

Red Thread of Fate: An Adoptee Tale

written by

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based on the novel by Woo Ae Yi

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Made in Highland

FADE IN:

SUPER: Trigger warnings: Adoption theme, cursing, domestic violence, drug use, and rape

1 INT. COMMUNITY THEATER - DAY 1

TITLE CARD: Fall 1997

Traditional Vietnamese music. There are Vietnamese WATER PUPPET FIGURES in brilliant colors being managed by a PUPPETMASTER. They are made out of wood and lacquered. They each have a wine red thread going down the sides.

NOTE: Yue Xia Lao is pronounced "Yoo-ay Zee-ah Lau."

NARRATOR (V.O.)

"Yue Xia Lao shows a boy the girl who will be his wife.

V.O. continues over puppet figure skit.

Older male puppet figure points to a girl puppet.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Not interested in having a wife, the boy picks up a rock and throws it at her.

A boy puppet throws a rock at the girl puppet.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

When the boy grows up, his parents arrange a wedding. On that night, his wife waits with the traditional veil covering her face. Raising it, the man finds her to beautiful.

A young male puppet raises the veil on the young female puppet.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

But, she wears an adornment on her eyebrow. He asks why, and she says--

Young female puppet figure appears shy.

2 EXT. OUTSIDE SCHOOL - DAY 2
Young Wei, throws a (fake) rock at Zarah (pronounced Zeh-ruh).

YOUNG ZARAH

Ow!

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Young Zarah runs away crying.

OPENING TITLES

CONTINUE OVER MUSIC.

SUPER: Red Thread of Fate: An Adoptee Tale

3 INT. ZARAH'S PARENTS' HOUSE - FAMILY ROOM - NIGHT 3
 The suburban house is located in Gaithersburg, Maryland. There are pics of Young Zarah and random white people on the fridge. ZARAH'S FATHER, 52-63, white male, holds onto an alcoholic DRINK, sloshing his drink on the floor as he searches the house.

ZARAH'S FATHER

Where is my phone? Where is my goddamn phone?

ZARAH'S MOTHER, 52-63, white female, wearing a T-SHIRT that says Maryland, gives him something that looks like a Nokia 6110. Zarah pulls out an Adoptee Hub planner (product placement) from her backpack with short nails.

YOUNG ZARAH

Does anyone want to know how my day went? Someone said something to me that was both racist and sexist.

ZARAH'S FATHER (INTO PHONE)

(dialing)

I'm in the middle of a meeting and then I have to catch a plane.

ZARAH'S MOTHER

Yeah, well, some stranger referred to me as your adoptive mother, so it wasn't a great day for me either.

ZARAH'S FATHER

(dialing *6)

God, don't you just hate the stares?

ZARAH'S MOTHER

Yes, it makes me anxious. I need some time to myself. Why don't you practice your knitting?

4 INT. ZARAH'S PARENTS' HOUSE - ZARAH'S BEDROOM - DAY 4

Zarah goes to her room. Young Zarah's colorful bedroom is decorated with '90s unicorn POSTERS with red and yellow backgrounds.

YOUNG ZARAH

My father might be too busy for me on earth, but my Heavenly Father always has time for me.

Young Zarah kneels and prays by her bed.

YOUNG ZARAH

Dear Lord, please let me have a committed husband, someone who'll like me and will be fun to be around. If I'm to marry, then please let me meet him when I'm in college. If I'm to remain single, then I won't meet him there.

Looks at her baby doll in a red onesie with a hood.

ZARAH

I just want to be understood.

5 EXT. OUTSIDE SCHOOL - DAY 5

Young Zarah, wearing a gifted and talented shirt, and YOUNG AMALEE, 12, dark-skinned Indian girl wearing a shirt with a rainbow, are eating lunch outside.

YOUNG ZARAH

And then my mom said "We don't use those words here."

YOUNG AMALEE

My parents have said something similar. They don't get us.

YOUNG ZARAH

No, they don't. Have you ever wanted to find your other mom?

YOUNG AMALEE

Yes, did you know that adoptees have their own color?

YOUNG ZARAH

No, I didn't.

YOUNG AMALEE

Adoptees are red, birthparents are green, and adoptive parents are purple.

YOUNG ZARAH

Huh.

(beat)

Will I ever have my true prince?
Or is there something wrong with me? Am I defective?

YOUNG AMALEE

No, there's nothing wrong with you. Yes, you'll find the One, and that person will be perfect for you.

YOUNG ZARAH

Maybe you're right.

YOUNG AMALEE

I know because I know who it is.
Hope that helps.

The bell rings. Young Amalee waves goodbye and heads on to class.

YOUNG AMALEE

Talk to you later. Bye.

YOUNG ZARAH

Wait!

(runs)

Who are you talking about?

Young Amalee walks inside and didn't hear her.

YOUNG ZARAH

If only I could find the One. I just want someone in my life who likes me.

6

INT. ZARAH'S PARENTS' HOUSE - FAMILY ROOM

6

SUPER: Summer 2003

ZARAH, 23, Vietnamese woman, talks with her mom.

ZARAH'S MOTHER

What happened to you and Amalee?

ZARAH

She just wants to have fun, but we'll still be friends.

(MORE)

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ZARAH (CONT'D)

She's going to take a year abroad
in India. You haven't told Dad
anything, have you?

ZARAH'S MOTHER

You know me; I'm good at keeping
secrets.

MATCH CUT:

7

INT. UNIVERSITY GREEK ROW DORM ROOM - DAY

7

SUPER: Zarah's Birthday 2006

WEI, 24, Chinese Cambodian male, and CUTTER, early 20s,
Colombian male, are in Wei's spacious dorm playing a VIDEO
GAME, listening to rap, and smoking a vape pen.

Cutter's side of the room has spraypaint and pictures of street
art.

Wei's dorm room has a BEER PONG "table" that has been marked
with permanent marker and a POSTER of a sex idol.

Zarah enters. Cutter looks up and quickly puts away his stash.

WEI

Whassap dude!

Wei and Cutter give each other a complicated insider handshake.

CUTTER

Who's this?

WEI

She's cool.

CUTTER

Hey, any friend of Wei is a friend
of mine.

WEI

This is Zarah. This here is
Cutter.

CUTTER

Nice to meet ya.

WEI

Today's her 21st birthday. And she
ain't tried nothing.

CUTTER

Never smoked?

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ZARAH

Nah, never even drank. My parents treat me as if I'm thirteeen. They're super protective.

CUTTER

Hoowee! This is your day!

WEI

Mindtaker!

Cutter grabs a large bottle of beer.

CUTTER

Try this.

Zarah grabs it and chugs it down.

CUTTER

Woa, you sure don't waste anytime!

WEI

We're perfect for each other because we're both a lil crazy.

Wei and Zarah are both wearing a RUBY RING on their left pinky finger.

ZARAH

So why are you named Cutter?

CUTTER

You never told her the story?

WEI

'Cause I know how you love to tell it.

CUTTER

Right on.

WEI

Did I tell you this game is getting repetitive?

Cutter swats him away.

CUTTER

There was this guy who pissed off everyone! And he got what was comin' to him. Name's 'cause I did surgery on the mofo.

(MORE)

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CUTTER (CONT'D)

Let's just say you don't wanna cross Wei, cause if you do, you'll have me to deal with. Everyone knows we're a pair. But I got better clothes.

WEI

Don't listen to Cutter. He's full of hot air. True story's lot more embarrassing.

Zarah looks uneasy.

ZARAH

I don't feel so good.

Zarah runs to throw up in the toilet.

WEI

She might prefer your stash.

CUTTER

You do the honors.

Wei prepares a VAPE PEN and hands it to Zarah.

WEI

Just smoke it.

Zarah takes a puff from the Jucixy VAPE PEN (product placement) with her back to the camera. She coughs and turns back around. Cutter laughs.

CUTTER

It takes a while to grow on you. Here, take some munchies. It has a special ingredient.

Cutter pushes a plate to her with brownies on it.

WEI

It's my job to teach you the ways of college, just as it was my job to help you with English.

ZARAH

I grew up in the U.S., and I'm an English major.

WEI

Exactly, because of me. Cambodians are much better at English.

Zarah looks at Wei then turns her head to look at Cutter.

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ZARAH
Do you go to school here?

CUTTER
(laughs)
I wish. You're the only one here
that belongs.

ZARAH
I don't know if I really belong
here either.

CUTTER
At least you're legal. Haha. Get
it?

Cutter smiles at Wei. Wei shakes his head to knock it off.

CUTTER
I don't know how much time Wei has
though. Even favors have an
expiration date.

ZARAH
What's that mean?

WEI
Ignore him. He's drunk.

Cutter eats a brownie off a plate.

CUTTER
Drunk and high, my friend.

ZARAH
I'm so high. I feel so good.

CUTTER
Haha! Say that again.

ZARAH
I'm so hiiigh. I feel sooo good.

WEI
I think you're sexier when you're
high.

ZARAH
You too. So sexy.

CUTTER
Woa, next time I see ya, just
lookin' at ya would make me high.

Light is shining on Zarah's hair from the window.

WEI

Look at how nice your hair looks.
You're a pretty brunette.

ZARAH

What? I'm Asian. I have raven
hair. You're Asian too.

WEI

No, your hair is brown, isn't it,
Cutter?

CUTTER

Dude, I think you're high.

WEI

No, maybe Zarah's high.

ZARAH

What? Oh, I did say I was high.

WEI

Yeah, you did. Well, we gotta go.
Later.

CUTTER

This is your room too. Where ya
goin'?

Wei smacks Zarah's ass and winks.

MATCH CUT:

8

INT. COMMUNITY THEATER - DAY

8

SUPER: November 4, 2007

Zarah and Wei are in attendance at a brightly decorated work-related gathering with a lot of red, yellow, magenta, and blue. The FIRING MANAGER, 30s-50s, Asian male, gets up to the podium to speak.

NOTE: Diwali is pronounced "Dih-vah-lee."

FIRING MANAGER

Welcome to the first ever Diwali
celebration of Monitoring
Solutions! Diwali, the festival of
light, symbolizes the victory of
light over darkness--

Zarah and Wei start bickering loudly. People are staring. Zarah spills WINE on Wei's only white job interview SHIRT.

WEI

Right before my birthday?!

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The Firing Manager talks with the SECURITY OFFICER. The Security Officer escorts them out of the event.

FIRING MANAGER

Hey, everyone, sorry about that.
We're gonna start off with a
raffle. Take a look at the ticket
you got when you came in.

9

EXT. GAS STATION - DAY

9

The gas station is across the street from the office building and Wei and Zarah are yelling across the street. The sky is gray.

WEI

I swear I'll leave you. Why don't
you walk home?

ZARAH

You sleep on the couch. The bed is
mine. I paid for it.

WEI

No, you sleep on the couch.

ZARAH

I paid for that too. You just
pretend to want me because I pay
for your stuff.

WEI

How many times do I have to tell
you I don't want you for your
money?

10

**EXT./INT. OFFICE BUILDING/ZARAH'S CAR - DAY
(CONTINUOUS)**

10

Wei blocks her car in the office parking lot, continuing their argument in front of the security CAMERA. After Wei leaves, the firing manager walks out to Zarah's car and says something to her.

ZARAH

You can't fire me! I've been a
good employee.

FIRING MANAGER (O.S.)

It's not you. This is a family-
friendly company, and we can't
afford to have your boyfriend
coming inside our building.

ZARAH

But he was only here one time.

FIRING MANAGER (O.S.)

And that one time was one time too many. I know what an abusive relationship looks like. We're giving you a severance package.

