

FADE IN:

INT. ROOM - DAY

Dimly lit, the room seems sad. Perhaps, it's the gray cloud that moves through the window.

The musicality of life is supplied by the steady PITTER PATTTER of raindrops spit by the sky, denying the summer.

JANET LEMAY, early thirties, pretty, half zips the last of three suitcases. Stops.

She moves to her desk. Concentrates her attention on a golden frame. The YOUNG GYMNAST in the picture has Janet's face before the tiny crinkles set in. The smile is radiant.

Janet's eyes drift to the hand of the girl in the picture. It clutches something hung from a ribbon around her neck. The disc of gold glistens from behind the glass.

A KNOCK startles Janet.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

The car's on its way.

JANET

So soon? I was supposed to be the last pickup.

The door opens. A WOMAN, average in appearance, stands in the frame. She glances at the suitcases.

WOMAN

Need any help?

Janet shakes her head. Rises.

JANET

I'm okay. Keep an eye out for the car. I'll be down in a sec.

The woman disappears.

Janet turns her attention back to the desk, slides open a drawer. Slips her hand underneath some papers. Removes another picture, this one unframed, smaller, just a snapshot.

A serious faced CHAOYANG, a Chinese boy in his teens, stares back at her.

A beat. We hear the woman again.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

(shouts)

Take your time. The driver called.
He just had a flat.

Footsteps. The woman is just outside now.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Want company?

Janet slips the picture under the papers.

JANET

I have to go over the schedule.
This will give me some more time.

The woman peeks her head in.

WOMAN

You sure?

Janet nods.

JANET

Go---do what you have to do. Don't
worry about me.

The door closes.

A Beat. Janet gently removes the picture, holds it side by side with the glowing girl. Her eyes flit from the boy back to the girl.

THE PAST - SIXTEEN YEARS EARLIER - INT. OLYMPIC AUDITORIUM

The NATIONAL ANTHEM of the UNITED STATES of AMERICA plays in the background. The girl in the picture comes alive. She moves her fingers from the gold medal, places her hand to her heart.

YOUNG JANET

O'er the land of the free and the
home of the brave.

The crowd roars as she waves her bouquet of flowers.

A PHOTOGRAPHER moves closer. A FLASH.

The view widens enough to see TWO GIRLS, one on the left, one on the right.

They climb higher than they have earned until they flank Janet. She embraces them as they smile into the camera.

Her glance catches the face of CHAOYANG. He looks familiar, but the smile is so different from the serious face of his picture.

His eyes shine with pride. He claps the loudest of them all.

INT. SMALL ROOM - LATER

Janet seems more fragile in her tee and jeans. She slides down the wall into a sitting position, her legs stretched out in front of her.

JANET

Ooooh, that feels good.

CHAOYANG, the boy from the crowd and the picture, watches as she pats the floor next to her. He joins her.

CHAOYANG

How did it feel?

JANET

I don't know. It hasn't really sunk in yet. I think the anthem was the best part.

CHAOYANG

Even better than the ten?

Janet blushes.

JANET

It was like an out of the body experience.

A Beat. She touches his face that has once again gone serious.

JANET

Don't worry. You'll win.

CHAOYANG

I don't know. Alexei is really good.

JANET

Not as good as you.

He lets his hand rest on hers.

CHAOYANG

You believe in me.

JANET

I wish it was over for you, too.

CHAOYANG

I don't.

JANET

Why not?

CHAOYANG

They'll make me go home as soon as it's over, especially if----

JANET

(interrupts)

Can't you come to America? We have so many competitions.

(beat)

They'll let you come.

CHAOYANG

Only if I win gold.

JANET

Lots of silver and bronze medalists compete, too.

A KNOCK on the door stops his reply. It opens to reveal MELODY, an American girl about their age.

MELODY

We're going to get something to eat. Wanna come?

Janet shakes her head.

JANET
I'm not hungry. Go ahead.

MELODY
No celebrating?

Her attention shifts to the boy.

MELODY
You can come too, Chaoyang.

He struggles for an answer. A beat.

JANET
We'll catch up to you guys, later.

Melody shrugs. Closes the door behind her.

CHAOYANG
Your friend wanted you to go.

JANET
I didn't want to.

CHAOYANG
It is the biggest night of your
life. You should be celebrating
with your team, your countrymen.
(beat)
Your best friends.

She stares into his face.

JANET
You're my best friend.

CHAOYANG
Everyone loves you. This is your
time, Janet.

She smiles.

CHAOYANG
Why do you laugh?

