Bitter tea

CaiCai Liu

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Bitter Tea
CaiCai Liu

MFA Imaging Arts/ Computer Animation
SCHOOL OF FILM AND ANIMATION
ROCHESTER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
ROCHESTER, NEW YORK
November 15, 2011

Approved for Submission By:

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Malcolm Spaull, Thesis Chair
School of Film and Animation of R.I.T

________________________________________
Howard Lester
School of Film and Animation of R.I.T

________________________________________
Yuan Ting, Zhao
Theatre Arts Department of Nazareth College
Abstract:

*Bitter Tea* is a 23 minute short fiction film made by CaiCai Liu in April 2010. The film shows a Chinese photography student’s life in the U.S. This paper discusses the issues of Asian identity, cultural changes and the philosophy of illusion symbolized by the perception of the photographer. It also represents the processes of making the film from pre-production, production, to post-production and explains the workflow and technical issues of how this project was made.
Table of Contents

Introduction ........................................................................................................................................ 1

Process

A. Pre-production

   I. Idea
   a. Photographer ......................................................................................................................... 2
   b. Tea ........................................................................................................................................ 3
   c. Hometown changes ............................................................................................................... 3

   II. Casting

      Finding and Training talent ................................................................................................. 4

   III. Producing

      a. Locations .......................................................................................................................... 5
      b. Crew .................................................................................................................................. 6

B. Production

      a. Directing Non-professional Chinese talent ................................................................. 6
      b. Importance of Assistant Director .................................................................................. 7

C. Post-production

      a. Sound ............................................................................................................................... 9
      b. Compressor ..................................................................................................................... 10

D. Screening / Conclusion .......................................................................................................... 11
E. Appendix ................................................................. 14

I. Still photos from final film ......................................................... 14

II. Thesis proposal ........................................................................ 23

III. Script .................................................................................... 30
Introduction

*Bitter Tea* was produced in the spring of 2010. The exact reason I made this film remains ambiguous to me. I can trace it back to when I started my thesis proposal in the winter of 2009 with an idea based on my experience with a car accident. Although most people accepted the treatment of this idea, I changed my mind at the last minute because I realized that in my previous film the main characters were all female. I felt I should make my main character a male for this production.

Also, I wanted to make a story about a photographer. This concept was much more exciting to me than a car accident. Then I realized I needed another quarter to prepare the script and locate actors. I sought suggestions from my advisor, Malcolm Spaull, and committee member, Howard Lester. They felt I needed more enthusiasm with this topic and agreed to give me more time to develop my thoughts.

The proposal was postponed until spring quarter. My story wasn't developing well, and one day friends invited me out for food and socializing. The host, a woman from China, began to perform a tea ceremony in front of us. It was the first time I had seen a tea ceremony up close.

I was mesmerized by the smooth, delicate movement of the process and thought it was amazing. I went back home, and the next morning I awoke from a dream and thought it would be a great idea to put this tea ceremony into my film. Later, feedback from both Malcolm Spaull and Howard Lester indicated it would be a potential project, and they were more interested in this idea than the previous one. They gave me their Western perspective on my idea, and we engaged in interesting discussions. Also, I felt I should have a
professional with a background in Chinese culture as one of my committee members, too. I was fortunate to be introduced to a Chinese professor, Yuan-ting Zhao, who had experience in drama and theatre. Her Chinese cultural perspective gave me more confidence working on the project.

The first version of the film was finished by the end of May, and after discussion with my chair advisor and committee members, and feedback from audiences, I began to refine it and expected to have a final screening by the end of fall quarter. The film received positive feedback following the final screening. The filming process was enjoyable, and it turned out to be a fine project with which I am very satisfied. Also, while working on this project, some difficulties arose due to my sometimes-heedless project plan, but I learned a valuable lesson. I will explain the details of how I made this project and what I learned from the experience.

