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RIT

My Guest From Afar

By

Yuan Yao

A Thesis

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the requirements for the

Master of Fine Arts degree in Film Production

School of Film and Animation

College of Art and Design

Rochester Institute of Technology

Rochester, NY

June 13, 2019

My Guest From Afar

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Abstract

An elderly American old man accepts a young Chinese visiting scholar to live in his house. They argue for trifles, they fight for money, but they build up the friendship as time goes by. One day the scholar finishes his research then the old man suddenly realizes that he has already been embedded in his life.

Tags

Drama, Live-Action, Indie, Friendship,

-

Introduction

About Yuan Yao

I'm a cross-cultural filmmaker. I grew up in the middle part of China, went to college in the western part of China, studied in Pensacola, Florida for a year and lived in Rochester for about 3 years. In addition, I've put my foot in Europe and have experience traveling around America and China. After all these experiences, I read history, studied some philosophy, and then, with my traveling and learning, I applied my point of views in my film works. The "global village" is the idea coined by Marshall McLuhan, it describes a picture that all human beings on the planet earth are living in a small village. I believe with the development of technologies, that is the trend for the future. So I want to stress that idea in my thesis project "My Guest From Afar". But behind the bigger picture, we do have a lot of boundaries like the racial discrimination, the hatred from history, the religious conflicts or even the invisible currency wars. Those barriers stand in front of the contemporary cultural trend and here as we all see nowadays, it created a lot of misunderstanding and conflicts. Ang Lee once told us, that as a cross-cultural filmmakers, we need to find some stories that are special but universal. I bore that in my mind. Since then, I started to devote my work to show the beauty of diversity. And this project is also in accordance with my creative goal.

The Culture

The definition of “culture” may vary, it could be explained as “the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group.”¹ Another definition is “The social behavior and norms found in human societies.”² Google dictionary defines it as “the arts and other manifestations of human intellectual achievement regarded collectively.”³

All of these definitions are absolutely correct and precise. But there was only one explanation that convinced me. It has been said by Chinese philosopher Wang Dongyue, “Culture is by no means some fancy things, it is a reflection of the structure of existence.”⁴ What makes this interpretation stand out from the other interpretations, is I believe it well explained the foundational attribute of the meaning of culture.

So, on the one hand, “My Guest From Afar” is a picture that draws up a corner of the “Global Village.” On the other hand, it’s also a picture that draws up a corner of my journey of exploring the different culture.

The Difference

1: On my 2nd year in RIT, I was producing my new short film. But I needed a cathedral to be my filming location. I showed some ideal cathedral pictures I took from Europe to my professor, asked if he could find some places like that. But he told me that kind of architecture only exists in Europe. I’m from China, where the religions are confined. So, right then, I started exploring the history of The Reformation.

¹ Merriam-Webster: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/culture>

² Wikipedia: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Culture>

³ Google Dictionary: <https://translate.google.com/#view=home&op=translate&sl=auto&tl=en&text=culture>

⁴ Wang, Dongyue. “Eastern and Western Philosophy Course.” Online Radio Platform (Ximalaya). Dec. 27, 2018. <http://xima.tv/LFiFjc>. Accessed on April. 22, 2019.

2: When I was in Florida, I served for a Chinese language teaching institute, I knew there are a lot of Americans learning Chinese right there. One day I asked one of my elective class' classmates if he wants to learn some Chinese. I got the answer of "the whole world is speaking English, why would I learn some Chinese" I was shocked, and coined this element into one scene in the film.

3: I had a friend who once lived in my apartment and he picked up some Chinese, such as the "water" (pronounced as "Shui") and even some dirty words, so we always joke to each other. One day he asked me how to say "thirsty", and I said "Kele," he then pronounced as "cola" like the beverages' pronunciation, we both found that interesting connection and I also put it in the film.

4: When I was in college back in China, students merely pay a little amount of money for the on-campus apartment, it's almost equal to nothing. But in America is quite different. I even learned a real estate company bought out all the lands around the RIT campus and raised the price, I included that monopoly phenomenon in the film.

5: Eastern and Western holidays are quite different. Even the new years' time is different. This is also one of the set-ups in the film.

Hegel and Confucius (Research)

What's underneath the phenomenon? What's underneath the culture? What shaped the "difference" ?

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel once researched some of the original philosophy books. And in his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, Hegel comments *Analects* (论语), which was written by Confucius and his students, "is a book of moral teaching more comprehensive and better than all the books of Confucius. He [Confucius] is

hence only a man who has a certain amount of practical and worldly wisdom — one with whom there is no speculative philosophy. We may conclude from his original works that for their reputation it would have been better had they never been translated.”⁵

Apparently, Hegel gives a poor opinion on Confucius’ proposition. But Confucianism, as a collective dogma has been handed down and refined over two thousand years. Confucius, 551–479 BC, his idea is the foundation of the Confucianism, even now it still has powerful energy and influences millions of people’s point of view and value. Hegel, on the other hand, 1770-1831, is an important philosopher in human history, there is no denying. But why has this happened?

Before Hegel, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz 1646-1716, who about 100 years earlier than Hegel, was influenced by Confucius’ theory, deeply. *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus*, by T. Meynard, was the first translation of Confucian Classics and been published in 1687, which at Leibniz’s 41 years of age. He “apparently read it in the year of its publication.” E. R. Hughes postulates the existence of some close resemblance in Leibniz's own theories and in *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus* and thereby suggests that Leibniz was directly influenced⁶. Voltaire (1694-1778) wrote, “Confucius has no interest in falsehood; he did not pretend to be a prophet; he claimed no inspiration; he taught no new religion; he used no delusions; flattered not the emperor under whom he lived.”⁷ Voltaire wrote favorably of the idea, with Voltaire claiming that the Chinese had

⁵ Hegel’s Lectures on the History of Philosophy

<https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/hegel/works/hp/hporiental.htm>

⁶ Mungello, David E. “Leibniz’s Interpretation of Neo-Confucianism.” *Philosophy East and West*, vol. 21, no. 1, 1971, pp. 3–22. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/1397760.: p.3

⁷ Lan, Feng. *Ezra Pound and Confucianism: remaking humanism in the face of modernity*. University of Toronto Press. 2005. p. 190. ISBN 978-0-8020-8941-0.

"perfected moral science" and advocating an economic and political system modeled after that of the Chinese.⁸

After the Renaissance, a lot of western thinkers and social activists gave eastern ancient China empire good praise. Including Leibniz and Voltaire. Translations of Confucian texts influenced European thinkers of the period, particularly among the Deists and other philosophical groups of the Enlightenment who were interested in the integration of the system of morality of Confucius into Western civilization.⁹

Knowing before the Renaissance, Europe was ruled by the religious. After knowing there was a big, rich empire in the eastern world was ruled by virtue, which is more tender than the religious authorities' oppression that represses human's nature. Western thinkers at that age envied that, some of them even exaggerated the truth of the eastern world. That built a public opinion environment surround Hegel.

So, is Hegel wrong? No, he isn't. *Analects* is indeed superficial and understandable. In China, we learned part of it from middle school and it's comprehensible for a teenager's intelligence. But what Hegel didn't know or didn't completely comprehend is how Confucianism adapted into Chinese existence structure. With the boasting of the eastern empire at that time, it's not hard to understand why Hegel's so disheartening. To comprehend Confucius and his theory, it refers to how Confucianism's dogma fits in and adapts to Eastern existence structures of the paternal hierarchy, the blood relation link, the heavy filial duty, and all other characteristics originally from a typical agricultural civilization.

⁸ Schwarz, Bill. *The expansion of England: race, ethnicity and cultural history*. Psychology Press. 1996.p 229. ISBN 0-415-06025-7

⁹ Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Voltaire#cite_ref-epc_203-1

The Journey of Culture Exploration

The topic of Hegel's comment of Confucius could be extended and explained based on several perspectives. It includes the history realm, the ideology realm, the geography realm, the religious realm, the anthropology realm, and the communication realm. This case as I regard is a good example of culture collision. Different cultures collided into each other and generate beautiful flairs. But all in all, as a conclusion, like Wang Dongyue's expression, "Culture is a reflection of the structure of existence."

As I could see from this case, to be an inter-culture artist, there is a long way to explore, and a long journey to go. It's a lifetime journey, and based on my research and study, "My Guest From Afar" is a step on my road of cultural exploration, and my future steps will be made and carry me on.

Creative Path

Re-Propose

My original thesis idea was a white-lie story. It originally was a news event I caught up to a few years ago. But in the pre-production stage, though it was a touching story, I felt like I lost the intimacy with that story, and I started thinking what if I could write a story based on my personal experiences. I saw a lot of thesis works are personal-related, so I made my decision at the beginning of the fall semester to re-propose my thesis project. Fortunately, It was approved by the committee, after that, I put all of my efforts to make it happen.

Inspirations

The story details as I mentioned above, are all originally from my previous three years of American experiences. Even the main character's name (Ying Da) was actually one of my best friends'.

The story structure was tweaked several times. I originally built up a small community in the script, it included Mr. George, Ying Da, the granddaughter, and even some neighbors. But the story structure has changed a lot as the project evolved. I was initially inspired by a Chinese independent film *You and Me* by Liwen Ma, and during the time I was preparing the film script, I also watched some other independent films, just like *Postmen In The Mountains* by Qijian Huo, by watching them, I was gathering ideas that how they unfold the intricate relationships between main characters and maximize the impact of support roles. After seeing my first draft, my

advisor Frank Deese suggested to me, that if he were me, he'd make the story just between the two of them. In consideration of that it is a short film, I accepted that suggestion, and cut it down to two-characters drama.

