

THE JOY LUCK CLUB

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INT. LIVING ROOM - EVENING

We burst through a swinging kitchen door and follow a steaming Chinese dish into a cluttered but comfortable room noisy with chatter, childish shrieks, happy chaos. The round dining table is already crammed with American and Chinese food: potato salad and noodles. Frank Sinatra's "Three Coins in a Fountain" blares.

A 70ish, tiny Chinese woman is giving a pork bun each to a little girl and boy. The girl pokes boy's bun and laughs.

LITTLE BOY:

You asshole.

TINY OLD WOMAN:

No more asshole, no more argue.

Shouts of pleasure as a roasted duck is brought to the crowded table. Close-up on duck's head, which is quickly swept up by a pair of tongs and dumped onto a plate. Roars of laughter, as we see face of duck's head recipient, a Jewish girlfriend type.

JEWISH GIRLFRIEND:

Get it off! Get it off!

Laughter diminishes to garbled snatches of Chinese, English-Chinese, and American slang. Now pan out clockwise to faces around the table, beginning with girlfriend dumping duck head onto plate of Chinese boyfriend. Next to him, a bossy 70ish grandmother is feeding noodles into a baby's mouth. Then HEAR . . .

JUNE'S VOICE (OFFSCREEN)

The old woman remembered a swan she had bought many years ago in Shanghai for a foolish sum...

... move to cigarette-smoking 60ish man talking in rapid Chinese to another man, their talk punctuated by English: "stock market up," "junk bond," "disaster."

JUNE'S VOICE (O.S.)

This bird, boasted the market vendor, was once a duck that stretched its neck in hopes of becoming a goose, and now look! -- it is too beautiful to eat.

...move on to red-headed Caucasian man struggling with chopsticks, another older man giving useless advice...

JUNE'S VOICE (O.S.)

Then the woman and the swan sailed across an ocean many thousands of li wide, stretching their necks toward America...

...move on to 30ish professional-looking woman dabbing at purple stains on crying daughter's dress...

JUNE'S VOICE (O.S.)

On her journey, she cooed to the swan,
"In America I will have a daughter just
like me. But over there nobody will say
her worth is measured by the loudness of
her husband's belch...

...move on to two old-world ladies trying to outdo each other with politeness: offering each other same food, refusing in turn.

JUNE'S VOICE (O.S.)

Over there nobody will look down on her,
because I will make her speak only
perfect American English.

...move on to young boy with punk haircut showing nearly blind old man pocket Nintendo game.

JUNE'S VOICE (O.S.)

And over there she will always be too
full to swallow any sorrow! She will
know my meaning, because I will give her
this swan -- a creature that became more
than what was hoped for.

...move on to two young women, one Eurasian, the other Chinese in bohemian clothes, talking and laughing conspiratorially.

JUNE'S VOICE (O.S.)

But when she arrived in the new country,
the immigration officials pulled her
swan away from her, leaving the woman
fluttering her arms and with only one
swan feather for a memory.

And now we finally see JUNE, 32, and realize it's been her voice all along. She looks oblivious to her surroundings, stares ahead, alone with her thoughts in the crowd. Push up closer on her face.

JUNE (V.O.)

Now the woman was old. And she had a
daughter who grew up speaking only
English and swallowing more Coca-Cola
than sorrow.

June smiles painfully, holding back...

JUNE (V.O.)

For a long time now, the woman had
wanted to give her daughter the single
swan feather and tell her, "This feather
may look worthless, but it comes from
afar and carries with it..."

She pokes absentmindedly at her food, not eating.

JUNE (V.O.):
 ...all my good intentions." My
 mother told me that story so many
 times. And I never understood what
 she meant.

The large bossy older woman spoons giant prawns onto June's plate:

BOSSY OLDER WOMAN:
 June! Guest of honor should eat more!
 Here, I made this dish myself. You tell
 me how bad it is.

June holds up her hand, protests as more people serve her food,
 until her plate nearly overflows. She's embarrassed by the
 attention, doesn't feel she deserves the fuss.

JUNE (V.O.)
 Ma would have loved this... She would
 have been so proud. 'Guest of honor!' --
 her daughter.

With moist eyes, June surveys her mound of food, searching for
 something else. She smiles, having found what she almost lost: a
 memory. With wistfulness, affection, the grief of hanging on...

JUNE (V.O.)
 Crab, that's what Ma would have made.
 Her famous crab. What a showoff she was.

Then, looking fondly at the older women at the table tonight...

JUNE (V.O.)
 ...just like her friends...Four months
 ago, after my mother died, they asked me
 to take her place at the Joy Luck Club.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

From a doorway we see three older women around a mah jong table,
 the fourth chair empty. They pour out tiles, swirl them, and make
 idle gossip in Chinese. On a side table: peanuts, tea, a clock.

From their angle, see JUNE standing in the doorway, unnoticed.
 She walks to empty chair. No one looks up. She sits down. Nothing.
 Her eyes dart back and forth, as if thinking, What am I doing here?

JUNE (V.O.)
 Of course, I knew I could never replace
 her. I just couldn't argue with them.

To June's right, a large bossy woman, LINDO, nudges June without
 looking at her. Her wrists are heavy with 24k gold bracelets.

LINDO
 Here, help us stack the tiles. No, this
 way -- like building walls -- north,
 south, east, west. You are the east.

JUNE (V.O.)

So there I sat on the east, where things
begin, with my mother's best friends . .

We see the faces of these older women, still unknown to us.
...YING-YING, elegantly dressed, slender and beautiful; quiet, she
has an inner intensity conveyed by nervous mannerisms.

JUNE (V.O.)

...my honorary aunties, coming at me
from all directions...

...AN-MEI, short and plump, with reading glasses. She is bright
and observant of June's pain, full of advice and humor.

JUNE (V.O.)

In fact, they came from different parts
of China. And they had nothing in common
with my mother...

AN-MEI

Look at you. Too skinny. Eat more.

JUNE (V.O.)

...or perhaps they did. Whatever, they
all got together in San Francisco 30
years ago, when my mother started The
Joy Luck Club.

LINDO

Do you win like your mother?

JUNE

I only played once, with some Jewish
friends in college.

LINDO

Anh! Jewish mah jong! Not the same
thing! Entirely different! Chinese mah
jong, very tricky. You must watch what
everybody else throws away, keep all
this in your head.

The ladies begin to play, their decisions rapid.

LINDO

And if nobody plays well, then the game
is like Jewish mah jong, no strategy.
Why play? You just watching people make
mistakes!

June hesitantly throws down a tile, a wild guess, the ladies stare,
she shrugs. The game blends into swirl of movements and gossip.

INT. BEDROOM - LATER THAT SAME NIGHT

Lindo slaps down a winning tile, startling June awake, and into the
middle of a discussion in Chinese. The clock reads 3:38 a.m.

AN-MEI (in English)
I tell you, she was always dreaming of
them. June, am I right?

June hides her puzzlement, nods, counts her chips and yawns.

AN-MEI
So what did your mother tell you?

JUNE
About what?

LINDO
Your sisters, of course! What we have
been talking about all this time.

June leans back in her chair, stunned.

JUNE
My sisters? ...you mean, the babies my
mother had in China?

June stares blank-faced as the aunties talk rapidly. We hear
background chatter in Chinese and English: "double tragedy," "not
her fault." And then we pull into June's reverie.

JUNE (V.O.)
That day she told me -- we were having a
fight because she wouldn't buy me a
transistor radio. She said, "How can you
miss something you never had?" And then
she told me this strange story, what
happened to her in China...

EXT. A ROAD LEAVING KWEILIN - DAWN

We see the face of a young woman, SUYUAN, around 25, singing a
happy-go-lucky nursery song as she walks down a wide dirt road.

TITLES: KWEILIN, CHINA, 1944. Booming sounds rumble off in the
distance. Suyuan's face tightens, her singing grows higher-pitched.
We see what she's leaving behind: jagged Kweilin peaks, puffs of
black smoke from bombs. Our view expands and we see a streaming
exodus of the displaced.

JUNE (V.O.)
She said she was going to Chungking --
to meet her husband...
(beat)
That was the first time I ever heard she
had another husband.

Now see Suyuan pushing a wheelbarrow, piled with suitcases, a mah
jong table, on top: laughing twin baby girls, 18 months old.

JUNE (V.O.)
She barely had time to grab her babies,
twin girls...

Hold a beat on adorable twins bouncing in wheelbarrow.

JUNE (V.O.)

That was the first time I heard she had other babies.

Noontime. The wheelbarrow is now broken down. The babies are hoisted into slings made out of scarves. Suyuan lifts the suitcases, still determined. We pan out to see her journey: an endless road filled with hundreds of desperate people.

JUNE (V.O.)

She told me that along the way, people gave up their most precious possessions.

Suyuan walks by abandoned goods: a radio, an iron pot, a hat box, books, a birdcage. She drops the suitcases, her palms bloody with blisters, defeat on her face.

JUNE (V.O.)

And in the end many gave up their hopes.

She puts babies down. Looks at them tenderly, kisses them fiercely. She puts her hands up to face, hiding her pain. Babies whine. She opens her hands, peek-a-boo fashion, making them smile. She backs down road, continuing to play this painful peek-a-boo, the babies laughing as she disappears from view.

JUNE (V.O.)

She said that by the time she reached Chungking, she had lost everything. And I said, Wait, what do you mean everything? What happened to those babies?

Smash cut back to...

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

...the mah jong game, Lindo's beaming face.

LINDO

It's a miracle, but we found them. Yes, can you imagine, they're alive!

June acts as if Lindo has just announced she's flying to the moon.

JUNE

What are you saying? They're alive?

An-mei cracks a peanut, nods. Ying-ying flutters a letter.

AN-MEI

I think your mother always want to find them. Her long-cherished wish. So after she died, we tried for her -- writing, writing, writing...

Lindo snatches letter from Ying-ying's hand, gives it to June.

JUNE

This is from them, those babies?

LINDO

Wah! Not babies anymore!

June takes out letter, shakily examines pale blue Chinese characters written on tissue-thin paper. Still dazed, she mumbles.

JUNE

They're alive? God, look at all this Chinese. They're so smart...But what does it say? What does this mean?

Ying-ying peers over June's shoulder, starts to read aloud in Chinese. Lindo interrupts, takes letter from June.

LINDO

It says, see here, they are glad, no, overjoyed beyond belief, to finally find you, their little sister. They say, see here, how sad, terribly sad that it is too late to meet their mother, now that she is no longer in this world.

An-mei and Ying-ying throw startled looks at Lindo. Lindo returns a look that silences them. June notices -- is something amiss?

LINDO

Yes, yes, and here, they say you must come see them, tell them all about their mother...And now, look here...

Lindo takes something out of her sleeve, crushes it into June's palm, pretends it's nothing as June unfolds it to see.

LINDO

...a check, enough money so you can go to China, see your sisters.

JUNE

My sisters sent me a check...
(beat) for twelve hundred dollars?

LINDO

No, no. Every year we save our mah jong winnings for big banquet dinner. But this year we thought, Ah, we are getting too fat, too fat, better diet.

AN-MEI

Most times your mother win, so most is her money anyway.

YING-YING

We just add a little so you can see your sisters, tell them about your mother.

June slumps to chair, dazed, embarrassed, trying to take this in.

JUNE (V.O.)

What poor liars they were! Trying to pretend it was nothing, the money, the sacrifice, their loyalty to my mother...it was generous beyond belief.

She tries to smile at the aunties, looks at check, begins to cry.

JUNE

(whisper) I can't take this money... I mean, what could I tell them? I didn't know anything about her. She was... she was my mother.

See three beats of aunties' faces, comic with horror.

CHORUS OF OVERLAPPING VOICES

--How can you say this! Your mother is in your bones!

--Tell them about lessons she taught you, about her big success here... .

--How kind, how smart, how honest . .

--The excellent dishes she cooked, better even than mine. . .

--Imagine, a daughter not knowing her own mother!

JUNE (V.O.)

They were frightened. In me, they were seeing their own daughters, just as ignorant of all the hopes and dreams their mothers brought to America.

June stares at the letter, looking down. She speaks quietly.

JUNE

You're right. I will tell them. I should. . . I want to.

Lindo's face is extremely doubtful, as if, "She will never get this right." Big sigh. June's voice is now breaking, full of conviction.

JUNE

I promise. I will tell them. I will remember everything about her.

One by one, the aunties smile.

JUNE

But first I need to go blow my nose.

June gives an embarrassed laugh. All three aunties pull out wadded Kleenex tucked in their sleeves. June shakes her head and leaves the room. The aunties now stare at the letter on the table, sigh.

AN-MEI

She's a good girl. Didn't protest too much, not like we were too poor to give her this gift generous beyond belief.

YING-YING (to Lindo)

But how could you tell her . . .

LINDO

Ai-ya! How could I tell her what the letter really said? Then she would never go. Am I right? Of course.

No argument. The women sit down. Lindo begins to wash tiles.

LINDO

Ai-ya. So sad for those babies! How could Suyuan give them up? Tst! To lose a mother so young, to wonder why...

We hear the tile sounds as she drifts into private thought...

EXT. OLD CHINA/CANTONESE COUNTRYSIDE - MORNING

Come up on threshing sounds, people cutting down wheat in a vast field, a poor village with crumbling walls seen in the distance.

LINDO (V.O.)

...Even to this day I wonder -- how my own mother could give me up.

Now see LITTLE LINDO, age 4, happily chasing a grasshopper through a field. She squints to see something ahead, runs forward. She comes upon a courtyard with three women -- young, middle-aged, and old -- sitting under a tree in idle chatter.

The young woman, LINDO'S MOTHER, calls Little Lindo over, smooths her hair, brushes off her dusty trousers, affectionately scolds her to greet the other women. Lindo pouts. Mother laughs nervously.

LINDO'S MOTHER (subtitled)

She's usually a very obedient girl.

The middle-aged woman, HUANG TAI-TAI, is finely dressed, looks doubtful. She sniffs her disapproval.

HUANG TAI-TAI (subtitled)

Look here -- her temper is bad, too much will of her own.

The OLD WOMAN, nervous, cajoles Huang Tai-tai with excuses.

OLD WOMAN (subtitled)

Not so, not so. She is a little strong horse, a hard worker. I guarantee it.

The old woman pats Little Lindo's head. Lindo ducks away. She runs off, then looks back at the three women. Notice mother's brave front, the sadness she tries to hide.

LINDO (V.O.)
I didn't know it, but that day my mother
made a promise...

See Huang Tai-tai's superiority, her tight mouth.

LINDO (V.O.)
...that one day I would go live in this
woman's house...

Now see the old woman's hands patting imaginary little heads.

LINDO (V.O.)
...and fulfill the old matchmaker's
guarantee -- to have many sons! Hnh!
With a husband I had never met before.

INT. OLD CHINA/CANTONESE VILLAGE KITCHEN - DAWN

YOUNG LINDO, 15 years old, is seated at a table, eating a simple meal, along with her mother, father, and two little brothers.

LINDO (V.O.)
For the next ten years, my mother
treated me as if I already belonged to
Huang Tai-tai.

Mother scolds her for eating too fast, demonstrates the proper way.

LINDO'S MOTHER (subtitled)
Look how much Huang Tai-tai's daughter
can eat!

Mother inspects behind Lindo's ears. Brothers laugh.

LINDO'S MOTHER (subtitled)
Ai-ya ! Look at these black spots! Who
would want such a dirty daughter-in-law
for her son?

Mother gets up and dips a cloth in a bucket of water, then rubs behind Lindo's ears as Lindo cries silently.

LINDO (V.O.)
My mother did not say these things
because she didn't love me.

Now see mother's face, biting her lips, how tenderly she rubs her daughter's skin, how gently she now speaks to Lindo in Chinese.

LINDO (V.O.)
She said these things so she would not
wish for something that was no longer
hers.

EXT. CANTONESE VILLAGE COURTYARD - DAWN SAME DAY

Young Lindo is standing in the doorway of darkened house. She is neatly dressed. There is an air of urgency. Her mother is inspecting her hair, her fingernails, avoiding eye contact.

LINDO (V.O.)

And then one day, my mother said our whole family was moving to the south...

In the background, a man's voice shouts, "Let's go" in Chinese. They turn to look, then grab hands and look at each other.

LINDO (V.O.)

...everyone except me.

Lindo and mother look at each other, grief-stricken, scared.

LINDO (V.O.)

The river had overflowed and ruined everything, all our crops, our home. We were so poor in all that mess.

REVERSE ANGLE to reveal a courtyard mired in mud: uprooted trees, broken bits of walls. Beyond that, a donkey-drawn cart, brimming with pots, chicken cages, chickens, the rest of the family waiting.

Mother hurriedly digs into pocket, takes out a red jade necklace and puts this around Lindo's neck. Both fight from crying, the mother talking fast, rubbing the jade, Lindo nodding quickly.

LINDO'S MOTHER (subtitled)

Act happy when you arrive at the Huangs.
Really, you are very lucky.

INT. OLD CHINA/BEDROOM. - DAY

Young Lindo is looking in mirror. She is dressed in red, weighted with gold jewelry. Nervous, she startles to the sound of thunder.

LINDO (V.O.)

Oh yes, I was so lucky! I remember one day it rained so hard, it was like the tears inside me finally pouring out.

Young Lindo goes to the window, watches the rain falling in gusty torrents. Outside, people are scurrying, shouting. Lindo laughs.

LINDO (V.O.)

I could not see the wind. Yet I could see its power, how strong, how pure.

She sits back down, stares at herself in mirror, now suddenly pleased and calmed by what she sees.

LINDO (V.O.)

That's how I was, too. Strong, pure. I had genuine thoughts no one else could

see, no one could take away from me. I
was like the wind.

Other women enter her room. A pair of too-small slippers are jammed on her feet. A scarf-like boxed veil is placed over her head so that her head is completely enclosed.

LINDO (V.O.)

I covered up my secret thoughts right
away. But underneath I knew who I was. I
promised myself never to forget.

Lindo stands up. Shrill sounds of horns and cymbals from outside.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

A confusing cacophony of sounds: shrill music, firecrackers,
shouts. An enclosed red sedan is being clumsily carried.

MAN'S VOICE (subtitled)

The bride is here! Careful! Make way!

The sedan comes to a bumpy halt. Inside, Young Lindo tumbles from side to side. The door opens and we look out from Lindo's POV. Through the sides of the swaying red scarved veil, we see hundreds of curiosity seekers: mostly poor villagers of all ages.

LINDO (V.O.)

I was like a blind person being carried
to my fate. But I still knew who I was.

INT. RECEPTION ROOM - LATER THAT DAY

Lindo is kowtowing, knocking her head three times to the floor. We are still in her POV, catching glimpses from under the scarf: a family altar table, ancestral tablets, an old monk, the matchmaker, bowls of dried fruit, smoky incense, a painting of an old man.

We see the old matchmaker putting a two-ended red candle in a special holder. She lights both ends, lifts the candle high.

MATCHMAKER (subtitled)

The marriage has begun!

Someone hands Lindo a goblet tied to another goblet with red string. She begins to drink.

LINDO (V.O.)

That red candle was supposed to burn all
the way down, my end, my husband's end,
neither end ever going out. . .

We see the red candle again. The matchmaker is pointing to the candle, protecting both ends.

LINDO (V.O.)

And if that happened, it meant the marriage would never end. I was tied to my husband forever, no matter what. After that, nothing could change my fate.

INT. OLD CHINA/BEDROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Ladies are leading Lindo, still with veil on, along a third-floor balcony to her bedroom. The matchmaker carries the burning red candle. Little children prance in front, joking and shouting.

CHILDREN'S CHORUS (Subtitles)

Poor Tyan-yu! Married an ugly wife. Wake up to her the rest of your life!

LINDO (V.O.)

Actually, I was quite beautiful. My husband was lucky to have me.

The entourage reaches the bedroom. The children race ahead and grab for eggs and candies hidden underneath blankets and pillows. The matchmaker puts the candle on a table outside the bedroom, prepares herself to stand guard all night.

Lindo is sitting on the bed, red scarf still over her head. She lifts it and peeks to see the surroundings of her room. The door opens, and she covers up quickly, clenching her fists, nervous.

LINDO (V.O.)

That night I met my husband for the first time, the one who would control my destiny, decide whether my life was happy or not.

We see legs walking in an assured, masculine stride. They stop at the bed, standing before Lindo, who bows slightly.

LINDO (V.O.)

I had prayed to the gods for many days, prayed that he was not ugly or too old.

A hand reaches over to Lindo's scarf and rips it off with a jerk. Lindo, startled, looks up at her husband, mumbles to self.

LINDO (subtitled)

I must have prayed too hard.

We hear a childish laugh. And now we see him: TYAN-YU, 11 years old, a chubby, spoiled-looking boy, smirking.

TYAN-YU (subtitled)

Ha! Scared you to death! What else scares you? Maybe -- this!

Tyan-yu fishes out from his sleeve a little lizard tied to a string. It leaps onto Lindo, who screams bloody murder.

Outside, the women listening at the door smile in understanding. They depart. The matchmaker stays to tend the candle.

LATER... the candle has burned down further. Tyan-yu is sleeping contentedly. We don't see the other half of the bed.

LINDO (V.O.)
My husband said he would make all the
decisions. Since I was the wife . . .

Lindo is on the floor with some quilts and pillows, eyeing the escaped lizard now inching toward her on the floor.

LINDO (V.O.)
I would sleep on the floor.

She chases the lizard away, then stares ahead, as if thinking: "I've got to do something about this." Restless and uncomfortable, she gets up quietly. She peers out the open window, sees the old matchmaker has fallen asleep. She has an idea, smiles wickedly, scratches the window pane. The matchmaker arouses slightly.

YOUNG LINDO (subtitled)
(Moans) Onnnh! Onnnh! I am a ghost,
looking for a virgin to take my place.

The matchmaker jumps to her feet, takes off. Lindo giggles. Now she sees the abandoned candle flickering. Suddenly she becomes serious, she has another idea. She opens the door quietly, prays to self.

YOUNG LINDO (subtitled)
Goddess of Mercy, Precious Buddha --
make the candle go out.

She hovers over the candle, waves her hand over it. It flickers, bends low in the breeze, but burns bright. Now what?

LINDO (V.O.)
Somehow . . . my prayers were heard.

She lets out a frustrated sigh, blowing out one end of candle.

LINDO (V.O.)
It was a miracle!

Lindo looks scared, guilty. She looks down the balcony corridor. She goes back into the bedroom, runs to her quilt, and lies down. When she turns on her side, we see her face: elated.

EXT. - OLD CHINA/COURTYARD - THE NEXT MORNING

Tyan-yu, Lindo, in-laws standing in front of a solemn-looking matchmaker. Lindo tries not to smile.

LINDO (V.O.)
The next morning, I saw how my prayers
were answered.

The matchmaker opens a red scarf with a big flourish. Inside: the candle holder and a little pile of ash. Lindo catches her gasp.

MATCHMAKER (Subtitled)
My job is done. The candle burned continuously without going out. This is a marriage that can never be broken.

LINDO (V.O.)
So you see, I was doomed...

...Lindo looks at happy faces around her. She feigns smile.

INT. OLD CHINA/HALLWAY - EVENING

Lindo is walking down a hallway, an intent look on her face, biting her lips, a sudden pained look on her face.

LINDO (V.O.)
For the next few years, I tried to accept my life, to act like an obedient wife.

Now see that she is balancing a bowl of steaming soup, burning her fingers. She enters a room, begins to serve Huang Tai-tai the soup.

LINDO (V.O.)
Every night I made Huang Tai-tai a special herb soup, good for healthy mother-in-laws . . .
but still she was not pleased.

See Huang Tai-tai knocking over soup, Lindo cowering.

HUANG TAI-TAI (Subtitled)
Where are my grandsons? My son says you oftentimes refuse to sleep with him. Bad wife! Why am I feeding you? For what!

INT. OLD CHINA/BEDROOM - NIGHT

See Lindo climbing into bed...

LINDO (V.O.)
After that, I slept with my husband --
every night I slept with him...

Now see Tyan-yu: motioning her to stay on her side of the bed.

LINDO (V.O.)
....just like brother and sister.

INT. OLD CHINA/SITTING ROOM - DAY

Huang Tai-tai slaps Lindo, who drops her embroidery.

HUANG TAI-TAI (Subtitled)
Where are they then? My son says he's
planted enough seeds in you for ten
thousand grandsons!

INT. OLD CHINA/BEDROOM - DAY

Lindo is being put to bed in the middle of the day, a pretty
servant is making her drink an awful-tasting tea. Huang Tai-tai
closes the windows, removes sharp things from the room. They leave.

LINDO (V.O.)
Huang Tai-tai concluded I was doing
something wrong, letting all her son's
seeds spill out. After that, I had to
lie in bed all day long. So boring!

