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Life In The Noodles

By

Junnan Xia

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

, 2019



Thesis Approval

Thesis Title

Thesis Author

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degree of --- select a degree ---
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Rochester Institute of Technology | Rochester, New York

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Abstract:

One day, a Chinese international student, Zhou Yu, is considering his going home to China, since he doesn't have a good life in America. That day, when Yu is in the supermarket shopping, he sees his ex-girl friend, Chen Xue. Xue is friendly and asks Yu to come to her home and she wants to treat Yu a bowl of noodles, which is her special treat that she made for Yu before. Yu struggles but finally he is moved by Xue's great passion. When they arrived at Xue's place, they start to eat and talk. Xue is curious about Yu's life through these years. And Yu starts to talk about it. And he finally realizes that Xue is such an important person to him. In the end, Xue looks at Yu to leave, and Yu gradually walks further and further away.

Tags: Romance, Live-Action, Drama, Comedy

Introduction:

A very interesting thing is that I got this idea when I watched a cup noodles advertisement¹ in the summer of 2018. The advertisement shows a man eating a cup of noodles which is made by his mother. Both of them show their happy smiles on the screen. That moment, I realized that maybe I should film something I'm more familiar with, which is the food. Food is a great relationship bridge in the Asian culture. Whether you want to build a relationship or want to end a relationship, you could always treat someone a meal². Thus, in my film, I would like to set the noodles as an entry point. Because, first, the noodles is a good culture icon to represent China. I saw noodles in films like *KongFu Panda*³ or *Blade Runner*⁴. It is always there as a cultural representation. Second, it is well-known. Everyone has eaten noodles, or at least has seen it before. So, there will be no big cultural barriers to the western audience. And I really want to avoid creating cultural barriers between us and western audience. Another thing is, I'm a grad student who has been here for three years. I've experienced a lot and have seen a lot during these years. Thus, I would like to mix the things I've experienced, or I know, and also mix the others' stories together to put them into this film. Therefore, I would like to use different kinds of noodles to represent other characters' relationships with my protagonist. These are my thoughts and starting point of this film. In my opinion, the relationship between people is as complicated as noodles, sometimes irrelevant, and sometimes intertwined. Interpersonal relationships have always been a topic I like very much, so I think it would be a very interesting thing to discuss these in this movie.

¹ Cup Noodles Advertisement: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ViwrdrnVqBU>

² <https://asiasociety.org/blog/asia/food-chinese-culture>

³ KongFu Panda Wiki: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kung_Fu_Panda

⁴ Blade Runner Ramen Scene: <http://www.criticalcommons.org/Members/vaparedes/clips/bladerunner-gaffintro.mov/view>

Review of Research:

Plot Inspirations:

This Is Not What I Expected - Derek Hui (2017)

Eat Drink Man Woman - Ang Lee (1994)

One Step Away - Yonghao Luo (2011)

Directing Approaches:

Inside-out

Action verbs

Improvisation

Process:

Re-Propose

The making of my thesis film, “Life in the Noodles”, was a long, hard but interesting journey. I had so many unforgettable experiences during this process. In this report, I would like to share with you my real stories during the making of this film. Also, I will talk about how I put everything together, and how I solved the problems.

Everything started during the spring semester of 2018, when all the graduate students were on the thesis preparation class. The teacher of that class, Cat Ashworth, told us that we need to start making our thesis films. She also told us that everything, including ideas, proposal, and plans of shooting should be prepared well within several weeks. However, in the meeting, it seemed like none of us had solid ideas about our upcoming thesis film. But we all should have one since we all want to graduate from school. After several weeks of thinking, I had an idea about shooting a film based on my friend, Reddy Manojh. He is a great film student from India. We’ve cooperated several times in my films, and his real-life story is full of complications. So, while I was thinking about him, I started to write the proposal. This story is about a student who gets stuck while he is creating his thesis film and how he gets out of it. And big parts of my film are about the slices of his life.

Soon I finished the proposal and I pitched it to the committees. However, most of the teachers disliked my idea. The biggest problem they said about the story was that there is no interesting conflicts or characters’ arc in it. One animation teacher told me that I should reconsider and pitch them a better story. After the meeting, I looked at my proposal and became lost in

thoughts. I did have a similar feeling that my story is not that interesting. But it was really hard to come up with another solid one quickly.

After the summer vacation, which is around the end of August, I realized that I have two options for the thesis: I would rather re-propose another one, or maintain the old story and shoot it. I struggled for a long time. Because I didn't think that the old story was mediocre. It has some possibilities. On the other hand, I had to admit that the old story was uninteresting. In conclusion, I've been through some hard times.

However, you can never tell when the inspiration will hit you. Several weeks later, I coincidentally clicked a noodles commercial, and it changed everything. The advertisement is pretty simple. It just shows a man eating a cup of noodles which is made by his mother, and both of them are smiling. It's a very simple video. But to me, it just opened my mind. I realized that maybe I should build a story based on a common subject we are all familiar with – noodles. Then, I started to find some reference films that depict food and human relationship. I re-watched Ang Lee's *Eat Drink Man Woman*⁵ and a 2017 Chinese romance *This Is Not What I Expected*⁶, and some other films. During those times, I realized that the food was always a great representation of people's relationship. Tons of famous Asian films used it as a relationship bridge among different characters, and it worked very well every single time. With these concepts in mind, I started to write my new proposal.

⁵ *Eat Drink Man Woman* IMDB: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0111797/>

⁶ *This Is Not What I Expected* IMDB: https://www.imdb.com/title/tt6772874/?ref_=fn_al_tt_1

On the re-propose meeting, I pitched the story to my committees. Luckily, they all liked it. So, I passed the re-propose without any doubt. After the meeting, professor Malcolm Spauld reminded me that I should start writing script very soon since it is mid-September. I felt the same feeling of anxiety. But, with the encouragement that all the teachers gave me, I felt powerful and inspired. I started writing the script soon.

Script Writing

The creation of my script took me a lot of time. At first, I created a basic story structure of my idea. I wanted to tell a simple story about a dispirited Chinese international student who meets his ex-girlfriend one day, and the girl treats him a bowl of noodles for dinner. Then they start to recall their old times. Also, I wanted to have some specific plot points in the story. For instance, I wanted 3 different characters representing 3 different kinds of noodles there, I wanted the film to cut from the past and the present back and forth, and some other things like these. Professor Malcolm Spauld supported me a lot. He also gave me a precious suggestion on cultural background and rationality. Also, for the first version, he suggested for me to try to put some comedy elements into the story, since I got some fun plots there. In the beginning, I refused to do that. Because what I wanted is a serious, subtle story. However, I reconsidered that a little bit. And I found that maybe professor Malcolm Spauld was right. So I wrote the “cheating scene” in a funny way. I have to admit I enjoyed it. After that, I did another draft and gave it to Malcolm.

Before I start to talk about my second draft, I want to explain something. At the early stage on the script creating, I have 3 characters representing 3 different kinds of noodles: protagonist’s ex-girlfriend, her metaphor is soya bean paste noodles, and it represents for good times.

Protagonist's roommate, his metaphor is instant noodles and it represents for corrupted, wasted life. Protagonist's American girl, her metaphor is pasta and it represents for a fast, unhealthy relationship.

Now, back to the time when I handed over Malcolm my second draft. When we were talking about the characters of my story, both of us had a feeling that the protagonist's roommate is an extra. Because in the second draft, that guy just lived with the protagonist for a while and left. It seems that the roommate character is a spare character without any interests. He didn't help the protagonist either. So, after the meeting, while I was creating another draft, I decided to throw him away from the story. Hence, when I was on the third version, I wrote a plot that the protagonist only eats instant noodles for a long time after he left the American girl then lives a wasted life on his own. It turned out that both I and professor Malcolm Spauld liked this plot change very much. After several times of minor changes on the script, I finally got my final draft.

Location Scouting

The next big hurdle I needed to get was to get the location scouted. I had five locations to find in total: a big house for the main present time scene, an Asian supermarket, and three different apartments for a different time period of the protagonist's past. Let me share these location scouting experiences one by one. The big house, I found it pretty quick. That house was actually the house of my classmate's actors' house. We met each other during the shootings of my classmate's film. After the shooting, I asked them if they could allow me to use their house for shooting, and they accepted. Their place is pretty big and fancy, it fits my story pretty well.

