TYLER NEPTUNE

Written by

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INT. LIVING ROOM. DAY

A RAINBOW CRAB

Floating, lifeless, in a 20 gallon aquarium.

THE REVERSE:

Tyler Neptune (46) wipes a tear from his eye. He was born in Guangzhou, a city in the South of China; now, he stands in his one-story home in Lake Balboa.

He sniffles, which catches the attention of:

ZHIYUN (a woman in her 70s, wearing reading glasses) who lounges on a couch, playing solitaire on an iPad.

She is completely oblivious to the dead crab and Tyler's grief.

ZHIYUN
Eh?

All Cantonese is italicized.

TYLER
Jasmine's dead.

Zhiyun's attention breaks. Turns to Tyler.

ZHIYUN
I'm sorry.

TYLER
It's alright.

Wider now, we get a better view of the house. Insanely decorated. A mix of gilded molding, colorful furniture, some pop-art, and -

Several color swatches have been taped to the wall. Various iterations of light-blue. The tape has yellowed with age.

LATER

Ice getting poured into a cooler.

Tyler places Jasmine the crab on top of the ice. Shuts the lid.

CUT TO:

INT. OPERATING ROOM. DAY

The dead crab, splayed out on a steel table.

A woman in scrubs, SOPHIE, looms over the crab. She activates a small DRILL.

BZZZZZZZZ!!!!!!!

INT. CONSULTATION ROOM.

Tyler shakes hands with Sophie.

SOPHIE
My condolences.

TYLER
Thanks.

They settle. Then:

SOPHIE
The necropsy showed that Jasmine was a generally healthy crab. But I saw some shrinkage in the pericardial sinus. She may have died of ennui.

TYLER
...what?

SOPHIE
When small crabs are inactive or lack a variety of visual stimuli for long periods of time, their pericardial sinus will shrink, constricting their heart.

Tyler seems deeply disturbed by this.

TYLER
I didn’t know that.

Beat. Sophie switches to *Cantonese*.

SOPHIE
How’s everything at home? Mom said you seemed stressed.

TYLER
You and mom talk about me?

SOPHIE
She said she heard you crying in your room.

TYLER
...That's a mischaracterization of the incident in question.

SOPHIE
Is everything alright?

TYLER
Yes.
(off her look)
I'm great, actually.

INT. WAITING ROOM. LATER

The place is small. A mural displays a kelp utopia, populated by all sorts of crustaceans.

A woman sits, waiting. There's a fish tank on the seat next to her: inside is a Mantis Shrimp.

Tyler and Sophie gather around the front desk.

Tyler wedges his credit card out of his wallet.

SOPHIE
Don't worry about it.

TYLER
Are you sure?

SOPHIE
Yeah.

TYLER
Give me a discount, not a handout.
(beat)
Please.

Sophie capitulates. Picks up a card reader. Punches in some numbers.

SOPHIE
That'll be $750.

TYLER
Awesome.

As he taps his card, the PHONE RINGS.

Sophie picks up.

SOPHIE
Playa del Rey Crustacean Clinic...
I'm sorry to hear about that...
We have Mondays and Thursdays open.

CUT TO:

LAPTOP SCREEN

The website for *House & Garden*, a UK based architecture and interior design magazine.

We are scrolling through pictures of posh living rooms. Quasi-pornographic.

Over this, we hear RELENTLESS HEAVY BREATHING.

INT. TYLER'S BEDROOM. DAY

Tyler sits at a desk, scrolling on his computer.

He pauses on a picture.

ZOOMS IN on the coffee table.

Tyler thinks for a moment. Then:

Takes a screenshot.

Opens PHOTOSHOP.

Loads in the screenshot of the coffee table. Selects a clay bowl of PINECONES. Erases it.

He switches windows back to the *House & Garden* website.

Scrolls back a few photos to a DIFFERENT LIVING ROOM. Zooms in on a CERAMIC COASTER HOLDER, sleek and minimalist. Screenshots it.

Brings it into the Photoshop. Places the coaster holder where the pinecone bowl was.

Tyler leans back in his seat, appraising his Photoshop work.

He hits ctrl+S

File explorer pops up, open to a folder with HUNDREDS OF PHOTOSHOP FILES.

He names the file:

CT_CONCEPT_437

INT. TYLER'S KITCHEN. DAY

A pot steaming on the stove.

Tyler chops CARROTS on the counter.

Zhiyun snacks on cashews at a breakfast table in the kitchen while simultaneously scrolling on her iPad.

TYLER
I was wondering if I could get an advance on my stipend this month.

ZHIYUN
No.

Tyler, in quiet disbelief, turns to Zhiyun.

ZHIYUN (CONT'D)
But I'll give you back your 750. Your sister already wired me back the money. Next time, when your family offers to do something for free, just take it.

Tyler's mouth is a thin line.

TYLER
It's a matter of honor.

ZHIYUN
Do you want the money or not.

TYLER
I'll take it out of my savings.

Tyler stirs the pot with a spatula.

ZHIYUN
Don't be silly. I'll transfer it to you tomorrow.

TYLER
I really don't want it.

ZHIYUN
Consider it done.

Tyler heaves a sigh of frustration.

ZHIYUN (CONT'D)
"Matter of honor."

INT. LIVING ROOM. MORNING

Tyler sits on his couch with a cup of tea and a plate of fruit.

He looks at the items on his coffee table:

-a clay bowl of walnuts

-a hardcover book on Scandinavian sideboards

He adjusts the book slightly.

Tyler sips his tea.

A doorbell chimes.

Tyler listens as:

Zhiyun answers the door, and a young man's voice booms:

PIERRE (O.S.)
Good morning!

ZHIYUN (O.S.)
Pierre!

Pierre attempts in butchered Mandarin:

PIERRE (O.S.)
How are you, Grandma?

Zhiyun speaks to Pierre in mandarin as well.

ZHIYUN (O.S.)
I'm good. Come in. Come in.

Pierre (23, Wasian, holds a ceramic baking dish) steps into the living room, followed by Zhiyun.

PIERRE
(to Tyler)
Hey, Jo Jo.

"Jo Jo" means Uncle in mandarin. Tyler stands.

TYLER
What a great surprise.

EXT. TYLER'S BACKYARD. LATER

A KNIFE carving out a slice of banana bread.

Tyler plates it. Passes it to Zhiyun.

They all sit at a table in the backyard.

As Tyler plates the next slice, Pierre speaks:

PIERRE
I wanted to invite you guys to an event, a grand opening, this Sunday. I've been working real hard on this for some time now, and I wanted it to be a surprise. I'm starting a store.

ZHIYUN
That's amazing!

TYLER
Opening a small business takes bravery and conviction. What kind of store?

Tyler passes a slice to Pierre.

PIERRE
That is such an interesting question, because I think you'd really like it. It's, um, an interior decoration store, but with a little more focus. Like scented candles, succulents, and fruit bowls and stuff. Coffee table decor.

Tyler's eyes narrow. This is not pleasant news.

TYLER
That's my idea.

PIERRE
Well, I don't think so. Not entirely.

TYLER
(re: banana bread)
Is that why you brought this? Like, "Hey, I'm stealing your dream store, here's a banana bread band-aid."

PIERRE
No, I just didn't want to show up empty (handed) -

TYLER
- I'd like you to know that I view this as a deep personal betrayal.

PIERRE
I thought you'd be excited about this. Mom mentioned how you'd probably be excited about it.

TYLER
My sister knew about this?

PIERRE
She told me to talk to you.

TYLER
How long have you been waiting?

PIERRE
Not long.

TYLER
How long?

PIERRE
There may be similarities between our ideas, but I swear I felt creative when I came up with this. I'm not trying to rip you off or anything.

TYLER
But you did rip me off.

Zhiyun puts in, speaking in Cantonese to Tyler.

ZHIYUN
You need to calm down. This is a good thing that's happening.

TYLER
I disagree.

Tyler turns to Pierre:

TYLER (CONT'D)
So you're saying you don't remember hearing me talk about coffee table decor ever in your entire life?

PIERRE
No. Yeah. No, I don't remember.

Tyler leans back in his chair, in disgust.

INT. CRUSTACEAN CLINIC. SOPHIE'S OFFICE. DAY

Sophie, in scrubs, fills out some paperwork.

The Clinic Receptionist's voice comes through on speaker phone:

CLINIC RECEPTIONIST (O.S.)
Uhh, Tyler's here for you? He doesn't have an appointment.

Sophie looks up from her paperwork.

TYLER (PRELAP)
You need to kill this.

EXT. CRUSTACEAN CLINIC. LATER

Tyler and Sophie outside the clinic:

SOPHIE
No, he put together a business plan and a little presentation and asked me for a loan. I was impressed.

TYLER
Does he even know the difference between modern farmhouse and shabby chic?

SOPHIE
Do you even need to know that to sell ash trays?

TYLER
Yes.

Sophie blinks.

SOPHIE
Great minds think alike. Take it for the compliment that it is.

TYLER
This is an insult to my personhood. It's like for him, I don't exist.

SOPHIE
You both had an idea. But he actually did something about it. You've had years. Why didn't you?

Tyler is left speechless.

EXT. COFFEE TABLE DECOR STORE. DAY

A modest shop squeezed between a juice bar and an art supplies store.

'GRAND OPENING!' written on a chalkboard outside the entrance.

Large display windows show a CROWD within. Groups of people chatting, eating off small paper plates.

INT. COFFEE TABLE DECOR STORE. CONTINUOUS

Sophie and Zhiyun stand together amid the crowd.

ZHIYUN
There's this bruise. See this?

Zhiyun rolls her sleeve up to show Sophie.

ZHIYUN (CONT'D)
It keeps growing.

SOPHIE
How long has it been like that?

ZHIYUN
Three, four days?

SOPHIE
Do you want to get that checked out by a doctor?

ZHIYUN
Why?

Tyler idles alone by a shelf full of coffee table books. A Saul Leiter retrospective, a Gustave Caillebotte biography, a monograph about Ancient Greek vases, etc...

Tyler looks across the room at:

Zhiyun talking with Sophie.

Tyler grimaces.

A GUEST inches by Tyler.

GUEST
Sorry, could I just -

Tyler realizes that he's blocking the catering table. He squeezes against the shelf to make space for the guest.

TYLER
No worries.
(beat)
Enjoying yourself?

GUEST
Yeah. Lots of interesting pieces here.

TYLER
How do you know Pierre?

GUEST
He's a friend of a friend. But we've talked a couple times. We're acquaintances.

TYLER
He seems to have a lot of friends.

The guest picks up some crackers, puts them on his plate.

GUEST
I guess so.

TYLER
That's so healthy of him.

GUEST
How do you know Pierre?

TYLER
He's my Nephew.

GUEST
You must be very proud of him, setting all this up.

Tyler thinks for a moment. Then:

TYLER
It's definitely impressive for his age.

GUEST
Have you seen anything in here that you, like, really want to get?

TYLER
I don't know, it's difficult to pick out one stand out item in these types of situations. How about you?

GUEST
I'd say the fossilized egg, over there.

TYLER
You know, that would be better suited for a sideboard, not a coffee table?

Pierre worms his way through the crowd to Tyler.

PIERRE
Hey, how's it going?

GUEST
Congrats. The place is great.

PIERRE
Thanks. Thanks for coming.

GUEST
No, like, it's gonna be huge. How did you even come up with this.

PIERRE
Well -

TYLER
Well -

Pierre and Tyler look at each other and laugh, awkwardly.

PIERRE (CONT'D)
It's just one of those things where you're thinking about small businesses, and improving people's lives, and how weird it is that just small things can do a lot for your mental state. Coffee table decor is indulgent by definition. It's a place for you to unwind and focus on something that's often overlooked.

TYLER
But also, you know, it's about concept and execution.