She gets up and pulls back the window curtain, sees the servant
girl down in the courtyard talking with a potmender.

LINDO (V.O.)
My life was worse than a servant's.

She sees the servant girl now openly flirting with the potmender.

LINDO (V.O.)
In fact, I envied that servant girl. I
dreamed we could one day change places.

INT. OLD CHINA/BEDROOM - DAY

The old matchmaker is lifting both of Lindo's hands, letting them
drop, looking in her eyes, feeling her forehead, her belly.

LINDO (V.O.)
It was the matchmaker who finally
discovered why I had no sons.

Huang Tai-tai and Lindo listen to the matchmaker's verdict.

MATCHMAKER (subtitled)
A woman can have sons only if she is
deficient in one of the elements. When I
found her for you she lacked metal.

Matchmaker picks up Lindo's two wrists, lets them fall with a plop.

MATCHMAKER (subtitled)
But Huang Tai-tai, such a generous lady!
-- you gave her too much gold. Now she
is too balanced to have babies!

Huang Tai-tai clasps matchmaker's hands in gratitude, then begins
removing bracelets and earrings from Lindo in a happy hurry.

LINDO (V.O.)
 Huang Tai-tai was only too eager to
 follow the matchmaker's advice and help
 make me fertile.

Stripped of her jewelry, Lindo is left lying in the room alone.

LINDO (V.O.)
 I knew I could not live this way
 forever. I would rather die first.

She sneaks out of bed, goes to the window and looks out.

LINDO (V.O.)
 But I could never break my mother's
 promise. So I tried to think of another
 way.

She spies the pretty servant girl, desperately talking to the
 potmender in the shadows. The man angrily denies something. The
 girl opens her jacket slightly, pats her rounded belly. Lindo
 covers her mouth: So that's it. She touches her own belly.

INT. OLD CHINA/BEDROOM - DAY

Lindo is lying awake in the bed, very calm. She sits up.

LINDO (V.O.)
 I waited until the Festival of the
 Ghosts -- when everyone prepared to
 sweep the graves. Even the matchmaker
 came to pay her respects. On that day, I
 knew what I had to do.

See Lindo now taking out a short knife, aiming it toward her arm.

SMASHCUT to courtyard, sounds of blood-curdling screams coming from
 Lindo's bedroom window. People drop what they are doing. The
 screaming gets worse. Servants are running down corridors. Huang
 Tai-tai and matchmaker, having tea, look annoyed, then puzzled.

Cut back to Lindo in bed, looking quite normal, listening to
 commotion. One of her sleeves is torn. She musses her hair, uses
 the knife to rip the other sleeve. She lets out another awful howl.

Huang Tai-tai rushes in the room, followed by Tyan-yu, the
 matchmaker, and others. Lindo is writhing, pushing away.

HUANG TAI-TAI (subtitled)
 What's wrong, little one? Tell me quick!

Lindo gasps and wails, moans and flails her fists.

YOUNG LINDO (subtitled)
 Ai-ya, it is too terrible to say.

The pretty servant girl rushes in, and Huang Tai-tai is about to
 order her to fetch the doctor, when Lindo sits up, panting.

YOUNG LINDO (subtitled)
I had a bad dream . . .

Huang Tai-tai makes a disgusted face, as if "Oh, is that all?"
Lindo continues with a theatrical recounting of the dream.

YOUNG LINDO (subtitled)
. . .or perhaps it was not a dream!

LINDO (V.O.)
I told them our ancestors had come to me
and were very angry. They had seen the
wedding. And later that night, they saw
how the matchmaker left the candle
untended, how one of the ends went out.

YOUNG LINDO (subtitled)
Ai-ya! It was Tyan-yu's end!

See the matchmaker shrinking in a corner, only Lindo noticing.

YOUNG LINDO (subtitled)
They said he would die if he stays in
this marriage!

Tyan-yu's face grows white. The others look unconvinced.

HUANG TAI-TAI (subtitled)
What a stupid girl to have bad dreams!

Huang Tai-tai starts to leave, the others as well.

YOUNG LINDO (subtitled)
Don't leave me. I am afraid.

LINDO (V.O.)
I told them that if the matter was not
settled our ancestors would begin the
cycle of destruction. They had already
planted the signs.

Huang Tai-tai comes back, trying to look unconcerned. The others
lean forward to hear.

HUANG-TAI-TAI (subtitled)
What signs?

LINDO (V.O.)
And I knew they were caught by my words,
like ducks leaning into a pot.

YOUNG LINDO (subtitled)
I saw a man with a long beard and a mole
on his cheek.

Flashback to painting of old man seen at wedding.

HUANG TAI-TAI (subtitled)
 Ai! Tyan-yu's great grandfather?

Lindo nods eagerly, holds up three fingers slowly. We see faces of others as they take in Lindo's story.

 LINDO (V.O.)
 There are three signs, he said. First, he has drawn a spot on Tyan-yu's back. And this spot will eat away Tyan-yu's flesh just as it ate away his ancestor's face before he died.

Huang Tai-tai yanks up Tyan-yu's shirt, gasps at what she sees.

 LINDO (V.O.)
 And there she saw his mole, as I had, during all those nights of sleeping like brother and sister.

 YOUNG LINDO (subtitled)
 Next, our ancestor touched my mouth.

Lindo pats her cheek, makes tooth-achy expression.

 LINDO (V.O.)
 Our ancestor said my teeth would fall out until I could no longer protest leaving this marriage I love so much.

Huang Tai-tai pries open Lindo's mouth, gasps again.

 LINDO (V.O.)
 And there she saw the open spot in my mouth where a rotted tooth fell out four years ago.

Lindo suddenly cries and points to pretty servant girl.

 YOUNG LINDO (Subtitled)
 Our ancestor also said this girl here is Tyan's Yu's true spiritual wife -- already growing his son!

The pretty servant shrinks back, horrified that her situation has been revealed.

 LINDO (V.O.)
 It's true, I told them. She only pretends to come from a bad family. To prove it, our ancestor planted the seed in her womb. Already ripe in one day.

Huang Tai-tai feels girl's round stomach, her mouth rounds too.

 YOUNG LINDO (subtitled)
 If you don't believe me, ask the matchmaker.

All eyes suddenly on matchmaker who is shrinking against a wall.

YOUNG LINDO (subtitled)
Ask her! She was supposed to watch the
candle and guard my marriage from doom!

The matchmaker bows down quickly in front of Huang Tai-tai and wails for forgiveness. Lindo flings herself facedown on the bed to sob. Huang Tai-tai orders everyone out, and now seems especially kind to the pretty servant. The door closes.

Alone, Lindo's sobs dissolve into giggles. We see her elated face, grateful and dreamlike. She hugs herself.

LINDO (V.O.)
Huang Tai-tai got her grandson, the
servant girl got a marriage, I got a rail
ticket to Canton. So everybody was happy.

INT. SAN FRANCISCO KITCHEN/MORNING

. . . Lindo in present time, her older face, still smiling, as she remembers her own cleverness. She pushes buttons on a microwave, heating a mug of water.

LINDO (V.O.)
. . .I kept my parents' promise. I kept
my promise to myself.

The phone rings. She picks it up. Smiles, then frowns.

LINDO (to phone)
Ah? Ah. You are already at beauty
parlor?...No? Oh. Headache...You have a
headache so you cannot keep your promise
to take me?...

INT. SAN FRANCISCO BEDROOM/DAY

...messy bedroom, nightstand with phone. Clock reads 9:28 a.m.

LINDO (O.S., phone)
...no, no don't come! Why should I want
you to come when now you are telling me
you don't want to come? No, don't come!

We see WAVERLY, a young woman in silhouette, clutching the phone.

WAVERLY
Mom?

Dialtone. The phone is slammed down. Angle rotates and we now see WAVERLY, 32, in full light, wearing a man's paisley bathrobe, sitting on edge of bed. She is stylish, pretty in hardened, aggressively modern way.

WAVERLY

Shit! She always does this!

A man's hand reaches for her, but she jumps up, storms off.

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Sweetie? Are you okay? Waverly?

INT. SAN FRANCISCO BUS - DAY

Waverly in cashmere jacket and Levis is on a bus, filled half with professionals, half with old Chinese ladies lugging groceries.

WAVERLY (V.O.)

It's like she can read my mind. As if
she has some kind of magical power. . .

More Chinese ladies get on. One old woman stares piercingly at Waverly until she gets up and offers her seat. Morosely...

WAVERLY (V.O.)

...like that invisible strength she
always talked about...

DISSOLVE to LITTLE WAVERLY as 6 year old sitting on bus, same morose expression. Her thoughts continue...

WAVERLY (V.O.)

. . .as if she were the one who taught
me how to play chess!

Now see LINDO, as young mother, smoothing Little Waverly's dress.

LINDO

Never show off. Wise guy, he don't go
against wind. In Chinese we say, Come
from South, blow with wind -- poom! --
Strongest wind cannot be seen.

Little Waverly sighs, rolls her eyes, looks out bus window.

INT. 1950's SMALL CHURCH HALL - SAME DAY

See a pawn moved. Audience rustles. Now full face on smug 13-year-old boy. Rotate angle and see Little Waverly peering at chessboard, a nervous Lindo in audience. Waverly's face is perfectly bland.

WAVERLY (V.O.)

Even at that age, I knew I had an
amazing gift, this power, this belief in
myself. To be better than anyone else.
If someone was bigger than me, older
than me, it didn't matter...

Cut to Waverly moving a knight. The boy smiling, like, "You just blew it." He makes another move quickly, settles back, pleased.

WAVERLY (V.O.)
 ...and if they were mean, I could make
 'em sorry...

She checkmates. Boy's face falls. Waverly grins.

WAVERLY (V.O.)
 It was the only part of my life ...to
 this day...where I trusted myself
 completely.

See Lindo now, coming up, patting Little Waverly's head, nodding
 proudly to other parents who congratulate them.

WAVERLY (V.O.)
 I was safe there. I still cry,
 remembering that.

LINDO
 Thanks, thanks. Is luck. Very lucky.

INT. LIVING ROOM. DAY

Waverly, two brothers, watching Howdy Doody. Lindo is polishing a
 trophy which sits on top of TV next to chess set. She picks up a
 knight, contemplates it, tilts back and forth like a rocking horse.

LINDO
 Wave-ly. Next time win more, lose less.

LITTLE WAVERLY
 Oh Ma, it's not how many pieces you
 lose. Sometimes you need to lose pieces
 to get ahead.

LINDO
 Maybe. Maybe better to lose less.

Waverly says nothing, keeps her eyes glued on Howdy Doody.

BOYS' VOICES
 Hey! You're blocking the TV! Can't you
 guys fight about this later?

INT. SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - DAY

We see people in folding chairs clapping politely, Waverly's two
 brothers, father-type, then Lindo, who is clapping furiously. Now
 see Waverly receiving a trophy, standing amidst older kids, trying
 to look serious, then . . . big grin.

They are exiting auditorium with others. Brothers run off. Father
 takes trophy, Lindo hands Waverly her sweater. Both are proud.

LINDO
 See? Lost less pieces this time. Only
 eight. Last time -- eleven. What I tell
 you? Next time, do even better. . .

Waverly puts arm slowly through sleeve. Bites lips, frowns.

SERIES of cuts as Waverly rises as chess champion . . .

...Lindo and Waverly are arguing over where to put the latest trophy. The TV set is already overcrowded. Boys are yelling for them to get out of the way.

....Waverly and mother are walking by Chinese bakery underneath their flat. Inside the window: a cake with script that says, "Waverly Jong, Chinatown Chess Champion." Owner runs out, congratulates mom. Waverly looks down at the cake. DISSOLVE to...

....The cakes, saved by the baker these last 3 years, has turned old, dusty gray. Waverly is now 9 years old. She and Lindo come out of apartment, Lindo still arranging lace on very frilly "tournament" dress she obviously made.

....Room filled with trophies, framed newspaper clippings. Father brings home stack of Life magazines. Opens to article showing Waverly and caption: Can Bobby Fischer beat the Chinese Terror? Lindo examines photo, shows Waverly how she should smile next time.

INT. CHINATOWN STORE - DAY

DISSOLVE to Waverly watching Lindo give the smile she demonstrated in last cut. She and grocer are admiring Life magazine clipping.

LINDO

I told my daughter, Use your horses to
run over the enemy. She won very quickly
this way.

Now they are walking briskly hand in hand down crowded street filled with Saturday grocery shoppers. Lindo greets everyone, grocers, neighbors, strangers. One old lady hails back. They stop.

LINDO

Oh, Mrs. Chew, you know my daughter --
Wave-ly Jong. Chess Champion.

Old lady does universal symbol for "you've grown so big." She and Lindo begin chatting in Cantonese. Ah! Lindo remembers something: opens purse, takes out magazine article. Waverly groans: not again!

They're walking again, Lindo beaming, Waverly sullen.

LITTLE WAVERLY

I wish you wouldn't do that. . .
Telling everyone I'm your daughter.

Lindo comes to sudden stop. People with bags bump into them, go around them, yelling. Waverly realizes her mistake, too late.

LINDO

Ai-ya! So ashamed to be with mother?

Lindo glares at Waverly, waiting for her to back down. She pulls Waverly's hand for an answer.

LITTLE WAVERLY

It's not that. It's just that it's so .
. . so embarrassing. That's all.

Waverly looks around at shoppers still irritated they are stopped in middle of the sidewalk. She looks stuck, flustered.

LINDO

Embarrass you be my daughter?

LITTLE WAVERLY

That's not what I said.

LINDO

Then what you say? Look at me.

And now we see same concentrated look of the chess player. Waverly eyes her mother evenly, equal opponents.

LITTLE WAVERLY (yelling)

Why do you have to use me to show off?
If you want to show off, then why don't
you learn to play chess!

Silence. A stand-off. Lindo's move. Her eyes narrow, dangerous. Waverly is breathing hard, still defiant, wind roaring in her ears.

It's unbearable. Waverly yanks her hand out of Lindo's grasp, spins around, knocks into an old lady. Groceries spill: oranges and cans roll down the sidewalk. Old lady shrieks in Cantonese, furious.

Lindo stoops to help pick up the cans. Then looks up at Waverly. Waverly stares back one beat longer, then takes off.

LINDO (V.O.)

Wave-ly! Wave-ly! You come back!

Waverly's pushing, running through the crowd, a demon on her back. She turns down one street, then speeds into an alley, then into another street, into another alley. Out of breath she looks back, to the side. Still panting, she leans back against wall, crying.

LITTLE WAVERLY

I don't care! I'm not going to let her
push me around anymore! She's stupid!
She doesn't know anything.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

A knock at the door. Waverly's brother unlocks three bolts, opens door. It's Waverly, cold but still defiant.

WAVERLY'S BROTHER

About time. Boy, are you in trou le.

She trudges by the warm kitchen. Family is eating, fish carcass on table. Lindo does not look up. Sounds of chopsticks hitting bowls. Silence. Father starts to motion to Waverly to sit, but. . .

LINDO

This girl not have concerning for us.
We not concerning this girl.

Everyone goes back to eating. Waverly trudges on to her room, closes door. She stares at her chessboard. Suddenly she pushes all the pieces off onto the floor.

Now see Waverly standing in kitchen doorway, out of breath, panting like a dragon. Lindo, others stop what they are doing, stare.

LITTLE WAVERLY

I'm never going to play chess again! You
can't make me! You can torture me all
you want. I still won't!

Stay on Waverly's face heated face. No response. Only silence.

LITTLE WAVERLY

Did you hear what I said? . . . I'm
never going to play again. . .ever.

Stay a beat longer on her face looking for a response.

INT. CHINATOWN PLAYGROUND - DAY

Two old men, smoking, playing chess on park bench. One looks up, smiles and waves.

Reverse angle to see Waverly staring through chainlink fence. She waves back shyly, starts walking slowly uphill. She's thinking about something, concentrating, pounding fist on thigh.

WAVERLY (V.O.)

For months, I kept expecting Ma to beg
me to play chess again. But she never
mentioned it -- as if I had never played
at all.

Now she's walking faster through Chinatown. She seems to be counting something on her fingers, some step-by-step logic. She bursts through the door at home. Walks by TV set, notices boy's baseball cap and glove thrown carelessly on top of trophies. Walks faster, until she finds Lindo in kitchen, washing vegetables.

LITTLE WAVERLY

Guess what? I've decided to play chess
again!

Waverly grins, expecting shouts of joy. Silence. Smile fades.

Now see Lindo, a frown on her face. She turns water off slowly.

LINDO

You think it is so easy. One day, quit.
Next day, play. Everything for you is
this way. So smart, so easy, so fast.

Oh-oh. This isn't going according to plan. Waverly whines.

LITTLE WAVERLY

I said I'm going to play again.

Waverly's eyes watches Lindo walk up to her. Right in her face. . .

LINDO

It is not so easy anymore.

INT. AUDITORIUM - DAY

Waverly is seated opposite her opponent, same version of smug 13-year-old at first tournament. Waverly bites lips, blinks eyes.

WAVERLY (V.O.)

What she said, it was like a curse. This
this power I had, this belief in myself,
I could actually feel it draining away.
I could feel myself becoming so... so
ordinary.

CUT to smug boy receiving trophy, dazed Waverly sitting at table, staring at board, this alien territory that was once her kingdom. Someone pats Waverly's shoulder. She looks up, it's Dad, smiling as if nothing is wrong. She looks around: No mom. She touches her king, as if it will give her an answer.

WAVERLY (V.O.)

All the secrets I once saw. I couldn't
see them anymore...I never played chess
again.

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO BUS - PRESENT TIME - MORNING

Adult Waverly, in same jacket and jeans, getting off bus, walking away.

WAVERLY (V.O.)

The best part of me just... disappeared.
But I can't put it all on my mother. I
did it to myself. Although...

INT. APARTMENT DOORWAY - DAY

Waverly knocks on apartment door. Father, now older, opens door, looks surprised to see her. Waverly's thoughts continue. . .

WAVERLY (V.O.)

With her, I can never win, no matter
what. And I still don't know how she
does it.

Enter Lindo, purse in hand, already dressed to step out.

LINDO

Why so late?

INT. BEAUTY PARLOR - THAT SAME MORNING

Lindo is seated in chair. British-accented, rock star-looking TRENDY HAIRDRESSER fluffing up her hair with fingers. Waverly is looking at Lindo in mirror, critically.

TRENDY HAIRDRESSER

How does she want it done?

WAVERLY (loudly)

Ma, how do you want it done?

Lindo looks at Waverly, hairdresser in mirror. Then . . .

LINDO

Not like yours. Not crooked, not too expensive... (beat) Not like his.

Waverly sighs an apology to Trendy Hairdresser. Business-like...

WAVERLY

She needs a cut and a perm. And this purple tint, she's been doing it at home. She's never had anything professionally done.

WAVERLY (V.O.)

It's maddening how she still does this stuff. God! I can never please her.

In the background, Trendy hairdresser is pumping Lindo's chair up and down. Waverly eyes mother, the sour look on Lindo's face.

WAVERLY (V.O.)

I mean, I even married a Chinese guy to please her. And was she pleased? (In mocking voice): 'Why does Marvin spend more time with his car than with you and the baby?' 'Why does Marvin's eyes run up and down other girls' legs?'

See Lindo being led away to have hair washed. Waverly sits down.

WAVERLY (V.O.)

When we got divorced, she got all upset, like it was my fault. (mocking voice) 'What about your daughter? No father!'

Waverly picks up a magazine, starts to flip pages, slowly then rapidly in rhythm to the anger of her thoughts...

WAVERLY (V.O.)

And when I finally started dating again,
when I tried to hint to her about Rich,
that we were living together, what did
she do? God!

CUT TO Waverly's memory of breaking the news to mom. . .

INT. WAVERLY'S APARTMENT - DAY

. . . Waverly opening apartment door, coming in.

WAVERLY

I just want to show you something. It's
in back. . . Watch out for Shoshana's
toys . . . and um, other stuff.

Now see Lindo coming in, looking around, gingerly stepping over
headless doll. From Lindo's POV, see hints of "a man in the
house:" barbells, running shoes, baseball bat, drawerful of plaid
socks, ties flung over door, stack of laundered shirts.

WAVERLY (V.O.)

How could she not notice? This was not
going to go away -- even with her silent
treatment. She had to say something. She
couldn't go on refusing to meet him.

Silence. Waverly brings a mink coat out of closet, sits down on
bed. Lindo inspects. Nervous, Waverly tries for modesty.

WAVERLY

This is what I wanted to show you. You
know Rich, the guy I told you about.
Well, I don't know why he got it for me.
It's never really cold enough to wear --

LINDO

This not so good. Just leftover strips.
See, fur is too short, no long hairs.

Waverly jumps up off bed, shocked.

WAVERLY

How can you criticize a gift! He gave
this to me with all his heart!

LINDO

That's why I told you, not so good.

Waverly is sputtering. She wants another reaction.

WAVERLY (V.O.)

I wasn't going to let her get away with
it this time... making me feel bad about
Rich, the love of my life, this gorgeous
man who treated me like I was perfect.

WAVERLY

Aren't you going to say anything else?

LINDO

What I should say?

Waverly flings men's socks and boxer shorts out of drawers.

WAVERLY

About the apartment -- about this!

Lindo looks around room. Turns back to Waverly, evenly.

LINDO

You are tax lawyer. You are busy. You want to live like mess, what I can say?

See Waverly's blank face.

WAVERLY (V.O.)

This time I wasn't going to give up...
I went into Plan B...

INT. APARTMENT - EVENING

...Lindo opening door to her apartment. SHOSHANA, Waverly's 4-year-old daughter, bursts in. She's cute, loud and spoiled.

SHOSHANA

We're here! Where is everybody?

WAVERLY (V.O.)

The next week I brought Rich to Mom's birthday dinner. Sort of a surprise present. I figured she was going to have to accept Rich, like it or not.

See Waverly's face, feisty and smug. She steps in, mink coat on.

WAVERLY

Ma, this is Rich. Rich, my mother.
Dad! Vincent! Winston! Come meet Rich!

See Lindo's polite-smiling face. Now see Waverly's beloved for first time: RICH, about 30, freckle-faced tax attorney, boyish, on the short side -- and loads of charm. He hands Lindo wine.

RICH

Great to meet you. Hey, something smells good. I guess we've come to the right place. Waverly's been telling me you're the best cook. . .

Waverly watching Lindo. Does Mom actually look pleased?

WAVERLY (V.O.)

I thought we'd won her over for sure.

As they walk to dining room, Lindo whispers to Waverly.

LINDO
So many spots on his face.

Waverly, in control, grabs Rich's arm, aggressively affectionate.

WAVERLY (V.O.)
Of course the night was still young.

INT. DINING ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

We see a bustling dinner table of 10 people, many Chinese dishes.
For a moment, all looks convivial, a happy gathering...

See Waverly's face as she watches Rich offering a toast of wine.
She then narrates the Emily Post Jong of Chinese table manners...

WAVERLY (V.O.)
He shouldn't have had that second cup...

Lindo gives half-smile, puts cup to lips, doesn't drink.

WAVERLY (V.O.)
...when everyone else had only a half-
inch just for taste.

See Rich eagerly spooning large amounts of shrimp on his plate...

LINDO (to Waverly)
He has good appetite.

Now see others carefully divvying up what's left...

WAVERLY (V.O.)
He should have taken only a small
spoonful of the best dish until everyone
had had a helping.

See Rich trying to use chopsticks. Food flies in the air, onto
his white shirt and pants. Shoshana laughs hysterically.

WAVERLY (V.O.)
He shouldn't have bragged he was a fast
learner.

See Rich examining weird-looking dish, turning it down.

WAVERLY (V.O.)
He shouldn't have refused anything...

Now see Lindo trying to spoon Shoshana same dish. She shrieks...

SHOSHANA
He didn't eat it! He didn't want it!

WAVERLY (V.O.)

But the worst was when Rich criticized
my mother's cooking...

Now see Lindo bringing another dish from kitchen, beaming.

WAVERLY (V.O.)

...and he didn't even know what he had
done. As is the Chinese cook's custom,
my mother always puts down her own
cooking -- but only with the dishes she
serves with special pride.

Lindo tastes the dish, makes a face...

LINDO

Ai! This dish not salty enough, no
flavor. It is too bad to eat.

WAVERLY (V.O.)

That was our cue to eat some and
proclaim it the best she had ever made.

See Rich tasting, frowning, nodding. He springs into action...

RICH

You know, Linda, all it needs is a
little soy sauce.

Now see everyone's horrified face as we see Rich's improvement:
the dish swimming in a riverful of soy sauce, a complete mess.

EXT. PARKED CAR - SAME NIGHT

Rich is shaking hands, all smiles after a "successful" evening.

RICH

Linda, Tim, we'll see you again soon,
I'm sure. Only --the next one's on us.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

They take off, Rich still cheerful, Waverly irritated, brooding.

