

Ghosts With Shit Jobs (third draft)

By

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EXT. GLAMOROUS SHANGHAI STREETS

The show host, ANNETTE, is walking and talking along the bustling and shiny streets. She's speaking in Mandarin so we don't know what she's saying.

ANNETTE

Here on the mainland, people have a variety of jobs.

She motions to a shining tower.

ANNETTE

From the plush jobs in the skyscrapers...

The shot drops to the guy selling street food.

ANNETTE

To the... well, not so plush jobs.

The documentarian joins her on her walk and talk.

DOCUMENTARIAN

The shit jobs.

She covers her laugh at this.

ANNETTE

But even the poorest jobs in Shanghai are better than the best jobs in Toronto.

An overlay of the world map comes up on the screen, with North America in bright red. A selection of stills shoot up on the screen displaying the plight of those languishing in the North American slums: a woman on the street in rags crying with her child in her arms, a child standing on a heap of garbage.

The documentarian sweeps away the images.

On the screen, an interface for changing the language pops up, and scrolls down to English on the bottom, below French. The audio is now dubbed in English.

DOCUMENTARIAN

We've all seen these pictures. But what is it really like there? At street level? Who are these people, who are invisible to us, "ghosts" as the Cantonese slang would have it?

(CONTINUED)

ANNETTE

We wanted to find out. So today, we bring you a very special North American edition of Fly on The Wall.

INTRO MONTAGE

Music starts up and a number of quick cuts present the concept of the show.

A diagram of a mech fly is exploded to show its video capturing capabilities.

We see a flycam shot of two conservative-looking Asian people in an elevator. As soon as the doors close and they're alone they start making out.

We see the documentarian pulling on black eyed goggles and pulling up his sleeves.

We see another flycam shot of a meeting of Yakuza. Suddenly, guns are drawn.

Now it's the documentarian with his goggles on his forehead and Annette, folding their arms and posing back to back.

The title of the show in Chinese characters is stamped on the screen. Below, in small English letters for "colour" is the translation: Ghosts With Shit Jobs.

An animation has the flycam flying from Shanghai and landing on Toronto.

EXT. STREET

A close-up of Oscar, a 30something man wearing a jumpsuit of some sort. Perhaps it's a motion-capture suit, skintight and florescent with those weird pingpong balls at the joints. But it certainly makes him stand out.

OSCAR

The best part of the job? In general, it's made me a lot more at ease around people than when I was a teenager.

EXT. STREET

Oscar is walking along the busy street. He sticks out in his jumpsuit, but no one is paying attention. He's got an industrial sized paint brush in his hand.

OSCAR

(v.o.)

I used to be really worried about what I should wear, and now I just don't care.

EXT. STREET

There's a couple of people who are watching a TV in a store window. He walks in front of them, and brushes the screen so the image becomes pixelated. The people keep watching it, and he walks off.

Title: The Digital Janitor

EXT. STREET

Medium shot of Oscar.

OSCAR

The other great thing is just the history aspect. It was always my favourite subject at school.

EXT. BRIDGE OVERLOOKING DVP

Oscar is marveling at the stream of cars at rush hour.

OSCAR

(v.o.)

So many cars at once they can barely move! People today don't even believe in it, that there were traffic jams back then. And I tell them, I know, I was in one once!

EXT. STREET

Oscar is working on a newspaper box when someone buys one. He spots a logo on his clothes and follows him to pixelate it out as the man walks off, unaware of him.

(CONTINUED)

DOCUMENTARIAN

Did your family have a car?

OSCAR

No, but my uncle was pretty well off and once he took me and my mom down to Florida.

DOCUMENTARIAN

Wasn't that dangerous?

OSCAR

No, not back then. I was pretty young -- this was when the states were united.

INT. CAFE

Oscar walks around a cafe and points out a guy working on his laptop.

OSCAR

Like, it's such a snapshot of the last days of an era. You want some water from the tap, go ahead, just ask -- it's free with your coffee. Which they imported from Africa!

INT. TOYSTORE

Oscar is looking at a particular toy on the shelf in the store, a smile on his face.

OSCAR

(v.o.)

And there's a bit of nostalgia for me, since I was a kid then. So every so often I'll come across something I remember, which is nice.

He gets back to work, brushing all the boxes on the shelves at once.

DOCUMENTARIAN

When you were a kid, did you ever think you would grow up to be a glorified janitor?

This makes Oscar very self-conscious. He licks his lips. Checks his watch.

(CONTINUED)

OSCAR

I should probably break for lunch.

He makes a gesture and the outside world around him becomes...

INT. OSCAR'S WORKROOM

Oscar's workroom is a weirdly empty space. There's a futon in the corner and a chair he's in. He steps out of a box of ball bearings and sets down a wooden cylinder.

He dresses in silence, pulling on his street clothes.

EXT. STREET

The POV follows a thoughtful Oscar through the Toronto slums. Ramshackle alleys contrast with the vibrance of Toronto main streets in 2020.

He steps over a chicken in the street.

OSCAR

I, I don't really think of what I do as being like a janitor. I'm not cleaning up dirt, I'm pixelating copyrighted materials -- I think there's a bit of a difference there.

A bedraggled lady comes by with a sponge and offers to wipe Oscar's brow. He refuses.

I really feel like it's a bit of an honour to be working on the Wayback Machine. When it opens to the public, people will be able to watch any moment of any part of the city from the last twenty years, just as good as if they were really there!

I know that the point of your show is white people with horrible jobs and stuff, but I think of it more like, like working in a living museum.

You'll probably edit that part out.

(CONTINUED)

DOCUMENTARIAN

No, how you perceive your job is very interesting.

There's a garage that's being used as a living room. People look out.

OSCAR

Do you find this shocking? The way we live?

DOCUMENTARIAN

A little bit. But I've seen pictures. We've shot in Zurich, and it's not as bad as that.

OSCAR

Yeah. You can always count on Western Europe to make us look good.

INT. CHINESE RESTAURANT

The POV reveals that there's not many white people in the restaurant. From the window there's a quick glimpse of the blackened stub of the C.N. Tower covered with giant silvery spider webs. Oscar is chowing down on some turnip cakes.

OSCAR

I get the same thing every day. Best turnip cakes in the city.

DOCUMENTARIAN

With a job like yours, how can you afford to eat in Chinatown every day?

OSCAR

I couldn't, normally, but I helped her renovate the place before it opened, and so now... (gestures at the food)

DOCUMENTARIAN

So it's kind of an underground barter economy.

OSCAR

Um... I don't know about it being underground. It's not illegal. I don't think. Like, my mom and her mom were friends.

(CONTINUED)

DOCUMENTARIAN

As I understand it, Canada has a special economic zone status owing to the relationship between Hong Kong and Vancouver.

Oscar finishes, shrugs.

OSCAR

I dunno. It's a long way from the capital, so what Vancouver doesn't know doesn't hurt them.

A kid, too young to be bussing tables, comes by to clear the plates.

KID

You're late. Get caught in a traffic jam?

OSCAR

Ha! Good one Willy. (looks at the camera) He's the kid I was telling you about, the one who doesn't believe in traffic jams.

Willy looks at the camera.

KID

Is the fly talking to you?

OSCAR

Oh, it's a camera. There's a guy back in China who's interviewing me.

He looks at Oscar suspiciously, and then walks away with the dishes.

KID

Riiiggght...

Shot of Willy, working.

OSCAR

That's Willy. His parents... are gone. It's sad. I was able to get him this job here.

Oscar gets up and notices someone at another table.

OSCAR

Oh, that's my boss, Mr. Li. I should talk to him quickly.

He approaches the large Asian man as he eats. He is neither friendly or unfriendly.

MR. LI

Oh, hi there Oscar. Seems like you're having trouble hitting your quotas?

OSCAR

It's just I've been having a problem where the system kicks me out after eight hours.

MR. LI

Yeah, I thought that might be the case. Look, you've always been a good worker, Oscar. You get it done.

OSCAR

Thank you sir.

MR. LI

But it's the bureaucrats in Shanghai. They want to do this labour equality crap across the board. Our people are explaining how it's different here, how westerners don't mind working 12-14 hours a day so long as they got a job--

OSCAR

Exactly. I mean, I know I'm slow --

Mr. Li looks at Oscar, and makes a decision.

MR. LI

Look, I shouldn't really do this, but...

He pulls up an overlay and starts looking through.

MR. LI

OK, I've given you a higher security rating, so can login multiple times a day. Just use different logins, should be fine.

OSCAR
Really?! Oh great, thanks Mr. Li.

Mr. Li goes back to eating, and Oscar leaves the restaurant, giving the flycam a thumbs-up.

INT. OSCAR'S WORKROOM

Oscar is in his work jumpsuit.

OSCAR
OK, well... the suit, of course,
allows them to track me easily.

Does some motions. Holds up a wooden cylinder.

OSCAR
And my brush. The computer adds the
brush part, but it's less
disorienting to have a physical
proxy.

He steps into this box of ball bearings.

OSCAR
It's good to have something to walk
on. Some guys use glider shoes, but
they're a lot harder to maintain.
You need a special tool to replace
the beads. This setup's not as
fancy but it works fine. And I
think that's about it...

He thinks about it for a second.

OSCAR
Oh, and of course, I have to be
able to see the overlays. You've
probably had your eyes synced, eh?
I've gotta use these drops.

A shot of him dropping eyedrops into his eyes from a bottle
branded SeePeeYou.

OSCAR
Do I need to do anything special to
allow you to connect? Oh, I see...

He pushes a button in the air.

