

UNTITLED JESSICA GAO PROJECT

Pilot

Written by

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COLD OPEN

INT. GENERIC OFFICE - DAY

JANET (V.O.)

Working in customer service, you deal with a lot of needy, demanding people. I usually handle the most difficult ones. I'm good at it.

In a drab cubicle, JANET ZHAO (29) talks on a headset. She's confident and capable but has the put-upon attitude of someone who always ends up doing all the work on a group project. Juuust enough make-up and style to look presentable.

QUICK CUTS of Janet talking to co-workers and on the phone.

JANET

I'll handle it. / Send them over to me. / I'm on it. / Another one? OK.

(on the phone)

Yes, I've filed a claim for your refund already. No, you have to wait for it to be processed.

JANET (V.O.)

And it's because I've spent my whole life dealing with the worst customers ever: my family.

JANET

Dad, there's nothing else I can do, okay? Just wait the ten days. Bye.

As Janet hangs up, her angry MANAGER stomps over.

MANAGER

Janet "Zow"! You've been warned multiple times about extended personal calls during work hours.

JANET

Sorry, I was helping my dad get a refund for a juicer he broke.

MANAGER

So it wasn't a life or death emergency.

JANET

My parents generally can't seem to differentiate between an emergency and a favor.

(MORE)

JANET (CONT'D)  
 And my last name is pronounced  
 "Jow," by the way.

MANAGER  
 Then why is it spelled with a Z?

JANET  
 Because it's a different language.

MANAGER  
 Your family is not paying you, we  
 are. Do the job you're being paid  
 to do. And speaking of, I just got  
 word you didn't get the position on  
 the product development team.

JANET  
 What? But I've basically been doing  
 all the work for that department  
 for months now!

MANAGER  
 Yeah, so why would they promote you  
 if you already do the work for  
 them? Focus on keeping *this* job  
 because the constant phone calls  
 with your family have to stop or...

As Janet nods along -- we get the sense she's used to being  
 lectured -- her cell phone starts to buzz on her desk. She  
 glances over and sees "MOM" calling. The Manager clocks this.

MANAGER (CONT'D)  
 Janet Z. Do not answer that.

JANET  
 If I don't, she'll keep calling.  
 And then possibly call the police.

Janet glances at the phone. The buzzing seems more urgent.

MANAGER  
 I'm warning you. I will write you--

Janet answers the call.

JANET  
 Hello, Mom?

MANAGER  
 You're getting written up!

But Janet is no longer listening; she's fully engrossed in  
 her call. The Manager storms off.

JANET (V.O.)

This conversation is all in Mandarin. Here's a helpful indicator whenever people are speaking Chinese.

**\*Throughout the show, a VISUAL CUE (TBD) will indicate whenever characters are speaking in Mandarin, but we will hear it as perfect, unaccented English.**

KATHY (O.C.)

(thru phone)

How do you spell "funeral?"

JANET

This is why you called me? I'm at work! You got me in trouble!

KATHY (O.C.)

Is it so hard for you to help your own mother? Your flesh and blood!

JANET

Okay! It's f-u-n-e-r-a-l. Why do you need to know?

KATHY (O.C.)

I'm writing a note to the bottled water delivery man.

JANET

Why do you need to spell "funeral" to the bottled water delivery man?

KATHY (O.C.)

Grandma died. Meet at her house tomorrow for the will reading.

JANET

Oh my God. Grandma... Isn't it a little insensitive to have the will reading the very next day?

KATHY (O.C.)

No, Grandma died three days ago.

JANET

Three days ago!? Why didn't you tell me until now?

KATHY (O.C.)

I don't want to bother you at work!

END OF COLD OPEN

ACT ONE

EXT. GRANDMA'S HOUSE - DAY

Janet's economy car pulls up to a San Marino mansion.

JANET (V.O.)  
Grandma Zhao was a self-made woman.

INSERT - oil painting of younger Grandma Zhao

JANET (V.O.)  
After the untimely death of her husband, she moved here, to the country that all of her adult children had immigrated to.

INSERT - oil painting of Grandma arriving at a US airport.

JANET (V.O.)  
And immediately became more successful than any of them.

INSERT - oil painting of Grandma looking like a powerful businesswoman at a mahogany desk.

JANET (V.O.)  
She also developed a love for oil paintings.

INSERT - oil painting of Grandma looking at the previous oil painting of herself.

JANET (V.O.)  
And that's about all I really knew about her. Like with most Asian grandparents, we saw each other regularly, but we didn't talk much.

AT THE FRONT DOOR

Janet takes a moment to psyche herself up, exhaling sharply like she's about to jump in a freezing cold pool. She enters.

INT. GRANDMA'S HOUSE - FOYER - DAY

The house is stately and well-maintained. Cherrywood furniture, brocade, and lots of portraits of Grandma Zhao.