ZARAH

I'm sure we can make a better arrangement.

Zarah winks and reaches out to touch the Firing Manager, who blocks her touch.

FIRING MANAGER

No, that's the best arrangement you're gonna get.

ZARAH

So, I'm being penalized because of someone else?

FIRING MANAGER

Rest assured that we're giving him a trespass warrant too.

11

INT. WEI'S APARTMENT - FAMILY ROOM - DAY

11

SUPER: Wei's Birthday (November 6, 2007)

The apartment is in Petersburg, Indiana. There's some red Vietnamese ART on the walls. The floor is littered with BEER BOTTLE CAPS.

There's a Christmas CARD on the table with "Christmas" scratched out and "Birthday" written on top. What looks like an iPhone 3G is unwrapped on the table too. WEI is laughing at Lil Baker Films ANIMATION on the TV (product placement) from his blue camping chair.

ZARAH

I got fired because of you.

WEI

Hey, don't put this on me.

ZARAH

No, seriously, they said it was because they couldn't afford someone with your record to be in their facility.

WEI

You don't need them.

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Zarah sighs.

She has a full schedule of applying for jobs, and he sits around watching hentai porn, not paying attention to her, having already forgotten what they were yelling about.

WEI

Giggity giggity!

Zarah flips open what looks like a pink Motorola RAZR. A window appears.

ZARAH (INTO PHONE)

Hi.

AMALEE (O.S.)

Hi, sweetie. How are you doing?
Are you going to the Asian Pacific
Alumni event? It's combined with
the Black Alumni event.

ZARAH (INTO PHONE)

No, I lost my job.

AMALEE (O.S.)

Oh, sugar, how can I help?

ZARAH (INTO PHONE)

Can we stay with you? Just until I
find something new?

AMALEE (O.S.)

Sure, but I only have one
bathroom.

ZARAH (INTO PHONE)

That's fine. Thank you so much!

12

INT. AMALEE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

12

It's a weekday morning. Amalee, 23, dark-skinned Indian who identifies as female, now Zarah's first love, is miffed that she's been "friend"-zoned but still cares for Zarah.

They speak in hushed tones in the bedroom while Wei is playing a VIDEO GAME in another room and wearing a blue Platforming Pangolin t-shirt (product placement).

ZARAH

I'd give him the skin off my bones
if it would help.

AMALEE (O.S.)

Parenting is no better.

(MORE)

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AMALEE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Darling, that man has a momma. Do
you mind if I ask you something?

ZARAH
Sure, what?

AMALEE (O.S.)
What do you see in him?

ZARAH
He's my other half. I'm a do-er,
and he's a be-er. He represents my
heart and soul. He's not afraid to
say what he feels. He doesn't
censor himself. He knows his
worth--

AMALEE (O.S.)
I don't think we're talking about
the same person because the guy I
know doesn't know his self-worth
at all.

ZARAH
We've never had issues in the sex
department...

Amalee raises her head from what appears to be Zarah's lap, and
gives her a look. She has a (temporary) TATTOO of a Celtic
motherhood knot. She puts her hand on Zarah's arm and looks
into Zarah's eyes.

AMALEE
That can't be it.

ZARAH
It's not. He wasn't like that when
we met. I thought he represented
me. I'm not perfect like my
parents think I am or should be.
He saw me and wasn't scared of my
darkness. He wasn't scared of my
father either. It's my fault that
he's the way he is now. I should
have been more empathetic.

AMALEE
Zarah, he doesn't represent you or
what you think of yourself. You
know I work from home as a
photographer.

Zarah is oblivious. Amalee takes a puff from a vape pen.

AMALEE

I've seen him steal your credit card to buy food.

ZARAH

What? No, I trust him.

AMALEE (INTO PHONE)

When I said you'll find the One, I wasn't thinking of him. There's someone better for you out there.

Amalee puts her hand on Zarah's back.

ZARAH

Well, he's never proposed to me. Some people say it's wrong to be living together.

AMALEE

It's not wrong, but he just sees you as free sex.

(then)

But right now you need to focus on finding a new job.

Zarah gets ready for work and puts on deodorant. Amalee stops her from putting on deodorant with her hand. Amalee walks out to where Wei is.

AMALEE

And you do too.

WEI

What?

AMALEE

Get a job. Or get out.

WEI

Yeah yeah. Just after this game.

13 **EXT. INDIANA - DAY (ESTABLISHING)** 13

14 **INT. CAR MANUFACTURING COMPANY - ZARAH'S OFFICE - DAY** 14
SUPER: January 1, 2008
The car manufacturing company is in Evansville, Indiana. YUE, 65, Chinese man with short white hair, wears an (American) Vietnam veteran T-SHIRT, blue jean JACKET, and lanyard with his picture, name, and "Parts Department" on the nametag. He walks down the hall while Zarah wears a red SHIRT with the Eiffel Tower and jeans without a name tag.

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Everyone is just now starting work.

Yue walks to Zarah's new desk and greets her.

The next two lines are spoken in Vietnamese with an American accent:

YUE
Hello!

Zarah is speechless.

YUE
Goodbye.

He walks out the door before she can respond.

15 EXT. SUBURBAN SIDEWALK - DAY 15

The sky is gray. Wei's unshaven, his clothing's wrinkled, and his face is dirty. Wei has to check the box saying that he had a felony. Show a series of hands accepting his job application only to throw it in the trashcan when he turns his back. He stands by his phone but it never rings.

FADE OUT:

HOLD IN BLACK

16 INT. CAR MANUFACTURING COMPANY - HALLWAY - DAY 16

The HIRING MANAGER, 30s-50s, Asian man, is giving Zarah a tour on her first day at the job.

NOTE: Yue Lao is pronounced "Yoo-ay Lau."

HIRING MANAGER
...and this is Yue Lao.

Zarah and Yue stare at each other a little too long and the hiring manager looks back and glances at him. The hiring manager continues the tour.

YUE
Have fun on the tour!

HIRING MANAGER
After the tour, I'll show you to your desk.

17 INT. WEI'S APARTMENT - FAMILY ROOM - DAY 17

Wei, wearing a blue t-shirt and jeans, watches WRESTLING from a blue camping CHAIR with a place to sit drinks.

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ZARAH

Can you help me find my makeup and music? I seem to have lost it after our seventh move.

WEI

No.

The floor is littered with beer bottle CAPS. Wei twists a beer bottle off, adding another bottle cap to the floor.

ZARAH

Why not?

Zarah steps on a bottle cap when Wei sees something big happen on TV.

ZARAH/WEI

Ow!/Oh!

WEI

I can't find something if I don't know where it is.

Zarah sighs.

During a commercial break, Wei looks over at Zarah.

WEI

What's with the long face?

Wei gets up and puts Zarah into a figure 4 and tickles her. Zarah can't help but laugh.

ZARAH

Sometimes I think that you deserve to just be. I'd pay for you to just be you if I could, but everything costs so much.

18

INT. CAR MANUFACTURING COMPANY - BREAKROOM - DAY

18

Zarah and Yue, both in jeans, are in the breakroom making small talk. There are Adoptee Hub and Platforming Pangolin mugs (product placements) on the counter.

YUE

There are a lot of Asians in this company in Evansville. We have Chinese, Thai, Hmong, Koreans--

ZARAH

How about Vietnamese?

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YUE
I'm sure there's that too.

LATER

Zarah wears SAFETY GOGGLES, a Bloomington (Indiana) t-shirt, and snuffles from a cold.

ZARAH
I feel miserable

YUE
You look fine to me.

ZARAH
I don't like how these safety goggles make my nose look.

YUE
You have a cute nose. You have a master's degree, so what are you doing here?

ZARAH
I just graduated and was looking for an adventure.
(then)
Is that ruby?

Zarah points to his left pinky finger.

YUE
Yes. I see you have one too.

ZARAH
It's a birthstone given to me by my family. I'm a Cancer. What's your sign?

YUE
I'm a Leo. You're gorgeous for someone who's about 35.

ZARAH
I'm 22, almost 23, but thank you. I'd like to coordinate a get-together after work.

YUE
People want to go home after work. Things are very informal. Not a restaurant, but a bar.

Yue stops to look at Zarah lovingly.

19

INT. MEXICAN BAR - NIGHT

19

At a colorful bar with Zarah, Yue, and the hiring manager, Yue wears a dark blue baseball HAT that says "USA."

YUE

I don't trust the government.

ZARAH

I saw a homeless man today who was wearing a nice work outfit, as if he had been newly evicted. Man!

YUE

This is the USA! That can't happen here!

ZARAH

Do I hear sarcasm?

YUE

A big fat YUP.

The hiring manager is watching the TV in the bar and cheering for a sports team.

ZARAH

Do you like sports?

YUE

(quietly)
Not at all.

ZARAH

(quietly)
Thank God you don't like sports.
Me neither.

Zarah laughs. Hiring manager leaves for the restroom.

ZARAH

You said that you have an ex-wife.
Do you mind if I ask why you broke up?

20

INT. YUE'S HOUSE - FAMILY ROOM - DAY (FLASHBACK)

20

SUPER: Fall 1975

Yue's house is in Evansville, Indiana. YUE'S EX-WIFE, 30s, a white blonde woman, and YOUNGER YUE, 30s, Chinese man, are talking. Yue's flashbacks have a B&W old 35mm quality.

YUE'S EX-WIFE

I'm pregnant!

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YOUNGER YUE

What? I thought you were on birth control.

YUE'S EX-WIFE

Well, it's not 100% effective. I thought you'd be happy for me.

YOUNGER YUE

(reluctant)

Uh, yeah, yeah. I'm happy for you. It's just unexpected.

21 INT. MEXICAN BAR - NIGHT

21

YUE

Children. Vietnam.

22 INT. WEI'S APARTMENT - FAMILY ROOM - DAY

22

It's raining. Zarah turns on her computer and searches for "ego" on a site that looks like Metacrawler. One of the search results refers to Kabbalah, and she starts reading about it.

It says, "Kabbalah is a practical religion. It comes from the Hebrew word meaning 'received knowledge.'" She clicks on the Contact link at the end of the site. She types into the contact form: "How do I protect myself from evil?"

An email pops up: "Wear a red string on your left wrist and have a loved one add seven knots to it. Then recite this prayer..." She prints it out, folds it, and puts it in her pocket.

Zarah turns around to look at Wei who's facing the opposite wall. Wei watches TV.

ZARAH

Guess what today is? It's our 4th anniversary.

NOTE: Bia is pronounced "bee-uh."

WEI

Happy Anniversary! This calls for a celebration. Would you be a dear and get me some *bia*?

Zarah runs to the nearest LIQUOR STORE to buy beer. She turns the corner. Sound of her falling on the ice. Amalee, who was in the area, runs in the direction of the sound, gripping the HANDLES of a fancy paper bag.

AMALEE

Oh my God! Are you okay? We need to get you to the hospital!

BLOOD runs down Zarah's face from her eyebrow area.

ZARAH

(dazed)

Amalee? What are you doing here?

AMALEE

I was just heading over to surprise you.

23 INT. PRIMARY CARE PHYSICIAN'S OFFICE - DAY 23

Amalee sits in a chair near the medical bed and takes Zarah's hand in both of hers. Zarah doesn't look at her, embarrassed. The PRIMARY CARE PHYSICIAN, 50s, female African adult, played as self, is looking Zarah over.

PRIMARY CARE PHYSICIAN

She's fine. She just has a cut above her eye, on the brow. I'm giving her a few stitches.

The doctor gets an antiseptic WIPE and starts to clean Zarah's face.

PRIMARY CARE PHYSICIAN (CONT'D)

Just going to clean her off and put a bandage on it, and she should be good.