Then I started to find the three apartments. First, the apartment for the solo scene of the

protagonist. I wanted to choose my Rustic Village apartment for the shootings. Because I thought it was dull and plain, and it should fit my character's situation. However, my DP told me to change it. He thought that place was way too mediocre. The walls were white, no wallpaper, nothing interesting in a word. He wanted it has more background settings or decorations. Thus, I asked around to see if there were any people would let me use their place.

And then I found a first-year film grad student called Komal. Her room fits. And most importantly, her place was on the ground floor, which means we can set up an HMI light very easily. The second apartment for the protagonist and his American girl, I found it on the Air Bnb. It was an OK apartment. Everything was all pretty good, nice dining place and three well-decorated rooms. Most importantly, it was cheap. \$60 per day. I booked it for two days just in case any situation could happen. The host was a pretty nice person, too. When he knew that his place was going to be a part of a film, he was really happy about it. As for the third apartment, I took me a long time to search for, because I didn't want a normal, less interesting apartment. My thought back then was to find a place with some Chinese elements. So I asked around and then one of my friends from VCD said we can use their room to do the shooting. When she showed me the pictures from the place, I was satisfied with them. Since their landlord was Chinese, there were some Chinese decorations in the apartment. It was really good. The last location is the Asian supermarket. Before I went to find this location, I thought it would be really hard. Because in my experience, most of the owners of public location are hard to negotiate with. And I believed that the bigger the location is, the harder the negotiation will be. Once, I was told by a friend that there was an Asian supermarket which is not very big. So one day I paid a visit to that place. It turned out that the owner was super friendly. He didn't even hesitate

for one second when I told him that I want to film in his place. At this point, all my locations were decided. I was happy.

Getting Actors

The next order of the preparation was getting the actors. Technically, it is not complicated to get the actors. The only problem is, can we get the well-experienced actors that can play the roles? And the answer is yes, but it is also really hard. I have five characters in total in my story. Two leading characters, Zhou Yu, the leading male and Chen Xue, the leading female. Three supporting characters, Abby, Zhou Yu's American girlfriend, the guy who slept with Abby, and David, Chen Xue's fiance. Three supporting characters didn't take me a lot of time to find. I found Cody Hunt on my friend Maria Gesek's set and he agreed to play David. I found Abigail Hentschke through the RIT actors Facebook group, and she agreed to play the role, Abby. For the "guy who slept with Abby", I looked for a while. But thankfully, a second-year grad student, Kyle Padden, was willing to be that role. One interesting thing was that I was asking if Kyle can take his clothes off or not during the shooting. He laughed first. Then he asked me if I really want to see it since he thought his shape was not "camera-friendly". In the end, I let him put a shirt on when we were doing shootings. As for the leading characters, I've explored such a long time to finally get them. In this film, I need these two leading characters to speak both Chinese and English, and age should better be the 20s. Besides, I also wanted them to be attractive. Since I got so many requirements for these roles, I spent about one and half a month to find them out. At first, I asked a friend of mine who studied at New York University to see if he could help me find some actors, because I've heard that NYU has a big actor pool. Then I got two Chinese actors, and both of them are New York University, international students. The male names Sihan Xue. The female

names Wen Liu. I auditioned them once. They did pretty good while they were in the audition. It seemed like everything was good so far. However, I finally decided to use the local actors due to some reasons. First, locals cost less money. Both Xue and Liu were in New York. If I invited them to come to Rochester, I needed to pay for the flight, the hotel, and the food. It would raise the budget. Second, if there were any pick-ups I need them to do, then I need to invite them to come back again for me. That would take a lot of time and money from me. Thus, I aimed from them to be the locals. Then I got two animators, the male called Yizhang Liu, and the female called Xuting Liu. I auditioned Yizhang first. He acted before, but not a lot. He was really good at showing strong emotions, and I liked it. Then I auditioned Xuting. She said she never acted before. But during the audition, I thought both her body language and the facial expressions were impressive. Hence, I decided to let them be my two leading actors. And these are the stories of me finding actors.

Other Preparations

In preparation for shooting I rehearsed with the actors and prepared a storyboard. The rehearsal was pretty good, all my actors gave me great actings back then. I was really satisfied with that. Storyboard took me a lot of time to draw since I'm not a good artist. I tried my best to draw the shots from my mind and make them understandable to the DP. Another interesting preparation was art. Since I got lots of scenes of eating, a big part of my film's art was about food. I spent about \$400 on the food art. For instance, noodles, pasta, sauce, meat, etc. I really enjoyed cooking this "arts" for my film. It was really fun. After preparing this stuff, I did some other preparations like negotiations and lots of calls. Then, I moved onto the shooting process.

Shooting

Finally comes to the shooting process, and it was a really painful but interesting experience. The first shooting happened last year, which was December 7th, 2018. And I made tons of mistakes that day. We started at 11:00 in the morning. Well, I should say on the call sheet, the shooting call time was 11:00 am. When it was 11:00 am, almost everybody was on set and stand by. But, when I was there, I didn't find the leading male. I went crazy when I discovered in this situation. Then I called him like 30 times, and he didn't answer the phone. Meanwhile, everybody was waiting for me. After 1 minute's consideration, I told my DP Reddy to set up for our first scene, and I would go to his place to take him here. So I drove to his place, knocked on the door very loudly, but no one answered. I was confused. Several seconds later, he opened the door with bloody eyes. I asked him why. And he told me that he stayed up very late last night because he was dealing with his 3D animation assignment. It was understandable, but it was really killing me at that time. So I took him to the set and finally we started working. When we arrived on the set, it seemed like Reddy and my crew has already set up everything. I was glad that Reddy always has our backs. Then I let Yizhang change his clothes, we shot some shots, and the "solo scene" went pretty good and smoothly. Except for "the cooking noodles" part. We really spent a lot of time on cooking. We eventually made it.

Next scene we needed to do was the opening scene. Before we talk about that, let me explain something here. In the solo scene, the leading male was supposed to be sloppy and untidy. Thus, I let him to keep his hair and beards for a long time. And in the opening scene, the leading male was supposed to be clean and neat. Back to the shooting. So, after we wrapped for the "solo scene", I sent my actor and another crew to get him a haircut. Getting his hair cut took me entire afternoon. We waited on set for 3 hours. When I had him on set, it was around 5:00 pm. We quickly got him dressed

up and finished the opening scene within one and a half hours. When it was 7:00 pm, I realized we really needed to move on. We wrapped very fast and then drove to the next location, the house. After the dinner, I felt like we definitely couldn't finish all the scenes within one night. Thus, I discussed with Reddy about this, and we reached an agreement with each other. I finished some parts of the dining scenes, then we wrapped for the first day.

We started around 10:00 in the morning on the second day. Everything was set up really quick. The shooting happened around 11:00 am. The first dining scene was shot fast and fluently. Then we moved to the next big set up, which was the cheating scene. We waited there till Kyle Padden showed up, because he was an important character in the scene. It was a fun experience, to be honest. Before I started shooting, I was a little bit afraid that my actor and actress won't take their clothes off. However, they did it for me. I really appreciate that. In the late afternoon, around 7:00 pm, I was done with my shooting part. When it came to the late-night, I gave my actress a phone-call and I wanted her to prepare for the Sunday shooting. But, since she was an animator, and she was super busy during that time, she told me that she couldn't make it. I was stunned there for a second. So, I had to cancel the second day shooting for this. When I got home, I emailed everyone and told them not need to come for Sunday shooting. I have to admit that I was so desperate that I wanted to give up the film. Then I realized that people need to move on. And you need to face the music. After that period of time, we came to the Spring semester of 2019. And then my second part of shooting began.

