

CASSANDRA

Written by

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NOTE: *Cassandra* is set in Beijing in the near future. All lines are in Chinese.

FADE IN:

INT. AMY'S APARTMENT - LANDING - NIGHT

The top floor of a dusty six-floor walk-up, the type you find in Beijing by the thousands.

We hear fast footsteps and laughter as XIAOYU scrambles up the stairs. She's elegant, a woman rounding out her 20s and trying not to notice.

XIAOYU
I win again. And I'm wearing heels.

Her boyfriend YI, two years older, clambers up behind her. He's a clean-cut computer programmer.

YI
Maybe if I weren't carrying
someone's bag...

XIAOYU
Excuses, excuses.

Yi hands Xiaoyu her handbag. They stand awkwardly in front of Amy's door. We hear music and conversation inside.

Yi looks to Xiaoyu but she doesn't knock.

YI
Nervous?

He gives her a quick peck. Just then, the door opens. AMY, chipper as ever, peeks out.

AMY
Thought I heard something!

Xiaoyu perks up and heads in with Yi, closing the door behind her.

INT. AMY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The cozy apartment can barely fit everyone. A banner across the wall screams, "CONGRATULATIONS AMY AND ZHANG!"

Amy, mid-anecdote, is surrounded by her GIRLFRIENDS and Xiaoyu. Some of the friends have wedding bands.

AMY

It's this new thing. I mean, I didn't really believe it either. But eventually I came around.

Her fiancée ZHANG and Yi drift by.

ZHANG

After I convinced you.

Amy rolls her eyes and pushes him away. The girls chuckle. Yi hands Xiaoyu a drink before following Zhang.

AMY

He said, "What have we got to lose?"

GIRLFRIEND 1

So, what was it like?

AMY

Real simple. All they need is a strand of hair from each person. They put them in a machine and then you watch this... scene. From the future.

GIRLFRIEND 2

What did you see?

AMY

The two of us, with a little boy and a little girl, just like I'd always wanted.

(tearing up)

Afterward, Zhang gets down on his knees. He didn't even have a ring.

The cooing reaches a fever pitch as the girls converge for a group hug. Xiaoyu stands apart, not quite sure how to act.

As the girls emerge from the embrace, Amy dabs her eyes and composes herself.

AMY (CONT'D)

Alright, enough of that. I'm going to find some other people to tell this story to.

The girls disperse except for Xiaoyu.

XIAOYU

Congratulations, Amy.

AMY

Thanks.

XIAOYU

Can finally shut the parents up,
huh?

AMY

That's the best part.

They share a laugh.

XIAOYU

My mom's still trying to set me up
on dates. Every time I go home,
it's just... endless.

AMY

She's just looking out for you, in
her own misguided way.

Xiaoyu chuckles, then looks at Yi. Amy follows her look.

AMY (CONT'D)

So when's that gonna happen?

XIAOYU

What do you mean?

AMY

You two.

XIAOYU

Oh, I don't know. We've talked
about it but he says he isn't
ready.

AMY

And when he is, your eggs will be
in cold storage.

XIAOYU

(laughs)

I don't want to push him.

AMY

Sometimes they need a push. Zhang
didn't think he was ready either.
But seeing it changed him.

Amy takes a BUSINESS CARD from her purse. It GLOWS BLUE. She offers it like the fruit from Eden.

AMY (CONT'D)

Here.

Xiaoyu takes it. The card is holographic with an animation playing on the front: a stylized EYE above the slogan, "SEE THE FUTURE, SEIZE THE PRESENT."

Xiaoyu says, almost to herself:

XIAOYU

Kind of takes the fun out of it,
huh?

AMY

What's fun about wasting your 20s?

Xiaoyu is skeptical but a part of her wants to believe. Amy senses this.

AMY (CONT'D)

What have you got to lose?

Xiaoyu looks at the card again as the animation spells out a single word: "CASSANDRA."

INT. XIAOYU'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Xiaoyu wakes up the next morning as Yi jumps out of the shower of the adjoining bathroom. He's in a rush, tearing her COMB through his hair. He sees her awake.

YI

Did I wake you?

She waves her hand no, then grabs her phone off the night stand. There's a message from Amy: "Made you an appointment for 10. You don't have work, do you?"

Xiaoyu growls.

YI (CONT'D)

You okay?

XIAOYU

Yeah, it's just Amy.

She gets up, goes to the bathroom to brush her teeth just as Yi flies out to dress for work.

YI

Quite a story, huh? Those two.

Xiaoyu peeks out of the bathroom.

XIAOYU
 Actually, I wanted to talk to you
 about something...

