MAY YOU LIVE IN INTERESTING TIMES

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Kill if you must, but the pain shall you own

- Proverb

A FORM JOGGING THROUGH SNOWY WOODS

FOLLOWING him from a far distance.

Just a silhouette. The path he runs is white, silent, beautiful. Something glimmering in the distance ahead.

The shouts of children at play...

UP FROM BLACK:

A SOCCER BALL KICKING AROUND

EXT. FIELD - DAY - RUSSIA

ORPHAN KIDS playing in the cold. No goals. Just frantic scramble.

Outskirts of Tava. Trash fields, industrial squalor.

BIGGEST KID. 13 year-old Bully with that Chechen caterpillar stach. Plays too rough. Kicks a kid as he goes for the ball.

Another kid comes in for a steal. Kicks it away...

... to scrawny legs and SNEAKERS. Sitting on a swing set. Far away from the others.

Picks up the ball as we PAN UP to a face to match the runty little body:

A GIRL, 10. Dark, sad eyes look hauntingly at the ball. Filthy as her ragged second-hand clothes. We barely make an Alice-In-Wonderland stitching through her ripped sweater.

SHADOW looms over her. BIG BULLY KID staring her down. Snatches the ball away. Starts off.

GIRL
(Russian, sub)
I want to play.

Kid stops as others form around him. Turns back to her.

Holds the ball out. As the Girl reaches in, he SMASHES her face with it. Kicks her off the swing.

KID
Suck me off and you can play.

Spits on her, heading off to finish the game.

Girl, still lying in the cold muck. Doesn't cry. Reaches up, feeling her nose.

Off blood seeping...

EXT. FIELD - DUSK

ASSISTANT ORPHANAGE HEADMASTER shouts at the remaining kids to scramble back to their residential blocks.

BULLY on the swing set with a FRIEND. Finishing up a cigarette. Ducks a final drag as the Headmaster sounds off.

FRIEND
Come on -- asshole's calling.

BULLY
Fuck him, I'm finishing this butt.

Friend heads off as Bully kicks dirt at him.

NEW ANGLE

Alone, he takes a final drag. Stares down at his feet.

Ball suddenly rolls up under him. Dried blood still on its rubber.

Bully pauses. Turns around as a HAMMER smashes his face.

Punctures nose. Bully SCREAMS, falls back. Before he can recover, SWING SET CHAIN is thrown around his neck.

THE GIRL

Pulls hard as hell, far beyond her tiny body. Blood seeps into her palms as Kid begins choking. FEET kicking on the dirt.

Girl, hasn't blinked. Tightens grip even more. Both crash to the dirt.

Bully, grabbing at air. Spitting, choking.

CHAIN cutting into his throat.

CLOSE ON THE GIRL

Lying beside him, state of zen. Never wiped the blood from her face. Listens to the suffocating Bully like a symphonic chorus...

NEXT MOMENT

Headmaster finishing the rounds. Reacts to the SCREAMS of kids. A boy rushes up to him, shouting in chain-gun Russian.

NEXT MOMENT

Headmaster turns a corner, coming to that field and swing set. Sound of a ball bouncing on flat dirt.

Headmaster sees it. Has to just stop and take it in:

BULLY keeled over on the SWING SETS. Chain still wrapped around his bloody throat.

The Girl, sitting on the parallel swing. Bouncing the ball into the dirt.

Off the creaking of swing...

EXT. JUVENILE FACILITY - TARA, RUSSIA - WEEKS LATER

Green paint and barbed wire. Fossil of the old Soviet Bloc.

MERCEDES SEDAN is ushered through the gate.

INT. GENERAL WARD - DAY

Anonymous MAN marches through buzzed security with badge around his neck. Accompanied by two well-armed GUARDS.

Grated TV on the wall plays crawl of some kind of attack on the World Trade Centers.

Man moves through a screaming, frantic animal factory of delinquent children. Moving to the:

INT. SOLITARY WARD

Gets buzzed in again. Trades some quiet Russian with a DOCTOR and PSYCHOLOGIST. They look with some slight fear and hopelessness at UNIT 7 down the filthy hall.

INT. UNIT 7 - NEXT MOMENT

The haunting, quiet singing of someone unseen. A Russian lullaby that will stay with us.

Door is bolted open. MAN moves through. He's thin, tall, even a little nerdy. But not afraid. Begins to approach her, keeping something hidden.

THE GIRL. Her back to us. Sitting in a single folding chair, staring at asbestos wall. Grey hospital uniform. Big 7 branded on the back of her shirt.

Keeps singing to herself. Stops at the sound of the Man's footsteps. Very close. Behind her.

She turns around. Big, pretty eyes barely peek through ratty, long hair.

Sees he's hiding something.

Her HANDS tighten on the chair sides, as though preparing to fight. To kill.

The Man suddenly reveals a new SOCCER BALL from around his back. Bright red, the color of some wonderful candy.

The Girl absorbs. Expression changes in very subtle ways. Something about the weird kindness of it all.

Man gently holds it out for her as she takes it in her hands. Hair in her face.

The Man, no fear. Pulls her hair away from her eyes. Makes sure they stare at one another when he whispers it:

MAN
Zdravstvujtye, Alice.

Off The Girl. Absorbing him.

SILENT CUT TO BLACK

Beat.

CHINESE CHARACTERS FILLING FRAME

As lonely violin strings fade in, they begin to wither, distort, fade like rain into the English:

MAY YOU LIVE IN INTERESTING TIMES

SLOW FADE TO:

FIREWORKS ON HONG KONG BAY - NIGHT

Setting the water into dazzling reds, whites and greens. DRAGON BOATS skim across the surface like colorful paint strokes.

The Chinese New Year is alive and spectacular in HONG KONG, CHINA.

INT. TAXI - MOVING

A DARK FORM watches the skyline glitter from a closed car window. Fireworks light up the smeared reflection of MICHAEL (40s,50s). Deep lines in his face. Subtle scars, earned from years of a cruel, secretive profession.

A stare that speaks of intelligence and quiet violence.

Everything about this man is quiet.

DRIVER at the wheel of his Nissan. Plexiglas between them. Says nothing as they take the causeway bridge toward the island skyline.

Michael regards it. Off his eyes...

EXT. ALLEY STREET - NIGHT

Wet from a fresh rain.

Cab turns a corner, coming into the neon-drenched Sheung Wan District. Hipster's parade. Roar of drunks and revelry in the vicinity.

Michael climbs smoothly out of the cab as Driver helps him with one carry-on and a single tote.

Chinese hip-hop kids rush by on BMX bikes...

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - NEXT MOMENT

Door buzzes open as Michael enters. Walks to the elevator with his bags.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Door opens and light comes on. The place is clean, modern, practical. Aura of business-monthly.

PATIO DOOR - NEXT MOMENT

Michael stands alone with a whiskey and ice, reflecting on Hong Kong 38 floors below. Jacket off. Nurses a quiet sip of whiskey.

OPEN BATHROOM - NEXT MOMENT

Michael washes water over his face. Shirt off, exposing some faded military tattoos. Scars from knives and bullets. Stories we'll never know.

Off a door buzzer...

NEXT MOMENT

Michael comes to the small SECURITY MONITOR. Spots a faux delivery-man type with a package at the building's front.

Michael buzzes him in.

NEXT MOMENT

He sits quietly on a black-leather couch, watching the closed apartment door. Eerie SHADOW of the delivery man comes to the door. Gently sets down the package and knocks four times.

Heads out. Michael listens for the elevator to open and the man to exit before climbing off the couch...

INT. HALLWAY - NEXT MOMENT

Door opens. Michael comes out, sliding the RECTANGULAR DHL BOX into his apartment. Shuts the door.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

TV on low. Local Hong Kong newsgirl's showing off her perky smile at the dock festivities. Interviews a sweaty, grinning Dragon boater.

ON MICHAEL

Sits on the edge of the made bed, opening the box to reveal a slim, long BRIEF CASE. Uses a code on his iPhone to open the code on the case.

Bolts electronically spring and he clicks it open. Pulls a dark-velvet pad away to reveal a beautiful, glistening SGW Multimatch SCOPE RIFLE.

Non-assembled in four clean sections.

Michael checks each section like a magician inspecting his pre-trick. Coughs slightly as he does it.

CUT TO:

HONG KONG SKYLINE - DAWN

The bay is quiet. Fishing boats haunt the water.

INT. APARTMENT - SAME

Clock reads 6:20 am.

Michael has changed into civilian jeans and bubble jacket. A bum's hoodie. Looks like a construction worker with a drinking problem.

NEXT MOMENT

His blurred form snatches an ear piece off the dresser, picking up the case. Heads off as we take note of a sun barely beginning to form off the patio...

EXT. STREET - DAY

Shopkeepers spraying sidewalks clean.

Michael, now ducked in hoodie, inconspicuous. Moves at quick, calm pace to catch the city bus.

INT. BUS - DAY

Michael sits in back. Stares at the waking cityscape. Suddenly twitches. Clutches his head like a man with a migraine.

Little kid takes notice. Stares at the case he keeps close.

EXT. HONG KONG EMBARCADARO - DAY

Michael gets off the bus, crossing the busy 10T highway that runs along the impressive bay. Heads with the case toward a row of tenements built along the popular waterway.

MICHAEL
(into ear-piece)
Seasonal on point.

VOICE
(anonymous, feminine)
Copy. Building 224, door code 4487.

Michael ducks a small fencing, heading up to tenement 224. Punches in the code.

INT. HALL

Aura of gentrified renovations. Michael moves in.

VOICE
Northernmost elevator is operable, roof is clear.

Michael takes the third and last elevator, clicking it to:

EXT. ROOF - MOMENTS LATER

Comes through the shaftway door, checking every angle.

MICHAEL
Stage mark.

VOICE
Northwest corner.

Michael heads for the corner. Barely makes two thin, black construction strips taped to the roof floor like an actor's stage mark. This is how it works.

Michael gets into position, crouching down. Already has the case open.

Pulls the rifle.

Quickly begins assembling. A mundane, almost sterile process.

MICHAEL
BDC trajectory.

VOICE
When you're assembled, Seasonal-

MICHAEL
Just give me the numbers.

He smacks the final component together, already twisting the telescope.

VOICE
500 meters at 45. Winds southeast at 28. We recommend 308 Federal 175 grain.

MICHAEL
Copy.

Michael gets into sniper kneel, using the case as a sandbag.

THROUGH SCOPE RETICLE

Sites focus on the outside of a FOUR-STAR RESTAURANT. Couple of guards are watching the outside as a Mayback prepares to drive someone out.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
BDC acquired.

VOICE
Copy, we're holding.

Michael remains still, capable. Suddenly winces. Nearly loses his site. Another bout of pain.

MICHAEL
(quiet)
Shit.

VOICE
Seasonal, report.

MICHAEL
Holding at yellow.

Michael resets himself, getting into mode. Slight distortion. A whining, eerie ring in his ears. Loses vision for a moment.

VOICE
Primary now exiting, we're holding.

Michael coughs. Nearly vomits.

Winces again. Begins sweating hard.

THROUGH SCOPE

A BUSINESS MAN exits with two guards and a GIRLFRIEND.

MICHAEL
(struggling)
Give me primary.

VOICE
Negative, we're holding.

Michael fights the interior pain, the ringing in his ears. Tracks the Man and his girl as they move swiftly toward the Mayback.

Michael's practically forcing his arms to keep still. Keeps sites on the business Man as he helps his lady into the car.

MICHAEL
Primary, goddamn it-

VOICE
Primary visible. Black jacket at door.

Michael swings to his SON (25). Heading out of the place with black jacket and bad sunglasses.

VOICE (CONT'D)
Yellow go green.

Michael curses another bout of pain, resetting the aim.

VOICE (CONT'D)
Seasonal, you are green.

THROUGH SCOPE

Michael gets a bad track with the moving target. Focus blurs. He's at the car now.

VOICE (CONT'D)
Seasonal.

Michael FIRES. Blasts a guard to death. The Son freaks, jumping into the Mayback as his father shouts for the driver. Already speeding off as guards pull guns.

Michael swears himself, snaps up, running off to get him.

FOLLOWING MICHAEL HAND-HELD

Runs up to the building's opposite edge, throwing the rifle's strap around his shoulder. JUMPS five feet of air, smashing onto a slightly-lower clearing.

MICHAEL
(shouting into ear piece)
New point!

VOICE
Holding.

Michael jumps another roof. Barely lands it as we FOLLOW him toward the last building roof.

VOICE (CONT'D)
Right to southwest corner.

Michael quickly adjusts, taking the right. Checking all windows around him. Spots a CLEANING WOMAN in a highrise. Vacuuming with headphones on.

MICHAEL
Taking position.

VOICE
Seasonal, you are not cleared. Seasonal-

Michael throws the ear piece off, getting back into sniper mode.

Barely makes the timing as the Mayback roars out the smaller road, heading for the highway.