Process

A. Pre-production

I. Idea

a. Photographer

Since I knew that it would be my last film at college, I was hoping to do something different from my previous work. The original idea of my thesis was a story about a photographer. I always had intended to make a film about a photographer, because I have been curious about how photographers deal with the real world at the same time their minds are filled
with images. My first attempt in making a film starring a photographer was when I first came to study here, but it never materialized. I am hoping I will make it someday. I had been thinking of various stories about a photographer, but the script was unsatisfactory until one day when I went to a friend’s house for dinner.

b. Tea

A woman I know has been studying the intricacies of the tea ceremony for years. One day I was invited to her house for dinner. After dinner, she began to perform a tea ceremony. I was intrigued by the process and thought, why not put this beautiful tea ceremony in the film! Also, I had a book about the history of tea. I found “tea” actually played an important role in cultural and economic exchange throughout history both in the East and West.

c. Hometown changes

After finishing the first draft, I went back to my hometown, Beijing, China. It is an old city with thousands of years of history and is now the cultural center of the nation. In order to welcome the Olympic Games, the economy of the entire nation developed rapidly. I went back to China after the Olympic Games, and I found my home city had changed into a more modern city than the traditional one. This change made me sad, because the images of the ancient streets and exquisite buildings were mostly gone and replaced by skyscrapers. The people had become quite busy, and traditional values were being ignored and forgotten. I think it’s a pity, from my aesthetic point of view; those historical and traditional entities were all beautiful in my eyes. However, most people wanted to pursue modernization instead of traditional beauty. Fewer people were concerned with the importance of protecting and preserving old buildings and values. So I decided to make a film about preserving tradition culture and wanted to combine this idea with the story.
II. Casting

Finding and training talent

Finding an actress was the most difficult aspect of pre-production. Because there were no professional Chinese actresses in the Rochester area, I had to look for a non-professional actress. Luckily, I was introduced to a Chinese dancing club where I found my actress. She was a student studying at the University of Rochester. Also she was a good dancer. While discussing the role on the first day I met her, she told me that she didn’t have any experience in acting and was not sure if she could act well. Later, I found the same situation with my actor who was another student from University of Rochester. He had great interest in photography but had no acting experience either. I thought it would be a great challenge to all of us.

Then I brought her to my friend who knew how to perform the tea ceremony. Also, I recorded the video of how to perform the tea process and put it online for her to watch. The actress started to practice the tea ceremony at her house. She was committed to this character, so she practiced very hard. Within a month she could perform the ceremony skillfully, which was beyond my expectations. Also, I felt fortunate when I later learned from my actress that she also was concerned about the disappearing Chinese traditional values. She liked to read ancient poetry and writings. I believed her dedication to Chinese values would benefit the film project, but another problem arose. The actress needed to play two different types of character. One was the girl with traditional presence and the other was the girl with modern presence. It was somewhat difficult for her to play the modern girl role. She had never been to any American bar or clubs before. So I took both my actress and another main actor from the film to the club and let them observe people dancing there. I
would say I was extremely fortunate to find my actress and actor. They were very talented and trying hard to get my idea. They spent a lot of time training them to become the character I wanted. Then finally, both of them were similar to their characters in one way or another. When I took them to the club, my actor told me he preferred a quieter place, exactly like the photographer character in my film. This is why I believe, in a profound way, that they could interpret their characters much better than someone who had no connection to their character. In addition, I think this is what I learned from the casting issue. To find the actors or actresses, they don’t necessarily have to be the same type of person as your character, but at least find one who can relate to the character.

III. Producing

a. Locations

_Bitter Tea_ was designed to have four main locations: a friend’s house, a park, a photo studio, and a club. The first two locations were easy to find because they were regular housing, but I did have a slight challenge on the last two.

I had been trying to contact local photo studios for the studio scene, but their rates were high for this low-budget student film, so I started to contact school locations. With help from a friend, I finally got the studio in our school photo department one week before shooting. For the club scene, I had thought it would be very expensive to use the actual locations, so I had planned to decorate a basement to make it look like a club. However, I finally got permission from The One, which is the most popular club in the area. They were
very supportive of R.I.T student projects and allowed me to use the location for about two hours.

b. Crew

I was short on crew members at this time. The locations were found late, so I was not able to schedule a crew ahead of time. Also, I shot this film in spring quarter, which was the busiest quarter of the year. Everyone was shooting their thesis in this quarter, and most of the students were already booked. So, it ended up that I called some people at the last minute, and most of them were people from outside of school, like my roommates and friends who had an interest in film making and photography. It turned out that I had to do all the work by myself, which included producing and casting as well as production, art design, etc. Also, my DP (Director of Photography) Madeline Wang did a great job on this project. She was actually changed into a PA (Production Assistant) trainer on set. She taught the unprofessional crew the basic skills of being a PA and they were fast learners. They finally became a great team together. However, because of the shortage of crew, we were behind schedule during the shoot. Also, it turned out that we had a lot of extra work in the post-production. Those factors posed a great challenge to me for the film.