It was February, and the first big problem that I had for the second part of the shooting was that I couldn't get the help from Manojh Reddy anymore. Back then, Manojh was in LA and he was busy on a feature film project. However, at the beginning of the semester, he told me that he would come

back for my film. I waited for about a week. Then he told me that he couldn't make it since he had a tight schedule. It was reasonable, because he was not a student any longer. He should be responsible for his own business. After that, it was almost the mid-February and I had to do the shooting. At last, I chose the second-year grad film student, Bo Gao, to be my DP. We had worked together several times before. I should say he is a trustworthy guy on the cinematography. I asked him and he agreed. Then I quickly rescheduled with my other crew members, the location owners, and the actors. The shooting will be started on February 15 and February 17. And the reason that we couldn't do on the 16 was because that the house's location owners, they would host a party on that day. Besides, these two days were probably my last major shooting days. Since my DP Bo Gao told me in advance that after helping me finish my film, he would start to work on his own film. So, that weekend was my last chance. It made me feel stressful, but we needed to make it.

February 15 was a nice but cold day. In the morning I didn't do anything special but some preparations. I decided to do the shooting in the afternoon around 6:00 pm, because the scene we were going to deal with was a night scene, and we need to wait for the sun to completely go down, then we start to shoot. Around 5:00 pm, I was at the cage to do the equipment checking out. At the same time, I was calling my leading actor to come to the cage to meet me. However, I called him for about 4 or 5 times, and he didn't answer me. With every single call I did, I became more and more anxious. I was so afraid of the scenario that happened last time would happen again. Nevertheless, I still couldn't reach him. Gradually, I became disappointed and angry. When the time was around 5:30 pm, all the types of equipment were fully loaded, and my crew members were waiting for my next guide. I was like an ant under the magnifying glass, super stressful and "being burnt". After a minute, I let other crew members go to the location to set up the scene. Almost at the same time. my actor

finally showed up.

However, when I saw him, there was no comfort but anger. I rushed to him, pointing him with my finger and yelled at him angrily. At that point, there was nothing I would like to do but question and curse him. Because I thought it was him slowed down the whole shooting process. He was the person who ruined my well-planned schedule. Facing my question, he couldn't deny too much. He defended himself one or two times by saying "I called you several time but you didn't answer the phone". I certainly wouldn't buy this excuse, it was true that I didn't take the phone call, but it was not a great excuse to me. The argument lasted about 5 or 6 minutes. Finally, he couldn't stand anymore. He shouted to me angrily and said: "If you dare to shout me one more second, I'll quit the acting". I was stunned, because this was not what I expected. My brain stopped working for 3 seconds. Then I realized that maybe I blamed him too much, and we still needed to do the shooting for tonight. I changed my attitude from anger to being sorry. I apologized to him about my bad behavior before. I said "I was too angry to control myself", "sorry about the strong words I gave you" bla bla. At that point, all the things I tried to do was to keep him and let him finish the shooting for me. Like I said before, this might be my last chance to shoot. I tried to be as humble as possibly. Maybe I convinced him, or maybe his anger faded away. After a while, he agreed to continue to do the shooting for me. I felt so relieved when he said that he could still act for me. So we got into our cars and headed to the location. The sun went down very quickly and it was almost evening time. I knew I wasted some time and we needed to speed up.

When we arrived at the location, the time was around 6:30 pm. The good thing was, my crew members, set up the lighting and arts for the shooting already. I should say my DP also did the AD's

job and he did it pretty well. But at this point, I thought we should eat first. Because everybody was hungry and we needed to work the whole night. When it was about 7:30pm, we ate some Chinese food for dinner. We finally started shooting. While everybody else was eating, I was checking my call sheet and shot list. I had 6 scenes to shoot in this house location. I felt so stressed that I barely eat.

The first shot was an introduction shot of the house, which was the entering of the actor and the actress. My DP suggested me to use a dolly shot to reveal the environment of this house since this house was nice and well-decorated. So we spent some time setting up the dolly and the tracks. It was supposed to be quick, however, the dolly operator and my DP spent some time to cooperate. This dolly shot took us about 45 minutes to finish. It was acceptable. “We still got time”, that was my thought back then.

Then, we decided to finish the character, David’s scene, who was played by Kody Hunt. I thought that his part wouldn’t be that hard. But when it came to real life, it was still challenging. We shot the noodles eating scene first. And there were some issues with the noodles. First, the noodles were dried very quickly. If you don't shoot quickly enough, the noodles would be dried very fast, which would affect the final effect we wanted to present. Second, it took some time to prepare noodles. I can't cook a lot of noodles every time because our pot was not big enough. Third, the soybean paste should always be on the top of the noodles and it should look nice and well-placed. However, actors were asked to mix the noodles and the paste during the scene, which means, we can’t do too many tries because it would waste a lot of time to prepare new noodles. Although the scene had some challenges, we still needed to do it. I really appreciated my DP, Bo. Before we shot, he also suggested me to use the dolly to do a zooming shot. That was a really good idea, even though tried many times. Finally, we

got this opening shot for the dining scene. Then we moved on to the close up of the noodles, which looked great through the camera. Then we did some shots about David. After that, we also did some shots about the actress, and some shots about the actor. I really should say Kody was a talented actor. Although sometimes he over-act a little bit, but once you point the problem out, he could always correct it perfectly. Also, he was such a gentleman on set, and everyone appreciated his acting. After the opening of this dining scene, the real challenging part, the eating part, came.

The reason why this scene was very challenging was that if you want to create the kind of effect that makes the audience feel the same, it requires an actor's acting skill a lot. Moreover, as I said earlier, because of the lack of preparation for our props, the shooting of this scene cannot have too many tries. Thus, my DP, my actors and I have planned and rehearsed for a long time to avoid the mistakes that we might encounter with. Gradually, the noodles got cold. But I didn't want it being cold since I prefer them warm and steaming. However, time was precious to us. We didn't have time to cook another one. Kody, again showed me his greatness. He told me that he was OK with the cold noodles, and I asked him to devour the noodles as it was written on the script. He didn't say too much and tried his best to make it. So while we were shooting the scene, all the actors were eating cold noodles and pretended they were fresh and delicious. They really gave me good performance. I want to appreciate everyone's hard work on that scene. When the scene was done, it was around 12:30 am. Even though we tried our best to make it quick, it still took us about 5 hours to finish, and after finishing this scene, Kody wrapped for his part. Next, we moved on to our leading actor and actress's part.

When it came to around 12:45 am, we cleaned up the table and got ready for the scenes of the actor and the actress. Since it was the late-night, or you could say the early morning, everyone started to show their tiredness. Basically, these scenes were all conversation scenes, with few blockings but

tons of dialogues. Perhaps because he was too sleepy, both my actor and actress often forgot lines when we were doing the scene. In addition to a large number of lines, they also started to make some minor mistakes such as looking at the camera or breaking the continuity. Plus, some of my crew members asked for leave for different reasons. At that time, I understood they were tired and sleepy. But I need people to help me. So I tried to let them stay as much as they could. At 2:00 am, there were only my DP, one of my crew members, my two actors and me there. I forget to mention, my friend, Yuan, was the man who delivered food. So he was always on the set doing his writing. Thankfully, he helped us when such terrible situation happened. With the help of Yuan and everyone, we finally finished almost all the scenes for today's shooting schedule. However, there were still some leftovers. For instance, the final scene of our leading actor and actress to say goodbye to each other, and some other short scenes. But, it was already 4:00 am in the morning, everybody was exhausted and tired so much, including me. Therefore, I called a wrap. Everyone had one day break on February 16th, and we planned to finish all the shootings on February 17th.

Finally, it came to February 17th, the last major shooting day of my film. This shooting day was divided into three parts: first, we would complete Yu's memory with Xue in the past. Second, their meet in the Chinese supermarket. Third, the leftovers of the house location. Still, we had tons of things to do within one day. We started with the memory scene around 9:30 am in my friend's place, which was owned by her landlord. At first, things went well. We just did some basic coverage shots. Cooking noodles was still consuming, I should say. I spent a lot of time on it. Then, the argument scene. We took some time to let the actor be into that moment. Actually, the first take was the best one he did. After that take, his emotion faded fast. But I needed another good take to cut. So we worked together to get another good acting. Then we met the biggest challenge of that day -- the bowl throwing. I was

not even afraid of the girl's crying shot. Because she could totally handle that even though she had never been trained before. She was talented and smart, based on the performance she gave. So, what I was really worried about was the argument scene, especially the part that the male protagonist throwing the bowl of noodles on the floor. In fact, I had already made some preparations the day before. For example, I made more noodles in advance, and I bought 4 plastic bowls for shooting. I also discussed with the DP for a while before the start of the shoot. Finally, we decided to divide the plot into two groups of shots, the first was the medium shot of the male's throwing. The second was the close-up of that bowl of noodles, spreading all over on the ground. We also put some unfolded trash bags to cover the floor, since the landlord was always there watching us. Once all the preparations were all set, we started shooting. Just like I expected before, the scene was tough to shoot. It was either that the actor didn't throw the bowl well enough, or the problem from the DP or the boom operator. Eventually, we made it by doing several tries. After we finished it, it was the afternoon time, and the landlord seemed to be a little bit unhappy with our shooting. Because I promised her that it would only take about 2 or 3 hours to finish. For now, we spent almost 5 hours there. I watched the schedule again and decided to do some quick shots of the montage scenes, then we should wrap for this location. So we did some quick shots, then cleaned up this messy place, packed up everything very fast and left this location owned by this unfriendly landlord.