VOICE (CONT'D)
(distant, off-line)
Seasonal, you are not cleared for shot.

Michael takes aim.

THROUGH SCOPE

Barely SEE the kid's head clutched in his father's hold. Michael mutters something we'll never quite understand. And FIRES.

A moment of travel before shot EXPLODES SILENTLY through the back. The Son's head pops to red.

Mayback crashes into highway railing as cars swerve from the collision.

ON MICHAEL

Throws the gun down, glancing up at that Cleaning Woman. She's now gone. Eerie.

Michael hurriedly takes off, leaving the rifle behind.

NEW ANGLE

He comes to a locked roof access. Doubles over for a moment. Pulls a hidden Glock. FIRES shot into the lock.

INT. STAIRWELL - BUILDING - NEXT MOMENT

Michael, sweating. Quickly negotiates the floor-to-floor steps. Ducks a couple of teenage lovers sharing a cigarette.

Keeps going as we FOLLOW him through a HALLWAY DOOR. Some residents checking their mail. A baby crying at the sound of police sirens.

Michael ducks the front entrance, heading for the back. Fights the lock. Finally breaks it open as emergency exit door sounds off.

He moves through the door, taking a:

BACK ALLEY WAY

Covered head to toe in hip-hop Chinese tag graffiti.

Michael has to stop for a moment. Keels over, throwing up.

Some BUMS watching from across the way. Just another one of their own.

Michael, hunkered down. Coughs a moment more. Wipes spit from his mouth. Blood residue.

He absorbs that as POLICE CARS roar by in BG. The panicked whump of a helicopter on its way.

Michael takes a heavy breath and starts out away from the Bums. FOLLOWING him around a corner to a parallel:

STREET

Hustles fast as a bus is already starting out.

INT. BUS - NEXT MOMENT

Michael just made it. Swipes a card through the payment, heading past Chinese and tourists alike.

This time, the bus is packed as hell. Everyone standing.

Michael stands too. Watches as POLICE CARS zip by, already shutting off the block's perimeter.

Michael staggers. Keeps his grip on the bus' grip strap.

Off sirens...

INT. APARTMENT - DUSK

TV plays in silence. News feed of the recent assassination of JAN HIUNG. Son of a Hong Kong industrialist.

ON MICHAEL, BACK TO US

Sitting at the patio table with a glass of water. Empty bottle of pills next to a smartphone that suddenly lights up on mute.

He answers. Listens.

MICHAEL
Yeah.
(beat)
No. Okay.

He clicks off. Gently puts the phone back down. We SEE a web page he's been browsing. WEB MD, cancer threads.

Takes a sip of water as we SEE his face. Glazed eyes. Pale. Watching a midge of Starlings flying over the cityscape.

Off their erratic, haunting patterns:

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Michael, dressed in casual jacket and jeans. Crosses the busy street, ducking into a METH/HEALTH CLINIC where a crowd of junkies fill the sidewalk.

INT. EXAMINATION ROOM - NIGHT

Michael's just had his blood taken. Sits quietly on a paper-mated table.

Beat.

KNOCK at door. DOCTOR curtly enters. Chinese with an ugly, receding ponytail. Air of third-rate practice.

DOCTOR
(broken English)
Mr. Thomas. How you feeling right now?

MICHAEL
(beat)
Okay.

DOCTOR
Okay? Do you know about these blood tests?

MICHAEL
(calm, evasive)
I need a refill for N-acetylcysteine, you can write the prescription.

DOCTOR
How long have you know about your cancer?

Michael debates telling him.

MICHAEL
I don't know, a few months. Maybe.

DOCTOR
Because what you have is a rare form of mutation caused by exposure to high levels of uranium-

MICHAEL
I know what I have. I need a prescription.

Doctor takes off his glasses, sitting down in a folding chair.

DOCTOR
Mr. Thomas, what you need is treatment in a facility. I don't have MRIs, but I would assume the growths are already substantial-

MICHAEL
Look at me. Look at me.
(off his attention)
N-acetylcysteine. Write the prescription.

DOCTOR
Mr. Thomas-

Michael pulls a thick envelope. Smacks it on the table.

MICHAEL
Write the prescription.

Off the Doctor’s silence...

INT. BATHROOM - APARTMENT - NIGHT

Michael injects himself with a small pack of generic N-Acet. Immune system builder. Nearly crashes from the rush.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Michael, shirt off, nurses a whiskey and ice.

On TV, news report now crawls with police interviews. Search is on for an unidentified man. Only fuzzy security shots, no constructive visibles.

Report cuts to images of the young man Michael killed. Images of him as a smiling teen. Riding horseback with his sister. Soccer game in London.

Michael picks up the remote. Shuts off the TV.

SILENT TO BLACK

Sound of plates clanging...

INT. NOODLE/FISH SHOP - DAY

YVONNE (60s) sits alone at a corner table, nursing an Oolong tea. Proper North London, too polite for this place.

Doesn’t bother to look up as a stranger enters. Sits down at her table. The stranger is Michael. Dressed back in slim suit.

YVONNE
You’ve been here before?

MICHAEL
No.

YVONNE
The herring soup is horrible. Honestly, I don’t know how you fuck that up.

Michael doesn’t react. Yvonne finally addresses him with her eyes.

YVONNE (CONT'D)
You're growing out a beard.

MICHAEL
Just haven't shaved.

YVONNE
Do I add that to the list of inconsistencies?

MICHAEL
You have something to say?

YVONNE
Your op was sloppy.

MICHAEL
I acquired.

YVONNE
(quiet)
You missed your green slot, then you ignored protocol when the zone wasn't cleared.

MICHAEL
I had to adjust.

YVONNE
Adjust.

Yvonne thinks about that. Michael motions to the restaurant TV. Some stupid Chinese variety show with people dressed as pandas.

MICHAEL
It's off the news already. I don't see the problem.

YVONNE
You're off your game, Michael. It's not like you.
(hard, polite)
Is there perhaps something you need to tell me?

Michael meditates on that.

MICHAEL
If it had gone 100%, there'd still be the same result. Cops and news. Your client wanted impact, that's what he got.

Yvonne pauses. Finishes a final spot of tea, passing a sleek FLASHSTICK across the table.

YVONNE
You rate has been adjusted. If you want to bonus-out, you can take this. Or don't.

MICHAEL
What does that mean?

YVONNE
This agency can only tolerate tangents of improvisation for so long. Their patience is wearing thin as is mine. I've reassigned you to death. Frankly, I've had my fill.

She rises up, throwing down her napkin.

YVONNE (CONT'D)
My flight's at 10. Let me know if you want the contract. Take a shower, you look like shit.

With that, she heads out. Michael doesn't watch her leave. When she exits, he loses the cool demeanor. Takes a heavy breath, fighting some pain.

Closes his eyes for a moment. Just stares out the window at the bay...

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Flashstick clicks into laptop. Michael's reading glasses reflect the security scroll. He double-clicks a code.

ENCRYPTED PAGE COMES UP

Images of a YOUNG CHINESE WOMAN (20s). Some arrest records. Security images of her entering and leaving a massage parlor. Some clubs.

Arm candy for old men. A mid-level prostitute.

Michael goes close on her name: MEI LEE, DOB 2/14/91

ON MICHAEL

Thinks about the date. Valentine's.

Beat. He contemplates the bonus. Off his hand snatching up the phone...

SMASH TO:

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Wan Chai, red light district.

Orgy of neon and drunken strip clubs.

BUS pulls to curb as HEELS dart out of the door. Finding their way onto wet pavement. Heels of MEI LEE (20s). The girl on Michael's dossier.

Jeans and red Adidas zip-up.

Walks through packs of drunks and junkies toward a back alley entrance. FOLLOWING her to a cheap neon green sign boasting MASSAGES/BATHS. Attached like a broken arm to a cheap stripclub called VIP's.

NEXT MOMENT

FOLLOWING her through a buzzer door where a BIG GUY with a cigarette greets her in Mandarin. Turns a corner as we're now in a:

INT. BASEMENT MASSAGE PARLOR

Mei comes through a curtain door, turning a corner as we gauge a long HALLWAY OF MASSAGE ROOMS. A couple of BOUNCERS keep watch.

Mei smiles at a passing girl, moving past the johns room where TV plays and a vending machine coughs out canned Tsingtao beer.

FOLLOWING Mei through an EMPLOYEE HALL where Girls dressed like overgrown schoolgirls in bright lipstick smoke cigarettes.

She trades some small banter, finally moving into the:

INT. LOCKER ROOM

Girls dressing and undressing for their shifts. Bad 80s Heart on a small transistor radio.

Mei comes to her locker as a MADAME TYPE approaches with a lapdog in her hands.

MADAME
Mei.
(in Mandarin, sub)
You have one waiting in 6.

MEI
Steven?

MADAME
No, this one's new. Fucking Yank. You were requested.

Some neighboring girls tease her in Mandarin. Madame cusses them out as Mei starts taking off her civilian clothes.

MADAME (CONT'D)
He's got a nice suit, so make sure you sell the extras.

Mei goes to pet her dog.

MADAME (CONT'D)
Let's go, bitches, showtime.

She heads out as Mei stands alone in the ugly light. Pulls off her shirt.

INT. MASSAGE ROOM 6 - NIGHT

KNOCK on the door. Mei comes in. Skinny little black dress with purse.

MEI
(perfect English)
Hi. Freezing in here tonight, yes?

She rubs her bare shoulders. Smiles across at:

MICHAEL

Sitting in a chair in the corner beside a massage bed/cot. His face is a little dark from the shadows.

MEI (CONT'D)
I'm Kim.

She moves closer to him. A little faux sexual.

MEI (CONT'D)
I understand I've been requested.

Michael just nods. Doesn't stare at her, but through her.

MICHAEL
I saw you dance upstairs.

MEI
Did you like the way I dance?

MICHAEL
Yes.

Mei moves closer. Gently touches his suit arm.

MEI
You can take this off. You want a beer or anything?

MICHAEL
No. Thank you.

Mei heads over to a small table. Beautiful skin exposed through the back of her dress.

MEI
What shall I call you?

MICHAEL
Michael.

MEI
Michael. Did they explain the rules.

MICHAEL
Yes.

MEI
What were we looking for tonight?

MICHAEL
I don't know.

Mei turns back with a slight grin. Appreciates Michael's shyness.

MEI
I don't believe that. I think you know what you want. You just need me to show you. Yes?

Michael thinks about that. Nods. As we PAN DOWN to his hand. Holds a mini Garrote WIRE. Just two plastic holes for finger grip and one steel wire.

MEI (CONT'D)
Now we just have to discuss how much it costs for me to show you.

Michael stands up, keeping the wire hidden. Steps closer as Mei withdraws some lotions from her tiny purse.

MICHAEL
I'm new to this. You tell me.

MEI
(her back still to him)
500 is the normal rate. But seeing as you're new, we can try 400.

MICHAEL
400. In Euros.

MEI
That's correct.

Michael's now within arm reach. She turns around, meets his eyes.

MICHAEL
What do I get for three thousand?

He drops the money on the table. Mei's eyes wander. A long time since she's been surprised. Looks at the door for a moment. SHADOW of a BOUNCER right outside.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
Kim.
(beat, she turns to him)
What do I get?

Mei swallows a breath. Resets herself with a shy smile. Moves closer, putting small hands on his waist.

MEI
What do you want?

Beat.

MICHAEL
I want you to lie on the mat.

Mei regards this. Goes to get her lotions.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
No. You won't need those.

Mei looks at him. Heads over to the mat.

MEI
Would you like me to undress?

MICHAEL
Please.

Mei reaches behind her dress, unzipping it clean. Lets it fall to the floor, revealing black lace panties and short bra.

She sits on the edge of the mat, facing him.

MEI
Do you like my body, Michael?

MICHAEL
Yes.
(beat)
You can lie down now.

MEI
How should I lie?

MICHAEL
Face down.

Mei complies, lying face-down on the mat. Starts to get into a cheap pin-up pose.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
No. Put your head down. Close you eyes, please.

MEI
Like I'm dreaming?

Michael nods.

Mei closes her eyes. Michael pulls off his jacket, moving over to her.

MICHAEL
Count down from 10. Then you can open your eyes. And I'll be beside you.

Mei nods, eyes closed. Whispers the countdown in her native Mandarin.

Michael pulls the Garrote, tightening the wire with both hands.

Mei's down to five as Michael comes up behind her. She feels his presence, strength.

Michael gently brushes her hair aside from her neck. Moves on top of her.

Mei's at 2 and counting slowly.

Michael moves the wire toward her head. A second from slipping it under her throat.

Mei counts past one. Then.

MEI
Am I still dreaming?

No answer. She opens her eyes to find no one there. Eerie silence.

Loud COUGH. Jolts us.

She snaps around, finding Michael in the corner. Coughing blood.

MEI (CONT'D)
Michael -- ?

She rushes over, crouching down as he coughs again. Sees he's now fumbling a hypodermic needle.