B. Production

a. Directing Non-professional Chinese talent

From a professional point of view, the director’s mission is to help the talent relate to the character, but I found this aspect difficult in terms of directing non-professional talent. To them, being in front of the camera is a new and strange experience, as is acting like another
person. When working with non-professional talent, you have to be prepared to answer a myriad of questions. You need to train the talent from the beginning, which in reality doesn’t make sense. Also, it is impossible to train them in such limited time, so to save time, you have to let the talent trust whatever you say. For example, I did a close up of the photographer holding the teacup. I needed to make his eyes look closed on the monitor, but it looked strange once he closed his eyes. As a result I just gave him specific directions to open his eye just a little bit. He didn’t understand and asked why I told him to look in a different direction. I had to explain that it looked better on the monitor when he did it the second time. The same situation happened many times, but time was limited during the shooting, and these potential disruptions had to be explained beforehand.

**b. Importance of Assistant Director**

I learned from the pre-production of this project that you need to have an Assistant Director. I found it difficult to find crew members during preproduction, so it turned out that I had no Assistant Director. In most of the scenes I was shooting, I had difficulty controlling the time, which made shooting time longer and made everyone on the set tired. My actor and actress should have had more time to relax when we were not shooting, because two-thirds of the shooting time actually dealt with lighting. With an Assistant Director, I would have asked him or her to play some music for them or help them polish their dialogue. This would have helped the actors do better later on, and it would definitely have saved a lot of time.

I still remember when we shot the club scene; we had over 20 extras come in that day. We also had to shoot it in a two-hour time limit. We arrived at 8:00 pm. Except for DP (Director of Photography) Madeline and I, all crew were new to the location. Madeline led the crew
dealing with lighting, and I was doing rehearsal with the actresses and actors. Then extras came in one by one at around 9:00 pm, but they didn’t know where to stay or what to do. We had to make as little noise as possible while shooting, but no one was there to manage in coming extras because we had no Assistant Director. Then around 9:30 pm, the DJ (Disc Jockey) from the club needed to start testing music because the club would be officially opened around 10:00pm. Then the chaos started. We could not hear each other, but fortunately we were done with the dialogue scene. We moved to the next one and tried to catch as many extras dancing with red dresses as possible, and I had to drag extras on set to put them into their position for the dancing. It made me feel bad, but I had no way to tell them where to stand. In the meantime more and more customers from the club were coming in. Crew, extras, and customers were all mixed into the dancing pool with flashing lights. It was chaos; we lost control of the film set. Madeline was handholding the camera and I was following beside her. We could not even see clearly and just tried to catch as many red dresses as possible. The manager warned us to leave because too many customers were there, so we had to wrap it up quickly. We got all the footage we wanted in this mess, but I knew that if we had had some Assistants, we would not have been in that chaotic situation. I did not even get the chance to tell my extras to leave the club. They told me afterwards that they ended up dancing in that club all night.
C. Post-Production

a. Sound

During shooting, the most important technical problem I encountered was sound. During an outdoor scene a wild wind was blowing that made the sound very unclear. We tried different techniques, such as using a windscreen on the shot-gun microphone, but even that didn’t work well. I had to fix it in post-production, but I found it very difficult to eliminate the background noise. I had to ask my actor and actress to do an ADR (Additional Dialogue Recording) session. The same situation occurred in the scene of the photo studio. There was a huge light and with an adaptor that made a loud noise. I couldn’t find a way to avoid the noise, and I had to do all the sound in post-production with ADR.

A lesson I learned from the sound issue is that you need to set aside time to do the ADR because ADR makes really clean sound. I finally used Sound Track Pro to remix the sound created by ADR. The software had a huge sound resource that I could use, and it gave great results with the sound.

From the editing point of view, it is very important to organize the sound track layers. I didn’t organize the sound track in the beginning, and, as a result, I found it very confusing when I needed to fix it. Some of the footage had four layers of sound track but only one track was good. Those tracks had to be unlinked, the bad one deleted, and the good one kept. It took me a long time to figure out the different layers. (Figure 1)
b. Compressor

I was excited to use the 5D Mark 2 as the camera to shoot my thesis. The image turned out very well, but there was a compression issue that needed attention. I didn’t know that I needed to compress my footage before importing it into Final Cut. So, after I put the original HD footage into Final Cut, I noticed the image could barely move. I checked an online tutorial that indicated I need to compress the footage before importing it. I tried various codecs, but it worked differently on different computers, because each computer had a different system set up. I finally chose the “Apple Pro res 422,” which is the most popular option, but I found it still ran a little bit jerky in some computers. Also, you need to take care to not lose quality when compressing footage. I made a test on “Apple Pro res 422,” “Apple Pro res 422 LQ,” and “Apple Pro res 422 HQ.” I found out there were no major differences, but “Apple Pro res 422 HQ” had high data rates that could cause difficulty in editing. So I chose “Apple Pro res 422” for the codec.
D. Screening / Conclusion