(CONTINUED)

OSCAR
(muttering to himself)
Yes, I would.

The perspective is now Oscar's. We see the dialogue box asking "Would you like to share your connection with [Chinese characters]?" for a second with the Yes lit up.

Then the blank room is gradually filled in by the other world. At first the world is very low rez, and then it gradually sharpens in resolution.

EXT. STREET

Oscar gets back to work.

DOCUMENTARIAN
So we know what you like about your
job. Is there anything you dislike?

Oscar laughs.

OSCAR
Oh, yeah.

EXT. STREET

A woman knocks him into the way of another passerby, who flattens him.

OSCAR
(v.o.)
Just recently, they made the job a
whole lot harder by implementing
collision detection.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY

A class lets out and a crowd of kids surge into the hallway. Oscar, with panic in his eyes, carefully weaves through them as they wash by. Just when he thinks he's free a kid knocks him sprawling.

OSCAR
(v.o.)
I've gotten better at dealing with
it, but it was so much easier to do
the job when I could walk through
everything.

INT. OSCAR'S WORKROOM

DOCUMENTARIAN

Do you get hit a lot?

He pulls off his shirt to reveal heavy bruising.

INT. RESTAURANT

DOCUMENTARIAN

And why do your bosses allow this to happen?

OSCAR

Hypothetically we're able to turn off the collision detection but it has to be approved by a real person.

He waits patiently for a couple as they pay and get their jackets, and then scoots out behind them.

OSCAR

(v.o.)

It's usually faster to find a workaround.

EXT. STREET

Long shot of Oscar standing on something like a newspaper box.

OSCAR

(v.o)

And I know it's good for immersion to be able to sit on benches and stuff but I don't do a lot of sitting in my job.

A couple stop for a light and Oscar gets on his shoulders.

OSCAR

(v.o.)

I don't do this too often, but if someone's going my way I'll catch a ride.

Continued shot of Oscar riding the person. Oscar's got an indifferent, somewhat pensive face and he puts his brush on the guy's head.

(CONTINUED)

DOCUMENTARIAN
(v.o.)
That seems like fun.

INT. OSCAR'S WORKROOM

Tight shot of a box of worn out shoes, marked "Made In Canada".

OSCAR
(v.o.)
It's mostly just to save my feet.
I'm generally walking for 11-12
hours a day.

EXT. STREET

There's a longshot of Oscar doing a street, with a time lapse speeding him up and the hours ticking away.

OSCAR
(v.o.)
I should be able to do my quota in
8...

INT. OSCAR'S WORKROOM

He scuffs the treadmill with his foot.

OSCAR
...but I'm kind of slow.

DOCUMENTARIAN
Aren't these quotas set by what a
A.I. script can do? Is that really
fair?

OSCAR
That's the whole thing. Like, the
only reason I have the job is
because of the political stuff,
them having to employ a certain
amount of humans. But sometimes I
wonder if they deliberately make it
harder for us to do a decent job.

DOCUMENTARIAN
Could that be why the collision
detection was enabled early?

Oscar rubs his eyes, yawns.

(CONTINUED)

OSCAR

Maybe. I dunno. Anyway, I gotta get
back to it.

A box comes up: 45 billboards. Oscar groans.

EXT. BUNCH OF DIFFERENT BILLBOARD SPOTS

The tape is sped up as Oscar does billboard after billboard.

The light is fading.

EXT. BILLBOARD

OSCAR

Don't worry, I've only got a couple
more.

From here he can see the crowd below. A few of them have
childlike scribbles on their faces -- doodles of other
faces, with mustaches.

OSCAR

Oh shit.

He makes a cut-the-taping gesture to the documentarian,
looking panicky.

OSCAR

Doodlefaces.

Oscar's dizzy, tired, looking towards the camera, looking at
the outbreak, but not looking where he's stepping -- off the
ledge.

The perspective shifts to a long shot of him falling, for
maximum dramatic effect. Cut to black.

INT. OSCAR'S WORKROOM

Oscar is flat on his back in his jumpsuit. He makes a few
gestures with his hands, to turn off the other world, and
then sits up.

OSCAR

Wow. I hate when that happens.

He gets up. He's in shock, still holding the wooden brush
proxy. He feels at his nose. He's acting like he's just been
punched.

(CONTINUED)

CUT TO: Oscar sitting down, looking defeated.

OSCAR

(on the phone)

It was the doodleface virus, the anti-Lando one. Class two outbreak, maybe class 3.

No, I couldn't, I would have but --

Right--

(turns away from the camera a bit)

OK. Should I check in with the doc?

No, of course not.

Yes sir, no, thank you Mr. Li.

Oscar presses a button in mid air. Smiles big.

OSCAR

Time to visit the clinic.

INT. CLINIC

The camera flies in and settles near Oscar and the Asian Doctor, who don't seem to notice it. There are posters on the wall about how to prevent the Texas Flu that feature a microbe with a ten gallon hat.

The doctor, wearing some kind of protective gloves and facemask, examines his eardrums.

DOCTOR

And how long did you have the ringing for this time?

OSCAR

About ten minutes after the fall?

DOCTOR

And how long were you in-world for at that point when you started feeling dizzy?

OSCAR

Seven or eight hours?

DOCTOR

(sternly)

And you're using the dampeners.

(CONTINUED)

OSCAR
Oh yeah. Of course.

DOCTOR
Because you're bleeding internally.

OSCAR
Oh. Well, it's not as bad as last time. Maybe they're running low on power.

The doctor sighs and gets a bag of silver coins from a drawer and tosses it at him.

INT. HOSPITAL ENTRANCE

Oscar is walking down the stairs in a good mood. He tosses up his bag of coins like a kid.

DOCUMENTARIAN
What are they?

OSCAR
You guys probably have better medicine. They're neuromagnets. (He holds one to his temple) Keeps your chi stable, prevents nausea, bloody noses... They're required for the job, but they're pricey. I used them when Mom was still alive, but these days I just go magless.

DOCUMENTARIAN
Isn't that dangerous?

INT. VARIETY STORE

Oscar is trading in one of the neuromagnets for a bunch of groceries, ramen, snacks, disposable oil lamps and beer. He looks happy but a little nervous. The owner tests it, first by holding it to his temple, and then by putting it in a box. Finally he nods and Oscar leaves.

OSCAR
(v.o.)
A little, but... it costs about a week's pay for a month's worth of them. And on one salary I can't really afford it. So I trade 'em in for another kind of dampener.

Shot of the beers being put in a cloth bag.

(CONTINUED)

Lasts longer that way.

INT. OSCAR'S WORKROOM. NIGHT

Oscar has put on some music and lights a lamp. He cracks a beer.

OSCAR

So, do you have a beer over there?

DOCUMENTARIAN

Yes. You are a good host.

OSCAR

[thanks him in mandarin]

DOCUMENTARIAN

Your accent is very good!

Oscar shakes his head and denies it.

DOCUMENTARIAN

No, I'm not being false. Most people mess up the tones.

OSCAR

My mom taught me a few words. She was taking Mandarin lessons from Mrs. Wong, Linda's mom.

DOCUMENTARIAN

Did she plan to move to Asia?

Oscar laughs at this.

OSCAR

Mom? Mom wouldn't move down the block! No, she thought she might get a job at a call centre or as a telemarketer. Something that paid a bit better. But she also just liked it.

He smiles in reminiscence, his eyes off to the side.

The tape speeds up and the bottles pile up.

DOCUMENTARIAN

You seem to have been close to your mother.

Oscar looks conflicted. He wants to please, but the emotions are intense.

(CONTINUED)

DOCUMENTARIAN

When did she die?

OSCAR

A year and a bit ago.

DOCUMENTARIAN

How have things changed for you since then?

OSCAR

I've been doing my job for two years now. At first I really liked being around people who didn't know I was there. Like I was invisible. I could act however I wanted.

A shot of Oscar's foot in the box of ball bearings, just sliding around.

OSCAR

(v.o.)

But these days, it feels more lonely. I guess 'cause Mom's gone.

Close up on his hands, clenching around his wooden proxy handle.

OSCAR

(v.o.)

It's started to feel like a tunnel that I never come out of. That just goes on and on.

Fade to black.

INT. PLAYROOM

Chaos. The room is full of babies and toddlers. The two adults, a 30something man and woman, are occupied at all times. Karen is changing a baby and Gary is trying to placate a child with a toy.

GARY

So, yeah, people who have babies? Totally insane.

KAREN

For sure.

Title: The Baby Makers.

INT. KITCHEN

There are four babies in high chairs, waiting for their lunch.

Karen opens the fridge, a model in organization. Each separate meal is labeled.

KAREN

(v.o.)

One of the ways we economize is by making the food ourselves instead of buying the packets.

She pulls out a few cubes and heats them up.

KAREN

(v.o.)

It's kind of risky, though. You get it wrong, and the caloric intake isn't exactly right?

INT. LIVING ROOM

Karen shakes her head and looks at the camera. They sit side by side on the couch.

GARY

Let's just say we learned the hard way.

KAREN

We went to sell them, and they told us that half the batch was invalid. That they would not certify them.

GARY

It pretty nearly bankrupted us. The certification process is... very particular.

Karen is obviously still upset about it. Gary squeezes her hand.

KAREN

"Particular." He's the diplomat of the family.

DOCUMENTARIAN

What did you do with the babies?

(CONTINUED)

KAREN

We had to break them down for parts
and start again.

INT. PLAYROOM

Gary is filling out some kind of form in his overlays,
making gestures to check boxes. A baby lies before him.

GARY

(v.o.)

To be honest, for the most part, I
understand the quality control.