In the late afternoon, we arrived at that Chinese supermarket. After we got there, we started preparations. However, my DP found a problem at this place. That was, this place was actually very narrow. The distance between the shelves was not enough for two people to stand parallelly, and on the storyboard I gave him, they were supposed to stand that way. So I started planning again with DP. Due to the limitations of the space, whatever we tried, we just couldn't perfectly bring the storyboard into

real life. Besides, due to the lack of space, our lighting was also very limited. In short, after a busy period of work, we still completed the shooting of this part. But the final result was not as good as I expected. Nevertheless, time is running very fast. We had no choice but to move on. After we wrapped for this location, we rushed to the last shooting location of that day.

The first thing we did when we arrived at the house was doing some pick-ups. For instance, some short conversations scene and some montage scenes. After those, we went to the doorway outside to do the farewell scene, which was the last part on the script. The last scene was not difficult, but it was too cold, which was a problem. Because the temperature in Rochester back then was very low, staying outdoors was indeed a big challenge for everyone. When we finished shooting, it was about 9:30 in the evening. I talked with my DP about whether I could shoot another scene of the protagonist in the snow, walking alone. But my DP and actresses asked for leave to do their homework, so we had to give up this idea. At this point, our major shootings had been all completed.

Post-productions

For a while, I have been working on the footage managing and doing some other minor works. When it came to March, and after the spring break, I realized that I had to start working on the post-production. It mainly includes the following parts: editing, color correction, sound mixing and music.

Before I went through my post-production process, I want to say that all these works were done simultaneously. Let me talk about the editing first. Because I like editing very much, and I am also good at editing, so I didn't spend too much time on this. The rough cut took less than two days. Then I

met my professor several times and he gave me further feedbacks. I changed it several times according to his instructions. I was also glad that I have covered almost all the scenes I wanted to have during the shooting process, otherwise I wouldn't be able to edit it. So editing was done very quickly. I had a fine cut version in early April.

Then I want to talk about music and sound. I didn't spend too much time on finding music composer. Since RIT filmmakers always have good communications with Eastman students. I found a great music composer named Linyao Zhang quickly. One of my friends highly recommended her because she had done a lot of great works for many films. And it turned out she was really good. She gave me what I wanted and I really appreciated her hardwork. After several revisions, my music part was done in a satisfying way. On the other hand, the sound mixing process was such a long and hard way. I was so worried about the sound from the day when I got my soundtracks. Because there were a lot of noises in many of my scenes, such as the sound from air conditioners in the house or apartments, and there were very loud noises in Chinese supermarkets. For instance, from aquariums and refrigerators. These noises seriously affected the feeling when you watch the film. So I needed a sound expert who can fix these problems very well. I had been looking for a decent sound designer for a long time. What was worse, all good sound designers had been booked, and they had no extra time to help me unless I pay them. But I didn't have more budget on that, so I kept looking for a while. Finally, at the end of March, I found an undergraduate named Brandon. He said that he could help me do the sound work. I believed him very much, so I met him and talked about it. He was very enthusiastic, but he might not be that experienced in sound processing. However, at this point, I had no better choice, I had to trust him. I gave him all the problems I wanted to fix when I met him, and then gave him a week, letting him

do his work. He accepted it with pleasure. However, a week later, when I asked him for the finished product, the sound files he gave me was unacceptable. Most of the problems I pointed out to him were not solved, such as noise reduction, sound repairing, and sound effect foley, and he complained that I should give him more time. This attitude was simply unacceptable to me. I was very angry at the time. But being angry was useless. So I stopped letting him take care of the sound. I started looking for other sound designers. After a while, my music composer recommended me to her classmate, Joe, a student from Eastman, to me. She said that he is very interested in my project. I met Joe with a try and found that he was indeed a trustworthy person. So I handed this sound mixing work to him. At this point, I was almost running out of time. I could only choose to believe him and pray that he can help me.

While I was looking for a sound designer, I also started looking for colorists. In my opinion, the colorist is harder to find than the sound designer. Mainly because it is hard to use the software, Da Vinci, for color grading. In addition, as far as I knew before, our school doesn't have a coloring major, so there were not many people to choose from. The only few colorists I knew were all busy. I also tried to ask for help from my two DPs. Reddy was outside of Rochester and it was very inconvenient to work with him. Bo Gao's film was also done at that time, so he could not help me. During that period of time, I got some outside contacts through the Internet. My middle school classmate introduced me some colorists. However, after contact with each other, we both found that the remote work was too troublesome and not easy to operate, so we gave up. Under the pressure of the time, I made up my mind to learn Da Vinci to color by myself. After all, it is my film. If the coloring fails, I can accept it. In the middle of April, I did my best and spent nearly 10 days or so, through various ways to learn how to do the coloring, and do the practicing in my own film. During this process, I

gradually found that the coloring is not particularly difficult to master. Actually, the introductory knowledge can be mastered very quickly. But if you want to improve, you definitely need more experience. However, for my short film, the knowledge I had learned in 10 days was enough. In the end, I spent about 10 days or so, watching, learning and coloring all by myself. I consider this as one of the biggest take away from my shooting this time.

When it came to the final day for us to upload the film, I was so nervous. Because I didn't receive the sound file which my sound designer supposed to give me that day until the late afternoon. The other parts of my work, editing, coloring, and music composing were all finished. I had been waiting in the grad lab until the evening. Finally, he sent it to me. However, when I checked, I found that many problems were still not solved, such as the noise problems. But overall it was good. When I called Joe, he explained to me that he didn't have enough time on my project since he was dealing with his semester final at the same time. It was understandable, I accepted it. I did further adjustments afterward. Since I'm not a sound expert, I tried very hard to do the corrections, and it took me about 3 to 4 hours to finish off everything. Even though the final sound was still not perfect, I should say I did my best. And after double checked everything, I submitted my film. At this point, all the work on my thesis film was finally done. I felt so relieved when I made it.

Evaluation:

As I mentioned in “post-production” earlier, my thesis adviser, professor Malcolm Spaul, gave me a lot of comments during the earlier stage of my creation, including the control of the film pace. For example, at the beginning my film was too long. Then he let me speed up the pace so that the film could have a reasonable duration. Another good example could be that, in some clips, professor Malcolm Spaul let me make them more consistent with the rhythm of the scene. These valuable opinions also helped me a lot in my later stage.

The screening of the film was on the afternoon of May 5. At the screening, the film's feedback was not bad. I was very happy that most of the audience understood the things that I wanted to express in my film. Also, an interesting thing happened during the screening. When it came to the comments part of my screening, the animation teachers, Thomas Gasek and Mari Blanchard, pointed out that my actor, Yizhang left America and went back to China in the real life. It was so similar to the male character's ending in my film. I smiled and said it was a pure coincidence. Then, one of the film teachers, Ambarien Alqadar, made suggestions for some parts of the plots. For example, she mentioned that the actresses in my film were mostly just like “waitresses”, and did not have a lot of interaction with the male character. She suggested that I can improve on plot designing after this. I found it was very useful. In short, most of people liked my film, and I was very happy. And I would definitely accept these precious suggestions and make progress in the future.

Conclusion:

Shooting the thesis film is a very interesting process. I have not only learned a lot of useful knowledge about shooting and post-production, but also have a deeper understanding of how to collaborate with others. In addition, I will take the suggestion from my teachers and my friends, and try to avoid the mistakes I've made. In short, I feel very glad that the thesis taught me tons of things. I will absorb the valuable experience, while maintaining the enthusiasm for film production in the future to make progress and bring better works.