After the final screening of the film, I received feedback from both American and Chinese audiences. I found that people from different backgrounds interpret this film differently. Actually, I showed the film twice. I had some sound issues in the first screening, so I fixed that afterwards and also changed the ending shot of the film in the second screening. That was my final screening. The big difference between the two ending shots was that in my first screening; the ending shot was the photographer laughing at himself after taking a picture of a subject. However, in the second screening, the photographer was sad with tears in his eyes before taking a picture of a subject, and then the film ended with black.

One American audience from my first screening thought the character of the photographer was naïve because the photographer had just met the girl but thought he knew her very well and tried to prevent her from going to the club. This audience’s comment made sense to me because that was my original thought of the film. That is why I put the “laughing at himself” shot in the end because I wanted to show that the photographer realized that he persisted in seeing truth and beauty in the images he created. (Figure 2) The reality was not like what he saw. Also, I wanted to show that he was naïve. I actually had another shot to present this idea. It was the one with the photographer holding the teacup with his image on it. The image he saw in the tea cup was only the tea, the water. It became nothing when you poured the water off. Then I found this idea was too abstract and wasn’t clear to the audience, so I changed the ending shot with him looking sad with tears in his eyes in order to focus on the idea of traditional value change. (Figure 3) Then the audience understood clearly that the girl was a symbol expressing the traditional value change, which was very important.
Figure 2: First screening: Ending shot with the main character

laughing at himself after taking the picture

Figure 3: Final screening: Ending shot with the main character

tears in his eyes before taking the picture.
The film had a great influence on the mainland Chinese community. Many of them were becoming interested in the tea ceremony and wanted to study it. Also, some Chinese audiences interpreted it as if the girl had a split personality, because they saw the girl presented differently to the photographer in the film, which gave the audience a little bit more to discuss. However, this story became even more interesting to me, because I felt the topic of cultural differences was valuable to express and experiment with this film.

Finally, Bitter tea was chosen by SOFA Emerging Filmmakers in Rochester 360/365 Film Festival in April, 2011. It was screening successfully in the Little Theatre on April, 30 2011 and won the Best Show award of SOFA Emerging Filmmakers section.

To sum up, the experience of making this project is poignant to me. Not only did I learn new film technology such as using the 5D mark II camera to shoot the film, but I also learned from the people with whom I worked. This film turned out to be a good one, and, again, I want to thank my professors and friends who supported me in completing this project.

Overall, this film is a team project and everyone is included. In order to make a film and finally become more efficient working with others, communication remains an important skill that I need to improve continually in my life.
E. Appendix

I. Still photos from final film

*Chen (photography student) works in the photo studio with a model.*
Chen goes to a party and smokes outside.

Lisa (college student) performs Tea Ceremony in the house.
Chen drinks tea with Lisa in the house.

Lisa needs to leave the party early, but the American man asks her to stay.
Chen goes back home and enjoys the tea set he has not used for a while.

Chen brings Lisa to a park to shoot his photography assignment.
A couple of weeks later, Lisa goes to Chen’s studio for another photo shoot.

Lisa dances with the American man in a club.
Chen is looking for Lisa in the club.

Lisa comes back to the studio with the American man.
Chen comes back to the studio and finds out Lisa is there with the American man.

Chen looks at the picture he took of Lisa after Lisa and the American man left the studio.
Chen notices there is an image of himself reflected in the tea.

Chen leaves the studio and looks at the picture of Lisa on the wall.
Chen takes a picture of an object.
II. Thesis proposal

Synopsis:

A Chinese photographer graduate student wants to complete a photography assignment about the ideal Chinese sexiness. He meets a Chinese girl who becomes his muse, and helps him to complete the assignment. During the process, the Chinese girl is attracted to a Chinese American boy and she changes herself in order to please the boy but finally she finds that the change is not easy.
Treatment:

Chen, a Chinese photographer, is taking photos of a blonde model.

Chen processes the photos and prints them. But he doesn’t feel the sense of sexiness. He meets a friend and talks about his difficulty in finding the sexiness. The friend recommends he attend to a tea party where he can find an Asian model instead.