Janet enters and changes into house slippers as her mom KATHY (60) comes to greet her. Kathy is ever slightly overdressed.

JANET  
Hi, Mom. How are you--

KATHY  
(tsks)  
You couldn't lose some weight  
before you see all your aunties and  
cousins?

JANET  
Well, I didn't know Grandma was  
going to die and we would all  
gather together at her house. I'll  
try to anticipate it next time.

JANET (V.O.)  
This is my mom Kathy. She has  
always said marrying my dad and  
having me prevented her from  
achieving her Five Dreams in Life.  
They range from superstar singer--

INT. BIRTHDAY PARTY - NIGHT

It's young Janet's birthday and everyone is gathered to sing.

KATHY  
(high operatic soprano)  
HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO YOU!

INT. PARENTS' HOUSE - NIGHT

JANET (V.O.)  
To fancy lady lawyer...

Kathy watches a legal drama on TV.

KATHY  
I could do that.

INT. GRANDMA'S HOUSE - BACK TO SCENE

JANET (V.O.)  
To rich housewife.

Janet and Kathy enter the living room, where the rest of the  
family are gathered eating cut fruit and drinking tea.

JANET (V.O.)  
Which I guess she technically was  
prevented from by marrying...

ROBERT (60) gives Janet a hearty pat on the shoulder.

ROBERT  
Janet. Did you eat?

JANET (V.O.)  
My dad Robert, a man with an  
endless well of business ideas--  
all of them terrible.

JANET  
How are you doing? Are you okay?

ROBERT  
Janet, listen...

He looks serious, inhaling deeply. Janet is panicked.

JANET (V.O.)  
Oh God, stoic Asian dad isn't  
supposed to get emotional!

ROBERT  
I figured out how to take my  
restaurant to the next level!

JANET (V.O.)  
I should not have doubted his  
ability to hide his grief.

INT. GERALD'S CAFE - DAY

JANET (V.O.)  
My dad runs a small deli. When he  
bought it, he kept the original  
name, leading to much confusion.

Robert works the counter. A huge sign says "Gerald's Cafe."  
At a table, a customer tries to get Robert's attention.

CUSTOMER  
Hey Gerald? Gerald? Gerald!

But Robert doesn't respond since it's not his name.

INT. GRANDMA'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - BACK TO SCENE

ROBERT  
I'm putting in leather booths, so  
it'll be just like a steakhouse.

JANET

Leather booths. In a deli. That only has five tables as it is.

JANET (V.O.)

See? Terrible ideas.

JANET

That seems like a waste of money.

ROBERT

No no no-- ugh, you don't understand the restaurant business.

Kathy pulls Janet away.

KATHY

Janet, do you have a boyfriend yet?

JANET

Since I talked to you yesterday?  
No.

KATHY

How about work? Any promotions?  
Give me something to work with!

JANET (V.O.)

My mom is worried she has no ammunition in the ancient Chinese mom art of Comparing Children. Her main opponents are--

They're approached by AUNTIE AMY (60s).

JANET

Auntie Amy.

AUNTIE AMY

Janet.

They stand, not making any physical contact.

JANET (V.O.)

We don't hug in our family. Even if we did I'd probably still avoid it.

Auntie Amy squeezes Janet's upper arms.

AUNTIE AMY

Still eating hamburgers everyday?

JANET

I don't really eat hamburgers ever.



AUNTIE AMY

Well, you shouldn't if you're going to lose weight. Are you at the same job? Answering calls from people complaining about their toasters?

JANET

Funny how I'm very good at listening to rude people say mean things to me all day.

JANET (V.O.)

Auntie Amy, much to my mother's envy, is a rich housewife.

INT. AUNTIE AMY'S BEDROOM - DAY

Auntie Amy lies in bed flipping through a catalog.

JANET (V.O.)

Her husband is a high-powered executive who works overseas so she combats her boredom with hoarding--

WIDEN to see the other side of the bed is stacked high with the spoils of many shopping sprees.

INT. GRANDMA'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - BACK TO SCENE

JANET (V.O.)

--and honing in on everyone's weaknesses. Like a shark in Skechers Shape-ups.

Auntie Amy conspiratorially whispers to Janet.

AUNTIE AMY

Poor Auntie Linda is so embarrassed that your cousin Franklin still hasn't found a job. Now you're not the only one with no direction.

AUNTIE LINDA (50s) approaches Janet.

AUNTIE LINDA

Janet, any plans to go back to school? I'm sure at this point your parents would be happy to see you graduate with any degree. Even art!

She laughs at her own non-joke.

JANET (V.O.)  
Auntie Linda, my mom's other rival,  
teaches at a university.

INSERT - photo of Auntie Linda's faculty photo with the  
caption: "WE ACADEMICS ARE ABOVE PERSONAL QUOTES."

JANET (V.O.)  
She sucks.