MEI (CONT'D)
No, no, you can't do that in here-

Mei looks to the closed door. One shout away from calling the Bouncer.

Michael clutches her hand, nearly falling. The needle drops to the ground, along with a vial of the N-Acet.

Mei realizes it's not heroin.

MICHAEL
(in pain)
Medicine.

Michael coughs again, almost passing out.

Mei's caught between the rock and hard place. Suddenly picks up the needle, gripping his arm.

MEI
It's okay, hold still. Hold still.

Michael, shaking, keeps his arm still as Mei taps on his vein. The motions of someone who once knew this procedure.

MEI (CONT'D)
Okay.
(silently)
Okay.

She gently taps the needle, buries it into his arm.

Michael absorbs the drug. Eyes close. Saliva dripping from his mouth. The world becomes smoother, more manageable.

MEI (CONT'D)
(a whisper)
Okay, Michael.

NEXT MOMENT

Mei guides Michael over to the cot. They both lie down. He clutches his arm, succumbing to the new rush.

Mei puts an arm around him, comforting him through the bouts. Their eyes on one another.

MEI (CONT'D)
Sshhhh.

She gently, compassionately pats his lips with a tissue. Michael, eyes watered. No longer coughing.

MEI (CONT'D)
It's okay now.

Michael pauses. Struggles to say it:

MICHAEL
Need to rest. A little.

MEI
Okay. We'll both rest.

Gently brushes his hair from his face.

MEI (CONT'D)
You close your eyes now.

Michael lingers on her a moment more. Closes his eyes. Mei runs her hand over his worn cheeks.

MEI (CONT'D)
And I'll be here with you.

He's still trembling. Descending into a minor sleep. She lays her head down beside him.

MEI (CONT'D)
(a whisper)
With you.

Off the silence...

INT. ROOM - LATER

Mei's fallen asleep herself.

LOUD KNOCK. Snaps her up.

She rises, turning to Michael. He's gone. Money still on the table.

Shouting of the Madame from the locked door.

NEXT MOMENT

Mei opens the door as the Bouncer stands there with a pissed-off Madame. Dog barking up a storm.

MADAME
(Mandarin)
What the fuck, girl, you sleeping on the job?

Mei ignores her, moving into the hall. Some Girls are watching. No sign of Michael.

Madame spots a needle and blood on the floor.

MADAME (CONT'D)
What the hell is this shit?

Mei, still staring down the hall. He's long gone.

EXT. STREET - DAWN

Some girls exiting the parlor, done with the shift.

Mei breaks away from them, heading down the street alone. Back in her jeans and zip-up.

Heads for the light-rail train stop.

CUT TO:

MICHAEL'S POV

Lurking behind some parked cars. Been there all night. Watching her.

FOLLOWING HIM HAND-HELD.

Keeping his distance as she hustles up to a light-rail platform.

MTR TRAIN gushes into the station.

NEXT CUT

Michael boards the rear of the train as it swooshes closed. Starts out again. Spots Mei in the next car, checking her iPhone.

Some school kids loudly come into the car, giving people shit. Michael continues to watch Mei.

NEXT CUT

FOLLOWING Michael Godard-like as he starts off the train, now having arrived at:

THE KENNEDY TOWN DISTRICT

Dilapidated tenements in a port section. Sad and clean.

He keeps pace with Mei as she hustles across an intersection.

FINAL CUT

FOLLOWING her around a city block to a back-end apartment unit that looks more like some dilapidated Los Angeles motel.

Rock music blasting from renters, squatters.

Mei hikes up the stairs, into her UNIT.

Michael regards this. Looks for a vantage point. Sees one in the form of a:

BILLBOARD SIGN

As Michael climbs the ladder up to the thin walkway. Can now spot Mei through a tiny window.

Eats cold noodles alone. Pets a cat who refuses to get off the table.

CLOSE ON MICHAEL

Watching her. Something quiet, haunted in his face.

LONG SHOT - THE ELECTRONIC BILLBOARD

ASIAN MODELS kissing air and selling Diet Coke. Dwarfing Michael's small form.

CUT TO:

INT. CORPORATE BOX SEAT - SOCCER STADIUM - LONDON - DAY

Rich men watching Arsenal destroy Chelsea. Trophy wives drinking champagne with their children and giggling.

The blurred form of Yvonne answers a cell phone. Back to us, watching the game through big panoramic windows.

MICHAEL (O.S.)
(on phone)
I want reassignment.

Yvonne pauses.

INTERCUT

Michael back at his APARTMENT. Sits on the edge of his bed, staring into Mei's dossier.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
Put someone else on it.

Yvonne steps away into a private corner as we hover over her shoulder.

YVONNE
You're on it. And once again, you failed your green slot. People aren't happy. You get one more chance tomorrow night.

MICHAEL
What did she do? I want to know.

YVONNE
You don't get to know.
(resets herself, a new air of compassion)
Michael. You're progressing into dangerous territory. You've always been an excellent asset to this organization. You need to think about that. You need to reset yourself and finish this job.

MICHAEL
I want to discuss exit strategies.
(off her silence)
I'm vet status, I want to talk retirement.

Yvonne absorbs that. A SUIT waves a champagne over to her.

YVONNE
We talk when you amend this situation. I've assigned a tandem.

MICHAEL
I work alone.

YVONNE
Not anymore. Since you seemingly lack the confidence to carry out your duties, you'll have to be relegated to baby sitter. The contract will be split between you and the secondary.
(beat)
Are we on the same page?

Michael sits frozen. A man making a silent decision with himself.

YVONNE (CONT'D)
Michael. Are we on the same page.

MICHAEL
(beat)
Yes.

Yvonne feeds herself a cashew. Changes the phone from one ear to the other.

YVONNE
You'll contact me again when the result is positive. And Michael. This comes from the top: you have no more leash to run with. You execute the contract. Or things will happen.

She clicks out.

ON MICHAEL

Still sitting there. Moonlight filling his face.

CUT TO:

THE HONG KONG SKYLINE - NEXT DAY

Red sun sinking into the bay. Night on the rise.

INT. APARTMENT - DUSK

Michael getting dressed. Buttons up a $600 shirt. JUXTAPOSE:

MEI IN HER FLAT

Throwing on jeans in her small world. Crappy little TV plays and --

MICHAEL

Adjusting tie. Stares at himself in the mirror as --

MEI

Feeding the cat. Grabs up her backpack and knit. Kisses a photo of her MOTHER and YOUNG SISTER on the fridge. The look of small village, poverty. Sending money back home.

NEXT MOMENT

Mei locks the door of her pathetic flat. Heads out into the night, rushing to make the light rail.

Finally --

MICHAEL - APARTMENT

Sets down a needle, having just given himself an adrenaline fix. Snaps up his 9mm from the dresser, heading for the door.

Through the patio we SEE the moon over Victoria Peak. A black diamond hovering over the mountains...

SMASH TO:

CAB ROARING UP TO CURB

Men’s black leather soles climb out as the cab moves on. Crossing the street, heading for the throbbing base of:

EXT. VIP GENTLEMEN'S CLUB - NIGHT

Beckoning in red neon like Hades. Michael's FORM heads up to the bouncers in cheap tuxedos.

INT. CLUB - NIGHT

Bad Euro mix throbbing over the place, lit in deep reds and violets. Wears the air of 3rd level Triad mob ownership.

GIRLS dancing on small tapestry stages. Working the CLIENTS who are ready to cut deals. Business elite, tourists, some women.

A BOUNCER clears the way for Michael, walking into the place with that cool suit and black leather soles.

Covers the place with his eyes. Sees a MAN (30s) watching him at an upper booth. German look. Glass of single-malt.

NEXT MOMENT

Michael moves over, stands before him.

MICHAEL
You're my Secondary?

The guy shakes his head.

MAN
You're mine.

Says it with an air of smugness. Young cub ready to skin the lion.

Michael keeps it in check.

MICHAEL
What do I call you?

MAN
Tomas.

MICHAEL
Okay. Your playbook, Tomas. What now?

TOMAS
Stay in the corner and drink a Sprite.
Cover me when I take her in back.

Michael regards this. Spots Mei by the bar, working a dance with some Brit soccer-types.

Skin-tight red stockings with high skirt and half-top. Dark version of Alice in Wonderland.

Michael reflects. Something more subdued, sympathetic than turned on.

TOMAS (CONT'D)
You can go sit down. Michael.

Michael checks him on that. He heads off slowly as Tomas takes a sip of his scotch.

Michael situates himself in a corner table where exotic Koi fish swim in a huge wall tank. Cheap fluoresceins give Michael a weird, electric aura.

Tomas looks back to Mei across the room. Signals a MANAGER over to get her attention.

NEXT MOMENT

Music has changed. DJ's playing a creepy Mandarin fusion of White Stripes' Black Math. Fast and sinister.

ON MICHAEL

Watches from the corner as Mei's now talking up Tomas. Laughs at some joke he makes. Puts a hand on her thigh.

Mei gestures to the PRIVATE DANCE ROOMS behind the cheesy velvet.

Tomas nods, slipping away. Holding Mei's hand. Shares a quick glance through disco mirrors at:

MICHAEL

Who quickly starts out. Signals to some Russian ex-pat Girl making rounds.

INT. PRIVATE DANCE ROOMS - NEXT MOMENT

GIRL comes through the black velvet with Michael. He spies Tomas heading into a private booth with Mei.

Screen closes.

Michael pauses before he's guided into his own booth. The Girl begins to swing in front of him. Takes off her argyle top and shakes to White Stripes.

Michael, half watching. Staring across at the closed curtain.

TOMAS' SECTION

Mei's grinding between Tomas' legs. Doing the 2-minute motions. Tomas, seemingly enjoying it. As we spot his HAND. Subtly going for his own little Garrote wire and --

MICHAEL'S SECTION

He's getting worked over by the Girl. Watches as a BOUNCER momentarily heads out to speak with some drunk Germans.

Girl whispers into Michael's ear:

GIRL
What else are you interested in tonight-

Michael gently grabs her, stuffing her face into a chloroformed handkerchief. She's already out by the time he gently sets her on the sofa.

Moves out, shutting the curtain closed and --

TOMAS' SECTION

Mei's in a momentary dance trance. Eyes closed. Grinding against Tomas. Lets him work her hands up her body. Clamps the mini Garrote between his fingers.

SMALL HALLWAY

FOLLOWING Michael toward the closed curtain. Lights on strobe effect. Jack White's guitar kicks into its glorious mid-lull as --

MEI TURNS AROUND IN BOOTH

Facing the curtain, grinding Tomas' crotch as he straightens the wire in one quick motion.

Music blasting on high point, covering all sound.

Mei opens her eyes again.

Tomas throws the wire around her throat. Blood instantly foams. Mei's eyes go wide, feeling the suffocation. Reaches a hand out to the black curtain.

WHICH SWINGS OPEN TO REVEAL MICHAEL

9mm aimed on Mei. FIRES.

BLASTING TOMAS THROUGH THE THROAT.

The killer twists backwards as Mei is freed from the grip.

Tomas, choking but alive, already has his gun pulled.

Michael FIRES at the HAND. Blasts apart bone and skin as the gun spins on table.

Michael FIRES three more rounds. No silencer. It's loud and scary and rocks the place.

Tomas' EYE punctures. Blood sprays wall.

Last shot into skull. Impact so hard, it crushes Tomas against the wall.

Mei, clutching throat. Doesn't get to breathe before she's yanked up off the floor.

ON MICHAEL

Pulling Mei out of the private dance hall. Already anticipating the:

BOUNCER

Has his own gun drawn. Michael FIRES. Shot through the throat. Bouncer returns, blasting into $400 champagne bottles.

Michael sweeps up the man's gun, prepping for the all-out war.

AS EVERYTHING AROUND THEM BECOMES SLOW AND SILENT

White Stripes blasting through speakers as:

MICHAEL explodes out the private dance hall with Mei. FIRES on another BOUNCER. Bouncer FIRES back.

Blasts apart LIGHTS. Neon showers the place in acid rain as people hit the ground.

MICHAEL RUNNING SLOW-MO WITH MEI

FIRES more shots. Shoots the Bouncer through the heart. Crashes against a big dance table. Strippers taking cover and --

MICHAEL

Already spotting a BIG GOON at the bar. Has SHOTGUN as --

MICHAEL FIRES

Popping apart beer bottles and glass. Pulls Mei into a corner booth for cover as:

GOON FIRES

Scatter shot blows out the table. Pumps and FIRES again, blasting apart the WALL AQUARIUM.

Flood of saltwater cascades down the second tier of the club.

As Goon pumps again, Michael launches forward -- FIRING two silent rounds.

Ear spits off. Then the eye.

Goon crashes back into bar mirrors. Everything shatters.

White Stripes heavy guitar and distortion covers the place. A surreal, stylish nightmare of violence.

Madame has her own gun. FIRES hard shots.

Michael practically throws Mei to a back exit door, FIRING final shot.