Chen attends a tea party and a beautiful Chinese girl, Lisa, doing tea art, inspires him. He asks the girl to be his model and the girl agrees. In exchange, the girl also requires the photographer to shoot her profile picture. In the meantime, the girl is attracted to a Chinese American boy and they are classmates. The boy supports Lisa’s tea art by using his apartment. The boy expects the girl to stay with him at night but the girl doesn’t understand his expectation and just leaves.

Lisa meets the Chinese American boy but the boy treats her as a normal friend. Lisa thanks him again for supporting her with his apartment but she is disappointed with his attitude toward her.

Chen sees the Chinese American boy flirting with other girls at school and then Chen meets his friend (mentioned before) again and tells him that he found the idea Asian model and praises her by resembling her beauty to ceramic. Chen says he will show his friend the beauty of the girl later.

Chen takes pictures of the girl in a nature setting. They begin talking about notions of sexiness. The girl seems not in the mood, and Chen asks her why. The girl doesn’t want to talk about it and Chen smartly guesses the reason and tells the girl that she is not the Chinese American boy’s type. Chen encourages her by praising her beauty, and tells her the artist has different perspective towards beauty. However, the girl doesn’t think of it that way.

Chen is printing the photo again and he is satisfied with his work.
The girl with her female friend meets the Chinese-American boy in a class but the boy tries to ignore her. The boy discusses homosexuality with his friend around her on purpose. The girl feels uncomfortable. Then some hot girls come to greet them and Lisa feels bad about herself.

The Chinese girl comes back home and she buys an enhancing bra and decides to decorate herself to be sexier.

Lisa and Chen meet in the studio for the profile picture shooting. Chen is upset about the girl’s new look and the girl tells her she is going to meet the Chinese-American guy at a party that night.

Chen puts some nails in the wall.

Chen tries to comfort himself by doing tea art at the studio. But his heart is not peaceful and he breaks a ceramic bottle by accident. He wants to cool off and leaves. Lisa meets the Chinese American guy at the party. The boy is shocked by Lisa but he doesn’t treat her in a respectful way. Lisa tries to behave mature and competes with other hot girls. Then, the Chinese American boy takes Lisa to another room and tries to rape Lisa. Lisa is terribly scared and escapes from the boy.

Lisa comes back to the studio and hopes to find Chen to get comfort. The studio is opened. Lisa enters to the room to find a huge picture of her taken outdoors is hanging on the wall. She is shocked by her own beauty which she has taken for granted. She takes off the plastic bra dropping it to the ground in front of a mirror and falls into sleep.

Chen comes back to the studio and finds Lisa asleep and lying in front of the huge picture of her with messed up make up. He fixes the ceramic bottle peacefully.

End
Statement:

With China’s open reform policy, Western ideologies floods in China. China is a country with thousands of years of traditional culture, and China is facing enormous challenges during this time. Many Chinese traditional cultures suffer on the brink of extinction. This means not only material objects, but also the traditional Chinese ideology. This is where my question arises.

In the meantime, Chinese women in this time have to face the same problems. This is especially true for the ones brought up with a traditional Chinese background but also have a Western-education. Their choice is a challenging issue. Many young women get torn between two cultures, and either choice provides no resolution. The phenomenon is getting even more popular but people seldom give it a consideration.

However, this film is going to talk about this issue and the importance of the preservation of traditional Chinese culture in the young generation.
## Budget Summary

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**Total: 2650**
**Time Line**

**Working Title:** NA  
**Format:** HD  
**Director:** CaiCai Liu  
**Year of Production:** 2010

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**Start Date:** 01/09/10  
**End Date:** 12/10/10
III. Script

Bitter Tea
by CaiCai Liu
INT. PHOTOGRAPHY STUDIO - DAY

LEE, a Chinese photography student, is taking pictures of an attractive blonde model in a sexy dress.

BLONDE MODEL
You look tired.

LEE
Do I?

BLONDE MODEL
Yeah.

INT. LEE’S BEDROOM - DAY

Lee is lying on his bed looking at photographs of the blonde model. Jack, Lee’s American roommate, enters and stands at the door frame.

JACK
Hey dude, are you going to Vanessa’s party tonight?

LEE
I was thinking about it but I’m kinda beat.

JACK
Come on Lee. What were you shooting today?

Lee passes Jack the photos.

JACK (CONT’D)
Damn that’s hot. She single?

LEE
I don’t know, I’m not feeling it. I think I’m gonna have to reshoot.