JANET
I love the way you say my name.

He moves closer.

CHAOYANG

Janet.

Their lips almost meet.

CHAOYANG

Janet.

She slips her arms around his neck. His eyes fill with passion. Their lips touch. They cling to each other.

INT. ROOM - THE NEXT MORNING

Janet stretches, yawns, reaches for something on the top of her night stand.

She hums softly as she studies a snapshot. It's fresh, new.

The face is Chaoyang's.

The door opens to reveal a frantic Melody. She glances at the picture in Janet's hand. Her face saddens.

JANET

What's wrong?

Melody thumbs the remote. Flips the stations until...

Chaoyang's face stares at them from the screen. We hear...

ANNOUNCER

Chaoyang suffered a groin pull and had to pull out of the competition.

JANET

No, he wouldn't.

Janet grabs for her sweats. Pulls them on.

JANET

I have to go to him.

INT. CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

Janet pulls on a closed door. The lock forbids her. She moves to the next one with no luck.

Each door refuses entrance. She finally reaches the end, turns the corner.

A TEENAGER, in trunks, passes.

JANET

Where's the team?

TEENAGER

They're practicing.

Janet sighs relief. Turns.

TEENAGER

Wait.

Janet glances back.

TEENAGER

If you're looking for Chaoyang, he left.

Her eyes open in horror. She bites her lip.

JANET

I don't understand. He couldn't have left----what about the rest of the team?

TEENAGER

They're gone.

JANET

All of them?

The boy shrugs.

TEENAGER

He was the team. When he got injured, they pulled out, just left.

She turns back to the corridor. He calls after her.

TEENAGER

You won't find anyone there.

She doesn't seem to hear.

TEENAGER

Wait----I almost forgot.

He unzips his duffel bag. Removes an envelope.

TEENAGER

Chaoyang asked me to give you
this.

She grabs at it. Reads the scrawled name as we hear
Chaoyang's voice.

CHAOYANG (V.O.)

Janet.

TEENAGER

Sorry.

The boy dashes off.

Janet reaches inside the envelope. Slips out a neatly
folded note. Opens it. We hear Chaoyang as she reads.

CHAOYANG (V.O.)

I wanted to come to say good-bye.
There was no time. I had to go. I
won't forget you. Ever.

The tears roll down her cheeks.

INT. AIRPORT- LATER

Just a tiny little gift shop, souvenirs, newspapers.
Chaoyang reaches out, lifts up the top one.

He stares at Janet's triumphant smile.

CHAOYANG

What did it feel like to win the
gold medal?

We hear a voice shout out.

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Chaoyang, you coming?

Chaoyang throws some change down. Folds the paper, slips it
into his gym bag, breaks into a run.

SIXTEEN YEARS LATER - THE PRESENT - INT. GYMNASIUM

The older Janet, still pretty and trim, glances at XINGHUA, an Asian teenager, dressed in his practice trunks.

JANET

You're going to be fine---Don't worry. Your mother and father will get here in time to see you.

XINGHUA

I won't let you down.

Janet smiles.

JANET

You're the National Champion. It doesn't get any better than that.

XINGHUA

I want to win you the gold.

JANET

This is a very special time for you. Just relax and have fun. The gold isn't that important.

XINGHUA

(almost accusing)

You won the gold.

Her answer hangs in the air, as a HANDSOME ORIENTAL MAN, in his thirties, bows before her. Her eyes take him in.

JANET

Chaoyang.

CHAOYANG

Janet.

Xinghua watches. Janet recovers.

JANET

This is Chaoyang.

CHAOYANG

I'm Li Zhifu's coach.

XINGHUA

I know that. You are very famous.

CHAOYANG
Americans know my name?

XINGHUA
Oh, yes, we all do. Ms. LeMay says
you were the best gymnast that
ever lived.

Janet blushes.

CHAOYANG
There were many better. I never
won the gold.

XINGHUA
That's because you were injured.

CHAOYANG
How did you know that?

XINGHUA
MS. LeMay told me. She said----

JANET
(interrupts)
The mat is clear.

Xinghua turns to Chaoyang.

XINGHUA
It's an honor to meet you. Excuse
me. I have to practice.

Xinghua disappears.

CHAOYANG
He's a very nice boy.

JANET
And a wonderful gymnast.

Chaoyang watches as the boy tumbles in the distance.

CHAOYANG
Zhifu will have to beat him for
the gold.

A Beat. Chaoyang turns his attention to Janet.

CHAORYANG
You look wonderful.

