKEEPER

Of course. Follow me.

(to customers)

Excuse us.

He leads her to the back of the store, then up a narrow flight of stairs, at the top of which is a closed door.

He opens the door and speaks to the manager in Hindi.

SHOPKEEPER

She asked for you, by name.

MANAGER

(to Wang)

He says you want to see me? Please come, sit down.

Wang walks over. He stands, and offers her a chair in front of his desk.

She gives him the envelope.

He opens it in front of her, sees the card, smiles.

He turns to open the safe. Wang looks around.

He comes back and sits down.

MANAGER

(to Wang)

Your friend, he said you were quite particular. In fact he was afraid to make the choice himself. So

you can choose any one of these -- and not to worry,
the gentleman has taken care of the fee.

He opens a small jewel case, it is full of diamonds. Wang is stunned by the sparkle of so many diamonds against the black velvet lining.

MANAGER

I haven't set any of them yet. So you are free to
decide the setting. It won't take long -- I'll need to
size your finger please, so that we can set
everything, correctly.

Wang stares at the diamonds, speechless.

MANAGER

(smiling)

Yes? All right? If they are not good enough, we
have more. I have something really unusual for you.

He takes out a second box from the safe.

Wang leans over as the manager opens ceremoniously each little compartment, until he reaches the last one and reveals a blazing "hot oil" pink diamond. Her face flushed, her eyes stay riveted on the sparkling pink stone.

MANAGER

Six carats.

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

Pigeon egg.

MANAGER

(leaning towards her to measure)

I know you will be a perfect size six.

INT. SUNRISE BOOKSTORE—SHANGHAI -- DAY

Close-up: A telephone rings four times. A hand hovers above the phone, but does not pick it up.

A pause, it rings again. The hand picks it up.

We're in the stockroom in the back of a crammed bookstore -- piles of books everywhere. K'uang Yu-min is on the phone, listening. Finally, he speaks in Cantonese.

Intercut:

K'UANG YU-MIN

Hello?

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI (O.S.)

Hi! Second Brother! It's me! I'm calling from
Keissling's café. Everything okay at home?

K'UANG YU-MIN

It's fine.

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI (O.S.)

I'm fine!—Just too busy to call. I plan to pick up
that package today. Yes, it's all set— for now!

K'UANG YU-MIN

I understand.

Everyone in the room is listening intently.

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI (O.S.)

Anything—else ?

INT. KEISSLING CAFÉ - SHANGHAI - WINTER 1942 - DAY

We're back with Wang in the café where we left her at the beginning of the film.

K'UANG YU-MIN (O.S.)

No...nothing.

WANG CHIA-CHIH

I guess I'd better leave now... All right. See you
later.

Wang hangs up the phone. She walks over to her table and sits back down. She drinks her coffee, takes a bottle of perfume from her purse, dips in a glass rod, and puts a few drops behind her ears.

She sees Yee's car through the window, picks up her coat and bag, slips them over one arm, and leaves.

EXT. KEISSLING CAFÉ. SHANGHAI. WINTER 1942

Wang comes out of Keissling Café.

The chauffeur steps out to open the car door for her.

INT. CAR—SHANGHAI-- WINTER 1942 -- DAY

Yee makes room for her.

YEE

I'm late.
(to the driver)
Route Ferguson, please.

Wang touches his hand and speaks to him softly.

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

Let's go to jewelry shop first. My ring should be ready.

Yee smiles, nods and leans forward to instruct the chauffeur.

YEE

Turn back.

The car turns back.

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

Hey, we missed it. It's that little shop.

The chauffeur parks and comes around to open the door.

EXT. NANKING ROAD—SHANGHAI-- WINTER 1942 - DAY

Wang gets out the car, jittery. The sound of Yee closing the door makes her jump.

She knows Yee is behind her. He catches up with her and puts an arm around her waist.

INT. JEWELRY SHOP—SHANGHAI-- WINTER 1942 - DAY

Wang feels a moment of relief once inside the shop.

YEE

(looking at her)
Are you all right?

WANG CHIA-CHIH

I'm fine!

The shopkeeper comes out, sees them, recognizes her.