After some revisions, I brought it to Brian Coughlin, who is a professor who used to teach me, and he recommended a film to me, *Gran Torino* by Clint Eastwood. After watching the *Gran Torino*, I decided to put the Korean War element into my plot, and make it more dramatic.

Until that time, all the inspirations I gathered formed the early draft of my film script.

Happy-Accident

Despite having the script in my hand, there were a lot of things on set that I could not control. On set, as the director, I must make a quick decision to determine what is possible and what is practical.

The Christmas Eve snow shovel scene was not originally in the script, it was an exterior clothes-washing scene. But I encountered a snow day and the snow was heaped up. So my clothes-washing scene seems not believable. Plus according to our schedule, that scene happened on the first shooting day, everything seemed behind schedule. So I decided to switch the scene into a snow shovel scene and changed the dialogue along with my movement change. But it caused a big problem for me that I designed this scene and the ending as a pair. Changing the front one may make them not seem like a pair. But thankfully, God helped me. On the day before we shoot the ending scene, I got a wave of a storm, and I got another stack of snow outside of the house. Fortunately, we got a beautiful day and an epic golden hour, and we got it.

I believe you will love the ending.



Pre-Production

Script

I did have a rough outline and a pretty rough script before my thesis re-proposal. That made me confident to get it through.

But my re-proposal happened in the second week of the fall semester, so that means if I want to shoot the film in the fall semester, I have to refine and revise it quickly. Thanks Frank Deese, Brian Coughlin, and the RIT writing commons, I make it as fast as I can and as good as possible.

But the script changed a lot. After recruiting my actors, Daniel J. Greer and Puwen Zhang, they even helped me to refine the dialogue and flesh the characters out. Since I'm not the native English speaker, my assistant director Ricky Panipinto contributed some of his ideas and really helped me out with switching the snow shovel scenes.

Counting the time, it approximately took me half a year for the script to evolve from the very rough to the story you have seen on screen.

Recruiting the Crew

I'm the writer, director, colorist, and sound mixer, but this film wouldn't have been made without the help of my lovely and professional crew. They are:

Director of Photography - Bo Gao

Original Music Composed - Ching-Shan Chang

Assistant Director - Ricky Panipinto

Art - Maria Gesek; Komal Ashfaq

Sound Mixing/Boom - Junnan Xia; Robert Stokes

1st AC - Wen Tong

2nd AC - Yuhao Sheng

Production Assistant - Zhuming Liu



Group Photos of some of the shooting days

Casting

After posting up my casting call, a lot of actors contacted me, and I held auditions for every candidate. They are talented. Finally, I got my talent:

Mr. George - Daniel J. Greer

Ying Da - Puwen Zhang

Mom - Wenhui Cao

Guest 1 - Kyle Robert Padden

Guest 2 - 2 Serious Tae

Granddaughter- Kiana Dugan-Haas



[Audition with Mr. Daniel J. Greer](#)



[Audition with Mr. Puwen Zhang](#)

Equipment

Thanks to the RIT SOFA cage for supporting us by providing equipment.

For my thesis project, I got the best equipment I could get from the SOFA cage.

They are:

Visual:

Sony FS 700 with S-Log 2, it gave me a high color space in the post-production.

Shogun Flame. It allows me to record in 4K and 10 color bitrate. At the same time, It could get the on-set audio to save a bunch of time for my audio sync in the post.

Cooke Prime Lens Kit. It is the most powerful lens we could get from the cage. They did the job.

Cini filter Kit: Black Supermist 1/4. I used the 1/4 filter, and as we can see from some scenes with facing the strong lights; just like the scene Ying Da gets into the house door or the ending scene, we can see the light rings and some soft vignetting effects. That's because of the Black Supermist 1/4 filter. It not only softens the strong light but

also helped me smooth the talents' skin. And it really helped me out with using the smooth image, to tell a soft-hearted story.

DJI Mavic II pro: I used the drone to achieve some of the shots that the camera couldn't make. Just like the exterior shot of viewing Ying's bedroom's lights.

Audio:

UC Audio 702 Kit. That's the kit we usually use and mostly used in the film.

PDR Recorder. That's the lavalier hidden into the actor's clothes and get the audio when the boom couldn't reach.

Other key supporting gears (including but not limited):

Arri Softbank Lighting Kit; Hive Wasp Kit; Diva LED Light Panel; Kino Flo LED Kit;

1500W HMI;

Light Control Kit; Butterfly Kit;

Easyrig Kit; Doorway Dolly; HD Monitor; Interphone;



[A Truckful of Equipment and Arts](#)



[On-Set Production](#)

Location

For scouting the shooting location, I spent almost a week doing that. I drove from Ithaca to Buffalo looking for an ideal place for the shoot.



Location 1



Location 2



Location 3



Location 4



Location 5



Location 6

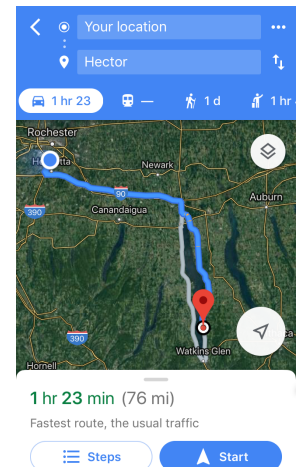


Location 7



Location 8

At the end of the week, I finally chose a house located in Hector, NY to shoot the film. (Location 8) I booked the entire house for a week (7days) from November 19th to November 26th, 2018. Though the shooting location is so far away from Rochester, it gave me the window to control everything. I do not need to worry about other guests coming and going, I do not need to worry about the housing schedule conflict, I do not have excessive rules so that I could put more time and effort into my production.



The Shooting Location

Schedule

To be the producer for my film, it's always a hard time to coordinate every part's time. My rule of thumb is that all the schedules should follow the equipment's schedule.

Under this principle, I reserved the equipment way earlier than the shooting date. And I got the best equipment I could get from the RIT SOFA cage. But the cage has a rule that grad students' maximum check-out time should be no longer than two days. But I have a 27 page script, and I assumed I probably need 5 days to get all the shots. Then, I found the Thanksgiving week. The exception for the cage's rule is checking out the equipment during the holiday week. So, I reserved the equipment during the Thanksgiving week and successfully got a 7-days reservation. From then on, I settled my shooting date from November 19th to November 26th, 2018.

The second problem I have to figure out would be that my script is a half-year-long story, it includes the late summer, the autumn, and the winter. But my scheduled shooting dates are the late November, that means I have to shoot some exterior autumn scenes way earlier than the scheduled shooting date. So I organized my team together and got the shots before the winter comes.

For the shooting dates, everyone's schedule is different. Fortunately, my assistant director Ricky Panipinto could stay with me for the entire shooting dates. Beyond that, I scheduled the first day to load and transport the equipment and set-ups, I decided not to shoot on Thanksgiving day, so that everybody could have a break. The householder also provided us one more morning so that we could clean-up and load equipment out. After all the schedules are settled, I smoothly moved to the production part.

Production

Directing

Directing actors is my biggest responsibility on set. I have taken the graduate directing course in RIT. Before my thesis film, I've directed 3 films in RIT, and a few short films and music videos before I arrived here. Even though I have a lot of experience, directing on set and dealing with different actors are always challenging. And every time I direct a project, it is another time of implementation of the directing theories I learned and the experiences I've gathered from former works.

I gathered my actors together a couple of times to rehearse scenes before the shooting date. Even though, to get the emotion from "inside out", I always let my actors rehearse tens of times towards the "accurate" direction before rolling the camera. There are several approaches I usually apply when I was directing actors.

First of all, to use the action verbs. Adjective words sometimes may not deliver accurate and sufficient information to my talent. Directing actors actually is a process of communication. Actors have their own comprehension for the script I provided and sometimes their understanding of the script may push them to deliver some interesting actions that I've never thought of. But sometimes, their comprehension may deviate from the subtext I paved underneath the dialogue. For example, "anxious" could be the word to describe the emotion when Mr. George provides the pizza and wants to raise the price. But what underneath the dialogue is that Mr. George wants more money from Ying Da. To ask for more may strain the relationship between him and Ying Da, it causes anxiety. So, on that scene, Mr. George firstly explains the reason, then tries to convince Ying Da. Because of Ying's rejection and Ying's explanations, the original impression of Ying that he is a rich

Chinese was destroyed by the truth that Ying is just a poor boy. But Mr. George doesn't want to lose this part of income, he compromised to Ying Da. At the same time, Mr. George's well-prepared reasons are no longer practical. So, he started to find reasons randomly and finally expressed his impression in his subconscious. It irritates Ying. In the entire process, from explaining to convince, to compromise, to insisting on doing so, Mr. George's approaches of reaching his goal are varied. So, I used those action verbs to separate the scene into several parts, so that we could see the beat changes and the attitude changes among Mr. George. It makes the character vivid.

The second directing approach would be the rule "one change at a time." For some small changes, I only tweak one point after every rehearsal or "cut." Throw a lot of changes to my actors at one time may cause them to forget what is going on here. For me, dealing the small tweaks, "one change at a time" is a time-tested rule, it's efficient and "friendly."