The doctor puts a butterfly BANDAGE on Zarah's eyebrow.

PRIMARY CARE PHYSICIAN (CONT'D)

There's little chance she's gotten a concussion, but we'll keep an eye on her.

Zarah is out of it because of the pain medication.

24 INT. SYNAGOGUE - OFFICE - DAY (FLASHBACK) 24

Everything has a pink tint. There are words on a BOARD. The heading is "Beginner's Kabbalah." Under that are words like "klipot" and "tikkun" with a diagram of the Kabbalistic Tree of Life. KABBALAH TEACHER, 50s-something woman, any race, is at the front.

KABBALAH TEACHER

Questions?

ZARAH

So what does Kabbalah have to say about domestic abuse and soul mates?

NOTE: Aleph Yod Shin is pronounced "Al-eff Yahd Shih-n" and Aleph Shin Hei is pronounced "Al-eff Shih-n Hay."

KABBALAH TEACHER

The Hebrew word for woman is spelled Aleph Yod Shin and man is spelled Aleph Shin Hei. If you remove the Yod and Hei, which spells God, you get fire: Aleph Shin.

The Kabbalah teacher writes the Hebrew for woman and man and circles the letters symbolizing Yod and Hei.

KABBALAH TEACHER

The Zohar is full of references to twin souls. The Hebrew word for soulmate is "bashert" (literally destiny). If someone needs to rectify their karmic debt, it could be difficult to find and be with your soulmate. Twin soul connections never happen at convenient times.

ZARAH

Thanks. That's my last question. I have to leave a bit early to catch the bus.

Zarah packs up her things and leaves for the bus stop.

KABBALAH TEACHER

Most people think of soulmates as the One or something romantic, but it doesn't have to be. For example, every date you go on is beshert and every bashert prepares you for the next beshert.

She takes a drink of water.

KABBALAH TEACHER

Also, it's not true that there's someone for everyone. Sometimes there are two for one and none for another. Anyways, that's it for today.

(MORE)

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KABBALAH TEACHER (CONT'D)

I want to thank the synagogue for allowing us to use this space.

25 INT. PRIMARY CARE PHYSICIAN'S OFFICE - DAY 25
Amalee kisses Zarah on the forehead, far away from the cut. She puts a ruby necklace in Zarah's hand.

26 INT. ZARAH'S PARENTS' HOUSE - FAMILY ROOM - DAY 26
ZARAH'S FATHER, 63, white male, and ZARAH'S MOTHER, 63, white female, sit. Zarah's mother looks out the window.

ZARAH'S MOTHER

Zarah hasn't called in a long time. Do you think she's okay?

ZARAH'S FATHER

I don't know. She could be lost to us forever.

ZARAH'S MOTHER

After trying for a baby for six years, I never thought that we could lose her when she became an adult.

27 INT. CAR MANUFACTURING COMPANY - PARTS ROOM - DAY 27
The only colors in the background are metallic silver, gray, and brown. Zarah, wearing a brown t-shirt and jeans, walks funny and hides her bruised wrist by aiming them toward the shadows. Yue is wearing a gray t-shirt and jeans.

ZARAH

I'm moving the beginning of March. I'll have to drive a different route to get to work. Can you help me with directions?

YUE

Sure. Didn't I hear that you'd just moved again not that long ago?

Yue brings up Yahoo! Maps, not GPS.

ZARAH

This will be our eighth move in less than a year.

YUE

You need to stop living like a college kid. Here.

Yue gives Zarah a business card.

YUE

I know someone who works at a leasing office. Tell her you know me.

ZARAH

Can I borrow some boxes?

Zarah points to the cardboard boxes in the parts room. Yue nods.

ZARAH

And can you help take them to my car?

Yue nods.

28 EXT. CAR MANUFACTURING COMPANY - PARKING LOT - DAY 28

Yue walks cardboard boxes out to Zarah's car. It's a nice day with blue skies. Yue catches a glimpse of the bruise she got from falling on the ice.

YUE

Does your boyfriend treat you okay?

ZARAH

Uh...

29 INT. CAR MANUFACTURING COMPANY - ZARAH'S OFFICE - DAY 29

Zarah, in a black t-shirt and jeans, is at work with a butterfly bandage on her eyebrow. He comes in, wearing a white-t-shirt and jeans.

YUE

(points to her eyebrow)
I bet that's from having too much sex.

ZARAH

(smiles)
You're so bad.

30 INT. CAR MANUFACTURING COMPANY - STAIRCASE - DAY 30

Zarah walks downstairs to the parts section. She stops and walks back up as Yue walks down.

ZARAH
No more flirting.

YUE
Don't make a mountain out of a molehill.

31 INT. CAR MANUFACTURING COMPANY - ZARAH'S OFFICE - DAY 31

Zarah goes to her office. OFFICEMATE, 40s, any race, is talking with a Midwestern accent.

ZARAH
I put my foot down. I'm dating someone else. He said not to make a mountain out of a molehill.

OFFICEMATE
That doesn't sound like him, so he must definitely like you. Beware though. He's a user.

ZARAH
He's charming.

OFFICEMATE
Charming men can be the most dangerous.

LATER

It's after hours. Yue walks by Zarah's door.

ZARAH
Wait.

YUE
What? I need to pack for a business trip

ZARAH
Just a second. Sit down.

YUE
No thanks. I need to leave soon.

ZARAH
I'm conflicted because I like you. If you had me, what would you want to do to me?

Yue looks around and walks into the room.

YUE
That's up to the woman.

ZARAH
Good answer.

YUE
What really happened to your
eyebrow?

ZARAH
(beat)
I got it from my boyfriend.

Zarah gestures to Yue to sit down.

YUE
No, I'm fine standing.

ZARAH
My sex drive is higher thanks to
you.

Zarah pats the seat of the chair.

YUE
We'll work things out.

She tries to kiss him, but he dodges her lips.

32 INT. ZARAH'S CAR IN PETERSBURG, INDIANA - DAY
Zarah texts Yue.

32

ZARAH (TEXT)
Hi.

YUE (TEXT)
Hi. Please call. Every text costs
me money.

Zarah dials Yue's number.

ZARAH (INTO PHONE)
Where are you?

YUE (O.S.)
Do you have protection?

ZARAH (INTO PHONE)
No, I can't afford it every month.
(MORE)

Made in Highland

ZARAH (INTO PHONE) (CONT'D)
 Are you curious as to how I got
 your number?

YUE (O.S.)
 No, you can find that out easily.

ZARAH (INTO PHONE)
 Every minute seems so long.

33 INT. CAR MANUFACTURING COMPANY - PARTS ROOM - DAY 33
 Zarah, in jeans, and Yue are in between the parts shelves
 downstairs. Zarah pulls Yue's white T-SHIRT toward her. He
 pulls her JACKET in too and they kiss. He covers their faces
 with a flattened CARDBOARD BOX.

ZARAH
 Have you ever felt so horny?

Fifteen minutes later, after making out, he indicates that she
 should get back to work.

34 INT. CAR MANUFACTURING COMPANY - STAIRCASE - DAY 34
 She walks up the steps and bumps into her officemate.

35 INT. CAR MANUFACTURING COMPANY - PARTS ROOM - DAY 35
 Zarah and Yue are in between the parts shelves downstairs. Yue
 grinds against Zarah behind LARGE INDUSTRIAL EQUIPMENT.

YUE
 Tonight, I'll be all over your
 body.

He hurriedly writes down his address and gives it to her.

36 INT. CAR MANUFACTURING COMPANY - HALLWAY - DAY 36
 Yue has a goofy grin on his face as he is about to pass his
 boss in the hallway. His boss is reading a newspaper with
 headlines about the recession.

YUE
 Man, I am so thankful you got me
 this job.

HIRING MANAGER
 I'm glad you're happy. It's the
 least I could do after what you
 did for me. People like us need to
 stick together.

37 INT. YUE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT 37

Yue's house is in Evansville, Indiana. The new moon is barely visible from the window. The bed is in a dark colorful shade like burgundy or maroon.

YUE

Feel my heart, it's racing. I've dreamt about this.

Zarah puts her hand on his heart. They embrace. They exhale. They sigh. Yue kisses the top of Zarah's head. They hold each other in their arms for a while. They keep kissing each other repeatedly. They seem to be desperate for each other's touch as if it's their last night even though it isn't. The sex is slow and loving and does not have to be explicit. Yue gets more excited at the end.

ZARAH

Yue, oh, Yue!

After orgasm-

ZARAH

That was a new experience! I've never squirted before.

(then)

I don't want to go to sleep.

YUE

Go to sleep. We have to go to work in the morning.

38 INT. CAR MANUFACTURING COMPANY - HALLWAY - DAY 38

Yue passes by Zarah, in jeans, in the hallway.

YUE

It's scorched earth down there.

ZARAH

I can't do anything about it; my boyfriend would know.

YUE

He likes it shaved?

ZARAH

Yes.

YUE

Next time we have sex, I want to put the spermicide on you.

39 **INT. CAR MANUFACTURING COMPANY - BREAKROOM - DAY** **39**
Yue has some eczema on his elbow, and Zarah massages it.

 ZARAH
 When's your birthday? How old are
 you?

 YUE
 Sixty-five.

 ZARAH
 Oh.

40 **INT. YUE'S HOUSE - FAMILY ROOM - NIGHT** **40**
It's Sunday morning on a CALENDAR. Yue has ANTIQUES in his home. There's an ASHTRAY and a full WHISKEY GLASS on the table. Yue takes his (fake) medication with a swig of whiskey. Zarah wears his white BATHROBE drinking a cup of COFFEE. Yue flips through a PHOTO ALBUM.

 YUE
 This is me when I was younger.

 ZARAH
 I think you're more attractive
 now; I'd never wish you to be
 younger.
 (then)
 What were you wearing?

 YUE
 If you read it sideways it says a
 four-letter word but it's made to
 look like Chinese characters.
 That's my sense of humor.
 (then)
 These are my LPs.

Yue shows off LPs of bands and musicians popular in the '60s.

 ZARAH
 I haven't seen a record player
 since I was at my babysitter's
 house!

 YUE
 And this is my computer running
 damned Windows 7.

 ZARAH
 Yeah, a lot of people have found
 it to be unintuitive.

YUE
Can you help me?

ZARAH
Sure.

YUE
I keep typing this address into
the--
(points)
thingy.

ZARAH
That's not an address bar. That's
a search engine.

YUE
What's the difference?

ZARAH
This is an address bar.

Zarah points to the address bar.

ZARAH
And this is a search engine.

Zarah points to the search engine.

YUE
They're both rectangular. They're
both long and hard.
(winks)

41 EXT. CAR MANUFACTURING COMPANY - HALLWAY - DAY

41

The next day-

Zarah, in jeans, goes out to greet Yue, in a t-shirt and jeans, in the PARKING LOT. Yue's car has an atheist bumper sticker of a fish symbol with legs. Inside, Yue reprimands her.

YUE
That was one of the scariest
things! Never do that again. I'm
angry, just give me a minute.

ZARAH
Everything was okay. No one saw.
And if they did, so what? It's not
a crime.

YUE

I understand why you think that,
but office romances are tricky;
The gossip mill is terrible.

ZARAH

Are you worried about what your
subordinates will think?

YUE

I don't have any subordinates. I
just want to get to the point
where I can retire in peace.

42

INT. WEI'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - DAY

42

Wei pulls a CONDOM out of Zarah's back jeans POCKET.

WEI

Hello, what's this? I seem to find
the weirdest things when I'm not
looking for them.

ZARAH

That was when I was thinking about
it, but I didn't do anything.