(MORE)

TYLER (CONT'D)
It's about helping someone find a concept that fits with the style of the rest of the room, and providing the right pieces to execute that vision. It's fascinating because coffee tables aren't just indulgent, actually, they also serve a function. They have a gravitational pull in a room. Furniture is arranged around them. You prop up your feet on them. Your dinner plates wind up on them -

PIERRE
No, yeah, but I also never wanted to turn anyone into a snob. This is a place about giving you access to some cool shit that you might have not seen before but you might really fuck with.

GUEST
Okay, so what's on your coffee table at home? How are you decorating it?

PIERRE
Lego plants.

The Guest laughs awkwardly.

Tyler stares at Pierre as if Pierre just shit on the floor.

PIERRE (CONT'D)
Seriously. They're so great. We carry some back there. I'll show you.

Pierre leads Guest away, leaving Tyler alone. Tyler calls after them.

TYLER
I'll be here.

EXT. MOUNTAIN HIGHWAY. DAY

Tyler's Prius hurtles up the road, flanked by tall trees.

INT. TYLER'S PRIUS.

Tyler and Zhiyun.

ZHIYUN
You're driving a little fast.

EXT. MOUNTAIN BED & BREAKFAST. DAY

A wooden lodge nestled in the woods.

Tyler turns a key in a heavy PADLOCK. Undoes some chains. Forces open a DOOR.

INT. MOUNTAIN BED & BREAKFAST. LOBBY. DAY

Big wooden beams. Big tapestries. Big stone fireplace.

White tarpaulins have been draped over all the furniture.

A thin layer of dust covers everything.

Tyler removing the tarpaulins off a few chairs... sweeping... changing lightbulbs.

He peers past the receptionist desk, into a BACK OFFICE:

Where Zhiyun looks over a ledger.

Tyler turns his attention to the coffee table. Looks quizzically at the decoration: some NatGeo magazines and a board-game.

He frowns.

EXT. MOUNTAIN BED & BREAKFAST. DAY

Tyler rakes leaves up around the front entrance.

He spots a group of TURKEYS in the distance and pauses his work, watching them.

INT. BANK. DAY

Glass office. Tyler in his best suit, sitting across from a BANKER.

The banker flips through a BINDER full of highly detailed drawings of coffee tables.

TYLER
Some of those date back to 1998.

The banker nods politely. Puts the binder aside.

BANKER
So what can you tell me about your business plan?

TYLER
Well, it's about helping people, and connecting them to art that's sophisticated, functional and accessible.

The Banker smiles. Tyler feels encouraged and continues.

TYLER (CONT'D)
I don't have many skills or interests in this life. But I have taste. I know design. I want to share that with people. I think people would really want to take advice from me if they knew how much I knew. They'd look at me and my business and say, "That's a person. He has a profession. He knows a lot about an interesting subject, and I like listening to him. That's a person of consequence."

BANKER
Thank you for sharing that. Before we give out an SBA we just need an idea of the risk associated with a given business. Can you tell me about the market potential of your shop? The demand for it? Other competitors? That sort of thing.

TYLER
Well I know I'd have one competitor at least. And it looks like his shop is doing very well. So I know there's demand. Yes.

BANKER
Is there anything else you can tell me?

Tyler mulls it over.

TYLER
Like what?

I/E. TYLER'S PRIUS. BANK PARKING LOT. DAY

Tyler HEADBUTTS his steering wheel again and again and again.

He slows, pauses, takes a breath.

CUT TO:

GOOGLE MAPS

Populating with red pins.

Tyler clicks on one.

The establishment's info appears:

Fund Small Business Loans Van Nuys CA

3.5 stars.

The street view shows someone's apartment and a van outside of it.

Tyler scrolls across the map a little bit.

Clicks on another pin.

A street view picture of a beige outdoor mall appears.

He clicks forward and we see a few stock photos of people shaking hands in offices.

Tyler thinks.

CUT TO:

I/E. TYLER'S PRIUS. OUTDOOR MALL. DAY

Tyler pulls into a parking lot. Takes a look through his windshield.

Like what we saw in the website, the mall has several floors, full of empty storefronts, shuttered businesses.

EXT. OUTDOOR MALL. 3RD FLOOR.

Tyler crests the steps onto the 3rd floor. Almost all the shops are dead here, except for:

A small establishment at the end of the walkway. It looks like a travel agency, but there is no sign out front.

This is the...

INT. NATIONAL BUSINESS VANGUARD (NBV) OFFICE.

Tyler pushes his way into the waiting room. Hum of AC. Soft piano music playing. Two chairs and a front desk, where a receptionist types on a computer.

TYLER
Hello.

We now see that the receptionist isn't really doing work, but doing a sudoku puzzle online.

NBV RECEPTIONIST
Do you have an appointment?

TYLER
At 2:30.

NBV RECEPTIONIST
You're really early.

TYLER
Bad habit.

NBV RECEPTIONIST
Take a seat.

LATER

Tyler, seated, TRANSFIXED on:

A small TV across the room, playing a loop of stock footage of farmers and stacks of money.

A MAN emerges from a doorway and walks out the front entrance.

NBV RECEPTIONIST (CONT'D)
Okay, they're ready for you.

INT. NBV OFFICE. BULL PEN.

Tyler enters, and finds himself in a cramped working area. Four cubicles. Grey. *Click-clacking* of keyboards.

Someone SLIDES out of a cubicle on a rolling chair: this is Maya.

MAYA
Tyler! You made it. I know it's a bit of a hassle to find the place.

TYLER
It was fine.

Tyler shakes hands with her.

MAYA
I'm Maya. I'm going to be running point on your loan.

Maya guides him to her desk. It has a computer and about five stacks of loose leaf papers.

Next to her, there's a spare rolling chair with a bunch of thick binders on it, and on top of the binders is a half eaten ham sandwich.

Maya moves the sandwich, then picks up the binders and drops them onto the floor.

MAYA (CONT'D)
Take a seat.

Tyler obliges.

MAYA (CONT'D)
Here at the National Business Vanguard we want to help individuals like you fulfill their dreams. What we're proposing is an easy and fast way to procure your funds, with or without stellar credit -

TYLER
My credit's fine.

MAYA
- Because we know how difficult starting a business can be, you're looking at a rate of zero-point-three-five-seven, and we have a suite of repayment plans and refinancing options. Now, we'll be giving you a home equity loan. Do you know what that is?

TYLER
I think so.

MAYA
Your equity - which is calculated by the value of your home against the balance of any outstanding loans you may already have - will be used as the security against this loan.
(beat)
But for someone like you, who I can tell is prepared for spearheading such a promising business, there's nothing to worry about.
(beat)
Here, take this pen. On us.

Maya hands Tyler a shitty ballpoint pen, "NBV: Helping Businesses Thrive" has been printed in Arial font along the side.

INT. TYLER'S BACKYARD. LATER

Zhiyun squats over a patch of grass in the yard and trims it with scissors.

Meanwhile, Tyler sits on the patio, examines a thick packet of documents, and chews on the end of the NBV pen.

Close on one of the documents, it reads:

...a daily rate 0.357...

ZHIYUN
They messaged me again about the old apartment.

Tyler looks up.

TYLER
Again?

ZHIYUN
Yeah.
(beat)
I'm thinking I should just sell.

TYLER
You shouldn't have to do that.

ZHIYUN
Don't be like that.

TYLER
Can we fight this?

ZHIYUN
I'm not sure if it's worth it.

TYLER
Of course it's worth it.

INT. KITCHEN. NIGHT

Flurry of crackling voices, speaking over each other in a mixture of Cantonese and Mandarin. A WeChat GROUP CALL is underway on Zhiyun's iPad.

TYLER
Hello? Can you hear me?

Tyler sits with Zhiyun at the breakfast table.

CALLER 1
Who are you?

TYLER
I'm Coach Huang's son. We have unit 302-

Another voice interjects:

CALLER 2
Isn't his son in America?

TYLER
Yes, we're - that's where we're calling from. That's me. I'm just a little confused, why exactly do we need to install an elevator?

CALLER 3
My parents live on the top floors and they're getting old. Without an elevator, they're essentially trapped in their apartment, like an open air prison.

TYLER
Oh.

CALLER 2
So are my parents. They're on the seventh floor.

TYLER
I understand that. This elevator is not, well, I guess we're just worried that it'll be ugly.

Beat.

CALLER 2
So you're not voting for it?

TYLER
I'd like to find a solution here that satisfies everyone.

CALLER 1
Isn't Mengjin dead?

TYLER
Um...Yes.

CALLER 1
So who lives in that apartment?

TYLER
I guess, in a certain sense, you could say no one lives there. But that's not really the point. This applies to all of you as well. Do you really want your parents to live in a space with less light and no view?

CALLER 2
A solution that would satisfy everyone would be voting for this elevator plan, considering no one lives in your unit.

TYLER
Not necessarily.

CALLER 2
Why do you care about this so much?

TYLER
My dad died in there.

Silence on the call.

EXT. PIERRE'S APARTMENT BUILDING. DAY

Tyler stands outside a gate. He presses a BUZZER.

Pierre's voice comes through the speaker.

PIERRE (O.S.)
Yes?

TYLER
It’s me.

PIERRE (O.S.)
What do you want?

TYLER
I need a favor.

INT. PIERRE’S APARTMENT. DAY

Pierre’s apartment is small. White walls. Popcorn ceiling.

One of his ROOMMATES smokes outside on the porch.

Tyler looks around.

TYLER
Nice place.

PIERRE
Thanks.

TYLER
What’s the rent?

PIERRE
1400.

TYLER
You can afford that?

PIERRE
The store’s doing pretty well, so yeah.

TYLER
Even before that?

PIERRE
Mom helps - helped - me out a little.

TYLER
Mhm.

Tyler has spotted Pierre’s coffee table. It’s a complete mess.

PIERRE
You said you needed a favor.

TYLER
Yes. You see, I am redoing my home office, and this coming month marks the 33rd anniversary of me coming here to America with my sister and my mother, and I'd like to frame a fake ID with my English moniker as a token of my stay here.

PIERRE
Okay.

TYLER
Could you get me a fake ID.

PIERRE
I haven't really needed one in a while.

TYLER
But do you still know people who have the faculties to get one?

PIERRE
I guess.

TYLER
Could you do this for me then?

PIERRE
It'll be expensive.

TYLER
That's fine.

PIERRE
And you'll have to say something nice about my store.

Tyler takes a moment.

TYLER
Sorry?

PIERRE
I'll do it if you say something nice about my store. Something real.

Tyler stares at Pierre. Then:

TYLER
I was impressed by your collection of books.
(MORE)

TYLER (CONT'D)
You have a good mix of vintage and new releases. There was a wide variety of subjects and I could see them doing a lot for a range of coffee tables.

PIERRE
Thanks.

Tyler looks off at a corner; his mood has been thrown.

CUT TO:

INT. TYLER'S HOUSE. GARAGE. DAY

A crack of light SPREADS across boxes of old shit as Tyler opens the door.

The garage has been converted into a storage space for excess tools, knick-knacks, and memorabilia.

Tyler begins rummaging through the boxes. Digging through worn-out clothes, defunct toys.

He moves to another box: FILLED with stuffed manila folders. Tyler flips through a folder. Legal and financial documents and papers.

INT. TYLER'S HOUSE. VARIOUS. DAY

SEQUENCE:

Tyler placing one of those DOCUMENTS (a house deed) on a SCANNER.

Hitting a button.

The scanner light sweeping across the paper...

Tyler on PHOTOSHOP, erasing a NAME...

And replacing it with 'TYLER NEPTUNE'...

Tyler PRINTING OUT a NEW version of the deed...

And FILLING IT OUT by hand with the NBV pen...

SIGNING it...

Examining the NOTARY STAMP on the new copy of the deed...

Then - Tyler disassembles a pen...Cracks open the ink cartridge...dips a NEEDLE into the ink...and dabs the ink on the notary stamp...

The ink bleeds.

INT. NBV OFFICE. MAYA'S CUBICLE.

TYLER'S ID -

In Maya's hands.