He is checking the baby's joints with a bored look on his
face.

GARY

(v.o.)

It's why they fetch such a high
price, even by Asian standards. It
would hurt the brand to release
sickly product, or product that
wasn't toilet trained.

He is tickling the baby. The baby laughs, and Gary
impassively gestures the response down on his form.

GARY

OK, honey, this lot's done.

Karen has a load of dry laundry.

KAREN

Can you give me a hand with
folding?

The baby's grabbed his finger, and he flicks it off as he
gets up.

GARY

Sure.

INT. KITCHEN. EVENING.

Gary and Karen are having dinner together, enjoying a glass
of wine after a long day.

In the background is the sustained wailing of several
babies.

(CONTINUED)

They're laughing and chatting casually, completely ignoring the screams of the children.

DOCUMENTARIAN

(v.o.)

Does the crying ever get to you?

KAREN

(v.o.)

There's definitely a hardwired response to it that you have to learn to suppress.

GARY

(v.o.)

Millenia of evolution.

KAREN

(v.o.)

Yeah, but it only took me a few weeks to get over it. It helps that by the end of the day you've built up so much resentment.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Gary laughs at this.

GARY

You can tap into that.

Karen shrugs.

KAREN

Although at this point, it's just white noise, just like the whine of a buzz saw if you worked at a factory.

GARY

Our neighbours see it differently, though. They've offered to help pay for sound proofing. So we might do that in the next few months. 'Cause at night--

Karen puts her head in her hands.

KAREN

Oh my god.

(CONTINUED)

GARY

...at night they can wake you up
and it's pretty bad for the sleep.

KAREN

Pretty bad...? One night, I just
about lost it. I got up, went to
the workshop and grabbed the wire
snips -- I was practically sleep
walking...

GARY

Luckily I'd gotten up to go to the
washroom. She was just about to
snip their vocal cords.

KAREN

I would have done it. In my sleep I
was imagining we could reconnect
them when they were older.

GARY

But of course that wouldn't have
worked.

KAREN

It would have been a complete mess.

She looks at him fondly.

KAREN

He's the sane one.

INT. CHANGE STATION

Gary is patiently changing a baby.

DOCUMENTARIAN

What does Karen mean when she calls
you "the sane one"?

Gary just smiles, doesn't respond for a second.

GARY

I'm usually the one who says, hey,
wait a sec, let's think about this.
You know. She's the brilliant, hot
headed one, and I'm the plodding,
stable one.

The smell of the poop makes him wince.

(CONTINUED)

GARY

But I mean, she's got a point usually. Like, these babies are realistic to a completely unnecessary degree. Why can't they be engineered so their poop is odorless?

DOCUMENTARIAN

Don't you have control of that?

GARY

Oh no. They ship us kits and we assemble them. We mod the motherboards and they'd be invalid. God forbid some kid in Shanghai gets a toy whose shit doesn't stink. Scandal!

He drops the diaper into the pail.

INT. WORKROOM

Karen has on a eyepiece and is working on a motherboard. She is smiling at something.

KAREN

I don't know about brilliant. I mean, he's right that we're a good team.

DOCUMENTARIAN

Do you feel like you're wasting your talent?

Her smile falls suddenly -- his question has cut her.

KAREN

I don't know.

She looks at the camera briefly, and back at what she's looking at. She pulls a baby body from a box next to the table and lays it out on the table.

KAREN

I'm very aware that we're lucky to have any work in robotics, living in the west. If we could afford to relocate to Shanghai, maybe it'd make a difference...

(CONTINUED)

She opens up the baby body and inserts the card she's been working on. Inside the body is an alarming combination of circuitry and artificial organs.

KAREN

...but then I hear about people who do that and their degrees aren't worth anything. They end up fixing ovens and toasters.

She recloses it up and turns it on. The baby's eyes flicker and it says in a terrifying voice, "Prepare to be annihilated." This makes Karen smile.

KAREN

It's not like we're going to be making babies forever. That's not the plan.

DOCUMENTARIAN

What is the plan?

KAREN

You should ask Gary about that.

She has a small, wry smile on her face as she says this. She opens the baby body again, going back to tinkering.

INT. BATHROOM. NIGHT

There's a bunch of babies in the bathtub, and Gary's washing them carefully.

GARY

Yeah, it's an arrangement we have. She starts them off, I finish them off. Works out better that way.

DOCUMENTARIAN

So she does the initial assembly?

He dries a baby off carefully, almost buffing it like you would a car.

GARY

Yeah, and it's not like put part a into slot b. These aren't Ikea components. I mean, I have a degree in robotics as well, but I don't have her focus -- like, she gets into the zone. She can have six babies crawling around in a couple

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

GARY (cont'd)
hours when it would take me all
day.

He takes a baby in each arm and brings them to the play room
and grabs a couple more.

GARY
But I mean, the stuff I do is
important too. We're shipping
tomorrow, so we've got the company
rep coming in -- and if they aren't
clean, they won't be up to code.
They're not up to code, then we
don't eat.

He looks back and we can see Karen going into another room,
avoiding the bathroom.

He scrubs the babies, and laughs.

GARY
Yeah, she really hates shipping
week.

INT. FRONT HALL

Gary is greeting the company certifier at the door, an Asian
man.

GARY
Oh, you musta drawn the short straw
again to have to do us...

The man smiles but remains silent, removing his shoes.

GARY
(v.o.)
I was pretty relieved it was Chao
-- he's polite. And we'd had him
before. With a new certifier you're
never sure what they're gonna look
for.

INT. OUTSIDE THE PLAYROOM

Gary is standing outside the playroom, watching Chao check
the mouths and the range of their limbs.

(CONTINUED)

CHAO

You can box these two.

Gary jumps to it, stuffing the kids into a cellophane fronted box and taping it up.

CHAO

This one... this one's been making noise since I've arrived.

GARY

You know, that model tends to leak a lot -- that might be the problem.

He grabs the baby and feels the bum.

GARY

Yeah, that's it. Let me just --

He goes to change the baby. Chao watches -- the poop's a weird colour.

Chao gets out a colour matcher -- a paint sampler with various shades of brown. He shakes his head.

CHAO

This one's invalid.

The rest are fine. Wanna give me a hand getting them loaded?

INT. HALL

Gary is carrying the boxes out to the door, his face ashen.

Chao is putting on his shoes.

There's a laser explosion sound and flash from the room down the hallway that Chao notices.

GARY

Guess she's got the lasers online.

CHAO

Your wife works on battlebots?

GARY

Yeah... hey, um, would you wanna take a look?

Chao picks up a box.

(CONTINUED)

CHAO

I'm running late as it is.

GARY

Oh, sure, no problem, maybe another time. It's really amazing what she...

CHAO

All military robots are done from the mainland office. I don't even know who I'd...

GARY

Sure. Forget I said anything.

Gary forces a smile and helps him carry the boxes out.

Montage of the baby boxes being packed in with the following interview snippet.

DOCUMENTARIAN

Why do you hate shipping day so much, Karen?

KAREN

(v.o.)

I just can't stand seeing them in the boxes.

The babies are stacked up in their boxes, looking cute and sad.

KAREN

Until then I don't have to think about them like that, you know? It just seems so wrong...

Cut back to Karen in her workshop.

KAREN

...wrong that we're wasting our time making them, when we could be making unstoppable killing machines. Instead we're making stupid toys for stupid rich kids.

GARY

(from the foyer)

OK, they're gone!

INT. FOYER

Karen comes out of the room and hugs him.

The sound of a baby crying freezes her body.

KAREN
Why is there--?

GARY
Let's get a drink.

INT. KITCHEN

Gary is getting two glasses of wine. Baby crying in the background.

DOCUMENTARIAN
What'll happen to the rejected
baby?

GARY
There's a market for refurbished
babies, but you don't get that much
and it's not technically legal...

INT. WORKROOM

GARY
So Karen'll salvage what she can
for her projects.

The baby's still crying, Karen is leaning over it. She's doing something industrial to the baby, but we can't see what -- only hear the unpleasant sounds of the disassembling work under the screaming sounds.

Gary offers her the wine. She shrugs him off and throws a baby limb into a box.

KAREN
Just let me finish here.

Gary sighs and nods, sets her wine down and rubs his forehead. The crying starts to warble and die, horribly.

DOCUMENTARIAN
Karen said I should ask you about
your plan.

Gary smiles and looks at his wife's back.

(CONTINUED)

GARY

Yeah. This is a bit of a setback. The original plan was that, well, we have a bit of money coming in. From Mumbai. My sister is a nanny there and is sending us back money. So the idea was that between that, and the money we were bringing in ourselves, we'd be able to buy a plane ticket to the big robotics conference in Hong Kong in five, ten years. Pitch some designs.

Karen grabs her wine and joins the conversation.

DOCUMENTARIAN

Your battlebot designs? In the hopes of getting a job making them?

KAREN

Yeah. Though any robots that don't shit and piss themselves would be fine, to start. It's such an exciting time to be making robots, and I just want to get in the game. I've been working on a new approach to stealth units, for instance.

Even 'splashers, I mean, everyone just thought they were a flash in the pan before the African division -- all that power in a single core processor. Lethal, elegant, reasonably priced...

Gary smiles at his wife's enthusiasm.

DOCUMENTARIAN

So in five years we can expect to see you in Asia?

KAREN

RobotiCon 2045 or die, right Gary?

GARY

Well... five or ten years. (he squeezes his wife's hand) Closer to ten.

She takes a big swallow of wine.

EXT. BRIDGE

Two men, one of average proportions and the other heavysset, stand on top of a wall. Their clothing is reminiscent of old time acrobats.