JACK
Whatever man, these are great. You just need to get out, have some fun, you better come tonight.
LEE
Well, I’ve got to figure out what
I’m gonna go about this project.

JACK
Dude, this is gold, you even have
the perfect spot to hang it. Think
about it, that large.

Jack walks over to a blank spot on the wall and places the
photo in the empty space.

LEE
Fine Jack, I’ll go to the party,
just take that down.

EXT. HOUSE – NIGHT

Establishing shot of house with party.

INT. BASEMENT – NIGHT

A crowded party with lots of people dancing. Lee sits by
himself in the corner drinking a beer. TOM, an American
college kid, comes over and sits next to Lee.

TOM
Yo, where have you been hiding out?

LEE
Hey, Tom. I’ve just been working on
my photo project.

TOM
Oh yea? What are you doing?

LEE
Nothing special, just shooting
some sexy models. I don’t know.

TOM
Sexy models? I’m Jealous.
You photographers!
You know there is an Asian girl,
Lisa making tea upstairs right now.
Do you know her?
LEE
Asian girl, Lisa? No, I don’t know a lot of Asians here. Why?

TOM
Really? Tell you what? She’s funny. We were in class the other day and really loud she asked if she could borrow a rubber. Everyone just started laughing right in the middle of class.

Lee and Tom both laugh.

LEE
I did that once, except it was during a math test. I leaned over and whispered, Do you have a rubber?

TOM
No way, what did she do?

LEE
She slapped me and changed seats. I just wanted an eraser and she slapped me.

TOM
Brutal.

LEE
Yeah, I guess we speak British English in China, I didn’t know it was different from American English.

TOM
Good times, hey, I need to go upstairs and get some fresh air.

LEE
I’ll go with you... I need some air too. (certain)

Tom and Lee get up and walk upstairs.
INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

LISA is at the kitchen counter and there is a group of people around her as she demonstrates the Chinese Tea Ceremony. Tom and Lee walk by. Tom exits. Lee stands in the background watching Lisa perform the tea ceremony for the small crowd. He is mesmerized. Lee sits down for the next round of tea and drinks the tea in the right way. As the tea ceremony is about to end, Lisa leaves to receive a call on her cell phone. Lee steps outside to the balcony.

EXT. BALCONY - NIGHT

Lee paces back and forth gathering courage to talk to Lisa.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Lee sees Lisa heading for the door. CHEN, a Chinese-American student, comes down the stairs.

CHEN
Lisa, you’re not leaving are you?

LISA
Yea, it’s that time.

CHEN
But it’s your first visit to my house and I haven’t given you the tour yet.

Chen puts his arm around Lisa.

LISA
It’s a beautiful house, thanks for the party.

CHEN
Let me show you up stairs, I have the coolest bedroom ever.

LISA
Sorry, my ride is leaving. Next time.
CHEN
All right, I will see you next time.

LISA
Bye.

CHEN
Bye.

Lisa walks out the front door.
Chen wanders away.
Lee follows Lisa.

EXT. PARKING LOT/DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

Lee jogs to catch up with Lisa. Lisa is about to get into the backseat of a car.

LEE
Hey, hey

Lisa stops and turns around.

LEE (CONT’D)
Um, You were doing the traditional tea ceremony in there. That was great!

LISA
Thanks.

LEE
Are you Chinese? Do you speak Mandarin or Cantonese?

LISA
Mandarin.

Lee switches to Chinese.

LEE
Hi, I’m Lee Ming, I’m studying photography.

LISA
Hi, I’m Lisa.
LEE
I am currently doing a photo project and I think you would be perfect for my project. Will you model for me?

LISA
Umm... I’ve never modeled before. What kind of photos?

LEE
Just portraits. Photos that can express yourself.

LISA
That sounds nice, but I’m not pretty enough to be a model.

LEE
Nonsense you are just what I had in mind for my picture. Take my card, call me and we will do it.

Lee hands Lisa his business card.

LISA
Ok but you have to shoot a picture for my facebook page!

Car honks again.

LISA (CONT’D)
Haha, Nice meeting you, I gotta go.

Lisa gets into the car.

LEE
Sure. Bye.

The car drives away. Lee walks away into darkness.

INT. LEE’S HOUSE—NIGHT

Lee comes back home and searches in a pile of newspapers. He takes out a big box with dust. He opens the box and takes out the tea ceremony tools and (CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

tries to put them on the desk.
Lee plays with the tea utilities.

EXT. PARK – DAY

Lee leads Lisa into the park. They speak in Chinese. Lisa is wearing special antique clothing.