Maya makes a note on her computer and hands it back to Tyler.

Then, Maya begins flipping through a stack of paperwork.

TYLER
I've made a bank account for my business. Coffee Corner LLC. So I'd like the money to go there.

Maya looks up at Tyler.

MAYA
I saw that on your application.

TYLER
Okay. I just wanted to say that aloud.

MAYA
Why?

TYLER
...I guess I'm a little nervous: feeling the future happening.

Maya nods, sets aside the documents.

MAYA
We'll just need your signature here.

Maya slides a CONTRACT towards Tyler.

He hesitates.

Then signs.

His signature is magnificent.

INT. VACANT STORE. DAY

Tyler and a real estate agent taking a tour.

Tyler traces his fingers along an old, dusty SERVICE COUNTER.

He peers out of the large display windows, and looks at:

PIERRE'S STORE across the street.

Pierre emerges from his store, crouches by the chalkboard sign out front, erases, and scribbles something new on it.

EXT. FLEA MARKET. DAY

Hundreds of pop-up TENTS selling clothes and trinkets.

Tyler examines a massive BEZOAR, which looks like a spherical stone with a leather ribbon wrapped around it. An old artifact with an unknown function.

Tyler flags down the attendant.

TYLER
Your collection is very beautiful.

ATTENDANT
Thank you.

TYLER
Would you like another outlet for you to display your items? I own a brick & mortar in a prime location.

The attendant looks at Tyler blankly.

INT. LIBRARY. DAY

We move along the ENDLESS STACKS of a huge public library...

Until we land on Tyler, who sits at a small study table on which multiple LARGE BOOKS have been scattered around him.

He scrutinizes a book called *WOOD*, a collection of forest photography.

He takes a note on a legal pad.

INT. TYLER'S STORE. DAY

BOXES everywhere.

Tyler pushes a heavy bog oak SHELVING UNIT against the wall.

Tyler puts the BEZOAR on the shelf.

On another shelf, he sets down a glass VASE, modeled to seem like a cluster of tubes.

On yet another shelf, he puts a jade coaster holder that's shaped like a turtle.

Tyler hears a KNOCK.

Pierre stands at the door.

TYLER
It's open.

Pierre enters.

PIERRE
What's going on?

TYLER
I'm putting together my showroom.

The two men stare at each other.

PIERRE
This is just going to hurt both of us financially. And calling it your showroom is disgusting.

TYLER
I disagree on both points, actually. I think one of us may fail, but not both of us. And I'm calling it my showroom because that's what it is.

PIERRE
Are you jealous of my shop?

TYLER
Why would I be jealous of something that's not even good?

Pierre seems genuinely hurt by that.

PIERRE
I run a good business.

TYLER
You have some cool stuff. But there's no concept tying it together. It's about concept and execution. That's what makes something good.

PIERRE
(re: Tyler's store)
This whole thing? I give it 5 weeks. Tops.

TYLER
Unlike you, I did not ask my mom for a loan to build this. I had to use my ingenuity and will power. I care more about this place than my own home. This is my domain. People can sense these sorts of things. That's why people will come. That's why I will succeed.

INT. PRIUS. RESIDENTIAL STREET. DUSK

Tyler makes a turn and through his windshield, he sees:

SOPHIE has parked in his driveway. She's in scrubs and leans against her car, waiting for him.

EXT. TYLER'S HOUSE. MOMENTS LATER

Tyler climbs out of his car.

TYLER
Hey.

SOPHIE
Hey.

Tyler and Sophie face off in the driveway.

TYLER
So what's up?

SOPHIE
(in Cantonese:)
Why are you making this so difficult?

Tyler kicks a pebble in the driveway.

TYLER
I'm not making anything difficult. Competition is good. It pushes both parties to do better. If anything, I should thank the two of you; even though you helped him commit intellectual highway robbery, it inspired me to do something. That's what I'm doing. I'm doing something.

SOPHIE
Step aside for your nephew.

TYLER
Why can't he step aside for his uncle?

SOPHIE
That's not how it works.

TYLER
So when it's an idea that I have, it's alright for everyone to dismiss it. But when Pierre has the same idea, you throw hundreds of thousands of dollars at him? Mom even shows up for the grand opening?

She switches to English:

SOPHIE
I just didn't want him to end up like you.

TYLER
Like me?

SOPHIE
I'm trying to help him launch his career. Maybe he'll move on to something else. But at least this way he can get his start.

TYLER
Our fates are in the hands of the free market now. If his business beats mine, I won't be a sore loser. I'll step aside. But you have to let me try.

SOPHIE
Does mom know about your store?

TYLER
I've mentioned it in passing.

CUT TO:

INT. TYLER'S HOUSE. DINING ROOM. LATER

Zhiyun's face in her hands. Finally:

ZHIYUN
How?

Sophie and Tyler sit around her at the dining table and have mugs of tea.

TYLER
I applied for an SBA loan from Bank of America.

ZHIYUN
They accepted an application from you?

TYLER
...Yes.

ZHIYUN
If you go under, I can't absorb those losses. If Pierre goes under, your sister can't absorb <u>those</u> losses. What have you achieved here?

TYLER
First of all, you won't have to be absorbing any losses. Because I have a plan and a vision. And in that vision, I only see success.
(to Sophie)
In the unfortunate event of Pierre's downfall, I know that I will have the resources to help him, so the weight of your lost investment will not be sorely felt. I won't let anything bad happen to this family. I give you my word.

We hear a HEAVY THUD.

Tyler and Sophie look over at -

ZHIYUN -

She has fainted, face planted into the table, and spilled her tea.

TYLER (CONT'D)
Mom?

INT. AMBULANCE. MOVING. NIGHT

Medical equipment swaying back and forth.

Zhiyun in a gurney.

EMTs monitor her.

Sophie sits in the corner and watches.

I/E. TYLER'S PRIUS. STREETS. CONTINUOUS

View out the windshield:

Following the Ambulance.

Tyler at the wheel.

Face of stone.

The ambulance crosses an intersection. The light changes, and Tyler has to slow to a stop.

A Jeep Cherokee pulls up next to him.

The light turns green.

The Jeep speeds ahead of Tyler's Prius, and changes lanes to position itself directly ahead of Tyler.

Then the Jeep slows down.

Tyler hits the brakes -

Honks -

Then prepares to overtake the Jeep, but ANOTHER Jeep Cherokee drives up next to him, boxing him in.

Tyler honks again.

They've reached the next light, and the group of cars slow to a stop.

A window in the Second Jeep rolls down to reveal:

A MAN (60s, Asian) looking at Tyler. The Man beckons Tyler to roll down his window.

Tyler obliges.

MAN
(in Cantonese)
Do you have an apartment at 17 Bahua Road?

TYLER
Uh. Yes?

MAN
Could you pull over?

TYLER
I have to go to the hospital.

MAN
I just need to ask you some questions.

TYLER
Are you a cop?

MAN
I'm MSS.

This means something for Tyler.

TYLER
What are you doing here?

MAN
Why don't you pull over first and we'll talk about it.

The light changes, and Tyler goes into the turn lane. Ahead of him, the First Jeep does the same.

Tyler and the two Jeeps turn right onto a smaller street.

Tyler pulls over.

The First Jeep parks just ahead of him.

The Second Jeep pulls up beside Tyler again.

The Man gets out and walks over to Tyler.

MAN (CONT'D)
You said you're going to the hospital?

TYLER
Yeah.

MAN
We can give you a ride.

TYLER
I'm alright with driving there myself.

MAN
Don't worry, we can give you a ride.

TYLER
You said we should pull over and talk. We've pulled over, so why don't we just talk now?

MAN
I meant we can talk while we drive you to the hospital.

Tyler hesitates.

TYLER
Are you actually MSS?

MAN
I'm a Ministry of State Security officer. Are you asking me to show you a badge?

TYLER
Yes I guess I am.

The Man huffs. He takes out his wallet and flips it open. Within, there's a badge:

A gold laurel frames the emblem of the Chinese Communist Party.

I/E. JEEP CHEROKEE. MOMENTS LATER

Tyler watches out the back window:

His Prius, still parked, recedes into the distance as the Jeep pulls away.

The Man sits next to Tyler.

MAN
My name is Yifei.

Tyler gives him nothing.

YIFEI
You should show me more respect.

TYLER
This isn't the way to the hospital.

YIFEI
I'm stationed out here to monitor Chinese emigrants. I have the authority to disappear you and ship you home to prison without trial. You should really show me more respect.

TYLER
I haven't done anything bad.

YIFEI
My colleague's cousin's in-laws live in your apartment building. He told me you're causing delays for the construction of an elevator.

TYLER
That's what this is about?

YIFEI
What else would it be about?

TYLER
So what do you want?

YIFEI
You're interfering with a community project.

TYLER
No, I'm trying to <u>improve</u> the project for the community.

YIFEI
These projects are supposed to be cheap, simple, and useful. What's useful about what you're doing?

TYLER
I'm just saying we can spend a little more time to figure out a better design for the elevator.

YIFEI
Then what progress have you made?

Tyler rummages in his pockets, takes out his phone, loads something up.

TYLER
This is the current plan. They want to build this right outside the porch area, so both units on each floor are losing half their view. What if we just rotated the elevator 90 degrees? So it's more narrow and it would obstruct less of the window.

Yifei mulls it over.

YIFEI
I think there's a standard requirement for projects like this. They have to have the smallest possible footprint. Your idea wouldn't pass because it would be bigger. See? The bridge connecting the elevator to the porch is direct, but for your idea, you'd need to extend the bridge out because the elevator doors are off to the side.

TYLER
That's just one idea, but I have lots of others. At least we're having a conversation now.

YIFEI
These buildings are garbage. They serve their purpose, barely. Why do you think they're worth "having a conversation" over?

TYLER
Because people deserve better.

Yifei looks out the window.

YIFEI
Hm.

Awkward silence.

YIFEI (CONT'D)
When they told me about you, to be honest, I wasn't going to do anything about it.
(MORE)

YIFEI (CONT'D)
But there was something they said that I couldn't get out of my head: Your dad died in that apartment, and you wanted to preserve it -

TYLER
- I just want it to be a good space. A comfortable space.

YIFEI
Anyways, I was intrigued. I did a standard sweep. Hacked into your Adobe Creative Cloud account. Went through your photoshop files. There's a file called CT_CONCEPT_188. I liked it. I like your point of view.

TYLER
...Thank you.

YIFEI
Do you do commissions?

TYLER
My store isn't even really open yet.

YIFEI
I want you to redo my coffee table like that photoshop: Concept 188. Do you think we can reach an understanding? A man in my position, I can make it so you'd be able to design your elevator any way you like - with an architect's approval.

TYLER
An exchange of services, but I do all the work.

YIFEI
Yes.

EXT. STREET. NIGHT

The Jeep Cherokee peels away from the curb. Tyler, standing on the sidewalk, watches it go.

Tyler does a little cheer.

EXT. THE STREET WHERE TYLER PARKED EARLIER. NIGHT

Tyler picks a ticket off his Prius' windshield, tears it up and gets into his car.

INT. HOSPITAL. HALLWAY. NIGHT

Tyler walks down a hallway.

Ahead, Sophie stands by a vending machine picking out snacks.

Sophie catches sight of him:

SOPHIE
Where have you been?

Tyler doesn't slow.

TYLER
I missed a light and I fell behind the ambulance so I started speeding to catch up but I got pulled over. How's mom?

Sophie's eyes goes cold.

TYLER (CONT'D)
What?

SOPHIE
...She died.

TYLER
I don't appreciate that kind of humor.

SOPHIE
I'm serious. She finally realized how stupid her son is, and she died of shock.

Tyler keeps walking past her.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM. NIGHT

Zhiyun (not dead) stirs in her sleep.

TYLER
(sotto)
Exciting things are happening. Exciting things.

Zhiyun - in and out of consciousness:

ZHIYUN
Moonrise?

