

SCENE THREE

SCENE

New York – Li Su's one-bedroom apartment

CHARACTER

Li Su

Mr. Li

Mrs. Li

Li Su carries two large pieces of luggage and enters the apartment, followed by her parents Mr. and Mrs. Li.

SU

Welcome to New York. Welcome to my home.

Mr. and Mrs. Li look around.

SU

It's still a bit messy. I tried my best to clean...

MRS. LI

Oh we know you.

MR. LI

So small.

MRS. LI

So this is 2000 US dollars a month? 2000 US dollars for a match box. Are you sure it's not a scheme?

SU

No. It's a good deal. I searched for a long time and found this.

MR. LI

I can hardly move.

SU

Why don't you take off your coat?

MR. LI

We are going to. We are going to.

They are not taking off their coats.

They walk around to check out the apartment. Mrs. Li sighs and gives Su a motherly hug.

MR. LI

My daughter should not live in such a tiny hole.

Mr. Li takes out a roll of a hundred dollar bills from his pocket and put it on the table.

Mrs. Li goes to lock the door.

Mr. Li takes another roll from a different pocket. Then another. More and more. So does Mrs. Li... They empty their coats, take them off, and take out more from their jackets... They empty their outer jackets, take them off, and take out more money from their inner jackets...

A large pile of cash sits on the table.

Mrs. Li opens her handbag and pours another large pile of cash over the table.

Mr. Li takes off his hat and pulls out another two rolls.

Su is shocked.

SU

What?

(beat)

Oh my god! Dad is corrupted! Are you on the run?!

MRS. LI

Shhh. Stop being so dramatic. You think we would only have one million if you dad is corrupted?

SU

This is one million?!

MR. LI

Your dad has never - NEVER EVER been corrupted! Not in 100 years! I'm a loyal Communist. How dare you think of me like that!

SU

Fine. Fine. Where did you get all these money? Why are you carrying them? How did you even pass the border?

MRS. LI

It's our old home's removal compensation.

SU

No way. Not that much! Our old termite-ridden house wasn't worth that much.

MRS. LI

Well, the house itself wasn't worth much. However, the compensation was based on the headcount of registered permanent residents.

SU

You, me and dad are only three people.

MRS. LI

No. We knew this was coming, so five months before the removal, we wisely invited everyone in the family to transfer their residence registrations to our home. That was 20 people. And each person got 300,000 yuan compensation from the government.

MR. LI

Hey, don't talk to kid about that.

SU

Oh my fucking god. That's... more than six million yuan?! And they were willing to do that? For free?

MRS. LI

Of course. That's what family is for. Plus, they were just returning favors.

MR. LI

Su Su doesn't need to know the minutia.

SU

What favors?

MRS. LI

Your cousin Linlin got into the key elementary school with my help. Your 40-year-old unmarried auntie Bai met her fiancé through my introduction. Your father used his connection to remove your uncle Fu's drunk driving record.

MR. LI

(Interrupt) That's enough.

MRS. LI

If it weren't for your father, your dumbass cousin Tan could never find a job, not to mention being promoted three times in one year.

MR. LI

Stop contaminating the kid!

SU

Wow, so much was going on and I had no idea.

MR. LI

Your mother likes to talk talk talk!

SU

Okay. Okay. I got it. Anyway. Was that illegal? The faking residence trick?

MRS. LI

No! Everyone in our neighborhood was doing it.

MR. LI

We don't do anything illegal.

SU

Smuggling a million dollar is illegal.

MR. LI

You teach me a better way to do it?

SU

Why don't you just wire the money?

Mr. and Mrs. Li laugh.

MRS. LI

We never let her worry about money, so she has no knowledge of real life.

SU

Hey!

MRS. LI

There is no legal way for average people to transfer a large amount of money out of China. The State Administration of Foreign Exchange has strict rules.

SU

That's ridiculous!

MRS. LI

Indeed ridiculous!

MR. LI

That's not ridiculous! That's what's best for the country! Without those rules, there would be turbulence and turmoil in our economy. Easy for you to criticize!

SU

Good for you. Huddling with a million dollar cash on the 14-hour flight. What if the border police found out?

MR. LI

They didn't. Your mother and I are decent people. Only those poor looking people with cheap woven bags get checked.

MRS. LI

We thought about wiring the money from different family members' accounts, but it would take too long, cost too much in service fees, and turn out to be suspicious anyway.

SU

So, you are going to buy an apartment in New York?

MR. LI

What? How do you know?! (To Mrs. Li) I told you to keep it a surprise! You never close your mouth!

MRS. LI

But I didn't say anything!

Su's cellphone rings.

SU

Isn't that what everyone is doing nowadays? Hold on a second.

She picks up the phone.

SU

(To the phone) Hello. Catherine speaking.

Mr. and Mrs. Li stare at the money on the table. They look around for a place to put it.

SU

(To the phone) Oh hi! Yes! Yes! Thank you for calling!

MRS. LI

Su Su, do you have a big bag?

SU

Shh.

MRS. LI

I need a bag for the money.

SU

(Seriously) Shhhhhhh!

(To the phone) Nonono, please continue.

I'm glad to hear that! My pleasure! I LOVE that play.

Uh...No... I'm not an Equity member...yet, because I'm not a citizen, but that won't be a problem!