The heavysset one, Anton, is a little shaky. He grabs the hand of his brother, Christopher (or Toph), who is very solid.

ANTON
You ready, Toph?

TOPH
Yep.

Anton lifts the hand of his brother in a victory gesture.

ANTON
We are... the Karrento brothers!

Anton looks at Toph.

ANTON
You gotta say it too.

TOPH
Oh, right.

ANTON
I say "we are", we both say "the Karrento brothers!" and then maybe we can jump down.

TOPH
(looking down)
No, no.

ANTON
You're right, you're right, that's cheesy.

Title: The Silk Gatherers

EXT. SCALING A WALL

Toph is climbing a wall. Anton is below, looking up.

ANTON
I would say the most important thing? Never collect alone. You need someone to spot you, keep an
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

ANTON (cont'd)
eye on you. You get into a
situation where, god forbid, you
fall, or get into some other
situation, you need to have someone
there who can help out.

Toph has some kind of rod with pincers at the end. He is
wearing a mask and has gloves on as well.

ANTON
Now what he's got there is called
the claw. He'll use that to grab
the goss.

DOCUMENTARIAN
The goss?

ANTON
The goss, the spizz -- no one
really calls it spider silk.

Toph pulls out the white strands from the rooftop eaves.

ANTON
Looks like a decent grab.

Toph holds something up. A trailing bit falls down and
starts to hiss and smoke in contact with a bush, indicating
its toxicity.

TOPH
Get a fire goin'!

Anton smiles.

ANTON
Lunchbreak!

EXT.UNDER A BRIDGE

The two of them are sitting around a fire, chewing on tiny
bones.

DOCUMENTARIAN
How is it?

ANTON
(shrugs)
Not bad. Pretty fresh. You know how
gamey squirrel meat can get.

(CONTINUED)

TOPH
He's probably never eaten
squirrels, Anton.

Anton looks at the camera.

ANTON
You don't got squirrels in China?

DOCUMENTARIAN
I'm a predatarian, actually.

Anton looks confused by this, but Toph's heard of it.

TOPH
Really. Sharks and lions and that,
huh? Heard the best bear burgers
are exported from Canada.

DOCUMENTARIAN
That's true.

Anton pumps his fist with each syllable.

ANTON
Ca! Na! Da!

Toph's embarrassed by this.

EXT. TOP OF RESERVOIR HILL

Anton is prodding a rusted "DANGER" sign with a silhouette of a spider on it, which has fallen years ago and is covered with debris.

ANTON
Oh, no, they died off ages ago. The
infestation probably only lasted
two years, tops. That's how cold it
gets here, too cold for giant
mutant spiders --

TOPH
Arachnoids, Anton. There's a name
for them.

ANTON
Anacroroi -- aracnord -- or as
normal people call them, giant
mutant spiders --

(CONTINUED)

TOPH

As pre-schoolers call them, giant mutant spiders...

ANTON

Whatever, so I didn't go to high school, professor. Anyway, they were mostly a problem for kids, they couldn't really take down an adult unless they were in a pack.

They start walking in the forest.

DOCUMENTARIAN

What do you remember about them?

ANTON

I seem to remember--

TOPH

We weren't here, Anton. We hadn't moved here yet.

Toph sees something in a tree and climbs up it.

ANTON

I remember something about a scientist--

TOPH

We saw the news report, Anton. The scientist from the genelab talking about the original outbreak. Down in Arizona or some shit.

ANTON

Oh, yeah. Scared the hell out of me.

It was a false warning, Toph comes down from the tree.

They walk on. Toph notices a patch of mushrooms and starts picking them.

DOCUMENTARIAN

Where did you move here from?

TOPH

Our family were part of the European refugees that came over in the 20s. Our dad was an acrobat, so he got into the silk trade in the early days.

(CONTINUED)

ANTON

Some people saw "disaster", he saw
"opportunity"!

DOCUMENTARIAN

Did your family face an
anti-European sentiment?

Anton shakes his head. He's collecting mushrooms too.

TOPH

For sure. Mom and Dad got all that
racist shit -- dirty carny, go back
to Europe, get away, you'll give us
monkeypox... all the farmer's kids
would throw dried dog shit at Anton
at school...

ANTON

Oh yeah, there was that. Fuckin'
shit-heel farmers.

DOCUMENTARIAN

And did he have monkeypox?

TOPH

Of course not, we never would have
been allowed off the boat. But
whatever, they worked, doing the
job that was too dangerous for
anyone here to do, and eventually
we got our citizenship.

They're collecting mushrooms throughout, and pretty much
every mushroom Anton gives Toph is rejected, which he seems
oblivious to.

INT. SILK STATION

Anton and Toph go into the station with the day's haul and
calls out.

HARRY, an older heavysset man, comes out, his face bleary
with sleep.

ANTON

Didn't wake ya did we?

ANTON

(v.o.)

Harry's all right. Not a million
laughs, but once in a while he'll

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

ANTON (cont'd)
have a good chuckle. I've sold to
him since the beginning. He used to
do gold and such originally, I
heard, so he has the connections.

They chitchat and Harry melts down the webbing in a little
device.

ANTON
What's the rate?

HARRY
5.3. Same as always.

ANTON
Same robbery as always.

ANTON
(v.o.)
I sure don't know any architects.
What am I gonna do, call people at
random in Singapore or whatever,
"wanna buy some rare building
material?" No.

HARRY
(to Toph)
You want it in online time or
water?

TOPH
Ha. Just give us the water, Harry.

They grab the three battered plastic bottles of water and
leave, wave goodbye to Harry.

ANTON
That's us for the day.

He smiles at the camera, pleased with himself. Once they're
outside the documentarian resumes the interview.

DOCUMENTARIAN
When he offered you online time...

ANTON
He was just joking. He knows we
don't go online.

TOPH
Our whole family got screwed when
the Cloud was repossessed. All our
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

TOPH (cont'd)
data was there. All of it --
network, legal, authenticators. Our
parents had to start from scratch.
We've been strictly local since.

ANTON
That's right. Local boys! Fuck the
Landos!

TOPH
Easy there, Anton. Remember who's
gonna be watching this thing.

EXT. ROOFTOP. NIGHT.

The rooftop has a tent on it, and the brothers are inside.
Their voices are hushed but audible.

TOPH
No.

ANTON
C'maaaaan.

TOPH
Absolutely not.

ANTON
Wouldn't it be great for the
documentary? "The Karrento Brothers
Take on the Tower!" Maybe we'd get
our own show!

TOPH
"The Karrento Brothers Die!" That
sound good? "The Karrento Brothers,
Smashed on the Pavement!"

ANTON
Well, actually--

TOPH
No! It sounds awful. Go to sleep.

EXT. FIRE ESCAPE

Anton is climbing a rickety fire escape.

(CONTINUED)

ANTON

It's actually not the dangerous spots you have to be worried about. For those ones, you're focused, collecting from the underside of a bridge or whatnot. Hanging upside down.

He is moving very slowly considering the relative safety of the climb. Above we can see Toph waiting at the top.

ANTON

It's climbs like these that look easy -- lose your focus for a second, and BAM!, you're sidewalk jam.

He gets up to the roof and we see Toph poking around with his claw.

TOPH

Can't see anything up here.

Anton puts his finger in the air like he's feeling the wind.

He looks around, and then walks authoritatively to one side of the roof, grabbing the claw as he goes.

He leans over the side and pulls back a clawful of silk, and flourishes it around like a magic trick. Toph smiles.

EXT. ROOFTOP

ANTON

I thought there might be some leftovers here. When I first started training with Dad, I remember coming here. And back in those days, we were pulling bags of spizz, so we didn't sweat the small stuff. Toph wasn't old enough to come. So it's just more "big brother magic" for him.

Luckily for us I got a good memory. Got a brain as sticky as a spiderweb!

Toph comes back out onto the roof with a bottle.

(CONTINUED)

ANTON
(calls to Toph)
Still trying to figure out how I
knew about the spizz?

Anton winks at the camera. Takes a swig from the bottle.

TOPH
Goin' out to trade for some food.
Do not drink all the water.

Anton surveys the water that's left guiltily.

EXT. MARKET

Toph is talking to a sidewalk market vendor, a cute hippie farm girl. He doesn't see the fly. There are a few people selling produce from blankets thrown on the ground.

TOPH
So you guys are growing enough to
eat and have some left over to
trade?

FARM GIRL
Yeah, we got a patch down by the
Humber... you should come down, we
can always use help around harvest.

Someone calls out "Sweep! One minute. Sat sweep, one minute."

The girl gestures to the sky, starts moving her stuff to the middle of her blanket.

People are packing up their blankets.

DOCUMENTARIAN
I thought bartering was legal here.

Toph is a bit startled, then sees the fly.

TOPH
Oh. Yeah, it is. More than three
vendors constitute a market,
though, and those are banned.

What were you talking to Anton
about? When I got home?

Someone calls out "Sat sweep, ten seconds."

(CONTINUED)

DOCUMENTARIAN

He was telling me he has a good memory.

TOPH

Did he tell you it's as sticky as a spider web? That's something my father used to say, but more about how stubborn he is. Once an idea gets in his head, no matter how bad it is...

This documentary thing, for instance.

Someone calls out, "Clear." The vendors spread out their blankets again.

Toph trades the water for a variety of strangely coloured vegetables.

DOCUMENTARIAN

So you didn't want to do this.