The third one would be kept "private." Especially for the on-set directing, there are a lot of cast and crews surrounding me and the actor. If I yelled out "This part is totally wrong" or use a loudspeaker or interphone to communicate with my actor, it may let them feel disgraced. So, I run close to them and keep a low voice tell them what's needed to be changed. I keep the conversation private, and it could let my actor immerse into the conversion, at the same time, protect the actor's dignity.

Furthermore, I, as a director, always give the room to my actors and crew to create. The dialogue, I always suggest they just speak the words as comfortably, as well as the actions. Sometimes My director of photography Bo Gao suggests me some of the shots that are not listed in my storyboard, I would accept his suggestions if we have sufficient time. The top-down shot is one of his suggestions, and it finally been used in the final cuts.

In addition, the choreography of the camera and actors is also a big part of the storytelling. What time to let the camera move, to pull or push, to stress or to reveal, what time the camera should be stable, and in what pace the story is going to be told.... I have to control the storytelling pace and make the image interesting at the same time.



[My Directing Pictures on set](#)

Production Design

I invited Maria Gesek and Komal Ashfaq to serve in my art department. They did a really good job.

I have two heavy-duty assignments for my art department: one is to create a change in Ying Da's bedroom before and after he left. The second one is the paper-cut art. I think they did a great job for creating the "colorful" and the "emptiness" in the bedroom, and based on the sample I gave to them, Maria created the delicate paper cuts for the shoot.

They also did some other parts that couldn't be forgotten. Just like creating the "Korean war book" and some on-set reconstructions and decorations.



Ying's Bedroom Before and After



The Korean War Book



The Paper-Cut Art



Other Art Works

Set Life

I have a small size crew and some of my crew members who could only come for one or two days out of my six main shooting dates. Plus the location is originally is a bed-and-breakfast estate, so I suggested my crew and cast live on set if possible. But I also assigned the transportation in between Rochester and the shooting location every day so that people could freely come and go.

The basic thing in the film production is to treat crew and cast well. In this aspect, I give myself 8 points out of 10. Since some of the core crew live together for the shooting dates, our friendship built up.

In my crew, there are RIT students from 1st-year grad all the way to 3rd-year grad. We shared production experiences and opinions after the daily shoot. It helped everybody to learn, especially the freshman students. I recalled when I was on my first year in the film production program, I joined several thesis sets and those on-set experiences really gave me opportunities to see the theories applied to real on-set scenarios.

Even in my crew, Chinese students who study in America have different opinions for this country. We debate the pros and cons of American society, and through this process, I tried to search the origination of their different point of views and from our conversation, I even comprehend more of my culture theory that culture is a reflection of the structure of existence.

All in all, I believe everybody enjoyed the time we work together, live together and think together. At least that period of time for me is impressive and memorable.

Post-Production & Evaluation

Editing

There is a common saying that the editor is the second director behind the table. As for me, my film career started from the post-production field back into 2014, plus my thesis story is a linear, time-based story, so I decided to handle the cutting blade on my own.

1st Stage

After the boring and laborious audio sync period (January 2019), I tried to put the clips together to make it into a rough cut. I once forced myself to concentrate on putting them together, and it turned out to be a rough cut that more than 40 minutes. I know that version is way far from “good,” but I still gave me a month break to write some other scripts, help on others’ set, traveling around and do other pieces of stuff not related to the thesis project.

2nd Stage

A month passes (February 2019), and I thought my brain was fully cooled down, I then set down and work from the first draft again (Early March 2019). During that period, instead concentrating on the editing, I usually spend just a morning or half of the day dealing with the materials. After a while, a 30-minutes version comes out, and I brought it out to my friends and professors to gather feedback from them.

During this period, Frank and I set down together several times, we talked about the revisions, challenges, the film length, and some other aspects that are related to my story. At the same time, Stephanie, Jack, and Dan LaTourette also gave me a lot of valuable recommendations, and those were applied to my future revisions, to make it better.

For instance, they all mentioned that some of my information is repeated. Based on that, I cut a lot from the previous version. Just like the granddaughter's expositions, the "cough and herb" scene, their negotiation scene, and some other scenes to really make the film shorter than that was before.

3rd Stage

The time comes to late March and early April. Rochester's weather is still cold. I stayed in my home, watched the latest version at least once a day, and made refinements.

At the same time, I also watch films and film comments, read books, to see other professionals' approach to film editing. I picked up some ideas of using the crossfades, the using of slow-motion, and some other methods to create motions and emotion points on the post-production stage. Moreover, I added the title and made it more comprehensible for my upcoming audiences.

And during this period of time, I also finished the color correction and color grading for my images, I started writing this thesis documentation paper and was looking for jobs around the world.

4th Stage

The time comes to early April. This is the stage right after my time lock.

In this stage, I mainly focused on work with my composer, Ching-Shan Chang, who is a talented musician I have been working with for almost three years. We had a conversation where I explained all the subtexts and metaphors that I wanted to express in every single scene. And we shared the common view of using the music as simple as possible.

Also, professor Jack gathered me and Dan LaTourette together. We watched the film and shared the opinions. They gave me some helpful comments and based on that, I did the last tweak and finalized the entire editing process.

Color

I studied the Da Vinci Resolve online when I was a freshman in RIT. I used to do the color work for my previous films, my classmates' films, and some other projects. Two years of color grading experiences really sharpened my skills.

Based on the Sony S-Log 2, I converted and tested some Luts, also hand-on DIYed some styles. After a long period of testing, I chose to make the entire film stylized, but close to real life. The concrete details are as follows:

1: For most parts of the film, I converted the dark area more towards cold color (greenish blue)

2: For most parts of the film, the mid-tone area I kept their original hue, and boosted its saturation.

3: For most parts of the film, along with the Black Supermist's flair as I mentioned before, I slightly added the warm tone into it.

4: The snow shovel/Chinese teaching scene, I pushed the entire image towards the cold tone. This decision was made based on three reasons. First, to emphasize the season change; Second, to build a contrast for the later ending snow shovel scene; Third, to create the "cold" (sad) feeling of the result of "granddaughter not coming back."

5: Human faces and skin tones are always been emphasized through the entire film.

6: Push down the luminance of the environment.

Audio

Ching-Shan Chang is a talented film composer. She did a great job of smoothing the pace of the film and really helped the image to create the MOMENT.

Junnan Xian and Robert Stokes got the clear on-set audio and kept the accurate audio report on file. It really helped the post-production out.

I was inspired by the Godfather (1972), the scene when Michael is about to kill Sollozzo, the sound designer paved a train's sound under this scene to create tension. I, in some ways, applied this approach into some parts of my film.

I once faced an accident in my sound mixing process that the Pro Tools program "destroyed" a third of my timeline, so, I have to go back and remix about 10 minutes of the soundtrack. It wasted some of my time in the post production, and after Dave Sluberski watched it, he diagnosed that is because of some errors hidden in my input OMF file. Though it take times, but I also learned from it.

So, basically, the audio part is the most cooperative part for my film in the post stage.

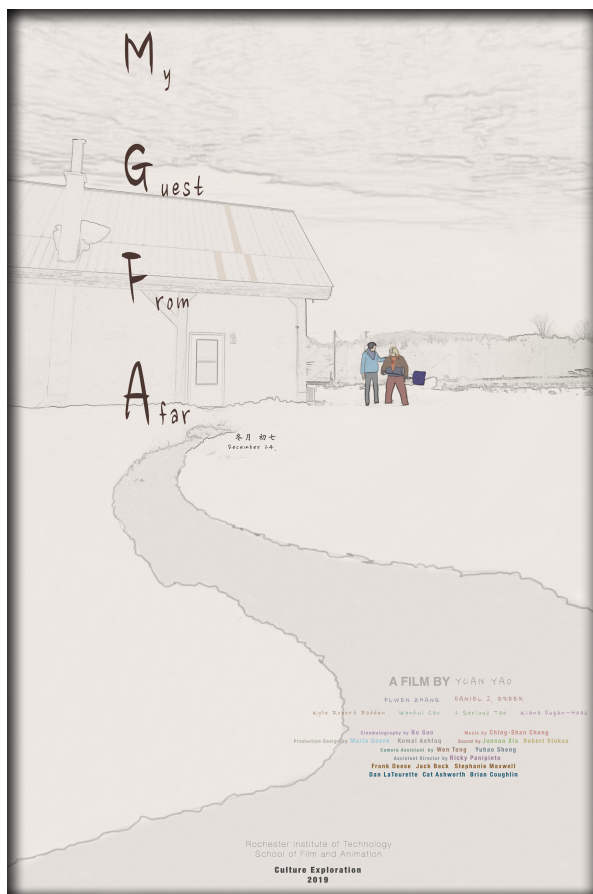
Poster

As it's a simple story, I wanted the poster as simple as possible. Initially, I wanted to use the "George putting up the paper cut" final image as my poster's image. But I received some recommendations that some said "it shows the final stage of the story." After I thought it over, I decided to switch an image for my poster.

Finally, I chose to use an establishing shot in the snow shoveling scene as the poster's backdrop. This image actually was not in the final cut of the film. But in the image, we could

see two of my main characters and one building behind them. That information is all I need for the poster and well delivered the information about what the story is about.

Chaofan Li and Jiahui Liu helped me with stylizing the backdrop image, and it finally comes out as the image as follows. I put the poster up in the corridor to the school of film and animation. And it has also been used as the promotional material for this film in the film festivals.