WEI

I've been checking your phone.

ZARAH

You have?

WEI

Will you please stop calling him?

ZARAH

Yes.

43

INT. WEI'S PARENTS' HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY (FLASHBACK)

43

Wei's parents' house is in Bloomington, Indiana. WEI'S MOTHER,
50s, goes through her husband's DRAWERS. There's a sculpture of
a balance scale on the top. She finds evidence that he's been
cheating on her. Young Wei is watching.

44

INT. WEI'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - DAY

44

WEI

Remember, no one gets you better
than me. That's what you want.
We're the only ones from our
region of the world.

(MORE)

Made in Highland

WEI (CONT'D)

And I'm the only one who'd still
marry you after you put our child
up for adoption.

ZARAH

Maybe that's not true.

LATER

In disagreement, Zarah throws a GLASS at WEI and tries to push him onto the broken glass but ends up cutting her feet because he dodges it. He's a tough guy and nothing scares him.

ZARAH

You don't love me. No one can love
me, not even my parents!

WEI

What the hell!
(then)
Do you want my help?

ZARAH

No... yes.

Wei wraps her foot in a SOCK and puts a BOWL underneath her foot to collect blood. The sock becomes completely RED.

45

EXT. WEI'S APARTMENT - DAY

45

Zarah returns home from work. Wei returns home from something too but it's not apparent what that is. Is it possible that he's cheating too?

WEI

Hey, Perfect.

ZARAH

I get tired of looking at your
face.

WEI

Well, I get tired of seeing you in
purple. It does nothing for you.
Red suits you better. This is the
thanks I get for loving you
unconditionally? This is about
him, isn't it?

ZARAH

No, it's about us. Don't make it
about him.

WEI
I don't trust him.

ZARAH
Well, I do.

WEI
So you're saying he makes you feel
safe, and I don't?

ZARAH
Yes.

WEI
I make my life, and I accept it.
You're a fool.
(then)
Well, how about this? You can have
sex with someone when I find a
girl to have sex with. But it will
not be with that man.

Zarah finds an eviction notice on the apartment door. This is
the last straw.

ZARAH
This is the 10th time in seven
months!

46 INT. CAR MANUFACTURING COMPANY - ZARAH'S OFFICE - DAY 46
SUPER: April 30, 2008
Zarah, in jeans, is in her office wearing a bandage on her
eyebrow.

OFFICEMATE (2ND JOB)
Can you check these boxes to make
sure they have the right manuals
in them?

Zarah cuts open boxes and waves scissors around angrily.

ZARAH
I checked them yesterday; I made a
list. What are you doing? Don't
give me BS. I've had enough BS.

Zarah runs to the HIRING MANAGER.

ZARAH
I need to go home.

47 INT. WEI'S APARTMENT - FAMILY ROOM - DAY
Zarah flips up her flip phone.

47

HIRING MANAGER (INTO PHONE)
You're fired. You were threatening
your coworker with a weapon.

ZARAH (O.S.)
But...

Next day-
It's the morning. An angry rap song is playing.

WEI
Ok fine. Just do it. Then be done
with it. Where are you going?

ZARAH
You said to just do it.

WEI
No, I didn't.

ZARAH
I'm pretty sure you did.

WEI
I wouldn't say that.

ZARAH
Can I at least call him to tell
him goodbye?

WEI
Fine but make it quick!

Zarah goes to the bedroom, closes the bedroom door, and calls
Yue.

YUE
Hi. The gossip mill is now saying
you threatened your coworker with
a razor.

ZARAH
That's B.S.

Wei knocks loudly on the bedroom door.

WEI
Why are you taking so long? It
shouldn't take this long!

ZARAH
I've got to go.

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Zarah hangs up and opens the door.

ZARAH

We're getting evicted, and you're telling me what to do? Go to a hotel room.

48 INT./EXT. ZARAH'S CAR/AIRPORT PARKING LOT - DAY 48
Amalee wears a purple airline work SHIRT. They look at each other's intercut screens.

INTERCUT:

ZARAH (INTO PHONE)

I've been in an abusive relationship, and I don't even recognize myself anymore.

AMALEE (INTO PHONE)

If I saw your ex, I'd beat him up for you.

(then)

I can get you a plane ticket.

ZARAH (INTO PHONE)

But my stuff...

AMALEE (INTO PHONE)

No worries. Just be thankful that I got this new job.

END INTERCUT:

AMALEE (O.S.)

Just let me know when you can pay for shipping.

49 EXT. YUE'S HOUSE - NIGHT 49
Zarah knocks on the door wearing what she wore on their first night together.

ZARAH

May I come in? I was just fired.

YUE

I know. I like your skirt.

The landline phone rings and Yue picks it up.

YUE

My friend is coming over soon. You better leave.

Made in Highland

50

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

50

Zarah watches Wei talk to her father on the phone.

ZARAH'S FATHER (INTO PHONE)

What the hell are you doing with your life? Why don't you join the military. You're young enough.

WEI (INTO PHONE)

I...

ZARAH'S FATHER (INTO PHONE)

From the point of view of my wife and me, your incompetence is gonna get someone killed.

WEI (INTO PHONE)

I think that's a bit--

ZARAH'S FATHER (INTO PHONE)

How long have you been dating my daughter?

WEI (INTO PHONE)

Four years.

ZARAH'S FATHER (INTO PHONE)

Four years, and you haven't done a damn thing for her life. This is her first time on her own and she can't take care of herself AND you at the same time. Get it together. You're screwing up our daughter's life and being a leech.

WEI

Yes, sir.

ZARAH'S FATHER

Don't just say yes. Do something about it.

Zarah's father hangs up.

ZARAH

(falls on her knees)
My life is over.

WEI

No, it's not. Get up.

Zarah curls up in a ball.

WEI

Get up.

Made in Highland

ZARAH

No, I can't. I feel the weight of the world.

WEI

Oh, Jesus. Get up.

Wei tries to pull her up, resulting in her being dragged on the floor.

ZARAH

I don't even recognize myself anymore.

Zarah bawls. Wei looks down at her then curls up next to her so they look like a Venn diagram. He doesn't know what else to do.

51 INT. WEI'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY 51
Zarah receives an email from her adoption agency with a form stating that she will pay her adoption agency to have them send a letter to her birthmother. Zarah writes a LETTER to her birthmother on an Untimely Torn card (product placement). She starts "Dear Má".

ZARAH (V.O.)

My name is Zarah. I graduated from college with a bachelor's degree in English. Some of my favorite hobbies include reading, listening to music, watching television and movies, watching Japanese animation, and hanging out with my friends.

52 INT. ZARAH'S PARENTS' HOUSE - FAMILY ROOM - DAY 52
ZARAH'S DIALOGUE continues.

Zarah's father is taking a work-related call. Zarah's mother is grading TESTS. She's wearing CROSS jewelry. All this appears to be viewed with idyllic rose-colored glasses.

ZARAH (V.O.)

I have a very small loving adoptive family. My mom is well known in my church and spends much time volunteering.

ZARAH'S DIALOGUE continues.

Zarah's Mother and Amalee are doing downward dog on their YOGA MATS while watching a yoga video. Amalee turns her head and smiles at Zarah's mother. This is viewed with a rose-colored filter.

Made in Highland

53 INT. WEI'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY 53

ZARAH (V.O.)

I'm very proud of my adoptive family and everything that they've given me. I wouldn't be who I am now if it weren't for them. I hope to reunite with you someday when you're ready. I'd like to know the circumstances behind my adoption. If you know French and can send me letters in French. I have a friend who can translate them for me.

54 INT. COMMUNITY THEATER - DAY 54
ZARAH'S DIALOGUE continues.

An adult female puppet looks pregnant. She "opens" up an ENVELOPE and cries.

55 INT. WEI'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY 55

ZARAH (CONT'D)

I hope that someday we can move past everything that has happened in our past, and I hope that we can all find peace.

56 INT. MEXICAN BAR - NIGHT 56

There are POOL TABLES and a bar inside the restaurant. There are several posters of graffiti art. Zarah calls Yue.

Zarah hears Yue groan into the phone.

ZARAH

Please, for me?

Yue enters the bar.

YUE

If I were twenty years younger--

ZARAH

I like you the way you are.

Yue teaches Zarah how to use a cue. A 50's song plays and they dance to it.

57 **EXT. MEXICAN BAR - NIGHT** 57

Wei is in the parking lot. He pours a SOAP concoction into Zarah's gas tank in a jealous rage and writes "whore" on her car with red spraypaint. Cutter is helping him.

Wei's face is red from anger.

WEI

You seriously chose today?! I just got a new job, bitch!

CUTTER

Yes, drown it in blood!

LATER

Zarah and Yue leave and get in Yue's car instead of her own. They can't see what happened to her car.

58 **INT. YUE'S HOUSE - FAMILY ROOM - DAY** 58

A modern jazz song plays from his outdoor speakers.

ZARAH

He was so stupid.

YUE

Duh.

ZARAH

There will be no talk about the men in my life, neither my ex nor my father.

YUE

I'm fine with that.

(then)

Your kisses are in the top five percent.

ZARAH

Wow!

YUE

The first time we kissed was amazing. When you came down to the parts room and told me 'No more flirting,' I thought, where did that come from?

Yue is very lusty.

YUE

If I were younger, around your age, I'd have been all over you. In the office that first day, you wanted to kiss me, right?

ZARAH

Yes.

YUE

Did you notice what I did? I leaned in and then dodged so you couldn't kiss me.

He leans and dodges to replay the moment.

YUE

I wanted to kiss you too, but I was afraid about it being in the workplace.

YUE

(pre-lap)

I got to step outside for a few minutes.

59

INT./EXT. YUE'S HOUSE - DAY - TRACKING

59

Yue gets up to smoke a CIGARETTE outside. Zarah follows. They sit outside. The music is a bit louder but not too loud.

ZARAH

My grandma doesn't like Frank Sinatra because he was a gambler.

YUE

My parents didn't like Frank Sinatra either. Let's watch a movie. So, tell me why your father--

ZARAH

Remember the rule?

YUE

Okay, I won't mention it again.

ZARAH

Do you mind if I ask what happened to your pointer finger?

YUE

Nothing, it's probably just from the repetitive motion of screwing things on vehicles.

(looks at Zarah's sandals)

Talking about appendages, you have long toes.

ZARAH

Oops! I forgot the closed toe policy.

YUE

Are you the type who goes from one relationship to another?

ZARAH

No.

YUE

When men show interest in you, play a little hard to get. Don't be easy.

ZARAH

Okay.

YUE

I thought about what it must have been like for you to be a Vietnamese adoptee in an all-white family.

ZARAH

Wow, most people don't even think about it.

YUE

You're very, very sensitive.

ZARAH

Is it obvious?

YUE

Fersher.

ZARAH

Say that again.

YUE

Fersher, 95% of the time, I can look at a person and describe his or her personality without even hearing them talk.

Yue looks into her face.

YUE

Most folks who have lived awhile,
and are somewhat astute, can do
that exercise.

ZARAH

There's a lot more to people than
their personality. Everyone has
stories to tell.

YUE

Fersher.

ZARAH

If we were to live together, do
you think we could figure out the
finances all right?

Yue walks in to get a drink and didn't hear her. He returns,
and she changes topics.

ZARAH

Guess what. I'm a model.

YUE

I was a model too.

Zarah gives him a quizzical look.

YUE

A long time ago.

ZARAH

So, what does being a Leo mean to
you?

YUE

It means I'm very bold.

ZARAH

My grandma was a Leo, but she was
very different from you. She was
modest. What makes her a Leo?