Appendix Pages

Screen Shots







Life In the Noodles

Credits

Cast

Yizhang Liu as Zhou Yu
Xuting Liu as Chen Xue
K Cody Hunt as David
Abigail Hentschke as Abby
Kyle Robert Padden as Kyle
Yiran Qiao (voice actor) as Zhou Yu's Mom

Crew

Directed and Produced by Junnan Xia
Written by Junnan Xia
Director of Photography: Bo Gao & Monajh Reddy
First Assistant Director: Bo Gao
Producer: Junnan Xia
1st AC: Wen Tong
2nd AC: Ricky Panipinto & Yuhao Sheng
Sound Designer: Joe Hagen & Brandon Granby
Sound Recordist: Aidan Connolly & Yuhao Sheng
Art Designer: Zichen Liang, Bichen Yang, Maria Gesek, Junnan Xia

The persons and events in this film are fictitious. Any similarity to actual persons or events is purely unintentional.
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Student produced at the
School of Film and Animation,
Rochester Institute of Technology

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Life in the Noodles

(Working Title)

By Junnan Xia

August 29, 2018

Thesis Proposal

Rochester Institute of

Technology MFA

Approved for Submission by:

Malcolm Spaul, Thesis Chair

Logline:

Recently, a Chinese office worker, Zhou Yu, is considering his homecoming to China. Since he feels lost in the US. One day, Yu found his ex-girlfriend, Chen Ting, in the super market. Ting friendly asks Yu to come to her home and treats him with a bowl of noodles that she made. And they start to memorize the past while they were grad student life in the university. What will happen to both of them?

Treatment:

Zhou Yu, a Chinese male, is packing up his stuff in his apartment. A voice overshadows a phone call between him and his mother in China. He tells her that he decided to go home since he feels the life here is unpleasant, because he is not doing a job that he likes. His mother sighs but agrees. While he is still packaging, his stomach rumbles. Then he decides to go to the Chinese super market to buy some food.

In the super market, while Yu is picking food on the shelf, he sees his ex-girlfriend from college days in America. Her name is Chen Ting. When Yu sees her, he tries to avoid having eye contact with her. However, Ting notices him and calls his name. Then they start a conversation. During the conversation, Yu says to Ting that he will go back to China soon. Yu notices that Ting is wearing a ring on her hand. Ting tells Yu she is engaged. After an awkward pulse, Ting asks Yu to eat at her home before he leaves. After several times of requests from Ting, Yu agrees.

That evening, Yu arrives at Ting's place. After letting Yu sit down, Ting goes to cook. Yu asks what she is preparing, Ting says soya bean paste noodles. Once Yu hears that, he becomes lost in the memories when he was with Ting.

(Flashback) Yu and Ting lay on the grass. On the starry sky night, they talked about their future. Another day, Ting is in kitchen, cooking soya bean paste noodles. Yu is sitting at the table in their apartment. Ting severs the noodles, and Yu enjoys them. (Montage) Ting keeps severing Yu same noodles (Montage End). One day, while they are eating noodles, Yu complains a lot about his life and Ting. Then, Yu frowns and says to Ting he is not happy. He hates his job, he has no money, and he is sick of Ting's noodles. He throws the bowl with noodles on the floor, then leaves.

(Back to the present) Ting puts a bowl of soya bean paste noodles on the table. She asks him to try it. He doesn't want to eat. He excuses that he has already eaten before. However, his stomach rumbles again. Ting chuckles and Yu feels awkward. Yu asks to leave. Ting asks Yu to stay here to talk with her since she won't see Yu again for a long time. Then Yu decides to stay. Ting asks how is Yu's best buddy, Long Fan. It brings Yu to the past when he lived with him.

(Flashback) Long is eating instant noodles in front of his desk. Yu comes in, and points at the stack of dirty bowls and tells Long he should move out. Long begs Yu not to throw him out. Yu agrees. Several days later, Long says to Yu that he has to go home since his father in China has a serious disease. The last words Long says to Yu is "The rest of my instant noodles

are all yours". Yu watches Long leaves with a complicated expression.

(Back to the present) When Yu talks about this, Ting starts to chuckle. Yu asks why. Ting says Long's father's "disease" was a trick. The father baited Long to go back to him since Long wouldn't get back so easily. Yu doesn't believe it. Then, Ting shows Yu some WeChat message to Yu. Yu just shows bitter smiles. Then, Ting says that she heard the rumor about Yu's American girlfriend. This brings Yu to another memory.

(Flashback) A beautiful and lively girl, Abby, eats pasta with Yu in an apartment. (Montage) Yu eats them at first. Abby keeps serving Yu different kinds of pasta, Yu gradually doesn't eat them anymore (Montage End). One day, when Yu arrives home, he sees Abby and a man are eating pasta, just wearing their underwear. Abby instantly tries to explain this. And the man, with his mouth full of pasta, is frozen in fear. Seeing man's mouth was full of pasta, Yu walks over to the table, picks up a bowl of pasta and drops it on the ground. It smashes, the sauce goes everywhere.

(Back to the present) Yu says that during that period of time, he felt regretful about abandoning Ting. Then, he tries to touch Ting's hand. However, Ting stretches back her hand. She touches her ring on the finger says that those are just old times, it was the past. After an awkward beat. Ting's fiance, David, comes back. At first, David is surprised. Then Ting explains that Yu is just her friend, and he is going back to China. Davis asks Yu to stay for dinner. Davis says to Yu that they will have a special treat-- soya bean paste noodles.

During the dinner time, David shows great courtesy to asks Yu to try his fiance's noodles many times. Finally, Yu takes a bite, then he nods and says "Tasty".

After the dinner, Yu is going to leave. Ting says she will walk him out. Yu thanks David for the dinner. They walk to the front hall. Ting wishes Yu safe travel. Yu tells Ting that David is a good man and he is happy for her. Ting gives Yu a hug. Then Yu leaves. At this moment. It snowing. Yu walks and then looks at the sky, shows a relief expression.

Rationale:

A very interesting thing is that I got this idea when I watched a Japanese cup noodles advertisement this summer. The AD shows a man eat a cup of noodles which is made by his mother. Both of them shows their happy smiles on the screen. That moment, I realized that maybe I should film something I'm more familiar with, which is, the Food. It is a great relationship bridge in the Asian culture. Whether you want to build a relationship or want to end a relationship, you could always treat someone a meal. In my film, I would like to set the noodle as an entry point. Because, first, the noodle is a good culture icon to represent China. Second, it is well-known. Everyone has eaten noodles, or at least has seen it before. So, there will be no big cultural barriers to the western audience. Another thing is, I'm a grad student since I came here in the 2016 fall. I've experienced a lot during these years. I would like to mix the things I've experienced and the others' stories together,

and put them into this story. Thus, I'm going to use different kinds of noodles to represent other characters' relationships with my protagonist. These are my thoughts and the starting point of this film.

Vision:

First, for the editing wise, the movie will cut back and forth from the present days to the old times. It will be my film's major editing feeling. I'm going to use lots of steady, regular shots for my film. Because I want to create a peaceful atmosphere to the audience. Sometimes, I may also use handheld shots to build an unstable feeling to represent my characters' unstable emotions. For the color aspect, I would like to use high-saturation color grading in the memory scenes. Because those memories are happy times to the protagonist. When it comes to the present scene, it should be low-saturated. Because his present life is not so good. But some color grading or lighting should make the noodles "beautiful", since it's also a big "character" in my film. As for the location, I plan to shoot in Rochester or other places if necessary.

The World/Mood:





The Time Line:

Fall 2018

Week 1 - 3: Screenplay Drafts, 1-6, Location scouting

Week 4 - 5: Screenplay Drafts 7 - 8/9, Securing locations, Casting,
Finalize Crew,
Schedule Shoots, Reserve Equipment

Week 6: Screenplay Final shooting Draft, Shotlists/Storyboards

Week 7: Shotlists/Storyboards, Principal Photography

Week 8: Principal Photography

Week 9: Principal Photography, Ongoing Rough

edits Week 10: Principal Photography, Ongoing

Rough edits Week 11: Principal Photography,

Ongoing Rough edits

Week 12: Contingency Day, Ongoing Rough edits

Week 13: 1st Rough Cut

Week 14: 2nd Full Rough Cut

Screenings: 3rd Rough Cut

Spring 2019

Week 1: 4th Rough Cut

Week 4 - 9: Additional Rough Cuts, ADR, Initial music composition

Rough ideas and correspondence with the composer.