“My Guest From Afar” Poster

Trailer

Bill Landers once sent out an email calling for trailers. I'd say, why not. So, I did a short trailer for this film.

Same as the poster, the film trailer was shown on the SOFA lobby display. It is another promotional material for this film. It will also be used for film festivals.

Review of Research

List of Inspiration Element

Plot Inspirations:

Gran Torino - Clint Eastwood (2008)

You and Me - Ma Liwen (2005)

Postmen In The Mountains - Qijian Huo (2004)

Directing Approaches:

Inside-out

Action verbs

One Change at a time

Keep private

Open-minded

Theory Support:

Wang Dongyue's Philosophy Online Class

The Analects

Other materials:

For more details, please see the previous part of the creative path and the production processes.

Artist Statement

This is my artist statement. I gave a speech on the screening day (May 4th.) right after the film was played.

I'm a cross-culture filmmaker. I grew up in the middle part of China, went to college in the western part of China, studied in Pensacola, Florida for a year and lived in Rochester for about 3 years. In addition, I've put my foot in Europe and have experience traveling around America and China. After all these experiences, I read history, studied some philosophy, and then, I applied my point of views in my film works. So, more likely, I'm a culture explorer. And I wish I could use my film works to show the beautiful and interesting details reflect the differences between different cultures.

The definition of "culture" may vary, a Chinese philosopher gave his definition to "culture" which convinced me. Said by Wang Dongyue, "Culture is a reflection of the structure of existence." I think American culture is a representative of Western culture, this territory used to be the testing ground of ideologies from the Enlightenment and the group of people who built this country applied the value of freedom, democracy, equality thoroughly in American society... and Chinese culture is gradually formed and shaped from a long-lasting agricultural civilization, which is a representative of the Eastern culture. Through almost 5000 years, Chinese people cultivated their characteristics of being obedience to the paternal hierarchy, respect for the blood relation link, and get used to carrying the heavy filial [ˈfɪliəl] duty. In this film, "My Guest From Afar" I extracted a Chinese young man and an American old man, to let them live together, see their argument, their fights, and their compromise. This, in some ways, is a reflection of the cultural exchange. Those detailed plots are all happened in my previous American life. For example:

- I got the answer of “the whole world is speaking English, why would I learn some Chinese” I got this answer when I was trying to hang out with one of my classmates when I was in Florida, I coined this detail into the film.

- I had a friend who once lived in my apartment for a while and he picked up some Chinese, such as the “water” is pronounced as “Shui” and even some dirty words, so we used to joke to each other, frequently. One day he asked me how to say “thirsty”, and I said “Kele,” he then pronounced as “cola” like the beverages’ pronunciation, we both found that interesting connection and I also put it in the film.

- When I was in the college back in China, students merely pay a little amount of money for the on-campus apartment, it’s almost equal to nothing. But in America, it’s quite different. I even heard a real estate company bought out all the lands around the RIT campus and raised the price, so I included that monopoly phenomenon in the film.

- Eastern and Western holidays are quite different. Even the new year’s time is different. This is also one of the set-ups in the film.

In the other hand, people speak different languages may have varied experiences through my film. For example:

If you know English but don’t know Chinese, you may not get the idea that Mr. George’s first-time mispronunciation of Ying Da’s name that literally means vagina in Chinese. And that caused Yingda made the big reaction.

My subtitle calendars (the dates) are not the direct translation. I used the Gregorian [grɪ'ɡɔːrɪən] calendar in English but used the lunar calendar in Chinese. So, some Eastern traditional holidays are hidden inside of it.

So, It will cause that when people speak different languages walk out from my film, they will carry different understanding and feelings. I believe some of you may don’t

like the “culture collision,” some may feel uncomfortable with some of the “antagonistic” plot in the film, but I think while my audience share their different POV after the screening, it will create the second time of the cultural exchange, which could generate more flares and really let you see the beauty of the diversity. I think that makes my film unique, and that makes me, as a director, a filmmaker unique.

Director Ang Lee once told us, that as a cross-culture filmmaker, we need to find some stories that are special but universal. I bore that in my mind. Since then, I started to devote my work to searching the universal value that hidden behind the different existent structures; to express the art of compromise; to show the ways of understanding and more importantly, to show the beauty of diversity. That could be my artistic goal and this project is also in accordance with this goal.

To be an cross-culture artist, there is a long way for me to explore, and It’s a lifetime journey. “My Guest From Afar” is a step forward on my road of cultural exploration. My future steps will be made and carry me -- on.

In the end, I’d like to thank you all, all of you here watching my film,

My Thesis advisor Frank, Jack, Stephanie,

All of my crew, cast, my classmates in the past 3 years, and everybody who helped me to make this film happen.

And more Importantly, Thank you, my family, my Dad and Mom, my girlfriend.

Thank you!

Conclusion

In Memory of...

I was born in 1993, I'm the generation of the "grandparents generation" in China. We raised by our grandparents and shared the most part of childhood time with them.

At the summer of 2018, my parents informed me that my grandma, which is my closest person on this planet has passed away, and the shocking part is... They sealed the news for more than one year and just don't want to disturb my hard work in America.

This news, somehow, is a trigger to let me re-propose the thesis story. And this film, as my thesis film, been submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for my Master of Fine Arts degree in Film Production, I couldn't overemphasize the importance of this project. Hence, for her endearment and endeavor, in memory of my loved grandma, Shi, Aiying.

My girlfriend's younger brother, Guo, Fengyu served in DJI. Seeing my production drone shot video been posted on the social media he once pat on my back. But unfortunately, the acute cardiac disease stroke on him on December 16th, 2018 and caused the fatal result. In memory of loved brother, Guo, Fengyu.

Awards, Screening, Recognition

The Film was screened on RIT Saturday, May 4th, 3:40 P.M. at Wegmans Theater in the MAGIC Spell Studio. Since the final work has been rendered not so far from the time I'm writing this part, I didn't have chances to throw it out to film festivals or competitions. But previously, I've won several recognitions from my previous works. According to my plan, I'll submit this project to some film festivals both in China and in America.

Appendix

A Little Busy Boy (working title)

Yuan Yao

September 5, 2018

Thesis Proposal

Rochester Institute of Technology

MFA

Approved for Submission by

Frank Deese, Thesis Chair

Logline:

At northern New York State, a new-come Chinese visiting scholar rent a room in a single old man's house, which really close to the campus. They help each other as well as relieve the boredom of loneliness. But because of their difference in culture and social value. They argue, they fight. Until one day, the scholar finished his research, and have to leave the United States. Suddenly, they both realize that the other has already embedded in their life.

Characters:

Ying Da (25) [m], Chinese visit scholar. From middle-class family. A diligent, frugal boy but with too much pride, and vanity.

Gaw Barlow (60-70) [m], American novelist, musician, and the householder. An arrogant, stingy and dated person.

Ike Balchen (50-70) [m], Gaw's neighbor.

Flora Barlow (18-21) [F], Gaw's granddaughter.

Ying Da's Father (50)

Treatment:

GAW is preparing dinner. He keeps talking anecdotes to his granddaughter, Flora. It's the "last supper" they have together. From Gaw's talk, we know that it's about the beginning of a new semester. Flora is going to go to California to attend college. Gaw plans to rent out Flora's bedroom after she left, as a homestay, so he can earn more money to ease Flora's loan burden.

The second day, Flora part reluctantly from Gaw.

Back in the Living Room, **YING** politely asks Gaw if he can rent one of his two idle bedrooms for a certain long period. If so, Gaw could benefit from that that he does not need to worry about finding guests. Gaw asks why he wants to rent a room over here? Ying answers he only gonna stay in American for a couple of months. School dorm is expensive and closes during the breaks. Apartments are far away and his family thought to get a car is not cost-effective and they barely could afford it. To rent a room close to campus, which is here is the best choice for him. After a discussion of the rental detail, Gaw agrees Ying to rent a room.

Back to Ying's bedroom, after he gets his mattress and blanket done, Ying wants to have a video call with his parents. So he goes out to find Gaw asks his WIFI and password. Because

they both forget the other's name, so they straightforwardly give each other a nickname. Gaw tells Ying that he never uses the internet. Ying gets astonished. Ying asks how he posts the B&B source on the internet. Gaw says his friend, Ike is helping him manage these. Ike is also a B&B host.

In Ying's bedroom, he reluctantly dials his parents with the signal. He tells them everything is fine, he found a nice place to live, close to campus, good environment... He also greetings for his grandparents. Ying rushes to hang up because he is losing data.

On the dinner table. Ying decided to install the internet and pay for it. They are eating Pizza.

It's Autumn.

A guest just leaves.

Ying comes back from school, he's exhausted.

On the dinner table, Gaw delivers an internet bill to Ying. Gaw also shows Ying the electric, water, trash fees. In addition, Gaw wants to raise the rental fee. Gaw thinks as a Chinese, the boy must be rich. But Ying cannot afford more rental fee. Ying is angry, he runs out of the door.

Ying finds Ike and asks if he can offer a room for him. Ike gives a price way higher than Gaw's. And Ike refuses to negotiate the price.

Gaw checks Ying's bedroom at night, he's not here. Gaw starts to worry about the boy. Ying backs to the house the second day, He stayed in his friend's place for the night. After negotiation, they eventually made an agreement that Ying will help Gaw with cleaning guests' bedroom and do the laundry. They write the new policy down on paper.