YUE

She must have masturbated every
day.

ZARAH

(laughs)

I don't know if I want to have more sex with you or if I want to find out all I can about you.

YUE

I agree.

Zarah points at a piece of paper quizzically. Yue pulls down the piece of paper and shows Zarah his father's will.

YUE

This is my father's will. The bastard didn't leave anything for me because I divorced my ex-wife.

60 INT. YUE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY (FLASHBACK)

60

YUE'S DIALOGUE continues over the FLASHBACK.

SUPER: Fall in the 1970s

Yue's ex-wife goes to take BIRTH CONTROL then decides against it while Yue's not looking. Yue drinks from a bottle of BEER and massages her shoulders in a lusty way. Yue's flashbacks have an old B&W 35mm quality.

61 EXT. YUE'S HOUSE - DAY

61

YUE

He left money for my daughters.

(then)

I love you, if I were twenty years younger--

ZARAH

I love your eyes, your hair, your voice, your smell, your writing, everything about you. I love you the way you are.

YUE

You cannot love me.

ZARAH

Yue.

YUE

Whaaa?

ZARAH

I love you.

YUE
That's BS.

ZARAH
I'm very vulnerable.

YUE
I know.

62 INT. WEI'S APARTMENT - NIGHT 62
Amalee moves Zarah's stuff out of Wei's apartment when he's not around.

ZARAH
What was I even doing here? I never used to be this angry. I was never angry. I never had the space to be. He gave me too much space to be the person I was never allowed to be.

Before they part--
Zarah unfolds a piece of paper and takes a red string out of her pocket.

ZARAH
Read.

Amalee reads the instructions for the red string protection prayer. She ties seven knots in a red string then turns it into a bracelet on Zarah's left wrist.

NOTE: Pronunciation of the last line is "Ben Poor-at Yo-sehf, Ben Poor-at Uh-lay-ee Ah-yin":

AMALEE/ZARAH
In the name of Yahweh, I put Michael to my right, Gabriel to the left, Uriel in the front, Raphael behind and the Shekina above. Ben Porat Yosef, Ben Porat Alei Ayin.

63 EXT. MEXICAN BAR - DAY 63
It's in the morning. They're in the parking lot.

64 INT. ZARAH'S CAR - DAY 64
Zarah's car won't start.

65 EXT. MEXICAN BAR - DAY 65
Yue drives her to an airport.

66 INT. AIRPORT - DAY 66
At the airport, after dropping her off and returning home, Yue calls her phone, and her phone rings. A bright WINDOW appears. Yue looks at it longingly.

YUE (INTO PHONE)
Our nights together couldn't have
been more magical.
(then)
Let's stay in touch.

ZARAH (INTO PHONE)
Stay in touch sounds too much like
goodbye. We'll stay in touch as
soon as possible, as often as
possible.

67 EXT. ZARAH'S PARENTS' HOUSE - DAY 67
Her parents open the door and hug Zarah. Zarah's mother has tears in her eyes, and Zarah's father tries to appear strong. Amalee is also there and hugs Zarah. She leaves, but not before squeezing Zarah's mother's hand.

68 INT. ZARAH'S PARENTS' HOUSE - ZARAH'S BEDROOM - DAY 68
Zarah turns on her computer and opens up her EMAIL ACCOUNT. A bright WINDOW appears, and she looks at it. It leads into a telephone world.

ZARAH (ON EMAIL)
Did I ever tell you that you're a
horrible conversationalist via
email?

Yue's emails are in comic sans.

YUE (ON EMAIL)
Fersher! However, you're a writer.
I tend to keep my verbosity to a
minimum. Writing for me, has
always been akin to pulling teeth...

A new RE: email pops up and Yue clicks on it, but the contents are not visible to the audience.

YUE (ON EMAIL)
Now you have it! Little sentences.

ZARAH (ON EMAIL)
Am I scaring you away?

WEI

Found it.

72 EXT. MEXICAN BAR - NIGHT**72**

Wei follows Yue to the Mexican bar and waits in the parking lot. Fight music begins. When Yue leaves drunk, Wei attacks him. A passionate STREET BRAWL ensues. As he leaves--

WEI

I'll hunt you down old man!

Yue's phone rings. He picks up.

ZARAH

So we're still on for tomorrow?

Yue catches his breath.

YUE

Tomorrow? Oh, yes.

ZARAH (O.S.)

Are you okay?

YUE (ON PHONE)

Yeah, of course, no worries.

73 INT. ZARAH'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY**73**

Zarah brought her '90s unicorn POSTERS in red and yellow from her old bedroom, as well as her baby doll in red. The apartment is decorated with a lot of colors and seems to be in accordance with feng shui rules.

Zarah wakes up early and runs around all morning getting ready. She mops the floors. She wipes down the counters, the sinks. She cleans the toilet.

She applies and re-applies makeup, as in eyeshadow and lipstick. She tries different hairstyles.

YUE (INTO PHONE)

I'll be there in ten minutes.

Zarah squeals.

She tries to throw together a sexy schoolgirl outfit. She looks in the mirror and realized that she forgot where she put her knee-highs. She plucks her eyebrows and paints what nails she had left to match her outfit. She puts on earrings but accidentally gets nail polish on it so she takes it off.

However, she was most worried about the hideous pimple on her face. She applies and reapplies concealer.

Made in Highland

Yue drives up and knocks on the door. Zarah opens the door and Zarah gives him her parking pass.

Yue returns and looks around.

YUE

Your parents really care for you.

ZARAH

Let's not kill the mood by talking about them.

YUE

You look so beautiful with those earrings on.

ZARAH

Wait a second.

Zarah returns with chocolate SYRUP and turns on a romantic alternative rock song. A romantic French song plays while Zarah is on top of Yue in Zarah's bed. Even though it's hot outside, the apartment is air conditioned but not loudly. They go slow to keep themselves somewhat cool. This scene is PG-13.

YUE

What are you doing to me?

ZARAH

I feel very strongly about you.

YUE

I'm starting to feel the same way. I'll never understand this relationship, but I'm going along with it.

After orgasm-

YUE

I'm tired. You've worn me out. I've used muscles I've not used before in a while. I'm a broken man.

74

EXT. ZARAH'S APARTMENT - DAY

74

Zarah and Yue make out by the SCREEN DOOR. Yue goes to the rental truck and Zarah heads toward the bus.

YUE

Wait!

Yue holds out her parking pass, which she takes. They hug.

Made in Highland

75 INT. ZARAH'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT 75
 After Yue has returned home, a bright door appears. Zarah, in a dress, steps through. The baby DOLL that she brought to her apartment appears to watch.

76 INT. COMMUNITY THEATER - NIGHT 76
 It looks like she's walking onto a STAGE to give a presentation. Yue is in the audience. The spotlight is put on Zarah.

ZARAH
 "Cologne" by Zarah
 Every afternoon
 around 6PM, I arrive home
 after a long day of work
 to be greeted by your scent.

77 INT. ZARAH'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY 77
 ZARAH'S DIALOGUE continues.

Zarah looks at the alarm CLOCK.

ZARAH (V.O.)
 Each morning when I wake up,
 I pick up the pillow
 from the side where you slept
 and take in a deep breath.

Zarah smells her PILLOW. Zarah looks at Yue's COLOGNE, which she bought.

78 INT. COMMUNITY THEATER - NIGHT 78

ZARAH (CONT'D)
 When the scent is gone I'll buy
 your cologne,
 though I'll never be able to find
 the perfect blend
 without your natural oils,
 and I'll spray that pillow lightly
 so that I've enough of you
 to last me
 for years.

Yue is the only one in the theater seats clapping.

YUE
 Sweetness.

ZARAH

You, my dear, are an absolute
delight.

YUE

And you're a queen!

ZARAH

Then that would make you a king.

YUE

Kind of... Miss you and our magic.

A door appears.

79

INT. TELEPHONE WORLD - DAY

79

They step through the door, leading them into a telephone world filled with red, yellow, and blue. This is a place where texts/emojis come to life. As they talk, they face each other.

ZARAH

Did you know there are Asians in
Mexico?

YUE

You could be a Vietnamese person
in Mexico who speaks Spanish.

ZARAH

I never said anything about
speaking Spanish... Hmm, I wonder
what you're thinking.

YUE

Just carrying fantasy to different
levels. Maybe learning Spanish is
not a bad idea.

A devil emoji pops up in the air.

YUE

This is my dream house.

A picture appears of a beautiful house.

YUE (CONT'D)

but with a surrounding veranda in
the foothills of somewhere cool.

There's the sound of a knock at the door.

YUE

Sorry, I have company.

Made in Highland

A door appears. Yue returns to his apartment quickly.

80 INT. YUE'S HOUSE - FRONT DOOR - DAY 80
 Yue opens the door to see his PROBATION OFFICER, adult, any age or race, handing him an envelope.

PROBATION OFFICER
 Mr. Lao. The terms of your probation are as follows--

The probation officer rambles on about the terms. The probation officer leaves.

Yue opens the letter. It's from the sheriff's office. The letter inside says "Receipt for payment of probation fees."

81 INT. TELEPHONE WORLD - DAY 81
 It's excruciatingly hot. Wei is sweating buckets. Zarah is not sweating as much but she does have a glow.

ZARAH
 What's up?

WEI
 You mean whassup!
 (then)
 Ahem, I saw something that reminded me of you the other day.

ZARAH
 That's nice. How are you?

WEI
 I'm surviving. I talk about you a lot.

ZARAH
 I dream about you. So what would you like to talk about?

WEI
 I've been doing a lot of thinking lately about how short life really is; my roommate just OD'd the other day.

ZARAH
 Wow! Gosh, I'm sorry.

WEI
 I found a job. I even think I'll get promoted soon.

Made in Highland

ZARAH

That's good. I'm proud of you.
What else is new in your life?

WEI

Well, some girl I had sex with
told me she was pregnant with my
child, but it was all a lie so
that she could get back with her
ex. Why would someone lie about
that?

ZARAH

Wow! That's crazy. I don't know
why.

WEI

I miss you. Why don't we stop
playing games and get back
together?

ZARAH

Uh...

WEI

I know you better than anyone
else. I'm Cambodian; you're
Vietnamese. You're just like me.
We should be together. Let's put
this all behind us and travel to
Macau like we said we would.

ZARAH

You don't know me. If you love me,
you have a funny way of showing
it.

WEI

We've been together for over four
years. We lived together. We've
been through hard times together.
No one will ever know you the way
I know you.

He puts his hand to his heart.

82

EXT. BUS STOP - DAY (FLASHBACK)

82

SUPER: Summer of 2006

Zarah has her arms wrapped around Wei's body under his crimson
JERSEY by a bus stop. She sees this flashbacks through "rose-
colored glasses".

83 INT. TELEPHONE WORLD - DAY

83

ZARAH
You don't know me.

WEI
While I have you on the phone, can
you help me update my résumé?

Zarah edits Wei's résumé while still in the telephone world and sends it back to him because she still cares about his well-being. The positions that show on screen are fast food, gas station attendant, and welding positions.

NARRATOR
(pre-lap)
She realized many cheaters find
"the One" at the wrong time.

84 EXT. ZARAH'S CAR IN PETERSBURG, INDIANA - NIGHT

84

NARRATOR'S DIALOGUE continues.

The word that Wei wrote on Zarah's car is changed from "whore" to "cheater."

NARRATOR (V.O.)
She was by nature a cheater; she
could neither love just one man
nor just one set of parents.

85 INT. COMMUNITY THEATER - DAY

85

NARRATOR'S DIALOGUE continues.