Week 10: Picture Lock

Week 11 - 14: The Score, Colour Grading

Budget:

Account	Specifies	Budget
01	Cast	\$1000
02	Travel	\$800
03	Hotel & Lodging	\$400
04	Food	\$800
05	Location Permits or Fees	\$800
06	Art, Props & Wardrobe	\$1000
07	Sound & Music	\$500
08	Festival Fees & screenings	\$500

In Total: \$5800

Life In The Noodles

(final draft)

written by

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INT.BEDROOM-LATE AFTERNOON

In a messy bedroom, a young Chinese male, Zhou Yu, is packing up his pants, shirts, and other stuffs. He puts them into his suitcase. It's almost full. But there are still many other sthings all over the floor. He looks at the things on the floor, and sighs. Then he takes out some of them, and starts to manage those things again. At this point, a conversation of him and his mother starts while he is packing up.

ZHOU YU (V.O.)
Mom, I'm going back home this week.
妈, 我这周马上要回去了。

ZHOU YU'S MOM (V.O.)
Oh, really? That's good! Finally you can stand by me, son! But... why? This is so sudden. Aren't you happy there?
真的吗儿子? 太好了。你总算能回来陪陪妈妈了。不过.....我想说你这通电话打的有点突然啊。你那边一切都好吗?

Zhou Yu stares at a jade Buddha amulet while he is managing things. Then puts it back.

ZHOU YU (V.O.)
Actually...mom. Yes, my life here is not good. My job is not the job I want. I...just can't live like this anymore.
事实上, 妈, 我.....我感觉.....在这的工作不太开心。我觉得.....有点呆不下去。

ZHOU YU'S MOM (V.O.)
I see... It's fine, my boy. Remember, I don't desire you to be a crazy rich person. All I wish is that you can live a happy life. That's enough. Also, there is an old saying in China called "fallen leaves return to the roots". Right? Home is always be with you.
这样啊..... 不过没事, 儿子。你记住一点, 我不奢求你成个亿万富翁什么的, 只要你过的开心就够了。另外, 咱这儿不是还有一句老话吗: 落叶归根。对不对? 家永远是你温暖的港湾。

ZHOU YU (V.O.)
Sorry I've let you down.
对不起妈, 让您失望了。

ZHOU YU'S MOM (V.O.)
 It doesn't matter, son. I miss you
 so much. I'll cook you nice dinner
 when you got back! See you!
 没事啦，儿子啊...妈妈很想见你了，你回来妈
 给你做好吃的调养调养。妈妈在家等着你!

ZHOU YU (V.O.)
 Ok. Take care, mom. Bye.
 嗯，回头见！您也在家好好照顾自己。

Zhou Yu lies on the floor. Stares at the ceiling.

ZHOU YU
 (whisper)
 "Fallen leaves return to the
 roots"...
 唉，“落叶归根”.....

Suddenly his stomach rumbles. Zhou Yu shows an awkward
 expression.

ZHOU YU (CONT'D)
 (whisper)
 Maybe I should go shop some food.
 也许我该吃点东西了。

He puts on his coat and shoes. Then he leaves the room.

INT.CHINESE FOOD MARKET-EVENING

At the Chinese food market, Zhou Yu walking slowly and
 checking around among different food shelves. Suddenly, he
 sees a familiar girl's figure. He checks again and gets
 shocked.

ZHOU YU (V.O.)
 (inner mono)
 Oh my god, it's her.
 我去，怎么是她。

It seems that the girl notices him. Zhou Yu quickly turns
 away. But, the woman calls him first.

CHEN XUE
 Hey, Zhou Yu! Is that you?
 嘿，周雨！是你吗？

At the same time, a beautiful girl who is about 25,
 approaches him. Then she pats on Zhou Yu's shoulder. Zhou Yu
 turns around and shows her a bitter smile.

CHEN XUE (CONT'D)
I know it's you.
我就知道是你。

ZHOU YU
Hi..... emm Chen Xue! Long time no
see. You looks...great.
嗨, 陈雪! 好久不见你了。你看着.....气色不错
啊。

Chen Xue smiles.

CHEN XUE
You looks good, too.
你看起来也很好啊。

An awkward beat.

CHEN XUE (CONT'D)
Hmm... I...Didn't expect to meet
you here.
嗯.....没想到在这儿能遇到你哈。

ZHOU YU
Me too, me too.
嗯, 我也是.....

CHEN XUE
How have you been recently? Aren't
you busy? How's your job?
你最近怎么样啊? 忙不忙啊? 工作如何了?

ZHOU YU
I...I'm going back to China, soon.
我.....可能马上要回国了.....

CHEN XUE
Wait, what? Really?
什么?

Zhou Yu lies to Chen Xue nervously.

ZHOU YU
Yes. I... just realized that there
are more opportunities in China.
Besides, I want to stay with my
parents. You know... so... ye...
是, 我觉得国内机会可能更多。再加上..... 我在
想回去能跟父母在一起..... 所以, 你懂的.....

CHEN XUE
Great! That's great. Feel happy for
you!
那挺好啊! 真为你感到高兴!

Another awkward beat.

ZHOU YU
I really need to go. See you later.
我.....可能得走了。回头再见!

CHEN XUE
Wait, Yu. How about come to my
house for dinner?
等下, 周雨。顺便到我家吃顿饭怎么样?

ZHOU YU
No need to bother you, I think.
I'll just go home.
不想打扰你了, 我回去吧。

CHEN XUE
It's just a dinner, Ok?
就吃顿饭

ZHOU YU
No, no..I'll just go.
算了, 还是回去吧。

Chen Xue pretends to be angry.

CHEN XUE
Yu, I just want to treat you a
dinner at my home. Because I think
you are my friend. But, if you
don't think we are friend anymore,
then you can just leave. And we
shall never meet again.
周雨, 我就是请你到我家吃顿饭而已。因为我觉得
你是我朋友。但如果你不把我当朋友了, 那你走
好了。从此咱俩再也不相见。

Zhou Yu doesn't know what to say.

ZHOU YU
I... I didn't mean that...
我不是那个意思。

Chen Xue changes her face and smiles.

CHEN XUE
Then come.
那就来吧。

Xue hands over a bag of food to Zhou Yu.

CHEN XUE (CONT'D)
Help me carry this.
帮我拿着

Suddenly, Zhou Yu notices the ring on her hand.

ZHOU YU
The ring. Are you...engaged?
这戒指.....你订婚了?

Chen Xue smiles and nods shyly. Zhou Yu speaks peacefully.

ZHOU YU (CONT'D)
Congratulations.
恭喜啊

CHEN XUE
Let's go. Check out.
走吧, 去付钱

INT.CHEN XUE'S APARTMENT-EVENING

Xue's home is not very big, but it's a clean and cozy place.

ZHOU YU
What a nice place. Ten times better
than mine.
哎, 地方不错啊, 比我那狗窝强多了。

CHEN XUE
(smiles)
Thank you!
哈哈, 谢谢!

Xue walks Yu to the kitchen and let him sit down. Then she goes to the bedroom.

ZHOU YU
Where is your fiance?
你老公呢?

Xue changed her clothes and comes back to the kitchen.

CHEN XUE
He will be home later. You sit here
and get some rests, Yu. I'll
prepare the dinner.
他晚点回来。你先坐着歇会儿吧, 我去准备晚
饭。

ZHOU YU
What you gonna prepare?
什么饭啊晚上?

CHEN XUE
 Special treat. Soya bean paste
 noodles.
 炸酱面。

When hearing the words, Zhou Yu is surprised for a moment. He stares at the steam from the pot, then gets lost in his memories.

CUT TO:

INT.XUE & YU'S APARTMENT-DAY

Chen Xue puts a bowl of noodles in front of Zhou Yu. The steam rise up to his face. Zhou YU takes a smell.

ZHOU YU
 Wow. Smells so good!
 哇, 好香啊!