LEE

Here we are.

LISA

Wow, this is beautiful.

Lee hands Lisa a basket and begins unfolding a cloth to sit on.

LEE

Here I brought my tea set. Will you make some tea before I actually shoot?

Lisa sits down and begins taking out the tea set from the basket. Lee begins taking pictures as they talk.

LISA

Sure, why not? Wow, what an amazing tea set you have. Where did you get it?

LEE

I brought it with me from China. Sadly in three years, I’ve only used it twice. It’s so bored to enjoy tea by yourself.

LISA

You are the first person I’ve met who knows about the tea ceremony.

LEE

Really? How long have you been here?
LISA
Only a few months, it’s my first year at school.

LEE
Do you like school?

LISA
School is good, a lot of work to do...

LEE
Yeah.

LISA
So, why you want me to dress like this. I mean the clothes. It’s kind of really old style.

LEE
Yeah, I am feeling you have a very classical personality.

LISA
Oh, Really? Classical? Haha, Thank you. No one has told me before.

LEE
Hold the tea cup up and take a drink, but look more to the left.

Lee takes a picture.

LEE (CONT’D)
Perfect.

LISA
So, When can you shoot my profile picture?

LEE
What picture?

LISA
Last time I mentioned, in the parking lot. Do you remember?

LEE
Oh, Yeah.
LISA
Can I come on Friday?

LEE
Allright. Friday is fine.

LISA
Great! I feel you’re a great photographer!

LEE
Are you? Thank you.

Lee is happy and takes a bunch of pictures.

LEE (CONT’D)
Amazing, it reminds me of a poem.
Have you heard this one?

LEE
Moonlight shining onto the walls
of a bungalow amid the hills...

LISA
A cup of tea waiting for the
pleasure of a companion to
savor...

Lee begins reciting a poem. For the last two lines Lisa
joins in and they say them together. They smile at each
other.

INT. LEE’S BEDROOM – DAY

Lee sits in front of the table and makes two cups of
tea. He holds the tea cups and looks outside of the window.
Then looks back and moves the cups to a little further.
He thinks of Lisa drinking the tea and gently looks at her. He
is happy and recites the poem.

INT. PHOTOGRAPHY STUDIO – EVENING

Lee is whistling while he sets up some lights. Lisa comes
in wearing skimpy American clothing.
LEE
Sorry, you have the wrong studio.
Lisa comes out of the room and comes in again.

LISA
Lee, it’s me Lisa. I thought I was in the wrong room.
Lee speaks really low.

LEE
Oh, Hi, Lisa.

LISA
So, are you ready for shooting?

LEE
Yeah, you can just stand there.
Lee’s voice is even lower.
Lisa moves to stand in front of the lights.

LISA
Do I stand here?

LEE
Yeah.
Lee starts to shoot.
LISA poses a couple of postures.

LISA
Wow, that’s so bright.
Lee takes a picture.

LISA (CONT’D)
Oh wait, I brought music.
Lisa walks over to her big purse and takes out a CD, she walks over to Lee’s computer and puts the CD in. POP music starts playing. Lisa returns to in front of the lights and starts dancing. Lee brings the camera to his eye, and then lowers it. He does this again. Lee stops the music.

LEE
I am sorry. I can’t do this.
LISA
What’s wrong?

LEE
...Why are you wearing clothes? like this?

LISA
Oh, I am going to Chen’s party tonight. What’s wrong?

LEE
Don’t you think that your dress is too appealing?

LISA
Appealing? Why can’t I dress like this. Those American girls are dressing even hotter than me!

LEE
This dress is not appropriate for you.

LISA
Not appropriate? So, you tell me what’s appropriate for me!

LEE
Alas! The picture I took last time has just printed out today. Do you want to have a look? I will grab that for you, wait for me here.

Lee walks out of studio.

LISA
It’s not a big deal! I can’t count on anything you say anyhow!

Lisa waits a second and leaves angrily.

Lee comes back to studio with a huge picture in hand, but Lisa has gone.

Lee tapes the picture on the wall of the studio.

Lee paces, mutter angrily under his breath. After a moment he goes to the counter and begins making himself tea.
CUT TO:
LISA IS FLIRTING WITH GUYS AT THE PARTY
LISA DRINKS A LOT AT THE PARTY
CHEN BRINGS LISA UPSTAIRS TO HIS BEDROOM
CHEN puts his hands on LISA’S ARM AND WAIST AND HIP.

Lee is furious and cannot concentrate, he pushes his cup of tea away violently and it breaks. He stands up and walks away.