An adult female water puppet puts her hand on her pregnant stomach.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)
She fooled her ex into thinking he
had a chance by making the
impossible sound possible,

86 INT. ZARAH'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY

86

Zarah notices that a bit of red thread has unraveled from the red baby onesie.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)
and she fooled her friends and
family by making the possible
sound impossible.

Zarah repeatedly flips a coin.

Made in Highland

NARRATOR (CONT'D)
 She held them both in her heart
 until she could decide who she was
 cheating on.

V.O. continues over music.

Rap plays. Zarah reaches in the direction of the rap. Jazz plays. Zarah reaches in the direction of the jazz. Zarah screams in frustration.

87

INT. BEACH - DAY

87

Zarah is building a sandcastle.

NOTE: Polyamorous is pronounced "polly-aam-or-us."

ZARAH
 Why can't I just love one man?
 Maybe I'm polyamorous.

AMALEE
 Some people just cannot be
 monogamous no matter how hard they
 try. However, I feel that when the
 person you're with doesn't want
 you to be non-monogamous, then you
 are, but I bet you that when you
 find someone who finally accepts
 you, then you'll want to be
 monogamous.

Amalee laces her fingers in Zarah's, and Zarah looks down.

88

INT. ZARAH'S PARENTS' HOUSE - FAMILY ROOM - DAY

88

Zarah's mother is doing yoga with calming meditation music.
 Zarah's enters.

ZARAH
 Hi, mom.

ZARAH'S MOTHER
 Hi, how are you?

Zarah doesn't answer. Zarah's mother turns off the music to look at her.

ZARAH'S MOTHER
 What's wrong, honey?

ZARAH
 I'm having a hard time deciding
 between two guys.

ZARAH'S MOTHER

I say go with whoever treats you well.

ZARAH

That sounds like something you'd say.

ZARAH'S MOTHER

You've always had a hard time deciding even as a baby. I remember when your dad's mom said that you preferred being bathed by my mom. The only thing you had no trouble deciding on was that you wanted to keep that red onesie you had on when we picked you from the airport. Do you remember how many times you asked me to read *Are You My Mother?*

ZARAH

Speaking of that, is the pic of my birthmother still in the safe like you said?

ZARAH'S MOTHER

Oh, I'm sorry, but I can't seem to find it anywhere.

89 **INT. ZARAH'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY**
Zarah writes a LETTER to her birthmom.

89

ZARAH (V.O.)

Dear Má,
I need some answers to hard questions.

INTERCUT:

90 **INT. COMMUNITY THEATER - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)**
ZARAH'S DIALOGUE continues over water puppets.

90

SUPER: December 1982

An adult female water puppet representing Sang is at the bar waving around a bottle of SHAOXING while it's drunk after its shift at a garment factory. It rubs up against an adult male water puppet lustily, wanting to have sex with a stranger. Everything has a sunglass tint.

91 **INT. ZARAH'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY** 91
 Zarah drinks from a bottle of beer simultaneously, potentially
 in a floating computer window screen in the bottom righthand
 corner.

ZARAH (CONT'D)

I need to decide between Person A
 and Person B. Neither one has much
 money. Both are far away. Person A
 is immature, and Person B is
 mature. I chase Person A, but
 Person B chases me. I'm religious
 and Person A is religious, but
 Person B is not.

Zarah takes a breath.

ZARAH (CONT'D)

Should I believe that comfort will
 grow with love or love will grow
 with comfort?

INTERCUT:

92 **INT. COMMUNITY THEATER - DAY (FLASHBACK)** 92
ZARAH'S DIALOGUE continues over water puppets.

SUPER: Christmas 1982

An adult female water puppet representing Sang in clothing
 typical in garment factories, and an adult male puppet in a
 suit are yelling at each other silently. A child female puppet
 hides. Everything has a sunglass tint.

93 **INT. AMALEE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY (FLASHBACK)** 93
 Zarah is yelling at Wei simultaneously but it's inaudible.

94 **INT. ZARAH'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY** 94

ZARAH (CONT'D)

Should I choose someone who knows
 the worst of me or someone who
 knows the best of me? The answer
 you give does not have to be
 dependent on the choice you made,
 but on the choice that you think I
 should make.

Zarah looks over at her all-knowing DOLL.

95 **INT. TELEPHONE WORLD - DAY** 95
 The scenery is colorful. Zarah faces Yue.

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ZARAH

Hi wonderful. We need to talk about monogamy.

YUE

Fersher...

ZARAH

Many of my relationships had been non-monogamous and when I was monogamous it was hard because I was used to the other way.

YUE

The only boundaries are the ones you make for yourself. I'd never be so presumptuous as to tell you what you can or can't do. However, you should find someone closer to your age.

96

INT. BEACH - NIGHT

96

Zarah goes on a bad date with a GRAFFITI ARTIST, 20s-60s, who was assigned female at birth.

The graffiti artist smiles a little too broadly. There are no sparks. The graffiti artist's smile falls. They stare at each other awkwardly.

ZARAH

Sorry, I can't think of anything to say.

The graffiti artist builds a sandcastle as Zarah changes Yue's ringtone to play a commitment-phobe ringtone song.

97

INT. TELEPHONE WORLD - DAY

97

Zarah speaks with a Kabbalah teacher. There's Hebrew for the word meaning "love" around her head in red.

ZARAH

How do I know if I'm in love?

KABBALAH TEACHER

What religion did you practice before learning about Kabbalah?

ZARAH

Christianity.

KABBALAH TEACHER
 You might want to read 1
 Corinthians 13:4-8 in your Bible.

Zarah flips to 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 in the Bible while on the phone.

KABBALAH TEACHER
 Would you be willing to let him go
 if you believed it was the best
 thing?

98 **EXT./INT. YUE'S HOUSE - DAY - TRACKING** 98
 Yue brings in a PACKAGE from the mailbox and opens it up,
 surprised to find what's inside. He turns on his computer and
 opens up his EMAIL ACCOUNT.

YUE (ON EMAIL)
 I put them right to my nose and
 mouth to see if I could smell and
 taste you.

99 **INT. TELEPHONE WORLD - DAY** 99
 Zarah listens to Yue.

YUE
 I've difficulty saying "No." A
 woman called me out of the blue
 who I hadn't seen for ages and
 asked me to call her boyfriend to
 make him jealous. I was able to
 find the word "No" for that.

ZARAH
 What was Vietnam like?

YUE
 Being there was an adventure. I
 was a youth at the time, and the
 world was all new to me.

ZARAH
 Would you ever like to visit
 Vietnam with me?

YUE
 Vietnam, sure. When one of us can
 afford the plane ticket.

ZARAH
 I'm sure I could find something
 cheaper when I'm ready.

YUE

Nothing is cheap anymore... The world is fast changing. More than I've ever seen it in my life--

ZARAH

Yes, but I have hook-ups, connections to the Vietnamese adoptee community. What I said on our first date, I haven't taken that back. I love you.

YUE

What you feel for me is lust.

ZARAH

I don't. I've had other boyfriends besides you who treated me better than my ex.

YUE

You "love" me because I'm unattainable.

ZARAH

But you're attainable.

100

INT. WEI'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

100

Wei is talking with MELINDA, 20s, a blond female woman with straight hair.

WEI

You know, if we were in her home country, she'd be a felon like me; cheating is illegal there. If she had to tell employers she was a cheater, she'd have a hard time finding a job too.

Melinda responds sympathetically.

WEI

She was my Koh Rong, nice to look at but made me sick.

Melinda hugs him then takes out her phone and shows it to WEI. He nods.

Melinda takes a duckface selfie of Wei and her together and uploads it as her Facebook PROFILE PIC. His face has a shine. She also makes a post about baby names to make Zarah jealous.

101 INT. ZARAH'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY 101
 Zarah sees the uploaded PROFILE PIC, clicks on Melinda's name, and messages her.

ZARAH (ON MESSENGER)
 That's my man.

MELINDA (ON MESSENGER)
 You've already broken up.

ZARAH (ON MESSENGER)
 His sister still thinks we're together.

102 INT. TELEPHONE WORLD - DAY 102
 It's the first day in August. The heat is excruciating. Wei's fight song ringtone plays. Wei is sweating buckets. Zarah has a glow.

WEI
 I have a girlfriend.

ZARAH
 What's she like?

WEI
 She's a lot like you; she likes to write poetry.

ZARAH
 Does she know your secrets?

WEI
 Yes.

ZARAH
 Wow! I'm surprised. It took you years to tell me your secrets.

WEI
 She subscribes to a newsletter for people who monitor the courts.

ZARAH
 How does she feel about exes?

WEI
 She thinks it's cool that we can still be friends.

SUPER: Labor Day Weekend
 Zarah texts Yue. Their text bubbles pop up on the screen.

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ZARAH (ON TEXT)
I can hardly wait until tomorrow!

YUE (ON TEXT)
Very exciting!

103 INT./EXT. YUE'S RENTAL TRUCK - DAY - TRAVELING 103
SUPER: Fall 2010
Zarah is dressed in a colorful BUSINESS SUIT and a subtle CROSS necklace (passed down by her mom) because it's a weeknight, and she wants to look as if she has a job. Yue is dressed casually. Zarah and Yue get into a white RENTAL TRUCK.

YUE
This place probably used to be a steakhouse. This is a family-owned business.

ZARAH
That movie you recommended to me... I'm going to wait to see it. I don't really like Ernest Hemingway.

YUE
Why?

ZARAH
He's a womanizer.

YUE
I'm a womanizer. That's not a good reason for not liking him.

ZARAH
I was reading a book about how women need love and men need respect. I don't feel that your wife respected you.

YUE
There wasn't much to respect.
(then)
I'm going to scan the pictures I have from when I was younger.

ZARAH
Just do it. You've been telling me that for months.

YUE
Will you let me sleep tonight?

ZARAH

Yees. Did you tell your daughters anything?

YUE

There are just some things you don't say to your kids, and this is one of them. I love being single.

ZARAH

But you're not single. You're with me.

At the stoplight, Zarah takes out her phone and takes a picture of him, afraid that she doesn't have enough to remember him by.

ZARAH

Smile.

He doesn't look up or smile. She fingers her CROSS necklace.

Yue rolls the windows down so he can smoke while he's driving to the airport. Zarah, in a blouse and skirt, looks out the window and sees a WOMAN, 20s-40s, Asian, pushing a baby stroller.

104 INT. YUE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY (FLASHBACK)

104

SUPER: Fall in the 1970s

YUE'S EX-WIFE

I'm pregnant!

YUE

Again?!

Images of Yue's ex-wife being pregnant, Zarah's mom being pregnant, and imagined images of Zarah being pregnant. The flashback appears to be B&W 35mm.

ZARAH

I'm pregnant!

YUE

Again?!

105 INT. YUE'S RENTAL TRUCK - DAY - TRAVELING

105

Yue is still driving to the airport with Zarah in the passenger seat.

YUE

You can't get pregnant.

(MORE)

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YUE (CONT'D)
If you do, you must get an
abortion. Understand?

ZARAH
(disturbed)
Yes.

Yue parks the truck and gets out. Yue seems to almost fall but grabs the TRUCK DOOR for balance. Zarah doesn't see as she's distracted by something.

Parked, he leans up against the TRUCK DOOR to hide his imbalance and beckons her to suck him. Sucking is implied, not explicit, as the TRUCK DOOR is the most visible.

YUE
Do you ski?

ZARAH
No, I was only able to ski on the
bunny slope one time.

YUE
I don't mean that. I mean, 'Do you
ski?'
(imitates sniffing a line)
Nevermind. Y'know, three of my
best friends are daily tokers. If
you get some high-powered pot, you
get a good buzz for two hours.
Let's go inside.