TYLER
I'm here.

ZHIYUN
Could you get your sister?

TYLER
...Yes.

INT. YIFEI'S HOUSE. DAY

Instead of a coffee table, Yifei has an ottoman and a large tray on top of it, displaying some magazines about military equipment and Chinese books bound with string.

Tyler squats by it, examines it, writes a note in a journal. He produces a tape measure and starts taking measurements.

Yifei's living room is maximalist, full of color and floral wallpaper and big fluffy couches.

Yifei watches Tyler and sips some tea.

TYLER
In Concept 188, I don't have an ottoman.

YIFEI
I like the ottoman.

Tyler ponders.

EXT. TYLER'S HOUSE. DAY

Tyler and Sophie help Zhiyun out of the Prius and walk with her towards the house.

SOPHIE
Watch your step.

TYLER
Watch your step.

Pierre gets out of the Prius and follows them.

EXT. TYLER'S BACKYARD. CONTINUOUS

Tyler grills corn, eggplant, tomatoes and bell peppers.

He looks up from the grill and into the house. He sees Pierre, Yifei, and Zhiyun watching TV together.

EXT. TYLER'S BACKYARD. SUNSET

Dinner. Bowls of dipping sauces. Everyone eats grilled vegetables.

Awkward. No one really knows what to say.

EXT. TYLER'S BACKYARD. NIGHT

Pierre smokes.

Tyler sidles up next to him.

They regard each other in silence.

TYLER
So, I'm doing a survey. You know the elevator? I'm debating whether it should be 160 centimeters in length, or 180.

PIERRE
I guess the smaller one.

TYLER
Why?

PIERRE
Well the idea is to keep it compact, right?

TYLER
But if it's 180, it'll be easier for someone with a wheelchair to use it. I think it would be better if it was 180.

PIERRE
Then why did you ask me?

TYLER
I wanted to hear your opinion and see if I agreed.

INT. TYLER'S HOUSE. NIGHT

Zhiyun stands in the middle of the living room and does repetitive neck exercises.

Sophie enters with some tea, pauses when she sees her mom doing the exercises.

SOPHIE
...Shouldn't you be resting?

ZHIYUN
I have to keep my body active. Remind it that it's still alive.

Sophie puts the tea down on the coffee table. Then stands up straight. And copies Zhiyun's neck exercises.

ZHIYUN (CONT'D)
We should all go up to the B&B again. As a family. At least one more time.

SOPHIE
Eh.

ZHIYUN
We should really do it. Not just talk about it and then forget about it.

CUT TO:

INT. NBV OFFICE. MAYA'S CUBICLE. DAY

Tyler sits across from Maya.

MAYA
Thanks for coming in today. We like to check in on our partners every now and then, see how you're doing.

TYLER
I'd say I'm making exceptional progress. I basically have a patron, except that he spies on my internet activity and extorts me for free labor but also we're sort of friends and he's the only one who understands me. There are just a few things I'd like to dial in, inventory-wise. Highlight my stock with some pricier showstoppers. Actually, I was wondering if I could take out another loan.

MAYA
You're interested in a microloan in addition to your startup loan?

Some of Maya's Colleagues have taken an interest in Tyler and lean from their desks to listen in.

TYLER
Is that not allowed?

Maya glances at her colleagues.

MAYA
How much were you thinking?

TYLER
10k.

MAYA
I'm sure we can figure something out. One moment.

Maya stands up. Walks over to one of her colleagues.

Tyler watches them whisper to each other. Then they both enter a back room.

INT. NBV OFFICE. BACK ROOM. CONTINUOUS

Maya and her colleague.

MAYA
What do you think?

COLLEAGUE 1
We've hooked the fish already. We can spare an extra piece of bait.

MAYA
If we already hooked the fish why would we need more bait?

COLLEAGUE 1
Because he's asking for it.
(off Maya's look)
I think it's fine.

INT. YIFEI'S HOUSE. DAY

The ottoman/coffee table.

Tyler meticulously placing a new TRAY on it.

A metal statuette of a hound dog.

A blown-glass vase with red and gold swirls in it.

And a shallow, heavy decorative BOX with a glossy ribbon under the top lid -

He adjusts it.

Then he calls out -

TYLER
It's ready.

YIFEI emerges from his study.

Takes in the new coffee table.

Tyler watches his reaction.

Yifei steps forward to examine it closer.

Tyler beckons him around to the box with the ribbon -

TYLER (CONT'D)
Open it.

Yifei lifts up the top lid.

Within the box, we see an ancient, yellowed copy of *DAS KAPITAL VOLUME 1.*

TYLER (CONT'D)
Because you're communist.

Yifei closes the lid. Takes a few steps back.

YIFEI
The tray in your photoshop was rattan, not lacquered wood.

TYLER
But a rattan tray doesn't go with an ottoman. And you wanted to keep the ottoman.

YIFEI
And the book was something about Basquiat.

Tyler gapes for a second.

TYLER
That's a ten thousand dollar first edition of Das Kapital.

YIFEI
It's old, ugly, and I don't speak German.

Tyler is absolutely shattered.

TYLER
....You just don't understand art. I go to museums regularly, and I study trends and luminaries. You have a great thing in front of you, but you're scared of it because it's not exactly what you asked for. And actually, this living room needs so much more than a coffee table to save it. It's a fundamentally hostile space, it's like being inside a marshmallow filled with thousands of tiny needles. You can't just impose your wealth on your guests, you have to welcome them in and envelope them in your hospitality. That's how you decorate a living room. Philistine.

INT. TYLER'S STORE. NIGHT

Tyler's face rising into frame. He has a phone pressed to his ear.

We hear a ring tone.

He sits in the middle of the showroom, surrounded by supplies and cardboard boxes.

The call goes to voicemail.

TYLER
Hi, this isn't an apology. But I wanted to follow up about the elevator...because it wasn't actually clear earlier today what was going to happen about that: if the deal was still on or not. As far as I'm concerned, I held up my end of the bargain very well, so call me back when you get this.

He hangs up.

The ceiling light flickers.

INT. MOUNTAIN BED & BREAKFAST. VARIOUS. DAY

Embers burning.

A few guests relax by the hearth.

We're in the lobby of the B&B, now fully open and operational.

Various angles:

THE DINING HALL:

A party of three eats lunch.

PEERING INTO A SUITE:

A cleaner changes the sheets.

EXT. MOUNTAIN BED & BREAKFAST. PARKING LOT. DAY

Tyler, eyes puffy, picks a suitcase out of the trunk of his Prius. Then passes a small backpack to Zhiyun.

A family (a mother, father, and a boy of around 9 years old) walk past the Prius and towards the woods. The family all carry wooden LONGBOWS and quivers full of arrows.

Tyler looks past them and spots PIERRE and SOPHIE, unloading luggage from a Nissan Leaf.

Pierre locks eyes with Tyler, and mouths: "What?"

Sophie follows Pierre's gaze to Tyler.

Tyler slams the trunk, startling Zhiyun.

INT. MOUNTAIN BED & BREAKFAST. LOBBY. DAY

Zhiyun, Sophie, Pierre, and Tyler walk through the lobby - they hear:

B&B GUEST
Zhiyun!

One of the guests by the hearth has spotted them. Zhiyun lights up.

Sophie, Pierre, and Tyler watch as Zhiyun goes over to the guest.

ZHIYUN
(in Cantonese)
Glad to see you again.

B&B GUEST
Yeah, glad to be back.

ZHIYUN
We missed you last year.

B&B GUEST
Yeah, work was crazy and then we got this time share in Cabos and it felt weird to waste it. Really, we wish you were open all year round though.

ZHIYUN
Me too.

B&B GUEST
Is this your family? You're all so beautiful.

TYLER
Yes, and happy too.

Everyone looks at Tyler oddly.

INT. MOUNTAIN BED & BREAKFAST. ELEVATOR. MINUTES LATER

Zhiyun, Sophie, Pierre, and Tyler:

SOPHIE
Can we be chill for two days?
(to Pierre and Tyler)
Can you two be chill for two days?

TYLER
I'm chill. I can be chill.

PIERRE
Yeah. That sounds good.

SOPHIE
Shake on it.

Tyler and Pierre eye each other. Neither of them move to shake hands.

SOPHIE (CONT'D)
I want this weekend to be nice for mom.

ZHIYUN
(in Cantonese)
Ugh, don't say that.

SOPHIE
Why not?

ZHIYUN
Because then it's like I forced all of you up here.

SOPHIE
No, we want to be here - but what's the point if the mood is like this?

Tyler starts in English:

TYLER
(to Sophie)
Do you remember at the hospital, you called me stupid? Do you realize how mean that is? Just because you have more money, friends, and hobbies than me doesn't mean I'm less of a person than you. My feelings are just as deep and true as yours. We're family, which means you can't force me to make deals with your son. If you want me to be nice, you have to be nice as well.

SOPHIE
I'm nice. I can be nice.

TYLER
Okay. I can be chill.

Tyler and Sophie look at Pierre.

PIERRE
I'm - Yeah. Sure.

TYLER
See? That's something that we shouldn't have to shake on. That's simply decent human behavior.

INT. MOUNTAIN BED & BREAKFAST. TYLER’S SUITE. DAY

Tyler rolls a carry-on suitcase into the suite and parks it next to the TV stand.

Takes in the room.

Tan tapestries. Grey carpet.

LATER

Tyler UNZIPPING his suitcase.

He takes out a plastic grocery bag and pulls from it a pair of muddy boots.

INT. MOUNTAIN BED & BREAKFAST. SOPHIE’S SUITE. DAY

Sophie lays out a pair of CARGO PANTS on the bed.

INT. MOUNTAIN BED & BREAKFAST. PIERRE’S SUITE. DAY

Pierre puts sunscreen on his face.

INT. MOUNTAIN BED & BREAKFAST. ZHIYUN'S SUITE. DAY

Zhiyun dons a puffy jacket.

EXT. MOUNTAIN BED & BREAKFAST. MEADOW. LATER

A path cuts through the meadow surrounding the B&B.

Zhiyun, Sophie, Tyler, and Pierre walk along the path. The latter three carry longbows and quivers of arrows, while Zhiyun has a walking stick.

SOPHIE
(to Pierre)
You’re slouching.

Pierre adjusts his posture.

They head towards a dense forest.

EXT. THE WOODS. LATER

Quiet sounds of leaves and branches knocking into each other.

Tyler pulls an arrow back, aiming out into the brush.

Pierre and Sophie also aim in the same direction as Tyler.

We see that the fletching of Tyler's arrow is lime green, while Pierre's is red, and Sophie's is blue.

Zhiyun watches them.

Something SPEEDS through the brush.

Tyler releases his arrow, followed by Sophie and Pierre.

A pause as they watch the arrows sail into the brush.

Then:

The sound of HORRIBLE, GUTTURAL BLEATING.

They all stand and approach the sound, pushing through the greenery to REVEAL:

A steel monorail TRACK, leading up to an animatronic GOAT.

It lies prone, the horrible bleating sound comes from a speaker in its mouth.

An ARROW protrudes from its belly. The fletching is green.

Tyler moves up, takes out another ARROW, and plunges it by hand into the animatronic goat's chest.

The bleating stops.

SOPHIE
Nice shot.

TYLER
Thank you.

Tyler takes out his arrows.

The animatronic goat's synthetic hide is littered with jagged HOLES and TEARS from years and years of getting shot at.

EXT. ELSEWHERE IN THE WOODS. LATER

Sophie and Zhiyun have paired off and walk a ways behind the boys.

ZHIYUN
(re: the forest)
Pretty nice right?

SOPHIE
Brings back memories.

ZHIYUN
What do you think about spending more time out here?

SOPHIE
I've got appointments on Monday.

ZHIYUN
I mean in general.
(off Sophie's look)
There's a good chance that, with the way things are going, this place will die with me. I used to think I could pass it on to your brother, but he's...him, and you've done more than enough to prove yourself, with running the Clinic so well. Do you think, for a few months every year, you could oversee things up here?