Chen Xue sits down and looks at Zhou Yu. He devours noodles like a hungry tiger.

ZHOU YU (CONT'D)
 Yummy! This is so good!
 嗯, 好吃!

CHEN XUE
 Soya bean paste noodles. My best
 dish.
 怎么样? 炸酱面, 我的拿手菜。

Zhou Yu gives her a thumb up and still eating at the same time.

CHEN XUE (CONT'D)
 If you like it, I will cook it
 every day.
 如果你喜欢, 我天天给你做。

Zhou Yu keeps nodding and eating . Chen Xue smiles.

MONTAGE

-Zhou Yu sits at table with a smile on the face. Chen Xue serves soya bean paste noodles. Zhou Yu devours them.

-Zhou Yu sits at table with a tired face. Chen Xue serves soya bean paste noodles. Zhou Yu eats them peacefully.

-Zhou Yu sits at table with an unhappy face. Chen Xue serves soya bean paste noodles. Zhou Yu looks at them, sighs, and only eats a little.

MONTAGE ENDS

BACK TO THE SCENE

INT.XUE & YU'S APARTMENT-DAY

At the dinning table. Chen Xue brings soya bean paste noodles to Zhou Yu again. Zhou Yu sighs.

ZHOU YU

Stop!
够了!

Chen Xue is shocked.

CHEN XUE

What happend, sweety?
怎么了? 周雨?

ZHOU YU

(angrily)
Everyday, every fucking day, you serves me soya bean paste noodles. Same shit everyday! It's so boring! Could you be more creative?
每天吃, 每天吃, 这炸酱面都不带换的! 无聊不无聊啊? ! 能不能有点创意啊你?

CHEN XUE

(in a weak tone)
I...I thought you like them.....
我.....我以为你爱吃.....

ZHOU YU

(raise his tone)
Yes, it is delicious. But, people will get bored, right? I have hard time outside home already. Now, I'm getting suffered in my own house. What a beautiful life!
是, 你做的是还行。但是个人都会吃烦的好吧? 我在外头已经够烦的了。回到家里还得天天忍受这个玩意! 这日子过的真他妈精彩!

CHEN XUE

Sorry, sweety, I don't know...
周雨, 对不起, 我不知道.....

ZHOU YU

Yes, of course. You don't need to take care of anything but cooking! What about me, huh? I'm the person who struggle and fight for us. Do you know what I feel? Huh? I have no job, no money. I feel like a fucking loser!
 你的日子多轻松啊,啊? 啥都不用管就管煮面就行了! 我呢? 我得拼命在外头到处找,到处找,就是为了找个工作回来好养你!
 你了解我的感受吗? 啊? 你了解我的感受吗?! 我现在既没钱,也没工作,我他妈就是一个 Loser!

Chen Xue is about to cry.

CHEN XUE

Don't say that, sweaty...
 别这么说,周雨...

ZHOU YU

You know what, Xue? I'm done with you... And this!
 我告诉你,陈雪。我跟你就地散伙..... 还有这个!

Zhou Yu raises the bowl of noodles. Then drops it on the floor. Sauce everywhere. Chen Xue covers her face and cries, with the leaving footsteps from Zhou Yu.

FLASHBACK ENDS

INT.CHEN XUE'S APARTMENT-EVENING

CHEN XUE

There you go.
 来咯~

Zhou Yu waks up from his memory. He sees Xue puts a bowl of soya bean paste noodles in front of him. Zhou Yu just stares at it without any words. Chen Xue looks at him and ask.

CHEN XUE (CONT'D)

What are you waiting for? Have a try. I added something new.
 等什么呢? 尝尝呗,我加了点新东西。

Zhou Yu shows her a bitter smile.

CHEN XUE (CONT'D)

Oh sorry, I forget... Give me a minute.. I shall prepare some other things for you.
哦，对不起我忘了..... 等我一下，我给你弄点别的吃的吧。

ZHOU YU

It's Ok. I... have already eaten before.
没事。那个.....我吃过了。

Chen Xue stares at him suspiciously.

CHEN XUE

Really?
真的?

ZHOU YU

It's... true. I really ate before I come.
真.....真的。我来之前吃过了已经。

At this moment, Zhou Yu's stomach rumbles again. Chen Xue starts to chuckle.

CHEN XUE

Seems like your stomach doesn't agree with you.
可你的肚子好像不是这么想的。

Zhou Yu's face is full of awkwardness. After an awkward beat, Zhou Yu puts on his coat and he is about to leave.

ZHOU YU

I need to go. See you.
我得走了，再见。

Chen Xue holds him.

CHEN XUE

Wait.
等等。

Yu stops.

CHEN XUE (CONT'D)

Yu, everything happened before are passed away. I've already let them go. I wish you could, too.
Alright? Besides, you are going back to China soon.

(MORE)

CHEN XUE (CONT'D)

And I think it will really hard to see you again for a long time. As my friend, Yu, just finish this humble dinner in my house, alright?
周雨，过去的就让他们过去了。我不在乎过去那些事情，我希望你也不要了，好吗？另外，你快回国了。今后咱俩见面估计很难了。作为朋友，你到我家来，咱就好好地坐下吃顿饭。行吗？

Chen Xue looks at Zhou Yu. Zhou Yu still showing his awkward face.

CHEN XUE (CONT'D)

Let's... Let's just have a chat. As for noodles... maybe later
你就.....陪我聊聊天。至于面条..... 待会再说。

Chen Xue push the noodles bowl away. Zhou Yu looks at Chen Xue's sincere face. He gives up escaping.

ZHOU YU

Alright, I'll stay. You're right. We should always cherish the people in front of us. Meeting you in person like this must be rare afterwards.
行吧，我留这儿陪你聊会儿。你说得对。我觉得每个人都应该珍惜眼前人，估计以后也很难跟你这样面对面聊了。

Zhou Yu takes off the coat and sits back again. A moment later, Chen Xue asks Zhou Yu curiously.

CHEN XUE

I've heard rumors... that you dated an American girl, right? How was she?
哎，我听人说，你还交过一个美国女孩啊？怎么样啊她？

Zhou Yu pulses for a quite long time. Chen Xue notices that it might be an unpleasant experience.

CHEN XUE (CONT'D)

Sorry, I didn't mean to...
不好意思啊，我不是有意.....

ZHOU YU

No, no. It's fine. I'm ok with that. Cuz...that's the past.
没事儿，我OK..... 因为，都是过去了

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK

INT.ABBY'S APARTMENT-DAY

A young girl, Abby serves a bowl of pasta to Zhou Yu. She puts it on the table, then she starts to play with her cell-phone. Zhou Yu stares at the pasta. Then looks at Abby. She totally ingores him.

ZHOU YU

Honey...

Abby is answering him without looking at him.

ABBY

Yeah?

ZHOU YU

Pasta again for lunch?

ABBY

Sure.

ZHOU YU

You only cook pasta?

ABBY

Yeah.

ZHOU YU

Hey. Do you love me?

ABBY

Sure.

Abby stops, and looks at Zhou Yu.

ABBY (CONT'D)

What do you mean?

Zhou Yu speaks with a little bit anger.

ZHOU YU

Can we... eat something else..
like.. besides... pasta?

ABBY

Ok.

Abby goes to kitchen and starts cooking.

ZHOU YU

Thank you.

After several times of "beep" sounds, we hear that the microwave starts to work. After another "beep" shows up, Abby serves another plate of food -- cooked penne. Abby sits down, keeps playing with the cell-phone. And Zhou Yu just looks at it.

ZHOU YU (CONT'D)

What is this?

ABBY

Penne.

Abby answers him without looking at him. Zhou Yu looks at Abby without words.

BACK TO THE PRESENT

INT.CHEN XUE'S APARTMENT-EVENING

CHEN XUE

Wow, this girl... I guess you must had a hard time with her...

天哪..... 这女的..... 我猜你跟她过的很难受吧.....

Zhou Yu shakes his head, and shows a bitter smile to Chen Xue.

ZHOU YU

There was worse time.