AUNTIE LINDA  
I'm concerned about you. I know  
it's hard for lazy people to have  
willpower, but you should know it's  
so unhealthy to eat hamburgers  
everyday.

JANET  
Why does everyone think I eat  
hamburgers everyday?

INT. PARENTS' HOUSE - DAY

Robert sits with Auntie Linda and Auntie Amy.

ROBERT  
You know how these American kids  
are, Janet eats hamburgers every  
day and nothing else.

INT. GRANDMA'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - BACK TO SCENE

KATHY  
Janet's starting to exercise more.  
She can do push-ups!

JANET  
I don't want to demonstrate!

AUNTIE LINDA  
Franklin can do a one-arm push-up.  
(Yelling across room)  
FRANKLIN, COME SHOW YOUR AUNTIE A  
ONE-ARM PUSH-UP!

COUSIN FRANKLIN (27) hurries over. He's eager to please but  
he also looks like being there causes him physical pain. He  
dives to the floor and does a shaky one-arm push-up. Auntie  
Linda smiles, triumphant. Kathy fumes.

AUNTIE LINDA (CONT'D)  
(to Janet and Franklin)  
Have you two said hello yet? I think the last time you saw each other was Franklin's graduation from law school. As a lawyer.

FRANKLIN  
Hi, Janet. How are you? I'm doing okay. I'm also looking for a place to live if you have any leads.

JANET  
I didn't know you were moving back for good. What's your budget?

FRANKLIN  
That depends on several factors that I can't answer right now.

JANET (V.O.)  
Last year, Franklin graduated from a prestigious law school.

INSERT - photo studio portrait of Franklin holding his framed diploma. As in he went to a portrait studio to get this done.

JANET (V.O.)  
But at the bottom of his class. His unemployment is a huge source of embarrassment for his mom so she compensates by saying things like--

Auntie Linda announces loudly to the whole room--

AUNTIE LINDA  
I don't understand why we pay a lawyer to read the will when we have a lawyer here in the family.

FRANKLIN  
Technically, I'm not a practicing lawyer, more of a hypothetical lawyer.

AUNTIE LINDA  
That'll change once you get the money to start your own law firm.

JANET (V.O.)  
Gee, I wonder what money she could be talking about. At Grandma's will reading.

FRANKLIN

Yup, and then you won't pressure me to do stuff anymore, right?

JANET

Franklin. Are you new to being Asian? The pressure never ends.

AUNTIE LINDA

The important thing is that you're a lawyer who went to college and not one of those lazy kids with bad mothers.

JANET (V.O.)

Obviously, she's talking about me and my mom.

KATHY

(to Janet)

I think she's talking about you and me.

JANET

She's always picking on me.

KATHY (CONT'D)

She's always picking on me.

Robert joins them.

ROBERT

Hey, is it just me or does it *almost* feel like she's talking about someone specific?

KATHY

She's worried she won't get as much as you and Amy since Amy is the oldest and you're the only son.

ROBERT

No, my mother didn't play favorites. Although she did rank us regularly...

ACROSS THE ROOM, Auntie Linda is glaring at Kathy and talking to Franklin.

AUNTIE LINDA

She's worried Janet won't get as much as you and Winnie since Winnie is the oldest grandchild and you're the only grandson. Don't you worry, Franklin, my mother always made very shrewd decisions.

FRANKLIN

She never let me sit on the living room furniture. Do I still have to follow that rule?

COUSIN WINNIE (30's), an Asian Gwyneth Paltrow, glides into the room carrying multiple travel bags.

WINNIE

Hello, everyone! I'm here!

JANET (V.O.)

That is my cousin Winnie.

WINNIE

I was just at the most restorative eco-retreat in the Amazon.

JANET (V.O.)

She is insufferable.

EXT. GRADUATION CEREMONY - DAY

Winnie, in graduate robes, receives her masters degree.

JANET (V.O.)

Winnie has numerous degrees, from business to photography. However, every time she gets a new degree--

Auntie Amy hands Winnie congratulatory flowers.

AUNTIE AMY

What is your plan for job hunting?

WINNIE

I changed my mind. I want to do something else.

JANET (V.O.)

And then her dad pays for her to go back to school. This has allowed her to never actually work.

INT. GRANDMA'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - BACK TO SCENE

KATHY

(low to Janet)

I heard her father is cutting her off. Not even money for schooling.

AUNTIE LINDA

(butting in)

How can anyone put a limit on education? It's the noblest pursuit.

JANET

Well, weirdly, if you go to school for decades and never get a job, then it's kinda just an expensive full-time hobby.

Winnie passes out tins of tea.

WINNIE

I brought gifts for you all!

JANET (V.O.)

More like the last of her allowance brought gifts for us all, but okay.

WINNIE

This tea applies the principles of food poisoning to detoxing.

JANET

So it's going to give us diarrhea?