Gaw and Ying start doing the laundry for the guests' room. Gaw teaches Ying that he should spoon out a tiny jar of detergent at a time to prevent the entire box get wet. Then, Gaw washes the blankets, Ying goes upstairs to clean the room.

On the night, Ying talks with his parents through the video call, he told them life in American is good, the research is arduous, but the dining in America is the thing he cannot get used to it. Then, as always, greeting his grandpa and grandma.

The second day, on the dinner table, Ying says he doesn't have an appetite today, and just let Gaw save the food in the refrigerator.

On the night, Gaw is working on his novels. He has no thread. Ying sneaks into the kitchen with his seasoning, start cooking with a cooking book. Ying is a novice. Gaw on the upstairs smells something. Until the fire alarm runs off.

Gaw runs downstairs, sees Ying messes up the kitchen, Gaw goes outrageous. After they disperse the smoke, Gaw angrily prohibits him cooking in his house forever.

It's Winter.

Gaw is washing blankets outside of the door. He yells Ying a couple times to let him deliver the detergent jar. Ying lets him hold on. Gaw is freezing.

Dinner time, Gaw is on the table, but Ying with his laptop in the couch and lays the food on the side desk. Gaw (thinks of the time he begs to stay here), how courtesy then and how discourtesy now. Ying thanks Gaw gives him a "home," so he could focus on his project.

Ying goes to the table, want to teach Gaw some Chinese. But Gaw refused. Anyhow, Ying teaches him how to say "water" (shui) and "thirsty" (kele) in Chinese. But Gaw doesn't care.

Gaw asks Ying's winter plan and told him his granddaughter is going to come back for the Christmas.

It's Christmas EVE.

Gaw is decorating the living room. Ying locks himself in his bedroom writes the research paper. Gaw removes the battery in the fire alarm. Then he yells to Ying to let him come out. Ying refuses, says he's run out of time with writing the paper. Gaw then talks to him that he could allow him to cook Chinese food today. Ying was persuaded to come out stay with Gaw.

Gaw tells Ying that Flora is not going to come back. And it's his first-time taste some Chinese food. Gaw says he doesn't like it. Gaw then introduces his family members using a framed old family picture. He explains that because he has a legendary family, so he chooses to become a writer to exaggerate their stories. He's proud of his family. Then he places the picture back on the top of a cabinet. Gaw then sings the Silent Night to Ying. Montage for the environment.

After they all go back to the bedroom, Gaw sneaks into the kitchen puts the Chinese food out and eat them secretly.

It's February.

Ying leisurely prepares some paper cuts in the balcony. A guest leaves the house and Gaw just arrives from outside. Gaw questions Ying that he thinks Ying would always be busy. Ying tells Gaw that he has finished his research task in America. Gaw then lets him clean the guest's bedroom.

When they are working, Ying tells Gaw the day after tomorrow is the Chinese New Year, it's Spring Festival. But unfortunately, Gaw is going to go to New York City with Ike, to meet the publisher for just two days. Gaw will try his best to get back as early as possible.

The second day, after Gaw left, Ying calls his Chinese friends up, gather them in the house. They are going to have a hot pot party. When they are cooking, suddenly, the fire alarm runs off again. With hurry and confusion, one of Ying's friends accidentally knocks down the cabinet, all things on the top of the cabinet falls off on the ground, include Gaw's family photo. It breaks into pieces.

Gaw carefully assemble the debris together, on the ground. He's heartbroken and mad. Ying on his side feels guilty. Ying tells Gaw that he is going to leave the United States in a few days. Ying want to give Gaw the last payment, but Gaw goes to his bedroom straightforwardly, without looking at Ying.

At night, Ying goes back to his bedroom, puts up the paper-cuts on his windows. He says "Happy New Year" to himself.

The second day, when Gaw is at outside doing some gardening, Ying just stays in his room, through the window, he can barely see Gaw. Ying starts putting things together, prepare to leave. His tiny room start feels empty. Ying dials to his parents to inform them that he is going to go back. Once his parents ask the same question again, that China's better or America's better? He hesitated for a while and states, it depends.

A morning, Gaw just wakes up, he hears the engine sound. He goes outside of his bedroom; an envelope is laying in front of him. Gaw realizes Ying's already left.

In the cab, with the house disappear from Ying's horizon, his tear goes down. Gaw sees Ying's bedroom is empty. A guest is going to leave. The guest enthusiastically tells Gaw that he had a great time stay in here.

Gaw now have to clean 2 bedrooms on his own. He tears down the paper-cuts on Ying's bedroom. Gaw takes their blankets to the outside door and washes them. As he is muttering Silent Night, the detergent jar runs empty. He yells Ying. But suddenly realize he will no longer get an answer from that. And he mutters "shui", "kele" (I'm thirsty, I need water)

Gaw goes back to Ying's bedroom, picks up the paper-cuts from the trash can, repairs them carefully, then put them up on his own bedroom's window.

Rationale:

This story is inspired by a Chinese independent film, *You and Me*. It's also the story happens mostly between two interesting individuals. That film focused on China's social problem ---- the elderly person who has no family. Or to say, the social support of the old people. So, that inspired me to try to use simply two people, put them in the limited area, to see what's going to happen and tell a vivid every-day style story to influence my audience profoundly. After having this idea, I started gathering life details from my own personal experiences to see what I could explore from that.

After I went back from Europe from early 2018, "Globalization" is the word I want to put my effort on in my artwork. (Thanks to my family, they supported me to experience different cultures, know different people, and understand why they love or why they hate). But I believe

the Globalization is the big trend and we all are going to benefit from it. Especially in the United States, which is a totally diversified country. People with different skin tone and have different accent live together, formed this amazing society. Maybe trace back a few generations, their ancestors came from different continents. I could find the total “Globalization” in this territory.

The first time I went to America was Aug. 15, 2015. So, I’ve been in America for 3 years in total. I’ve mainly lived in Florida, in California, in upstate New York in these 3 years, and as you can see, south, west, and north, I even experienced the culture more than some of Americans. I’ve met people, and got a lot of stories to tell. So I gathered them, and put some of the elements together, formed this story.

Surely I’ve met some people don’t like Chinese people very much, and I put those experience together to give the film the crisis, or to say, the barrier, but eventually, We’ll all find the kindness in the deep of our mind.

Yes, this film is a condensed experience I’ve experienced in America. It has a lot of fun, a bit bitter, so much work to do, and a degree to pursue. I’d like to make this story happens, and show it to people, to show the beauty of the diversity.

Vision:

Mostly Interior shots, with some season exterior shots. Dark-tone and bright-tone interactive.





Schedule:

Deadlines:				
Aug 27	Mon		All gear reserved.	
Sep 3	Mon		Thesis repropose paperwork done	
Sep 11	Tue		Thesis repropose meeting	
Sep 14	Fri		First Draft	Location scouts complete, File permits within 1 Week.
Sep 21	Fri		Second Draft	Audition Begins
Sep 28	Fri		Third Draft	
Oct 5	Fri		Final Draft	Casting Complete, send out offers
Oct 14, 21, 28	Sun (s)		Rehearsals / Shot lists Storyboards complete	Transition shots / Season shots
Nov 3, 10	Sun		Rehearsals	Transition shots /Season shots
Nov 16	Friday		Principal Photography Start	Art, Grip get done
Nov 25	Sunday		Principal Photography End	Warp up

Dec 10	Mon		[Last Day, evening, online classes]	Rough cut due for screenings (if possible)
January 2019			Fine Cut Editing, Determine need for pickups	
February 20019			Possible Indoor Pickups [Picture Lock]	Sound Design and Music
March 2017			Color Correction	
April 2017			Last Chance Exterior Pickups	
April 29			[Last day, evening, and online classes]	Film Due

	Film Title		DATE			
		QTY	UNITS	FEE	COST	TOTAL
A. SCRIPT & STORY						
	Story & Script	1	EACH	0.00	0.00	
	Duplication	30	COPY	0.00	0.00	
	Postage	1	ESTIM	0.00	0.00	
	Storyboarding	1	ESTIM	0.00	0.00	
	Copyright	1	FLAT	0.00	0.00	0.00
B. TALENT						
	Line Producer/UPM	1	FLAT	0.00	0.00	
	Director	1	EACH	0.00	0.00	
ACTORS						
	Lead	6	DAY	50.00	300.00	
	Lead	6	DAY	50.00	300.00	
	Lead	1	DAY	0.00	0.00	
	Big Name Star	0	DAY	0.00	0.00	
	Support #1	1	DAY	0.00	0.00	
	Support #2	1	DAY	0.00	0.00	
	Supporting Cast	4	FLAT	0.00	0.00	600.00
C. PRODUCTION PERSONNEL						
	Cinematographer	6	DAY	0.00	0.00	
	1st Camera Assistant	6	DAY	0.00	0.00	
	2nd Camera Assistant	6	DAY	0.00	0.00	
	Audio Person	6	DAY	0.00	0.00	
	Boom Operator	6	DAY	0.00	0.00	
	Production Manager	6	DAY	0.00	0.00	
	Assistant Director	6	DAY	0.00	0.00	
	Associate Producer	6	DAY	0.00	0.00	
	Art Director/Props	6	DAY	0.00	0.00	
	Set Dresser	6	DAY	0.00	0.00	
	Key Grip	6	DAY	0.00	0.00	
	Grip	6	DAY	0.00	0.00	
	Gaffer	6	DAY	0.00	0.00	
	Makeup	6	DAY	0.00	0.00	
	Stunt Coordinator	6	DAY	0.00	0.00	
	Special Effects Person	6	DAY	0.00	0.00	
	Clapper/Continuity	6	DAY	0.00	0.00	
	Production Assistants	6	DAY	0.00	0.00	0.00
D. LOCATION EXPENSES						
	Meals	10	6 DAY	12.00	720.00	
	Motel	1	1 DAY	0.00	0.00	