Explodes through the old lady's skull. She crashes back into wall. Dead eyes reflecting the red strobe...

SMASH TO:

BACK DOOR EXPLODING OPEN

Michael and Mei scramble out into back alley.

She's still coughing, covering her throat as he pulls her onward.

WE'RE FOLLOWING MICHAEL CLOSELY TOWARD:

EXT. STREET

Loud screech of a car brakes. TWO GOONS arrive in a matte black Mustang GT.

Michael FIRES expert pop shots. Fast and scary. Kills Driver instantly. Second Goon fires shots at his open door.

Michael returns. EMPTY CLIP. He drops the gun, pulling Mei against a wall as Goon FIRES.

Brick spits across their faces from the gunshot.

Michael listens as the guy scrambles to swap a clip. Michael RUN-CHARGES out of the wall cover, SLAMMING car door on the guy's body. Does it again.

Goon extends his arm to fire as Michael performs an expert disarm move, snapping his wrist. Gun drops into Michael's hand.

Whips the guy around for body cover as -- FINAL BOUNCER GOON breaks from that back exit.

FIRES shots into his fellow Tong.

Michael FIRES back.

Three fast shots and the guy slaps dead to the wet pavement.

Michael drops the dead body, grabbing Mei before she can think to break away. Pushes her into the Mustang, scrambling into the driver's seat.

WE'RE RIGHT WITH THEM

As Michael checks his forward. POLICE CARS already turning corner.

He jams it into hard reverse, now spotting POLICE SEDANS coming on his rear.

Michael twists the wheel, righting the car into a SLIM alley.

HOMELESS JUNKIES break for cover as Michael roars it down the alleyway.

Turns hard, finding a new street outlet. Loud AIR HONK as Michael nearly slams into an oncoming BUS.

Burns through a red light, ducking back into an adjoining ALLEY. Listens to the distant whine of POLICE SIREN.

Glances at Mei, holding both hands over her throat. Drenched in sweat and rain, terrified.

MICHAEL
It's alright, it's not deep. Keep pressure on it, think of blue.
(hard)
Hey, picture the color blue.

She does. Eyes close as Michael turns the wheel hard right. Spots a POLICE SEDAN zipping past FRAME.

Sound of police brakes screeching as Michael burns past another intersection.

The shouts of parade revelry in the immediate distance.

Michael turns a corner, coming to a big impasse of police barricades and colorful costumes.

DRAGON AND DRUM PARADE.

Entire street closed down for the week-long celebration.

Michael hears the police siren a block away. Jams the car into park, turning it into a temporary barrier.

Throws open the passenger door for her.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
C'mon.

Pulls Mei out, quickly grabbing a half-empty beer bottle from a trash can. Pours it over them both.

They're now a stumbling, drunk couple mixing into a parade of thousands.

They head past the police barriers, swallowed up in a kaleidoscope of dragon costumes, tourists and bright street fireworks.

In BG, police sedan skids to a halt, crashing into the Mustang that's blocking their alley exit.

FOLLOWING MICHAEL HAND-HELD

Guiding Mei through the surreal parade. Her frightened face reflects across the glitter. The popping firecrackers.

Michael now spots the LIGHT RAIL TRAIN heading into the station a half-block away.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
C'mon.

Michael forces her to speed up the pace.

Some passing Canadian frat boys give a holler as Mei's still in her skimpy Alice outfit.

A couple of beat cops, not yet alerted to the massacre, wave Michael and the big crowd across the street.

Their radios crackle with new updates as Michael turns up the pace.

Guides Mei away from the parade flow as they head for the outside platform. Light Rail's now in station.

Michael and Mei rush to make it just as the doors swish closed, falling into the seat of the:

TRAIN CAR - MOVING

Swooshes back to life, leaving the roar of the parade crowd far behind.

TICKET AGENT moves by them, barking about their receipt.

Michael looks at him drunkenly. Mutters something to Mei who's too afraid to speak.

The guy can smell the beer on them. Cusses something, heading on because it's 2am and he's pissed and tired.

Michael holds Mei a little closer like they're lovers. She's still muttering the word blue.

MICHAEL
(a whisper)
It's okay. Just close your eyes. Close your eyes, Mei.

She closes her eyes.

MEI
(struggling)
How do you know my name-

Michael throws the chloroformed handkerchief over her mouth. She kicks a leg up as Michael gently presses her closer. Comforts her into oblivion...

SILENT TO BLACK

Long beat.

UP FROM BLACK:

VAN WINDSHIELD FILLING FRAME - DAWN

We're rushing through a clean, residential area.

UNSEEN DRIVER silent as the van turns a corner, coming to the familiar downtown street of Michael's:

EXT. CORPORATE APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Van brakes and ignition's killed.

DRIVER now in FRAME. Puts an ear-piece on as we PAN to CARGO HOLD. THREE PRIVATE-SECTOR OPERATIVES slap in clips on Ruger Mini-14s. Light Kevlar armor hidden under faux construction jackets.

Prepping for a silent, violent assault.

Someone nods to the DRIVER (TEAM LEADER) as he moves out. Has his own gun ready, quickly tucking into vest holster.

Comes around the van's rear, opening cargo doors for the OTHER THREE. The bright reflector stripes on their yellow jackets give the unassuming look of city workers.

The FOURSOME move calmly, swiftly toward the building's FRONT DOOR.

TEAM LEADER
(into ear-piece)
Red Letter clear on perimeter, moving to front area.

INT. AIRPORT TERMINAL - LONDON - SAME

FOLLOWING Yvonne through Virgin's Terminal 6. Dressed back for business. Cell to her ear.

YVONEE
Keep on his GPS, watch your background.

TEAM LEADER (O.S.)
Copy. We're interior. Heading up stairwell.

INT. 38TH FLOOR HALL - NEXT MOMENT

Foursome heads out the stairwell door, up to Michael's apartment door. Haven't even broken a sweat.

Leader nods at one of his Ops. Quickly puts a magnetizer to the key-card door as men pull guns.

INT. APARTMENT - NEXT MOMENT

Shadowy and quiet.

Red turns green on keylock as door opens.

FOLLOWING TEAM INTO THE PLACE

Rifles aimed at every angle, corner. Michael's suitcase is still where he left it. TV on. Silly yoga show.

OPERATIVES checking out bedroom, bathroom. No sign of Michael.

OPERATIVE
Clear on 2.

ANOTHER
Clear on 3.

TEAM LEADER

Moves professionally to that OPEN PATIO DOOR. Eerie drape blowing restlessly. He spots Michael's iPhone sitting on the small patio table.

TEAM LEADER
GPS acquired. He left his phone behind.

YVONEE (O.S.)
Secure it.

TEAM LEADER
Copy.

Team Leader moves over to the patio, picking up the phone.

CUT TO:

AN OPERATIVE IN THE KITCHEN

Investigates some new wiring attached to something below the sink.

BACK WITH TEAM LEADER

TEAM LEADER (CONT'D)
Checking last call.

Leader hits a scroll button.

OPERATIVE OPENS CABINET TO REVEAL C4 REMOTE BOMB

Duct-taped to gas range.

TEAM LEADER hits CALL.

OPERATIVE
PROBABLE-

Phone chirps. A remote transmitter activated.

ENTIRE APARTMENT VAPORIZES

Fire and smoke BLOW OUT the open patio, windows.

BUILDING WALL blows wide open. Mortar cascades over the city, leaving debris smoke.

Echoes across all of downtown.

INT. AIRPORT TERMINAL - SAME

Yvonne just stops. Clicks off her phone. PANNING TO HER FACE. The eyes of a wounded friend or mother.

Staring into nothing as people from all walks of life pass. Knows what comes next for them both.

Off the ripple of distant plane engine...

EXT. WOODS - DUSK

We've returned to that opening image.

Snow falling hard. FORM becoming a blurred image. Running deeper into the woods. Translucent.

The sound of erratic breath, fighting to breathe. To awaken...

INT. BEDROOM - UNSPECIFIED

Mei awakens in a rush. Breaks from dark sleep. Wonders if she's dead for a moment. Gently touches her throat.

NEW DRESSING on the laceration. It's been cleaned and bandaged.

NEW ANGLE

Mei lies in bed, sheet over her. Stares at the cruddy facade and cheap paddle fan of a:

INT. MOTEL ROOM - DAY

Mei hears the quiet sound of rustling from the half-ajar bathroom. Sees Michael's muscular back in the mirror. Giving himself a new fix on the toilet.

Mei takes a deep breath. Spots her flimsy dress on the edge of the bed.

NEXT MOMENT

Mei, half dressed again. Creeps away from the bedroom, heading for the motel's door. Undoes the latch and bolt, starting out --

DOOR SLAMS CLOSED AS MICHAEL'S RIGHT THERE

Grabs her as she starts to open it.

MEI
NO, LET ME GO. LET ME FUCKING GO-

Michael surprises her by opening the door fully. Doesn't stand in her way.

She starts out. Stops at the second level railing. Staring down at some dingy neighborhood just outside of Victoria Peak.

PEOPLE washing their laundry on wires in the alley. Some bums gambling with dice.

Mei takes it in. Looks back at him.

MICHAEL
Don't go back to your place. They're already there. You can try to leave the city, but you won't make it.

Holds out money for her.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
Here. This is what you want, right?

Mei absorbs him. Doesn't answer. Feels her throat. Eyes watered.

Michael glances around. Keeps the door open for her. Quietly:

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
I got you some new clothes.

Mei pauses. Off her indecision:

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NEXT MOMENT

She's sitting alone, newly dressed in jeans and jumper hoodie. Confused, broken.

MEI
Who. Who are you?

Michael, standing across from her. TV on low volume.

MICHAEL
You know my name.

MEI
You know what I mean.

Michael reflects.

MICHAEL
I'm someone who was paid to kill you.

Mei contemplates. Scared, but not entirely of Michael.

MEI
Why?

MICHAEL
I don't know. I get paid by people who arrange these things.

MEI
Who -- who are these people?

MICHAEL
(beat)
It doesn't matter.

MEI
I can go to the police, I can-

MICHAEL
No. If the people who want you dead had the money to hire me, the police won't help. In fact, they'll probably aid in the effort.

A tense silence. Michael has to lean against the wall to think for a moment. Mei, eyes wet, sees the pain in his face.

MEI
(breathless)
Why did you save me?

Michael doesn't answer. Not sure himself. Mei sees the hypo on the filthy sink. Another spent bottle of N-Acet.

MEI (CONT'D)
What's wrong with you.

MICHAEL
I'm sick.

MEI
(breathless)
How sick.

Michael pauses, debating telling her. Almost to himself:

MICHAEL
I have a strain of cancer.

Mei reflects.

MEI
It's -- bad?

Michael takes a deep breath. Keeps watching angles.

MICHAEL
Bad enough.

MEI
You can get treatment.
(off his silence)
We can both get out of Hong Kong, and you can find a-

MICHAEL
I'm dying.
(silences her)
I should have been dead already. The medicine I take just boosts the immune system.

He closes his eyes for a moment. Breathes heavily.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
I'm losing my hearing. In a few days, I won't be able to see. I'm winding down, you understand?

Mei reflects on that. Chooses her next words carefully.

MEI
What do we do?

Michael thinks about that.

MICHAEL
It's not safe here. We have to leave, head somewhere else.

MEI
You need to rest-

MICHAEL
No. They'll be here in under three hours. They'll find you and kill you.

MEI
How do you know?

Beat.

MICHAEL
I would.

Mei absorbs that. Off her scared eyes...

CUT TO:

CAR WINDOW SMASHED IN

Wires reconnecting.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Michael pulls around in a stolen Honda. Brakes in front of Mei who quickly gets in.

INT. HONDA - NEXT MOMENT

Michael drives in silence as Mei looks out to the passing landscape.

MEI
My cat. I have to get her.

MICHAEL
She'll survive.

She looks at him. Mascara dark. Red eyes.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
You have family.

Mei nods.

MEI
My mother and sister in the country.
(she looks at him)
Will they be safe?

Michael doesn't answer, keeps driving.

MEI (CONT'D)
Will they be safe?

Michael angrily yanks the wheel right.

EXT. HIGHWAY

Honda pulls hard off the road, screeching to a stop below a dilapidated overpass.

IN THE HONDA

Michael guts the stick into park. A dying man trying to think.

Looks at her with swollen eyes.

MICHAEL
We need an out. We need someone to arrange it.

MEI
The people you work for-

MICHAEL
No. You can't cut deals with them. We find out who wanted you killed. We go after them, maybe we can work an out.
(softly)
It's been done before.

Mei absorbs that.

MEI
How much time do we have?

MICHAEL
A day. Maybe less.

Mei stares down for a moment. Looks back.

MEI
How much time do you have?

Michael regards that. Off the glimmer of sunlight off his face...

INT. AIRPORT LOUNGE - DAY

Virgin First Class lounge.

Yvonne, eyes stray. Sits politely in a corner. Speaks to someone OFF FRAME.