But Yi's got one foot out the door.

YI
 Can it wait till tonight?

He rushes to her side, kisses her cheek. She gives him a foamy kiss back.

Yi hurries off, calls from the door:

YI (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 Dinner's on me!

XIAOYU
 Great, I'll look for some place
 expensive.

The door slams. Xiaoyu's phone buzzes. Six more messages from Amy. Xiaoyu lets out another growl.

INT. CASSANDRA - FOYER - DAY

Xiaoyu enters a sleek, modern office, all glass and smooth surfaces. We see the company's stylized eye logo hanging on a wall. Behind the front desk is a sharply dressed RECEPTIONIST.

RECEPTIONIST
 Good morning, welcome to Cassandra.
 Do you have an appointment?

XIAOYU
 Hi, I have a ten o'clock.

RECEPTIONIST
 (types something on
 computer)
 Ms. Zhou. You're here for your
 glimpse?

XIAOYU
 Glimpse? I guess so.

RECEPTIONIST
 Great.

The receptionist hands Xiaoyu a clipboard with a consent form.

RECEPTIONIST (CONT'D)

If you could just sign that for me.

Xiaoyu skims the document, scribbles her name and hands it back to the receptionist. Just then:

TANG (O.S.)

Ms. Zhou?

Xiaoyu turns to see TANG, a Cassandra operator. He's got a kind smile, like a doctor with a good bedside manner.

TANG (CONT'D)

You must be Amy's friend.

XIAOYU

Oh, hi. Yes, I am.

TANG

She said your boyfriend might be coming too?

XIAOYU

He has work.

TANG

Do you have the DNA samples?

XIAOYU

Oh, right.

Xiaoyu takes out her comb, sealed in a plastic bag.

TANG

Wonderful, let me get this started.
(to the receptionist)
We'll be in screening room three.

Tang leaves.

RECEPTIONIST

Please follow me.

The receptionist stands up and leads Xiaoyu down the hall to--

CASSANDRA - SCREENING ROOM

It's a small theater, with a few seats and a projector mounted to the ceiling.

RECEPTIONIST

Please relax. You'll hear further instructions through the intercom.

The receptionist exits. Xiaoyu surveys the room. The far wall doubles as a curved screen. Next to the door is a cubby with pamphlets titled, "WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS" and "UNDERSTANDING YOUR GLIMPSE."

Then, Tang's voice comes through the intercom.

TANG (V.O.)
Xiaoyu, can you hear me?

XIAOYU
Yes.

TANG (V.O.)
Great. A timeline should be coming up now.

The projector lights up, splashing the wall with light. We see a TIMELINE, a visual representation of the future. There are actually two strands--one corresponding to Xiaoyu and the other to Yi. They overlap at many points.

TANG (V.O.)
Look at that. You two have great compatibility.

XIAOYU
Can you see what I'm seeing?

TANG (V.O.)
For now. But I won't be able to see the glimpse.
(pause)
Now, if you could pick up the remote in the armrest...

Xiaoyu sits down and picks up a small, curved remote with a click wheel. She slides her finger along the wheel as it scrolls through sections in the timeline. Small screencaps pop up as she's scrolling through.

XIAOYU
I can choose any of these?

TANG (V.O.)
Any one you like.

XIAOYU
How accurate are these... glimpses?

TANG (V.O.)
They aren't certainties, if that's what you mean. But based on our algorithms, they're quite probable.
(MORE)

TANG (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Unless something drastic happens,
 of course.

XIAOYU
 So if I get hit by a car tomorrow,
 this future would be gone.

TANG (V.O.)
 (chuckles)
 Yes, be careful out there.

Xiaoyu stops at a moment in the not-too-distant future.

TANG (V.O.)
 You can confirm the selection by
 pressing the button in the center.

She does so.

TANG (V.O.)
 Okay, I'm queuing it up now.

The intercom clicks off. After a moment, a video clip begins to play. We slip from the projection into the glimpse itself.

INT. ART GALLERY - FUTURE - NIGHT

The minimalist gallery hosts an opening for JIAN, the artist du jour. The guests pinch flutes of champagne. Promotional posters on the wall read, "SUN JIAN: INFLECTION POINTS."

Jian stands in the middle of the room, mid-speech:

JIAN
 We experience our lives in moments.
 Some of them come to define us. A
 chance encounter, a stolen glance.
 What we do in these moments may
 change our lives forever.

He gestures toward a painting behind him of a HAND reaching for a STRAND OF HAIR.