Location Fees	6	ESTIM	240.00	1440.00	
Transportation	1	ESTIM	400.00	400.00	
Production Trailer	1	ESTIM	0.00	0.00	
Mileage/Fuel	1000	MILES	0.10	100.00	
Electricity/Permits	1	ESTIM	0.00	0.00	
Petty Cash	1	ESTIM	300.00	300.00	2960.00

E. FIELD EQUIPMENT

Camera Package	6	DAY	0.00	0.00	
2nd Unit Camera Package	6	DAY	0.00	0.00	
Camera Support	6	DAY	0.00	0.00	
Camera Supplies	6	DAY	0.00	0.00	
Sound Gear	6	DAY	0.00	0.00	
Grip Package	6	DAY	0.00	0.00	
Lighting Equipment	6	DAY	0.00	0.00	
Misc. Lighting	6	DAY	0.00	0.00	
Generator	0	DAY	0.00	0.00	
SteadyCam & Operator	0	DAY	0.00	0.00	
Dolly	3	DAY	0.00	0.00	
Crane/Jib	3	DAY	0.00	0.00	
Props	1	ESTIM	200.00	200.00	
Wardrobe	1	ESTIM	400.00	400.00	
Expendables	1	ESTIM	100.00	100.00	
Picture Vehicles	1	ESTIM	0.00	0.00	
Set Construction	1	ESTIM	0.00	0.00	
Special Effects	1	ESTIM	0.00	0.00	
Makeup Supplies	1	ESTIM	0.00	0.00	700.00

G. RAW STOCK AND LABS

Negative	0	FEET	0.30	0.00	
Developing(Free)	0	FEET	0.13	0.00	
Workprinting	0	FEET	0.30	0.00	
Audio Stock(DAT)	0	CASS	9.00	0.00	
Still Photography				0.00	
Color	0	ROLL	5.00	0.00	
Black & White	0	ROLL	3.00	0.00	
Processing	0	ROLL	10.00	0.00	
Instant Film	0	PACK	12.00	0.00	0.00

H. SOUND AND MUSIC

Sound Designer	1	FLAT	0.00	0.00	
Composer	1	FLAT	0.00	0.00	
Recording Studio	0	HOUR	0.00	0.00	
Equipment Rental	1	WEEK	0.00	0.00	
Music Mix	0	HOUR	0.00	0.00	
Sound Mix	1	FLAT	0.00	0.00	
Audio Stock	0	ROLL	0.00	0.00	
Musicians/Instruments	0	HOUR	0.00	0.00	
Syncing	14	HOUR	0.00	0.00	

Transfer Costs	14	HOUR	0.00	0.00	
Composer's Videotape	1	FLAT	0.00	0.00	0.00
I. GRAPHICS & TITLES					
Graphic Designer	1	FLAT	0.00	0.00	
Artist & Supplies	1	ESTIM	0.00	0.00	
Titles	1	ESTIM	0.00	0.00	
Optical Photography	0	FLAT	0.00	0.00	0.00
K. OFFICE					
Office Space	1	ESTIM	0.00	0.00	
Production Insurance	1	FLAT	200.00	200.00	
Accounting Fees	1	FLAT	0.00	0.00	
Telephone	1	ESTIM	0.00	0.00	
Duplication	0	ESTIM	0.00	0.00	
Postage/Shipping	1	ESTIM	0.00	0.00	200.00
TOTAL					4460.00
L. LEGAL FEES	0.00			0.00	
N. INSURANCE	0.00			0.00	
M. CONTINGENCY	0.20			892.00	
SUB-TOTAL					892.00
GRAND TOTAL					5352.00

5/22/2019

My Guest From Afar copy

My Guest From Afar

Written by Yuan Yao

Nov 13 2018

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1/28

1 EXT. FRONT YARD - DAY

YING (25) standing on the road side carries a huge suitcase, George (65) waves to a girl, FLORA (19), UBER DRIVER (30) carries Flora's suitcase into his car.

GEORGE
Call me when you arrive at school,
honey.

FLORA
Bye, grandpa, I'll miss you!

Flora gets into the car and the car gradually goes away.

Film Title - TBD

Title: Late Summer

George points to the direction the car leaves.

GEORGE
My granddaughter. Sorry for letting
you wait here, come right in young
man! By the way, you speak English?

YING
Of course I do.

GEORGE
Never mind.

YING
Where she's going?

GEORGE
Florida.

2 INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

George takes the lead and shows Ying the house.

GEORGE
Put your luggage behind the door and
follow me, young man.

Ying gets into the door, puts the luggage aside and takes his shoes off.

GEORGE
(cont'd)
Oh, you don't need to do that.

YING
That's ok, I'm used to do it.

GEORGE
All right, whatever you want, but you
don't need to.

George points to a table right in front of them.

GEORGE
(cont'd)
I'll prepare the breakfast and serve
it on this table tomorrow morning,
help yourself. Follow me.

George walks to the kitchen.

GEORGE
(cont'd)
Here is the kitchen

George walks by a shelf.

GEORGE
Knives, forks, plates... And here is
the bathroom for guests, there is
another on upstairs but that's mine.
So please use this one only.

George stops by the staircase and turns around to face Ying.

GEORGE
(cont'd)
Oh, there is an important rule here,
please stay quiet after 11-P-M I'm a
writer so I need a good sleep. You
know, to reset my brain. By the way,
be respectful to my neighbors, cuz
they are hard to deal with and I'd
rather not deal with them. Take your
luggage now.

YING
Ok, sir, I'll follow your rules.

Ying uses all his effort to carry the luggage up the stairs.

GEORGE
So you booked my room for how many
days? Two? Three?

YING
Two, two days.

GEORGE
So you are traveling around?

YING
No, I'm here for school, I'm a
visiting scholar, we have some
research to do here.

GEORGE
Visiting-scholar. School time, ah? My
granddaughter just left to attend the
college, too.

YING
Why not just attend school right here?

GEORGE
Maybe she doesn't like the wether,
maybe they have better program. Young
people's thinking, who knows. Or maybe
she just doesn't like to live with me.
You know.

George points to two idle bedrooms.

GEORGE
These bedrooms are for my guests.

George points to a room that Ying booked.

GEORGE
(cont'd)
And here it is, it used to be my
granddaughter's. You'll take it for
now. Thank you for choosing my
cottage, George.

George shakes hands with Ying.

YING
Ying da.

GEORGE
What was that?

YING
Ying - da.

GEORGE
Yin - dao.

Ying got frustrated.

YING
It's Da! Da!!

GEORGE
Ying - da.

YING
Yes, that's right!

GEORGE
Help yourself!

George repeats the young man's name again and again. He goes back to his bedroom.

DOLLY TRACK SHOT FROM BEDROOM TO BEDROOM:

Ying takes off his coat and zips up his suitcase. He's thinking if he can just rent this room for couple months long.

An empty guest's bedroom.

George in his bedroom puts his pajama on and grabs his laptop goes out of the door.

3 INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

George sits on the couch and puts his apple laptop on his lap. George sneezes and seems a little bit sick. On the computer screen, he writes down "The Family Album" as title of the novel. Then he writes down "George" as the book writer credit.

Ying goes downstairs. George sees the man and turns to him.

GEORGE
Young man, May I help you?

YING

I'm fine. But I saw you are sick, here are some traditional herbs, hope it can help you.

GEORGE

Oh, don't mind. I've taken my medicine. I don't think my body can afford more.

Ying puts the pills down on the table.

YING

I'll just leave it here and may I ask you something?

GEORGE

What?

YING

Can I rent your room for a longer time?

GEORGE

Sure, go online and renew your rent yourself.

YING

I mean, I want to stay here for doing my research for maybe half a year long, I think your place is pretty good, clean, quiet; in addition I'm sick of looking for places to rent. I want to set a price with you, privately. I can give you 500 dollars a month, you earn fixed amount from me and you still have one more bedroom for other guests. How about that? Mr. George?

GEORGE

You want to stay in my place for half a year?

YING

Maybe shorter. Mr. George, It's a win-win deal.

GEORGE

Let me think about it, okay? Give me some time, okay?

YING
 Sure, of course, I'm staying here is just like your granddaughter is still living with you. Take your time, Mr. George, I look forward hearing back from you!

Ying turns back and heads up stairs.

GEORGE
 Young man, can you pay it up front? I mean, if you want to stay, can you pay the first month now?

YING
 Sure, of course I can!

4 INT. YING'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ying checks his 500 bucks cash, and put it on the top of the table. Ying's laptop makes some beep. It's Ying's MOM (50). She's dialing Ying.

Ying open up the screen and talk to his Mom.

MOM
 怎么样, 住的地方找到了吗?

(How's you going? You found a place to live?)

YING
 算是找着了吧, 我现在住的这家家庭旅馆, 这个业主好像有意让我长期租下来他的一间卧室。你们放心吧!

(Kind of, I'm living in a homestay hotel now, the house holder may allow me to rent one of his bedroom.)