SHOPKEEPER

(in English)
Ah, Miss!

The moment she lifts her head, she sees two men choosing rings at the counter. She wonders if they are part of the group.

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI
(in English)
I was wondering if the ring was ready?

SHOPKEEPER
(in English)
I'm sure it is. Please follow me.

While he speaks, she watches from the reflection in the glass the two men choosing rings.

Yee also notices and turns around to look.

Again, the narrow stairs.

They enter the upstairs room.

The manager nods in greeting, rises from his desk, and bows.

MANAGER
(in English)
Welcome! Welcome! Please sit.

The manager bends down to open the small safe covered with green felt. He returns with a small box.

MANAGER
(in English)
The masterpiece is ready!

He gives the box to Wang, who opens it -- a magnificent ring. She examines it, then slips it on her ring finger. It fits perfectly.

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI
Do you like the diamond I chose?

YEE
The diamond in itself is of no interest to me -- I just want to see it on your hand.

She looks at the ring's pink diamond, moving her hand this way and that to get a better look. Against her rose red nail polish, the pink on the diamond is quite pale.

MANAGER

Congratulations!

YEE

(with satisfaction)

Fine.

He takes her hand and looks at the ring.

With the manager watching them, they are more keenly aware of their being alone under the lamp, so close, yet so restrained.

With a smile Wang begins to remove the ring.

YEE

Keep it on.

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

I wouldn't want to wear it on the street.

YEE

Please. You're with me.

She puts it back on.

With his profile outlined against the soft lamplight, he looks, to her, tender and vulnerable -- a man in love.

At this moment Yee and Wang both hear a car backfire. She winces.

Without thinking, she tells him softly:

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

Go, now!

He looks blankly at her, confused.

YEE

What?

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI

(a harsh, panicked whisper)

Go now!

With one last look in her eyes, in a flash, he understands.

He jumps up and runs for the door, catches the door frame, and flies down the stairs.

EXT. JEWELRY SHOP—SHANGHAI --WINTER 1942 -- DAY

A flurry of footsteps run across the linoleum floor. The shopkeeper follows closely but does not block him. He rushes out the door while the shopkeeper stays to watch.

YEE
(yells at chauffeur)
Door!

The chauffeur, alert, quickly opens the door. Yee ducks in and lies flat across the back seat.

The car speeds away.

INT. JEWELRY SHOP—SHANGHAI -- WINTER 1942 - DAY

Wang hears the screech of the tires.

Pang! A door closes, or is it a gun shot?

She sits there, dazed.

The manager gets up and sees her out with a feigned smile.

She walks out the shop wearing the diamond ring.

EXT. NANKING ROAD—SHANGHAI--WINTER 1942 -- DAY

A late afternoon bright winter light still fills the air as she walks out onto the street. Her watch says almost four-thirty.

On the streets, she looks around, but recognizes no one.

No tricycle cab in front, so she walks over to Seymour Road.

People throng the sidewalks and many tricycles zoom by, but none is vacant.

Walking past a dress shop, she looks at the wooden mannequins with their fur coats and pewter-colored tops with bat-wing sleeves and matching skirts.

She keeps walking, looking out for a vacant cab, or an unexpected attack from behind.

She looks across at the Peace Cinema. The crowd has left, no tricycle there either.

As she debates whether to cross the street to the empty cinema, she spots a tricycle cab coming in the opposite direction, a little red-green-white pinwheel tied on the crossbar.

WANG CHIA-CHIH/MAI TAI-TAI
Taxi!

The driver, a tall young man, sees her waving and quickly makes a U-turn and speeds towards her, the pinwheel spinning wildly.

Wang climbs into the car and pauses for breath.

DRIVER

Where to, miss?

Not knowing where to go, she chooses a destination at random.

WANG CHIA-CHIH

Route Ferguson!

DRIVER

Going home?

WANG CHIA-CHIH

Huh?

The sky begins to darken. Before they reach Ching-an Temple, she hears the whistles.

DRIVER

Ah - they're blocking the road again!

A middle-aged man in Chinese-style tunic and trousers drags a long thick rope across the street, a whistle in his mouth.