As he drones on, we see Xiaoyu and Yi, four years older. Yi doesn't hide his disdain for this kind of thing. Xiaoyu tries her best to ignore him. As she sips from her glass, we see a WEDDING BAND on her finger.

JIAN (CONT'D)
 These are the moments that have
 come to define *my* life. What about
 yours?

Light applause as the guests scatter to view the exhibition.
Xiaoyu walks over to Jian.

XIAOYU
Quite the turnout.

JIAN
All thanks to you.

Their easy rapport is interrupted by a mob of art students.
He shrugs, like, *what can you do?*

Xiaoyu takes her leave and heads for her office. Yi
approaches her.

YI
I'm gonna go. I can't stand these
people.

XIAOYU
I know.

There is a distance between them.

YI
When will you be back?

XIAOYU
Late.

He gives her a perfunctory kiss, then goes to grab his coat.
Xiaoyu watches until he's gone, then walks into--

XIAOYU'S OFFICE - FUTURE

And closes the door. She sinks into her chair and downs the
last of her champagne.

Then, a KNOCK.

XIAOYU
Come in.

The door creaks open and Jian slips in, as if trying to be
discreet.

JIAN
Big night.

XIAOYU
Big night.

JIAN
Sold two already.

XIAOYU
Like hotcakes.

There's nothing more to say but Jian doesn't leave. Up close, he's not as pretentious. He's a few years younger than Xiaoyu, equal parts rake and romantic.

Jian leans back on the door. It closes. His hand turns the lock.

XIAOYU (CONT'D)
They're going to notice you're missing.

Jian doesn't answer; instead, he advances. An imperceptible smile crosses Xiaoyu's face as we...

CUT TO BLACK:

FADE IN:

INT. UPSCALE RESTAURANT - NIGHT

A warm, quiet place. Tealights on every table. Wisps of conversation float through the air. We're back in the present.

YI (O.S.)
Can you believe it? Some guy on the street thought I was Huang Xiaoming. Even asked me for an autograph.

Xiaoyu and Yi are at a table for two. Yi chuckles at his own anecdote but Xiaoyu is miles away.

YI (CONT'D)
Hey, are you alright?

XIAOYU
Yeah.

YI
Work?

XIAOYU
No.

Yi picks at his food. A beat, then:

XIAOYU (CONT'D)
 What would you do if I cheated?

Yi freezes, looks up at Xiaoyu.

YI
 What?

She doesn't repeat herself. He sees she isn't joking.

YI (CONT'D)
 (thinks about it)
 I guess I'd leave.

Xiaoyu tears up.

YI (CONT'D)
 What's going on? Are you seeing
 someone else?

XIAOYU
 Not yet.

YI
 What do you mean?

XIAOYU
 You know the company Amy and Zhang
 went to?

YI
 You went?

She nods.

YI (CONT'D)
 Why?

XIAOYU
 I wanted to know if we'd ever be
 together.

YI
 We are together.

XIAOYU
 I mean married.

Yi tries to keep calm but he's thinking, *not this again.*

YI
 And are we?

XIAOYU

Yes. But there's someone else.

Yi doesn't know whether to take her seriously. She senses his skepticism.

XIAOYU (CONT'D)

I saw it. In the glimpse.

YI

The glimpse?

XIAOYU

The future.

YI

Who is he?

XIAOYU

I don't know. I've never seen him before.

YI

Then how can you know it's true?

XIAOYU

There were other details about my life--

YI

(irritated)

It's all a scam.

XIAOYU

You don't understand.

YI

I do understand. It's not real.

XIAOYU

How can you be so sure?

YI

(loudly)

Because it's impossible!

Other diners turn their heads. Yi calms himself as Xiaoyu holds back tears. He takes a deep breath.

YI (CONT'D)

Are you happy... being with me?

XIAOYU

Of course.

YI
Then why did you go?

XIAOYU
Because I needed an answer.

Yi realizes how hard it's been for Xiaoyu. He reaches for her hand but she pulls away. He reaches further, holds onto her hand.

YI
I'm sorry. I just... I don't believe you'd cheat on me.

Xiaoyu doesn't argue. She doesn't want to believe she would either.

XIAOYU
But if it's going to happen, don't you want to know?

YI
No.
(beat)
Call me a Luddite but I won't believe it until it happens.

XIAOYU
(can't help but smile)
You are such a Luddite.

He laughs. The tension dissipates.

YI
Look, don't go there again, okay?
We don't need them.

She doesn't say anything, just places her other hand on his.

YI (CONT'D)
Promise me.

She nods.

INT. ART GALLERY - DAY

THE ART GALLERY WE SAW IN THE GLIMPSE. It's where Xiaoyu works. She walks in and greets LULU, the intern manning the receptionist desk. She's energetic and eager to please.