TOPH

Makes us look like a bunch of landos. But once he gets a fuckin idea in his head --

DOCUMENTARIAN

What are landos? Anton mentioned them earlier--

TOPH

That's the thing. One minute he's all "fuck the landos"... but he doesn't really understand.

DOCUMENTARIAN

I had my assistant research it and she said all she found was a movie character's name, Lando Calrissian.

TOPH

(smiles)

That's where it came from. I never saw it but supposedly he sold out Cloud City to the Evil Empire the same way our politicians rolled over when you guys reposed the Cloud.

(CONTINUED)

DOCUMENTARIAN

It was an emergency financial recovery process that --

TOPH

I know, I know, I took grade 10 economics. Whatever. You asked where lando comes from -- that's where. Nowadays it's just anyone who gets too chummy with mainlanders. It's kind of old fashioned, actually. The people who use it today are mostly old guys pissed we didn't do more to stop our data being walled up.

DOCUMENTARIAN

And you? Are you pissed?

TOPH

I was four or something. I didn't have google documents or facebook friends to lose -- I was a little more worried about the fucking spiders.

EXT. ROOFTOP

Anton is eating alone.

DOCUMENTARIAN

Where's Toph?

ANTON

He's gone out.

DOCUMENTARIAN

Do you know where?

ANTON

I bet he's getting supplies... for our big mission tomorrow.

He jumps up and puffs out his chest.

ANTON

Because tomorrow, the Karrento Brothers Take on the Tower!

DOCUMENTARIAN

Which tower?

(CONTINUED)

ANTON

(laughing and pointing)

Duh! The Tower! The biggest source
of uncollected spizz in the...
probably, in the world!

He flips through a worn journal. The cover has the
handwritten title "Tower Assault".

And I was just reading (points to
one diagram of a drooling spider)
that the giant spider saliva made
the concrete unusually soft, which
makes scaling it a lot easier--

The door shuts and Toph comes in, unaware.

ANTON

(s.v.)

But don't say anything to him. He's
very... superstitious.

He tries to hide the book at the last minute but Toph spots
it and grabs it.

He gives him a "this shit, again?" look before he takes it
and leaves.

ANTON

(calling after him)

It's as much mine as it is yours!

But I guess you didn't burn it
after all, liar!

EXT. ROOFTOP. NIGHT.

The rooftop is quiet, except for the rustle of the brothers
in their tent.

Then, there is the whispered resumption of an argument.

ANTON

Please?

TOPH

No.

ANTON

Please.

(CONTINUED)

TOPH
No.

ANTON
Please?

TOPH
No.

ANTON
C'maaaann--

TOPH
No.

EXT. BRIDGE OVER WATER. MORNING.

Anton and Toph are walking to the site. Toph looks tired, with a coil of rope over one shoulder and a backpack over the other.

ANTON
OK, so, we're postponing the Tower assault for a while.

TOPH
For ever.

ANTON
But, instead, we've got an amazing climb for you today anyway. We've been wanting to do this for years.

DOCUMENTARIAN
What's stopped you?

TOPH
Brains. There was always some other goss deposit somewhere that was easier pickings. But not anymore.

ANTON
But once we get the Tower spizz we'll be able to retire.

TOPH
Right, just like Mom and Dad retired, right?

Anton goes quiet. He starts unrolling the rope.

(CONTINUED)

TOPH

Our parents had this great tower assault plan too. Oh, they had it all figured out in their stupid book of theirs. (to Anton) You tell him that?

Anton is still looking down, a stubborn look on his face.

TOPH

But half way up the wind picked up. The wind picked up, and whoosh, there goes Mom, and yanks Dad down with her. Early retirement.

He's tying the ropes violently.

ANTON

(quietly)

Can't account for the weather. Even Harry said. Can't account for the weather.

TOPH

They laid in the rubble for two days before we were able to get anyone to help us move them.

ANTON

OK. OK.

He's shaking back and forth, squeezing himself.

Toph sees the effect he's had and relents, gives his brother something between a hug and a shake.

He thrusts the rope into Anton's hands. It's tied securely to something.

ANTON

No. No, maybe you're right. It's too dangerous.

Toph shakes his head determinedly.

TOPH

This is it. This is my, this is our only option. Now I'm gonna need to hold on tight as hell, OK, Anton? Don't go near the edge, and hold on no matter what.

The POV is focused on Anton. His face goes from worried to calm.

(CONTINUED)

ANTON

Don't worry, Toph.

Toph climbs down out of sight.

Anton starts to regain his jubilant manner.

ANTON

Finally, you'll see the Karrento
Brothers in action doing what we
do--

There's a sudden yell.

The rope goes slack.

There's a splash in the distance.

Anton, on his hands and knees looking over the edge, yells
his brother's name. He's still holding onto the rope with
both hands. Starts screaming and sobbing.

Fade to black.

INT. OFFICE

A long shot of a young woman sitting at a desk, filing her
nails and talking silently. She's the new girl, and the men
who pass check her out.

SERINA

(v.o.)

I keep busy. The walled online
access is pretty sweet, means I can
research clients and products
without worrying about remote
attacks or transferable viruses.
Basically, I do work -- it's just
not the work they're paying me to
do.

INT. OFFICE HALLWAY

A guy in the office stops Serina and offers her a donut from
a box branded Creamers.

She makes enthusiastic gratitude noises and takes it.

SERINA

Cream 'er? I barely knew her!

(CONTINUED)

Then she continues going into the washroom and shoves it into the garbage and heads to the mirror. There's a woman at the mirror putting on eye makeup that makes her look more Asian.

Serina washes her hands.

SERINA

You can say you're not hungry, but do they listen?

WOMAN AT MIRROR

I'm always hungry.

SERINA

Seriously? I've been on Slimgirl so long I don't really even remember what hunger feels like.

WOMAN AT MIRROR

That patch thing?

She's checking her look in the mirror. They continue to talk about Slimgirl in very muted volume, and the camera focuses in on Serina.

SERINA

(v.o.)

The way these places are, it takes them a few days -- sometimes a week -- to catch on.

Until then, it's pretty much the ideal hunting ground.

Title: Human Spam

INT. OFFICE

She's sitting at her desk, with a young executive, Tom, hanging over her shoulder as he points out something in the file. As they gesture, there's sound fx: page flipping, the blip of button pushing.

TOM

I know it's totally confusing at first.

SERINA

It is confusing. I'm glad you said that.

(CONTINUED)

TOM

It just takes a bit of getting used to. In fact, if you weren't busy tonight, I'd be happy to give you the lowdown on some of the ins and outs of this place. Maybe over drinks?

She seems surprised, but then manages a smile.

SERINA

Well, sure. It'd have to be an early night, but... yeah. That'd be nice.

INT. BAR

She's sitting alone at the booth, staring at the various invisible forms in front of her.

SERINA

The office alpha male is easy meat. You can see him over there with his buddy, probably reliving that "ins and outs" comment earlier.

Shot of Tom talking to another office mate and ending with a slap on the shoulder.

SERINA

Sure as shit, tomorrow, his buddy will appear at my desk with a proposition. I'll work the new girl angle for a week at least.

Tom sits himself down.

TOM

Talking to yourself?

SERINA

Were my lips moving? (giggles) Just trying to make sense of these forms! I just popped three Sharpeners and they're still in some other language.

TOM

I know. Aren't they ridiculous?

(CONTINUED)

SERINA
(pointing at his beer)
Oh! I never figured you for a Bud
man. (mocking) King of beers!

They clink bottles.

TOM
What are you drinking?

Serina shows her Coors Light.

SERINA
I ride the bullet.

Tom laughs and they continue talking.

SERINA
(v.o.)
Luckily sarcasm doesn't invalidate
the impressions. Otherwise, you
sound like a robot and the client's
on to you.

Serina is looking at something in the menu and pointing it
out to Tom.

SERINA
(v.o.)
Bars are great, there's a lot of
natural segues into product
mentions. Stuff on the menu.
Waitresses with their branding on
their uniforms. Ads in the
washrooms that you can just bring
up naturally.

DOCUMENTARIAN
So you spend a lot of time here?

INT. BAR WASHROOM

Serina is putting on her lipstick and changing into a more
high-powered business look.

SERINA
Oh yeah. Staff knows to go super
light on the alcohol. Lets me stash
a change of clothes here. So I can
say goodbye to Tom, and hello to
Avinash, without leaving the
building. Convenient.

She makes her way to the door.

INT. BAR BUILDING ELEVATOR LOBBY

DOCUMENTARIAN

Who's Avinash? Another client?

SERINA

Yeah. A little higher on the food chain than ol' Tom. (pushes the up button on the elevator) Let me put it this way -- they fly to Toronto twice a year. Loaded. I met him and his friends at a mentorship initiative. I'm their charity case. Nice people. Kwan's even offered to pay for an eye-job for me.

Enters the elevator.

DOCUMENTARIAN

So you'd look more Asian?

SERINA

Yeah. She says it'd help my job prospects. But Avinash's talked her out of it. He's got a caucasian fetish.

She leaves the elevator.

INT. BAR

Serina sits with a polished group of older Indian and Chinese businessmen, with an Asian businesswoman in the mix.

SERINA

I see. I've just been confused because United Mutual Funds seemed to have higher returns in the short term.

AVINASH

They do, but they're very volatile.

SERINA

When compared to the Yukon Funds or Klondike?

(CONTINUED)

A young attractive woman with a logo on her shirt at breast level stands there. She's watching her overlays as she gets money for the mentions, giving her a particularly spacey quality.

AVINASH

We actually have a waitress already.

SPAMMER

You guys are Marlboro men, I can tell. Who wants to buy me a Carlsberg?