WINNIE

Exactly. I read a really interesting email forward the other day about how we can use the power of food poisoning to our benefit.

JANET (V.O.)

She's like this all the time.

Winnie looks at a portrait of Grandma.

WINNIE

Grandma always gave the best gifts.

JANET

She always gave cash.

WINNIE

I think she knew it was my favorite.

The DOORBELL RINGS.

AUNTIE AMY

The lawyer's here!

JANET  
Let's get this painful gathering  
over with already.

FRANKLIN  
Dealing with Grandma's death.

JANET  
Yeah, that too.

KATHY  
(sidling up to Winnie)  
How *much* weight can I lose with  
this diarrhea tea?

INT. GRANDMA'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - LATER

Everyone listens as the FAMILY LAWYER reads Grandma's will.

FAMILY LAWYER  
I, Betty LiuZhu Zhao, hereby  
bequeath my entire estate and  
appoint sole executorship to my  
granddaughter, Janet Zhao.

EVERYONE  
What?! / Janet? / JANET??

JANET (V.O.)  
Huh?

The fruit Janet was eating falls out of her mouth.

JANET  
Huh?

FRANKLIN  
Did anyone else know that was  
Grandma's full name?

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

INT. GRANDMA'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - BACK TO SCENE

ROBERT

Everything goes to Janet? Is that what he said?

AUNTIE LINDA

But she doesn't even have a college degree!

AUNTIE AMY

She hasn't made anything of herself, how can she be expected to fill our mother's shoes?

WINNIE

Do we know for certain Grandma had not gone insane when she wrote that?

KATHY

Janet, we need to start investing right away. Maybe real estate-- no, gold-- no, something *on your phone*.

Janet is a little dazed. This is all surreal.

JANET (V.O.)

My first thought was--

FANTASY

EXT. BEAUTIFUL POOLSIDE LOCALE - DAY

Janet is lounging by the pool, looking more happy and relaxed than we've ever seen her. A SERVANT brings her a beverage.

SERVANT

Your hostile takeover of your former employer is complete. You are now the head of every department. Are you pleased?

JANET

I'm mentally, emotionally, and spiritually-- even though I hate that word-- well.

Her phone rings. "FAMILY" calling. She tosses it in the pool.





INT. GENERIC OFFICE - NEXT DAY

JANET (V.O.)  
I quit my job.

Janet goes to her cubicle and looks around.

JANET (V.O.)  
I realized I didn't have any  
personal items to pack up. So I  
took a bunch of pens and post-its.

She pockets a bunch of pens and post-it pads, then thinks  
twice and puts it all back.

JANET (V.O.)  
Then I remembered I had money now  
and put everything back.

She takes the pens again.

JANET (V.O.)  
Everybody likes free pens.

INT. JANET'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

JANET (V.O.)  
Then I went on a big shopping  
spree.

Janet sits on her couch, tapping away at her laptop. It's not  
dissimilar to the document signing.

JANET (V.O.)  
Which looks a lot less exciting  
than I thought it would.

EXT. 168 IMPORTS - DAY

JANET (V.O.)  
I went to check out the company  
that I now owned.

Janet arrives at an unremarkable strip mall. It's the same  
strip mall that contains Gerald's Cafe.

INT. 168 IMPORTS - CONTINUOUS

The office is a mishmash of cheap office furniture, super 80s  
furniture that somehow looks brand new, expensive gold/jade  
decor, an ancient beige fax machine, and endless clutter.

Janet enters and surveys the land, taking it all in.  
Grandma's office assistant GENE pops up.

GENE  
Hello hello?

JANET  
Hi, I'm Janet Zhao. I inherited  
this company from my Grandma.

GENE  
Oh, right! The death. I'm sorry and  
congratulations. I'm Gene, I manage  
the office here.

JANET  
So what exactly is it that this  
company does?

GENE  
A lot of things but mostly we make  
money.

JANET  
Not helpful...

CUT TO:

INT. SHOWROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Gene shows Janet samples of fake money, novelty money-themed  
merchandise, play money, etc.

JANET  
Oh. We actually make money.

INT. GRANDMA'S OFFICE - LATER

Janet sits at the desk while Gene stands by.

JANET  
So I sit here and... do whatever I  
want?

GENE  
As long as you make money.

JANET  
Okay, we covered that. I get it  
now. It was confusingly phrased.

Janet slowly turns in her chair, savoring the feeling.

JANET (CONT'D)  
 Finally, I get to be in charge  
 instead of always doing other  
 people's work for them.

AUNTIE AMY and AUNTIE LINDA enter.

AUNTIE AMY  
 Janet, we need to discuss the  
 funeral arrangements.

JANET (V.O.)  
 This is the kind of moment where an  
 American family would support each  
 other through their grief.

AUNTIE AMY  
 This funeral has to be better than  
 when the Chens lost their mother.

JANET (V.O.)  
 Not us.