YVONEE
His electronic assets are frozen, as are any internal passcodes. We have contacts at the airports and routes. They report they haven't seen him.

VOICE (O.S.)
And the contract?

YVONEE
I suspect she's with him.

VOICE (O.S.)
Then that's two acquirements.

Yvonne nods.

YVONEE
Correct.

She looks up from her tea at the unseen colleague.

YVONEE (CONT'D)
You understand why I have to outsource this contract to your agency. We tried to handle it internally, but he knows the shorthand. We need this contained before our clients feel the residual. We need someone he doesn't see coming.

VOICE (O.S.)
(beat)
I may have someone -- unique to this situation.

YVONEE
How are they?

PANNING away from Yvonne. To reveal that unseen voice:

THE MAN from the opening sequence. Aged and gray now. Eyes still sharp as razor.

MAN
Sublime.

Off the first eerie ripple of Arcade Fire's Relfektor:

CUT TO:

HONG KONG INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - DUSK

A 707 SINGAPORE AIR lands silently onto big runway. Sun sinking into the west.

INT. TERMINAL HALL - NIGHT

BUSINESS MEN in suits moving out from all walks of life. Any one could be a killer.

As the hypnotic electronica of Arcade Fire kicks in, a FORM parts through the sea of passengers and business elite like some slow bullet-time dream:

ALICE. All grown up now. A young, beautiful woman.

No Angelina black leather or hitman briefcase. Wears a big backpack like some touring college student.

Sonic Youth Goo tee shirt and jeans. Knit hoodie from a thrift shop. Like Michael, anonymous and lethal.

Moves down the hall with subdued purpose.

INT. AIRTRAIN - NIGHT

Alice sits alone in a corner seat. Beats headphones. Watches Hong Kong come into view as the train races across bay.

INT. CENTRAL STATION - HONG KONG

Alice comes out of an MTR TRAIN as we FOLLOW her into a GRAND HALL.

HUGE PANORAMIC MONITORS play 24/7 ads and Manga cartoons while countless people rush to make their connections. Surreal and vibrant.

FOLLOWING Alice around a big podium, into the:

LOCKER AREA

WALLS of rented storage lockers haunt the place like a mausoleum. Alice moves with purpose to locker 818.

Uses a key on the locker, turning the orange-colored wheel right. Opens the locker, pulling a big, slim Nike tote bag.

Shuts the locker and heads out as we FOLLOW her into the huge crowd of faceless commuters.

PANNING UP ON A BIG MONITOR

Displaying the recent news of the stripclub shootout. Crawls of crime-related Triad activity.

Mei's FACE fills a side panel. Missing stats all in Chinese.

INT. SMALL APARTMENT - NIGHT

Not unlike Michael's, but a studio and nothing more.

Alice quietly, curtly unzips the Nike tote to reveal the various essentials: EUROS and HONG KONG DOLLARS.

A new PASSPORT and SMARTPHONE.

Finally, two very slim and scary Glock AAC Evolution 9mms. She immediately finds their matching mini SUPPRESSOR MUZZLES.

Attaches them with the speed and finesse of an artist mixing paints before the canvas.

Pops in magazine clips, racking the slides. The precision is beautiful.

NEXT MOMENT

Everything is neatly organized on the bed. Clothes, weaponry, mobile devices. Puzzle pieces ready to connect.

TV shows a choir of Chinese singing folksongs. Subtitle sing-along crawl in Mandarin. She passes by the TV. Clicks it off.

Takes a seat at the small patio, staring out into the city dark.

Nearly exact parallel to her in that ward unit 14 years ago.

Begins gently singing that Russian lullaby...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Spent bottle of hair dye. Scissors.

ON MEI

Staring into the mirror. Hair now dyed a vibrant punk white. Cuts a final tress off, giving her a pixie cut. Complete 180 from her former self.

Trembling a little, she splashes water on her face.

EXT. GAS STATION - NIGHT

BP full-service. Hugging the corner of Ching Wha Garden park.

Mei comes out the bathroom, checking angles. Looks around, worried. No one and nothing.

Some FORMS in the night checking her out. Air of threat.

Mei swallows a breath, turning around. MICHAEL right there. Half-beard now fully shaven. Has a bag from the station's convenience store.

MICHAEL
C’mon, I found a place around the corner.

She nods, heading off before anyone can get another look.

INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Decommissioned office floor. Soulless remnant of the 2008 crash.

Mei watches Michael checking gun, preparing to head out.

MICHAEL
There’s a toilet down the hall. If you use the flashlight, point it at the floor.

MEI
When are you coming back?

MICHAEL
(beat)
Soon.

MEI
We should just leave.

MICHAEL
We won’t make it without help.

MEI
You ask for help from the people that want me dead.

MICHAEL
I’m not asking.

Racks the slide on his gun. Grabs whatever tricks he has in that bag.

MICHAEL (CONT’D)
You’ll be all right.

Mei steels herself. Nods. As Michael heads out:

MEI
Michael.
(off his attention)
You didn’t ask me how I look.

Michael regards her pretty hair. Nods.

MICHAEL
You look nice.

Mei almost smiles. Watches him slip away into the shadows of the warehouse. Reaches up to a desk, grabbing some water. A bag of open chips from the gas station.

Off her taking a quiet bite...

INT. HONG KONG INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - NIGHT

FOLLOWING Yvonne, just off the London flight. PHONE rings. She answers.

MICHAEL (O.S.)
You're back in Hong Kong. I can hear the flight intercom.

YVONNE
The difference is I can come and go. You can't. Where are you, Michael?

EXT. HONG KONG EMBARCADARO

Michael on a city pay phone. Already removing the wiring box.

YVONEE (O.S.)
This situation can still be rectified.

MICHAEL
Pieced back together?

YVONEE (O.S.)
Possibly.

He quickly begins pulling on wires. Has his own MOTHERBOARD extracted from a neighboring phone.

YVONEE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
The hornets are buzzing, you won't survive the night. Tell me where you are and I can have a car there in 5 minutes.

MICHAEL
What about her?

INTERCUT:

Yvonne stops before the huge panoramic terminal windows, as if mediating on the question.

Michael quickly inserts a redirect fuse into the phone's motherboard. This is how to tap back into a recent mobile line.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
Does she survive?

Yvonne takes a small breath.

YVONEE
If you have to ask that question, there's nothing more I can do.

MICHAEL
I understand.

YVONEE
Michael, why-

He clicks off.

Yvonne swears under her breath. Goes to dial a new number.

EXT. HONG KONG EMBARCADARO

Michael taps a coin on a fuse wire, getting a redirect to Yvonne's line. Listens in as the call answers.

YVONNE (O.S.)
He just called me, he's still in the city.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)
You assured me this is being handled.

YVONNE (O.S.)
It is, Mr. Yung, he'll be contained within the hour-

YUNG (O.S.)
Contained or killed?

YVONNE (O.S.)
We don't use that word in this agency. Just stand-by, where are you right now?

YUNG (O.S.)
My office. Told my wife I was working late.

Michael's already written down the name Yung on his arm.

YVONNE (O.S.)
Stay there another hour. Then you can go home. I'll have additional security around your building-

YUNG (O.S.)
I have security, what I need is competence and I'm not getting that with you. For chrissakes, you can't control your own people-

Loud SHOUT behind Michael.

He yanks out the motherboard, turning to a HONG KONG COP. Hand on his sidearm, patrol car pulled off the road.

COP
(broken English)
What are you doing with that phone-

MICHAEL
(faux British)
It's okay, mate, I work for Telecorp.

COP
Show me your ID.

Michael moves forward, hands raised high.

Cop goes for his sidearm. Michael KICKS it away.

Stuns the cop with a fast punch to the throat.

Cradles him into a sleeper hold, gently setting him down on a bench along the embarcadaro.

Starts off fast with the cop's gun. Tucks it into his back pocket, leaving the police sedan sitting there flashing lights into the bay.

NEXT MOMENT

Michael crosses the embarcadaro overpass that bridges over the 3 freeway.

Has to stop at an overpass as the migraines come on again. This time, double bouts. Everything goes silent as that ringing overtakes the world.

He struggles to reach the other side of the bridge. Keels over, vomiting bile.

Ducks a couple of TOURISTS as we FOLLOW him to the bridge's other side. Has to stop and take a deep breath. Lost for a moment with himself.

Rises up again, freezing at SOMETHING we don't yet see.

His EYES reflect glittering electronic lights. Everything at once clicking for him.

As we PAN AWAY to REVEAL a HUGE ELECTRONIC BILLBOARD. Big animated ad for Hong Kong Telecorp.

Smiling face of TONY YUNG. Surrounded by actors/telecom employees. Special effects making sunrises and pretty things happen.

Propaganda for a brighter, more clear future. Corporately and politically.

Michael stares down at his arm.

Off Yung's name, scribbled on his worn skin:

SMASH TO:

LIGHT TRAIN ROARING BY

Leaving behind the FORM of Alice. Heading down the outside platform of the:

EXT. KENNEDY TOWN DISTRICT - NIGHT

PANNING UP to REVEAL Mei's APARTMENT BUILDING a block away.

NEXT MOMENT

Alice, hoodie over her head. Looks like some teenage Goth junkie. Eyes honing on Mei's crime-scene taped unit.

INT. UNIT - NEXT MOMENT

Window is razor-forced open. Alice's petite little body moves through.

Small light clicks on.

Police have been here, looking for clues.

Alice regards a cat's empty FOOD BOWL. PHOTO of Mei's mother and sister on the fridge. Alice moves close to it. Stares into the faces of Chinese poverty.

INT. BEDROOM - NEXT MOMENT

Alice moves in, quiet and predatory. Regards the ransacked place.

Categorical bits and pieces of a young woman's life.

Alice regards her small collection of old LPs. Runs a finger down the spine of a Beatles album.

NEXT MOMENT

Alice opens CLOSET DOOR. Slides through the small rack of clothing. Not sure what she's looking for. Just looking.

Approaches some dirty laundry in a small wicker basket.

Takes note of Mei's red Adidas hoodie she wore that night when first meeting Michael.

Alice meditates on the bright red color. Unlike her male counterparts, she has the ability to think like a young woman. Likes the color.

Feels it in her hands. Suddenly feels something in the kangaroo pocket the police perhaps missed or didn't care to even search...

A VIAL OF EMPTY MEDICINE

The N-Acet Michael had used in the massage parlor. Alice turns the bottle over, spotting the prescription name Michael Thomas.

CLOSE ON ALICE

Instantly knows what the medicine is.

A tinny meow.

Alice turns around, facing a TABBY CAT at that open window. Crept in from the cold. Mei's cat.

Alice regards it with silence.

NEXT CUT

Kitchen cabinet opens. Cat food opens with razor.

Alice watches as the cat dines. Crouches down, gently stroking her rain-wet fur.

From her new vantage, Alice suddenly catches something in the KITCHEN LIGHT.

A rectangular ENVELOPE half-tucked behind the bulb.

NEXT CUT

She uses the razor blade to loosen the tiny screws of the light. Pulls the lid off to reveal an ENVELOPE taped to the inside of its frosty glass.

Alice unseals the dusty envelope, extracting some PHOTOS. Last year's DRAGON PARADE.

Mei with some girlfriends. Photo of her cat.

Alice notices that a couple of photos are stuck on the others. She peels them away, revealing a cryptic though fascinating discovery:

PHOTO OF MEI WITH A MAN (40s). On his lap at some private function. Another with them kissing.

Final PHOTO and the most recent: a body selfie taken of a bedroom mirror. Revealing Mei with a small belly bump.

Hopeful aura of a mother-to-be.

CLOSE ON ALICE

Lingering on the photos.

Spots a NEWSPAPER on the table.

Recent photo of Tony Yung ducking into a government building with a stern-looking FATHER. Aura of ex-Triad-turned-industrialist. Swallowed in security and press.

Alice moves over to the coffee-stained newspaper, reading the title: <u>Son of Telecorp Chairman With An Eye On Political Future</u>

The name Tony Yung in bold. Tony Yung is the man in Mei's secret photos.

Alice reflects.

The cat meows. Food already gone. Wants more.

CUT TO:

MEI'S SLEEPING FACE

Eyes closed, restless.

LOUD ECHO. Snaps her awake.

INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Spooked, she rises from a cruddy office couch. Notices a rat or two feasting on the remains of her chips.

Mei observes the hot silence.

Another ECHO. The sound of bootsteps.

Mei quickly goes prone to the floor, snatching that FLASHLIGHT. Winks it into the darkness.

The CLOSED OFFICE DOOR and the wide-open floor beyond. Suddenly makes FORMS in the dark.

Mei clicks off the flashlight. Stares with frightened eyes at:

THE OFFICE DOOR

A thin wall between Mei and the unknown.

Quiet sound of BOOTSTEPS moving toward it.

MEI

Trembling from the cold, fear. Staring at:

THE DOOR

As hushed whispers ruminate from the other side. Scary as hell. Flashlight clicks on and off.