MOM
 诶! 美国是不是挺乱的啊? 我看国内的新闻每天报道美国街头打枪, 你可是千万小心啊! 晚上不要再街上乱走啊!

(Be careful, honey, the domestic television reports the American's shooting crime everyday. Don't roam around at night!)

YING
好好好, 没你想象的那么严重

(All right, actually, It's not that scary.)

5 INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT-

George is in his pajama waiting in front of the microwave oven.

Ying takes a stack of cash goes down stairs.

YING
Mr. George, if you decided to accept me, please take it. It's for the first month.

GEORGE
Ok, I can tell you like my place, I'll take it.

George gets the cash from Ying and count it.

YING
All right, then, thank you very much Mr. George, I hope we will have great time living together!

The micro wave oven beeps. Ying opens the door and take the tray out.

GEORGE
Thank you Young, it's my dinner. That table please.

Ying puts the cake down on the table.

GEORGE
Sit down, it's not enough for two persons, but help your self, take some slices.

YING
Thank you, Mr. George.

GEORGE
Young - da? What are you studying?

YING
Engineering. By the way, It's Ying da.

Don't worry, Americans always have a hard time with Chinese names.

GEORGE

China, we were enemy weren't we?

George teases Ying.

YING

But we are friends now. Just like you and me.

GEORGE

Have you been taught in the history class, back to 1950s, China and America had a fight over in Korea? The Korean war.

YING

Yes, I know about it.

GEORGE

Unfortunately, my father was an American soldier, and he was killed by the Chinese soldier over there. Let me show you something.

George gets off of his chair and grabs a book shows it to Ying.

YING

Oh, I feel so sorry about that, Mr. George.

GEORGE

Let by gone be by gone, though it's chiche, but never mind. Now, here, I've wrote a short novel to commemorate my father.

It's a picture on the front page, George points to the soldier in the picture.

GEORGE

(cont'd)

If you want to read it, I can lend it to you.

George hands the book to Ying. Ying receives it.

YING
Thank you Mr. George, I'll read it. So
you are a writer?

GEORGE
Yeah, kind of. Just kill the old man's
boring time. Also, you know my
granddaughter, I mean the college, she
needs money. As you saw early on
today, I just kicked off a new novel.
It's about our family. You know we
used to have a family company, so many
joys and so many pains. I just want to
write it down on paper and share our
story with the world. More
importantly, to make some money.

Ext. shot of them both in the kitchen. Two bedrooms lights
are on.

6 INT. YING'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ying puts up some decorations and makes his room neat and
clean. He lays in the bed leisurely.

7 EXT. SCHOOL STREET - DAY-

It's a sunny day, Ying is reading books under a beautiful
maple tree.

8 EXT. FRONT YARD - DAY

George opens up his mailbox and takes some mails out from it.

A B&B GUEST 1 (30s) carrying his bag and hand the key over to
George.

Title: Autumn.

GEORGE
Thank you for choosing my cottage.

GUEST 1
You had a bad sleep, you were
struggled last night and that mainly
because you didn't have a smooth ride
on your business. Am I right?

GEORGE
You bet. How did you know that?

GUEST 1
Well, I tell when I'm seeing people.

Ying passes by and goes in the house.

GEORGE
How about him?

GUEST 1
Tall, neat, he's merged in his work.
And he must be rich!

9 INT. YING'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ying is reading his engineering books in front of his desk.

GEORGE
(V.O.)
Ying da, the dinner is ready. Come out
and take some Pizza!

Ying turns his head and yells to the out door.

YING
Coming.

10 INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

George opens up a Pizza box on the table and cuts it by half.

Ying walks down stairs and talks to George.

YING
I wonder if you just like to have food
alone. The last time we sat down and
ate together was a month ago.

GEORGE
Well, I wonder you are always busy.
You go out early and come back late,
every - day!

YING
But if you have some goodies for me,
I'm glad to have it.

GEORGE
Anyway, good stuff should be shared.

Just like the Pizza.

George hands some mails to Ying.

GEORGE

(cont'd)

And I think you are also ready to share the bills. Electric, water, trash..

YING

Okay, all right.

GEORGE

And as you see during the last month, I had a lot of guests, even some guests wanted stay in my place but I do not have enough space for them. You see the beautiful maple trees all around? This place is getting hot for tourists. So based on the market value, you should give me at least 650 dollars for next month.

YING

No, wait, you want to raise the price? Sorry, I can't pay that much. We both agreed on 500 bucks at the very beginning; you cannot go back on your word. I have no more money to pay you!

GEORGE

I mean, if you can't make that much, a lot of tourists are looking for a nice place to live, like here. Don't forget it's my house.

YING

Okay, i know what's your mean, I'll move out.

GEORGE

Take it easy, Yingda, I know it's not a problem for you. I know you Chinese guys are rich; it's merely 650 dollars, Yingda. I see Chinese students at your age driving nice cars roaming around everyday.

YING

Not all the Chinese people are rich

okay? I'm just from a middle class family.

GEORGE

Oh, come on, you came to America to study and you tell me you don't have money?

YING

It's an international cooperation program, you understand? I can only get a small amount of subsistence allowance each month. If I were rich, why would I stay in your house?

GEORGE

See, I have a nice house, quiet, clean, and not far to your school. As you said previously, win-win. But look right now, I lost my money and you got the benefit!

Ying laughs.

YING

you lost? I'm sorry Mr. George. You agreed on 500. I can't afford more!

GEORGE

You speak as if you are the victim. But you come to America, take our jobs, take our money, learn our technology....

Ying stands up and puts the chair back.

YING

What did you say? Ok, I'll leave.

George stretches his arms and have no word.

Ying takes his jacket and rushes out of the door.

GEORGE

Go! Get out! Don't you know a real-estate developer bought out all the land around the campus? It's a monopoly now! Give your 800 bucks to those fat cats then! Go! Don't come back!

GEORGE
(mutters)
See if I care.

EXT Shot, only 1 bedroom's light on

11 INT. GEORGE'S BEDROOM -NIGHT

George in his pajamas sits in front of his laptop. The cursor stops and George frowns.

GEORGE
(mutter)
His Father.... Father.. Mother.. What
is the plot question....

George gets up and goes out.

12 INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

George grabs some snacks from the refrigerator and goes up stairs.

George passes by Ying's bedroom. The door's wide open and it's dark inside. George freezes by the door frame and gazes inside for a while.

GEORGE
(mutter)
Where did the boy go?

George goes back to his bedroom.

13 INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

George is writing his novel on the couch.

Ying enters the door.

GEORGE
I said don't come back. Didn't you
hear that?

YING
Of course I heard that. I, I come back
to take my suitcase.

GEORGE
What? And to pay 800 bucks to those
fat cat?

YING
What cat?

GEORGE
To the scumbag that bought out all the
land surrounding the campus?

YING
It's none of your business.

George laughs out loud.

Ying goes straight heads to his room.

GEORGE
You know, you are cute when you're
getting angry.

Ying stops his steps and turns back with smile.

YING
Fuck you. George, your prejudice is
not right.

GEORGE
Sorry, my boy. My mind always goes
crazy. No, wait, you just said "fuck"
to me, why should I say sorry to you?

YING
500. I really cannot afford more.
Please.

GEORGE
All right. 500 in cash. But to
compensate my loss, you gotta do some
house work to make up for it. What do
you think?

Ying recites.

YING
George felt like a loser, Ying want
to be kind to help George out. So,
Ying decided to accept George's
request. But! But! To prevent somebody
breaking the promise again, Ying want
they both writ down the agreement on
paper. Is that ok? Mr. George?

15.

GEORGE
All right, all right.

MONTAGE START.

Ying and George writes the signature on the paper.

YING
Signature.

GEORGE
Signature!

14 INT. KITCHEN -DAY

George is packing the trash bags.

GEORGE
(yells to other room)
How many times did I tell you, the
milk jug is recyclable! Don't put it
in the trash!

15 EXT. FRONT YARD - DAY

George takes a box of detergent in one hand and holding a jar
in the other hand. Ying stands by his side.

GEORGE
So, to prevent the entire box from
getting wet, you should spoon out the
detergent into this jar. Take as much
as you need.

CUT TO

Ying spoons out a spoon-full of detergent and rushes out.

16 INT. GUEST'S ROOM - DAY

Ying is vacuuming the guests' room.

MONTAGE END.

17 INT. GEORGE'S BEDROOM -NIGHT

George puts his pajamas on and sits in his chair. He faces
the computer screen, and frowns.

GEORGE
(mutters)

The money. The mother left her.....

George hears a voice from Ying's room. He stands up and goes out.

GEORGE
Oh, Jesus.

18 INT. YING'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ying is laying in bed talking with his mother.

George knocks the door from outside.

YING
Come in!

GEORGE
Young man! Have I told you don't make noises after 11?

YING
Oh, sorry!

Ying faces the computer.

YING
(to Mom)
妈, 房东说11点后要安静, 我先挂了啊!

(Mom, the land lord rules have to be quiet after 11. I have to hang up.)

Ying closes the computer and faces George.

YING
I was saying goodbye to my Mom.

George turns around and shuts the door. But when he's about shut the door, he stoped. George turns back.

YING
I'm sorry sir.

George puts his palm up. (gesture of "no need")

GEORGE
By the way, I'm writing my novel. Can I ask you something?

YING
Sure, what's up?

GEORGE
So, what conditions would drive a mother to heartlessly abandon her child?