JANET  
 Right, because everything is a  
 competition.

AUNTIE AMY  
 Everything has to be perfect so  
 Auntie Linda and I will prepare  
 speeches for each family member.

JANET  
 Shouldn't everyone say what they  
 want to say?

No! AUNTIE AMY NO! AUNTIE LINDA

AUNTIE AMY  
 This isn't one of those American  
 funerals where people tell jokes  
 and give toasts!

JANET  
 Are you sure you're not thinking of  
 a wedding?

AUNTIE LINDA  
 Janet, you never take things  
 seriously. And this funeral is  
 serious business so let the grown-  
 ups handle it.

JANET

But a funeral is for family to remember and honor their loved one.

AUNTIE AMY

See? Wrong. A funeral is a checklist of things you have to do properly so that people like the Chens don't look down on you.

JANET

Well, I'm going to give a eulogy that I write myself and there's nothing you can say to stop me.

AUNTIE AMY

So immature.

AUNTIE LINDA

Just like her mom.

AUNTIE AMY

We will decide how the rest of the funeral goes.

JANET

Well, make sure there's a prime slot for my heartfelt eulogy. Stock up on tissue. Buy stock in tissue!

The Aunties leave. Gene looks to Janet.

GENE

I didn't know you were so close with your Grandma.

JANET

(head in hands)

I don't know anything about her.

Kathy barges in.

KATHY

EXCUSE ME, MOTHER OF THE CEO COMING THROUGH!

JANET

Mom, what are you doing here?

KATHY

I work for this company.

JANET

You do?

GENE

You do?

Gene mouths to Janet, "I've never seen her before."

\*

KATHY

I don't always have time to come in because of my many social obligations.

(then)

I'm here to see my chubby little CEO run her very own company. First thing-- you need a water feature in the front for people to see when they walk in. It shows you're successful enough to afford a water feature and have good taste.

JANET

Are there a lot of walk-ins here?

KATHY

Also, water feature in the bathroom. And definitely a water feature in here.

MOMENTS LATER

Janet is talking on the phone to the Family Lawyer.

JANET

My mom is trying to run things here. Is there some sort of "stay away from the company" contract we can trick her into signing?

FAMILY LAWYER

She has no legal authority. You own the company. You could just tell her to stay away.

JANET

(beat)

Okay, that means nothing to my mom, or anyone else in my family.

Janet looks at Kathy, who is already measuring out Grandma's office, presumably for a water feature.

JANET (CONT'D)

What I need is to distract her, like deflecting a laser to destroy something else.

FAMILY LAWYER

Is this something that requires the services of a lawyer?

JANET  
No. I know what to do.

She hangs up.

JANET (CONT'D)  
(whisper to self)  
Five Dreams in Life.

We briefly FLASHBACK to Kathy's singing dream.

INT. GRANDMA'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Kathy and Janet sits across from each other.

JANET  
Mom, I know you've always wanted to  
take voice lessons. I could pay for-

Kathy immediately gets up.

KATHY  
I already know the voice coach I  
want to use.

INT. AMY'S HOUSE - GUEST BEDROOM - DAY

JANET (V.O.)  
Meanwhile, at Auntie Amy's house,  
Winnie was trying to revive a  
former source of income.

Other than a twin bed, the room is filled to the brim with  
boxes and bags. Winnie paces around (as best as she can)  
while talking on the phone.

WINNIE  
Well Dad, you could just *un-cut* me  
off. After all, I'm agreeing with  
you now-- photography isn't a  
stable career path. So why are you  
punishing me for not wanting to be  
a photographer anymore? Do you  
really want to be the father who  
denies his own daughter a degree in  
jewelry design? In her creative  
prime? Hello? Dad?

INT. AUNTIE LINDA'S HOUSE - DAY

Franklin paces by the front door. He jumps at the sound of the mail slot creaking and snatches away the day's mail, thumbing through it furiously. He tears open a collection notice for his student loans and one for his credit card.

JANET (V.O.)

Franklin was drowning in debt but didn't want anyone to know. Living with his mom meant constantly getting rid of evidence.

LIVING ROOM

Franklin brings the mail to the fireplace, but can't work it.

FRANKLIN

Mom! How do I use the fireplace?

AUNTIE LINDA (O.S.)

Just wear a sweater!

INT. GERALD'S CAFE - DAY

Robert pours over pictures of leather booths.

JANET (V.O.)

My dad obsessed over making his deli more like a steakhouse.

Customers finish eating and leave.

CUSTOMER

See ya, Gerald!

Robert is visibly annoyed at being called Gerald again.

INT. VOICE COACH'S STUDIO - DAY

A VOICE COACH sits at a piano. Kathy stands, hands clasped, singing along. She finishes the last note.

JANET (V.O.)

And my mom had her very first voice lesson.

KATHY

I'm ready to perform for an audience.