XIAOYU
Morning.

LULU

Morning! Your meeting got pushed to one and I placed the latest prints on your desk. Hope that's okay.

XIAOYU

That's great, thank you.

Xiaoyu glides past Lulu and into--

XIAOYU'S OFFICE

It's the same office we saw in the glimpse, though furnished differently.

Xiaoyu closes the door and settles herself at her desk. She starts going through the stack of prints when there's a KNOCK.

XIAOYU

Come in.

In walks Jian, THE MAN FROM THE GLIMPSE. He's four years younger, just a fledgling artist.

JIAN

Hi, Julie?

Xiaoyu struggles to contain her surprise. Jian, off her look:

JIAN (CONT'D)

Oh dear, I'm so sorry.

He's about to slink out when Xiaoyu says:

XIAOYU

Are you Sun Jian?

JIAN

(brightens)

How'd you know? Have you seen my work?

XIAOYU

What are you doing here?

JIAN

I've got a meeting with Julie. I'm hoping to land a spot in the exhibition.

Xiaoyu regains her composure. If she had any doubts about the glimpse, they're gone now.

JIAN (CONT'D)
Well, sorry for interrupting.

As he turns to leave:

XIAOYU
Wait.

Jian stops. Xiaoyu gets up from her desk and walks over to him, close.

XIAOYU (CONT'D)
You're going white.

She plucks a STRAND OF HAIR from his head.

JIAN
I feel ten years younger.

He exits.

Xiaoyu exhales, like her heart's going to burst. She goes to her desk and carefully places Jian's hair in a plastic sleeve for negatives.

She rifles through her purse and finds Cassandra's business card. She takes out her phone and dials the number.

RECEPTIONIST (O.S.)
Cassandra. How can I help you?

Xiaoyu hesitates. She looks at the card, the forbidden fruit. Then:

XIAOYU
Does Tang have an opening this morning?

RECEPTIONIST (O.S.)
One minute.
(pause)
Yes, he has an opening at eleven.

XIAOYU
I'll be there.

RECEPTIONIST (O.S.)
Your name, ma'am?

XIAOYU
Zhou Xiaoyu.

She hangs up.

INT. ART GALLERY - MOMENTS LATER

Xiaoyu marches across the foyer.

XIAOYU
Lulu, hold my calls?

LULU
Where are you going? Your meeting--

XIAOYU
I'll be back before one.

INT./EXT. CAB - DAY

Xiaoyu is in the backseat, preoccupied with her thoughts as the city rolls by.

Outside the window, a giant billboard is being put up on the side of a building. A stylized eye stares back at us, along with the unfinished slogan, "SEE THE FUTURE."

A call comes through on Xiaoyu's phone. It's Yi. She clicks it off.

EXT. ART GALLERY - THAT MOMENT

Yi hangs up the phone. He's right outside the gallery with a bouquet. He paces, unsure whether to go in. Ultimately he decides to.

INT. ART GALLERY - CONTINUOUS

Yi walks up to Lulu, who is chatting with Jian.

YI
Hey Lulu, is she busy?

LULU
No, she just left...

YI
(puzzled)
You know where she went?

LULU
She didn't say.

JIAN
(regarding the flowers)
Did you do something wrong?

YI
 (laughs)
 Yeah. I think I did.
 (to Lulu)
 Can I put these in her office?

LULU
 Of course.

We follow Yi into--

XIAOYU'S OFFICE

Where he looks for a place to put the flowers. Yi goes to Xiaoyu's desk where he sees something glowing blue.

He picks up the business card in time to see the animation spell out "CASSANDRA."

He drops the flowers.

INT. CASSANDRA - FOYER - DAY

Xiaoyu walks in. Tang is waiting for her.

TANG
 Back so soon. Did you want to see another glimpse?

XIAOYU
 No. I've got something else.

She hands him the plastic sleeve.

TANG
 I'll go run this right now.

INT./EXT. CAR - DAY

Yi is driving, phone on the dash. It's dialing.

RECEPTIONIST (O.S.)
 Cassandra. How can I help you?

YI
 Hi. I'm supposed to meet my girlfriend for an appointment today but I forgot the time. Her name is Zhou Xiaoyu.

RECEPTIONIST (O.S.)

One second.

(pause)

Yes, we're expecting you at eleven.

YI

Thank you.

He hangs up.

INT. CASSANDRA - SCREENING ROOM - DAY

Xiaoyu is back in the chair. A timeline appears. It's got less overlap than the one before. It intersects at ONE DISTINCT POINT.