RICH

Well I think we hit it off A-OK.

WAVERLY

Their names are not Linda and Tim. It's
Lin-do, Tin-nn, as in tin ear. And
nobody calls them that except a few
close family friends.

See Rich's puzzled, hurt face, Waverly's exasperated one. Sigh...

WAVERLY

I'm sorry. I don't know why I said that.

WAVERLY (V.O.)
 God! My mother was doing it again!
 Making me see black where I once saw
 white.

Close in on Waverly's anguished face, then CUT BACK TO...

INT. BEAUTY PARLOR - DAY

...Lindo with wet hair seated in salon chair, looking vulnerable,
 as if she is about to be executed. Behind her, the Trendy
 Hairdresser and Waverly, critically looking at Lindo in mirror.

LINDO (V.O.)
 I could see her face, looking at me, but
 not seeing me. She was ashamed, so
 ashamed to be my daughter.

TRENDY HAIRDRESSER
 A soft wave for body, what do you think?

WAVERLY
 Ma! A soft wave for body. What do you
 think?

Before Lindo can answer, Waverly tells hairdresser...

WAVERLY
 She doesn't want it too short. Otherwise
 it'll be too tight for the wedding. We
 don't want it to look weird or kinky.
 (louder) Isn't that right, Ma? Not too
 kinky?

See Lindo nodding, giving pained smile, then no smile...

LINDO (V.O.)
 Why does my daughter think she is
 translating English for me!

LINDO
 Maybe I don't go.

WAVERLY
 What do you mean?

LINDO
 Maybe I don't go to your wedding.

WAVERLY
 Don't be ridiculous.

LINDO
 Maybe I already ridiculous. Hair too
 ridiculous for future husband's family.

Waverly stares Lindo. Lindo looks away. Hairdresser frowns, holds
 up hands in referee fashion.

TRENDY HAIRDRESSER

Ladies, time out! We are discussing a haircut, not nuclear disarmament.

Waverly and Lindo look at each other in mirror, the same unpleasant expression on their faces. Then...

TRENDY HAIRDRESSER

You know, it's uncanny how much you two look alike!

Lindo beams, then sees Waverly's crestfallen face. Someone taps hairdresser's shoulder, mimes telephone call. He leaves.

Waverly looks at herself in mirror, frowns: This can't be. She blows out her cheeks. Oh well. Her eyes look to the side. Lindo has been watching her. Embarrassed, Waverly picks up a magazine and pretends to read.

Lindo looks down. Now we see what Waverly does not: Lindo's pain, her eyes brimming with tears.

LINDO (V.O.)

I was so ashamed that she was ashamed.
Because she was my daughter and I was so
proud of her. And I was her mother and
she was not proud of me.

Waverly is still preoccupied, flipping pages rapidly. Finally she notices what we already saw: Lindo's tears, her vulnerability.

WAVERLY

Ma, what's wrong? ...What's wrong?

Lindo cannot face Waverly. She gives stiff upper lip expression.

LINDO

Nothing, nothing! I only thinking...

Suddenly, Lindo does think of something. She looks at herself in mirror, the same expression as on her wedding day 50 years ago.

LINDO

I thinking 'bout my mother from long
time ago, how much I wanted be like her.

WAVERLY

Your mother?

LINDO

...so strong. So pure.

Lindo continues in sad girlish voice, as if in a dream...

LINDO

She told me, You can see your character
in your face. You can see your future.

Waverly closes magazine, puzzled. Lindo stares at self.

LINDO

She say... your ears, nice ears...

As Lindo tenderly touches her ear lobes, CUT TO...

INT. OLD CHINA/BEDROOM - NIGHT

...softly lamplit room, YOUNG LINDO, 15, and LINDO'S MOTHER sitting next to mirror. Mother is touching Lindo's ears...

LINDO (V.O.)

So lucky you have my same ears! A big thick lobe, full of blessings! But listen carefully to what is calling you.

See mother holding Lindo's chin, moving it left to right.

LINDO (V.O.)

The eyes are honest, eager. They do not look down in shame. This is good, Also bad. Sometimes you see too much.

See mother pushing hair from Young Lindo's forehead...

LINDO (V.O.)

Your hair, oh, too thick! Too many hardships in my life. Later you will worry and lose your hair.

See Mother earnestly talking to Young Lindo. Lindo nodding, looking hopeful, then downcast, heartbroken.

LINDO'S MOTHER (subtitled)

Can you feel in your heart what I am saying? Will you always keep it there? After tomorrow, I will never give you any more advice.

LINDO (V.O.)

I wanted so much be like my mother. If her mouth flew up, hopeful, I want my mouth do the same. If her mouth fall down, unhappy, I unhappy too...

INT. BEAUTY PARLOR - DAY

...Lindo's faraway look, still with her thoughts in China. Waverly, uncomfortable with her mother's emotions, jokes.

WAVERLY

You must be making this up. I mean, that was fifty years ago, at least! How could you remember exactly --

LINDO

I remember.

WAVERLY

Yeah, but maybe what she really said was
your nose is too big, your eyes too --

LINDO

How could I not remember? In the
morning, I went away to be married. This
my last memory of her forever.

Waverly is stunned. She's never heard this. Never heard her mother's
voice so gentle and lost.

LINDO

In my memory, my mother very beautiful.
Important to me. Like her words.

Her sadness creates a hush.

LINDO

Easier to appreciate. Memory.

For reasons she can't understand, Waverly's eyes brim with tears.
She makes one last stab at soft defiance...

WAVERLY

Ma? Why don't you like Rich?

Ah. Something understood. In Lindo's eyes.

LINDO

Is Rich you afraid I not like?

It is there between them now, no turning back.

LINDO

If I don't liking him, I act polite, say
nothing. Let him get cancer. Let my
daughter be a widow.

Waverly squeezes her eyes shut to keep from crying.

LINDO

I like Rich. Of course I do. To allow
him to marry such a daughter.

Waverly's eyes open. The tears come.

WAVERLY

You don't know. You don't know the power
you have over me. One word from you, one
look!...I'm four years old again, crying
myself to sleep...because nothing I
do...can ever, ever please you...

And now Lindo's face brightens as if she is seeing that 4 year old.

LINDO

Now. Now you make me happy.

Waverly stops, blinks. She is smiling now through the tears. Then laughter, laughter so hard she's breathless. Lindo begins to laugh too, although she doesn't know exactly why.

DISSOLVE TO the two of them looking in the mirror at Lindo's new hairstyle. As they look, Lindo traces the line of her eyebrow. Then reaches to trace Waverly's brow as reflected in mirror: See? Same thing. And Waverly looks, as if seeing herself for the first time. Lindo tugs at her own earlobes now. Waverly tugs at hers. Staring in the glass, holding their ears. Two faces, just alike.

NOW CUT BACK TO...

INT. DINING ROOM-NIGHT

...Same noisy dinner party we opened with. Only now we see that Waverly is the woman dabbing Shoshana's dress. Shoshana is showing Rich how to use chopsticks. He succeeds for the first time, picks up a pea, and shouts joyfully across the table.

RICH

Ma! Auntie Ying! Look!

Right then the pea shoots out of his chopsticks, sending Shoshana into shrieks of laughter.

Across the table Lindo (in new hairdo) nods, as does YING-YING, the slender, elegant, dithery older woman introduced before in the Joy Luck Club scene. They watch June, shy, glowing, unaccustomed to being the center of attention.

LINDO

You look, June so happy, going to China, see her sisters at last... How come we find those babies so easy, when Suyuan never find them all her life?

Ying-ying nods half-heartedly. She's watching Shoshana laugh.

LINDO

...I think Suyuan scared to find those baby girls. All grown up and mad that she left them. That's what I think...

Ying-ying nods, but her eyes seem vacant, still watching Shoshana, now squirming to get away.

LINDO

...if my mother came back, would I forgive her? Of course. What daughter would not...

Now we see Ying-ying is not simply wool-gathering. She is disturbed her thoughts. She mumbles...

YING-YING

Not so easy to be found once you are lost...

As Lindo continues to ramble on, her voice fades away. And now we peer more closely into Ying-Ying's face, lost in memory.

EXT. OLD CHINA/RICH FAMILY'S COURTYARD - MORNING

A solitary dragonfly, the whirring of summertime crickets. A little girl's voice, plaintive, then complaining...

LITTLE YING-YING (OFFSTAGE)
Amah!...Amah! It's too hot!

Pan out and now see we are in a courtyard with elaborate stone benches, carved wooden moongates, goldfish ponds, covered walkways, red lacquered window lattices. A rich household.

YING-YING (V.O.)
How did I lose myself?...so many ways,
so many years...

LITTLE YING-YING, age 4, in white undergarments, is being dressed by her AMAH, a plainly dressed young servant, intent on getting her charge into a richly embroidered yellow and black jacket.

AMAH (subtitled)
Shh! Do you want your mother to hear?
Do you want to look like a beggar?

Ying-ying considers this a second, then nods. Amah yanks her hair, making her yelp and pout.

DISSOLVE TO back view of Ying-ying in full regalia: the pants, jacket, the beribboned hair. And --reverse angle -- her pout.

YING-YING (V.O.)
I had to wear those clothes for the Moon Festival. Amah told me the whole family was going to the lake to celebrate...

INT. HANGCHOW LAKEFRONT - DAY

At the lakefront, crowded with families, hucksters selling quack remedies, actors, acrobats, food stalls, a stage.

YING-YING (V.O.)
We had rented a boat, big enough for our whole family...

See various people getting out of rickshaws, boat approaching...

YING-YING (V.O.)
Amah said the Moon Lady came out of hiding once a year. And she would grant me a secret wish... if I behaved.

Ying-ying looks up at the sky. Amah seeing this, laughs.

AMAH (subtitled)
 You can't see her now! Wait until night.
 Then you can see her shadow on the moon.

Now Amah is helping servants unload hampers of food, sleeping mats.

YING-YING (V.O.)
 Amah said the Moon Lady was dark because
 she had to hide her secret desires.

Ying-ying wanders off...and suddenly sees her shadow against a whitewashed wall. She and her shadow do a comic dance together. They shake their heads, flap their hands, turn around fast to surprise each other.

YING-YING (V.O.)
 We were alike, the Moon Lady and I!
 Restless. Willful. Always following our
 own desires.

Ying-ying hears Amah shouting for her. The boat is already there. Everyone is on board, eager to go. She begins to run.

YING-YING (V.O.)
 I wanted to show Amah my shadow.

Now see Ying-ying bounding up gangplank, her shadow right behind, which disappears once she's under boat's awning. She tugs on Amah's pant leg, turns around to point at her shadow. Gone! She's shocked, then filled with wonder. Big secret smile.

YING-YING (V.O.)
 I loved my shadow. This dark side of me
 no one else could see.

INT. PAVILION BOAT - DAY

The adults are fanning themselves, gossiping. Ying-ying and her two half-sisters start to run along the length of the boat. Mother gives stern look. Amah sees this, shouts at her playful charges.

Next see SERIES OF CUTS of the afternoon...

Girls squirming to sit still, slapping each other to behave...

An orgy of food brought out, adults murmuring with delight, children staring at the live shrimp...

Adults and children laying on mats, napping during the quiet afternoon...

INT. PAVILION BOAT - DUSK

Now see Ying-ying, her eyes popping open, looking around, seeing Amah snoring, quietly getting up, inching along the rail of boat, sneaking along the length of the boat, through a doorway. CUT TO...

EXT. BACK OF PAVILION BOAT - DUSK

Ying-ying, solemn-faced at first, takes in a visual delight. At the back of the boat: an old toothless woman chopping vegetables, two teenaged poor boys using a cormorant to catch fish, the deck covered with baskets, buckets, cages of birds. Beyond that: the lake filled with pavilion boats, fishing boats, leisure boats.

YING-YING (V.O.)

I stayed as if caught in a good dream.

SLO-MO, dream-like: the boys tossing fish up to deck. The old woman chopping off chicken heads and eels, gutting and scaling fish. Blood, feathers, scales flying into air, onto Ying-ying's clothes.

REAL-TIME: The old woman gets up, leaves. Boys paddle away. Now Ying-ying sees her clothes covered with blood, fish scales. She tries to wipe off mess, smears it. From the front of boat...

AMAH (O.S./subtitled)

Ying-ying! Where's that bad girl?

A look of panic on Ying-ying's face. She sees a bucket of bloody water, dips her hands in...

YING-YING (V.O.)

What a strange mind I had! I truly thought I could cover those spots by painting all my clothes crimson red.

Hear Amah approaching, shouting for her. Ying-ying standing up.

YING-YING (V.O.)

...and if I stood perfectly still, no one would notice this change.

See full effect of Ying-ying's clothes: the beautiful yellow silk a bloody brown. Hear one loud, LONG SCREAM. CUT to Amah inspecting Ying-ying, counting fingers, yanking clothes off, cursing.

AMAH (subtitled)

You smell evil! You look evil! Your mother will banish us both!

ANGLE: Ying-ying in underclothes, standing alone at back of boat. Sounds of happy laughter up front. Two half-sisters peek through door, laugh, point at Ying-ying, then run away.

Still spunky, she sits down on the edge of the boat...

EXT. BACK OF BOAT - NIGHT

The full moon reflected in the water. The dancing lights of lanterns. Boats gliding by.

Ying-ying leans over edge of boat, reaching for moon's reflection.

YING-YING (V.O.)

The Moon Lady! I was trying to reach her. I was thinking of my own desires.

In a rapid burst -- firecrackers explode! Hear a splash, then see the empty spot where Ying-ying once sat.

SURREALISTIC UNDERWATER - NIGHT

Ying curled into a ball, plunging down below. We see her face, her eyes opening. Expression is wonder, then growing panic and horror. She thrashes, kicks, struggles. Yet her voiceover is distant, like someone under hypnosis, matching words to feelings for first time.

YING-YING (V.O.)

The water, so cool, soothing... like sleep?... no... Amah! Amah! Why didn't she come? ... water... up my nose... in my throat...hurting, hurting...

She falls below the surface again. Now see what looks like a strange sea creature brushing by, her thrashing to get away. The dark shape grabs her around the middle...whoosh!

INT. BOW OF FISHING BOAT - NIGHT

The face of a poor-looking FISHERMAN looking down, dripping wet and grinning, possibly evil...

FISHERMAN (subtitled)

Too small to eat? Shall I throw it back?

Sounds of men laughing. Now see Ying-ying lying in a rope net filled with writhing fish. She's coughing, crying. A skinny FISHERWOMAN, wrinkled and brown, yet young, comes over to soothe Ying-ying. Behind her, two other fishermen, smoking stubs.

FISHERWOMAN (subtitled)

Stop it! You've scared the wits out of her. She thinks we're bandits.

Bandits! Ying-ying sits up, scoots back, as if considering this might be true. She looks at the four faces peering at her.

FISHERWOMAN (subtitled)

Hey, little one, are you from another fishing boat? Where? Point.

Ying-ying, still afraid, looks warily out toward the lake. She sees a pavilion boat lit by lanterns, filled with laughing people.

YING-YING (subtitled)

There! There!

The fishing boat glides over quickly. Fisherman stands up, shouts.

FISHERMAN (subtitled)

Hey! Hey! Did you lose a little girl, a girl who fell into the water?

We see the shadows of people leaning over the boat, shouting back the same question to others, more shouts. Boat comes closer.

Ying-ying struggles to get up, crying now, ready to be rescued.

LITTLE YING-YING (subtitled)
Amah, come! Amah, I'm scared!

The people in the pavilion boat now in focus. A LITTLE GIRL, Ying-ying's age, pushes through crowd, points at Ying-ying.

LITTLE GIRL (subtitled)
That's not me! I'm here!

Roars of laughter from people on pavilion boat receding. The fishing boat glides away. Push in on Ying-ying's scared face.

FISHERWOMAN (subtitled)
Now what'll we do? No one to claim her.

YING-YING (V.O.)
Such a strange feeling! No one wanted me. I was lost forever.

People in fishing boat argue over what to do, glancing at Ying-ying every now and then, pointing out to the lake, then at Ying-ying. As they argue, we hear Ying-ying recalling what she felt...

YING-YING (V.O.)
They said I was a beggar girl...and I thought this was true! -- now a beggar without a family!

The fisherwoman looks at the men, exasperated.

FISHERWOMAN (subtitled)
Don't you have eyes? Use your head!

Fisherwoman pats Ying-ying's palms, the soles of her feet.

YING-YING (V.O.)
Lucky for me, I had soft skin, too much fat on my bones... I was too pale to be a beggar. Too precious to lose.

FISHERWOMAN (subtitled)
Put her on shore. If she has a family, they'll find her there.

CUT TO...

EXT. DOCK - NIGHT

Fisherman is lifting Ying-ying onto shore. The fishing boat drifts away. Woman stands up and calls.

FISHERWOMAN (subtitled)
Be careful next time, little one!

Ying-ying stands listless at the dock, watching. Above her, the full moon, now full and large. Behind the sounds of a festival.

Downcast, she notices her shadow. Looks up at moon. Looks down at shadow. Starts to walk, following her shadow, chanting a wish...

LITTLE YING-YING

Amah, amah, amah...

EXT. LAKEFRONT - NIGHT

Ying-ying slows down. She sees a stage, hears tinkling music, ducks behind a bush to watch.

The stage backdrop is shaped like a giant moon, yellow-lit gauze. In the audience, about 25 people. A young man in western clothes bursts out, announces in typical MC fashion...

MC (subtitled)

And now the Moon Lady will come and tell
her sad tale, in a shadow play,
classically sung.

EXT. STAGE - NIGHT

A shadowy woman appears on gauzy backdrop of the moon. Her hair sweeps to floor. She does a strange dance, reaching her arms one way, then another.

MOON LADY (subtitled)

My husband, the Master Archer, I adored.
But my own desires I loved more...

Moon Lady silhouette plays with something ball-like, lifting it above her head, pulling away, then bringing it to her mouth.

MOON LADY (subtitled)

I too was not his greatest treasure.
He loved the peach of immortality,
beyond measure.
To live forever! No death would follow.
So I stole his peach, ate it in one
swallow.

The Moon Lady prostrate with grief, lamenting in singing voice.

MOON LADY (subtitled)

He banished me to live on the moon!
To regret forever two lifetimes I
ruined.

The Moon Lady rises into the air. Stage goes black, then lights up at half-strength. Moon Lady now sweeps hair on floor of moon.

MOON LADY (subtitled)

No escape from my eternal fate.
Lost to desires I now hate! Ai!

Little Ying-ying is trembling with tears.

LITTLE YING-YING (subtitled)

Just like me! Just like me!

Stage goes black again. Musicians break up. Audience starts to leave. Young MC bursts out onto stage again.

MC (subtitled)
Wait, wait! As a special favor, the Moon Lady has agreed to grant everyone here a secret wish...

Excited murmurings among the crowd. Ying-ying looks hopeful.

MC (subtitled)
...for a small donation.

Groans and boos. People disperse. Ying-ying starts walking toward stage, her mouth moving as if saying a prayer. She whispers...

YING-YING (V.O.)
I had a wish. I had a secret wish!

The young man disappears behind stage. Ying-ying, barefoot, begins to run. Darts behind stage, shouting. Then stops, stares, awed... The Moon Lady, still a silhouette, rubbing an aching shoulder.

YING-YING (V.O.)
She was beautiful...I could tell her everything... she would understand... how I lost myself... how I wished to be found...

LITTLE YING-YING (subtitled)
Moon Lady? Moon Lady? Please listen.

She doesn't hear. Ying-ying moves closer, her face full of trust and innocence, hope and expectation...

And now see Moon Lady turning around. The face -- it's a bit angular, coarse -- eyes are red. In one motion, Moon Lady, the tired actor, pulls off long hair, robe slips off shoulder...

See Ying-ying's face again, scared, but still hoping...

YING-YING (subtitled)
(tentative) Moon Lady?

YING-YING (V.O.)
Before ~~the~~ the secret wish could fall from my lips, the Moon Lady looked at me ...

The Moon Lady looks up, full-face. Little Ying-ying gasps.

YING-YING (V.O.)
...and became a man.

CUT TO...

INT. SAN FRANCISCO BEDROOM - MORNING

...a very pregnant YING-YING sitting on bed in the dark. Her eyes stare at nothing, show nothing. We recognize her as a younger version of the woman who was at the opening banquet.

YING-YING (V.O.)

...all my life, lost and found and lost again, the old fear ever new. Never more real than for my second born.

Ying-ying's 11-year-old daughter, YOUNG LENA, comes into bedroom doorway. She's half-Chinese, half-Anglo, hesitant, a lonely girl.

YOUNG LENA

Mommy? Daddy says it's time to eat.

Ying-ying turns to daughter, eyes now filled with terror.

YING-YING

Things are not balanced. The hill is too steep. The baby will fall out, damaged.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Young Lena is
~~Lena's~~ cooking bacon and eggs for her father, ST. CLAIR, an Anglo, tall, balding, slightly paunchy, glasses, very kindly, but annoyingly deaf and blind to problems.

YOUNG LENA

She's talking crazy again.

ST. CLAIR

Lena, honey, she's just going through a bad spell. A blue mood. All women do.

YOUNG LENA

But she said something about the baby falling out. She's talking about predictions again.

ST. CLAIR

Mommy had a very scary fall into a lake when she was a little girl. Last night she probably dreamed about it again. She'll be fine, you'll see.

As Lena cooks eggs sunnyside up, we hear her adult voice remembering that moment, the numbness still there.

LENA (V.O.)

To Daddy everything was sunnyside up, just like the three eggs he had every morning. I don't know if he was pretending, or if he was just blind.

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

Young Lena comes in Ying-ying's bedroom with breakfast tray.

LENA (V.O.)

What Daddy said was true. She went into these blue moods. Only they were so often I almost don't remember the times when she was normal.

Ying-ying is still sitting, statue-like, blank-faced, silent tears streaming. Lena is desperate to get through to her mother.

YOUNG LENA

Mommy? Are you hungry yet? ... Mommy?
Mommy, please answer... Please?

She sits on the bed. Fixes the tray just so. Fluffs her mother's pillow. Straightens the thin robe. Then reaches to dry her mother's tears with her own fingertips...

LENA (V.O.)

She didn't know I was there.

EXT. NORTH BEACH NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Young Lena
~~Lena~~ trudging home, schoolbooks in hand, to apartment on steep hill. She passes a freckle-faced boy who shoots rubber bands at her legs. They zing off her legs, and she doesn't seem to notice.

LENA (V.O.)

At least an orphan had no mother. No one to ignore you. No one you couldn't help.

INT. APARTMENT LIVING ROOM - DAY

Young Lena
Lena walks in room, freezes. Pregnant Ying-ying is taking down a scroll painting.

YOUNG LENA

Why are you doing this?

Pan out to living room: All the furniture is pushed against one wall, poltergeist style.

YING-YING

This building is too steep. A bad wind from the top blows all your strength downhill. So you can never get ahead.

As Lena watches, Ying-ying re-hangs a round mirror so it faces the front window.

LENA (V.O.)

She always had these predictions... about balance and harmony and disasters in life...and the crazy thing is, she was right...

Ying-ying, still frenzied, puts a goldfish bowl on the window sill, turning it just so.

LENA (V.O.)
 ...Because they all came true...The rent
 went up, Daddy's salary went down... The
 boy across the street ate dirty fruit,
 that's why he died...All those weird
 predictions.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Lena walks in, different school dress. Starts to put books down ...
 but nowhere to put them. Pan out: same living room, completely
 different arrangement. She bites lips to keep from crying.

LENA (V.O.)
 The one thing she never predicted, is
 when she'd start noticing I was there,
 too.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Foghorns. We see the apartment, second floor lights on both
 bedrooms. Fog rolling by. St. Clair comes to window, pulls down
 shade, light goes out. CLOSE IN on other window with fire escape
 balcony and ladder. Lena comes to window, looks out.

LENA (V.O.)
 If I could have hated her. Or even
 stopped loving her. It would have been
 better.

INT. LENA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

We follow Lena going from the window to crawling into bed. She's in
 pyjamas, trying to read a Nancy Drew book. Pan out and see that all
 the furniture is pushed against one wall.

LENA (V.O.)
 I thought I had the worst life of anyone
 in the whole world.

Suddenly... a loud thump on the wall adjoining other apartment.
 Lena startles. Muffled voices are heard, shouting sounds. Lena,
 curious, puts her ear to the wall. We hear amplified shouting...

ITALIAN MOTHER'S VOICE (O.S.)
 (Garbled Italian, then...) Stupida girl!
 Who are you to say...

GIRL'S VOICE (O.S.)
 Stop buggin' me!

We hear a loud whack! whack! whack! Girl's screams. Lena jumps from
 wall, horrified. More muffled shouts. Then crashing sounds.