YING
There might be a lot of reasons. Maybe because of the finical constraint? Maybe because the father betrayed her?

GEORGE
No, the father died.

YING
Ok, then, the money. Because she doesn't have enough money to raise the baby. You know, it happens in China.

GEORGE
I'm afraid the finical constraint is too plain, you know, not that dramatic. But you know Flora, my granddaughter, her mother becomes the truck driver after her husband, which is my son died. She cannot drive Flora around the country every day. Flora needs to go to school. So my granddaughter lives with me. As the time passes, her mother just disappears.

YING
Oh, really? So sad. George, but that's actually a nice story to tell. I remember you told me you are writing about your family right?

GEORGE
Yeah.

YING
Then, tell the right thing, tell the truth to your reader.

GEORGE
All right, maybe I'll rework it tomorrow. (pause) Don't mention this in front of Flora. It will make her

sad.

George turns back and is about to shut the door. But he turns back.

GEORGE
(cont'd)
By the way, Flora will come back for
Christmas.

George turns back and is about to shut the door. But he turns back.

GEORGE
(cont'd)
Thank you!

YING
You're welcome.

George eventually goes out.

19 EXT. STREET -DAY

WINTER SCENERY SHOT.

Title: Christmas EVE

20 EXT. FRONT YARD - DAY

George is hanging some washed blankets in the front yard.

Yingda comes back with tired face. He goes straight to the house.

GEORGE
Ying! Ying! Come over here! I know you
deliberately come back late to elude
from the house work. Get me another
jar of detergent!

YING
(V.O.)
Hold on, I'm coming!

After a short while, Ying takes a jar of detergent out.

GEORGE
I'm freezing!

George points to a water bottle.

GEORGE

(cont'd)

Refill this bottle with mostly hot water and a little bit cold. I need it probably around 100 degrees!

YING

Sorry, I use Celsius.

GEORGE

Make it warm but not hot!

YING

All right, all right.

Ying rushes out of screen.

21 INT. KITCHEN -DAY

Ying is mixing the cold and hot water together.

YING

(mutter)

Weird.

22 EXT. FRONT YARD - DAY

Ying carries the bottle rushes to George.

YING

The entire world is using Celsius, Kilograms, and Meters. Not something like Fahrenheit, pound or foot.

George takes the bottle and takes a sip.

GEORGE

Go up stairs and vacuum the guest's room!

Ying puts his hands on George's shoulder.

YING

Hey, George, you maybe want to learn some Chinese sometimes?

GEORGE

Why should I learn some Chinese? The entire world is speaking English, even you can speak English!

YING
See, this! The water, the water is
"shui". Try it!

GEORGE
No! No!

YING
Shui.

GEORGE
How do I say I'm thirsty?

YING
Kele.

GEORGE
Kele.

YING
It sounds close to "Cola". "Coca-
Cola." "Kele" is thirsty. You are
thirsty, you want some Cola.
"shui" "kele."

GEORGE
"kele." Go find the Coca-Cola
advertisement chair and pitch this
idea to them! Now, go vacuum the
guest's room!

YING
All right, all right, sir!

Ying is on his way to go inside.

YING
(cont'd)
You said Flora is going to come back
but tomorrow is the Christmas, where
is she?

GEORGE
She's not going to come back this
year.

23 INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT (OPTIONAL SCENE)

Ying and George sit together in the house on the side of the
dinner table, It's snowing outside.

24 EXT. STREET -DAY

Snow Scenery.

George in his thick jacket is heading back to home, a GUEST 2 (35) just leaves.

Title: January.

GUEST 2
Such a nice place!

GEORGE
You had a great time?

GUEST 2
Yeah of course, my flight is in two hours.

GEORGE
Well, you gotta be quick then. Thank you for choosing my cottage! Hope you have a great day!

GUEST 2
Have a good one!

25 INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Ying puts his legs on the couch and his shoes are messed. He's cutting the paper-cut on the couch.

George gets in the house.

GEORGE
Ehh, Look who's it is!

YING
Who's that?

GEORGE
You! Look where your shoes are and how you're sitting?

Ying sits up and collects his shoes together.

YING
Sorry man.

GEORGE
Think about the first day you came

into this house, what a gentleman.
Now, what a monster.

YING
But George, I feel like I'm in my own
home now. I want to thank you, thank
you for giving me a nice and steady
home so I can put all of my effort
into my research work.

GEORGE
Cut it out.

YING
Sincerely.

George nods to the paper-cut art.

GEORGE
What is that?

YING
It's Chinese paper-cut! We put it on
the window before the New Year.
Actually, the Chinese New Year is 3
days from now, the Spring Festival.
Our tradition is to stay with family.
But I'm over seas. George, may I ask,
can I bring some of my friends in your
house on that day?

GEORGE
You want hold a party? Forget it! Go
party at your friend's houses! But not
in my house!

George takes off his jacket and hangs it up.

GEORGE
I'm going out of town. But I'll tell
the neighbors to keep an eye on my
house!

YING
You are going out of town?

GEORGE
Yeah. To pitch my new book to some old
friends. They know people so I'm just
looking for ways to selling my new
book.

YING
You finished it?

GEORGE
Yes, not too long ago.

YING
Can you tell me the story of the book?

GEORGE
Too long! I'm tired.

YING
But you are going to pitch it to your
friend anyhow. Pitch it to me, it's
the practice for you!

GEORGE
Vacuum the guest's room! Wait, you
don't have home work to do?

YING
I'm done! It's finished!

GEORGE
Well, congratulations! Go vacuum!

YING
Tell me the story first!

GEORGE
It's Too long! I can give you a copy,
but I bet you didn't finish my Korean
War book. Am I right? Now, go do your
work!

YING
You pitch it to me then I'll go
vacuum!

CUT TO

George sits on a chair.

Ying sits down on another chair, which is face to George.

YING
Ok, my old friend, tell me your story!

George pats the dust on his shirt.

GEORGE

A diligent, hardworking father raises his boy up in an American middle class family. That boy was an only child because his Mom couldn't have more children, you know, she got some problem. The boy was so loved by his parents. After the boy grew up, he won the love of a girl and they started a business and a family together. Not long after, their boy becomes a father himself and the father becomes the grandfather. But the financial crisis in 2008 destroyed their family company and the father was killed in an accident. The family didn't believe that was merely an accident because he was so much in debt. Grandma passes away right after her son from her grief. The grandfather takes years searching for murder evidence for his son. The mother became a truck driver to make a living but eventually abandons the family. "The Family Album" was torn apart.

Ying was stunned.

YING

Truck driver, and goes away. So the truck driver is Flora's Mom, and the grandpa is.

GEORGE

Yes, it's my biography. What do you think?

YING

It's nice, I mean, the book, the story is nice. But I feel sorry about that, Mr. George.

GEORGE

Sorry? Sorry about what?

YING

Your loss.

GEORGE

Don't be. I mean, no one was born to stay with me. People may depart. But

they are in here.

George points to his heart.

26 INT. YING'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ying puts up the paper-cut on his windows, then dials to his Mom.

MOM

过年不回来呀? 你说你就知道玩! 明天我们去奶奶家, 准备年夜饭。大年初二回姥姥家!

(You are not going back for the Spring Festival? There are a lot of fun in America right? Tomorrow we'll go to grandma's house, to prepare the dinner.)

YING

爷爷奶奶身体还好吗? 姥姥姥爷呢?

(How's grandpa and grandma?)

MOM

都好着呢! 你爷爷人家每年都坚持冬泳!

(They're good. Your grandpa kept swimming during the winter!)

Ext. Shot of one bedroom lights on.

27 EXT. STREET - NIGHT

George is heading to his house.

GEORGE

(mutters)

All they want is money... What a friend....

George sees his house is dark, he goes in.

28 INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

George takes off his jacket and carries some snacks goes upstairs.

George stopped in front of Ying's bedroom, realizes that all his personal stuff was moved away. George stands there for a long time, gazes inside of the dark bedroom.

George gradually goes in the dark bedroom, stands on the middle of the room and looks around the walls. Then, he goes out.

George picked up an envelop in front of his bedroom.

YING

(V.O.)

Forgive me for the leaving without saying goodbye. I'm going to go back to join my family for the Spring Festival. The 650 bucks is for the last month, you forgot to ask for the money from me. I'll miss you, my friend. Ying Da.

George is laying in his bed, hard to fall asleep.

29 INT. YING'S BEDROOM - DAY

George tears the paper-cut down on the window and throw it into the trash.

George pulls the blanket out from Ying's bedroom.

GEORGE

(mutters)

Young people.... Young people...What a Chinese man!

30 EXT. FRONT YARD - DAY

George hangs the blankt up.

GEORGE

(mutters)

He doesn't like my book... What a jerk...I'll win Pulitzer.... May be Oscar...

Then, George realizes he run out of the cloth pins. (Give a hint beforehand)

GEORGE

(Yells)

Ying! Da!

No answers. George freezes there for a second, he smacks his lips.

GEORGE
Kele, shui.

31 INT. YING'S BEDROOM - DAY

George picks up the paper cut from the trash can and carries it to his bedroom.

32 INT. GEORGE'S BEDROOM - DAY

George sticks the paper cuts together and put it up on the window.

Exterior shot, camera pulls afar.

END

Screen Shots









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Assistant Director Ricky Panipinto
Art Maria Gesek
 Komal Ashfaq
Sound Mixing/Boom Junnan Xia
 Robert Stokes
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Special Thanks



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