Tang's voice on the intercom.

TANG (V.O.)

Not so good this time.

XIAOYU

I want to see this part.

She uses the remote to highlight the intersection on the timeline and clicks.

TANG (V.O.)

Okay, here it is.

The glimpse begins to play.

INT. CASSANDRA - FOYER - DAY

Yi bursts in, out of breath.

RECEPTIONIST

Welcome to--

YI

I'm looking for Xiaoyu.

RECEPTIONIST

(hands him clipboard)

If you could sign this first.

YI

Just tell me where she is.

RECEPTIONIST
(gestures toward screening
rooms)
She's in there, but--

Yi blows past the receptionist and into the hallway.

RECEPTIONIST (CONT'D)
Hey!

INT. CASSANDRA - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Yi races down the corridor. He spots Xiaoyu at the end of the hall through an aperture in the door.

But as he gets closer, his pace slows.

At the door, his hand freezes above the handle. He's certain it's not real, and yet...

Yi opens the door. We follow him into--

CASSANDRA - SCREENING ROOM

Xiaoyu is watching the glimpse. Yi turns to watch too.

We see his face crumble as we hear FAINT GASPING in the background. He doesn't want to believe, but it's right there in front of him.

Yi turns to Xiaoyu. Xiaoyu turns to him. Neither has anything to say.

FADE TO BLACK:

HOLD ON BLACK.

FADE IN:

INT. FANCY RESTAURANT - NIGHT

A first date kind of place. Xiaoyu sits across the table from a handsome SUITOR. Her hair's shorter, styled differently. It's been half a year.

SUITOR
Thanks for tonight. I had a great
time.

XIAOYU

Me too.

SUITOR

I'm glad your mother put us in touch.

XIAOYU

To be honest, I almost flaked.

SUITOR

I don't blame you. These things can be...

They share a knowing smile.

SUITOR (CONT'D)

I know we just met but...

XIAOYU

Yeah?

SUITOR

This is going to sound weird...

XIAOYU

It's okay.

SUITOR

But I really want to know how this will turn out.

XIAOYU

Me too.

Xiaoyu notices that he's anxious.

SUITOR

I guess what I'm saying is...

She's confused. What could he be getting at?

SUITOR (CONT'D)

(popping the question)

Can I have a strand of your hair?

Xiaoyu's anticipation turns to disappointment, for reasons he'll never understand.

INT. XIAOYU'S BEDROOM - DAY

We hear the front door close. Xiaoyu enters and sits on the bed.

A moment passes.

Then she goes to the closet, pulls out a box from the very back. In it are knickknacks from her time with Yi.

She takes out the comb she can't bear to use anymore, runs her finger across the bristles.

Then she sees a faint blue glow emanating from the bottom of the box. She fishes around and takes out Cassandra's business card.

INT. CASSANDRA - SCREENING ROOM - DAY

Xiaoyu is in the chair. Tang speaks over the intercom.

TANG (V.O.)
It's been a while.

XIAOYU
Yeah.

TANG (V.O.)
You're lucky we still have the old
glimpse on file. We delete them
after a while.

Xiaoyu doesn't say anything.

TANG (V.O.)
Sure you don't want a new one?
We've improved our algorithms.

XIAOYU
No. I want to see the old one.

We hear Tang entering commands into the computer.

TANG (V.O.)
How are you two doing?

XIAOYU
Good.

It's all she can do to keep from crying. She wheels to a moment on the timeline that's later than anything we've seen. She clicks the button.

A moment later, the glimpse begins. We see:

INT. AMY'S NEW APARTMENT - LANDING - FUTURE - NIGHT

A much classier place. There's probably an elevator but Xiaoyu and Yi race up the stairs. They are older now. Nearly A DECADE has passed but she still has her wedding band on.

XIAOYU
Sometimes I think you let me win.

YI
Finally figured it out, huh?

They pause outside the door.

YI (CONT'D)
Don't be nervous.

He kisses her.

INT. CASSANDRA SCREENING ROOM - THAT MOMENT

Xiaoyu cries for the future that she lost.

INT. AMY'S NEW APARTMENT - LANDING - FUTURE - NIGHT

Amy opens the door, chipper as ever. There are two children circling her, a boy and a girl.

AMY
You made it! Come in!

The couple enter and leave the door open.

We watch Xiaoyu and Yi take off their coats and mingle. He stays close to her. She reaches for his hand. We feel their renewed intimacy.

Just then, as if sensing someone watching, Xiaoyu looks into the camera as she closes the door and we...

CUT TO BLACK:

THE END