LENA (V.O.)
 Oh God! She was being killed! I couldn't
 stop it...I couldn't stop... listening.

Cautiously, she puts ear back to wall. And now her imagination takes off: She sees a gypsy-like mother holding an ax above a girl's head. The girl, in rags, is coolly defiant.

ITALIAN MOTHER'S VOICE (O.S.)
...rather see you die! Rather you be
dead than let you...

GIRL (O.S.)
Why doncha' then!... Do it! No, Mama...
Mama! No! Stop it! Stop it!

Silence. Lena pushes away from the wall. In her imagination, sees dead girl lying on floor, vacant-eyed, Psycho-like. She lies back on pillow, contemplating this horror.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Another night: Lena in plaid dress is trying to do homework. She hears muffled sounds, stares at wall three beats, then quickly runs over and puts her ear to the wall. Her mouth opens in amazement...

LENA (V.O.)
She didn't die. She wasn't killed!

Again: shouting voices, pounding, crying. Lena slides to the edge of the bed, contemplating this. She brings knees up to chest, hugging them.

LENA (V.O.)
Night after night this happened, like
clockwork. And I realized I was no
longer alone.

Hold a beat on Lena crying for herself, consoling herself.

YOUNG LENA
My life isn't so bad. Her life is worse,
worse than mine.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - EVENING

Open on animal-like grunting sounds. Ying-ying is writhing on a bed with white sheets, terrified, in agony. She mumbles in Chinese, unaware of people around her.

Now we see Lena and St. Clair, standing at bedside. Lena is listening to a horror story that St. Clair can't understand.

YING-YING (subtitled)
My fault! My fault! I knew it would
happen. I did nothing to prevent it!

ST. CLAIR
Baby-doll, shh! shh!

YOUNG LENA (subtitled)
What was your fault?

Ying-ying stares at Lena, grabs her hand, as if Lena can save her.
As Ying-ying babbles in Chinese, we see what she sees...

INT. DELIVERY ROOM - EVENING

She's lying on delivery table, terrified, shaking her head.

YING-YING (subtitled)
He did not want to be born. His fingers
were clinging to my womb!

Garish faces of doctor and nurses, shouting at Ying-ying.

YING-YING (subtitled)
They shouted, Push him out! Force him to
come out!

Nurses nervously at looking at baby coming out, then each other.
Hands to mouths. Look of horror. Something's wrong, terribly wrong.

YING-YING (subtitled)
Then I saw him too, so angry, steaming
with life, his tiny legs, his small
arms, his thin neck, and his head!

Ying-ying looking down to between her legs, trembling, closing
eyes, opening and seeing same horror, shaking hard...

YING-YING (subtitled)
...a head so terrible... His eyes were
open, and his head-- it was open too!

Confusion in the operating room: Doctor and nurses shouting.
Incubator rushed in, equipment poised to save the baby.

YING-YING (subtitled)
Where his thoughts were supposed to be -
-there was nothing there!

The doctor looks down at baby, shakes head, stops nurses.

YING-YING (subtitled)
No brain! the doctor said. His head is
just an empty eggshell!

Ying-ying still on delivery table, panting hard, eyes big.

YING-YING (subtitled)
And then the baby sat up, he looked
right through me. He knew everything!

CUT BACK to...

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - EVENING

Ying-ying still clinging to Lena's arm, confessing all, crying...

YING-YING (subtitled)
 How I had given no thought to having
 this baby! How I had given no thought to
 killing my other son!

ST. CLAIR
 Lena, what's she saying?

Lena lets out big breath. She looks at her feet.

YOUNG LENA
 She hopes the baby is happy in little
 heaven... And now she thinks we should
 leave and go have dinner.

CUT TO...

INT. LENA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

A few nights later. The furniture is arranged in more normal
 fashion now. Lena is peering out, the door cracked open. She
 overhears:

ST. CLAIR
 Sweetie-pie? You have to eat something.
 Here, try a little soup...

Lena shuts door quietly, sits on bed, leaning against wall, hugging
 knees, rocking self. In the background, a doorbell rings. Then, a
 light rap on Lena's door.

ST. CLAIR (O.S.)
 Lena, someone's at the door for you.

Lena sits up puzzled, comes out, walks down hall, curious.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

In the foyer is a girl, Italian-looking, big eyes, messy thick
 braids, slight smile on lips -- a mischievous look.

LENA (V.O.)
 Even though I'd never seen her, I knew
 who she was.

Without a word, Italian girl smiles at Lena as if they're best
 friends, co-conspirators. She looks down hall, see Lena's bedroom,
 heads toward it, Lena following, looking behind, puzzled.

INT. LENA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The girl shuts the door. Goes to window. Opens it. Looks to side of
 fire escape. She starts to climb out. Lena watches, curious, then
 increasingly amazed. When the girl is fully on the fire escape, she
 turns back to Lena and giggles.

ITALIAN GIRL

My mom kicked me out. She thinks I'm going hafta wait outside the front door 'til I say I'm sorry. Only she's the one's gonna wait. And when she opens the door -- ta-da!-- I'm not there.

The girl disappears from view. We hear a window sliding open, her soft giggles. Lena sits on bed, leans against wall, looking worried, as if she were the one who was going to get caught.

LENA (V.O.)

Her mother was going to kill her for sure. How could she go back? Didn't she know how terrible her life was?

DISSOLVE to... Lena asleep in pyjamas. Shouting sounds heard. Lena sits bolt upright, scrambles over to wall, presses up close.

ITALIAN MOTHER (O.S.)

Stupida girl! You almost gave me a heart attack!

ITALIAN GIRL (O.S.)

I coulda been killed. I almost fell and broke my neck.

ITALIAN MOTHER (O.S.)

Come'ere.

ITALIAN GIRL (O.S.)

No, you come'ere.

Instead of the killing sounds Lena expects, the argument gives way to crying and laughing. Lena pulls away from the wall, stunned. Then she also begins to cry and laugh. And we see what she feels, something quite normal...

LENA (V.O.)

I could almost see them, kissing and hugging, hugging and kissing! I was crying for joy with them...because I had been wrong! The worst possible thing--it stopped. And if it could stop for her...

EXT. WOODSIDE/MODERN HOUSE/PRESENT TIME - EVENING

We see the exterior of a former barn in Woodside converted into modern, sleek house, Provencal style. Crickets peacefully chirp.

LENA (V.O.)

In time, Mom got better.

INT. MODERN HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Now we're in the living room with all the H&G trimmings of bleached floors, hand-sponged walls, white sofas, iron and glass tables. Adult LENA, 30, is scrutinizing all this, as if for the first time.

LENA (V.O.)
 Although she never lost her ability to
 make predictions...

The older YING-YING comes into view, also examining the house,
 noticing every detail, an ugly abstract painting.

LENA (V.O.)
 ...The philodendron died, then Daddy
 died. A heart attack six months ago. Of
 course, maybe his three eggs a day had
 something to do with it. Still...

Ying-ying is rubbing finger on rough surface of wood, frowning.

LENA (V.O.)
 She also predicted I'd marry a bad man,
 because I never finished my rice. And
 now that she's here, at our new house, I
 wonder what she'll see...

YING-YING (politely)
 Hmmm. You paid one million dollars. For
 this kind of wall.

Now Lena's husband, HAROLD CHEW, about 36, comes into view. He's
 tall, thin, mustached and balding. He wears glasses, a starched
 white shirt buttoned to collar, no tie, and crisply pressed Levis.

HAROLD
 It was sand-blasted to give that effect.
 And the walls-- see this-- they were
 hand-sponged to look weathered, more
 natural... Actually, the house was a tad
 over a million before we remodeled...

Ying-ying nods, unmoved by this explanation. She deadpans...

YING-YING
 Hmm. Sand and sponge cost so much.

Lena and Harold look at each other uneasily. Lena tries for a break
 in this line of conversation.

LENA
 Harold? How about we get dinner ready?

INT. KITCHEN - EVENING

Harold is peering into fridge, taking out marinated steaks. Lena is
 helping Ying-ying up onto a high stool at the granite counter.

HAROLD
 Lena, if you'll set the table and do the
 vegies and salad, I'll do the charcoal
 and steaks.

This suggestion leads to a terse, tense exchange which Ying-ying notes in her quiet fashion.

LENA
I did the grocery shopping.

HAROLD
All right, all right. I'll do the dishes
this time. Okay?

He exits with steaks out onto deck. Meanwhile, Ying-ying gives her daughter that knowing stare, until Lena can't stand it anymore.

LENA
It's just that he sometimes picks all
the easy things to do and leaves me the
rest... Don't worry, things are fine.

LENA (V.O.)
Of course, they weren't. I was just
hoping she wouldn't notice.

LENA (emphatically)
He's very nice to me.

Now YING-YING looks around kitchen, pretending to admire things, quirky trappings of modern life: a numberless clock, etc.

YING-YING
Nice. Nice. Very nice.

As Ying-ying glances at the fridge, she sees something: a grocery list? Lena startles, and tries to distract her mother.

LENA
Mom, why don't you rest in the living
room. I'll make you some tea.

Ying-ying is undeterred. She puts reading glasses on, slides off stool. Lena holds up tea selection. Mom's right on the list.

LENA
Look! I even have chrysanthemum tea.

CLOSE-UP on list. One side says "Lena;" under that, the cost of groceries, maid, garden supplies, etc. The other side says "Harold;" under that, cost of movies, DMV renewal, ice cream, etc.

YING-YING
What is this writing?

LENA
Oh, that? That's just... you know...
nothing really. Just things we share.

Ying-ying looks at Lena, frowns, goes back to list, moving her finger down each item. Lena sighs, starts to boil water.

LENA (V.O.)

At least that's what Harold calls it. Sharing. Everything fifty-fifty. So our love is always equal...The irony is...I was the one who started it that way.

And now she remembers how this logic first began.

INT. ROMANTIC RESTAURANT - NIGHT

A slightly younger version of Lena (longer hair) and Harold (more hair) are arguing about the restaurant tab, in jovial way.

HAROLD

Are you sure? After all, architects do make a lot more than junior associates.

LENA

Hey, hey, let's not rub it in! In any case, this is the world of modern dating. So fifty-fifty. Let's see, with tip, that comes to...

HAROLD

Forty-one dollars.

LENA

Total?

HAROLD

Each... What, you don't have enough?

LENA

No, it's not that... It's just that I never was very good at math.

Lena peers in wallet. She has \$46. A quick flicker of unease in the eyebrow, and then she takes the money out, smiling the whole time. He squeezes her hand, gives her romantic look.

LENA (V.O.)

So what if I had only a salad and he had three courses? We were equals. It was worth it.

We see a MONTAGE of their early relationship, as Lena narrates...

...Harold and Lena in movie theatre line. Harold walks up to booth, lifts one finger. When Harold looks at Lena, she flashes big smile, then holds up one finger to ticket booth person.

LENA (V.O.)

Harold used to say he valued our relationship too much to contaminate it with money. He'd seen too many couples break up over it...

...Harold shaking hands with clients. Lena's shadow standing next to a slide projector automatically clicking through a presentation: "Tray Shiek--an exciting new deli," restaurant layout, bazaar-style props, etc.

LENA (V.O.)

A year after we met he started his own restaurant design business -- what I called theme eating. He asked me to join him. He actually appreciated my ideas!

Harold grins across at her. Sends a private thumbs up.

LENA (V.O.)

To tell the truth...of the three best ones, two were mine. They brought in most of the new clients. I was pretty proud. Quietly proud.

...Harold dozing after lovemaking, Lena looking at him adoringly, then pan out to show a dog at foot of bed, Lena's apartment filled with feminine knick-knacks, antiques -- a place with personality.

LENA (V.O.)

Of course, we both agreed right from the start--no favoritism. Strictly business. So I didn't ask for or get any special treatment. No promotions or pay raise out of the ordinary. After hours, that was another story. He was great.

...Harold dozing, Lena reading a book in bed, then pan out to show we are in a different apartment, Harold's: pristine, minimalist, no warmth.

LENA (V.O.)

We got along so well at work, he ended up asking me to move in with him. We split the rent and the utilities. The food, too. That seemed fair. I mean, we weren't married. Not yet.

....Harold and Lena standing at city hall, in wedding clothes, getting picture taken, a few friends cheering.

LENA (V.O.)

And then last year, when we finally decided to get married, we promised we wouldn't change a thing. Committed to love, yes. False dependencies, no.

...Harold and Lena sitting in mortgage office, Harold signing last document. Mortgage officer shakes his hand. Lena just sits, smiles.

LENA (V.O.)

With the house, we agreed I'd pay only 15% of the mortgage since I earn so much less. But then again, I own just 15%.

...Lena at dining room table, petting mutt cat heatedly, staring at Harold off-screen.

LENA (V.O.)

...With most everything else, we keep track of what we spend, then split it fifty-fifty. Of course, we agreed early on not to include personal stuff like my tampons and feminine hygiene spray, or his shaving lotion and foot powder.

...See a similar dutch-treat-at-the-movies date, only Lena does not smile when it's her turn to pay.

LENA (V.O.)

So really, we're equals, except that Harold pays himself about seven times more than he pays me.

(beat)

Seven and a half.

...Now see Harold going over bills, exasperated about something, pointing out some item, lecturing. Lena's anger rises, her VO sputters, as she lists what has become growing grievances:

LENA (V.O.)

But we still have these philosophical arguments about the gray areas...like magazines I subscribe to, which he reads, but only because they're there ... And dinner for his clients, whom he argues are also our friends... And the cat! Even the goddamn cat's fleas!

...Lena strokes cat fiercely, sadly. In quavering voice...

LENA

You gave her to me as a birthday gift -- and now you're saying I have to pay to get rid of her fleas?

SMASHCUT BACK TO ...

INT. KITCHEN/PRESENT TIME - EVENING

...The modern kitchen, with shrieking tea kettle. Ying-Ying in background still staring at list. Lena's face is brooding.

YING-YING

This you don't share!

Lena is stirred out of her funk. She sees what Ying-ying is accusing her of: the item "ice cream" on Harold's side.

YING-YING

You don't eat ice cream. Ever since that time you got sick on strawberry and chocolate flavors together. I remember.

Lena nods. Ying-ying is pained for her daughter, scared.

YING-YING

Now you must pay for half his ice cream?...Why do you do this? Why?

LENA

I don't know...It's something we started before we got married...and for some reason, we never stopped.

At that moment, Harold comes in the house, indignant.

HAROLD

Lena, if you buy charcoal, you have to buy lighter fluid! Don't you know that yet? Do I have to remind you every time?

Ying-ying does not miss a beat.

YING-YING

Lena cannot eat ice cream.

Harold is puzzled by this non-sequiter. He smiles at Ying-ying.

HAROLD

What? What are we talking about?

LENA

It's true. I've hated ice cream almost all my life. I don't touch the stuff.

Lena goes to broom closet, pulls out lighter fluid, hands it to Harold who is still confused by this exchange.

HAROLD

I guess I assumed you were always trying to diet or something.

Push in on Ying-ying's beaming, ironic face.

YING-YING

Oh yes, she's lost so much weight you don't see her anymore.

INT. GUEST BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ying-ying sits on twin bed in a cramped attic room with sloped walls and a dormer window. Lena is putting towels on bed, avoiding eye contact as Ying-ying looks sadly at her, then at ceiling.

LENA

It's a firm bed, the way you like it. If you need more blankets --

YING-YING

One million dollars and the walls are still crooked. Ai! Bad luck.

LENA

Harold wanted to keep it that way, for the effect.

YING-YING

For effect a person has to lie here, thinking she is in a coffin.

Lena smiles. Ying-ying sighs, then touches a spindly legged endtable holding a vase with freesias. The table wobbles precariously, and Ying-ying snatches her hand back.

LENA

Careful, it's not too sturdy... Harold made it, back in college.

YING-YING

What did he make it this way? You put one more thing on top, everything falls down. Why do you keep it?

Lena busies herself shutting Venetian blinds at dormer window.

LENA

Do you need anything else?

Ying-ying looks at her with such a need to tell her something urgent. She opens her mouth. Takes deep breath...

YING-YING

Oh....no, nothing.

We hear the hollow sound of a door closing, Ying-ying alone. She turns lights off. Standing in the dark, she very quietly cracks the door again. Through this sliver, she watches Lena going downstairs.

INT. ~~STAIRWAY~~ - NIGHT

CUT TO Lena's POV as she looks around the house -- at list on fridge, at white furniture, ugly painting -- everything seems wrong. She starts breathing faster and faster.

She goes around corner, sees Harold in front of TV, gorging on ice cream right from the container, absorbed in Jeopardy.

HAROLD (shouting to TV)

Salmonella. What is salmonella!

~~INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT~~

Lena sits down with a thump at other end of sofa, crosses her arms. Harold keeps eating, deriding a contestant's answer.

HAROLD

What an idiot! It's "regatta", not "drag race". I can't believe this guy!

With eyes still fixed on TV, Harold gets up and opens the window.

LENA

It's cold.

He seems to notice her for the first time. Smiles pleasantly.

HAROLD

What?

LENA

I said would-you-close-the-windows-please-it's-cold.

Smile gone, Harold closes the window. Lena crosses arms, crosses legs, jiggles her foot up and down, then jumps up and marches to kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Worked up, she digs in her purse for pen. Failing that, she snatches her red lipstick, crosses out the words "ice cream." She pulls the list off the fridge.

INT. LIVING ROOM -NIGHT

She flings the list at Harold. He looks at the list, sighs, then looks at Lena impatiently, like a teacher to a pupil.

HAROLD

What's going on here?

LENA

I don't think you should get credit for your ice cream anymore.

Harold shrugs. His tone is patronizing.

HAROLD

Fine. You got it. End of discussion.

Lena spins around, arms akimbo, face angry.

LENA

Why do you have to be so godamn fair!

Harold clicks off TV, puts down ice cream. Lena begins rocking on feet, hugging arms to chest. You can tell she's a little scared.

HAROLD

Just what is this about exactly?

He's walking in semi-circle around her, like a lion stalking. She watches him out of the corner of her eye. Finally she bursts forth:

LENA

I don't know! ... Maybe everything! The way we account for everything, what we share, what we don't share. I'm sick of it! Adding things up, subtracting, making it come out even when it isn't. I'm sick of it!

Harold closes eyes, the master of self-control. In even tone:

HAROLD

You were the one who wanted the cat.

LENA

What are you talking about?

HAROLD

All right. If you think I'm being unfair, we'll both pay for the fleas.

Lena throws her hands up, exasperated that he doesn't get it.

LENA

This isn't about fleas! That's not the point!

HAROLD

Then please, tell me, what is the point?

Lena opens her mouth as if to answer, then starts to cry.

LENA (V.O.)

I didn't know! Was I asking Harold to support me? Did I think we should stop accounting for everything? Wouldn't we do it anyway, in our heads? Wouldn't Harold wind up paying more? And then wouldn't I feel dependent on him?

LENA

I just think we have to change things... We need to think what our marriage is based on...not this balance sheet...not who owes who what.

HAROLD

Shit.

He sits down. He frowns at her, sighs. Very calmly:

HAROLD

Well I know what our marriage is based on. And if you don't, then you better think about it before you change things.

Lena looks chastized, defeated, no escape route. She says nothing.

INT. GUEST BEDROOM - NIGHT

Offscreen we still hear Lena and Harold's voices downstairs. Ying-ying, we realize has heard everything. She shuts door quietly. She's standing in the dark, some moonlight filtering in through the blinds. She's agitated.

YING-YING (V.O.)

All around this house I see the signs.
My daughter looks and does not see. This
is a house that will break into pieces!
But if I told my her this, she still
would not see.

She sits down on bed, full of remorse. She stares at table.

YING-YING (V.O.)

To her I am an old lady, useless like
this table. I am mother, someone to be
careful with...She doesn't know. Once I
was lihai, fierce and stubborn. Born in
a tiger year. A good sign for boys, a
bad sign for girls...

She sits erect, her posture changing as she recalls...

EXT. OLD CHINA COURTYARD - DAY

YOUNG YING-YING, 16, haughty, bejeweled and beautiful, seated with perfect posture at table in courtyard -- the same courtyard we saw when she was 4 years old, only now everything seems more decadent.

YING-YING (V.O.)

I was strong...too strong.

At same table: half-sisters, mother, father, old aunts and uncles, various family people, older Amah. She scolds her giggling sisters.

YOUNG YING-YING (subtitled)

...Pay no attention to him! Stop looking
at him!

Laughter is directed to someone at the end of the table: a BAD MAN, around 30, very wealthy, dashing, his face reddened from drinking. Holding up a long knife, ominous-looking, he calls to Ying-ying.

BAD MAN (subtitled)

Ying-ying! Maybe you are still hungry?
Let me feed you, make you full...

Ying-ying giggles to half-sisters, then gives snooty sniff to bad man, staring at him evenly. Bad man laughs.

BAD MAN (subtitled)
See! She cannot peel her eyes off of me.
She is already mine!

With that, the man raises the knife and shouts something.

BAD MAN (subtitled)
Kai_gwa! (Open the watermelon!)

SMASHCUT to watermelon chopped in half, the man wiggling his tongue suggestively, people roaring with laughter. He offers a piece to Ying-ying. She sneers...

YING-YING (subtitled)
Sagwa! (Fool!)

INT. OLD CHINA/SITTING ROOM - NIGHT

In a sumptuous sitting room, Ying-ying, her half-sisters are cracking watermelon seeds, gossiping. On a side table next to window: a vase with a single chrysanthemum.

Across the vast room sit the older people and the bad man, smoking and chatting. The bad man throws sly looks to Ying-ying.

YING-YING (V.O.)
I pushed him away from me...I pushed so
hard I fell into my fate.

Bad man throws piercing stare. At that moment, flower snaps from stem, lands at Ying-ying's feet. She looks at flower, at man, startled as a rabbit. The man is nodding, as if he knows...

YING-YING (V.O.)
That flower, it was like a sign! Because
right then, I knew... I would marry this
man...

INT.SHANGHAI NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

As Ying-ying's V.O. relates the events of her marriage, we see glimpses of her marriage...as the glittery couple, entering a sophisticated Shanghai nightclub. Very western in decor, bands, cozy table, cigarette girls, obsequious Maitre 'D.

YING-YING (V.O.)
In time, I told myself he was not
arrogant, only self-possessed and
confident. And with excellent reason.

Beautiful women greet the Bad Man, envious of Ying-ying. He's aware of his power, so is she. She's completely vulnerable to his charms.

YING-YING (V.O.)
 A rich man from Shanghai. Sophisticated.
 Powerful. As proud as I was. He could
 give me the world! What I deserved! So
 many women wanted him. And he wanted
 only me!

See her adoring face looking at him, as he feeds her some food.
 He dabs her lips with a napkin, kisses her, feeds her again.

YING-YING (V.O.)
 ... (in small voice) What did I know? A
 16 year old girl.

EXT. LAKESIDE PARK - DAY

They're sitting by a lake, boaters drifting by. He is coaxing her
 to confess something. Her eyes sparkle. She pats her belly. When
 he roars with laughs, she throws her arms around him.

YING-YING (V.O.)
 I always searched for ways to give him
 more in return...I gave him my
 gratitude. My heart. A son.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Ying-ying in nice dress, sitting at table laid out with food,
 watching door. A baby cries. She goes to bassinet, picks up baby
 to soothe him. By the way she jiggles him, we know she's anxious.

YING-YING (V.O.)
 He became forgetful. I forgave him.

NEXT NIGHT, Ying-ying waiting once again, this time in gorgeous
 dress.

YING-YING (V.O.)
 So forgetful he had not returned by the
 next morning. Or next evening. So I
 looked for ways to regain his attention.

PAN to yesterday's meal which has been left on the table, and has
 begun to congeal.

YING-YING (V.O.)
 But I left his meal in its place to
 remind him of his forgetfulness.

NEXT NIGHT... Ying-ying disheveled, same food on table, rotten
 now. She's gaunt, hollow-eyed, distraught, crying, hysterical, on
 the edge of a psychotic break. The baby's crying and she doesn't
 seem to hear. The door opens, she jumps up. It's her drunken
 husband, with a FLOOZY in tow. She stares.

FLOOZY (subtitled)
 Who's this?

BAD MAN (subtitled)

This person? This person...is...a whore.
Like you. But as you can see, far more
expensive.

The man and floozy share a good laugh. He goes over to crib with crying baby. Scoops baby up, lifts him dangerously high, tosses baby roughly in the air. Baby shrieks, Ying-ying screams.

BAD MAN (subtitled)

My son! My son! Listen to that voice!
Strong like his father!

He puts the baby in floozy's arms. Ying-ying, shouting, rushes to take baby away. Bad man pushes her away. She flails at him. He shoves her against the wall. She's sobbing, delirious, her eyes seem crazy.