SOPHIE
Can't you sell it to someone?

ZHIYUN
No one wants to take on the risk.

SOPHIE
So you want me to.
(beat)
Did you bring us all the way up here so you could pitch to me?

ZHIYUN
Not exactly.

SOPHIE
You're just as bad as Moonrise.

ZHIYUN
It would make me really happy to see you take over here.

SOPHIE
I have my own life, my own interests, my own business. I didn't become a vet to prove something to you, I did it because I cared about animals. It's so like you to expect me to sideline all of that because you're feeling sad.

ZHIYUN
Think about it. Please.

SOPHIE
I won't.

Up ahead, with Tyler and Pierre:

TYLER
So how's it going? Business good?

PIERRE
Yeah, it's good.

TYLER
That's good.

PIERRE
And you?

TYLER
It's good. Progress has been really good.

PIERRE
That's great.

TYLER
Indeed.

They've reached a clearing. Sophie and Zhiyun catch up with them.

A MECHANICAL WHIRRING SOUND.

An animatronic HIPPOPOTAMUS slowly emerges from behind the trees. It glides along another monorail track.

Tyler, Pierre, and Sophie nock arrows, take aim, and hold...

Sophie looks at Zhiyun, who is checking something on a smartphone. Sophie hesitates.

SOPHIE
This is perverse.

Lowers her bow.

PIERRE
Mom?

She puts away her arrow.

SOPHIE
If you want to continue fantasizing about killing intelligent mammals, you can do so without me. I'll be back at the B&B solving a 500 piece puzzle like a civilized person.

Confusion among the other three.

ZHIYUN
Wait, you don't have to shoot anything but stay with us.

TYLER
What's the issue?

SOPHIE
You two expect me to save your lives for you. Well, I'm done. I always hated vegan hunting and I'd rather spend time with people who are smarter and less delusional than all of you.

TYLER
That's not how you should talk to your family.

SOPHIE
You don't care about family. You use the idea of family to control other people, to guilt other people.

TYLER
I'm not trying to control anyone, I just want what's fair.

SOPHIE
What you consider fair is for you to receive all of the love and support. When have you returned any of that?

TYLER
All the time.

SOPHIE
Well I don't see it.

Sophie walks away.

PIERRE
(to Tyler)
What were you guys talking about?

TYLER
...Nothing.

INT. MOUNTAIN BED & BREAKFAST. DINING HALL. NIGHT

Tyler, Zhiyun, and Pierre eat dinner (basic buffet items) together at a table.

At another table across the dining hall, Sophie eats alone.

INT. MOUNTAIN BED & BREAKFAST. HALLWAY. NIGHT

Tyler walks down a hallway. He turns and enters the:

INT. MOUNTAIN BED & BREAKFAST. GAMES ROOM. CONTINUOUS

It’s just Pierre in here. He’s hunched over a pool table, lining up a shot.

Pierre looks up and sees Tyler. Tyler walks over.

PIERRE
Wanna play?

TYLER
No, thank you.

Pierre takes the shot. Tyler watches.

PIERRE
What’s up?

TYLER
I’ve been thinking about our respective establishments.

PIERRE
Sure.

TYLER
Perhaps, this family may knit itself back together if one of us surrenders.

PIERRE
Who?

TYLER
I can buy you out. I have the means. Just stop running your store. Your mom will support you, trust me, she'll be relieved. You've got your whole life to do anything you want and embark on adventures and so forth. I only have this.

PIERRE
You need to close your store before you embarrass yourself any more than you already have. You're a living punchline. Like, I bring you up to my friends and tell them about the things that you do, and they laugh.

Something inside Tyler breaks.

TYLER
I'm offering a path to de-escalation. You're refusing that?

PIERRE
Yeah.

TYLER
So right now, we're in the midst of a gentlemanly dispute. You're prepared to turn that into a thermonuclear war?

PIERRE
I'm not really sure what that means but yeah.

INT. MOUNTAIN BED & BREAKFAST. TYLER'S SUITE. DAWN

Sunlight BEAMING IN through the windows, hitting:

Tyler's face.

He's awake.

He's been awake for some time.

Thinking.

INT. MOUNTAIN BED & BREAKFAST. DINING HALL. DAY

Breakfast!

People pour themselves cereal from one of those big plastic dispensers. Other people pick fruit out from a basket.

Pierre eats oatmeal and looks at something on his phone. Across from him, Sophie eats some yogurt and fruit.

PIERRE
Are you feeling better today?

SOPHIE
A little.

PIERRE
Will you want to go shooting?

SOPHIE
No.

PIERRE
Do you think I'm doing well with my shop?

SOPHIE
Of course.

PIERRE
If I sold my store, would you be relieved?

SOPHIE
You're thinking of selling?

PIERRE
No. I mean, if you thought this was a stupid idea, you didn't have to - I could have found other investors.

SOPHIE
Who said I thought it wasn't a good idea?

PIERRE
No one.

SOPHIE
I think you're doing a great job...but if I'm being honest, I also think you have it in you to do something better.

PIERRE
But this is what I want to do.

SOPHIE
I know, and that's great...as long as that's true.

PIERRE
Thanks for helping me out.

INT. MOUNTAIN BED & BREAKFAST. DINING HALL. LATER

Pierre walking towards the exit of the dining hall, while Tyler enters...

TYLER
Good morning.

PIERRE
Hey.

They pass each other.

EXT. MOUNTAIN BED & BREAKFAST. DAY

Pierre ties his shoelaces, picks up a bow, and heads off in the direction of the woods.

INT. MOUNTAIN BED & BREAKFAST. DINING HALL. CONTINUOUS

TYLER sits by the window and looks out:

He sees Pierre walking off with the bow and arrow.

Tyler sips from a mug of tea.

EXT. MOUNTAIN BED & BREAKFAST. MEADOW. DAY

Pierre walks up to the edge of the woods.

About a hundred yards behind Pierre, Tyler follows, with a longbow in his hands.

EXT. THE WOODS. DAY

Tyler is off trail, traipsing through dead leaves, fallen branches, and dense weeds.

His eye is on:

Pierre, in the distance, who hikes along the trail.

Pierre turns for a moment, watching the flight of some birds.

Tyler drops to the ground, getting obscured by a shrub.

Waits a beat.

Then peaks over the leaves.

Pierre continues up the trail, unaware.

But a GROUP OF PEOPLE hike down the other way and pass Pierre.

Tyler ducks down again.

Listens as the group passes.

Pokes his head up again.

Pierre has disappeared from view.

Tyler jogs forward.

The hiking trail rounds a bend and reaches another CLEARING. A designated hunting zone. This is where Pierre stands, back turned to Tyler, waiting for an animal.

Tyler settles.

Crouches.

WITH PIERRE -

Pierre looks out into the greenery. He nocks an arrow, draws... and waits.

WITH TYLER -

Tyler nocks an arrow, draws, and aims.

WITH PIERRE -

He listens for the telltale mechanical whirring sound.

He hears it.

Deep in the bushes, an animatronic DEER passes by behind the trees.

Pierre tracks it with his bow...

FWOOT!!

A dark shape flashes past him.

Pierre's reaction, delayed and bemused, as he traces the sound to:

AN ARROW, stuck in the ground in front of him. It has green fletching.

Pierre looks down at his arm. His sleeve is ripped, a gash has formed above his elbow.

Pierre angles his arm for a better view, and sees BLOOD soaking through the torn cloth.

He hears a voice call out to him.

TYLER (O.S.)
DID I GET YOU?

Pierre turns.

Tyler, a small figure in the distance, waves broadly at him.

Pierre starts RUNNING FOR HIS LIFE. He dashes out of the clearing and into the forest, zig zagging through bushes and trees.

Tyler jogs after Pierre.

TYLER (CONT'D)
NO. IT'S FINE.

Pierre ducks behind a tree. Sinks low to the ground. Puts pressure on his wound.

Tyler, in the distance, continues to call out for Pierre, looking for him.

TYLER (CONT'D)
It's just for laughs, it's not scary.

Pierre doesn't respond. He sinks lower into the ground.

TYLER (CONT'D)
PIERRE????

Pierre fumbles out an arrow from his quiver. Lines it up in his bow. Peaks around the tree. Repositions himself. And draws the arrow back.

But his wounded arm can't handle the tension. The bow trembles wildly.

Pierre lowers his bow.

Shit.

He takes out his phone. Dials. Raises it to his ear.

PIERRE
(sotto)
Grandma? Can you help me?

WITH TYLER -

Scanning the forest. No sign of Pierre.

His phone buzzes in his pocket.

He answers in Cantonese.

TYLER
Mom?
No...
Near the deer circuit...
No....
It was just a joke...
Sorry...

Phone still up to his ear, Tyler throws down his bow and quiver.

TYLER (CONT'D)
I'm disarmed now.

He draws a large circle around himself by dragging his foot in the dirt.

TYLER (CONT'D)
I drew it.

He sits down in the circle, crisscross apple sauce.

TYLER (CONT'D)
Okay I'm sitting down now.

He hangs up. Yells out to Pierre:

TYLER (CONT'D)
IT WAS JUST A JOKE.

Pierre stands up and steps out from behind the tree.

Tyler sees him.

Pierre turns and walks away.

CUT TO:

DUSK

Tyler still sits in the circle, fiddling with some twigs.

His phone rings again. He answers. Listens for a moment.

TYLER (CONT'D)
...Okay, see you soon.

Tyler stands up. Brushes himself off. And starts walking.

INT. MOUNTAIN BED & BREAKFAST. TYLER'S SUITE. NIGHT

Tyler sits at the foot of the bed.

Zhiyun, Pierre (arm wrapped in bandages) and Sophie stand around his room.

TYLER
Why do you have to assume the worst about me? Why can't I just be stupid?

ZHIYUN
Go home tonight and move out. I don't want to see you there when we return.

TYLER
I wasn't trying to hurt him. If I was, he wouldn't be standing here. It takes a high amount of concentration and skill to graze a target like that, actually.

SOPHIE
You talk to my son again, and I'll scalp you.

EXT. TYLER'S HOUSE. NIGHT

Tyler's Prius rolls up into the driveway.

INT. TYLER'S HOUSE. LATER

Tyler places a stack of clothes into a suitcase.

INT. TYLER'S STORE. NIGHT

The half finished showroom.

We see a light coming from the:

INT. TYLER'S STORE. STORAGE CLOSET. CONTINUOUS

Narrow. Shelves on both sides of the closet. Tyler unfurls his sleeping bag onto the ground.

INT. TYLER'S STORE. EMPLOYEE RESTROOM. NIGHT

Tyler brushes his teeth.

INT. NBV OFFICE. DAY

Maya at her desk. Colleague 1 pokes his head out of his cubicle.

COLLEAGUE 1
Yo.

Maya turns.

MAYA
Yeah?

COLLEAGUE 1
Your guy's last payment was low.

INT. NBV OFFICE. BACK ROOM. DAY

A FILING CABINET

Maya rummages through it. Takes out a manila folder full of documents.

She opens it. Flips through the paperwork, Tyler's application materials:

Tax forms, a credit report, a copy of the house deed....

INT. NBV OFFICE. COLLEAGUE 1'S CUBICLE. LATER

Colleague 1 does the NYT crossword puzzle.

MAYA (O.S.)
I don't think he ever intended to honor his contract.

Colleague 1 looks up at her.

COLLEAGUE 1
Why not?

MAYA
I don’t know. Something’s not lining up.

COLLEAGUE 1
I hope you’re wrong.

MAYA
Yeah.

Maya hovers around the desk, thinking.

COLLEAGUE 1
I feel like you’re expecting me to do something.

MAYA
Yeah, no, I got this.

INT. NBV OFFICE. MAYA'S CUBICLE. DAY

Tyler zones out, staring off into space, while Maya pulls up his file.

MAYA
So, just another routine check up. How’s everything going?