Beat. Someone tries the door. Locked.

Another whisper. The sound of people pulling guns from holsters and coats.

MEI

Steeling herself for the inevitable. Nothing left to do but stare at that:

CLOSED DOOR

As it SLAMS OPEN. DARK FORMS enter with guns drawn. They're HONG KONG POLICE. Shining flashlight at:

Mei. Who's now GONE. Open window in the corner.

As the rats scatter into dark...

CUT TO:

EXT. TELECORP BUILDING - NIGHT

Gleaming white tower in the Hong Kong skyline.

INT. PRIVATE ELEVATOR - NIGHT

TONY YUNG stands impatiently in wrinkled John Phillips suit, fumbling his iPhone from one message to the other. The air of a man who hasn't slept, worried.

DUAL SECURITY behind him, ready for anything.

As the elevator TINGS.

INT. BUILDING GARAGE

FOLLOWING Yung and Security detail to a big CADILLAC ESCALADE waiting for him with DRIVER and a third SECURITY MAN.

Door opens as Yung quickly gets into the truck.

FOURTH SECURITY MAN in passenger's seat.

We're right with them as DOORS CLOSED. DRIVER starts out.

Quick sound of SILENCER POPS. Yung looks behind him, already spotting his TWO MEN dead on pavement.

Third pop as WINDSHIELD blows open with a single hole. Security Man slaps dead on dashboard as Yung SCREAMS in Mandarin.

Driver hits the peddle, burning out of the lot. PASSING a FORM who FIRES a final shot.

Blasts into the Driver's head as the Cadillac SLAMS into concrete podium. Splinters the windshield.

Yung, terrified, turns to see that FORM now gone. Eerie sound of pipe echoes from the underground.

Yung spots the dead security's GUN. Before he can think to scramble for it: his PHONE RINGS.

Yung, nearly hyperventilating.

Trembling hand answers the call. Brings it to his ear.

MICHAEL (O.S.)
That gun won't save you. It won't save your wife, Nanette. Your two daughters, Soun and Cleo, sleeping in your home at 1311 Halloway in Kowloon Tong. Nothing will save you unless you listen to me. Say you understand.

Beat.

YUNG
I understand.

MICHAEL (O.S.)
I haven't put it all together yet, but I know enough to know that you're deeply involved with this.

YUNG
I don't know what you're-

MICHAEL (O.S.)
If you lie or interrupt me again, Cleo will be shot first. I'll send you pictures of her dead body before you can alert the police. Say you understand.

YUNG
I understand.

MICHAEL (O.S.)
My standard equipment package included three C4 remote detonators. The first I used on my apartment unit. The second detonator is already installed somewhere close to your family. You'll never know where and you won't find it in time. Say you understand.

Yung, tear of fear and rage burning down his face.

YUNG
I understand.

CUT TO:

VARIOUS SHOTS -- YUNG'S DEAD SECURITY MEN

Lying sprawled on the cement floor. Blood flows silently.

MICHAEL (O.S.)
In the breast pocket of one your dead security men, you'll find a set of instructions. These instructions comprise my exit strategy and financial arrangement for the girl. All of which is easily within your faculty.

BACK ON YUNG

Absorbing the calm detail in Michael's voice.

MICHAEL (O.S.) (CONT'D)
You have til 7 a.m. tomorrow morning to execute these instructions. If you follow them to the letter, you will not see me again. If you don't, you might live -- but your daughters won't.

YUNG
Look, we can talk about this.

MICHAEL (O.S.)
We just did. Be ready for me.

YUNG
Wait --
(takes a breath)
You mentioned three detonators. What about the third?

Beat.

MICHAEL (O.S.)
You're sitting on it.

BELOW THE TRUCK - MAGNETIZED C4 DETONATOR. BLINKS RED.

MICHAEL (O.S.) (CONT'D)
I suggest you run. Now.

Call clicks out. Yung realizes, scrambles out the door.

OUTSIDE THE BUILDING - MICHAEL WALKS AWAY FROM A PAY PHONE.

Clicks a detonator button.

IN THE PARKING GARAGE

Yung gets 15 yards out before the SUV EXPLODES. Chain reaction to gas line blows 4 more cars out of their sleep.

Yung crashes on the cement floor. Eyes reflect the horror and fire as --

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Ripple effect booms across the block.

SMOKE AND CINDER roar out of the parking underground. CARS blast out theft alarms.

New panic from passing citizens as people shout for police. Sirens in the distance.

WHIP PAN TO: ALICE

Standing under a bus stop shelter, having been casing the place after finding Tony Yung's photo.

As every other eye is staring at the smoke and building sirens, Alice stares into the dark street.

Alice ducks a passing car, noticing a MAN marching calmly, quickly across the street and through the saturating sidewalk crowd.

NEXT MOMENT

Michael pushes through the crowds, starting through a big corporate plaza and a surreal NIGHT MARKET of food booths and Chinese moon lanterns.

ALICE

Ducking across the street, passing through that same crowd.

Bright eyes trying to track that FORM far off.

Making his way into the labyrinthine night market and --

MICHAEL

Brushes by COPS running toward the recent explosion. Falls a little, plagued with his dire illness and --

ALICE

Pushing past people, trying to stay on that distant form. Some drunken assholes get in her face. She kicks out a knee and keeps going as --

MICHAEL

Has to stop again. Nearly throws up.

ALICE

Growing closer. 50 yards apart, spotting him keel over. Knows it's him and --

MICHAEL

Starting out again. Turns around to check on those cops.

Suddenly spots the small female form following as --

ALICE

Ducking around the running police. Marching harder, faster.

We're FOLLOWING her following Michael.

Michael up ahead, one more beat of playing it cool.

BOOKS INTO A RUN

And Alice RUNS.

Slamming people out of the way, jumping booths as Michael does. A foot chase both fast and effortless.

FOLLOWING Alice as she sees Michael's distant form make a hard left.

She tracks it, coming out of the night market revelry.

Sees him dashing past a line of FOOD TRUCKS, triple-stepping an escalator to a higher-level plaza.

RUNNING WITH ALICE as she tears past the food trucks, gym-flipping a railing that leads to that corporate-plaza ESCALATOR.

SILENCER SHOTS fill the metal around her as Michael FIRES from above.

Alice hits ground for cover, pulling dual 9mms. FIRES back but Michael's already gone.

EXT. SECOND LEVEL PLAZA - NIGHT

Michael, heart pounding, ducks through a concrete wilderness of CORPORATE SCULPTURE ART.

Ducks around a big copper wall as SHOTS fire back. She's already on the second level.

He takes a deep breath, dropping a clip and filling a new one. Racks slide.

Spots a CONSTRUCTION ZONE neighboring the corporate plaza. Another billion-dollar condo on the way.

Michael steels himself. Jumps out from cover, FIRING silencer shots.

Alice running parallel, FIRING back. Both using the lonely sculpture art for cover.

The fast PING of bullet on metal and copper.

A shot zips by Michael. Nearly loses his synch but keeps running --

JUMPING THE HIGH GAP

Crashing onto some construction scaffolding.

Stumbles up wooden walkway planks, FIRING two shots back on Alice.

Buys him a crucial second to duck around a corner of unfinished building as STEEL POLE sparks with Alice's return fire.

Michael has no options but to follow the planks up another floor of construction.

Coughs hard, staggering from the race. His heart's working against him.

Clutches it, looking for some temporary hiding place. Spots it in the form of a:

OPEN FLOOR PLAN

Moves through some makeshift plywood walls used to keep the rain and rats out.

Looks for a new out. Stairs haven't been built yet. BIG EMPTY HOLE and thick CRANE HOOK with caution pylons surrounding it.

Hears her coming up the scaffolding walkway.

NEXT MOMENT

Michael crouches down below an architect's field desk. Gets prone aim on:

THE PLYWOOD WALLS

Giving eerie traces of 24/7 yellow construction light. Sound of Alice's STEPS stopping and calculating.

ON MICHAEL'S FACE

Watching. Quietly. Very quietly racks the slide on his gun and --

PLYWOOD BOARDS

A wall between Michael and his killer. Sound of her stepping forward. Right behind that wall and --

MICHAEL

Silent as the moon. Carefully tracks back the slide on his weapon, putting in his last and final clip.

PLYWOOD BOARDS

Still and silent. Sound of Alice moving onward.

MICHAEL

Still watching. Still listening. As he gently lets the rack slide go. Small click.

Beat.

<u>PLYWOOD BOARDS FILL WITH BULLET HOLES</u>

One catches Michael's ear. Blood spits on wall. He hits the ground, FIRING capable shots at the bottom of the wood walls.

Sound of ALICE nearly tripping. <u>He just shot her in the boot</u>.

Blasts more of the wood away to reveal her already gone.

Total silence again. Small bead of sweat rolls of Michael's face.

THE PLYWOOD BOARDS

Cracked and broken. Debris mist settles. SOMETHING rolls into the open space.

Slides to a stop in front of Michael: PHOSPHORUS AJAX DETONATION SAUCER.

Michael bursts up from under the table, jumping for that CRANE HOOK.

FIRE AND MORTAR blow apart the room.

MICHAEL SNAGS HOOK, FALL-ZIPPING THROUGH SIX FLOORS

Firestorm FOLLOWING his speed descent all the way to the bottom as we:

SMASH TO: ALICE

Moving into the burning wreckage with dual 9mms aimed. Regards some of Michael's clothing, burning from the explosion.

Comes to that OPEN STAIRWELL HOLE. Stares six floors down into a big green dumpster used for internal debris. May have spared his fall as Alice angrily moves back outside, now with a limp.

Spots Michael's FORM already running out the construction zone. Furious, she takes multiple SHOTS. Staggers to that makeshift ZIP-LINE Michael made.

Repels down the steel wire as we're WITH HER every moment.

Crash-lands onto rubble, cursing the pain in Russian. Takes off after Michael.

NEXT CUT

Alice moves around some fencing, coming back into the city center. Already lost him amid the flowing sea of pedestrians and umbrellas.

Alice curses again, falling back on fencing. As we PAN DOWN to her boot. Bullet shot through the carbon plate.

BACK ON ALICE'S FACE

Taking the pain in stride. Using it. Eyes close.

SILENT TO BLACK

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Dark form of Michael comes out a subway exit, shielding his ear from any late-night passerbys. Lost his jacket from the explosion.

Heavy sustain of pain and sickness. Moves into some building shadows, pulling the last of his N-Acet. Trembling hand fumbles a new syringe.

NEXT MOMENT

Michael moves out an alley, stopping at the sight of POLICE CARS all over the warehouse. His eyes go dire for a moment.

Not sure what comes next.

PAY PHONE across the street rings. Bum sleeping on a bench beside it.

NEXT CUT

Michael moves swiftly, inconspicuously up to the phone before the bum can wake up. Answers it.

MEI (O.S.)
(beat)
I recognize your breathing. You're in pain.

Michael reflects. Slumps down in the fog.

MICHAEL
How'd you know to call here?

MEI (O.S.)
It was the only phone around, I took the number down. The police came, I had to leave.

Michael checks that sleeping bum again. His coat and bottle of cheap rice wine.

MICHAEL
Where are you?

INT. ABANDONED CHURCH - NIGHT

Michael's FORM comes into a half-gutted church, now wearing the bum's padded trench coat. Pews broken and disorganized. Big open hole where a steeple used to be.

Soft rain cascades onto a shattered altar.

Michael studies the place. A sharp whisper:

MEI (O.S.)
Michael.

He looks up. Spots Mei on the old choir mezzanine. Lone red candle in hand.

CHURCH MEZZANINE - NIGHT

Mei carefully applies a filthy tabernacle cloth to Michael's ear. Winces as she applies some alcohol from the bum's rice wine bottle.

MEI
Who did this to you?

MICHAEL
(beat)
Someone good.

MEI
He was sent to find us?

MICHAEL
She.

Mei pauses on that.

Michael gently grabs the cloth from her.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
Mei. You need to tell me about Tony Yung.

Mei nearly goes pale at the name. Soft face reflects in the candlelight.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
I can't protect you unless I know everything.

Mei stalls like someone who knew the playbook all along. Michael sees it in her eyes.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
You knew it was him who hired my people.

MEI
I wasn't sure.

MICHAEL
The hell you weren't.

MEI
I didn't think he'd-

MICHAEL
Why?

MEI
You said it doesn't matter.

MICHAEL
It matters now. The man's in the running for Chief Executive of Hong Kong. In a few years, his family will practically own this province. What, were you fucking him and found out about something big? Blackmail? Get yourself a nice buy-out-

MEI
I got pregnant.

Stops Michael cold. Mei, eyes watered.

MEI (CONT'D)
I never even knew how powerful his family was, I just liked him. He liked me. I thought he -- he would understand.

Michael pauses. Looks into her worn eyes. Realizes something big. It's not about money or position.

In fact, it's so ridiculously simple, it hurts.

MICHAEL
You didn't like him. You loved him.