BAD MAN (subtitled)

Look at you! Disgusting! Filthy!

He lets go of her. She crumples. He heads toward bedroom with floozy. Suddenly she rushes toward table, breaks a plate, picks up the shard like a knife aimed at her husband. Man turns around.

BAD MAN (subtitled)

Clean up this mess...Do you hear me!

A held moment. His stare suddenly sober, cold as death. He takes his whore to bed now. Ying-ying left in silence. Tears streaming, she sweeps up the shards with her bare hands.

EXT. OLD CHINA ELEGANT COURTYARD - NIGHT

A lavish party in progress in the opulent courtyard of Ying-ying's father-in-law. Bright lanterns, musicians playing, guests milling, a blend of Western and traditional finery.

YING-YING (V.O.)

That night he left for Tientsin and we
never spoke again.

SEE Ying-ying now in exquisite gown, cradling her three-month-old baby. Guests crowd around to ogle the precious son.

YING-YING (V.O.)

It was the Red Egg Ceremony, in honor of
our son's 100th day, a sumptuous party
given by his family, one of the most
powerful in Shanghai. I had no choice
but to come and pretend to be proud.
After all, I was still his wife.

She's surrounded now by a group of matrons, giving her solicitous smiles.

YING-YING (V.O.)
 I could see the pity beneath their
 kindness. And the shame of it cut me
 more than anything he had ever done.

Suddenly a big commotion at the bandstand area. All eyes turn.

YING-YING (V.O.)
 There he was. With his opera singer.

Bad man, smiling, waving for attention so he can make
 announcement, other arm cuddling glamorous diva in low-cut
 Western gown.

YING-YING (V.O.)
 He announced his protege would sing in
 honor of his son. Also, that they were
 leaving together for her debut in Paris.

Matrons nearest to Ying-ying cannot resist the compulsion to
 furtively glance at her complete humiliation. She cuddles her son
 nearer.

INT. OLD CHINA/BEDROOM - NIGHT

She is in a bedroom with '30s furniture, kneeling in front of an
 old-fashioned wooden Chinese tub. She seems to be bathing and
 caressing the baby. Same disheveled look, vacant-eyed, crazed ...

YING-YING (V.O.)
 In the days that followed, I was a crazy
 person. My mind kept repeating a single
 thought. He had taken from me my
 innocence, my youth, my heart.
 Everything.

And now she vacantly raises the baby out of the tub. Reverse angle
 to see the baby's eyes are open, the arms limp. We realize she just
 drowned the baby.

YING-YING (V.O.)
 So I took from him. The only thing I
 could.

She stares absently at baby. Blinks, coming to sudden awareness of
 what she's done. A wave of PANIC sweeps over her. She clutches the
 baby to her, pats him on the back frantically, as if trying to
 revive him.

YING-YING (V.O.)
 In that moment I had only horror.

She looks at him now. Kisses his face, his hair, his eyes.

YING-YING (V.O.)
 Later, I was always thinking...my sweet
 little son, what would his life have

been? I have had a lifetime to think this...

She's wrapping him tenderly in his baby quilt.

YING-YING (V.O.)
...why he was better off, not to live with such an undeserving mother. A mother who would lose her mind when her son needed her, depended on her.

She lays him gently in his cradle.

YING-YING (V.O.)
One day, my next son would punish me as I deserved. To be born without a mind. Just like his mother.

EXT. OLD CHINA/VILLAGE COURTYARD - DAY

Ying-ying in plain cotton clothes, disheveled hair, oblivious to small black flies landing on her face. Is she in jail?

YING-YING (V.O.)
An accident, everyone said. What mother would kill her own son? But to punish myself, I went to the poor countryside to live with a second cousin's family...

Now we see she is sitting at a long bench and table with a dozen or so people hungrily eating from bowls, chickens scratching in the background, corn husks lying out to dry.

YING-YING (V.O.)
I was no longer a tiger with a fierce, proud heart. I was a wounded animal, hiding, waiting between the trees, seeing and not being seen...

She looks down. Her bowl is completely black with buzzing flies.

INT. SHANGHAI DRESS SHOP - DAY

In a Shanghai dress shop, Ying-ying is elegant in a stylish dress, modern hairstyle and hat. She looks like a rich customer.

YING-YING (V.O.)
After ten years I was ready to come back. By then the war had come and gone, and my family's fortune had changed...

A slightly dumpy woman comes up to her, and Ying-ying greets her.

YING-YING (V.O.)
...so I became a shopgirl.

Ying-ying guides the customer around the shop. She selects a hideous flowery dress, holds it up, her expression dispassionate.

YING-YING (V.O.)

I wore clothes far better than what was sold. And this made women buy the cheap clothes I showed them, thinking they could buy my same kind of prettiness.

Cut to customer in the flowery dress, holding her breath to keep from bursting the seams. Ying-ying is coolly critical.

YOUNG YING-YING (subtitled)

Few woman can wear so many colors at once. But your skin is unusual.

YING-YING (V.O.)

I did not need to learn to flatter women. I already knew what they wanted to hear. I was like a ghost, with no real feelings to call my own.

Now we see her ringing up the sale, putting dress in box. She hands dress to customer. Behind the customer is a Caucasian man, who tilts his hat to Ying-ying. He is a younger version of ST. CLAIR.

YING-YING (V.O.)

That's how I was when I met St. Clair ... when he began to court me.

We see St. Clair's adoring look, her polite smiles. He does a pantomime of pointing to the door, offering crook of his arm for a walk. It's obvious they don't speak the same language.

YING-YING (V.O.)

He was kind. I was not unkind. He loved me. I did not dislike him. He poured out everything. I did nothing.

They sit on a bench at a park. He gives her a gift. While she is opening it, he reaches behind the bench, plucks a single chrysanthemum from the park garden. She doesn't see this.

Inside the box: an obviously cheap brooch and bracelet. When she looks up to thank him, she's shocked to see the flower he's twirling in his hand. She murmurs to herself:

YING-YING (subtitled)

This same sign. It can't be. This man?

She stares at it, at him. He thinks she's impressed with the gift.

YOUNG ST. CLAIR

It's nothing much. The sorta thing a fella might give a gal ... someone he's kinda sweet on.

YOUNG YING-YING (subtitled)

I will save it... for the future...
(then in ENGLISH) Thanks you.

ST. CLAIR

I guess you've never seen anything so fancy. I just wish they were real...

As he continues talking in a language she can't understand, she carefully wraps the gift and flower in tissue, placing them in the box. He tenderly watches her.

YING-YING (V.O.)

Of course he did not know I was raised with riches he could not even imagine. But I said nothing. Because that day I knew. One day this man would be my husband. And he would ask to see those trinkets again.

INT. WESTERN-STYLE HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Young Ying-ying and St. Clair sitting on bed, she in white peignoir, he in robe. A small wedding bouquet on nightstand. She's staring at her wedding ring, the small diamond.

ST. CLAIR

It's real... In my country it means, it's a pledge, to give you the best of myself...Sweetie, do you understand any of what I've just said? (In bad Mandarin) Tingde dong?

He gives her an inquiring look. Ying-ying smiles politely, clearly not understanding--yet she does.

YOUNG YING-YING (subtitled)

Tingde dong. (I understand.)

She goes to her suitcase, brings back a white box, opens it, unwraps the trinkets and holds them in her hand to show him.

YING-YING (V.O.)

I showed him those gifts he gave me four years before...

We see St. Clair full-face reaction: his astonishment, gratitude, then his tearful joy as he hugs her. We see Ying-ying's face, detached from what is happening to her...

YING-YING (V.O.)

He was so happy! And I felt so sad... that this was all I could give back to him. The love of a ghost, no spirit... and later I gave him a daughter, and she had no spirit either...

RETURN TO INT. WOODSIDE LIVING ROOM/PRESENT TIME - NIGHT

Harold and Lena at a silent stand-off. He's cold, furious. She's defeated, scared. Suddenly they hear the sound of something heavy falling, the sound of glass shattering. They both look up.

INT. WOODSIDE GUESTROOM - NIGHT

We see right away: the broken table, the vase cracked into half, shards still rocking from the recent violence in the guestroom. Now see older Ying-ying's face, no longer detached, but anguished. She paces like a tiger.

YING-YING (V.O.)

It's not too late. All my pains, my regrets --I will gather them together.

LENA (from "downstairs" O.S.)

Mom? ...Mom?

YING-YING (V.O.)

I will see a thing before it happens...

She goes to window, stands there, her back to us, moonlight through the venetian blinds casting stripes over her.

YING-YING (V.O.)

I will prevent this from happening...

She turns around. Tight shot on her dark face, her silhouette.

YING-YING (V.O.)

My daughter will hear me calling even though I have said no words...
She will climb the stairs to find me...

INT. STAIRWAY - NIGHT

Lena walking up the stairs, a worried look on her face.

LENA

Mom?

YING-YING (V.O.)

She will be scared because at first her eyes will see nothing...

Lena, squinting, comes in. Tight shot on Ying-ying's face, still completely in shadow. Then back to Lena's scared face...

YING-YING (V.O.)

...but she will feel in her heart, this place where she hides her fears...she will know I am waiting, like a tiger in the trees -- now ready to leap out and cut her spirit loose!

Wide shot for the full confrontation: Ying-ying, with stripes of moonlight draped over her body, illuminating her eyes.

She reaches for Lena, Lena comes, sinks to knees. Ying-ying puts her hands out, holds Lena's head, the two of them willing themselves to a moment they never had.

YING-YING
Do you know what you want?

Tears stand in Lena's eyes. She doesn't understand.

YING-YING (soothing)
I mean from him.

So Lena tries to think. To tell her mother and herself.

LENA
Respect. Tenderness.

And sweetly, lovingly...

YING-YING
Tell him. Now. Then leave this lopsided house. Never come back until he gives you these things. With both hands open.

Lena looks up at mother, terrified to think of doing this.

YING-YING
Losing him doesn't matter. It is you who will be found. And cherished.

Lena looks at her mother with incredible awe, to finally see this strength, to believe what she's heard, to believe in herself.

NOW CUT BACK TO...

INT. SAN FRANCISCO/DINING ROOM - NIGHT

....same noisy dinner party we opened with. Lena is talking to her girlfriends, Waverly and Rose, a tall, sweet-faced, strikingly beautiful Chinese-American with glossy hair down to her waist. Lena's new boyfriend, KEN, brings her a plate of food, as the girls talk. He is handsome, Chinese-American, and very attentive to Lena.

LENA
So my mom sees this mirror at the foot of our bed. She says, "A mirror there is bad luck. All your romance hits the mirror. Poom. Goes the opposite way."

WAVERLY
So what'd you do?

KEN
We moved it.

Waverly and Rose laugh. Lena turns to Ken with a half-smile.

LENA
He'll do anything for her. They're allies.

He shrugs. Hey, whatever it takes. Draws Lena into a soft kiss. The girlfriends exchange a glance, they like this guy for her.

LENA

Although he's capable of taking it to extremes. After the party, we're leaving for Tahoe, and he actually asked Mom along!

KEN

She'd have a great time.

LENA

Choosing between the two of us, I'd rather I had the great time.

Rose looks across the room, gestures...

ROSE

They just brought out my mom's cake. I'm counting on you guys for two slices apiece.

KEN

Five.

In the background, we see AN-MEI, short and plump, the third woman we met at the Joy Luck Club, setting an enormously gaudy sheet cake on the table. She stares at the cake, shaking head, upset. Rose walks up to her, softly asks:

ROSE

Ma, what's wrong?

She tenderly rubs her mother's neck, a shiny scar.

AN-MEI

Oh, I thinking... those babies in China.

ROSE

Yeah, I bet they're dreaming right now about meeting their little American sister. Look how excited June is.

They both look over at June who appears to be fending off advice from Lindo and Ying-ying. An-mei begins to cut the cake.

AN-MEI

Yes, but their mother...that's who they waited for all these years. They will be so sad.

ROSE

They already know. Auntie Lindo wrote them.

Rose can't see, but An-mei's eyes flicker at this.

AN-MEI

Still... to wonder what your mother
is... and never know.

And now An-mei is rubbing her own neck, remembering what her own mother meant to her...long ago.

INT. OLD CHINA/BEDROOM - DAY

In a darkened bedroom of a middle-class countryside house in China, a deathwatch. We first see a girl seated near bed, LITTLE AN-MEI, 9 years, nervously rubbing a smooth scar covering half her neck.

AN-MEI (V.O.)

As a little girl, I wondered every day
...worst of all, I had to wonder in
secret.

Also seated, a sleepy boy, DIDI, around 6, two middle-aged women (AUNTIES 1 and 2). Another woman (AUNTIE 3) waves a fan over a figure in the bed. Suddenly An-mei's hand is slapped down.

AUNTIE 1 (subtitled)

An-mei, stop playing! Show some respect!

A groan comes from the bed. It's an old woman's voice, An-mei's grandmother, POPO.

POPO (O.S./subtitled)

An-mei, come!

An-mei is wide-eyed with fear. Auntie 1 pushes An-mei.

AUNTIE 1 (subtitled)

Didn't you hear your grandmother? Hurry!

You can tell An-mei doesn't want to see Popo. She shuffles over. And now we see a horrifying sight: POPO, her face puffy and orange with jaundice, bulging eyes, grimacing in pain. Popo grasps An-mei's hand in a deathlock, pulls her close.

POPO (subtitled)

If she comes, never say her name!

An-mei nods quickly. The other aunts begin speaking at once.

AUNTIE 2 (subtitled)

She is a traitor to our ancestors!

An-mei turns to that angry-faced aunt, nods her head.

AUNTIE 3 (subtitled)

So low even the devil must look down to
see her!

An-mei turns to another angry-faced aunt, nods her head.

AUNTIE 1 (subtitled)

To say her name is to spit on your
father's grave! You do not know her!

An-mei nods her head, then shakes it, thoroughly confused.
She sits down somberly. Her voiceover recalls her terror.

AN-MEI (V.O.)

They were talking about my mother. They
called her a ghost, because in their
minds, she should not exist. In my mind,
I had no memory of her. Because she had
left our family when I was only four...

Another groan from Popo. Auntie 1 inspects, then pronounces in
irritated voice:

AUNTIE 1 (subtitled)

She's messed the bed again. Get cloths,
clean water, two pails.

The others cough as stench fills the room. An-mei covers her nose.

AN-MEI (V.O.)

Now everyone was angry. Because my
mother wrote them a letter. She said she
was coming home...to pay respects to
her dying mother one last time.

INT. ALCOVE - DAY

In a dusty alcove, Little An-mei kneels with her little brother,
Didi, in front of a family altar. On the wall are scrolls, as well
as a painting of a very stern-looking young man. Didi is tapping
the floor with a stick of incense to torment a beetle.

LITTLE AN-MEI (subtitled)

Stop that! Didn't you hear what Auntie
said? No playing while Popo is sick.

DIDI (subtitled)

I'm not playing. I'm chasing.

LITTLE AN-MEI (subtitled)

You have no respect for ancestors --
just like our mother!

DIDI (subtitled)

You're not supposed to say her name!

As An-mei lights the incense, bows, etc., her adult voice recalls:

AN-MEI (V.O.)

Our minds had been washed so many times
we had no thoughts of our own. I learned
to hate my mother, a woman who abandoned
my brother and me. Who broke her vow as
a widow. Who ran away to the north to

marry a rich man who already had a wife,
two concubines, and other children.

Didi runs off. An-mei turns to stand up, then sees the painting of the stern young man, his eyes staring at her. She walks by, the man's eyes "following" her.

AN-MEI (V.O.)

That painting was the only father I
knew. Popo used to tell me he watched me
for any signs of disrespect.

She sticks her tongue out at him, then, scared, runs out of room.

INT. STAIRWAY - MORNING

An-mei is sitting at the top of the dark stairway, looking down, listening to people below arguing, shouting. She sees someone. Her eyes grow big. She stands up slowly, breathing fast, looks down.

AN-MEI (V.O.)

Even though I had not seen her in all my
memory, I knew who she was.

LITTLE AN-MEI (subtitled)

The ghost!

REVERSE ANGLE and we see her: A stunning, remarkably stylish and beautiful woman illuminated by morning light pouring through doorway: AN-MEI'S MOTHER, short hair, in fashionable Western clothes, high heels (played by the same actress who plays her future granddaughter, Rose).

AUNTIE 1 (subtitled)

How can you come and bring disgrace into
our house! If you have any respect to
give, then let her die in peace!

We see aunties scurrying around and scolding An-mei's mother. Mother moves calmly as if she has not heard anything. She has eyes only for what is up the stairway. The aunties now grow quiet, watch, as the mother climbs the stairs. They seem frightened of this woman's power.

At the top: An-mei and her mother, staring at one another quietly.

AN-MEI (V.O.)

I saw my own face looking back at me.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

An-mei and her mother sitting on a plain narrow bed. An-mei refuses to look at her. Yet her mother is doing all the loving things she has never experienced: speaking gently, stroking daughter's palms.

AN-MEI'S MOTHER (subtitled)

My precious one! Grown up already!
You've been a good daughter?

An-mei glances out of the side of her eyes, says nothing. Mother begins brushing An-mei's hair, coaxing in sweet voice:

AN-MEI'S MOTHER (subtitled)
Little treasure, you know who I am?

An-mei vigorously shakes her head. Mother looks stunned, momentarily stops brushing, then continues bravely...

AN-MEI'S MOTHER (subtitled)
You look just like me.

Suddenly she gasps, looks at An-mei's neck, at the scar. She runs her fingers along it, then chokes and begins to wail. She hugs An-mei, rocking her, her heart broken.

AN-MEI'S MOTHER (subtitled)
All my fault! All my fault!

An-mei is confused, moved, and she searches in my mind why...

AN-MEI (V.O.)
Her voice, her sad crying voice...and
then I remembered something... a dream I
once had ...with this same sad voice.

FLASHBACK: KITCHEN/EATING AREA - NIGHT

IN DREAM-LIKE FOCUS: BABY AN-MEI, 4 years old, chin level to the table, watching a healthy Popo bouncing a crying baby, Didi, on her lap. Younger versions of the aunties bringing food to the table, various men and other children around the table.

A large steaming hot pot (soup on a burner stand) is brought to the table. Suddenly the room grows quiet. A 40ish man, AN-MEI'S UNCLE, rises from chair. All eyes turn toward kitchen doorway...

CUT TO An-mei's mother standing in the doorway, now wearing plain Chinese clothes, no makeup, long hair in a bun.

AN-MEI'S MOTHER
An-mei! Come with me?

See An-mei trying to get off bench, others holding her back.

BABY AN-MEI
Ma! Ma!

Now everyone leaps up, shouting and jostling table. A bit of soup spills over edge. Popo's voice dominates, full of bitterness:

POPO (subtitled)
Who is this ghost? Not an honored widow.
Just a number three concubine!

UNCLE (subtitled)

If you take your daughter with you,
 she'll become just like you. No face!
 Never able to lift her head!

Mother keeps shouting and gesturing for An-mei to come to her. Others continue shouting at mother, knocking into table. In SLO-MO the soup rocks on its stand, and then tilts over and spills with a roar, screams, shouts. FADE to black...then in stunned whisper:

AN-MEI (V.O.)
 It was like everyone's anger was pouring
 all over me...

DISSOLVE TO BEDROOM - MORNING

Open on bright hot white sunlight pouring through window, baby An-mei's voice panting as if choking. We see her lying in bed, a huge cloth wrapped around neck, red blisters evident around chin area. She's delirious with pain, her eyes swollen and blinking.

In her blur, we see blinked glimpses of her mother, her face puffy with tears, wailing in a haunted voice we've heard before...

AN-MEI'S MOTHER (subtitled)
 All my fault! All my fault!

With camera still trying to focus on mother, we hear An-mei's off-screen reply.

BABY AN-MEI (O.S.)
 Mama? Mama?

Now we see that An-mei is only mouthing the words. No sounds come out from her swollen throat. Mother wails, her heart breaking.

Sounds fade, screen goes black again...then up again on blurred stern image of Popo, waving a fan over An-mei, still delirious.

POPO (subtitled)
 An-mei, listen carefully! If you die,
 you leave behind a short life, a big
 debt to your family. Your funeral will
 be small, your dying clothes very plain.
 Better come back...you must obey.

Back on Popo's face, tears running down her dry cheeks, still trying to be stern, but breaking into worry and tenderness...

POPO (subtitled)
 An-mei!....little one, even your mother
 has used up her tears and left. If you
 don't get well soon, she'll forget you.

BABY AN-MEI (O.S./ECHO)
 Mama! Mama!

We see An-mei's lips moving again, but no sounds, only choking.

AN-MEI (V.O.)
 You see how smart Popo was? I came
 hurrying back from the other world to
 find my mother...

We see An-mei mouthing the words "mama" again.

AN-MEI (V.O.)
 ...but I was too late.

DISSOLVE to...same bedroom 5 years later. An-mei is 9 once more,
 sobbing piteously as her mother holds her. The child is mouthing,
 then saying aloud...

LITTLE AN-MEI
 Mama. Mama.

INT. POPO'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Little An-mei is somberly standing, watching. Her mother has donned
 traditional Chinese clothes, is now softly speaking to Popo, who is
 barely conscious, clearly taking her last breath. There's some fake
 moaning going on in the background by the other aunties.

Then An-mei's mother pulls out small knife. The room grows quiet,
 tense, expectant, yet no one moves.

We see the knife put to the fleshy part of her upper arm. She
 hesitates only a moment, bites her lower lip, then slices quickly.
 Sweat bursts on her brow, blood drips to floor.

She puts the flesh into a bowl with herbs, then brings this to
 Popo's lips, spoon in hand, trying to feed Popo. Popo turns away.

AN-MEI'S MOTHER (subtitled)
 Mama, don't leave. Take my life instead.

AN-MEI (V.O.)
 It was an old tradition. Only the most
 dutiful of daughters did that... But I
 could see, she didn't do this just for
 show...

An-mei is swallowing hard as she watches. Her mother is clasping
 Popo's hand, stroking her forehead...

AN-MEI (V.O.)
 This is how a daughter honors her
 mother. The pain of the flesh is
 nothing...the pain you must forget.

She brings the soup bowl closer once more...

AN-MEI (V.O.)
 Of course then, mother and daughter make
 most important sacrifice for most
 important people. Each other.

And Popo drinks.

INT. SAN FRANCISCO SUPERMARKET/PRESENT TIME - DAY

An old JEWISH WOMAN is handing out a sample of soup to 3-year-old girl, perched in shotgun seat of supermarket cart. The little girl is JENNIFER, the granddaughter of An-mei who's pushing the cart, her worried expression...

AN-MEI

Is that hot?

JEWISH WOMAN

Would I give her hot?

Probably not. An-mei watches her granddaughter gulping soup with obligatory disapproval. When child spills a few drops on dress...

AN-MEI

Too fast! Now your poor mother have to slave so hard, get grease out.

JEWISH WOMAN

No grease. No fat. All natural ingredients.

An-mei does not even dignify this with a glance. She wheels Jennifer and cart up the next aisle, where her daughter Rose has collected an armful of items in their absence. Rose turns and dumps her load into the cart. An-mei barely looks before commenting...

AN-MEI

Ted coming to dinner?

Rose blinks, frankly astonished.

ROSE

Uh, not dinner actually, just a...sort of meeting at the house tonight.

AN-MEI

Meeting.

The unasked question hangs there. Awkwardly ...

ROSE

Well, we both thought it was time to settle all the property stuff.

AN-MEI

Both.

ROSE

Yeah, both, absolutely.

Rose wheels cart away to avoid continuing this conversation.

AN-MEI

What you gonna ask for?

Without turning...

ROSE

What are you talking about?

Silence. A silence that ultimately makes Rose turn.

AN-MEI

Talking about what you worth.

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

An-mei strapping Jennifer into the rear carseat. Rose is loading groceries into the trunk. Calling out...

ROSE

Ma? How'd you know I was meeting Ted?

AN-MEI

You put in cart flour, egg, bittersweet Hershey bar, Skippy Chunky -- good for only chocolate peanut butter pie. Who else eat?

As Rose continues loading, we PUSH INTO her thoughts...

ROSE (V.O.)

Nobody. That's the point, isn't it, Ma?

EXT. CAMPUS - DAY

A younger Rose, in flashdance clothes and cascading hair over bare shoulders, reading by a fountain at Cal Berkeley. Beside her, a violin case with homemade ethnic jewelry, a sign, "Any three \$20." A tall blond hunk approaches...

TED

'Scuse me...are you Rose?

Her face looks up, squinting against the sunlight, trying to hide her sudden surprise and excitement. She nods as casually as she can, pretending to barely recognize...

ROSE

...yeah, you're from Ecoethics...Peter?

And behind the nonchalance...

ROSE (V.O.)

Actually, I knew exactly who he was. He was gorgeous, every girl's sophomore fantasy, incredibly rich, and Ted. In that order.