From the opposite side another man holding the other end of the rope pulls it tight. The street is cordoned off.

Someone else rings a bell listlessly, no sign of urgency.

The driver rushes to the edge of the rope before screeching to a stop. He slaps at the pinwheel to set it going again.

DRIVER

Can't go any further!

Wang watches the road. Cars and people are all grouped on one side of the rope.

She knows. She looks around for her companions.

No one in sight.

The driver turns and smiles at her.

DRIVER

Looks like a long wait!

MIDDLE AGED WOMAN

Let me through! I'm late! I have to go home and cook!

POLICE

I could let you through for the doctor, but not to cook!

She sits back in the tricycle cab, her ears pierced by the shrill whistling. She feels the hem of her coat, the place where she sewed the cyanide tablet in.

INT. THEATER IN HONG KONG UNIVERSITY -- 1939 (FLASHBACK) -- DAY

The group is up on the balcony. K'uang is calling her.

K'UANG YU-MIN

Wang Chia-chih.

Wang looks up at them from the empty stage.

LAI HSIU-CHIN

Come on up!

INT. SECRET SERVICE HEADQUARTERS. SHANGHAI--WINTER 1942-- NIGHT

Yee stands by the window, smoking.

Chang enters and places a file on his desk.

CHANG

We got six of them, all college students. They once ran a drama group in Hong Kong. The woman is called Wang Chia-chih, a student actor. The leader is called K'uang -- we've been tailing him for a while. A shame. Almost got Old Wu, but he slipped out of town last night. The gunman probably got away through the back door of the Peace Cinema. When we searched, they all had movie tickets on them, better to get away. The students were only there as cover.

YEE

You've known about them? Why wasn't I told?

CHANG

(a sinister smile and a smarmy bow)

Well, sir -- there was some question, given your involvement with the girl...In any case, all's clear now! I have delayed her interrogation, assuming you'd like to conduct it yourself?

YEE

She's downstairs?

CHANG

Yes, Lao Lou and Lao Fan have her. We've already broken the others -- they're a very easy lot. Their stories matched.

YEE

Then...I will...no. There's no need for further questioning, is there? I've - we've gotten what we need.

Chang hesitates.

CHANG

Certainly. Any further orders?

Yee looks at his watch.

YEE

Take them to the quarry.

Yee's voice is cold. He turns to light another cigarette.

YEE

Total news blackout. Dispose of them, by ten o'clock.

Chang understands -- Yee is sparing her a torture session. Yee moves toward the door. Then he thinks something else.

CHANG

Oh!

He takes out the ring, and places it on the desk.

CHANG

Your ring.

YEE

(pause)

It's not mine.

Chang goes, leaving the ring where he placed it.

INT. HALLWAY--SECRET SERVICE BUILDING—SHANGHAI--NIGHT

A cell door opens, and Wang walks into the hallway, her hands cuffed behind her back, escorted by two plainclothes agents. Her high heels sound particularly loud in the long dark corridor. She continues walking. The corridor is long. There's a spot of chalky white light shining at the other end.

EXT. BACK ENTRANCE -- SECRET SERVICE BUILDING—SHANGHAI-- NIGHT

Wang is escorted out.

She sees a military truck parked on the road. About eight soldiers with rifles mount the truck. Then she notices, with a start, K'uang Yu-min. Despite the distance, she can make out his bashed, swollen face. He lifts his head and sees Wang.

Her face freezes, her feet rooted to the ground. She now sees that the whole group is there.

SOLDIER

Move it!

The soldier gives her a shove. She walks toward the truck.

INT. YEE'S CAR—SHANGHAI – NIGHT

Yee, barely visible in the back seat. He searches his pockets for a cigarette.

The guard in the front seat takes a quick peek back at Yee, but does not offer him one.

Yee looks out the window.

EXT. QUARRY – OUTSIDE SHANGHAI -- NIGHT

The place is huge and frightening, lit by starlight and the headlights on the trucks.

The open pit gapes like a ready grave. The sound of feet marching over loose stone.

The six are lined up on their knees, perched at the edge of the vast quarry. Two soldiers load and cock their guns.

Lai Hsiu-chin crumbles in tears.