难受的在后头呢。

INT.ABBY'S APARTMENT-AFTERNOON

Zhou Yu arrives home. Suddenly, he heard something in the bedroom. He tracks the sound and sees some clothes on the floor. Then, he finds a man who is playing a guitar. And he is being feed pasta by Abby on the bed. They just wear their underclothes. The man is frozen for a second with his mouth full of pasta. Then he gets up and starts to put on his clothes.

THE MAN

Oh shit...

On the other hand, Abby is very calm at this moment, even a little bit disappointed. She is dressing up a clothes and says.

ABBY
 (whisper)
 Oh geez.
 Why you are home so early today?

ZHOU YU
 What the fuck are you doing here?
 Who the fuck is he?

ABBY
 Nobody. Just a friend of mine. He
 came for dinner. Is there anything
 wrong with that?

ZHOU YU
 Dinner? Dinner my ass. Have you
 ever eaten your dinner and dress
 like this?

Zhou Yu stares at the man furiously. He frightens him. The man finally swallows the pasta in his mouth and starts to explain.

THE MAN
 Hey man, I...I'm sorry, Ok? This
 is... this is a misunderstanding...

Yu wants to rush to the man and him. But, Abby stands out and blocks Yu.

ABBY
 You scared my friend, asshole.

ZHOU YU
 What the fuck is wrong with you?
 Huh?

ABBY
 I don't like you anymore. Simple as
 that.

ZHOU YU
 What?

ABBY
 Because you are boring and dull, ok?
 You don't know music, you don't
 play games, you hardly even watch
 movies with. It seems like there is
 no fun on you. All you care about
 is job hunting and stuff.

Yu pauses for a second then puts down his fist.

ABBY (CONT'D)

But what really makes you an asshole is if there is any male who wants to hang out with me or even just talk to me. You will show me your ugly angry face. What am I? Your prisoner? Now Listen! I hang out with whoever I want! Alright?

Yu tries to be calm down and says to the man.

ZHOU YU

You should leave.

ABBY

No, you should leave.

Yu takes a glance at Abby.

ABBY (CONT'D)

This is my place. You should go.

Yu tries to press the anger for a moment. Then points at Abby and says.

ZHOU YU

Damn you, and your fucking pasta.

Then he leaves the room.

ABBY

(whisper)

What a jerk.

Abby shuts the door.

FLASHBACK ENDS

BACK TO THE PRESENT

INT.CHEN XUE'S APARTMENT-EVENING

ZHOU YU

Then I left our apartment. And we never contacted again since then.
之后我就离开了房子，从此再也没联系.....

CHEN XUE

I... feel sorry about that.
我..... 抱歉啊.....

ZHOU YU (V.O.)
After that... I feel my life is...
这之后, 我觉得我的生活整个都.....

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK

INT. ZHOU YU'S APARTMENT

ZHOU YU (CON'T)
...corrupted.
垮了

In a glooming bedroom, Zhou Yu is lying on the bed staring at the ceiling with a unruly hair and stubbles. He sighs, then gets up.

MONTAGE BEGINGS:

-Zhou Yu gets up from the bed. He gradually walks to the dining place like a zombie. He starts to cook instant noodles.

-Two or three empty instant noodles bowls stack up on his table.

-Zhou Yu plays computer games with his bloody eyes in the late night.

-Zhou Yu gets up.

-Zhou Yu starts to cook instant noodles.

-More empty instant noodles bowls stack up.

-Zhou Yu plays computer games.

-Zhou Yu gets up.

-Zhou Yu starts to cook instant noodles.

-More empty instant noodles bowls stack up, now they just like a hill.

-Zhou Yu plays computer games.

After several quick cuts of his dull lives. We see Zhou Yu lies on the bed. He takes out the cell phone. And coincidentally sees his photo with Chen Xue before.

Couples of short flashes about their happy lives shows up. At that moment, he bursts into cry.

ZHOU YU (V.O.)
 You don't know, Xue. After your leaving, every single day, I'm in suffering...
 你不知道, 陈雪。你离开之后, 每天我都在后悔和自责之中.....

FLASH BACK ENDS

BACK TO THE PRESENT

ZHOU YU
 ...I finally realized that, I lost the most precious thing in my life. I feel regretful.
我终于意识到, 我失去了我生命中最宝贵的东西。我很后悔。

Chen Xue don't know what to say. She just looks down with a sorry face. Then Zhou Yu tries to reach Chen Xue's hand. But Chen Xue stretches back. She touches her engagement ring.

CHEN XUE
 It's the past, Yu. I think... You should let it go and move on. I've already engaged. I think, you should start your life, too. Maybe this homecoming is your... new beginning. Afterall, we all should look forward.
 那已经是过去时了, 周雨。我觉得..... 你该放下那些然后继续面对生活。我..... 已经订婚了。我想, 你也应该好好做下一步的打算。也许这次回家对你来说..... 是个新的开始。毕竟, 人都得向前看。

A quiet moment later, a door opening sound breaks the silence. A young tall man, David, comes into this place.

CHEN XUE (CONT'D)
 Hi David! You're back!

David looks at them, shows a confusing face.

DAVID
 This is...?

CHEN XUE
 Oh, it's my school mate. I
 mentioned him before. Zhou Yu.
 (to Zhou Yu)
 My fiance, David.

Zhou Yu greets David with an awkward smile.

ZHOU YU
 Hi David! I'm Zhou Yu. Glad to meet
 you.

CHEN XUE
 David, my friend Zhou Yu is going
 back to China very soon. So I
 treated him to dinner.

David suddenly gets relieved. And he starts to do handshake
 with Zhou Yu.

DAVID
 Oh, sorry, man. I was... Glad to
 meet you, glad to meet you. NI
 HAO! NI HAO!

ZHOU YU
 NI HAO! Nice to meet you.

They smile and shake each other's hand.

INT.CHEN XUE'S APARTMENT-EVENING

After a period of time, David sits down at the table.

DAVID
 Honey, what's for dinner?

CHEN XUE
 Soya beanpaste noodles.

DAVID
 Ah, great! My favourite!
 (to Zhou Yu)
 Dude, you really should try my
 fiance's special treat. It's really
 good! I shit you not!

Chen Xue pushes David a little.

CHEN XUE
 Shhhh, eat your noodles.

DAVID
 (to Chen Xue)
 Sorry, sorry.
 (to Zhou Yu)
 Try it, Yu. Trust me. It's very
 tasty.

Zhou Yu looks at David. Then he takes a bite. He pulses for a second. Then he nods with a smiley face.

ZHOU YU
 Tasty.

DAVID
 I told you, Right?
 (to Xue)
 Honey, you are the best. Everyone
 likes your special treat...

David chats with Xue very happily. Zhou Yu sees them with a peaceful face.

EXT.PORCH-EVENING

Chen Xue walks out with Zhou Yu. Then Chen Xue turns back and yells to David in the home.

CHEN XUE
 (yelling)
 I'll go see him off, honey. I'll be
 back soon.

DAVID
 (yelling)
 Alright, babe. See you, man. Take
 care!

ZHOU YU
 (yelling)
 Thank you, David! See you!

Xue shuts the door.

CHEN XUE
 You need a drive?
 要我送吗?

ZHOU YU
 No, thanks. My place is not very
 far from here.
 谢谢, 不用了。我房子离这儿不远。
 (sighs)
 Life is strange, right?
 (MORE)

ZHOU YU (CONT'D)

I wanted to stay here, but I'm leaving. You wanted to go back but stays.
人生真是奇妙, 是吧? 我当初想留这儿现在却得回国。你当初想回国最后却留了下来。

CHEN XUE

This might be what we called "life".
嗯, 也许这就是人生。

ZHOU YU

Yes. You can never foresee the future. Xue, David is good man. You can live happily with him. I'm really happy for you.
是啊, 你永远没法预知未来。陈雪, David人挺不错的。你跟他一定能幸福。我挺为你高兴的。

CHEN XUE

I wish you can live happily, too. And may you find your truelove soon.
我也希望你能够幸福, 祝你早日能遇上真爱。

They hugs each other.

ZHOU YU

Bye, Xue. Thank you!
谢谢你, 陈雪。再见了!

CHEN XUE

Safe travel, Zhou Yu! Bye.
路上小心啊周雨! 再见!

Zhou Yu walks away. When he looks back, Chen Xue is already not there anymore. He looks at the sky, it starts to snow. Suddenly, he shows a relief smile.

THE END