TED

Actually, I'm Ted.

She nods, okay, Ted. Tries to keep him from seeing how fast her heart is beating. He just smiles, effortlessly boyish.

TED

I missed class. I, uh...wondered if I bought you some coffee and pie, or something, I could look at your notes.

ROSE

What kinda pie?

She's just fighting to keep it all together.

TED

I sorta like chocolate peanut butter. They only make it at Blake's. It costs double.

She screws up her face at the very thought of the suggested flavor.

ROSE

What makes you think the notes are that good?

Now he smiles for real. Golden sunlight.

TED

I don't. Truth is, I cut class just to ask you for them.

The biggest and most thrilling shock of her young life.

ROSE

Why would you want to do that?

One last smile...

TED

What's the matter? Don't you ever look in a mirror?

EXT. BERKELEY NEIGHBORHOOD - DUSK

Rose and Ted, carrying groceries, are walking up steep pathway, lined with lovely shingled bungalows and lush gardens.

ROSE

It's right up here. Just ten more steps.

TED

You didn't have to go through all this trouble. Just because Blake's was out of pie.

ROSE

Well, you got me intrigued. This is my chance to do two things I've never done before...

TED

Bake a peanut butter pie...

At the door now. She's fumbling for her key.

TED

...and...

She kicks open the door...

ROSE

...and what?

TED

...and what else?

She saunters on past him, into the bungalow...

ROSE (O.S.)

...look in the mirror.

Ted's smile. What else?

INT. BERKELEY BACKYARD - EVENING

In her gardenlike background, they dine by candlelight overlooking the Berkeley hills. The spaghetti is long finished, she sips wine, watching raptly as he talks animatedly, stuffing his face with...

ROSE (V.O.)

My pie was a pitiful rendering of a disgusting idea. He loved it.

He certainly seems to.

ROSE (V.O.)

He was so terrific, laughed at all my jokes. And he was interested in my jewelry business. He said I was a risk-taker.

DISSOLVE TO...hours later, only the wine left.

ROSE (V.O.)

He liked me for myself, whatever that meant.

DISSOLVE TO...first light. Nobody's moved.

ROSE (V.O.)

By dawn, the most amazing thing had

happened. I'd forgotten he was gorgeous,
I'd forgotten he was rich. I'd forgotten
everything, except that he was wonderful.

At last, Ted pushes back from the table. Looks at her.

TED

My folks are having a party tomorrow,
it's their anniversary. Will you come?

She is too stunned and in love to do anything but nod. He stands,
goes to her, kisses her once tenderly. Murmurs...

TED

I'll get you at noon.

And leaves. Hold on her. Watching him go.

EXT. GARDEN PARTY - DAY

Rose and Ted are making their way across a croquet lawn court, Ted
greeting certain people (clubby-looking WASPs). Rose has on Indian
gauzy clothes, but her hair is now neatly tied back.

ROSE (V.O.)

His dad owned a publishing empire, his
mom's family had wineries. I'd never
been around people like this.

They approach a middle-aged couple, Ted's parents, MR. AND MRS.
JORDAN, both with perfect silver hair. They stand under umbrellaed
table lined with champagne flutes stuck with paper umbrellas.

TED

Mom...

He kisses her, as his father looks on...

TED

This is Rose Hsu, my girlfriend.

As Mrs. Jordan graciously reaches for her hand...

ROSE (V.O.)

The one word sent me into total shock.
From which, I'm afraid, I never quite
recovered.

EXT. BALCONY TERRACE - DAY

Rose stands alone with her empty flute of champagne, gazing out at
endless gardens. The blank stare of the died-and-gone-to-heaven.
Sensing someone beside her, she turns to...

MRS. JORDAN

Is this a private reverie? Or can an old lady join you?

Rose smiles, dreamy and serene.

MRS. JORDAN

You and Ted haven't known each other long, have you?

Rose blinks.

ROSE

Actually, no.

MRS. JORDAN

I've never heard him speak of you until this morning, but it's always a thrill for ~~the~~ mother to hear that sort of excitement in her son's voice.

The older woman glances down...

MRS. JORDAN

So I hope you don't misunderstand what I have to say.

Sound FADES, as Mrs. Jordan's lips keep moving. Rose's face goes from smiles, to less smile, to blank.

ROSE (V.O.)

I couldn't believe what she was telling me. It was straight out of some awful racist movie, like the World of Suzie Wong.

The camera rotates, giving the terrace is spinning, Rose is falling. *Impression that the*

MRS. JORDAN

... Ted is going to be judged by people of a different standard. Publishers, authors, critics, their wives. And they won't be as understanding as we are...

Rose is absolutely reeling.

ROSE (V.O.)

I guess that would be too much to expect.

Rose struggles to clear her throat.

ROSE

Mrs. Jordan, you sound as if Ted and I are getting married. That's hardly the case.

MRS. JORDAN
 I know, dear. It's just that, you know
 ...the way the world is... how unpopular
 Vietnam was!

Rose stares down at her empty champagne flute. We see how terribly her hand is trembling.

ROSE
 I'm not Vietnamese. I'm American.

MRS. JORDAN
 Yes, of course you are. It's just that
 I...I understand you. That's all I'm
 trying to say. Do you understand?

From behind them, a throat CLEARS. As they turn, Ted steps forward.

TED
 Mom, I always knew you were a jerk...

Ignoring her shock he steps even closer.

TED
 ...but this is the first time in my life
 that I'm actually ashamed of you.

Hard to tell which of the women is more stunned. But to somewhat different effect.

MRS. JORDAN
 Ted, I think you better apologize right
 now or leave immediately!

Ted nods. Okay.

TED
 Mom, I'm sorry you made a fucking
 asshole ~~out~~ of yourself in front of the
 woman I love.

He turns away from his mother, takes Rose's hand.

TED
 We're outta here.

INT. BERKELEY BUNGALOW - NIGHT

In Rose's loft, a confection of Victoriana, wicker, baskets of flowers, and a window view of East Bay lights. Ted and Rose on bed, kneeling, facing each other, their silhouettes against the window.

Ted's hands cups Rose's face protectively. He kisses his brow, her eyes, one at a time, the tip of her nose, her lips.

ROSE (V.O.)

The strange thing is, I wasn't sorry, what his mother did. How else would I have known if he hadn't rescued me? How wonderful he was... That he loved me.

DISSOLVE TO the two of them now undressed, lying down. He's kissing her neck, her shoulder, whispering fiercely.

TED

Rose, Rose. Can you believe what's happening to us?

Her face: She can't. To her, this is some kind of miracle.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Blasts of Vivaldi's "Four Seasons" on the organ. An-mei and husband starting to stand up and face aisleway. Now see Rose walking down the aisle, grinning at sedate Anglos on one side, very mixed enthusiastic crowd on the other. She's ecstatic.

ROSE (V.O.)

In six months, we were married. Ted invited the whole world to come and kiss our asses. It was perfect, the two of us against the world, love conquers all. Even her.

Mrs. Jordan in front pew, rises, dabbing eyes. Beyond her, we see Ted, proud, standing at front, waiting for Rose.

ROSE (V.O.)

I couldn't free myself from one constant thought. The one miracle stroke of luck in my lifetime had somehow actually happened. I had to cling to that, never let it go.

He's saying "I do." She's saying "I do."

ROSE (V.O.)

I swore to myself. Over and over. He would never regret it.

INT. NEW HOUSE\LIVING ROOM - DAY

Rose directs traffic as workmen and interior decorators swarm about her. She compares swatches of fabric to wallpaper, nodding approval, as she points to a workman to move a credenza a few inches to the left. Her manner is efficient, calm in the eye of the storm, on top of everything.

ROSE (V.O.)

I put the house together for him,
everything just the way I knew he'd
like. I did everything that way...

She takes a wall scone from a workman's hand, holds it against the wall for the decorator's approval.

ROSE (V.O.)

I fixed the food he'd like, arranged the
vacations he'd like, and of course,
always dressed to what I knew would be
his approval. All of this, without his
ever having to ask for any of it.

DISSOLVE TO...same living room, years later. Wandering guests,
smoke, music, caterers with hors d'oeuvres. One more in an endless
series of endless dinner parties. We follow Rose, strikingly
dressed, on her hostess rounds...

ROSE (V.O.)

I was offered a fellowship in fine arts
to this school I admired in Idaho. Of
course, that was out of the question.
The interesting part was, I never asked
the question. Not even of myself.

She arrives at a small circle surrounding Ted. He is engaged in a
spirited debate with an extremely sophisticated blonde trophy wife
of an older executive. Rose steps to Ted's side, touches his arm
gently. He smiles at her briefly and continues his conversation
without missing a beat, as she stares up supportively.

ROSE (V.O.)

He was running two of his family's
magazines now, and there were four or
five business affairs each week. I was
glad to help, and knew he appreciated
it.

Ted gestures, making his point, spilling a little of his drink on
the hardwood floor. Without hesitating, Rose gracefully dips to the
floor, dabbing at the spill with her napkin. Once again, Ted and
the others scarcely notice.

ROSE (V.O.)

But over time, I could see that Ted was
becoming bored. We said less and less.
So I tried harder, behind the scenes...

She looks up, almost wistfully, at her preoccupied husband.

ROSE (V.O.)

...little things, I took over paying the
household bills, bought him special
gifts that showed my love, arranged

imaginative evenings and weekends alone,
which he pretended to enjoy, while
keeping one eye on the phone or the fax.

EXT. TENNIS COURTS - DAY

Rose in new haircut, on tennis courts, waiting for Ted's serve.

ROSE (V.O.)
Nothing worked. The more I did, the more I
was taken for granted. Finally, I tried to
imitate his interests, desperate to claim
some share of his time...

Now we see Ted doing easy lobs to her right, then left, Rose
flailing away, running all over the court, missing.

ROSE (V.O.)
...your basic humiliation.

As she goes to scoop up errant balls, Ted waves to someone at next
court, lopes over. It's a blonde, club-classy in looks. Rose
bounces ball impatiently, then walks over slowly. Ted finally
notices her, makes awkward introductions.

TED
Oh, Beth. This is Rose... I'm teaching
her how to play. It's her first day.

ROSE
Hi. I'm Ted's wife.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Rose, tired and happy, cradling newborn Jennifer in her arms.

ROSE (V.O.)
For six years, I never breathed a word
about how desperately I wanted a baby. I
knew he would have allowed it, to please
me. But I also knew that it would
completely disrupt everything important
to him about our life.

Ted moves into frame, smiles warmly at Madonna and child.

ROSE (V.O.)
Finally, I got pregnant for the worst
reason imaginable. A last attempt to
hang on. Although, of course, I never
thought of it that way at the time.

Ted lifts Jennifer in his arms.

ROSE (V.O.)
The good news was, he adored her.

He turns his back to Rose, focusing completely on the baby.

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

Grassy backyard, ringed by leafy trees. PAN to Rose, standing pensively at a child's redwood swing and play set. Her fingertips reach absently, touch the slide. Suddenly she seems about to cry.

ROSE

We could still try. We haven't tried counseling. I can change, you know. I can. You have to tell me what you want.

TED (O.S.)

Rose, I'm doing this as much for you as for me.

She turns, and we see him now. A different pain, but perhaps as great as hers.

ROSE

Just tell me what you want...

He stares at her with pity. She takes a deep breath.

ROSE

What's her name? Is she beautiful?

TED

Look, you'll get all the papers next week. I think the house has to be sold, but any special things you want to keep, you just let me know. Any cash...you know, whatever...you just call Barry, and...

ROSE

What's her fucking name!

Silence.

TED

What's the difference? She's not the reason.

Hold on her, fighting not to cry.

ROSE (V.O.)

And of course he was right. I was the reason.

EXT. LAND'S END BEACH/PRESENT TIME - DAY

Melancholy Rose, in the same clothes from the supermarket, sits on a sand dune, watching Jennifer play along the shoreline. The wind is whipping, her teeth are chattering.

ROSE (V.O.)

I was so angry and confused. Ma always said I was the kind of person who didn't try hard enough. But this time I tried so hard. I really did. I paid attention! And I lost Ted anyway.

Now it's later. She's walking with her baby along the beach.

ROSE (V.O.)

I should have been thinking what I was going to say tonight to Ted at our 'meeting,' about the papers he'd sent over...

Jennifer tugs at her dress, points out to sea. As Rose squints out...

ROSE (V.O.)

...all I could think about was Bing.

DISSOLVE TO

EXT. SIMILAR BEACH - DAY

Adorable 4-year-old boy, BING, is building a sandcastle way too close to the surf. Cruising for a bruising.

ROSE (V.O.)

Bing was the littlest. The only baby left.

See YOUNG ROSE, 14 years old and already a beauty, lying on her stomach, reasonably nearby. She is putting polish on her nails, reading Mademoiselle, and babysitting Bing at the same time. She's done this before. PAN to...

...MATTHEW and MARK, her 11- and 12-year-old brothers, engaged in a clumsy game of frisbee.

ROSE (V.O.)

When Matthew and Mark were growing up, I had to always babysit them, be second mother, even though I was only a few years older.

PULL BACK to see An-mei, futilely sweeping sand off a blanket, putting the picnic lunch in order.

ROSE (V.O.)

But just as I was reaching adolescence, and longing for my freedom, they grew up. Sort of.

BACK to Bing, oblivious to a breaker crashing outside that spells disaster.

ROSE (V.O.)
But then came Bing.

Breaker's on its way...

ROSE (V.O.)
Whenever I wanted to go to the mall,
have a sleep-over, or God forbid, a
date, there was always my responsibility
to Bing. At least, that's how my mother
saw the world.

The inevitable CRASH!! Bing tossed head over tea kettle, the sand
castle instant history. Rose barely notices. The funny thing is,
Bing just pops up delighted with his ride. Looking around for more
fun.

YOUNG ROSE
You wanna watch it?

Not hardly. Bing points her to a man far out on the point of a reef
ledge, casting for perch.

BING
I wanna see Daddy's fish!

And off he goes toward the reef, which extends out like a walkway
into the ocean.

YOUNG ROSE
Just stay out of the water.

She goes back to her nails and her magazine.

ROSE (V.O.)
I wouldn't admit it out loud, but the
little guy could be pretty sweet.

Bing just keeps going, staying dutifully clear of the surf.

ROSE (V.O.)
Maybe it was just my age, but sometimes
I liked to fantasize Bing was my baby.
That this was how it would be someday.

Suddenly a fight breaks out among the other boys. They're throwing
seaweed at each other, fists of sand.

AN-MEI (O.S.)
Rose! Stop those boys!

Rose looks at her wet nails regretfully, climbs to her feet as
carefully as she can, starts toward the boys, holding up her wet
nails protectively.

YOUNG ROSE
Mathew! Mark! Stop it! Stop it right
now! You heard what Mommy said.

As she circles them angrily, we see Bing in the blurred background climbing up onto the reef. Once he stands up, he starts to walk in wobbly manner over the rough surface. When Rose finally trudges back, disgusted, she looks up just in time to see Bing now far out onto the ledge. She's confused.

YOUNG ROSE
What's he doing there?

Spray from a wave splashes Bing a little and he laughs, then walks closer to the ledge, toward the pounding waves. Another wave is building. Bing is leaning over, peering into the water.

YOUNG ROSE (softly)
Bing. Bing. No, Bing.

SLO-MO: Wave hits. Rose closes eyes. Starts to stand up. Opens eyes. Bing is teetering, about to fall in. She closes eyes again. Opens eyes. The ledge is empty.

REAL-TIME: She's standing now. Staring. Disbelief on face. She walks to water, stares at the spot where he fell in. Begins to hyperventilate. The sounds of gulls and waves.

EXT. BEACH - NIGHT

Boats and search lights bobbing on the dark water. Rose, brothers and sisters standing in a line on the beach. Janice and Ruthie are crying, sniffing. Boys are grim, scared. In hollow voice:

ROSE (V.O.)
We searched all night.

FATHER is talking to rescue people, combing back hair with hands, in shock, trembling and confused.

FATHER
He didn't disobey! Usually he obeys.
It's because ...the water... it's too
cold for him. He doesn't like a bath...

We see the figure of An-mei running up and down the beach, calling. Motioning to rescuers to keep trying here and there.

ROSE (V.O.)
But it was hopeless. After six hours,
the police sent us home to grieve.

EXT. SAME BEACH - DAWN

An-mei is trudging forward rapidly across sand toward the reef. Rose is following behind, stumbling, sad and scared.

ROSE (V.O.)

The next morning, she woke me before the sun was up. She said we had to go back and find Bing...I thought she meant his body...

An-mei is standing at reef's edge. She pulls a Bible out of her bag, looks skyward and begins to pray loudly in quavering voice.

AN-MEI

We have come to your house many years!
We sang your songs! We brought you
money! In return you gave us many
blessings. Now we have misplaced one.

An-mei takes out a little baseball jacket. Voice is soft, sad.

AN-MEI

We were careless. This is true. Maybe
you hid him from us to teach us a
lesson. I have learned this.

She stands upright, once again suffused with hope. Loudly:

AN-MEI

I have put it in my memory. And now --I
have come to take Bing back!

Rose gasps, then begins to cry.

ROSE (V.O.)

She still thought he was alive. That she
could still save him.

Suddenly An-mei shouts and scrambles to another part of the reef.

AN-MEI

There! I see him! There!

Rose pauses one beat, then scrambles over, looks eagerly. So you know how much Rose also wants to believe. But --it's only seaweed.

DISSOLVE TO later in the day, the full sun. Rose sitting on dry sand near the surf. An-mei walks toward surf with a tea cup.

ROSE (V.O.)

When the Christian God failed her, she
reached back into her life. To China. To
her childhood.

AN-MEI

An ancestor of ours once stole water
from a sacred well. I'm thinking the
water is trying to steal back. We must
sweeten the temper of the dragon who
lives in the sea.

An-mei tosses the contents of tea cup into ocean. Now she reaches into her pocket and takes out a wadded scarf.

AN-MEI

And we must give him another treasure to hide. So he will let Bing go.

She opens the scarf. In her palm: a blue star sapphire ring. She stares at it sadly, then tosses it into the water. Another wave rushes in. She wades in, searching. It recedes. Nothing. Rose is sitting with her arms perched on knees, very sad.

ROSE (V.O.)

Hours went by. Wave after wave after wave. She wouldn't leave.

DISSOLVE TO later in the day, nearing dusk. An-mei is looking down the beach. Frowns. Eyes grow big. Clasps hands. In wondrous voice:

AN-MEI

You see! You see! Whole time we were watching the wrong way. There he is!

Rose now turns, gets up slowly. We see what she sees: the dark figure of a boy, growing sharper in focus, who looks exactly like Bing, trudging wearily, head bent, shoes in hand. Rose is laughing-crying, the joy of disbelief, of miracles coming true.

ROSE (V.O.)

I could feel what my mother felt! The hunger in our hearts. Instantly filled. And then...before we could even run to grab him in our arms....

Simultaneous to her VO, we see what she whispers hoarsely...

ROSE (V.O.)

We watched him light a cigarette. Grow tall. And become a stranger.

DISSOLVE TO dusk...An-mei walking fast across sand, now carrying an inflated inner tube with fishing line trailing. Rose pleading.

YOUNG ROSE

It's no use! Why are you trying? It's hopeless. He's dead! He's gone!

An-mei whirls around, angry.

AN-MEI

No! How can you say such a thing! I will save him! I will bring him back!

At reef's edge, An-mei tosses the inner tube in the ocean, hanging onto the fishing line. The tube drifts out toward a cavern.

AN-MEI

I can still see him in my mind. He is in a cave, sitting on a little step above the water. He is hungry, a little cold. Not complaining too much.

An-mei is straining to hold onto the fishing line. The tube tugs toward the cove. Crashes against the outer walls. Holding on but -- the line snaps. An-mei stands still, watching as the tube now drifts farther away. Until it is a black dot. Then disappears.

Hold on An-mei's blank face changing to horror, then despair.

ROSE (V.O.)

At that moment, and not until then, did my mother give up...And it made me angry, so blindingly angry, that everything!...had failed us.

INT. SAN FRANCISCO LIVING ROOM/PRESENT TIME - DUSK

Adult Rose, in the same windwhipped beach clothes we saw earlier, near-dozing on the couch, Jennifer nearby watching Nickelodeon.

ROSE (V.O.)

Unlike my mother, I never expected to find Bing. Just as I'd always known I could never save my marriage. What good does it do to try? Trying just gets your hopes up.

The doorbell rings. She startles, fully awake. Who is it? She climbs off the sofa, glancing at her watch, is it too early for Ted? Heading for the door, hopeful, finger-combing her hair, an appraising glance in a hall mirror, opening the door to...

AN-MEI

You expect I was someone else?

Not surprising. It's written all over her face.

INT. KITCHEN - DUSK

Rose busy at her kitchen counter, combining the ingredients for the famous peanut butter pie. She's working a little frantically now, somewhat against the clock. Clearly, anxiety over Ted's arrival is mounting. An-mei leans around her, scooping a fingerful of the mix. Tastes, to apparent disgust.

AN-MEI

What you going to do with leftovers, after he eat one slice?

Rose keeps her eyes down, trying to suppress both irritation and shame.

ROSE
Throw it away, I guess.

AN-MEI
You ask yourself, why you make this?

Rose keeps working.

AN-MEI
Because I know, even if you don't.

ROSE
I like being pathetic, Ma. It's an
acquired taste.

Her mother is unfazed. Nothing stops her from making her point.

AN-MEI
You think he sees this pie, now he's so
sorry take you for granted? You think
this, you the foolish one.

Rose puts the mixing bowl under the twin beaters. Her face is
burning. She's holding her tongue.

AN-MEI
You not knowing you own worth. Every
time you give him gift, like begging,
take this, sorry, please forgive me, I'm
not worth as much as you. So he only
take you more for granted.

Staring now, at the back of her daughter's head...

AN-MEI
You just like my mother. Never know what
you worth...

And now we drift back in time to An-mei's memory...

INT. OLD CHINA/DOORWAY - DAY

We are in the same house of LITTLE AN-MEI's childhood. AN-MEI'S
MOTHER, in plain white mourning clothes, standing at doorway with
leather trunks packed. HEAR the continuation of An-mei's thought...

AN-MEI (V.O.)
...until too late.

An-mei's mother looks at An-mei and DIDI, standing between AUNTIES.
Mother squats down to say good-bye to children. First, Didi. She
takes his hand. He yanks it back, scowling.

AN-MEI'S MOTHER (subtitled)
Listen to your uncle, your aunties.
Respect them...If you forget your
mother, fine. If you forgive...

He turns his face away. Mother nods, pained. Then looks at An-mei.

AN-MEI (V.O.)

She was going back to Tientsin. To her life as the fourth wife of a rich man. She did not ask me to come, but she said if I followed, she would not stop me.

UNCLE and AUNTIES begin yelling, yanking An-mei away from mother.

UNCLE (subtitled)

You want to ruin her life as well!

AUNTIE 1 (subtitled)

Never able to lift her head!

An-mei watches this chorus of rebukes, then suddenly jerks away from aunties and toward mother. The insults continue as mother and daughter look at one another, an unspoken alliance made.

AN-MEI (V.O.)

I had lost her once before. This time, I took my chance before it was too late.

EXT. BOAT DECK - DAY

An-mei and her mother on deck, drifting by villages. Her mother is telling her amusing things with pantomime. An-mei is laughing.

AN-MEI (V.O.)

My mother was so lively! On the long boatripe to Tientsin she told me stories of our new life together. About crowded bazaars. Vegetables I had never eaten before. About a city with foreigners of all kinds! White Russians. Americans. Germans. Each with their own habits. Some dirty. Some clean.

EXT. BOAT DECK - MORNING

Several days later.... They're out in open waters, staring at sea. An-mei notices her mother's gloomy face.

AN-MEI (V.O.)

But as we got closer to my new home she changed. Her face, dark as the sea.

Mother speaks somberly, still looking out over deck.

AN-MEI (V.O.)

She said, Soon your new life begins. My old one ends...She talked in riddles.

INT. BOAT COMPARTMENT - EVENING

An-mei is asleep in their compartment. Sounds of door awaken her. She gasps at what she sees, wide-eyed, frightened.

REVERSE ANGLE to An-mei's mother coming in. A Chinese version of Louise Brooks: pale face, red lips, smudgy eyes, brown felt hat with long feathers, two perfect curls on forehead, tapered dress.

AN-MEI (V.O.)

She changed her clothes for our arrival.
She looked scary. She looked scared. She
told me I would look the same way.

An-mei's mother strides in. Puts a cream-colored box down. It says, "Fine English Apparel." Mother's face is noncommittal.

AN-MEI'S MOTHER (subtitled)

Open it. Inside is your new life.