She brushes a stray hair back.

JANET
Thank you.

CHAORYANG
I mean it.

JANET
You, too.

CHAORYANG
The years have not been as kind to
me. You look the same.

JANET
Do I?

CHAORYANG
Very much so----How is your life
in America?

JANET
Good.

CHAORYANG
I'm glad. I would read much about
you.

JANET
Only in the beginning. All those
appearances and endorsements. Then
they forgot about me.

CHAORYANG
But you won the gold.

JANET
They went on to the next gold
medalist. I was old news.

CHAORYANG
You're here now.

JANET

I became a coach----you did, too.

CHAOYANG

After a while.

JANET

You never competed again.

She stares at his solemn face.

JANET

What did you do----after you left?

CHAOYANG

Nothing, really.

He bows his head. Avoids her eyes. A Beat.

CHAOYANG

I went to work in a mill for
awhile.

(beat)

I had to wait for everyone to
forget my shame.

JANET

You didn't lose. You got hurt.

CHAOYANG

I didn't win.

(beat)

But I got lucky. I found Zhifu. He
has so much talent----I won my
respect back through him.

JANET

He's not your only student. You
coach the whole team.

CHAOYANG

When Zhifu started winning
competitions, other parents came
to me with their children. Most of
them are ordinary.

JANET

I saw them practicing. They're
very good.

CHAOYANG

Good is not enough. Zhifu is great. When he wins the gold, it will be the way it should have been sixteen years ago.

JANET

You would have won, you know.

CHAOYANG

I will win tomorrow and my family will be proud of me. The shame will be over.

JANET

Your parents still hold it against you?

CHAOYANG

My parents? They are long gone. More than ten years now.

His eyes hold the burden. He pulls out a picture. She stares at a YOUNG BOY, about 13, with Chaoyang's face.

CHAOYANG

My son will be proud of his father.

JANET

You have a son?

CHAOYANG

And a daughter.

JANET

Do you have a picture of everyone together?

He slips out another. Hands it to her.

The two children stand in front of Chaoyang and a pretty ASIAN WOMAN.

JANET

You're very lucky. You have a lovely family.

CHAOYANG

You do not show me a picture of
your----husband and your children.

JANET

I never married.

CHAOYANG

You were so successful, so famous.
Everyone spoke your name, even in
my country. You had to have
married.

JANET

I never did.

CHAOYANG

I didn't know. I just assumed you
had a full life---a man, his
babies.

(beat)

I thought that was why you never
answered my letters.

JANET

You never wrote.

CHAOYANG

I wrote you many times--for many
years.

JANET

I never got any letters----Where
did you send them?

CHAOYANG

To the address they listed in the
newspaper.

JANET

That was for the fans. There were
so many. Someone else read them.

CHAOYANG

They sent me a picture signed by
you---

A ROAR from the few spectators interrupts Chaoyang.

JANET

Your boy just stuck it.

Chaoyang almost smiles.

JANET

Is your family in the village?

CHAOYANG

Not yet, they'll join me if Zhifu wins.

JANET

And if he loses?

CHAOYANG

He won't lose.

JANET

Xinghua is a wonderful gymnast.
He's National Champion. He
received four tens for
presentation.

CHAOYANG

Like you.

Her lip quivers. He says nothing...Suddenly, they're joined
by Zhifu. His eyes glow.

ZHIFU

Did you see?

Chaoyang nods.

CHAOYANG

This is Zhifu.

He points to Janet

CHAOYANG

This is Ms. LeMay.

ZHIFU

I know who she is. Everyone does.
You won gold.

Janet smiles.

JANET

I hope you're having a good time
at the Olympics.

ZHIFU

I'm having a wonderful time. It
will be better tomorrow after the
competition.

INT. AUDITORIUM - NEXT DAY

Chaoyang watches from afar, as Janet embraces Xinghua to
comfort him and bring the joy back to his sad face.

JANET

You're not even sixteen. We'll be
back in four years to get you your
gold.

She stops as we hear the announcer...

ANNOUNCER

And from the United States, your
silver medal winner----

The voice trails off as Janet wipes a stray tear from
Xinghua's face.

JANET

Go---get your medal.

He hesitates.

JANET

I'm so proud of you.

A soft smile plays about his lips. His shoulders
straighten. He runs.

She follows him with her eyes as the announcer speaks
again.

ANNOUNCER

And from China, your gold medal
winner, Li Zhifu.

The young winner embraces his mentor, Chaoyang, before he
too, disappears in the spotlight.