INT. GRANDMA'S OFFICE - NEXT DAY

Janet is going through the piles of stuff in Grandma's office. Gene is helping.

GENE

How do you know so little about your grandma when you saw her so regularly?

JANET

None of us really talked to her. She was this kinda intimidating lady we had nothing in common with. I didn't even know her first name until I heard it in the will.

GENE

Then what are you gonna say in your eulogy? You really talked it up.

JANET

*I know, Gene. I'm gonna keep going through all her stuff until I learn enough to write a speech that honors her and shames my aunties.*

GENE

What do you have so far?

JANET

She kept a lot of receipts. And liked gold. I have nothing, Gene!

Kathy enters, wearing a t-shirt printed with a photo of Janet sitting at Grandma's desk with "CEO" written across it.

KATHY

Janet, I need to talk to you about the funeral.

JANET

When did you get that shirt made?

KATHY

I want to perform a song at the funeral. I can be the big finale.

JANET

Isn't the big finale burying Grandma?

KATHY

No, I just told you, *I'm* the big finale.

AUNTIE AMY (O.S.)

Absolutely not.

AUNTIE LINDA (O.S.)

Oh God, no!

The Aunties enter.

AUNTIE AMY

We are absolutely not going to have that at our funeral.

KATHY

My daughter Janet is the CEO.

JANET (V.O.)

My mom could finally brag about me. It was nice. For about a second.

KATHY

And she and I will make the major decisions in this family. And then she makes them happen.

AUNTIE LINDA

Janet, how is your eulogy coming along? It's not too late to use the one we prepared. No one would blame you or be surprised you failed.

JANET

It's great. You should be prepared to hear a perfect eulogy. You might even cry.

AUNTIE AMY

We have crying on the schedule. And we'd really like to preview this eulogy of yours. Now.

Winnie barges in.

WINNIE

Janet, I just had the most brilliant idea for a memorial scholarship honoring Grandma. You just need to set it up and fund it. Shall I get the company checkbook?

Robert enters.

ROBERT

Janet, I ordered the leather booths from a guy who gave me a great deal, but they arrived and they're not leather. Or booths. Help Dad!

Through the doorway, we see Franklin about to enter but hastily retreat when he spots his mom in the office. Everyone tries to get Janet's attention, crescendoing.

JANET

STOP! Do you think I can run a whole company and do every little thing for you?

Everyone confirms this is true.

JANET (CONT'D)

Incorrect! I'm not customer service for Chinese adults who can't seem to do anything themselves! Learn to handle your own problems because I'm not doing it anymore!

Janet stomps over to a bookcase, pulls on a specific book, and the whole thing swings open. It's a secret passage!! Janet steps through as everyone looks on in surprise.

GENE

Is that a secret passage to the storage room?

JANET

Yes, I've always wanted one and I had it put in yesterday.

KATHY

Aiya, such a waste of money--

JANET

It's an extravagance, Mom!

The bookcase swings shut behind her.

INT. SECRET STORAGE ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The modest storage room has no furniture except an inflatable kiddie pool filled with the company's fake money. Janet lays in the pool like Scrooge McDuck. We will of course pay to use Simon & Garfunkel "The Sound of Silence" in this scene.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. GRANDMA'S HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

JANET (V.O.)

I felt bad. Just not enough to talk  
to anyone in my family.

Janet walks around looking through Grandma's stuff.

JANET (V.O.)

Instead, I looked through Grandma's  
things but I still had nothing for  
the eulogy. That's the thing with  
immigrant parents and grandparents--  
they never tell you who they were  
in their previous lives.

Janet explores Grandma's amazing closet and discovers that  
she fits the clothes. She takes a particularly nice jacket.

JANET (V.O.)

At least I'll have something nice  
to wear while *not* giving a eulogy.

EXT. GERALD'S CAFE - NEXT DAY

JANET (V.O.)

My dad was fed up with people  
constantly mistaking him for  
Gerald, the original owner of his  
deli, and decided to set the record  
straight once and for all.

The cafe is closed. A sign on the door says "GERALD DEAD."

JANET (V.O.)

But he chose to do this on the same  
day it was closed for the funeral.

Beneath that sign is another sign: "CLOSED FOR FUNERAL."

JANET (V.O.)

Leading his customers to believe  
the quiet man who regularly served  
them had just died.

Customers reading the sign look aghast.

## EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

Many luxury cars line the parking lot. Attendees come in a wide-ranging spectrum of dress: all black, regular clothes, golf pastels, glitter and sequins. A mixed bag of propriety.

## INT. FUNERAL CHAPEL - CONTINUOUS

Normal funeral set-up: Grandma's casket is on the dais. Instead of a photo, there is a huge oil painting of Grandma and an abundance of flowers. Guests are seated in the pews. Family members are up front. Winnie is dressed like she's going to a gala. Franklin is on the dais reading his speech.