An-mei doesn't seem eager to open the box. Finally she does. Her expression turns from worry to pure girlish delight and awe. She lifts a starch-white dress with ruffles on collar and petticoat.

Next see mother helping An-mei into dress, which is obviously too large. Then white stocking, over-sized Maryjanes, hair bow. An-mei is happy, her mother intent on pinning everything in place.

AN-MEI (V.O.)

I loved those new foreign clothes! So
you see, by time I arrived in Tientsin,
I too had changed.

Sounds of boat whistles, porter bells. Mother reaches into a trunk. Wraps six dead foxes with beady eyes around neck. An-mei stares at their heads as she and mother walk out of compartment.

EXT. ROADWAY TO MANSION - DAY

An-mei and mother in a pedicab that comes to a halt. As mother pays pedicab driver, An-mei stares ahead, eyes full of awe.

AN-MEI (V.O.)

I knew our new home would not be an
ordinary house.

Now see the house, a mansion, British in style, with three stories, a sweeping lawn, statuary. The whole thing is lifeless, lonely.

INT. FOYER OF MANSION - DAY

A magnificent foyer with grand staircase. Paintings of dogs and English girls on the wall. An-mei and mother are being warmly greeted by a woman servant, YAN CHANG, about 40, gossipy with a lot of warmth. Yan Chang is ordering men servants to take the trunks, a girl to get tea, scolds another girl for staring at An-mei.

AN-MEI (V.O.)

Yan Chang, my mother's personal maid,
greeted us as if we were the mistresses
of the house...So many servants!

They start up the staircase, Yan Chang gossiping, An-mei straining to look at everything that catches her eye, rooms, people, riches. An-mei's mother is looking around warily.

AN-MEI'S MOTHER (subtitled)
Where is Wu Tsing, the others?

YAN CHANG (subtitled)
Gone to the countryside. What a pity,
eh? (sarcastic laugh)

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

An-mei's mother and Yan Chang are unpacking. An-mei is touching a bed with a rose-silk quilt folded at bottom. She looks around room: at the carved round table, the little stove. She's walking around the room, not daring to touch anything.

AN-MEI (V.O.)
I could not remember a time when I felt
more happy, more comfortable.

An-mei is now staring at a chiming wooden Bavarian clock. She watches in wonder as moving figurines erupt from clock's mouth and German music plays. She bursts out into delighted laughter.

CUT TO...

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

...An-mei lying in plush bed next to her mother, drifting off to sleep, perfectly contented.

AN-MEI (V.O.)
To belong to my mother, to have so many
pleasures belong to me...

She's jarred back into wakefulness by the same Bavarian clock, its music and figurines now seeming garish and frightening.

AN-MEI (V.O.)
But one day all our pleasures stopped.

EXT. DRIVEWAY TO HOUSE - DAY

An-mei is on the front lawn, kicking a ball at dogs. The dogs chase it, then break away, yelping toward commotion entering the driveway. An-mei, retrieving ball watches what's arriving: A black motorcar, followed by a dozen or so rickshaws. Someone shouts and then servants pour out of the house. Yan Chang and An-mei's mother come to the front door. An-mei looks on with excitement...

AN-MEI (V.O.)
Wu Tsing, his other wives, and children
-- at last my new family had come home.

A flurry of obsequious behavior, and then the car door opens and two servants assist a large man, WU TSING, 55, arrogant and powerful. An-mei's mother bows to him. He acknowledges no one.

An-mei is now standing next to her mother and Yan Chang who explains to her who is arriving. We see women getting out of their rickshaws: a feeble blind woman, around 55, FIRST WIFE, being helped by two ugly middle-aged daughters with facial deformities.

AN-MEI (V.O.)

There was First Wife, a ghost of a woman. Many years ago, she blinded herself so she could not see the faults of her daughters.

Now see a timid mousy-looking woman, THIRD WIFE, around 40.

AN-MEI (V.O.)

Third Wife was supposed to bear Wu Tsing a son...

Now see three timid, mousy-looking daughters of different ages.

AN-MEI (V.O.)

Now she was scared she would be kicked out one day. With nowhere to go.

Next, see a young girl, 15, pretty in a tawdry way, graceless and awkward in her movements, little girlish in her whiny complaints.

AN-MEI (V.O.)

Wu Tsing bought Fifth Wife as a toy, a hasty decision he now regretted.

An-mei's mother now stiffens with discomfort upon seeing an elegant woman, 45, SECOND WIFE, emerge from the car. She has haughty manners, wears a fur coat and long strand of pearls, and is holding a year-old baby boy. Yan Chang whispers to An-mei who she is.

AN-MEI (V.O.)

Second Wife...with Wu Tsing's only son. She was once a famous opera singer...

Now see mother whispering to An-mei with a scowl.

AN-MEI (V.O.)

Well, maybe not that famous.

Second Wife now notices An-mei and her mother. She gives a cool smile to them, then hands off the baby to a servant.

SECOND WIFE (subtitled)

Give my son some rice porridge. No meat. His stomach is upset from the ride...(then, to An-mei's mother) So you've come back already...This is the daughter you wanted permission to bring?

Second Wife holds An-mei's chin, examining her face, frowning, then smiling and nodding as if she approves. In a swift, graceful movement, she removes her pearls, drapes them around An-mei's neck.

AN-MEI'S MOTHER (subtitled)

Don't! This is not proper for a small child! She will break it.

Second Wife ignores An-mei's mother and croons sweetly to An-mei.

SECOND WIFE (subtitled)

Who is she to say what is proper? A treasure like you needs precious pearls to light up your face...You may call me Big Mother.

An-mei, speechless, fingers the pearls. An-mei's mother nudges her.

AN-MEI'S MOTHER (subtitled)

Give them back. Hurry now.

SECOND WIFE (subtitled)

You will make your Big Mother very angry if you do not thank her.

An-mei looks from her mother to Second Wife. She looks down at the pearls, trying to decide what to do. Finally she whispers.

AN-MEI (subtitled)

Thank you, Big Mother.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

An-mei's mother is pacing, obviously upset. An-mei is sullen.

AN-MEI'S MOTHER (subtitled)

She makes clouds in one hand, rain in the other! She is trying to trick you, so you will do anything for her!

AN-MEI (V.O.)

I did not believe her. I already thought I was lucky to have gained favor from someone as important as Second Wife.

An-mei's mother holds her hand out.

AN-MEI'S MOTHER (subtitled)

Give me the necklace then....You do not believe me. So you must give me the necklace. I will not have her buy you for such a cheap price.

An-mei refuses. Her mother walks over, takes off necklace. As An-mei cries to stop her, mother throws necklace on the floor, stomps it, then picks up the necklace, and shows An-mei the result.

AN-MEI (V.O.)

That precious pearl necklace that had almost bought my mind and heart...it was made out of glass!

Mother hugs An-mei protectively as if she had almost lost her.

AN-MEI'S MOTHER (subtitled)

You did not believe me. Why should you?
I have become nothing. A low-class concubine. A Fourth Wife!

She grabs An-mei by the shoulders, shakes her with fervor.

AN-MEI (V.O.)

She was shouting, telling me that she was not always a Fourth Wife. She had been a First Wife, my father's only wife! I was the daughter of a First Wife. I should not forget this.

AN-MEI'S MOTHER (subtitled)

Can you recognize what is real? My words. No one else's. What only I can give you...Never forget.

Mother frantically pulls something off her finger and puts it in An-mei's hand. An-mei stares at it with wonder. It is a blue sapphire ring, the same one we saw An-mei as a mother throw into the ocean when her son Bing drowned.

AN-MEI (V.O.)

That day, my mother gave me...all the strength she had left.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

An-mei and her mother are asleep in bed. A hand touches her shoulder, then shakes her awake. She whimpers upon seeing the face of Wu Tsing. An-mei's mother also awakes, then pleads.

AN-MEI'S MOTHER (subtitled)

You cannot... My daughter is with me.

WU TSING (subtitled)

Then send her away. Or let her watch.

AN-MEI'S MOTHER (subtitled)

An-mei. Go to Yan Chang's room. Hurry.

An-mei slips out of bed, looking back at the large shadow of Wu Tsing crawling into her mother's bed.

INT. PARLOR ROOM - AFTERNOON

Snow is falling outside. Yan Chang, An-mei and her mother are roasting chestnuts on top of a coal-burning stove. Suddenly Second Wife appears at doorway, angry eyes aimed at An-mei's mother.

SECOND WIFE (subtitled)
You go behind my back and ask Wu Tsing
for a bigger allowance?

AN-MEI'S MOTHER (subtitled)
You were busy. I only asked so I could
go visit my mother's grave...

SECOND WIFE (subtitled)
Come into my room to discuss this.

An-mei and Yan Chang exchange looks, then go back to roasting chestnuts, picking off the shells. Their appetite is gone.

YAN CHANG (subtitled)
Your mother is too good for this house.

LITTLE AN-MEI (subtitled)
Then why did she come here?

YAN CHANG (subtitled)
Ai! A child cannot ask such questions!

They are silent a few moments, then Yan Chang softens, sighs.

YAN CHANG (subtitled)
Ai-ya! I should have stopped her...

An-mei does not look at Yan Chang, pretends to eat as An-mei's VO narrates what Yan Chang told her. Snow falls more furiously.

AN-MEI (V.O.)
My mother had gone to a temple at a
lakeside resort to make an offering for
her dead husband...

And now we see a brief SERIES OF CUTS of what happened...

...An-mei's mother strolling with Yan Chang by a lakeside temple.
Wu Tsing admiring her, Second Wife noticing this.

AN-MEI (V.O.)
Second Wife was tired of seeing Wu Tsing
give his money to teahouse whores...

...Second Wife making friendly conversation with An-mei's mother on
pathway, as if asking for directions. Yan Chang looks suspicious.

AN-MEI (V.O.)
She decided she would find him another
concubine. A lonely widow. With no
position, no power...She invited my
mother to come play mah jong.

...Late at night. Second Wife, Third Wife, and another rich-looking
woman play mah jong with An-mei's mother. Yan Chang observing.

AN-MEI (V.O.)

Second Wife insisted my mother should stay the night. Why wake the rickshaw boy? You can sleep in my bed.

...An-mei's mother sleeping in bed, Second Wife getting up, a dark figure of man coming into room.

AN-MEI (V.O.)

Before she could cry out, Wu Tsing raped her...

...An-mei's mother, face swollen from crying, hair unbound, leaving in pedicab with Yan Chang.

AN-MEI (V.O.)

By mid-morning, everyone knew about the unvirtuous widow who had seduced Wu Tsing. Popo and my uncle banished her.

...An-mei's mother in bed, radiant, having just given birth to boy.

AN-MEI (V.O.)

Wu Tsing promised my mother her own household if she gave him a son. But Second Wife took away the promise...and the son.

RETURN TO INT. PARLOR ROOM - DAY

An-mei is looking out window at snow falling.

AN-MEI (V.O.)

After Yan Chang told me this, I saw everything. I knew things I never understood before. What children should never know...

An-mei turns to see mother standing in parlor doorway, crying.

AN-MEI'S MOTHER (subtitled)

It's no use.

AN-MEI (V.O.)

I saw everything.

INT. AN-MEI'S MOTHER'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

An-mei is kneeling at bedside, pleading, patting mother's hands.

AN-MEI

Mama! Wake up! Hurry wake up!

And now see An-mei's mother: convulsing, her arms and legs moving back and forth like a soldier marching. Her jaw is pulled down, her tongue swollen, choking her. An-mei, distraught, looks behind her.

Cut to a row of somber people lined up in the dimly-lit room: Third Wife, her daughters, First Wife's daughters, servants, Second Wife, Wu Tsing, a doctor type. An-mei returns to pleading with her mother. Yan Chang comes to her, gently trying to pull her away.

YAN CHANG (subtitled)

She has taken too much opium. The doctor says we can do nothing. Come away...

An-mei jerks away defiantly, flings herself on mother who is still marching eerily in bed.

AN-MEI (V.O.)

They were doing nothing, only waiting for my mother to die. I too waited those many hours...

We see An-mei looking around her, trying to hold on, whispering to her mother. Bavarian clock begins to chime and garish music plays.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

An-mei's mother is laid out in a coffin, magnificently dressed in Chinese clothes. Monks with burning incense are chanting. An-mei in white clothes is walking around coffin with chains on her ankles. She is numb with grief.

AN-MEI (V.O.)

Second Wife told me my mother had died by accident, taking too much opium. Lies! I know my mother killed herself on purpose. Why else did she die two days before the lunar new year?...

We see An-mei mumbling words before an altar, putting incense in the holder, performing the expected rituals...

AN-MEI (V.O.)

Why did she plan her death so carefully it became a weapon? She had eaten sticky sweet dumplings, one after the other, filled with opium. You see how life is, she told me, you cannot get enough of this bitterness...

An-mei is bowing before her mother's body...

AN-MEI (V.O.)

When the poison broke into her body, she whispered to me that she would rather kill her own weak spirit so she could give me a stronger one...

Now An-mei throws herself on top of her mother's body. Her mother's eyes pop open. An-mei stares at her, talks tenderly to her...

AN-MEI (subtitled)
 Mama? Can you see? Can you see I am no
 longer scared? I am strong now. I see
 the truth too.

She closes her mother's eyes gently. Then looks around: at Wu
 Tsing, Second Wife, Third Wife, etc., all of them frightened.

AN-MEI (V.O.)
 They were all scared of my mother's
 vengeful spirit. Because we all knew: On
 the third day after someone dies, the
 spirit comes back to settle scores. And
 that day was the Lunar New Year, when
 all debts must be paid. Or disaster and
 misfortune would follow...

Wu Tsing now comes forward with incense, bows to mother's body.

AN-MEI (V.O.)
 So on that day, Wu Tsing promised to
 revere my mother as if she had been
 First Wife, his only wife...He promised
 to raise me and my mother's son as his
 honored children, the highest position.

As Second Wife comes forward to give incense. An-mei pushes her
 away, shows her the fake pearls, then crushes them under her foot.

AN-MEI (V.O.)
 And on that day, Second Wife's hair
 began to turn white.

An-mei standing in front of her mother's coffin, faces the whole
 roomful of people with startled faces. Rage in her young face...she
 opens her mouth, and...

...SCREAMS her mother's power and fury, as we PAN the terrified
 faces of the assembled household, and CUT TO...

INT. SAN FRANCISCO KITCHEN/PRESENT TIME - DAY

...An-mei standing at Rose's counter, continuing her story in
 present time.

AN-MEI
 ...and on that day, I learned to shout.

See Rose now, mesmerized, as her forgotten blender beats on
 unheeded. Her eyes brim with tears to hear this story for the first
 time.

ROSE
 Mama...what does it mean? What does it
 mean for me...?

An-mei draws herself up tall. Repeats...

AN-MEI
Can you recognize what is real? My
words, no one else's. What only I can
give you. Never forget.

A last lingering look. And An-mei leaves her there to ponder.

EXT. BACKYARD - NIGHT

The grassy yard we've seen before, now illuminated by yard lights. Under an overhanging tree, Rose sits alone on a child's swing, looking into distance, a stare at once fierce and helpless. From somewhere...

TED (O.S.)
Rose...? Rosie...?

She does not look up, nor seem to hear him. He approaches somewhat wearily.

TED
I rang the fuckin' bell for fifteen
minutes. Are you okay?
(beat)
Honey...? Are you all right?

She stares at the ground.

ROSE
Get out of my house.

For a moment, he's too stunned to answer.

ROSE
You heard me, get out!

She still hasn't looked up. Begins swinging absently, in a shallow arc. Her eyes seem plenty crazy.

TED
Honey, it's our house, and we agreed to
sell it. That's what I'm here to talk
about.

ROSE
You're not taking my house. You're not
taking my daughter. You're not taking
any part of me.

And now she looks up. Straight to his eyes.

ROSE
Because you don't know who I am.

In full quiet fury.

ROSE

I died sixty years ago. I ate opium, and
I died. For my daughter's sake. Now get
out of my house.

But Ted doesn't go away. He comes closer. Sinks down on his heels
just in front of her swing. Softly...

TED

I'm listening.

For the first time now, tears stand in her eyes.

ROSE

It's not your fault. None of it.

She draws a ragged breath.

ROSE

I was the one who told you I wasn't good
enough. That your love was worth more
than mine.

Now her tears come.

ROSE

I was so full of shit.

But she says no more. Because looking at him...

...he's crying, too.

INT. LIVING ROOM/DINNER PARTY - NIGHT

...same noisy dinner party we opened on. An-mei cuts the cake, puts
a piece on her granddaughter's plate. Jennifer looks up, hopeful.
On second thought, An-mei piles a second piece on top of the first.
Then breaks off a chunk in her hand, and moves to...

...Ted, who stands grinning at her, his 6-month-old son, strapped
in a backpack. An-mei tries to feed her grandson, who swats at the
cake, smearing frosting and crumbs on Ted's shoulder. At the head
of the table...

...Rose shares a private moment with June, who looks around at the
gathering, overwhelmed by the attention and outpouring of
affection.

JUNE

So wonderful, Rosie, everybody here.

ROSE (quietly)

Well, almost everyone.

They share a look, and a thought for June's absent mother.

ROSE

No meal is ever going to be the same
without your mom's famous crab.

June's eyes go down. She was thinking the same thing. PUSH IN now to her memory...

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

We're at the home of June's mother, SUYUAN, a 65-year-old feisty woman. Suyuan is putting down a plate of a crabs on the table. We see who's at this feast as June narrates. We see Lindo and Tin Jong, Waverly, Shoshana, and Rich, an old man, OLD CHONG, who's noticeably deaf...

JUNE (V.O.)

The last Chinese New Year's, my mother cooked her famous crab dinner...

The crab plate starts to make the rounds. First to Waverly... who is poking through crabs, rejecting a small one with a missing leg, then given biggest one to Shoshana.

SHOSHANA

Noooo, I don't like crab!

JUNE (V.O.)

Waverly picked the best crab and put it on her daughter's plate. She picked the next best for Rich, then another good one for herself.

Waverly passes plate to Lindo, who also bypasses defective crab.

JUNE (V.O.)

And because Waverly had learned this skill -- of choosing the best from her mother, it was only natural that her mother knew how to pick the next-best ones for her husband, her son, his girlfriend, and herself.

Next Lindo passes plate to Suyuan. Four crabs left. Suyuan picks one for Old Chong, one for husband.

JUNE (V.O.)

My mother picked a good one for Old Chong, because he was ninety and my former piano teacher. So he deserved that kind of respect. She picked another one for my father.

Suyuan now shakes plate of two crabs at June. June considers.

SUYUAN

Take it. Already cold.

JUNE (V.O.)

I thought I was doing the right thing...

She takes the small crab with the missing leg. Suyuan frowns.

SUYUAN

No, no. Big one, you eat it. Otherwise I cannot finish!

Suyuan exchanges plates of crab with June.

DISSOLVE to ... voracious people slurping and sucking crab legs, poking meat out of shells. Only June notices her mother prying open her crab shell, sniffing, making unpleasant face, then getting up, plate in hand, and going into kitchen.

Suyuan returns with bowls of sauce. She turns to Old Chong.

SUYUAN

Enough to eat? More vinegar?

Old Chong cups hands to hear. Laughs, nods, points to crab, shouts:

OLD CHONG

Excellent! Bravo! The best! Best quality!

Suyuan turns to June, beams.

SUYUAN

You see? Best quality.

June smiles back reluctantly.

JUNE (V.O.)

That's how my mother was. Everything had to be the best. She believed the same about me. That I could be anything. The best anything. The best piano prodigy this side of China...

We see with June how painful those early expectations were...

INT. CHURCH AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

We're at a talent show. Kids are running excitedly backstage, one crying, one screaming that she's lost her baton. 9-year-old YOUNG JUNE has on pretty dress in pink, fluffy as a carnation. She peers between curtains, sees her mother sitting in front row...

JUNE (V.O.)

Mom was sick of hearing Auntie Lindo brag about Waverly. That night, she figured I'd redeem her. With my international piano debut!

Now we're in the front row with SUYUAN as young mother. She hears a commotion behind her, turns around. It's Lindo Jong with family, scolding a sulky Young Waverly. Lindo sees Suyuan, explains:

LINDO

...I ask her help me carry groceries -- she thinks this is too much ask her! All

day long she play chess. I dust off her trophies. Hnh! Appreciate me? No! You lucky you don't have this problem.

SUYUAN

My problem worser than yours. If I tell June time to wash dish she hear nothing but music. It's like you can't stop this natural talent.

The talent show begins. A 4-year-old girl comes prancing out in bumblebee costume and giant paper flower. June watches...

JUNE (V.O.)

Until that night, I didn't believe I was a prodigy. In fact, I used to go out of my way to prove my mother wrong. That I wasn't cut out to be the best anything. I could only be me. So when she got this idea about my taking piano lessons...

FLASHBACK TO...OLD FASHIONED LIVING ROOM - DAY

...June in Old Mr. Chong's living room, playing piano. We can't hear what she's playing, but it looks smooth as she narrates. Old Chong is counting rhythm by pushing on June's shoulder.

JUNE (V.O.)

...I never practiced....Lucky for me, Old Mr. Chong couldn't tell the difference. He'd gone stone deaf over the years. The only music he heard was in the recesses of his memory...

Come up on music June is playing: arpeggios riddled with mistakes, but completely in rhythm. Old Chong opens piano book to a piece called "Humoresque."

OLD CHONG

Okey-doke! Looky here! How many sharps and flats! What key are we in!

YOUNG JUNE

Zee major.

OLD CHONG

Right! Now watch me! Play after me!

He begins to play quite beautifully, closing his eyes in reverie. After a few seconds, he gets up, tells June to play. She plays. The movements are right, but not the notes. At the end, she smiles big.

OLD CHONG

Bravo! But for the recital -- more feeling! More gusto!

June nods. As Chong sits down to demonstrate, June's VO recalls:

JUNE (V.O.)

I didn't care. What difference did it make if my mother thought I was a prodigy and I wasn't?... Of course, I didn't think it would come to this...

BACK TO...HIGH SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - EVENING

We see Suyuan and the audience eagerly clapping.

Cut to June behind curtain. She takes big gulp, then walks out on stage, looking at people from corner of her eye. She sees her mother, then Waverly, who's not clapping, then the friendly smiling audience. She smiles back, sees Waverly's smirk.

JUNE (V.O.)

The stupid snot! At that moment, I wanted so bad to show Waverly up. I actually tried to convince myself I was better. The best. A genius. Everybody had seen it all along, except me! Until now...

She sits down, fluffs skirt out, smooths pages, fingers poised perfectly over keys. We don't hear what she plays, just her VO, but the whole thing looks like a prodigy playing in a concert hall.

JUNE (V.O.)

It was incredible. It was like my hands were possessed by Mozart! And everybody could see this, could hear this! I was a genius! I had been discovered!

Now we hear the mistakes...and a murmur in the audience...

JUNE (V.O.)

...and then I heard it. Oh no. Oh no. But I couldn't stop playing. It was like my hands were possessed all right...by the Three Stooges.

We hear the final strains of this musical catastrophe. The look on her face as she realizes how awful this is. At the end, she doesn't look at audience. She stands up, shaky-legged...

JUNE (V.O.)

Maybe I had just been nervous. Maybe everyone had seen me go through the motions and hadn't heard anything wrong. Like Old Chong...

She does a fancy curtsy, dropping to one knee. From the audience, we hear a weak clapping, then:

OLD CHONG

Bravo! Bravo! Encore! Well done!

June smiles briefly, looks up, sees Old Chong cheering, then the embarrassed looks of people around him, the horrified, dumbstruck look on her mother's face. We close in on her and down the row from her, hear a little boy's voice whispering loudly to his mother:

LITTLE BOY'S VOICE
Mommy, that was awful!

BOY'S MOTHER
Well, she certainly tried.

We see Waverly laughing hysterically. June runs off stage, pushing past next contestant in whiteface Madama Butterfly makeup.

DISSOLVE TO...

After the show...members of the Joy Luck Club with their kids milling toward door to head out.

JUNE'S FATHER
Terrific show. That was somethin' else.

He starts to whistle the Humoresque piece June played so badly. Suyuan walks ahead. He keeps whistling.

LINDO
Lots of talented kids!(Then quietly to June) You tried best.

Waverly walks by June, whispering a sneer:

YOUNG WAVERLY
You're not a genius like me!

June punches Waverly's stomach and pulls her hair. A screaming, shrieking fight ensues. When June is finally pulled away, panting hard, she sees her mother has reacted to none of it. She is still in shock, walking like a zombie.

JUNE (V.O.)
It was my mother's face that devastated me. A look that said she had lost everything.

INT. SAN FRANCISCO LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

...June, mother and father coming home, father still humming song.

JUNE (V.O.)
I kept thinking she'd start yelling at me the minute we walked in the door...and then I would shout back and blame her for making me miserable, for thinking I was a stupid prodigy!