Chaoyang's eyes catch Janet's. Janet mouths.

JANET
Congratulations.

Chaoyang moves to her as the Chinese National Anthem starts.

CHAOYANG
Where will you be later?

JANET
With Xinghua, I guess, watching
some of the other sports---and
you?

CHAOYANG
I'll be with the team.

JANET
When are you leaving?----

Janet glances around.

JANET
Where is your family?

CHAOYANG
I don't know.
(beat)
Your boy was very good. I thought
he was going to win, but something
happened.

JANET
He got a cramp.

CHAOYANG
He's even better than Zhifu. I
didn't think it was possible.
(beat)
He should have won.

JANET
You should have, too. Things
happen. Injuries are part of the
game.

The music ends.

CHAOYANG

I don't want you to go.

JANET

The anthem is over. A few pictures
and they'll be back. It'll be
over.

CHAOYANG

I don't care. It was never over.
Not for me.

JANET

You don't know what you're saying.
We can't go back sixteen years.

CHAOYANG

I should have---

JANET

(interrupts)

What, Chaoyang? What could you
have done?

He stands there, helpless.

CHAOYANG

You think I forgot you. Betrayed
you because I took a wife, had
children?

She shakes her head.

CHAOYANG

I saw it in your eyes. I never
did---I wanted to give you
everything and I gave you nothing.

Xianghua runs to Janet's arms. She hugs him.

JANET

You were wonderful.

Janet looks back at Chaoyang.

JANET

Don't ever say you gave me
nothing.

XIANGHUA

Ms. LeMay, you were right. My
parents are here.

Janet smiles.

JANET

I told you. Your parents must be
so proud of you.

She turns to Chaoyang.

JANET

Xinghua, you remember---

XIANGHUA

You are Zhifu's coach. He won gold
for you.

Chaoyang shakes Xianghua's hand.

CHAOYANG

Congratulations. You are a
wonderful gymnast. You will win
your gold.

XIANGHUA

It won't matter then----this is
the Olympics.

CHAOYANG

It may not seem like it today, but
the gold is not the whole world.

He reaches out, touches the silver disc hanging from the
boy's neck.

CHAOYANG

You will win many more in all
colors.

A glowing Zhifu joins them. Behind him, a YOUNGER BOY,
maybe ten or eleven waits.

ZHIFU

They took so many pictures.

Janet takes Xinghua's hand.

JANET

It's time to go.

Chaoyang's face falls. Janet smiles at Zhifu.

JANET
Congratulations, Zhifu.

Her eyes meet Chaoyang.

JANET
Congratulations, Chaoyang. You
have your gold.

A young CHINESE GIRL comes into view.

JANET
That must be your daughter.

Chaoyang nods.

JANET
Soon their mother will come.

The little girl speaks.

CHINESE GIRL
My mother has gone to heaven.

Janet's eyes fly open.

JANET
I'm so sorry. I didn't know.

CHAOYANG
So many things we didn't know.

A REPORTER approaches Chaoyang.

REPORTER
We'd like to do an interview on Li
Zhifu.

CHAOYANG
Now?

The reporter nods. Chaoyang turns to Janet.

CHAOYANG
Will I see you later?

JANET

Yes---you won't leave--this time?

CHAOYANG

I will be back. I promise.

Chaoyang bows, takes his leave with Zhifu and the reporter, passing a middle-aged ASIAN COUPLE. Janet turns to Xinghua.

JANET

Your parents are here.

The man shakes Xinghua's hand. The woman embraces him.

XIANGHUA

Do we have to leave?

MAN

We have to go back, but you can stay with Ms. LeMay.

Xinghua beams, but wonders.

XIANGHUA

Are you sure?

Janet asks the man.

JANET

You don't mind?

Another REPORTER comes up to Xinghua.

REPORTER

We'd like to do an interview with you on television.

XIANGHUA

But, I only won the silver.

REPORTER

Many people think you should have won the gold. When we interview you, we'll be interviewing the next Gold Medalist.

Xinghua turns to Janet.

XIANGHUA

Can I?

JANET

Of course. Go with the gentleman.

Janet smiles at the couple.

JANET

Thank you for everything.

MAN

We are proud to share him. Thank you for letting us have even a part of your son.

JANET

Shhhh. Someone will hear.

MAN

It would make Xinghua happy to know and his real father would be proud.

JANET

Maybe one day he will be.

Janet smiles. Her eyes beam.

JANET

So many medals. So many colors. So many things to be proud of.

FADE OUT.