INT. PARTY - NIGHT

Lisa stops dancing with Chen and walks to the side.

    CHEN
    You look tired.

    LISA
    Yeah.I don’t know.Lee has just wanted me to wait to see the picture he took for me...I didn’t see it,but um...

    CHEN
    So you want to see the picture?

    LISA
    I don’t know.Yes,I guess...Shall we go.

    CHEN
    Sure,why not. What picture? I am curious.Let’s go!

Chen and Lisa leaves.

EXT. ROAD - NIGHT

Lee drives through a main road on his way to party.

INT. PARTY - NIGHT

Lee arrives and wanders through the party searching for Lisa. She is not there. He finds a girl with a traditional Chinese QiPao.
LEE
Hi, Lisa!

The girl turns her back and it is an American girl.

INT. STUDIO - NIGHT
Lisa and Chen arrive at Studio. The Door is opened. They enter.

CHEN
Wow, the door is opened.

Chen and Lisa comes in to the studio and searching for Lee.

CHEN (CONT’D)
He is not here.

LISA
Yeah, he’s probably goes out to smoke.

Chen takes off his sweatshirt. He sees the picture of Lisa on the wall.

CHEN
Cool poster, very pretty. I mean different.

LISA
Wow, That is me. Can’t imagine.

Chen looks back and forth from the picture in the background and Lisa.

CHEN
I think Lee did a great job!

LISA
Yeah, I think he is especially talented.

Chen puts his arm around Lisa.

INT. PARTY - NIGHT

Lee disappointed and went out.
EXT. STUDIO - NIGHT

Lee arrives at the studio, the door is opened. Lee enters into the studio and finds Chen is there with outdoor picture hanging on the wall in the background. Chen fusses with the missiles of his pants.

LEE
Why are you here?

CHEN
Hi, Lee! We come to see the picture. You did a great job!

LEE
We? Who else?

CHEN
Me and Lisa.

LEE
Where is Lisa?!

CHEN
Lisa goes to bathroom.

LEE
Bathroom? What did you do, where is she?

CHEN
What do you mean?

LEE
You know what I mean, where is Lisa! Where is Lisa!

Lee thinks Chen did something bad to Lisa and starts to catch his shirt.

LEE
What did you do to Lisa! She has just come here and are you trying to take advantage of her, bastard!
CHEN
Hey, are you drunk?! You want to fight! OK!

Chen catches Lees shirt.
Chen and Lee fight.
Lisa walks in and finds out there is a fight. She tries to stop them.

LISA
What are you doing?! Stop!

Lisa starts to prevent Lee from hurting Chen.

LEE
Get away from here, Lisa. Don’t worry. I am here. No one will hurt you.

Lisa stands by the Chen’s side and tries to protect Chen.

LISA
What are you talking about! Are you drunk, Lee?

LEE
Am I drunk? Lisa, Are you OK?

Lee puts his arm in Lisa’s shoulder.

LISA
Don’t touch me! Are you drunk?!

CHEN
Don’t touch her!

Chen stands in the front and tries to protect Lisa.
Lee looks at Lisa from top to bottom.

LEE (CONT’D)
Wake up, Lisa! See how you look now. It’s not worthy of you to dress like this for him. Look how pretty you were!

Lee points to the picture hanging on the wall. Lisa looks at the picture and turns around.
LISA
Wake up Lee! That’s not me!...Why you say that’s me! You don’t know me at all!

LEE
Lisa, you changed...You’re not that Lisa I knew before ever.

LISA
Wake up Lee! We’ve just met. That’s only a picture. What’s wrong with you!

LEE
You don’t understand what I mean. But someday you will.

LISA
What are you talking about?
I don’t need your lessons here.
I am happy about myself like this.
I accept who I am, not like you, always complain things!...Can you tell me who you are?

Lee keeps silent.
Lisa and Chen are about to leave.
Chen notices the broken cup on the ground.

CHEN
Oh, I didn’t know tea can make you drunk too!

Chen laughs and leaves with Lisa.

LEE
Get out!

LEE takes over the cup and wants to throw it away but he decides to keep it and he wraps up the broken cup with cloth.

(cut to)

LEE sits beside the table with the picture in the background and he holds a cup of cold tea and finds the image of himself reflected over the water. He drinks the tea.

(cut to)

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

Lee is about to leave and he watches the picture on the wall again. He takes out of his camera and takes a picture of the picture of Lisa on the wall and walks away with smile.

Fade to black