(Pause) I have an EAD card. No. It's not a green card. It's different from the green card but Equity doesn't know the difference. I can join the Equity as soon as you cast me! It will all work out fine.

(Pause) Nonono, that's not what I meant.

MR. LI

Look at her talking on the phone. Our daughter's English is so fluent!

Mrs. Li opens drawers and closets one after another to find a bag.

SU

(To the phone) Please. It's not as complicated as it sounds.

MR. LI

Su Su' English grades were always the top at her class since elementary school. That's something she does better than her father. (He is proud.)

MRS. LI

She does a lot of things much better than her father. (Takes out a roll of black plastic trash bags from one drawer.) God. Our girl is so disorganized.

MR. LI

She is an artist.

MRS. LI

I was an artist too, but I don't make a mess.

MR. LI

Probably that's why you never made it.

MRS. LI

Excuse me?

SU

(Cover the phone, gesture to her parents) Can you please?! Shhh.

MRS. LI

Alright alright.

SU

(To the phone) I know, but... No... Yeah. I understand. But that is so unfair! If there is anything I can do, ANYTHING... You have no idea how long I've been auditioning since graduation. I felt SO close this time. How about the ensemble roles?

Mrs. Li puts money into the black trash bag.

MRS. LI

This is perfect.

SU

(To the phone) Yeah, please tell Mr. Haley and Mr. LaGatta that I look forward to working with them in the future too, but we both know there probably won't be another play in a major Off-Broadway theater any time soon that starring so many Eastern Asian actors.

Actually. There is something I didn't say in the audition.

I am that girl in the play.

Lu Lu's story is like my life. My birth parents sent me to an orphanage when I was born, so that they could save the one-child quota for their future son. A woman working in a factory line adopted me. When I was 10, my foster mother lost her left arm during work. The factory gave her a little compensation and kick her out. When I was 16, the government forcefully took our house and sold it to a developer to build a luxury hotel. My foster mother fought back and was hit by a bulldozer. (weeping) So, when I said those lines in the audition, I felt every single word was punching my heart. Me and that character became one. Mr. Haley's writing gives voice to voiceless people like me.

MRS. LI

Su Su, why are you crying?

MR. LI

What is she saying in English?

Su gestures to them to keep quiet.

SU

(To the phone) Really? Thank you so much! I look forward to hearing from you. Yes, anytime. I'm waiting by the phone! Fingers crossed.

Su hangs up. She is out of breath.

MRS. LI

What happened?

SU

Nothing.

MRS. LI

Why are you crying? Tell us!

MR. LI

Who dares to mess with my daughter! Tell dad! I will find that son of bitch!

SU

No. Nothing. I was talking to a producer. I auditioned for their play.

MRS. LI

Poor baby. I know what a rejection feels like.

SU

No. You don't.

MRS. LI

Of course I do. Mom was an actress too. It's okay. You are beautiful and talented. There will be plenty of opportunities.

SU

No. It's different!

MR. LI

Have you told them about your grades at school? And you were selected to perform dance for Samaranch, the president of the International Olympic Committee, when you were 7?

SU

No, dad! You don't understand.

Silence.

Mr. and Mrs. Li watch their daughter suffer.

MR. LI

Hey, wanna see your home? (To his wife) Where is the brochure?

SU

Sure.

MRS. LI

Here!

She hands her the brochure. Su takes a look.

SU

Nice.

MR. LI

Look at the view! The location! Amazing, isn't it?

SU

Yeah.

MRS. LI

One million dollars.

SU

Yeah.

MR. LI

Can't you show a bit of appreciation? We are spending one million dollars on you, and you seem not to care at all!

SU

No. Don't spend it on me.

MR. LI

As if we have choices! You are our only daughter!

The phone rings again. Su picks it up immediately.

SU

(To the phone) Yes yes! I'm here! Thank you for calling me back!

No problem! I'd love to take interviews. What kind of interviews? ... Hm... about that... Yeah, sure. No problem.

Really? Are you serious? Oh my god. Oh my god. Yes! Yes! Of course! Thank you so much! This is my happiest day. I will forever remember it. Thank you! You won't regret it! Thank you! Thank you!

She hangs up. She hugs her parents with excitement.

SU

I got the part! I got the part! Leading role in Josh Haley's play on Off-Broadway! Oh my god! Finally! I almost lost it!

MR. LI

Who is Josh Haley?

SU

Oh my god. He is like super famous. He is an Obie award winning playwright!

MR. LI

What is Obie?

SU

He was a Pulitzer nominee too! (Seeing her parents having no reaction) For his play Noise!

MRS. LI

Never heard of it.

SU

(Trying to find anything) His ex-girlfriend is Sally Goldman.

MRS. LI

Oh her!

MR. LI

Who?

MRS. LI

Sally Goldman! That woman in that action movie we saw at Christmas! Remember? The one wearing leopard dress and fighting in high heels?

MR. LI

Oh! Her! Wow! I like that movie!

SU

Yeah. The playwright is her ex-boyfriend. They were together for 9 years before she became famous in Hollywood.

MR. LI

Wow!

MRS. LI

Congratulations baby!

SU

I'm so happy now! Let me see the brochure! This is beautiful!

MR. LI

Are you coming with us on Monday?

SU

No. The rehearsal starts on Monday!

MRS. LI

It's great to see my daughter becoming an actress. Continue the dream I couldn't fulfill.

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For more information or to request a full script,
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