Mei sheds a tear. Still trying to put up a wall.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
You thought you'd be a part of the family-

MEI
(angry)
I thought I'd be a part of him!

MICHAEL
So they tried to buy you off.

Mei nods.

MEI
They -- they wanted me to get rid of it. But I couldn't. I didn't care about the money, I just wanted --

Michael looks at her body. No sign of pregnancy.

MICHAEL
What happened to the baby?
(off her anger, silence)
Mei, what happened to the baby?

MEI
IT DIED.

Hard silence. Tear slips down her face. She viciously wipes it away.

MEI (CONT'D)
A miscarriage.

Michael offers a polite silence. Mei looks around, teary-eyed. Hollow.

MEI (CONT'D)
I used to come here -- when I first arrived in Hong Kong. I don't even believe in God, but I still prayed.

Michael reflects. Mei faces him, eyes sad and beautiful.

MEI (CONT'D)
(softly)
In Chinese, a fortunate soul will be born into interesting times. Interesting times offers hope. Even to those with nothing.
(trembling whisper)
Michael. She was to be my hope. He... he would have loved her.

Michael. A hard truth.

MICHAEL
There is no love. Kid or no kid, it's an embarrassment to them. Don't you get it?
(MORE)

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
This is what happens when you refuse the emperor. It's defiance and they want you dead for it.

MEI
No. He knows how I feel-

Michael grabs her, a little scary.

MICHAEL
Look at me. Look at me.

Shows Mei heavy finger scars.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
You see these? This comes from 26 years of gripping a Garotte wire. It's the single-most efficient and horrible way to die. They could have ordered my people to kill you gently. With sodium-J solution. Instead, they wanted the wire. Cuts in 4 inches past your larynx and you're still alive to feel it before you choke on your own blood. HE WANTED YOU TO SUFFER, MEI.

MEI
(shakes her head)
NOT TONY, NOT HIM.

MICHAEL
You're just a whore to them-

She SLAPS him. A tense silence. Michael's eyes darken for a moment. But betrays his killer instincts. Just lets her go.

Mei cradles herself. Quietly, gently breaking apart.

MEI
(breathless)
I deserve love. Michael. In some way, we all do.

Michael absorbs. Regards the haunting surroundings of the abandoned church. Looks back at her. A powerful quiet:

MICHAEL
Doesn't mean we get it.

Mei reflects on that. Michael twitches at a new bout of pain.

MEI
Michael.

He shakes his head, moving away.

MEI (CONT'D)
No.

She approaches him. Runs a hand across his face. He's trembling now. Deterioration in his veins. Sickly, yellow thorns bubbling below the skin.

She fearlessly moves in, cradling him. A nurse or loved one to a dying soul. A lover in a different life perhaps.

He deflects at first. Feels her warm body. The strength in the simple gesture.

Finally embraces her. Eyes close, holding back tears. Breaking down inside.

Mei leans her head against his. Shushes him to some place where the pain is almost tolerable. The power of a woman's compassion.

Two people needing each other and this moment.

LONG SHOT

The small wicker of a candle glows across the decrepit choir balcony. And two people holding each other into sleep...

FADE OUT.

Beat.

UP FROM BLACK:

DAWN OVER THE HONG KONG SKYLINE

Glimmer of light through the clouds, rain mist. Off the ring of a cell phone...

INT. APARTMENT - SAME

Alice's bullet-shot BOOT lies on the carpeted floor. A water bucket with light blood from some recent shrapnel extraction.

CELL PHONE rings a third time.

A small HAND reaches down, picking it up. Brings to the ear of Alice. Sitting in that patio chair in underwear, back to us. Staring out to Hong Kong in 5am.

Answers the call. Just listens.

MICHAEL (O.S.)
Yvonne.

Beat.

ALICE
(perfect English, subdued)
Yvonne isn't here for you anymore. I'm taking her calls now.

INTERCUT:

MICHAEL HUDDLED AT A DETERIORATED PAY PHONE

Strong winds blowing off the bay.

ALICE (CONT'D)
And you don't make deals with me.

Michael pauses. Absorbs the quiet, calm voice of Alice. Keeps his rage in check.

MICHAEL
I didn't call to make a deal. This is fair warning.

Alice thinks about that, intrigued.

ALICE
Your fair warning includes me?

MICHAEL
It does now.

Alice reflects. As we reveal that empty N-Acet vial in her hand.

ALICE
N-Acet. Used for the treatment of Advanced Radiation Syndrome.

Michael pauses. Moves the phone receiver from one ear to the other.

ALICE (CONT'D)
My guess is Polonium 210. Just like the Russian in London.
(MORE)

ALICE (CONT'D)
I'd suspect your hearing is just about gone by now. And what follows is far worse.

Michael mediates on that. Thinks about those next words.

ALICE (CONT'D)
All those long years of practicing poisons has finally come back to haunt the poisoner.
(off his silence, slight fear)
Or maybe it was no accident at all. Maybe your own people finally saw you as expendable. This was your gold watch. And you wear it to your grave.

MICHAEL
Just like you'll wear that bullet wound.

Alice ponders. Didn't like that.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
If you're trying a tracer-

ALICE
I'm not. I don't have to. I know I'll see you very soon.
(beat)
You need this more than I. You're dying, yes. But you're here to make a statement. Like that washed-up old man who refuses to leave his desk. This is your time. Whether you accept it or not.

MICHAEL
(beat)
You think you know me, but you're wrong. I don't see you as the enemy, but if you get in my way, you will be collateral.

ALICE
My job is to be in your way. You went against your benefactors. Now you will incur the penalties. As will she.

Michael hovers on that.

ALICE (CONT'D)
You think saving one girl will somehow save yourself? There is no benediction for people like us.
(MORE)

ALICE (CONT'D)
There's only absolutes. But these are things you already know.

Michael doesn't defend it. Holds that receiver a moment more. Returns to the conversation with a dark threat in his voice.

MICHAEL
What I know is I'll live long enough to watch you die. I'm giving you the opportunity to walk away. Take it.

Alice. Tired of the discussion.

ALICE
Okay. Michael Thomas. My promise to you: You bring her to me now. She'll die, but she won't suffer. She won't feel what we feel.

Michael pauses. Wipes tired, dying eyes. Checks an angle.

MICHAEL
She already has.

Beat. Alice stares into the ether.

ALICE
Not like I can show her.

Michael steels on this. Alice listens to the silence.

ALICE (CONT'D)
You don't speak, but I hear the rage. Dying fast. Almost gone.

MICHAEL
I'm saving the last for you.

Michael hangs up. Violently BASHES the receiver into the box. Heads out, leaving it swinging like a gallow's noose.

IN THE APARTMENT

Alice clicks off. Lets the phone fall to the carpet. Presses on her bandaged foot. As blood seeps into that small bucket...

CUT TO:

INT. CHURCH MEZZAINE - DAWN

Michael sits in the corner, watching Mei sleep. Sweat pouring off his face. The face of a dying man who has not days, hours.

A quiet mind wielding one final plan. He checks his watch.

CUT TO:

A CLOCK DESK READING 6:59 AM

INT. GRAND BEDROOM HOME - SAME

Tony Yung sits in a chair, watching his own wife sleep. New suit and tie. One of his daughters, curled in with her mother.

Yung's eyes reflect a look of both pride and shame.

Off a phone gently humming...

NEXT MOMENT

Yung answers it in the bedroom hallway. Knows who it is.

YUNG
Your instructions have been followed. They're ready for you at the point.

MICHAEL (O.S.)
If there are any tricks-

YUNG
There won't be.

Call clicks out.

DAUGHTER (O.S.)
Daddy.

Yung turns into his other DAUGHTER, lying in bed. Sleepy, just awoken.

DAUGHTER (CONT'D)
Are you going to work today?

Yung goes cold at the question.

INT. CHURCH - DAWN

Mei's sleepy face, filling FRAME. Sound of footsteps coming near her. She opens her eyes, staring up at Michael.

Without any words, she takes his hand. Rises up. The sound of heavy chopper blades taking form...

SMASH TO:

MACUAU FERRY TERMINAL - DAWN

A black-tinted SIKORSKY S-76C EXECUTIVE HELICOPTER is idling at full throttle. Wears the insignia of Yung's company.

One AIDE stands ready at the tarmac. Single briefcase in hand. Staring at:

MICHAEL AND MEI

Appearing from the pedestrian tunnel. Marching toward the tarmac. Michael, checking all angles with his eyes.

Any hidden sniper posts.

NEXT MOMENT

Michael approaches the lone AIDE. He offers the briefcase.

AIDE
As per your instructions.

MICHAEL
Put it inside.

AIDE
You'll want to examine-

MICHAEL
I know it's in there. Put it inside.

Aide nods, opening the Sikorsky's door to its luxurious interior. Sets the case inside.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
Get out of here.

AIDE
I was ordered to come.

Michael, no hesitation, pulls his gun. Aide runs off fast.

Michael glances at the pilots. They're looking forward, doing their job.

INT. SIKORSKY - NEXT MOMENT

Mei climbs in with Michael. Shuts the door into lock.

EXT. HELIPORT

Sikorsky roars up from its nest. Flying into the waking sun with the power of a DC11 Jet.

INT. SIKORSKY

Michael unbuckles the Hermes case to reveal 2 million in Euro. Checks the bricks for fraud or diversion. Checks for any transponders.

PILOT (O.S.)
(intercom)
Okay?

Michael turns to the PILOTS, manning the craft from a plexiglass cockpit. Big earsets on, ducked in caps.

Michael just nods.

PILOT (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Where are we taking you?

MICHAEL
I'll tell you where we're going once we clear airspace.

Head Pilot regards that, turning back to his controls.

Mei, big eyes, watching the expanse of Hong Kong slipping away like a hazy dream. Looks at Michael. Gently takes his hand in hers.

He looks at her with a mixture of hope and empathy.

CUT TO:

THE SIKORSKY CHOPPER FLYING HIGH OVER CHINA

Passing the multitude of splinter islands, heading over the mainland and its vast kingdom of pine and mountains.

INT. SIKORSKY - DAY

Michael checks his sides. Stares down at the endless miles of remote hill land. The dense, mountainous Yangshou providence.

MICHAEL
I said keep it on the coast.

Pilots ignore him.

Michael SLAMS the partition.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
HEY.

SECONDARY PILOT turns around, revealing ALICE under the cap.

Michael's already reached for his 9mm. FIRES. Shot PINGS the BULLET-PROOF GLASS. Mei SCREAMS at the ricochet.

Alice just watches them like they were amusing zoo animals. A placid, almost peaceful face.

HARD ON MICHAEL

Staring back. Two sides of the same coin.

Mei, emotions crushed. Frozen scared as the chopper takes a drastic course change.

She can now see a small CONVOY OF PEOPLE AND TRUCKS on some high mountain clearing.

Michael keeps his eyes on Alice. She regards him with a hint of finality.

VOICE comes on the radio. Yvonne's.

YVONNE (O.S.)
Element 1, Status.

HEAD PILOT
Element, we are clear of remote detonation ranges, securing landing.

YVONNE (O.S.)
Copy.

Alice, still hasn't blinked. Staring at Michael staring at her.

ALICE
(the rage)
Did you save it?

Michael regards that. Off painful eyes...

EXT. CLEARING - DAY

YVONNE in big black sunglasses. Stands around a SECURITY DETAIL. Two big SUVs behind them.

Watches as the Sikorsky taps ground. Men are already moving into position, guns aimed.

Alice moves swiftly out, taking her own path as a security goon opens door, ready to kill:

MICHAEL

Who shows no aggression. Moves out with Mei at his side. Still has the case of money in hand.

Goon puts a Glock to his head as another frisks and takes his only gun. They violently push them forward.

Alice stands her ground, tracking Mei as she reluctantly moves with Michael up to Yvonne.

Goon screams in Mandarin for them to put hands on heads. Either the blades are too loud or Mei's too scared, doesn't react fast enough.

Goon SLAMS the back of her head with his gun.

Michael instantly reacts, grabbing the man, bashing FIST into nose. Sends the bone through the man's brain, killing him instantly.

Alice, quietly impressed as others go to fire.

YVONEE
NO, HARD RESET. NO ONE FIRES.

Men with guns want to kill, scared of this man, remain aiming.

IN A BLACK SUV

Tony Yung has to turn away. His FATHER, a miserable man and power-wielder in heavy black glasses. Grabs his son, forcing him to look on.

FATHER
(in Mandarin)
You don't look away from what you created.

BACK IN THE CLEARING

The Goon lies on the ground, still convulsing.

Alice comes up behind Michael, KICKING in his rear calf. Makes him crash down to his knees.

Yvonne, at once sickened and respectful by Michael's deft skills. Moves forward, making a slit motion with her hand.

Pilot CUTS power on the chopper to low idle.

Alice pushes Mei down to kneel beside Michael.

Yvonne steps up to Michael, taking back the SUITCASE of money.