Tyler comes back to reality.

TYLER
What?

MAYA
It looks like there was an issue with your last payment.

TYLER
I don’t think that’s right.

MAYA
The number you paid is lower than the number on your plan.

TYLER
That’s correct.

MAYA
...So do you see the issue?

TYLER
I do. You're asking for an APR of 268%, in violation of California law. I'm not paying that.

Maya's Colleagues turn their attention towards Tyler.

MAYA
That's not how contracts work.

TYLER
That contract was signed by Tyler Neptune. That's just my name that I tell people who can't pronounce my real name, Yusen, which means Moonrise. I'm not bound to that contract. I'd like to propose a new agreement between us. Because I'm a good person, I'll continue to pay the legal rate of 10%. We should agree on that.

MAYA
No, we shouldn't.

TYLER
Why?

MAYA
Because the NBV does not negotiate with morons.

TYLER
You're being a sore loser. I'm not leaving here until you shake my hand on this: the agreement that I proposed a minute ago.

Tyler extends his hand.

Maya glances at her co-workers. Then:

MAYA
We can foreclose your house.

TYLER
I don't <u>have</u> a house for you to foreclose.

MAYA
Then whose house is in your file?

TYLER
My mom's.

MAYA
(beat)
The NBV has a division that specializes in cases like yours. It's called Department Z-TAC. It has the capacity to do you and your family physical harm.

TYLER
I don't see why that would be necessary if we simply enter into the fair business agreement that I've proposed.

MAYA
You have until the end of the day to pay us the money you owe. After that, I'll have to move your account to Department Z-TAC.

TYLER
Are you really not going to accept my proposal?

MAYA
This conversation is done.

EXT. TYLER'S STORE. DAY

Tyler pulls down the front gate of his store, locks it.

INT. TYLER'S STORE. DAY

Tyler enters through the back entrance, on the phone.

TYLER
I've encountered a powerful, terrible foe. Take mom and Pierre and just get out of the country for a while. I'm so sorry. Please give me a call when you get this. I beseech you.

He hangs up. Looks around his showroom. With the front gate closed, it's dark. He turns on the light.

The CEILING LIGHT flickers.

He ignores it and walks to the...

INT. TYLER'S STORE. STORAGE CLOSET. CONTINUOUS

His sleeping bag, toiletries, and personal belongings are all mixed up with spare items from his shop's inventory and other supplies.

He opens his LAPTOP.

He goes to YOUTUBE.

Clicks on a video:

A *HOUSE & GARDEN* tour of a happy British couple's country home. Jangly music and handheld camera.

HAPPY BRITISH MAN
I don't know what it is about the land, and the ley lines, and something here that we all have this immediate feeling of we're home.

Shots of the British couple looking very pleased over their property.

HAPPY BRITISH WOMAN
One Saturday morning, Russell was lying in bed looking at the Modern House. And on page 46 there was a listing of a field and an old ice cream factory that you could buy with the potential to build a house...

INT. NBV OFFICE. DAY

Maya eats supermarket-sushi at her desk.

Her Colleagues glance at her, then make eye contact with each other, tense.

MAYA
What are you looking at?

COLLEAGUE 1
Nothing.

MAYA
Is something interesting over here? Is that why you're staring at me?

COLLEAGUE 1
No.

MAYA
Do you want some of this sushi?

COLLEAGUE 1
No.

MAYA
You keep looking over here as if you want this sushi.

COLLEAGUE 1
No. I'm good.

MAYA
I'm good too.

COLLEAGUE 1
Okay.

Maya takes another bite. Then throws the whole plastic box of sushi into the trash by her desk.

The sudden movement startles her Colleagues.

MAYA
Lost my appetite.

INT. TYLER'S STORE. DAY

We're looking at the back door. We hear:

Knock knock knock - dull thuds on heavy wood.

Tyler shuffles out of the storage closet and up to the door.

TYLER
Who is it??

MAYA (O.S.)
It's me.

TYLER
Uh, I'm in no mood for your society.

MAYA (O.S.)
We should talk.

TYLER
About what?

MAYA (O.S.)
Things got kind of harsh earlier. Maybe we can reach an agreement.

Tyler cracks the door open slightly.

TYLER
What kind of an agreement?

MAYA
Let’s get lunch.

INT. IN-N-OUT BURGER. DAY

Tyler and Maya at a table.

MAYA
If you need to refinance the loan, that’s okay. It’ll be a fee. But you’ll be able to manage your loan easier.

TYLER
I don’t want to pay any fees. I outsmarted all of you. I win.

MAYA
You know your loan wasn’t taken out in California, we took it out from a bank in Wisconsin, where there is no APR cap. We’re working within the limits of the law, so all you’ve done is stolen money from us.

TYLER
Then report me to the police.

MAYA
...I think it would be easier for everyone if we worked this out between us.

TYLER
The sooner you stop threatening me, the sooner I can open my store, the sooner I’ll be able to pay you all back at a fair rate.

MAYA
Nobody cares about your store.

Tyler leans back in his seat.

TYLER
Your business hurts people. It's not enough to just have a job and make some money, your job should lend you a sense of purpose as well. I've devoted my life to a thing, and now I'm trying to share that with the world. What's your purpose?

MAYA
You might not agree with the way we do business, but we don't force anyone into bad deals. People take on the risk themselves. And you know what? You could say that at the NBV, we help people realize that some pipe dreams aren't worth it. Now, because of you, we're out three hundred and ten thousand dollars, and I'm responsible for getting it back. I'm certain your store won't be able to generate the revenue needed to recoup those losses. So what are we gonna do here?

TYLER
You invested in me because you thought you saw a feeble man with a house you could take. I've denuded you of that possibility. And now you want to trap me in a lifetime of debt. No thank you. I have a dream to fulfill and a family to impress. You should have more faith in people.

MAYA
You don't get to decide these things.

TYLER
What makes any of you better or stronger or cooler than me?

MAYA
Nothing in particular, it's just who you are.

TYLER
I disagree.

EXT. PARKING LOT. LATER

Maya and Tyler walk towards their respective cars.

Awkward.

Maya gets into a Subaru Impreza.

Tyler crosses the parking lot and gets into his Prius.

They are parked across from each other.

WITH TYLER -

He looks in his rear view mirror: sees Maya's Subaru.

WITH MAYA -

She looks in her rear view mirror: sees Tyler's Prius.

She puts her car into reverse.

Backs out.

WITH TYLER -

Backing out as well.

He checks his rear view mirror again:

Maya's Subaru slowly rolls towards him.

He doesn't turn.

WITH MAYA -

Not turning either.

Finally, she tugs on the steering wheel. Her Subaru swerves away from Tyler's Prius.

WITH TYLER -

Turning away from Maya's Subaru.

Their cars straighten out, so they now face each other.

Tyler pulls up alongside Maya.

They exchange ugly stares.

Then Tyler drives off towards the exit.

Maya checks her side mirror, watching him go.

EXT. TYLER'S STORE. ALLEYWAY. NIGHT

A grey car (2008 Acura TL) pulls up.

A MAN (wearing a black baseball cap) gets out of the car, walks over to the back door of Tyler's store. He carries a bucket of red paint.

He thunks the bucket onto the ground.

Takes out a couple of paperclips from his pocket.

Straightens them out.

And starts trying to pick the lock.

INT. TYLER'S STORE. THAT MOMENT

Tyler, on a ladder, unscrews the faulty lightbulb in the ceiling of the showroom. A package of a new lightbulb rests on the ladder's top ledge.

He hears a scraping sound coming from the back door...

He gets off the ladder. He peers at the back door.

Click!

The back door UNLOCKS.

Swings open.

Baseball Cap Guy in the door way and Tyler look at each other.

TYLER
Who are you?

In full light, Baseball Cap Guy looks like a 22 year old, pimply kid; we might recognize him as Pierre's roommate from earlier.

Baseball Cap Guy totally panics.

BASEBALL CAP GUY
YOU'RE DEAD, BITCH!

Baseball Cap Guy picks up the bucket of paint and CHUCKS it into the store.

As it hits the floor, the lid pops open and red paint spills out.

Baseball Cap Guy turns and RUNS back out into the alleyway.

Tyler RUNS after him.

EXT. ALLEYWAY OUTSIDE TYLER'S STORE. CONTINUOUS

The chase is short, considering Baseball Cap Guy's getaway car is parked across the alleyway.

Baseball Cap Guy sort of flails his arms as he runs -

BASEBALL CAP GUY
GO GO GO!!

Tyler is only a few steps behind.

By the time Baseball Cap Guy fumbles with the car door and dives into the back seat -

Tyler reaches the car and stands in front of it, squinting at the person behind the wheel:

TYLER
Pierre.

Pierre revs the engine.

TYLER (CONT'D)
Get out of the car.

PIERRE
No.

TYLER
Do you want me to call the police??

Pierre pauses.

TYLEER
Get out of the car. Now.

Pierre gets out of the car.

Tyler marches up to him. Grabs him by the collar and pushes him against the side of the car.

TYLER
What's wrong with you???

PIERRE
What's wrong with <u>you</u>??? Why are you here past 10???

TYLER
I live here now because of you! You could literally be doing anything else right now. You could be getting a masters degree, or watching a movie, or eating food, fueling and nourishing your body. Why are you doing this????

Pierre hyperventilating.

PIERRE
Close your store.

TYLER
No! You close your store.

PIERRE
I can’t.

TYLER
Why???

PIERRE
I have a friend who’s an aircraft pilot. And another friend who edits super bowl ads. And, and another friend who’s already a boss at a company that makes radios or something. And another friend who’s, like, super rich because his family owns a logging company. I’m under so much pressure, feeling like I’m falling behind and stuff, I need this. I don’t know what else I’d do. Please.

Tyler backs away. Baseball Cap Guy looks at him from the backseat of the car.

TYLER
(to Baseball Cap Guy)
What’s your deal?

PIERRE
He doesn’t do anything.

DOWN THE ALLEYWAY:

Hidden in the shadows of overhanging tree branches, we find the silhouette of a Subaru Impreza.

INT. MAYA'S SUBARU. CONTINUOUS

MAYA peeks over her dashboard at Tyler and Pierre in the distance.

She can't really hear what they are saying.

But then:

Tyler seems to say something decisive.

Pierre seems to agree.

Pierre gets into his car. Tyler walks around and gets into the passenger side of the car as well.

Pierre's car revs to life, drives away down the alleyway, and makes a left turn.

MAYA starts her Subaru.

Reverses out of the alleyway and takes a right, reaching an intersection.

She pulls over into an empty parking space.

Looks out the side of her window:

The Acura is at the opposite end of the block. It turns onto the cross street, then parks on the other side -

Right outside *Pierre's* store.

Pierre emerges from his car, unlocks the front door of his shop, and goes in.

After a moment, he re-emerges with a MOP.

He hops back into the Acura, and drives down the street - towards Maya.

Maya sinks in her seat as Pierre's car whizzes past and turns BACK DOWN THE ALLEYWAY.

Maya does a U-turn and looks down the alleyway:

The Acura parks again outside of Tyler's store.

Pierre and Baseball Cap Guy wedge the mop out of the Acura while Tyler watches.

Pierre and Baseball Cap Guy go back into Tyler's store.

Beat.

They re-emerge. Baseball Cap Guy holds a red paint bucket. Pierre's mop is now completely red.

Pierre and his buddy get back into the car and drive away.

Tyler stands in the alleyway for a second, watching the Acura disappear around the corner.

ON MAYA -

Trying to puzzle together what she just watched.

INT. PIERRE'S SHOP. DAY

The next day.

Idyllic. Warm colors. Pierre, manning the cashier, hands a customer a small paper bag and smiles.

PIERRE
Thank you, have a good day.

The customer moves away and brushes past:

MAYA, looking around, puzzled.

PIERRE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Can I help you?

Maya turns. Pierre's eyes are kind and helpful.