BUSINESSWOMAN

Go away please.

She smiles and leaves.

SPAMMER

(on her way off)

You know what's good for PMS, honey? Advil.

AVINASH

She was one of those product placers. Creepy.

BUSINESSSMAN

Spammer. I'm amazed they still can't shut down the Nigerian spam cartel.

AVINASH

Not now they've got a military.

Serina shakes her head in disgust, watches the other spammer work the room as they go back to their conversation.

INT. BAR FOYER

Serina and Avinash are heading home. She notices the spammer heading into the washroom.

SERINA

I'm going to use the washroom first. Want to bring the Cadillac around and I'll meet you up front?

He nods and leaves, and she heads for the washroom.

INT. BAR WASHROOM

She checks the stalls, and heads back to lock the door. The woman comes out.

She's startled at first, but when she sees it's the small Serina, she continues to check her look in the mirror.

SPAMMER

You people are so rude. You need to
lighten up with Menthol--

Serina has cut her off with a lipstick sized tazer which knocks her to the ground. She squats beside her.

SERINA

Listen carefully, small time. Stay
away from my people. You're
queering the deal.

(showing her the tazer)

I bought this in Quebec. Do you
know what that means?

SPAMMER

That it... it has a coronary
setting?

SERINA

Very good. I see you around here
again, I'll get to try it out.

SPAMMER

But it's not fair--

Serina snaps open the lock and strides out.

SERINA

Now you're getting it.

INT. CAR. NIGHT.

Serina is in the back of a hired car.

DOCUMENTARIAN

He sent you home?

SERINA

Yeah. His wife called. He's on a
short leash.

(CONTINUED)

DOCUMENTARIAN

Is that disappointing?

At a stoplight, someone knocks at the window and is ignored, except Serina doublechecks the lock.

SERINA

No. It's ideal, really. Sex has diminishing returns.

DOCUMENTARIAN

How so?

SERINA

Less banter, so less chances for segues. Products are limited: condom brands and lubricant, maybe sex toy brands but not that often with the older men. More drama. Guilt. Attachment. Betrayal.

She taps her ear.

SERINA

Hi yourself, Victor.... I'm actually with my mom, right now. I think I told you, she's at Bayview-Crest Hospital?... oh, that's sweet that you thought of me, but she's taken a turn... for sure. No, the staff at Bayview-Crest are amazing, but Mom wants a familiar face around. Uh huh. OK, then, enjoy yourself!

She taps her ear again.

SERINA

Nothing like a dying mother to take the wind out of a booty call.

DOCUMENTARIAN

And you mentioned a hospital brand. You get paid for that, I assume.

SERINA

Sure. And the bit about the amazing staff is one of their core messages, and so that also pays.

She looks at the air in front of her and gestures through the information that is invisible to us.

(CONTINUED)

SERINA

Actually, that last mention of Bayview-Crest put me into the top three this month. Victor makes a lot of money, so even phone impressions pull in a lot. Might get a bonus. Thanks Mom!

She smiles, ever so slightly, to herself.

EXT.HOTEL.NIGHT.

The limo goes into a hotel parking garage.

INT. HOTEL PARKING GARAGE. NIGHT.

Serina gets out and walks away, never acknowledging the driver.

INT. STAIRWELL. NIGHT.

Serina is pulling on new shoes, a different jacket, less flashy attire.

DOCUMENTARIAN

And what about your mom? Do your parents know what you do?

SERINA

Nope.

DOCUMENTARIAN

What do you think they'd think?

SERINA

What do you want to hear? Rough childhood? Daddy was a farmer before the bottom dropped out of the gold market, and then mommy was a whore?

DOCUMENTARIAN

I just--

SERINA

You're paying me for this, so you might as well get your money's worth. What do you want me to say? What'll really choke up the mainlanders?

(CONTINUED)

DOCUMENTARIAN

We want your real life.

SERINA

My parents aren't relevant to my real life. Change the subject.

Serina leaves the stairwell, and then the hotel through the front door, pulling on her sunglasses too.

DOCUMENTARIAN

OK. Why'd you get the driver to drop you off here?

SERINA

The autodrive cars have ridiculous mapping systems, for one. When I give them my address it glitches and loops forever, never stopping.

She walks on, the neighbourhoods getting sketchier.

DOCUMENTARIAN

You said, "For one".

SERINA

Well, obviously I'd rather my clients not have access to my real address.

DOCUMENTARIAN

Are these men clients? Aren't they marks?

SERINA

If I do my job right, and they never know, it doesn't matter.

INT. SERINA'S APARTMENT. NIGHT.

Serina's apartment is a sparsely decorated and somewhat untidy place. We notice a big book of Sudoku puzzles somewhere.

The first thing she does is put the lipstick tazer in a charger beside her bed.

DOCUMENTARIAN

Do you often have incidents like the one in the washroom today?

(CONTINUED)

SERINA

(v.o.)

As often as I need to.

Serina is showering. Shot is of a little box with a readout of the remaining water, nearly at zero.

DOCUMENTARIAN

Why do you need to?

Serina is brushing out her hair.

SERINA

Girl like that thinks she's smart. Pretty face and a tittie billboard can make you enough money to pay for your phone service and your clothes, maybe. But she'll never be able to make a living from it, and she's fucking it up for those of us that do.

DOCUMENTARIAN

Why wouldn't she be able to make a living off it?

SERINA

Being too pretty is a liability. Any Easterner who has a girl like that show him attention? Not plausible. He'll know something's up. Or his friends will, if he's too stupid. Even a local boy doesn't buy it for long after he hits it. Not that I'm stupid enough to mess with locals.

INT. VARIETY STORE. MORNING.

Serina puts a can of Mr. Brown's coffee down on the counter. She's dressed office for her job. A young guy about Serina's age comes out -- he's been sleeping in the back. They both flinch when they see each other.

SERINA

Where's your dad?

NAT

He's got this thing (motions to his stomach). What the fuck, Serina, what's with the clothes? (he motions a blow job) You taking dick-tation now?

(CONTINUED)

SERINA

Your career's really taken off too.

(Pushes the can to the floor) So
not worth it.

She stalks out of the store.

NAT

Dad thinks you're a slutty spammer
too!

EXT. SIDEWALK.

Serina is obviously upset by this but masks it with her
sunglasses and tough talk.

SERINA

That's what I'm saying about local
boys.

INT. ELEVATOR.

She's still got her sunglasses on. She doesn't notice Tom
get on and he leans into her for a flirtatious shoulder
bump.

Her whole body rears up and for a second it looks like she's
going to attack him. He jumps a little.

SERINA

Oh. It's you.

Tom nods nervously.

SERINA

Sorry Tom, haven't had my coffee
yet. My Starbucks, I mean.

He laughs nervously as they get off the elevator.

INT. OFFICE

She gets to her empty desk and hangs up her cardigan. She
brushes her thumb on a scanner and starts to file through
her computer messages.

SERINA

Huh. That was fast.

(CONTINUED)

She walks down the row of desks with people working at invisible terminals in the air. One of them was the guy Tom was talking to at the bar yesterday and he waves at Serina.

He says something inaudible to her and she sticks her head into his soundproofed cubicle, and he's suddenly audible.

LEO

Hey, there, Serina isn't it?

SERINA

Yep. Mr. Wilson's asked to see me, should I be worried?

LEO

Oh. Um. It's... not good. He's a busy guy.

She nods and continues on.

INT. MR. WILSON'S OFFICE. DAY.

Serina comes in with a little smile. Mr. Wilson is a middle aged man who does work through the whole scene.

SERINA

Mr. Wilson?

MR. WILSON

Yep. You the new girl?

SERINA

I am, yes, and--

MR. WILSON

Not any more. I'm terminating your employment as of today. Your productivity has been zero the whole time you've been here.

SERINA

Two days, sir, I'm just ramping up. Getting the feel of the place. Tom's been showing me the ropes.

MR. WILSON

Tom should be firing you right now instead of me but he's said he took you out to drinks so there's a COI.

(CONTINUED)

SERINA

You're totally right, my
productivity--

MR. WILSON

I know I'm right. Why are you still
here?

SERINA

My mom's been really sick. I've
been useless days here because I'm
at Bayview-Crest all night. They've
got her on Phenupalsol, Rebuitin,
Quininalonsol -- all great
painkillers, but they can only do
so much.

MR. WILSON

And now you've just lost your job.
Honey, this is a really sad story.
We're not going to have to make it
even sadder by calling security for
this, are we?

SERINA

(smiles for the first time)

Nope.

She puts on her sunglasses and leaves.

INT. ELEVATOR.

Shot of Serina in the elevator.

DOCUMENTARIAN

Are you upset?

SERINA

No, I'm trying to decide where I
should go for my early lunch.

DOCUMENTARIAN

He was not very polite.

SERINA

I thought he was funny, actually!
"Honey, that's a sad story."
Driven, does his job well. Way
smarter than the clueless drones
that work for him.

(CONTINUED)

Having said her piece, she looks away from the camera, and then leaves when the elevator door opens. We can see that Leo and a couple other workers were also in the elevator, but that she didn't care.

DOCUMENTARIAN

So what now?

The next sequence has Serina buying sushi from a cart and installing herself on a park bench or by a fountain. Someone from the office sees her and moves away. She seems indifferent.

SERINA

(v.o.)

My people will get me a job somewhere else. They own half the temp agencies in the city.

DOCUMENTARIAN

"Your people"? The Nigerian Cartel?

SERINA

(v.o.)

They're my spam brokers, so they handle shit like that for me, yeah.

She's eating alone, focusing on her food, but there's something lonely about it.

