

RITA

Dystopian/Sci-Fi/Adventure

Story/Script by Laura Zhang

Logline

A middle-aged saleswoman discovers that her misfortunes are caused by an alien entity residing in her subconscious. She must find a way to the alien's world and stop their civilization from taking over Earth.

Synopsis

At the 2026 Academy Awards, Asian director Xia wins the Best Picture award for her film *RITA*. The inspiration for this groundbreaking work stems from a profound realization she had years ago during her time in prison. The story takes us back to 2023 when Xia was working as a door-to-door solar panel salesperson. Burdened by heavy family conflicts and financial struggles, she endured the pain of cultural dislocation while still chasing her dream of becoming a filmmaker.

One day, during a dream-like experience, Xia is transported to a surreal subconscious realm. There, a mysterious figure named Rita reveals herself, guiding Xia to revisit her past—a journey spanning her childhood in China, her academic pursuits, her marriage, and even her time in prison. Xia is shocked to discover that many of her life choices were not entirely her own, but rather influenced by an external force. Under Rita's guidance, Xia begins to awaken to her subconscious power, merging with the younger version of herself, "Little Xia B," in preparation for an even greater challenge: a confrontation with a force from the mysterious planet R.

As Rita grows increasingly skeptical of the so-called "perfect" world of R, she unveils the truth about its existence: a flawless society devoid of pain, death, or imperfection. Yet this perfection comes at a cost—its inhabitants have lost their free will and the true meaning of life. Meanwhile, the planet's creator, Mr. R—a steampunk-era scientist with a tragic childhood—has been conducting extreme experiments to break the cycle of life and death and achieve immortality. His plan not only threatens Earth's safety but also raises existential questions about the meaning of humanity itself. With Rita's support, Xia comes to understand her pivotal role in this cosmic crisis. She faces an intense inner conflict: should she accept Mr. R's offer of immortality, or uphold her belief in the finite beauty of human life?

In the climactic showdown, Xia confronts Mr. R. He showcases the immense power to control the universe and tempts her with the promise of eternal life and dominion over Earth. Yet Xia, with a hint of irony and disdain, rejects his offer, declaring that the fleeting nature of life is what gives it meaning. She argues that death and struggle are what make humanity

truly valuable. Xia demands to take Rita back to Earth, allowing her to live within Xia's body until her natural life ends. Her unwavering resolve shatters Mr. R's spirit, leading him to self-destruction. Rita, on the other hand, must stay behind to help rebuild R and guide its inhabitants toward rediscovering free will. Xia returns to Earth, her perspective transformed, and resumes her pursuit of filmmaking.

Years later, Xia's film *RITA* wins Best Picture at the Oscars. That evening, as she indulges in a celebratory hotpot feast, she smiles to herself. She isn't sure if her inspiration came solely from her creative journey—or if she truly did save the planet. Either way, the taste of victory is unmistakable.

LAURA ZHANG

pasadenalaura@gmail.com

323-558-8918