MAYA
I'm just browsing.
(beat)
Is this your store?

Pride blooms across Pierre's face.

PIERRE
Yeah.

MAYA
It's so unique. How did you get the idea for it?

PIERRE
Well, I just feel like it's an underappreciated area. Coffee tables have a gravitational pull in a room. You arrange furniture around them. You put your feet up on them. Your dinner plates wind up on them.
(MORE)

PIERRE (CONT'D)
I wanted to make interior design feel approachable and beautiful at the same time.

MAYA
I just couldn't help notice the store across the street? It seems to be doing something similar.

PIERRE
That's - that's so funny, that's my Uncle's place.

MAYA
No way.

PIERRE
Yeah.

MAYA
And how's that going?

PIERRE
It's going.

Pierre looks across the street. Tyler's store's gate is down.

PIERRE (CONT'D)
Can I ask, how did you know that his store sold something similar? It's closed.

MAYA
You caught me. I'm a friend of your Uncle's.

PIERRE
Oh, really?

MAYA
I was in the area to say hi to him. I'd been hearing so much about his store and I wanted to see it. But then this place caught my eye.
(beat)
It's funny, he never told me about you. But then again, he probably just wanted the opportunity to himself.

PIERRE
...opportunity?

MAYA
I run a little summit, up in Ojai, where investors and small business owners get together, booze and hobnob, that sort of thing. It works for entrepreneurs at all stages in their careers. I think Tyler just needed a little help getting off the ground, but a business like this one, already going strong, could have a chance to expand. But it looks like you've got a good thing going here.

PIERRE
When is it?

MAYA
The summit? It's a weekend-long event, starting this Friday.

PIERRE
And where is it?

MAYA
Ojai.

PIERRE
No, like, specifically.

CUT TO:

INT. TYLER'S STORE. DAY

The RED STAIN in the hallway.

Tyler stacks a couple boxes and moves them into the storage closet.

The showroom looks ready.

EXT. NBV OFFICE. DAY

Maya and her three Colleagues taking their smoke break outside their little office on the third floor of their desolate mall. Their view: the flat grid of San Gabriel.

COLLEAGUE 1
And...he's back.

Maya looks up.

At the end of the walkway, TYLER crests the staircase and approaches them. He is way out of earshot as Colleague 2 says:

COLLEAGUE 2
Anyone notice he's got a smell?

COLLEAGUE 3
Wait, yeah. Weird B.O.. Sort of chemically but also not.

COLLEAGUE 2
I was getting a mix of paint and soil.

COLLEAGUE 3
No, it's a little sharper than that. It's hard to explain.

COLLEAGUE 1
You guys could smell him?

MAYA
I don't think he has access to a real shower anymore.

COLLEAGUE 1
Who is this guy.

Maya steps forward as Tyler arrives within earshot. He has several flyers.

MAYA
How can the NBV be of service to you today?

TYLER
I'd like to invite you to the grand opening of my store. It's done.

Maya says nothing.

TYLER (CONT'D)
I have some flyers for you, for the information concerning the event, if you'd like to come.

Tyler passes Maya the flyers.

TYLER (CONT'D)
Have a good day.

Tyler turns and walks back the way he came.

TYLER (CONT'D)
Onward!

Silence among the co-workers.

INT. YIFEI'S HOUSE. DAY

The furniture in the living room has been covered in sheets of plastic.

A team of PAINTERS stand on ladders and paint the walls of the living room a light green.

Yifei strolls past them, observing what they're doing, while he holds a cup of tea.

The doorbell rings.

Yifei goes over to the front door.

Opens it.

Outside, we see Yifei's front yard. There's a gate and fence surrounding it.

Tyler stands at the gate.

EXT. YIFEI'S HOUSE. CONTINUOUS

Yifei walks over. Doesn't open the gate. But looks at Tyler through the bars.

TYLER
I'm opening my store. There's going to be a party. I have flyers.

Tyler hands him one of the flyers through the gate.

YIFEI
I'll be busy.

TYLER
You don't know when it's going to be.

YIFEI
I know I'll be busy.

Tyler puts the flyer on the ground.

TYLER
Think about it.

INT. TYLER'S FAMILY HOME. DAY

Zhiyun plays solitaire on her iPad.

TYLER (O.S.)
Mom. Mom.

Zhiyun looks up.

Tyler stands outside the window.

TYLER (CONT'D)
I'm here to notify you of my success. I'm opening my store. All of you are invited. I'll leave a flyer by the door. I open on Monday.

Zhiyun looks back at her iPad.

INT. CRUSTACEAN CLINIC. DAY

Tyler enters the waiting room, goes over to the Clinic Receptionist.

TYLER
Is my sister in?

CLINIC RECEPTIONIST
She's with a patient.

TYLER
That's okay. Could you give her one of these?

He gives the receptionist a flyer.

TYLER (CONT'D)
And would you please tell her that her son is a pathetic unoriginal miscreant, but he's deeply lost, and all I'm doing is making it more difficult for him to get unlost, and I've brought a wedge - multiple wedges - between all of us. I'll only be open for the one, single day. Then I'll step aside.
(beat)
You can have one yourself as well.

He gives her another flyer.

EXT. TYLER'S STORE. DAY

A LARGE BRUSH -

Tyler (standing on a ladder) paints the name of his shop on the wall over his storefront.

It says:

LESS IS MORE

His phone rings.

He puts the brush down.

Answers:

TYLER
Yes?

Maya's voice on the other end.

MAYA (O.S.)
How's business?

TYLER
We'll see on Monday.

MAYA (O.S.)
Right.

TYLER
What?

MAYA (O.S.)
I'd like for you to come into the office. I'd like for you to bring us our money. And then we'll give you your Nephew back.

TYLER
Pardon?

MAYA (O.S.)
We have Pierre. Would you like him back with all his fingers?

TYLER
Yes.

MAYA (O.S.)
Bring us the outstanding money in your balance for this month and be prepared to sign a new contract with your true legal name.

Maya hangs up.

EXT. PIERRE'S STORE. DAY

Tyler walks over to Pierre's store.

It's closed.

Tyler peers in through the display windows. No sign of Pierre.

Tyler thinks for a moment.

Something changes in his eyes.

A decision has been made.

CUT TO:

EXT. MOTEL. DAY

A SUITCASE clicks over the cracks of a cement walkway. It's being dragged by:

PIERRE -

Walking past motel rooms.

INT. MOTEL ROOM. DAY

A twin bed, a TV, and a water stain on the ceiling.

Pierre collapses on the bed and lies down. Yawns.

CUT TO:

INT. TYLER'S STORE. DAY

Tyler places his phone on the ground, then SMASHES it with the bezoar.

EXT. ALLEYWAY OUTSIDE TYLER'S STORE. DAY

Tyler gets into his Prius, slams the door.

INT. MOTEL ROOM. BATHROOM. DUSK

Pierre combing his hair back. He wears a suit.

EXT. MOUNTAIN BED & BREAKFAST. NIGHT

Tyler’s car pulls up to the front entrance.

INT. MOUNTAIN BED & BREAKFAST. NIGHT

Tyler strides through the lobby, down a hallway, to a small room behind a glass door. Tyler punches a sequence into a keypad. It beeps. The door unlocks. This is the:

INT. MOUNTAIN BED & BREAKFAST. ARMORY. CONTINUOUS

LONGBOWS, beautifully crafted, hanging from the walls. There are several boutique QUIVERS.

Tyler weaves through the room, to the back, where he finds:

A CROSSBOW.

CUT TO:

EXT. SMALL TOWN STREET (OJAI). NIGHT

Pierre walks down the quiet street. He approaches a LARGE HOTEL.

INT. LARGE HOTEL LOBBY. NIGHT

Marble pillars. Bell hops. Numerous guests milling around.

Pierre wanders among the guests, looking around for something, confused.

He spots a sign in front of a CONVENTION ROOM. It’s for a wedding.

He approaches the front desk.

CONCIERGE
Good evening.

PIERRE
Hey, uh, I'm here for the NBV summit, but I'm a little lost. Could you point me in the right direction?

CONCIERGE
...The NBV?

PIERRE
There should be a summit, a mixer or something, here for entrepreneurs and investors and stuff.

CONCIERGE
Sorry, you might have the wrong place.

PIERRE
Oh.

Off of Pierre's puzzled expression, we CUT TO:

INT. TYLER'S PRIUS. NIGHT

Tyler is parked on a dark street.

He zips up his hoodie.

Slides on a pair of sunglasses.

We see that he wears blue latex gloves.

He puts on an N95 mask.

EXT. OUTDOOR MALL. NIGHT

Tyler climbs up the stairs. He has NEWSPAPERS wrapped around his shoes and cinched around his ankles with string.

He holds a SPORTS BAG.

INT. NBV OFFICE. WAITING AREA. NIGHT

Tyler enters.

The NBV Receptionist looks at this masked man in a hoodie with alarm.

TYLER
I recommend that you go home. I have no quarrel with you.

The NBV Receptionist nods, gets up and SPRINTS out of the store.

Tyler begins UNZIPPING his bag.

INT. NBV OFFICE. MOMENTS LATER

Maya and her co-workers at their computers, typing away...

Colleague 1 rolls in his rolling chair over to a printer, punches in a couple settings as -

The door opens. Tyler enters. He holds the cross bow. A quiver of bolts hangs from a belt around his waist.

COLLEAGUE 1
Oh shit.

Tyler raises the crossbow and FIRES.

The bolt IMPALES Colleague 1 through the chest, pinning him to his rolling chair, which spins and rolls backwards from the force.

For a moment, everyone in the room kind of just stares at the impaled man as he rolls backward in his chair into his cubicle. Collective disbelief.

Then:

TYLER
Where’s Pierre? Where’s Department Z-TAC?

MAYA
...What?

TYLER
Department Z-TAC.

MAYA
What’s Department Z-TAC?

TYLER
WHAT DO YOU MEAN WHAT’S DEPARTMENT Z-TAC? YOU CAN’T DO THIS TO PEOPLE. I’M HERE. GIVE ME BACK MY NEPHEW.

Drowning Tyler out:

MAYA
LALALAAABLAHBLAHBLA...

Tyler tries to yell over her:

TYLER
LALLALALABLAAHAHA

Maya's Colleagues join in:

COLLEAGUE 2
AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAGGGGGH

COLLEAGUE 3
AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAGGGGHH

ABSOLUTE MAYHEM

The other two Colleagues spring out of their chairs and RUSH at Tyler.

Tyler starts to reload.

But as he cranks the crossbow back...

The two Colleagues TACKLE him to the floor. Awkward melee. None of them are trained in hand to hand combat. Watching this should feel like watching one of those videos of airplane brawls between passengers.

The Colleagues TEAR at Tyler's clothes and face, try to wrench his crossbow out of his hands - Tyler punches and kicks wildly - the crossbow gets TRIGGERED and a bolt flies straight into one of the LIGHT FIXTURES in the ceiling -

SHATTERED GLASS and mercury powder rain down from the busted light.

MAYA grabs her bag, stands, and walks towards the door...but has to side shuffle against the wall to get around Tyler and her Colleagues, who are still wrestling each other on the ground.

Maya opens the door and sprints away.

WITH TYLER

He's getting overwhelmed. Colleague 2 is choking him. Colleague 3 finally pulls the crossbow out of Tyler's hands, then squeezes around to Tyler's side, and reaches for Tyler's quiver of bolts.

Tyler SQUIRMS violently, trying to make the quiver inaccessible to Colleague 3.

In the struggle, the crossbow bolts slide out of Tyler's quiver and onto the floor like spilled color pencils.

Colleague 3 grabs one of the bolts.

Tyler picks up one of the bolts as well - and STABS Colleague 2 in the shoulder. Colleague 2 holds onto Tyler's neck.

Tyler's face purples.

Colleague 3 tries to load the crossbow, but struggles with cranking the drawstring back.

Tyler grabs another bolt, and drives it right into Colleague 2's neck.