Wang Chia-chih and K'uang Yu-min trade a final look in each other's eyes.

INT. YEE'S RESIDENCE—SHANGHAI-- WINTER 1942 - NIGHT

At the mahjong table, there are now three black capes facing each other. Liao Tai-tai has taken the place of Mai Tai-tai.

Amah opens the door. Yee enters the house.

LEUNG TAI-TAI (O.S.)

Why don't we go to Chiu-ju then. It's been a while.

YEE TAI-TAI (O.S.)

When Yang Tai-tai invited us last time, wasn't it at Chiu-ju's?

MA TAI-TAI (O.S.)

If it is not Szechuan, it's Hunan - always so spicy!

YEE TAI-TAI (O.S.)

If you can't take spicy food, you'll have no spice in your game!

Mr. Yee enters the mahjong room.

MA TAI-TAI

(smiling)

Ah! Mr. Yee is back.

Yee looks at everyone with suspicion.

YEE TAI-TAI

This Mai Tai-tai, what a piece of trash! Promised to invite us but is still not back.

LIAO TAI-TAI

Mr. Yee, the minute you left Yee Tai-tai has been winning and winning. She's inviting all of us tomorrow. Will you join us?

MA TAI-TAI

(smiling)

Mr. Yee! Your wife is not like you - she doesn't go back on her word! It's not easy to get you to invite!

LEUNG TAI-TAI

You have to treat us, Mr. Yee, for we never manage to invite you.

He only smiles.

The maid serves him tea. He glances at the thick curtains against the wall. They cover the entire wall - how many assassins can hide behind? He panics, and suddenly walks over and draws open the curtain.

YEE TAI-TAI

Don't do that, it's full of dust! It's so late already - are we still waiting for Mai Tai-tai?

YEE

I'm going upstairs to change.

MA TAI-TAI

Don't bother - we're going now. Unless you got dirty today or something?

YEE TAI-TAI

I should make an inspection!

The ladies continue with their fun.

Yee signals Yee Tai-tai to follow him and walks upstairs.

YEE

I'm going upstairs first.

INT. GUEST ROOM IN YEE'S RESIDENCE—SHANGHAI--NIGHT

Yee pushes open the door to Wang Chia-chih's room.

The room is in total darkness. He stares at her luggage by the wall.

Footsteps coming upstairs. Yee Tai-tai appears in the doorway.

YEE TAI-TAI

(whispering, nervous)

What's going on? Your assistant, that Chang, and two men from the ministry - they came by a couple of hours ago and took away some of her things.

YEE

(surprised, but calm)

Go downstairs. Say nothing! Say nothing at all!
 You understand? If anyone asks, just tell them Mai
 Tai-tai had an emergency and went back to Hong
 Kong.

YEE TAI-TAI

What happened?

Yee looks at his wife. A long pause. She begins to understand.

YEE

Just go down. I'll be there shortly.

Yee Tai-tai, fear creasing her face, walks away.

Yee sits there, in a daze.

Yee hears the women's voices, bantering, from below.

LEUNG TAI-TAI (O.S.)

Well? Who's treating us to dinner tonight, Mr. Yee
 or Yee Tai-tai?

MA TAI-TAI (O.S.)

Mr. Yee, of course! He promised! He looks so
 radiant tonight, it's only natural he should treat.

YEE TAI-TAI

All right, all right! Let him pay for our dinner at
 Lai-hsi restaurant. Let's go now!

MA TAI-TAI (O.S.)

The only things good there are the cold appetizers.

YEE TAI-TAI (O.S.)

It's true, German cuisine is good only for cold
 appetizers. Let's have Szechuan then, for a change.

LIAO TAI-TAI (O.S.)

That means it's back to Shu-yü. Ma Tai-tai missed it
 last time.

MA TAI-TAI

Shu-yü again? Aren't you tired of Shu-yü?

YEE TAI-TAI (O.S.)

You didn't have Leung Tai-tai with you when you went. Leung Tai-tai is from Hunan, she knows how to order, we don't.

The clock strikes ten.

Yee gets up, switches off the lamp, leaving only the hallway light and the sounds of mahjong playing from the room below.

The End