DOCUMENTARIAN

And you don't see yourself ever getting out of this life? Going legit?

SERINA

Fuck no. This is way more interesting than an office job, and pays better too.

DOCUMENTARIAN

What if you could get something better?

SERINA

Maybe I could see myself doing what Wilson does. But they'd never give me...

(shrugs)

It's all a game, it's all a bullshit fixed game. And I'd rather be a player than be played.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

SERINA (cont'd)
So like the song says, spammer for
life, yo.

Fade to black.

INT. STAGE. DAY.

The lights go up on two people on a stage dressed to be a "fireside chat" interview. They start talking in Mandarin, but soon after an on-screen "setting" switches it to English.

ANNETTE
Amazing. Just amazing.

DOCUMENTARIAN
Thank you. In my opinion the credit goes to the subjects, who were wonderfully generous with their time and unbelievably open.

ANNETTE
Their lives are so sad, and yet they have such an amazing attitude. For the most part.

DOCUMENTARIAN
No, it's true. We can really learn a lot from these people. When I first suggested doing a show about the lives of people in the west, the response was: "What? Why? We have slums here."

ANNETTE
But it's not the same. There's hope here for people to, to climb and to achieve something. There, there's just... nothing.

DOCUMENTARIAN
But you can see, they don't live like that. They live like their lives matter. They have to.

ANNETTE
Now that we've gotten a glimpse into these lives, I know I'm not alone in wanting to know: what happened to them? Especially Anton, with the horrible accident with his brother.

(CONTINUED)

Documentarian nods.

ANNETTE

Well... what happened!?! (she pretends to be jumping out of her seat, and the audience laughs)

DOCUMENTARIAN

Well, before we jump right to that, there's one last piece of footage that I have to show--

ANNETTE

No! No more delays!

DOCUMENTARIAN

Right after I finished the interviews with them, we thought we'd arrange for them all to meet. Since they were in a similar situation, we thought maybe together they could come up with ideas on how to achieve something more with their lives.

In a traditional western meeting place, where they'd feel at home.

ANNETTE

OK, this sounds interesting.

DOCUMENTARIAN

I'm glad you approve.

ANNETTE

Proceed!

INT. BOWLING ALLEY. NIGHT.

Anton, Karen, Gary, Oscar, and Serina sit around a table. Gary is pouring the drinks.

GARY

Well, this is weird.

OSCAR

(to the POV)

Are you going to ask us questions?

KAREN

Apparently he's just going to record this -- he's not watching live.

(CONTINUED)

Karen shrugs. The others just mostly look awkward and quiet.

Timelapse to:

The pitcher and drink levels have dropped.

ANTON

Yeah, honestly, who doesn't grow up wanting to make robots! That's awesome. Wow. How could you guys be on this show?

GARY

Well, it's... it's pretty stressful, and repetitive.

KAREN

And it's not really making robots, more assembling someone else's robots.

ANTON

Still, wow. And you?

SERINA

Freelance promotions.

Oscar and Anton look impressed by this, but Karen's eyes narrow.

KAREN

Freelance, huh? As in the get-a-lot-of-work-from-Nigeria freelance?

SERINA

Maybe.

Karen snorts at this. Gary tries to shift the focus.

GARY

So, Oscar, you were saying you live in Parkdale? We used to live there. How've the pipes been holding up?

Timelapse to:

SERINA

(on the phone)

Listen Ronald, Mom's really sick. I don't know if any night this week is good -- I'll be at Bayview-Crest more often than I'll be home.

(CONTINUED)

KAREN

Do you think you could talk to your
"clients" somewhere else?

Serina gives her a withering look and walks away.

OSCAR

That's too bad about her Mom.

GARY

So you were saying your contract is
up?

OSCAR

Yeah, the metatagging is next, but
you need a history degree for that.
So I'll have to find something
else.

Gary pours Oscar another drink.

KAREN

Still, it's cool that you got to
check it out.

OSCAR

Oh, yeah. It was great.

KAREN

And before anything's censored or
privatized, eh?

OSCAR

Yeah, entirely uncut. After I'm
done they'll be getting a new wave
of people to privatize the
sensitive data.

ANTON

Like, the boobies?

OSCAR

Yeah, well, some of that. But
they're more worried about
financial info and passwords and
stuff. There was a lot of fraud
that happened when they originally
launched this service on the
mainland.

Karen's suddenly struck by a thought.

ANTON

There was this time? Me and Toph were working on this bridge and we could totally see these ladies sunbathing in the nude and you could see their...

Serina hears this as she sits back down.

SERINA

Oh boy oh boy, nude huh? Was that a first for you, homespun?

Anton smiles at her at first, confused by her jokey tone.

ANTON

No. Like, the hundredth.

KAREN

Leave him alone.

SERINA

This gig doesn't pay enough to ignore dumbassery.

She gets another call and leaves the table.

KAREN

(jaw dropping)
She's getting paid?

She looks at Gary, who shrugs.

Timelapse: food appears and disappears, so do drinks. Serina's on the phone again.

KAREN

So is there like a million security protocols with your job? We've had jobs with new designs for bots that require blood samples, DNA scrambling, the whole nine.

OSCAR

Usually, it's locked down pretty tight, especially for non-mainland workers. But because I'm -- well, long story short, I've got higher access privileges.

GARY

(jokey)
And now you can change the past.

(CONTINUED)

OSCAR

No, no, everything's read-only of course. But I can turn off collisions, do unlimited time jumps, sign in multiple operators -- it was pretty cool when he upgraded my access, I suddenly had like a million more options on my overlays.

KAREN

No kidding. So have you snuck in anyone before?

OSCAR

Yeah, there's this kid in the neighbourhood -- I try to look out for him, he's an orphan. And I was telling him about when we were young, how many cars there were. But he wouldn't believe me. So when I got the access I was actually able to show him. His face was like, whoa!

GARY

That must have blew his mind.

OSCAR

Totally. Like, if the schools could use it you'd get more people going to high school -- but it's going to be really expensive. It's mostly going to be used by mainlanders who want to sort of visit here but...

GARY

Who don't actually want to visit. Cheaper than an air flight, safer, cleaner...

Time lapse:

KAREN

You must have gone back and watched your prom, or something.

OSCAR

No... prom wasn't a big deal for me and... there's a lot to do. I'm more interested in the history aspect of it than like, my personal life I guess. Mostly I try to forget that stuff.

(CONTINUED)

There's a moment where people avert their eyes at the rawness of that admission. Then Karen plows through.

KAREN

Well, surely there's something you'd like to see while you still have free access. I would love to... (looks at Gary) Gary and I have this long-standing...well, it's not an argument, really...

GARY

Hoo boy.

KAREN

We met at this party. He says I talked to him first. I'm like, no way, you came up to me.

GARY

She hit on me! Believe it or not, folks...

Everybody laughs.

KAREN

I don't suppose...

OSCAR

The thing is, I've been pulling a lot of long shifts lately, so the doctors say I have to watch my in-world time...

Karen and Gary both nod.

GARY

We wouldn't want you to endanger your health, it was just an idea...

OSCAR

...but a couple hours probably wouldn't hurt. I've probably got enough beer in my system to dampen the effects.

KAREN

I feel a little strange about it, since we hardly know each other.

OSCAR

But still, you know, it's like -- you should be able to check out the

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

OSCAR (cont'd)
time you met. It's like, it's your
history, why should only rich
people get access?

GARY
The man's got a point.

Time lapse:

OSCAR
Just so you know, my place is a bit
of a mess. I haven't had visitors
in a while.

ANTON
Can I come too?

Oscar is a little drunk by this point.

OSCAR
Sure!

KAREN
Well, shall we?

Serina notices people are leaving.

OSCAR
We're going back in time. Wanna
come?

Serina notices Karen's irritation at this, and smiles.

SERINA
Definitely.

They get up and get their stuff. Karen casually flips an
empty glass and places it on top of the POV. It flies around
for a bit, banging against the glass, and then gives up.

Timelapse: as everybody leaves.

INT. STAGE. DAY.

Lights come up on the interview and applause.

DOCUMENTARIAN
Well, I don't know if I deserve
applause for getting trapped in a
glass, but...

(CONTINUED)

ANNETTE

You don't.

He shrugs.

ANNETTE

And if you're telling me that's the end of the story then I will have to kill you.

Laugh from the audience.

DOCUMENTARIAN

The bad news is I wasn't able to shoot any more.

ANNETTE

I will shoot you, mister!

DOCUMENTARIAN

The good news is that their time using the Wayback Machine feature was recorded in its entirety.

ANNETTE

Thank god for technology.

DOCUMENTARIAN

I suppose. Though it basically renders people like me obsolete.

ANNETTE

Never!

DOCUMENTARIAN

Well, I guess someone has to edit the footage. Which is what I did for this. Would you like to see?

Annette looks at him mock angrily. The crowd giggles.

DOCUMENTARIAN

I'll take that as a yes.

Fade to black.

EXT. STREET

Oscar is standing alone against a parchment coloured background that has the repeating text THERE IS NO DATA AT THIS TIME.

(CONTINUED)

KAREN

(v.o.)

It's giving a warning. Do I want to ignore or quit?

OSCAR

Try hitting ignore.

Karen appears, first in low rez and gradually into full resolution. Then Gary.

KAREN

I'm just seeing a blank yellowish--

OSCAR

Yeah, this is the time before they started recording. When everyone's here we'll skip ahead.

Serina and finally Anton show up. Oscar makes a few hand gestures and they're in the streets of 2020. They are a little apart from the crowds of people. Oscar is in his jumpsuit, and adopts more of a leadership role.