Colleague 2 trembles, then slowly collapses onto Tyler, blood pouring down...strength draining...finally, Colleague 2 dies.

Tyler pushes Colleague 2's dead weight off to the side. Looks up.

Colleague 3 aims the crossbow, fully loaded, right at Tyler.

Tyler ROLLS, making himself as thin a target as possible.

TWANG! The crossbow goes off, and an arrow punctures through Tyler's arm, pinning it to the side of his torso.

Tyler gasps.

Colleague 3 starts CLUBBING the shit out of Tyler with the crossbow itself. It bends and splinters.

Tyler tries to shield himself from the blows with his good arm and his legs.

A slight pause in Colleague 3's onslaught and...

Tyler KICKS at Colleague 3 from the ground. Ferocious. Unpredictable. Colleague 3 has to back away.

Tyler and Colleague 3 look at each other in a weird stalemate. Tyler, with his good arm, sweeps up the four remaining crossbow bolts and clutches them.

Still on the ground, Tyler inches forward legs first, towards Colleague 3, intermittently KICKING to keep Colleague 3 away.

Colleague 3 steps backward, and bats at Tyler's legs with the mangled crossbow.

Then Colleague 3 LUNGES and swings the crossbow down on Tyler's midsection -

Tyler YELLS - rolls himself toward Colleague 3 as much as possible - and essentially wraps himself around Colleague 3's legs in a fetal position -

And STABS the back of Colleague 3's knees repeatedly with the spare crossbow bolts that he gathered.

Colleague 3 YELPS and collapses over Tyler -

Messy pile of bodies, dead and alive. They WRITHE against each other, slick with blood and sweat and possibly mercury dust, trying to get the upper hand -

Tyler stabs BLINDLY at anything, behind him, to his side, and soon -

There's no more rival movement -

Tyler's just stabbing a corpse.

Tyler slows...then stops.

He's soaked in blood.

He worms his way out from the tangle of limbs.

And slowly pulls himself up to his feet.

He attempts to call out, but his voice cracks, hoarse:

TYLER
PIERRE.

He looks around.

Tyler limps towards a doorway, leading to the backroom.

He opens the door, peers in.

Storage boxes. Several safes. No Pierre.

Tyler shuts the door again.

Leans against a wall. Dizzy. Adrenaline wearing off. Pain kicking in.

He looks down at his arm: the crossbow bolt sticks through his arm, above his elbow, and enters into the side of his body.

He scans the room, and his eyes land on a box of Kleenex.

He limps over.

Tyler does all of the following with one hand:

Takes out a bunch of tissues, and snakes them up underneath his hoodie to place the Kleenex around his wound. He grunts in pain.

He grabs the hem of his hoodie, and TWISTS, tightening the whole hoodie around his waist.

Tyler inspects his arm. It leaks blood, dripping down his forearm.

CUT TO:

INT. RESTAURANT. OJAI. NIGHT

Pierre eats a pizza alone.

I/E. TYLER'S PRIUS. I-10. NIGHT

Tyler drives with one good arm.

He's wedged oddly in his seat with his injured side.

The Prius crawls forward in dense traffic.

He nods off. Catches himself. Slaps himself awake.

He turns on the radio. NPR. Something about a new book release.

EXT. TYLER'S FAMILY HOME. NIGHT

Tyler prowls across the lawn.

Peers into the windows.

A single night light glows in a hallway.

Otherwise, it's completely dark.

Tyler moves along the rosebushes to the side of the house.

A wooden gate.

Tyler reaches through a gap in the wood and pulls a latch.

The gate swings open.

Tyler limps through.

He rounds a corner, and finds a door leading into the...

INT. GARAGE. CONTINUOUS

Tyler crouches by a little shelf of plastic drawers.

He pulls one of the drawers out.

Some old Chinese passports. A couple of jars of tiger balm.

He grabs a passport...

He opens another drawer, and picks something up.

A KEY.

EXT. YIFEI'S HOUSE. NIGHT

Tyler leans against the gate and holds down the buzzer.

The front door slams open, revealing Yifei in his pajamas.

Tyler slides down the gate and collapses onto the ground.

Yifei runs over. Crouches by Tyler. Assesses the wound in his side.

YIFEI
What the fuck??

TYLER
Disappear me.

EXT. VAN NUYS AIRPORT. TARMAC. NIGHT

ENGINES ROAR.

Yifei walks towards a private jet; he's followed by his driver, who rolls a large SUITCASE.

They reach the airstairs, and Yifei helps his driver lift the suitcase up. They struggle with it.

CUT TO:

INT. MOTEL ROOM. DAY

Pierre packing his suitcase, putting in his clothes forcefully, frustrated at the wasted trip.

INT. TYLER'S STORE. DAY

The showroom. Unopened. Pristine. The front gate is still down, so slits of light beam into the room.

In the storage closet:

Tyler's laptop, ruffled sleeping bag, and several dirty instant noodle bowls.

INT. NBV OFFICE. DAY

Police officers inspect the three bodies at the NBV office.

A forensics specialist, with a pair of tweezers, picks up splinters of wood from the crossbow and puts them in a plastic bag.

INT. MOUNTAIN BED & BREAKFAST. ARMORY. DAY

Police tape everywhere.

A little post-it note has been stuck where the missing crossbow had previously been stored on the wall.

INT. TYLER'S FAMILY HOME. DAY

Zhiyun WEEPS in the living room. Sophie clutches her hand.

SOPHIE
It's going to be alright.

ZHIYUN
It's not.

Pierre sits alone.

INT. CAFE. DAY

Maya sits by the window. Looks at the steam coming off the top of her coffee.

I/E. TRUCK. DAY

TYLER -

Unconscious.

A hand shakes his shoulder.

He jolts awake.

Looks around.

Cages full of CHICKENS, stacked on top of each other, all around him.

Yifei looms over him.

YIFEI
He'll take you as far as Jinhua.
You're on a heavy dose of morphine.
This is where we say goodbye.

Tyler is completely out of it. Yifei tucks an envelope into the waistline of Tyler's pants.

YIFEI (CONT'D)
Good luck.

Yifei turns and hops out the back of the truck, which has been parked on the side of a long road in the middle of nowhere. We see green mountains in the distance.

Yifei hits the back of the truck, and it starts to move.

Tyler looks out the back of the truck; Yifei's figure recedes into the distance. Tyler checks his wounds.

He finds bandages on his arm.

Then, Tyler lifts his jacket:

And finds bandages all around his torso.

He digs the envelope out of his waistband, looks inside:

A thin stack of cash (Chinese yuan).

EXT. GUANGZHOU. DAY

Giant grey housing projects loom over us. 10 lane boulevards ROAR with vehicles, an odd mix of luxury electric cars and diesel-powered vans.

We find ourselves in a secluded PROMENADE, flanked on both sides by gated townhouses. Clothes have been hung outside to dry.

TYLER limps along the side of the street.

EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX. COURTYARD. DAY

Various angles:

A huge tangle of electrical cables hang from a building.

Iron bars in the windows.

A paper airplane stuck on an awning.

Three large, old apartment buildings face each other in a sort of stand off. Between them lays a cobblestone courtyard.

Tyler walks alone across the courtyard, footsteps echoing.

INT. APARTMENT COMPLEX. STAIRWELL. DAY

Tyler laboriously ascends the staircase. Out of breath, he pauses.

INT. APARTMENT COMPLEX. HALLWAY. DAY

Tyler produces a KEY. Fits it into a lock. The door gives way with a creak.

INT. OLD APARTMENT. DAY

Tyler steps inside. The space is tiny. The living room is essentially a hallway, feeding into two bedrooms and a kitchen. A layer of dust coats everything.

The couch has imprints on the cushions from years of use.

There’s a calendar on the wall - from 1999.

At the end of the living room, there are sliding glass doors that lead out to a porch.

Tyler spots a dry fish tank.

GKLKLKLHLHLKLGGGLGKGLGLKLHLHLLHKLFKD -

The sound of a JACKHAMMER coming from outside.

Tyler walks over and opens the sliding glass door. Leaning over the ledge of the porch, he sees below:

Several construction workers standing around. One of them operates the jackhammer.

EXT. RESTAURANT. DUSK

This is the sort of restaurant that has a bunch of massive fish tanks out front. Each tank is full of a different species: eels...catfish...and MITTEN CRABS.

A MAN scoops up one of the crabs with a landing net and presents it to Tyler.

TYLER
Looks good.

The man puts the crab in a bucket full of water.

EXT. PIERRE'S SHOP. DAY

A sign out front:

'EVERYTHING MUST GO! 50% OFF'

Pierre folds up the sign, takes it inside.

We see his shop is empty.

INT. MOUNTAIN BED & BREAKFAST. DAY

Bereft of furniture and decorations.

The dining hall is empty...

...And so is the lobby, except for Pierre and a (balding) man in a turtleneck who have gathered around the concierge desk.

The balding man signs a DOCUMENT on a clipboard. Pierre gives him a set of keys. They shake hands.

EXT. MOUNTAIN BED & BREAKFAST. DAY

Zhiyun looks out on the grounds.

Pierre emerges from the front double doors.

PIERRE
It's done.

They begin walking to Pierre's Acura.

I/E. PIERRE'S ACURA. MOUNTAIN ROAD. DAY

The Acura hurtles down the mountain road.

Pierre at the wheel. Zhiyun sits shotgun.

They don't say anything.

INT. OLD APARTMENT. DAY

A MITTEN CRAB

Alive and well in a fish tank.

THE REVERSE:

A little book of OPTICAL ILLUSIONS, pressed up against the glass of the tank. It's open to a confusing spiral of white and black shapes.

Tyler holds it, trying to catch the crab's attention. He flips a page, moves the book around a little bit.

INT. MALL. DAY

A futuristic, super clean mall. Hundreds of people mill around, shopping, hanging out, eating snacks....

INT. MALL. RED STAR MACALLINE. DAY

A row of leather CHAISE LONGUES on display.

We're in a huge furniture and home-improvement store, like an Asian IKEA.

Customers browse modernist lamps, various kinds of tables, chairs, etc...

TYLER wears a red polo shirt and a nametag, working the floor. He's speaking with a customer about a set of bookshelves:

TYLER
These shelves here are adjustable, so you can organize your titles by size. I really love the sleekness of the design on this one - and look at that grain...

Tyler's totally in his element.

INT. OLD APARTMENT. DAY

Tyler's coffee table:

-A ceramic bowl filled with unpeeled lychee.

-A book about the aesthetics of 90s electronics.

Tyler takes a sip of tea and flips through a dog-eared copy of *House & Garden.*

The living room has been cleaned up...but outside:

His view is completely obscured by an ELEVATOR. It's connected to his porch by a small bridge.

INT. GUANGZHOU APARTMENT. DAY

Tyler in the kitchen, stirring a pot of soup. He hears a sound: the elevator outside...

He peers out the window, but only sees the elevator doors closing.

He walks out of the kitchen into the living room, and finds:

MAYA -

Standing by the doorway, aiming a CROSSBOW at Tyler.

Tyler looks at her without fear.

TYLER
Hi.

Maya stays silent.

TYLER (CONT'D)
I'd like to say something.

Maya stays silent.

Tyler takes a deep breath.

TYLER (CONT'D)
My sister rescues 43 crabs per week. My mother invented vegan hunting. And my father coached national champions. My family is incredible, and because I'm a part of my family, I'm also incredible. I will stick to you. I'll get in your hair, eyes, ears, and between the wrinkles of your brain. Why, you may ask? Because you've crossed paths with my dreams.
(MORE)

TYLER (CONT'D)
My dreams have immense power and have no beginning or end. My dreams are like seismic waves, forever rippling throughout the planet, round and round, bringing tragedy and euphoria to all who feel them. And in that way, I'm immortal.

Maya keeps the crossbow aimed at Tyler's chest for a long moment...and as Tyler braces himself against the future, we:

CUT TO BLACK

THE END