ZARAH
I thought you liked the heat.

106

INT. TELEPHONE WORLD - DAY
The scenery is very colorful.

106

ZARAH
Wait. I never got to say what I
wanted to say.

YUE
Fersher, what is it?

ZARAH
I'd never get pregnant on purpose,
but I just don't like the way you
forced me into saying "Yes" by the
way you asked the question about
abortion.

YUE
That's me being an ass.

ZARAH
If you were twenty years younger,
I'd have loved to have a son with
you.

YUE
Oh, fersher. If it were to happen,
we would figure something out.

107 EXT. BUS STOP - NIGHT 107
Zarah picks up Wei from the airport bus stop.

108 INT. ZARAH'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT 108
It's thundering outside. After Zarah let Wei inside, Wei pulls
down her jeans in a hurry. The power goes out. This scene is
PG-13.

OVER BLACK

ZARAH (O.S.)
Stop! Stop!

FADE IN:

He keeps going. All the color seems to drain from her colorful
apartment, starting with the walls.

ZARAH (O.S.)
(exhausted with her eyes
open)
Stop... Stop... Please...

NURSE (V.O.)
(pre-lap)
Zarah?

109 INT. PRIMARY CARE PHYSICIAN'S OFFICE - DAY 109
Zarah follows the nurse with a clipboard into the doctor's
office. The primary care physician enters.

ZARAH
I'm hurting down below.

PRIMARY CARE PHYSICIAN
Get changed and we'll take a look.

The primary care physician leaves and closes the door. Zarah
undresses and puts on a hospital gown.

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The primary care physician enters and closes the door. The doctor gasps.

PRIMARY CARE PHYSICIAN
I've never seen anything like it!

ZARAH
I can't even go to the bathroom.

PRIMARY CARE PHYSICIAN
You won't be able to for two weeks.

110 INT. PRIMARY CARE PHYSICIAN'S OFFICE - WAITING AREA - DAY 110

Zarah returns to the waiting room and Amalee opens the door so they can leave.

111 INT. ZARAH'S CAR - DAY 111

The car is parked with Amalee in the driver's seat. They talk with each other quietly before Amalee explodes.

Amalee shakes Zarah's shoulders.

AMALEE
He raped you, and you still love him?! Are you nuts! Snap out of it!

Zarah feels remorseful at what occurred and ashamed that Amalee now knows.

ZARAH
I abandoned him when he needed me most. If it weren't for me, he wouldn't be in the situation he's in.

Amalee stares out the window astonished.

This tracks with the original tale.

AMALEE
Zarah, you know I'll always help you when you're in crisis, but this is hard for me too.

ZARAH
I just want to be by myself for a while.

- 112 INT. ZARAH'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM 112**
A thread from Zarah's baby onesie unravels.
- 113 INT. TELEPHONE WORLD - DAY 113**
SUPER: Yue's Birthday
Yue looks around and is all by himself. The colors have faded.
An text message appears on the screen
YUE (ON TEXT)
I miss you!
Yue pours himself a glass of whiskey and drinks it alone.
- 114 INT. ZARAH'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY 114**
Zarah's phone plays a fight song ringtone she had just assigned to her ex. The phone rings a few times with Wei's name on the CALLER ID, but she doesn't answer.
The phone rings once with Yue's name in the caller ID, and she picks up right away.
- 115 INT. TELEPHONE WORLD - DAY 115**
The primary colors are somewhat dulled. Zarah looks embarrassed, like she's hiding something from Yue.
ZARAH
I passed by the bathroom mirror today and saw a bright red capillary. All I do is stare at a computer screen all day. Today, after I rubbed my eyes, it took too long for my eyes to go back in focus.
YUE
I love your eyes.
ZARAH
You always know what to say. If you broke up with me now, I don't think I'd know what to do. I need you right now. You're my therapy.
YUE
But you should really have your own. Your dad paid for the insurance.

ZARAH

No matter how much you feel about me I feel twice as much for you.

YUE

Every time you go to sleep, take comfort in knowing that I think about you all the time.

116

INT. TELEPHONE WORLD - DAY

SUPER: July 4th
Color returns.

116

ZARAH

Guess what? I found out that my teacher is also a therapist. She says I shouldn't get involved with anyone so soon after leaving an abusive relationship.

YUE

Your therapist is correct. You're on a path of discovery, that being, finding out who you are. You know some things; however, you'll be learning how cool a person you are, and all the things that you're capable of. Knowing who you are opens doors to many possibilities for yourself! Confidence and a belief in yourself can be, and are, quite rewarding.

Zarah looks up to him with admiration.

LATER

ZARAH

So, tell me a little about your ex-girlfriend.

YUE

That was also an age-gap, but it wasn't quite as large.

ZARAH

What was the gap?

YUE

We were less than 20 years apart.

ZARAH

Hmm.

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YUE

She was a pumper. She was married then divorced her husband to marry someone else who worked where she worked. He wasn't very impressive. She said I sexually harassed her after we broke up, which was complete BS. Girls who are attracted to older men tend to be a little twisted.

ZARAH

Am I?

YUE

Fersher, a bit.

ZARAH

I'm not monogamous.

YUE

Nor am I, but if I found the right person I'd be. It's an issue of respect.

ZARAH

Have you ever been in love?

YUE

Fersher. I've been in love a handful of times...three...maybe five times.

ZARAH

So, you say you've been in love several times. Who were they with? Your ex-wife?

YUE

No, I never loved her. In fact, maybe I've never been in love.

ZARAH

What do you think about when you think about us?

YUE

Actually, I've been reading various accounts about near death experiences and the afterlife.

Zarah has a quizzical look on her face.

ZARAH

Do I make you feel older?

YUE

No. You make me feel like I'm fifty years old.

ZARAH

What do you think about me?

YUE

I see you as worldly, but unsophisticated. No offense, but you're too trusting.

Zarah is all too aware.

ZARAH

So where do you see us going?

YUE

I don't see us going anywhere. The money issue is huge.

ZARAH

I want to move in with you. After having moved to one state, I want to try them all out.

Zarah laughs.

YUE

Fersher, you could still do it! But no, you need to stay where you are and establish yourself.

ZARAH

I was thinking, I could be with you for five years. I know I can last that long in a relationship. I can't promise anything past that.

YUE

In five years, I'll be about 70.

ZARAH

So?

YUE

You'll find someone else, or I'll find someone else. There is no long-term potential. In addition, money is a big issue. I'll be retiring soon.

(MORE)

YUE (CONT'D)

I don't have a retirement account
and just started living off of
social security.

He pulls out the inside of his pockets to make his point.

YUE

I can't afford to live in the
states. You don't have money
either. It would be unfair to you.
Let's just enjoy ourselves and
have fun.

Beat.

ZARAH

If you want to be fair to me, then
do what you can to keep yourself
living longer, meaning laugh more
and smoke less and eat
antioxidants.

(then)

God, I love the sound of your
laughter...

YUE

Am trying...

117 INT. ZARAH'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY 117

SUPER: Day After

Zarah makes a sort of shrine to Yue with his PICTURE on top of
the image of a mountain, magazine clippings, and a votive
candle. It's large enough to look like a teenage crush but not
large enough to be creepy. Zarah is praying to her shrine.

ZARAH

Lord, please release me from the
covenant I made with you.

Zarah looks up at the unicorn POSTERS and down at her CROSS
necklace.

ZARAH

It's not working.

118 EXT. SUBURBAN SIDEWALK - DAY 118

Yue shows Zarah around where he grew up.

YUE

And this is where I had sex for
the first time...

Made in Highland

119 INT. TELEPHONE WORLD - DAY
Zarah sees Yue looking at a plant.

119

YUE
I got a new plant. It's actually
poisonous.

ZARAH
Why in the world would you get a
poisonous plant? Do you want to
die?

YUE
My retirement is coming up.
There's not much left for me.

After they hang up, Zarah calls 911. She waits to be asked
"what's your emergency?" but the audience can't hear.

ZARAH
I'm afraid that my boyfriend is
suicidal. Can you provide a
wellness check?

Zarah's phone rings.

YUE
Please don't do that. It's
embarrassing. Gimme some time.
I'll be fine tomorrow.

120 INT. YUE'S HOUSE - FAMILY ROOM - DAY
Zarah, in a skirt, and Yue are sitting on the couch. The moon
is full from the window.

120

Zarah orders a colorful vegetarian PIZZA.

ZARAH
Can you?

Yue gives her the CASH to pay for it.

YUE
You know there are forty years
between us. That's a lot.

ZARAH
Yes.

LATER

YUE

Well that's my first time seeing animé. Very interesting. Anyways, it's my turn to pick the next movie.

Zarah, in a skirt, and Yue watch a romantic French tragedy.

ZARAH

You seem to have a thing for movies with unhappy endings. That'll have to change.

YUE

Am not familiar with current movies... Have not been in a movie theatre for over 15-20 years.

121

INT. YUE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

121

Zarah and Yue are in bed. Yue has his back to Zarah with Zarah's hand around his waist.

ZARAH

In that movie we watched, I wouldn't say that I'd kill myself for you, but I'd die for you.

YUE

You'll never have to.

ZARAH

I'd do anything for you.

YUE

I know, but I'd never exploit it.

ZARAH

Well, you can.

YUE

Well, I won't.

ZARAH

You can never understand my feelings.

YUE

The more you tell me, the more I understand.

ZARAH

It hurts me to be with you; it makes me sad because you keep saying it is temporary.

YUE

At some point I'll have to say it is the end, but I'll not want to.

ZARAH

God played a cruel joke on me!

YUE

God didn't do anything to you. There is no God anyways.

ZARAH

I'll love you even if we were not compatible.

YUE

You should go to the bathroom. Don't want you to get pregnant.

Zarah leaves for the bathroom but is still talking.

ZARAH

Do I talk too much?

YUE

(laughs)
Fersher.

Yue gets back into bed with his back facing her.

ZARAH

I'll love you forever. You can't say anything to change my mind.

YUE

I'm TOO OLD!

ZARAH

That's not going to work.

Yue leaves for the bathroom again. He seems to be dealing with a health issue. Yue gets back into bed with his back facing her again.

ZARAH

Are you awake?

YUE

Fersher. How'd you know?

ZARAH

If I ever go to Mexico or Panama,
it'll be for me, and we'll live
separately.

The next day-

Zarah moans into the receiver while Yue listens but doesn't
respond.

122

INT. TELEPHONE WORLD - DAY

122

Colors have become a bit darker. Zarah's father is coming down
on Zarah hard.

ZARAH'S FATHER (INTO PHONE)

You have zero confidence and self-
esteem. You have only yourself to
blame. Look in the mirror and know
who did this.

ZARAH

I...

ZARAH'S FATHER

If you want someone to love
there's me. There's your mother.
Two people who are safe to love.

ZARAH

I know.

ZARAH'S FATHER

You intentionally complicate your
life. You'll need at least a 1 1/2
years to fix yourself. What are
you going to do?

ZARAH (INTO PHONE)

I can find a job so that I can be
independent and pay off my debt.

ZARAH'S FATHER (INTO PHONE)

You better. I became the co-signer
because you're my daughter, but
when the rent comes due I expect
you to pay it. Instead of doing
what you did before, why don't you
get a real job?

ZARAH'S MOTHER (O.S.)

Who's on the phone?

ZARAH'S FATHER (INTO PHONE)

Zarah.

Made in Highland

ZARAH'S MOTHER (O.S.)
Oh, Zarah, what's going on baby?