FRANKLIN

Today, I honor my grandmother, by  
standing here an accomplished  
lawyer...

Embarrassed, he looks over to Auntie Linda who gestures to keep reading.

FRANKLIN (CONT'D)

...with a 1460 SAT score.

## IN THE PEWS

The tension between Janet and the rest of the family is palpable. As the Aunties go up to take their turn on the dais, Janet leaves the pews (taking her jacket with her).

## ON THE DAIS

Auntie Linda and Auntie Amy approach the casket. They exchange nods and whisper low to each other.

AUNTIE AMY

I'll take the closed half.

AUNTIE LINDA

I'll fall to the floor and clutch  
the side.

AUNTIE AMY

Careful not to pull down too hard.

AUNTIE LINDA

It's simple physics, Amy.

On cue, the two throw themselves on the casket, putting on a big show of wailing and crying.

INT. CHAPEL BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Janet enters to find Kathy unzipping a garment bag.

JANET

Mom, what are you doing? You were told not to sing!

KATHY

You're not the boss of this funeral! You don't want to deal with us anymore, remember?

JANET

I just don't want to be in charge of *everyone's* problems.

KATHY

Do you understand that you getting Grandma's estate is a big deal? I finally have something to brag about and hold over your aunties' heads and you don't want it?

JANET

I can't believe this is the first time you're proud of me, and it's for something I didn't even earn.

KATHY

Of course you earned it!

JANET

Do you know how an inheritance works?

KATHY

Janet, the most successful and respected person in our family decided you were the best choice, over everyone else, to take over her legacy. That's 100 percent something to brag about.

JANET

I wish I knew why she chose me.

KATHY

It's obvious. She thought you were the most like her. The Zhao women are very self-absorbed and she wanted someone who would take care of everything the way she did.

Janet smiles. This is a rare moment for her and Kathy.

KATHY (CONT'D)

But if she could see how you're acting now, she would-- drink poison and jump off a cliff!

JANET

Okay, that's excessive. And redundant.

(walking away)

I think it's time for the burial.

As Janet gets to the door--

KATHY

And be nice to your dad. This has been the hardest on him.

JANET

Oh really. All he's been doing is obsessing over getting leather booths for his deli! Which I'm definitely not paying for.

KATHY

Improving the restaurant was the last thing Grandma asked him to do before she died.

JANET

Oh.

JANET (V.O.)

I thought we were the kind of family that didn't deal with our emotions. I didn't realize my dad was working through his grief.

INT. ENTRYWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Janet finds her dad in the crowds heading outside.

JANET

Hey dad. I wanted to say... I should've realized why these leather booths are so important to you. And I understand now.

ROBERT

I just want the best for my restaurant.

(MORE)

ROBERT (CONT'D)

It deserves it after all the years it's given me. There will never be another one like it.

JANET

(getting the metaphor)

I don't think "the restaurant" cares about all that. I think "the restaurant" ultimately wants you to be happy and healthy.

ROBERT

You're talking about my restaurant, right? Gerald's Cafe?

JANET

Yep. Good old Gerald's Cafe. I thought we barely knew anything about each other but she somehow knew what I wanted and needed.

ROBERT

Okay, it really doesn't seem like you're talking about my restaurant.

JANET (V.O.)

That was the most emotional conversation we'd ever had.

ROBERT

I know you made it pretty clear that you don't like being a part of this family, but it'd be nice for us all to stick together. Because this is a tough time. No one really knows what to do now that your grandma isn't around to help us.

JANET

I...

Janet is speechless. Then Robert's cell phone rings, on full volume. He answers as he walks away.

ROBERT

Hello? Yeah, I can talk. Hold on, I'm putting you on speaker...

JANET (V.O.)

I was so hung up on my family not being nice to me that I didn't realize I wasn't very nice myself.



Janet puts on her (Grandma's) jacket to go outside. Just then, two FUNERAL EMPLOYEES carry a big portrait of Grandma wearing the exact same jacket behind her. Their poses match. Janet sees it.

JANET (V.O.)

And I wasn't just inheriting  
Grandma's estate, I was inheriting  
her role in the family.

Janet puts her hands in the jacket pockets and finds a small notebook with notes on every member of the family. Likes, dislikes, etc. Grandma had kept track of everyone's lives.

EXT. GRAVE - DAY

Everyone gathers around the gravesite. Winnie looks around the crowd and leans over to Franklin.

WINNIE

If you had to pick, who here would  
you say looks like a rich guy in a  
rocky marriage?

FRANKLIN

Who here would you say looks like a  
rich guy who isn't picky about  
hiring a lawyer? Or has snacks to  
share?

Everyone watches in silence-- broken by occasional cell phone rings-- as the casket is lowered into the ground.