A silent Suyuan walks numbly to hallway. June watches, stunned that her mother has simply given up on her. For now...

INT. LIVING ROOM - AFTERNOON

June is lying prone on the floor, face propped on hands, watching TV. Suyuan stands in doorway, wiping a dish dry, also watching.

JUNE (V.O.)

Well, at least the talent-show fiasco meant I never had to play the piano again.

SUYUAN

Four clock. Turn off TV. Practice piano time.

She nods toward the piano. June looks at her, defiant.

JUNE (V.O.)

I couldn't believe what she was saying! Like I was supposed to go through the same torture again. Forget it!

SUYUAN

What I say? Four clock.

June wedges herself in closer to the TV. Calls back nonchalantly.

YOUNG JUNE

I'm not going to play anymore. Why should I? I'm not a genius.

Suyuan walks over briskly, stands in front of TV, chest heaving up and down in angry way.

SUYUAN

Turn off!

YOUNG JUNE

I'm not your slave! This isn't China! You can't make me!

JUNE (V.O.)

I felt strong, as if my true self had finally emerged. So this was what had been inside me all along.

Suddenly Suyuan yanks June up by her arm, pulls her off floor, snaps off the TV. She starts to half-pull, half-carry June toward piano, while June screams, kicks at throw rugs under feet.

YOUNG JUNE

No! No! I won't!

Now she's on the piano bench, sobbing. Suyuan is smiling crazily.

YOUNG JUNE (sobbing)

You want me to be someone I'm not! I'll never be the kind of daughter you want me to be!

SUYUAN

Only two kinds of daughter! Obedient or
follow own mind. Only one kind daughter
can live this house! Obedient kind!

June is still sobbing, angry and reckless.

YOUNG JUNE

Then I wish I wasn't your daughter! I
wish you weren't my mother!

Suyuan looks like she's been slapped. Her voice is deadly quiet.

SUYUAN

Too late to change this.

They do a silent staredown for a few beats, both breathing hard.

JUNE (V.O.)

This awful side of me had finally come
out. It felt so good....I knew her anger
had risen to its breaking point...I
wanted to see it spill over. And that's
when I remembered, what we could never
talk about...

YOUNG JUNE

Then I wish I were dead! Like them! The
babies you killed in China!

Suyuan's face go blank, her mouth closes, her arms fall slack to
her sides. She backs out of the room. She's gone.

We see young June crying on the piano bench, alone, scared, knowing
full well she's just committed something unforgiveable.

JUNE (V.O.)

In the years that followed, we never
talked about this. Or why she always
hoped for something so great I was
doomed to fail...Unlike my mother, I
didn't believe I could be anything I
wanted to be....

CUT BACK TO...

INT. DINING ROOM - EVENING

...the crab dinner. June watches her mother passing out toothpicks.

JUNE (V.O.)

...I could only be me. I failed her. So
many times. All her expectations. I
didn't get into Stanford. I became what
she called a college drop-off. I didn't
go to medical school. I became a
freelance writer...

In the background we see Shoshana banging the piano with crab legs.

WAVERLY

Shoshana! Stop playing with your food!

Shoshana goes off, sulking, tapping the crab legs along the tops of chairs. Waverly sighs, shrugs, then looks at June.

WAVERLY

Say, didn't you play the piano once?...

JUNE

Not really.

WAVERLY

Yeah, I could have sworn...

JUNE (V.O.)

After all these years she was still so sneaky! And I still wanted to show her up...expose her for what she really was...petty, mean-spirited...

Lindo is cutting oranges into wedges. She makes small talk...

LINDO

So, June, how your business go? Your mother tell me you busy, busy, busy!

JUNE

Oh, yeah, well....It's pretty good.

She looks at Waverly, who's now feeding Shoshana an orange.

JUNE

Although one of my clients seems to think freelance means free...just because we're friends.

Waverly sees June looking at her with a teasing grin. She looks genuinely flustered. June's confidence grows. She can't resist...

JUNE

I think it's pretty ironic that a big accounting firm can't even pay its own bills on time. I mean, really, Waverly, what kind of place are you working for?

Waverly puts down the orange, her face a mask of total control.

WAVERLY'S FATHER

Hey, hey, you girls, no more fighting!

WAVERLY

He's right, June. We don't want to talk about this. Not now.

WAVERLY'S BROTHER

Hey, everybody, how 'bout them 'Niners!

June, still flippant, still certain she has the upper hand...

JUNE

Well, every time I call you, you can't talk about it then either.

Waverly rolls eyes at Rich, shrugs, then sighs and turns to June:

WAVERLY

Listen, June. I don't know how to tell you this. That stuff you wrote. Well, the firm decided it was... unacceptable.

June looks like she's just had cold water thrown on her.

JUNE

You're lying. You said...you said it was terrific. You said...

WAVERLY (mock weary)

I know, I know. Don't you see? I didn't want to hurt your feelings. I was trying to see if I could fix it somehow. But it just won't work.

Now June is flailing, desperate to recoup her dignity...

JUNE

Most copy needs fine-tuning. It's...normal not to be perfect the first time. I should have explained the process better...

WAVERLY

June, I really don't think...

JUNE

Rewrites are free, of course. I'm just as concerned about making it perfect as you are--

We see the whole room is silent, embarrassed for June. Even Old Chong, who can't hear a thing, nervously takes the scene in.

WAVERLY

I'm trying to convince the firm to at least pay you for some of your time. I know you put a lot of work into it...I owe you at least that. For even suggesting you do it...

JUNE

Just tell me what they want changed. I'll call you next week. Okay? We can go over it, line by line.

Waverly looks at her sadly, sighs, talks like a big sister.

WAVERLY

June. I can't. It's just not... well, sophisticated. I'm sure what you do for your other clients is wonderful. But we're a big firm. We need someone who understands that...

Now Waverly searches for more explanation, then points to self.

WAVERLY

...who understands our style.

JUNE

What's style to to do with it?

WAVERLY

(laughs) I mean, really, June. (then in mock announcer parody) Three benefits, three needs, three reasons to buy...satisfaction guaranteed ...for today's and tomorrow's tax needs!

JUNE

Well, that was only part of it!

WAVERLY

Yeah, the bad part.

The others laugh nervously, as if this is a joke. They go back to their oranges and toothpicks. Suyuan looks deadpan, then announces in matter-of-fact voice.

SUYUAN

True, cannot teach style. June not like Waverly. Must be born this way.

June looks stung. She blinks. She's starting to pick up her plate, Old Chong's, pretending to be busy clearing the table.

JUNE (V.O.)

I was surprised how humiliated I felt. Outsmarted by Waverly. Then betrayed by my own mother. Everyone pitying me.

LINDO

Waverly, you let her try again. You make her do too fast first time. Of course she cannot get it right.

WAVERLY'S FATHER

Put in lotta action! Lotta action, that's all you need, make it right.

June is heading toward kitchen with plates. She replies wanly.

JUNE

Probably not.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

The hot water is running full-steam. June is staring at nothing.

JUNE (V.O.)

That night I realized again... I was no better than who I was. I worked for small companies. I gave them what they wanted: three needs, three benefits, three reasons to buy. I was very good at that... Succeeding at something small.

Turning to the side, she spies the crab with the missing leg, uneaten. She lifts the shell, sniffs a few times, shrugs.

DISSOLVE TO later in the night, the kitchen now clean, the dishes washed, June drying the last of them. Her mother pours tea.

JUNE

Good dinner, Ma.

SUYUAN

Not so good.

Suyuan jabs at mouth with toothpick. June puts a dish away.

JUNE

What happened to your crab? Why'd you throw it away?

SUYUAN

Not so good. That crab dead before cook. Even a beggar don't want it.

JUNE

Why'd you cook it if you knew it was already dead?

SUYUAN

I thought, Maybe just die. Maybe taste not too bad. Okay, cook one extra, just in case.

Suyuan now springs up out of chair, angry in recalling something.

SUYUAN

And you see! Waverly serve her daughter. Only four years old. Gave her whole crab! Biggest one! She didn't even eat.

JUNE

What if someone else had picked that dead crab?

Suyuan smiles at June.

SUYUAN

Only you pick that crab. Nobody else take it. I already know this. Everybody else want best quality...You...you thinking different!

JUNE (V.O.)

I couldn't tell if she meant that in a good or bad way. Maybe both.

Suyuan suddenly remembers something. She grunts to self, then unhooks a gold necklace with a jade pendant. She grabs June's hand, shoves it in her palm, wraps her hand around it.

JUNE

I can't take this!

SUYUAN

Take, take, don't argue! ... For a long time I want to give you this necklace. See, I wore this on my skin. So when you put on your skin, you know my meaning...

She helps June fasten it around her neck.

SUYUAN

This...your life's importance.

JUNE

You're only giving it to me because of what happened.

SUYUAN

What happen?

JUNE

What Waverly said. What everybody saw.

Suyuan looks pained and exasperated.

SUYUAN

Tss! You not hearing what I say at dinner? I say, Cannot teach style. You not like Waverly. Must be born this way. What you think my meaning?

She reaches now. For her daughter's hand.

SUYUAN

You not like her. She took best quality crab. You took worst. That's because you have best quality heart. You a good person...best person.

June blinks in amazement, in gratitude. She speaks softly...

JUNE

I always thought ...I only disappointed you.

SUYUAN

What you mean, disappoint?

JUNE

Like with college, and not getting married, and not getting a real job, and not playing the piano--

SUYUAN

Ai-ya! Piano! I almost forgot...You take the piano. I keep forget to tell you.

JUNE

I can't take the piano--

SUYUAN

Take it, take it! Otherwise I just have to keep storing for you, dusting off. So dirty, so much trouble, every week...

Suyuan's fake complaints about piano continues as June realizes:

JUNE (V.O.)

I knew what she was doing. It was the closest she could come to an apology. For what happened between us, so many years ago. And it was enough. Enough to erase the pain from both our hearts.

JUNE

Are you sure? Won't you and Dad miss it?

SUYUAN

No, this your piano. Always your piano. You only one can play.

JUNE

Probably not anymore. It's been years.

SUYUAN

You pick up fast. You have natural talent! You could have been genius if you want to... You just not trying.

June smiles at her mother, now understanding.

SUYUAN

Take it.

We hold on Suyuan's face: full of love, acceptance, pride.

CUT BACK and return to...

INT. LIVING ROOM/DINNER PARTY - EVENING

....the same dinner party we opened with. June is standing with a huge semi-circle of people clapping, cheering her, etc. Party noisemakers are going off. A champagne bottle pops. Frank Sinatra plays, the previous cut replaced by "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas." Old Chong shouts bravo, one beat past the crowd quieting down for a toast.

WAVERLY

To June! Take all of this love with you
to China.

So clearly from the heart, it leaves June embarrassed and bewildered. Everyone begins to yell...SPEECH! SPEECH! Finally, she starts to talk in a soft voice.

JUNE

I don't know what to say...

VOICES

Louder! Louder!

She looks at the crowd, their expectant, happy voices, happy for her. She breaks into huge smile, then finds what she wants to say. We see faces in the crowd as she addresses them...

JUNE

I've known all of you for a long time.
Rose, Lena, Waverly -- since we were
babies, then kids, fighting over dolls.
And we're still together.

She stares a beat longer at Waverly, then they both grin.

JUNE

Amazing, isn't it?...Auntie Lindo,
Auntie Ying-ying, Auntie An-mei --
longtime friends of my mother. You are
second mothers to me. In so many ways
...truly.

The three women exchange proud looks.

JUNE

I mean, you gave her back to me -- by
finding my sisters. You've given me
something I can still do for her. Here I
thought it was too late -- well, it's
not. I'm going to China to fulfill her
long-cherished wish. To find those
babies, her other daughters. It's not
too late to do this for my mother...
thanks to you...your kindness, and
generosity, and loyalty, and love...

June's voice breaks, unable to go on. A baby starts to cry in the background. June giggles. She rubs her nose. Everyone laughs good-

naturedly. And suddenly, it is very quiet. In the silence, Sinatra's sad voice rings through...

SINATRA (O.S., singing)
...through the years, we all will be
together...if the fates allow...

Then, just above a whisper...

JUNE

Thank you.

Hold on her face. How much she means it.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

June, dutiful to the last, despite being guest of honor, brings in a stack of dirty plates. Auntie Lindo is alone in the kitchen. The old woman turns to her now, drying her hands compulsively, anxious.

June starts to speak, but seeing Lindo's disturbing expression, remains silent to hear...

LINDO

I have something must tell you.

June half-smiles, wary. Lindo looks somber.

LINDO

One little thing I forgot to tell you...
I wrote a letter...I said how happy you
are to find them. How happy you are to
come meet them in China....

JUNE

Oh, Auntie Lindo, you told me that
already...

LINDO

And then I signed the letter...from your
mother.

JUNE

What?...You signed the letter...in my
mother's name?

Lindo nods, looking guilty. Panic rising in June as she listens.

LINDO

I try to write another kind of letter.
Telling them, so sad, too late, your
mother is gone, died... But how can I
send such a letter! No. This is my
thinking. Better to hear from own
family, from own sister. Important news.
Only you can say...

JUNE

You mean...they think she's still alive?

Lindo nods.

JUNE

Omigod. Omigod!....You have to write back! Tell them she's dead. I can't tell them that... Auntie Lindo, you have to write another letter!

LINDO

tonight Too late. No way to do this. You leaving ~~June~~ You must go. You tell them. Anyway, this is the best way. That's my thinking.

JUNE

I can't have them think she's coming, too.

LINDO

No problem, that not what they think. They think she coming alone. My thinking is, they see one person get off boat, they get scared if they expecting two. Before you have chance to explain.

June blinks, she can't believe any of this.

LINDO

Anyway. This my thinking.

INT. JUNE'S FATHER'S LIVING ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

June bursts into her father's living room, looking rushed and excited. She scans quickly left to right, calling...

JUNE

Daddy! I'm here! Do you have the gifts ready?

DAD pads in from the bedroom, already in his pajamas, unhurried.

DAD

Oh, here already? Want some coffee?

JUNE

I gotta run. Ted and Rose are outside waiting, they're taking me to the airport.

Dad sends a gentle smile. He wishes they had longer together, but doesn't want her to feel bad about this. Therefore, she does. He gestures in his familiar casual way, follow me, and June...

... follows her father into the bedroom. It's apparent it hasn't changed since Suyuan's death. We see knickknacks, a woman's

sweater, an embroidered cloth over a sewing machine. Dad opens a drawer, taking things out. The drawer is still filled with Suyuan's things, just as she left them: stockings, nightgowns.

DAD

You know, ever since Mommy died, it's like a mystery where everything is. She hides everything...jewelry, even the fake stuff.

He sits down on the bed with a heavy sigh.

DAD

She spend 30 years, telling me where she hide everything in case she die. I guess I wasn't listening.

His hand comes to rest on two pillows piled on the left side of the bed, the other side empty and forlorn. June can't stop herself from saying...

JUNE

...you're sleeping on Mommy's side now?

His barely perceptible nod. His eyes lower, as he lays out the packages he had taken from the drawer, small parcels wrapped in old Christmas paper. Instead of answering her question...

DAD

I couldn't find anything. No scissors, no tape, just this old wrapping paper. (small laugh) Mommy likes to save everything.

Her father pats the bed for June to sit down. She obliges.

DAD

I picked some things to give them. You tell me if they're okay...

He hands a package to June. It is obviously something he cherishes.

DAD

This...this is her hairbrush. I thought maybe they like it. A mother's hair is always precious to her Chinese daughter.

He hands her a thick bundle.

DAD

And this...her letters to them. They came back, no such persons stamped outside. Like a slap in the face each one she got them... I thought maybe her daughters like to know she didn't give up. Not for long time. Fifteen years she tried. And then, well, one day, I guess she lost her hope. I don't know why,

Cultural Revolution maybe. Anyway, she cried for so many days. Always saying she killed them, she killed them...

June flinches. In this moment, cannot hide...

JUNE

One time I said that to her. Just like that. When I was angry.

Her father's forgiving smile. Too late to worry about that now. But she is worrying about that, however grateful for his reassurance. She fingers the edges of the letter bundle. Dad holds out one last package, this one very slim.

DAD

This one is from me. Old photos of Mommy in China. Only ones. All I could find.

She looks at the package in her hand, as if straining to see through the paper. To see her mother young. Tears in her eyes.

JUNE

I'll take the best care of these, Daddy. And bring them back safe.

DAD

Don't bring back. This gift for your sisters.

She simply cannot believe his sacrifice, that he could bear to part with this.

DAD

I don't need old photo for memory. I have lots. You have lots. Now they should have her. Am I right?

June nods, smiles gratefully at her father's wisdom.

DAD

Maybe they see a picture of Mommy so young, so beautiful, they can still remember her. Not the way she looked when she left them...

JUNE

The way she looked?

DAD

She almost died, you know. She never tell you?

June shakes her head, awed by all she's now learning.

DAD

Oh yes. Very bad dysentery. Back then, no medicine, no doctor. You could die in

two days. She thought, Better not die next to my babies. Nobody save babies with such bad luck. Who wants two babies with ghost mother following them? Very bad luck. Very.

June nods, even though she doesn't quite understand this Chinese thinking.

DAD

Then she thought even worser luck, somebody save her after she left them. Put her in a truck. She woke up in a hospital, screaming, wanting to die. Very strange things happen during wartime. In China, more strange things happen there than here. You'll see.

JUNE

Strange? Like...

DAD

Oh, bad luck. Also good luck. More luck over there, all kinds. Like how they found your sisters. Twins, you know, very rare in China. So when Mommy's old schoolmate from Shanghai saw those twins coming down the elevator in the Number One Department Store in Shanghai, she thought she was seeing a double ghost of her old friend come back to China!

They share a laugh together. June's is through the tears standing in her eyes.

JUNE

They look like her?

DAD

Must be, heh?

Suddenly, he grows pensive, although still smiling.

DAD

Or maybe it was your mother's ghost, guiding her old friend to find them.

June stares at him. Suddenly, she doesn't want to leave him. But...

JUNE (softly)

...I think it's time.

June and Dad stand up, hopes and expectations now rising again. Dad quickly opens nightstand drawer. Hands her long envelope.

DAD

One more thing. I found this in Mommy's jewelry box. I know she was saving it for you. Someday she was going to give to you. I think now. Go ahead, open. It's good luck for China.

She stares at the envelope, then peers in. It looks like an ordinary white feather. She pulls it out, puzzled.

DAD

See, it's a swan feather.

June looks up, startled.

JUNE

Swan feather?

DAD

Mommy brought it from China. Oh, very funny story. Your mother tried to smuggle a swan on the boat coming here. Of course, the officials tried to take it away from her. They grabbed, she grabbed. She got one feather...

But he stops now. Because, at last, his daughter is crying openly.

JUNE (V.O.)

How could I tell him? That old story that she told me every night...I thought it was a fable, a myth. A bedtime story.

DAD

...for some reason, that feather was like all her hopes. Like maybe that one feather would turn into another swan! Big hopes. No one could take that away from her, no sir. She was going to give that feather to her children, make them strong, just like her.

June torn apart inside. Her gently smiling father does not understand.

JUNE (V.O.)

...'my daughter will know my meaning, because I will give her this swan -- a creature that became more than what was hoped for...'

DAD

But then...she decided she couldn't give it to you. Not yet. She didn't think you would understand.

June looks crestfallen, guilty.

JUNE

I guess I wasn't very good at listening to her.

DAD

No, no. I mean, she thought she wasn't worthy enough mother to give it to you.

June blinks.

JUNE

Worthy enough...for me?

DAD

Because she gave up hope. About her other daughters. How could she show you how to hope big, when she had lost hope? A mother can never give up hope for her own children. Never.

She stares at feather.

JUNE

Never.

DAD

But she never did. On the day you born, she transfer all hope to you. All hope from those babies.

June looks up...

JUNE

...all her hopes on me?

Silence.

DAD

Mine, too.

Father and daughter stare at each other. It is a sad moment, and the most wonderful they've ever had. Suddenly, June hugs him.

JUNE

I love you, Daddy.

EXT. BOAT DECK/SHANGHAI LANDSCAPE - DAY

A boat horn blows. June looks out over deck, squinting at Shanghai coming into view, the tall buildings along the Bund, the busy harbor scene. People are pointing, talking excitedly in Chinese.

LOUDSPEAKER VOICE (subtitled, O.S.)
Attention! We will arrive in Shanghai in five minutes.

JUNE (V.O.)

Omigod! Here goes.

She opens her purse, hands shaking with excitement. She takes out a pocket mirror, finger-combs her hair, looks in her own eyes, blinks.

JUNE (V.O.)
I look like her... Well, sort of. Oh God, who knows what they'll think?

She looks at her face once again in mirror.

JUNE (V.O.)
Shit! That's not who they think they're going to see! What'll I say...? Oh God!

She looks out at approaching harbor, at thousands of Chinese people milling about. She looks terrified.

JUNE (V.O.)
... I'll tell them after we get to the hotel... I'll say... she's been delayed. She wasn't feeling well. She'll be on the next boat... I'll wait 'til I get to know them better...

She starts to put the mirror back in purse, then sees the feather her father gave her. Slowly takes it out. Runs her finger along its ridge.

JUNE (V.O.)
I will tell them, This feather may look worthless. But it comes from afar, and carries with it all my good intentions...

EXT. SHANGHAI HARBOR - DAY

June's on the harbor, pushing, peering over people's heads. Suddenly she hears a shout and sees a face that looks like Suyuan's. She feels as if caught in a dream. Stunned...

JUNE
Ma? Ma, is that really you?

The image clears, and now it's clearly not Suyuan, but two middle-aged women, twins, SISTER 1 and SISTER 2, crying with the same mistaken joy. They are the same actresses who split the role of Suyuan in America.

SISTERS 1 & 2
Mama! Mama!

June, still separated from them by ten people, looks panicked.

JUNE (V.O.)
They think I'm ...our mother. What am I going to say? What was I going to tell them...Oh, Mama. Oh, help me...

Now they're a few feet apart. The sisters are about to run into her arms. June shakes her head. Puts luggage down. Quietly...

JUNE (subtitled)
Mama's dead...

Silence. The sisters stare at June, then each other.

SISTER 1 (subtitled)
Dead? Mama is dead?

June bites her lips, nods slowly.

JUNE (subtitled)
Four months ago.

Silence. Horror and sadness grow on the sisters' faces. They stare at each other. Their faces drained. Their bodies depleted of the excitement that filled it just moments ago. June closes her eyes. Unable to bear seeing their pain.

JUNE (V.O.)
Oh, Mama, I'm sorry. I'm so sorry.

SISTER 2 (subtitled)
And you? Who are you?

June opens her eyes. Turns to them. The sisters are staring.

JUNE (subtitled)
I'm your sister. June...I've come to
take our mother's place.

The sisters now stare more intently, pressing forward slightly.

SISTER 1 (subtitled)
Our little sister?

JUNE (subtitled)
I've come to bring you her hopes...

Her eyes flick down to the feather, still clutched desperately in her hand. And now the sisters take one step forward, and embrace her. Quietly, in awed voices, joy coupled with grief...

SISTER 1 (subtitled)
Our sister.

SISTER 2 (subtitled)
Our family.

We see June's face, as she is suddenly caught in their embrace, her astonishment, then letting go with joy and tears, struggling to hold the swan feather high so it doesn't get crushed. They stare at each other's faces again and again, comparing noses, eyes, laughing, wiping tears from each other's faces, hugging again.

JUNE (V.O.)

It was enough... for them... and for me.
Because really, she was there... And I'd
finally done something for her... I'd
found the best of myself...what she kept
for all of us...her long-cherished wish.

The joy grows until it explodes with excitement. The sisters spin her around. PULL BACK to see the whole scene. June now meeting a zillion Chinese relatives: old people, little kids, young couples. It's a handshake fest, with June always protecting the sacred feather...

...In the whirl, someone pushes June and her sisters toward a guy with an umbrella stand selling Polaroid snapshots. The twin sisters bookend June. No one has to tell them "cheese," they give one big ecstatic smiles. The camera flashes.

Now the crowd of relatives look over their shoulders as the picture develops. June is excited, smiling through tears, along with her happy sisters.

SISTERS (subtitled)

You see! You see!

CHORUS OF VOICES

Aaah!

The image comes into focus: the greenish surface of the photo turning into three images, unmistakable in similarity:

JUNE (V.O.)

We all see it. Her same eyes. Her same
mouth. Together we are our mother.

PULL UP now, an aerial shot of the melee below. Higher and higher, until our family can no longer be distinguished from any other. HEAR June's voice begin...

JUNE (O.S.)

...'an old woman remembered a swan she
had bought many years ago in Shanghai
for a foolish sum...'

And as the poem continues, we...

ROLL END CREDITS.