ZARAH'S FATHER (INTO PHONE)
Her boyfriend wants to break up
with her. Zarah, let him. No one
wants to be a burden: you or him.

ZARAH'S MOTHER (INTO PHONE)
Are you okay?

ZARAH (INTO PHONE)
No, mom. I miss him so much!

ZARAH'S MOTHER (INTO PHONE)
You're lucky to have two men who
care for you. One man, your ex,
gives you what you want. The other
man gives you what you need. If
you truly love him, you'll accept
this gift he's giving you.

LATER

Zarah turns to face Yue.

ZARAH
(cries)
I can't be in an unbalanced
relationship. I think you're a bit
of a commitment-phobe.

YUE
I'm not afraid of commitment.

ZARAH
Well, okay...

YUE
And the age thing--

ZARAH
Age has never been an issue!

YUE
Well, okay. How do you want to do
this?

ZARAH
We'll take a break, I'll return,
and I'll always love you. Do you
believe in my word?

YUE
I don't plan for the future.

ZARAH

Don't go! This is the last time I
get to talk to you. Well, the last
time for a very, very long time.

(then)

How do you feel about me?

YUE

I'm not where you are, mentally.
We'll leave it at that.

ZARAH

I'll miss you so much.

YUE

I'll miss you too.

ZARAH

Will you stop thinking about me?

YUE

No.

ZARAH

I'll love you forever.

YUE

Go to bed.

Zarah calls Yue again.

ZARAH

Sorry.

YUE (O.S.)

Why?

ZARAH

For calling you again.

YUE (O.S.)

God, I'll miss your laughter so
much.

(then)

Go to sleep.

FADE TO:

BLACK

123

INT. ZARAH'S APARTMENT - FAMILY ROOM - NIGHT

123

It's the next day. A breakup song plays. Amalee sits on Zarah's
COUCH smoking a VAPE PEN.

Made in Highland

ZARAH

You got your revenge.

AMALEE

I'd never wish that on you. Do what's in your heart.

ZARAH

I feel abandoned all over again. I feel like dating is like being a foster child.

AMALEE

You know I'd never abandon you.

ZARAH

Yeah, but you're my friend.

AMALEE

So? Friends abandon each other all the time.

ZARAH

Should I call him?

AMALEE

There's no time likes the present.

Zarah reads the EMAIL she is writing aloud.

ZARAH (ON EMAIL)

Ok, I admit I can't take this. We can stop these games now. I promise that I don't care about your age. I'm strong. I'm a big girl. Talk to me. Call me.

Zarah sends the email, not noticing that Yue had already emailed her previously. Zarah calls Yue twice. Zarah calls him again every few minutes while her first love is in the apartment stoned.

AMALEE

The euphoric feelings from getting high are similar to the euphoric feelings of being in love, and You're on a double high.

Zarah calls Yue, and Yue picks up. He hangs up. She hangs up.

YUE (O.S.)

Read my email. I liked what you said yesterday.

Yue reads his EMAIL on Zarah's LAPTOP SCREEN.

YUE (V.O.)

Were I thirty years younger, there might be a chance. In a couple of years, I'll begin the downhill aging process. In no way will I let you be saddled with an old man. You're young and have the whole world ahead of you. Grab on to it. It's over.

Upon realization that she's being abandoned, Zarah's eyes water and her lips tremble before she cries violently.

AMALEE

You'll never stop loving, but the pain will go away. You have to continue living. You have to learn to accept it.

ZARAH

When he dies, I'll have peace that he's all around me and can watch me. I'll spend my annual vacation visiting his grave. When I die, I wish to be buried next to him.

124

INT. ZARAH'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

124

Zarah prints out Yue's last email and lays it upright on the shrine with a FIGURINE pointing to it that says, "Love". She lights the votive candle and turns on romantic chill music.

ZARAH

You know what he said to me? He said, "There are just some things you don't say to your kids."

AMALEE

I see his point of view.

ZARAH

What do you mean?

AMALEE

Zarah, I'm dating your mom.

ZARAH

You're what?! But she's married. She's white. She's straight.

AMALEE

Oh honey, she's not straight anymore.

Amalee puts a hand on Zarah's back.

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AMALEE

But this is about you. Know what?
You don't need him.

ZARAH

I guess not. I don't need anyone.

AMALEE

Don't crawl back to me. At least
I'm not the stereotype.

Zarah is taken aback.

Zarah puts her hands together on the desk as if in prayer. She
stares up at a cross.

KABBALAH TEACHER

(pre-lap)

Love addiction and codependency go
together.

125

INT. SYNAGOGUE - OFFICE - DAY

125

We see the Kabbalah tree of life. Zarah sits anxiously across
from the Kabbalah teacher/counselor. She looks at herself in
the teacher's mirror.

KABBALAH TEACHER (CONT'D)

And what they both have in common
is a focus on other people.
Remember that focusing on others
is a cop out from focusing on
yourself.

The Kabbalah teacher takes a drink of water.

KABBALAH TEACHER

However, it's more apparent in
love relationships, whereas
friendships tend to fall by the
wayside. I bet you don't spend
much time in self-care.

ZARAH

I've a hard time understanding
"self-care" and "self-love." I
struggle buying groceries for
myself if that's what you mean.

KABBALAH TEACHER

Exactly. Have you ever thought of
meditation?

ZARAH

Oh, I don't think I can do that.
It's much too unproductive.

KABBALAH TEACHER

I disagree. There are plenty of
benefits. If you're new, why don't
you just try to be by yourself.

ZARAH

Ew, that's terrifying. I'll keep
my calendar full just so I don't
have to be in my apartment.

KABBALAH TEACHER

As Ralph Waldo Emerson said,
"always do what you're afraid to
do." That's from Kabbalah as well.

ZARAH

It is, but easier said than done.

126 INT. ZARAH'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY 126
Zarah writes an EMAIL that she never sends. Zarah reads the
email she is writing aloud.

ZARAH (ON EMAIL)

If you're out there and you're
reading this, know that I've
accepted your gift of a "better
life," but I'll always love you,
Yue.

127 INT. COMMUNITY THEATER - DAY 127
An adult female water puppet fills out a form in Vietnamese
with a number behind the Vietnamese dong symbol. SANG, 46-52,
Vietnamese woman, asks-

SANG

(in Vietnamese; subtitled)
Can I borrow some money? I'll pay
you back.

An Asian male hands her some money.

128 INT. ZARAH'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY 128
A relevant and poignant Vietnamese song plays. Zarah finishes
her sewing project on her sewing machine, and it's revealed to
be the Vietnamese flag.

An email pops up. Zarah opens up an email from her adoption agency with two attachments. There's a JPEG file with Sang's picture and the document file name is "Translation of Birthmother Letter."

SANG (V.O.)

And it's better to marry a man who loves you than whom you love.

129 INT. COMMUNITY THEATER - DAY
SANG'S DIALOGUE continues.

129

An adult female water puppet is leading other female water puppets in a garment factory. The adult female water puppet's water breaks. It puts a phone to its ear. An adult male and female water puppet come into the garment factory and rush her to the hospital. The adult female water puppet is in the hospital giving birth. An adult male puppet kisses Sang's puppet on the cheek after her baby puppet is born.

SANG (V.O.)

Be sure to choose a man who is not selfish, but is considerate and responsible, and has earning power.

Sang grabs her husband's hand and says something in Vietnamese:

SANG

(whispers)

Let's not tell our baby that she has an older sister.

130 INT. ZARAH'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY

130

SANG (V.O.)

It's not that easy to be a mature adult, so please deal with every moment of your life as you learn.

131 EXT. BUS STOP - DAY

131

What appears to be helicopter seeds fall to the ground. Zarah stands waiting for her bus. Zarah opens up her wallet and counts her cash to pay for the bus.

Stock footage of squirrels gathering acorns and an oak tree.

132 EXT. YUE'S HOUSE - DAY

132

Yue gardens.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
 Yue was already in the winter of
 life. Until they reunited in
 heaven, her heart would ache.

V.O. continues.

He cuts a plant and replants it in a cardboard container.

133 INT. YUE'S HOUSE - FAMILY ROOM - DAY 133

NARRATOR (V.O.)
 Wei's time was running out too.

V.O. continues.

Yue finishes the movie on his TV that they watched when Yue and Zarah broke up. He takes a drag from his cigarette, then he starts it again from the beginning. Everything has a B&W 35MM appearance.

134 INT./EXT. WEI'S APARTMENT - DAY (SERIES OF SHOTS) 134

NARRATOR (V.O.)
 Time was running out to change bad
 habits

While we continue to HEAR the narrator's voice, we begin a SERIES OF SHOTS:

Wei looks around at the floor in the family room and starts picking bottle caps off the floor.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
 that could last throughout his
 lifetime,

Wei knocks on doors outside his apartment, taking surveys for his job.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
 that could lead to an earlier
 death.

Wei puts money in a COIN JAR that has an acorn symbol on the front. He keeps it in the back of his kitchen pantry so that Melinda doesn't know.

END SERIES OF SHOTS

135 INT. AIRPORT - DAY 135
Zarah's DIALOGUE continues.

Melinda waits for Wei at the airport, saving him a seat and looking at the clock, but Wei never shows.

136 INT. ZARAH'S APARTMENT - DAY 136
 TITLE CARD: February 2011
 Wei knocks on the front door. Zarah opens it. He smiles.

WEI
 Here, this is for you.

Wei wears a casual SHIRT that glamorizes money and BLING. When he tries to put a NECKLACE on her neck, with a ruby pendant, he struggles with the clasp, and it falls to the ground.

Zarah looks down at the necklace then closes the door. WEI bangs on the door.

WEI
 What does he have that I don't have? Why? Why?

137 INT. ZARAH'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY 137
 TITLE CARD: March 2011
 Zarah does what her therapist recommended: spending time with herself. As she spends time acknowledging her feelings, she writes down words that come up like "loneliness" and "abandonment" but then these words change to words like "resolution" and "decision." She looks at the crumpled home-based business brochure. Music plays.

Zarah calls Amalee.

ZARAH
 Hey.

AMALEE
 Hey, I'm sorry I said those mean things about you; I didn't mean it. I was feeling a bit resentment at the time, but I miss being your friend.

ZARAH
 I miss you too. I apologize for being self-centered. I haven't treated you right, and I do appreciate you for calling me out. I just...

(MORE)

ZARAH (CONT'D)

The world, how I was raised, it's hard not to be what the world defines me as because it becomes a part of my self-image.

AMALEE

I get it.

ZARAH

But I'm gonna work on it. Let's start over. Friends?

AMALEE

Friends.

Special Features and/or Interactive Alternate Endings:

138 INT. ZARAH'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY 138
Click: Happy Ending

ZARAH

Hello? Hi!

YUE

It's me again. I miss you so much.

ZARAH

I miss you too.

139 INT. ZARAH'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY 139
Click: Realism
(because an abused person returns to their abuser at least seven times before letting go)

ZARAH

Hello? Hi!

WEI

Look, you're a part of me now, and I'll never let you go.

ZARAH

I miss you too.

140 INT. ZARAH'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY 140
Click: Adoptee Experience

ZARAH

Hello? Hi!

Made in Highland

SANG

Hello? I'm your mother. I've missed you since the day you were born.

ZARAH

I miss you too.

141 INT. ZARAH'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY
Click: Family-Friendly

141

ZARAH

Hello? Hi!

ZARAH'S MOTHER

It's been a while since you came by the house. Is everything okay? I miss seeing your face.

ZARAH

I miss you too.

FADE OUT:

MUSIC

CREDITS

Credits are shaped like a red heart.

THE END

Made in Highland