JANET

I'd like to say a few words.  
(steps forward)  
Grandma was a very successful  
person. Not just in the business  
she built, but also in the way she  
took care of our entire family.  
Sometimes family can feel like work--  
- endless, thankless work for a  
bunch of maniacs who never give you  
any credit or show any appreciation  
for all that work you do.

As she talks, we PAN ACROSS the family's reactions. Most are not self-aware enough to get that she's talking about them.

JANET (CONT'D)

But you still do it. Because things  
need to get done and what you're  
best at is getting things done.

(MORE)

JANET (CONT'D)

And also, maybe you love and care about these maniacs. That's what I've learned from Grandma. In death, she gave me a new life. And I'm going to create my own legacy, one as good as hers that I can pass on to an unsuspecting relative one day.

(to grave)

Rest in peace, Grandma.

Just then, Kathy, wearing a glittery gown, comes out singing into a cordless mic. Some inappropriate pop song in a high operatic soprano.

JANET (CONT'D)

Oh crap, I forgot about that.

(shouting above the singing)

Winnie, Franklin, you guys can move in with me until you get back on your feet. Dad, leather booths are a terrible idea but we can talk about other ways to fix up your restaurant. Auntie Linda, Auntie Amy, I know, I know-- I'll go stop my mom!

But the singing is interrupted by the arrival of many of Robert's CUSTOMERS.

JANET (V.O.)

But I didn't have to. My dad's regular customers, reeling from the news of his death--

EXT. 168 IMPORTS - DAY

CHYRON: EARLIER

The customers go next door to Grandma's company.

JANET (V.O.)

--had wandered next door to Grandma's office--

INT. 168 IMPORTS - CONTINUOUS

Gene writes down info for the customers.

JANET (V.O.)  
Where her office assistant gave  
them all the information for the  
funeral.

EXT. GRAVE - BACK TO SCENE

JANET (V.O.)  
But at the sight of my dad--

The customers are shocked to see Robert in attendance.

CUSTOMER  
Oh my God, it's Gerald!

JANET (V.O.)  
The customers thought they were  
seeing a ghost. My dad did his best  
to explain the misunderstanding.

ROBERT  
I'm Robert.

The Customers look at each other, confused for a moment, but  
then they get it.

JANET (V.O.)  
They assumed he must be the twin  
brother of the deceased Gerald.

CUSTOMER  
We're very sorry for your loss.  
Gerald meant so much to all of us.  
We'd love to honor him somehow.

Janet had been walking past but upon hearing this last line,  
she stops in her tracks and backs up.

INT. GERALD'S CAFE - DAY

JANET (V.O.)  
So we got my dad a leather booth.

Robert happily compares the photo in his catalog to an actual  
single, red leather booth wedged awkwardly at the front of  
the deli. A little plaque says "In Memory of Gerald." Below  
it, a second plaque says "And Mama."

END OF ACT THREE

TAG

EXT. GRANDMA'S HOUSE - DAY

Janet, Winnie, and Franklin carry moving boxes inside.

JANET (V.O.)

After the funeral, my cousins and I  
moved into Grandma's mansion.

INT. GRANDMA'S HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

An enormous portrait of Grandma Zhao dominates an entire wall, facing the bed. Janet stands looking at it.

JANET

That'll take getting used to.

INT. GRANDMA'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Janet, carrying a plate of strawberries, walks past WORKERS hanging an oil painting of her.

JANET (V.O.)

I didn't really want to live with  
family but I can make it work. It  
might even be fun.

A DELIVERY MAN has just set up a CHOCOLATE FOUNTAIN. Janet signs for it and he leaves. As the chocolate starts to flow, Janet and Franklin dip in the strawberries.

Winnie serves them a tray of tea. Franklin is about to take a cup but Janet stops him. It's diarrhea tea.

JANET

Don't drink that.

Janet confiscates the cups of tea and takes it into--

INT. GRANDMA'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Janet walks in to find her parents unpacking moving boxes.

JANET

What is this? What's happening? Why  
are you unpacking all your stuff?

JANET (V.O.)  
Dumb question. I knew the answer.  
The horrible, horrible answer.

KATHY  
You own a mansion and you didn't  
think to share it with your own  
parents?

ROBERT  
This is every child's dream, to  
live with their parents again!

JANET  
For how long?

KATHY  
What a strange question!

JANET  
No, not strange. Very normal.

KATHY  
Don't worry about it.

JANET  
I truly will not be able to worry  
about anything else except this.

INT. GRANDMA'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Janet is on the phone with the Family Lawyer.

JANET  
What am I supposed to do? Kick out  
my own parents?

FAMILY LAWYER  
(heavy sigh)  
Okay. You have to stop talking to  
me about your personal issues with  
your family. I'm charging you four  
hundred dollars an hour every time  
we talk. It would be so much  
cheaper if you went to a therapist.

JANET  
(insulted, then  
considering)  
A therapist!... How much cheaper?

CUT TO BLACK.