They look upon one another, equally disappointed of either's roads. Yvonne glances at one of the big SUVs.

The cue for Yung and his Father to come out, both wearing camel-wool coats and suits.

Michael stares up at the big man as Yung barely looks on.

The Father is handed the case of money. He hands it to his son, stepping up to Michael and Mei.

FATHER (CONT'D)
Both of you tried to take something from me. Both of you failed.

Alice thinks about that as the Father moves closer to them. Takes off his glasses, revealing the worn eyes of a retired Triad mobster who keeps all the cards.

Regards Mei's non-pregnancy.

FATHER (CONT'D)
God saw it fit the bastard died. Now you join it.

Tear streams from Mei's eye. Yung looks away. The Father viciously grabs his son, forces him into the conversation.

FATHER (CONT'D)
(in Mandarin)
LOOK AT HER. THIS IS THE WHORE BITCH WHO NEARLY RUINED YOU.
(hushed)
Our family.

Tony Yung stares down at the poor girl.

FATHER (CONT'D)
You have something to say to my son?

Mei trembles. Barely says it:

MEI
She was a girl.

Yung absorbs that. A moment where he might break down. Something changing in his eyes.

Stuns us all by spitting in Mei's face.

Michael almost makes a move. Alice, too, slightly taken back.

Yung looks upon her a moment more.

The old man addresses Yvonne.

FATHER
Finish your fucking job and make this go away.

Yvonne nods, staring down at Michael.

The Father puts his glasses back on, heading off to the company's 13 million-dollar helicopter.

Yung stares down at Mei a moment more. Heads out with that suitcase of money and the insult of silence.

ON ALICE

Watching the rich and powerful slip away into the sky. Staring back at Mei who fights back any tears. Something changing in Mei's face. No longer afraid.

Yvonne waits for her two clients to safely board the chopper before gesturing Security to pull Mei and Michael up to a stand.

THE SIKORSKY STARTS BACK INTO THE AIR

Blasting wind across the clearing.

IN THE SIKORSKY

The Father takes the suitcase from his son. Opens it to check on their money.

IN THE CLEARING

Yvonne pulls her Glock. Stares down Michael with a final moment of empathy. Now knows everything.

YVONNE
Why didn't you tell me?

MICHAEL
(beat)
You'd have had me killed.

Yvonne thinks about that. The last look of an old friend.

YVONNE
You're right.

She raises the Glock. It's Mei who SCREAMS, charging Yvonne. Shot FIRES but hits Michael's shoulder.

Yvonne slams Mei down with the butt of the gun.

IN THE SIKORSKY

Father finds a small BLACK DEVICE in the pouch of the suitcase.

Michael's 3rd and final C4 DETONATOR.

Before Yvonne can fire again, Michael CLICKS a button tucked behind his watch.

DETONATOR EXPLODES - THE SIKORSKY CHOPPER INCINERATES

<u>FOUR TONS OF METAL AND FIRE FALL FROM THE SKY</u>

CHOPPER BLADES boomerang from the sky, cutting men apart.

Michael's already shielding Mei as the firestorm covers the landing area.

Yvonne and the last of her security detail are ripped to pieces, consumed from the fire.

SUVS smashed apart.

Alice, still alive, has to dive for cover as the fiery skeleton of the chopper SMASHES belly-first on the cold ground.

Creating a heavy firewall between her and:

MICHAEL AND MEI

Already up and running.

Alice fires SHOTS into the smoke. Starts out with a slight limp from Michael's gunshot as --

MICHAEL AND MEI

Ducking into a heavy tree line as we FOLLOW them through the first stone remnants of a two-thousand year-old MAHAYANA BUDDHIST MONASTERY.

One of the last few surrounding the outlying areas of Hong Kong.

Just ruins in the winter now and --

ALICE

Gun in hand, moving, tracking the light blood trail of Michael. An animal on the hunt as --

MICHAEL

Has to stop for a moment. Bleeding from the shoulder. Dying from cancer. The world of sound becomes a lonely ringing.

Mei, speaking to him in silence. Urging him on.

He nods as she helps him on.

MOVING further into the maze of ruins perched along a high cliffside.

BEHIND THEM

Alice moving through that thick tree line. Light snow has begun to fall in the high mountains. She tracks the blood trail as --

MICHAEL

Clutching Mei as they turn a corner. Michael makes eyes with the last of Yvonne's SECURITY GOONS. Burned from the chopper wreckage, half-blind. Fumbles for his gun.

Michael snaps up a rock, SMASHING him in the head.

Gun falls to the ground as Michael strikes him again. Kills him instantly.

Michael collapses to the ground.

MEI
(hushed)
Michael -- !

Michael takes the gun, putting it into Mei's hand. Finds her eyes.

MICHAEL
Go. Take this.

Michael puts a small piece of folded paper in her hand.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
Money hidden there. Enough to get you free. If you can reach it, it's yours.

MEI
Michael, don't leave me.
(makes him look at her)
Don't leave me.

Michael's body, breaking down. Looks back at her.

MICHAEL
I'm not. I'm with you.
(struggling, takes her hand)
With you.

Mei chokes back tears as Michael moves into her. Runs a hand down her face.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
Go --

MEI
Michael-

MICHAEL

GO.

SMASH TO:

ALICE IN THE WOODS

Heard his echo through the wind. Snow falls harder as she quickens the pace. Following Michael's blood trail and --

MICHAEL

Watching Mei's form disappear into the woods. He topples to the ground, alone. Clutches his heart and --

ALICE

Coming upon the monastery ruins. Ready with gun. Ducks around a big piece of stone, predatory and --

MICHAEL

Clutching ground. Spent. Reserving that list bit of rage. Can't sustain. He goes to the ground as --

ALICE

Moving around another piece of labyrinthine ruin. Absorbs the silence around her.

FOLLOWING HER around a final piece of stone. Puts aim on MICHAEL, lying face-down in the accumulating snow. Blood trail seeping.

Alice, no hesitation. FIRES shots into his body. Spends an entire clip.

Michael's lifeless body continues to bleed. Red colors the white snow.

Alice approaches, firing a final shot into this skull. Suddenly freezes. Because THIS IS NOT MICHAEL.

It's the dead body of that one Goon. Michael switched jacket for the trench coat as Alice whip-turns --

SLAMMING INTO MICHAEL

Roaring out from a snowbank. Slams Alice before she can reset her clip. Gun falls.

Alice returns with a heavy kick and punch. Both elite killers go hand-to-hand, turning their last stand into a deadly ballet of Brazilian Jiujitsu.

Alice ducks and parries, landing a heavy roundhouse to Michael's chest. He takes the pain, deflecting with punches to her face.

Ducks a leg sweep, kicking Alice in the thigh. Tries for a kill punch to her throat.

Alice slams him in his wounded shoulder. Does it again. Trumpets all her power and --

DOUBLE-KICKS MICHAEL OFF THE SIDE OF THE MONASTERY

He digs his hands in, clutching a long piece of Shundaze root, sparing his fall down a rocky mountainside.

Alice SCREAMS, kicking his face. Does it again. Third kick, Michael gets a hand on her leg, pulling her down.

As Alice topples off the side, grabbing hold of that same root.

The two killers fighting it out, hanging by organic thread over the enormous cliffside.

Alice, with the higher ground. Grabs hold of some root outcrop, throwing it over Michael's throat. Choking him to death just as she had with that Bully so many years ago.

Michael, a sustained silence. The world swirling away. About to give in.

Refuses to. Fights the choke, sending an elbow into Alice's face. Sends her hurling past him.

She GRABS at his leg, refusing to die.

The root now giving way.

As Alice pulls her belt off to reveal micro dagger. Stabs Michael's side. He SCREAMS in silence as everything is now a sustained ringing.

Throws his hand over hers. Alice, confused for a moment because Michael's nodding to someone above them.

As Alice stares up at Mei. Armed with that 9mm and single bullet.

A moment between Michael and Mei. Both communicating what's about to come.

As Mei aims gun not on Alice, but the ROOT. FIRES single shot, breaking their last hold on the mountainside.

MICHAEL AND ALICE

Falling together.

A strange, beatific tandem.

Plunging 300 feet into cold fog --

SLAMMING INTO THE COLD NG TUNG RIVER

CUT TO BLACK

Long beat.

UP FROM BLACK:

THE MOUNTAINS OF VIETNAM - A YEAR LATER

Spring rains fill the dense vegetation.

We're high up in a cloud forest. Bamboo walkways and tiny cobble alleys make up the serene village of BOK TAN.

Where life is slow and hard. Fisherman on their Tu boats bring in the dawn catches.

A SMALL FLAT ALONG THE RIVER

Treehouse wood with a fishing dock and boat.

INT. FLAT - SAME

Small TV plays Vietnamese news. A kettle of tea sits on a small stove. HAND takes it off the range.

Brings it to a small table where LETTERS written in Chinese crowd the space. Recent photos of Mei's mother and sister. Active, communicating.

ON MEI

Takes a quiet sip of tea. Hair's changed again. Longer and dark, grown out with the spring. Wounds are healed.

A quiet introspection haunts her face as she blows on the tea. Walks away.

NEXT MOMENT

Moves over to the small window, opening the damp rain shield. Lingers on the dark jungle river and its promise of a storm having moved on.

A new sound. Snaps Mei around. Having come from the:

INT. KITCHEN ROOM

Mei peeks through the doorway, spotting the TEA KETTLE. Removed from the stove.

She feels the new presence. Turns into the DARK FORM sitting at the table. Cup of tea and kettle in front of her.

The shadowy form is undeniably ALICE.

The two women just look at one another for a cold, quiet moment.

Alice blows on the tea. Takes a sip.

ALICE
In Vietnam, it's said an insult to not drink the tea of your host. Did you know that?

Mei keeps quiet. Spent. Nothing left to do but stare back at the killer.

Like Mei, Alice's hair and manner have changed. Still wears the battle scars of Michael's fight. Sets down the cup of tea. Looks up at her.

ALICE (CONT'D)
You must like the rains.

Beat.

MEI
I have no more money-

Alice shakes her head. Don't talk. Rises up with a gun in her hand. But just lets it hang from her side. She's staring down at the new photos of Mei's sister.

ALICE
Your sister.

Mei pauses. Nods.

Alice continues to stare at the photo.

ALICE (CONT'D)
I had a sister. She died when I was four. At the orphanage.
(beat)
Got sick and died.

She stares out to the light rainfall off the riverbed.

ALICE (CONT'D)
I don't like the rains, you see.

Mei understands. Watches that gun in her hand.

Alice comes out of the shadows. Hypnotic stare on Mei.

ALICE (CONT'D)
Did he ever tell you why he saved you?

Mei thinks about that.

MEI
He didn't need to.

Alice meditates on that. Looks away.

ALICE
That day we fell. He saved me, too.

Mei absorbs this. Off her eyes --

SILENT FLASH TO:

MICHAEL AND ALICE PLUNGING THROUGH THE COLD WATER

Alice, struggling as they descend into black depths. Michael fights against the heavy currents, pushing Alice up.

ALICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Saved his last bit of rage for me.

And Michael does. <u>Only using it to save Alice's life</u>. Pushes her toward surface as a thick piece of BARK floats by.

Alice grabs hold of it. Lungs ready to explode. Just one more moment to stare back at Michael.

Already floating downward. Into darkness. The ether.

BACK ON ALICE

Sad, beautiful eyes reflecting. No emotion. Just truth.

ALICE (CONT'D)
For that, I owe him.

Mei's eyes frost with emotion. Alice pulls from her pocket that PHOTO of Mei's sister and mother.

Puts it on the table, along with some BRICKS OF EUROS.

ALICE (CONT'D)
No one will come for you or your family. What's done is done.

Mei struggles to nod. Alice swallows a breath, almost apologetic:

ALICE (CONT'D)
I couldn't find your cat.

A tear runs down Mei's eye.

MEI
(a whisper)
She'll survive.

Alice reflects on that. Says nothing more, heading out. Stops at the open doorway.

ALICE
February 14th. Today is your birthday.

Mei nods.

MEI
Yes.

ALICE
(beat)
His, too.

With that, Alice heads off into the rain.

Mei, stunned into silence. Staring down at that photo Alice kept for her.

EXT. FLAT - NEXT MOMENT

Rain falling as Mei comes out, staring into the sleepy village. No sign of Alice, already vanished into the world.

Mei stares into the rain, looking for any lingering signs.

The rain softens with Alice's Russian lullaby. Sung as a child. Echoing into:

The streets and alleys of the village.

The river, heavy with rain.

The unending wilds of the jungles and mountains.

Finally:

A LAND OF SNOW AND SILENCE

FOLLOWING Michael's FORM through the last of that wilderness path. Makes his way to a rise of hill and that weird, beautiful light.

He stops, back to us. Not sure what's on the other side.

Alice's haunting lullaby ends.

And Michael's silhouette passes over the hill.

SILENT TO BLACK

TITLES: **may you live in interesting times**

END