ANTON

Holy... the tower's not busted up.
That's cool--

He's looking up and pointing, and a passerby knocks him spinning.

OSCAR

Yeah, you need to stay out of the way of in-world people.

KAREN

Anything else we should know, Oscar?

OSCAR

Well, you should be able to call up the chronometer on your overlays.

He motions in the air, and so does Karen.

Karen takes Gary's hand.

KAREN

Well, not to be rude, but I think we'll make the most of the time we have.

(CONTINUED)

GARY

Thanks very much, Oscar.

Karen is setting her overlay and nods agreement. She nudges Gary to do the same. When they're set, she looks up with an impatient smile.

KAREN

Well. OK. Nice to have met you all.

Serina's arms are crossed, and she looks off somewhere else. Oscar waves.

Karen and Gary disappear.

ANTON

Whoa.

OSCAR

I know, freaky eh?

SERINA

They left in a hurry.

OSCAR

Yeah, they wanted to watch their first date.

ANTON

You think they'll watch themselves... do it?

Serina smacks her head at this.

OSCAR

Probably not on the first date. It'd be more romantic stuff. That's how a lot of people use this on the mainland, anyway. Check out moments they want to relive.

SERINA

Or the ones they totally regret. To see if they could have done it differently.

Anton blinks at this and starts to have an idea.

OSCAR

That's true.

Serina looks at the people passing by with packages and bags.

(CONTINUED)

SERINA

Man. Everyone's been shopping.

OSCAR

Yeah. Different times.

SERINA

I was born in the wrong decade.

OSCAR

Wanna go window shopping? I know where there's a mall nearby.

ANTON

Guys? I'm gonna take off. There's something I've gotta see.

He's looking at his overlay.

ANTON

See you later.

He tries to disappear, making a few pushing motions, but doesn't. He just ends up wandering off.

SERINA

I guess he realized there were naked ladies to peep on.

Oscar laughs nervously.

EXT. STREET. NIGHT.

Gary and Karen walk down the street. Gary's taking it all in, but Karen's more focused

GARY

Wow. This doesn't look like Bloor at all.

KAREN

It's not.

GARY

Wasn't the party we met off of Bloor?

KAREN

Yeah, but we're not going to the party.

They come up to an ATM and Karen stops.

(CONTINUED)

GARY

We're not? So you're willing to admit you hit on me?

KAREN

Listen. So this stupid documentary thing. It was supposed to be good publicity, to get us closer to Shanghai, right?

GARY

Yeah...

KAREN

But actually, we've lost money. We got our first invalid baby in, what? Six batches?

GARY

Yeah, but --

KAREN

I'm not pointing fingers. I'm just saying, as soon as I heard that spammer character got paid to do it when we've lost money -- I just think we need to take advantage of the situation here. Just to be fair to us.

GARY

Right...

KAREN

'Cause honey, I can't deal with any more than five years. We gotta get back to where we were before this started.

Slowly nods.

GARY

To get us back on the right track.

KAREN

Right, 'cause your plan is good. It is. But now I've got a plan to get us back to your plan.

She looks over at someone going up to the ATM.

EXT. ROOFTOP. TWILIGHT.

Anton is watching Past Toph and Past Anton collecting some silk from behind a billboard.

Past Toph is at the top of a ladder and Past Anton is holding it.

Anton is staring at Past Anton.

PAST ANTON

Hey Toph, are you hungry? I'm getting hungry.

PAST TOPH

Yeah, we'll eat after this.

PAST ANTON

I been thinking about those sandwiches you made for hours.

Toph has a little smile. His mood in general is better than when we saw him last, at the end of his rope.

PAST TOPH

Uh oh. Babe alert!

PAST ANTON

What?

PAST TOPH

You're not going to believe this, Anton.

Anton starts to smile, remembering.

PAST ANTON

What? You see more spizz? What?

PAST TOPH

There's a couple of ladies on the top of that building.

PAST ANTON

What? What? Are they beautiful?

PAST TOPH

They are... and they're not wearing any clothes.

PAST ANTON

No!

(CONTINUED)

PAST TOPH
Come up here and see.

PAST ANTON
Oh, no. No, I don't think so.

Anton pushes by his reluctant self and climbs the ladder.

PAST TOPH
What -- oh, you're blushing, Anton.

PAST ANTON
Am not.

Anton gets to the top.

ANTON
Oh my god, boobies! Toph, check out those boobies! Four of them!

Past Toph climbs down.

PAST ANTON
There weren't really naked ladies up there, were there?

PAST TOPH
Naw, I was just joking.

Anton follows him down the ladder.

ANTON
He wasn't! There were four boobies! One two three four!

PAST ANTON
I knew it.

Toph takes the ladder down.

PAST TOPH
Let's go sit over there and eat those sandwiches.

Anton watches, melancholy, as the two of them walk away into the sunset.

INT. MALL. DAY.

Oscar is looking in the window of a toy store. Serina comes up to him.

SERINA

Wow, it looks so different with so many people in here. And every one of these units are occupied -- nothing's boarded up. Reminds me of a Bollywood movie.

She notices his focus. She looks at the window, but the majority of stuff is blurred out.

SERINA

What are you looking at?

OSCAR

Um, I forgot I'd pixelated this store already. There was a toy here I had when I was a kid. I was trying to remember when I got it -- I think it was my 7th birthday.

SERINA

Well, couldn't you just watch your 7th birthday and see it?

OSCAR

I guess so. But we were still in the suburbs then.

SERINA

Fancy.

OSCAR

No, well, it was before the demalgamation. And years before the checkpoints.

SERINA

Still, I'd be into seeing it. I've only seen, like, soap operas and stuff set there.

OSCAR

Huh.

It'll be a long walk.

Serina shrugs.

EXT. STREET

Karen and Gary are following and middle-aged man. Unlike most tailing scenes, they're only ever a couple steps behind him, Karen in the lead.

GARY
You don't have to get that close.

KAREN
I just don't want him to get away.

GARY
You can totally tell you've never tailed anyone before.

KAREN
(mockingly)
Oh, listen to Magnum P.I. over here.

He stops in front of a storefront window.

He looks at a menu in a restaurant and decides to go in.

Karen's frustrated by this delay, but Gary smooths out her hair and gets her to relax.

KAREN
Oh wait, can't we just fast forward through this?

GARY
Oh yeah...

EXT. UNDERPASS

Anton follows around Past Anton and Past Toph, enjoying reliving their antics.

They encounter another silk collector, who's beat them to a cache. They are good natured on the surface about it, but Anton gives him the finger to his face.

At some point, Anton notices that he's near the bridge that Toph fell from.

EXT. MIDTOWN STREETS. DAY.

Serina and Oscar are a strange duo, but they're talking away.

They're walking determinedly through streets that are more sparse than the downtown they've just come from.

Oscar points at someone and makes a joke, which earns a rare smile from Serina.

INT. OLD MAN'S APARTMENT. NIGHT.

Karen and Gary squeeze in behind the old man.

They start to look around the apartment while the old man goes about his business.

KAREN

Does he look rich?

GARY

Not ostentatiously. You hoping for piles of gold?

They look around. He listens to the answering machine as he pours himself some water.

MACHINE

Hey Dad, it's Sherry.

GARY

(guiltily)
Oh, he's got kids.

MACHINE

Just wanted to let you know, I talked to Mom, and she was saying that we're really --

He stops the machine, deletes the message.

KAREN

See? He's a bastard. Sherry'll never see a dime.

Gary notices the old computer set up.

GARY

Check out the keyboard. It's a qwerty.

(CONTINUED)

KAREN

Oh, those things were so gross. Remember that ad where all the germs and hair and shit started crawling out of the keyboard?

GARY

But if he's going to login to his bank it'll be easy to see him do it.

They look over at their mark, but he's installed himself in front of the TV. Gary gets comfortable.

GARY

And now... we wait.

Karen pulls up her overlay.

KAREN

Now... we fast-forward.

The environment speeds up and we see a blip of the old man in front of the computer.

GARY

Wait!

They go back, and watch as the old man checks his email. There're no messages. He goes to bed.

They exchange a look.

Karen fast-forwards to morning. The light is better. She fast-forwards through his morning routine, until he sits himself down in front of the computer with a coffee.

They start watching it in real time. He loads up a file called memoirs.doc. He straightens up his desk.

KAREN

Can I just fast-forward it to the part where he dies?

Gary snorts. And then, a sticky note beside the monitor catches his attention. It reads: TD \$ - jpatrick - of999fkkea\$0Ik

GARY

Karen -- does that look like bank account info...?

She sees it and starts gesturing madly.

(CONTINUED)

KAREN

Oh shit, it's still good. Let's see how much liquid assets he has -- oh shit.

GARY

Oh shit what?

KAREN

I think we're out of the diaper changing business, Gary.

They laugh and hug.

OLD MAN

What do you think you're doing?

They freeze in their tracks, and look at the man, who's staring at the screen.

OLD MAN

No one cares what happened in your life, old man!

They relax, realizing he's talking to himself.

EXT. STREETS. MIDTOWN.

Serina and Oscar are walking through the suburbs.

SERINA

Is it starting to look familiar?

OSCAR

That hospital looks... I think I remember that.

SERINA

Hospitals all look the same.

OSCAR

Yeah, more or less. I bet the Bayview-Crest is fancier, though. Inside.

Serina shrugs non-committally.

OSCAR

Oh! This is the street.

I think it's great that you visit your mom so much. I tried to go

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

OSCAR (cont'd)
every night but sometimes I missed
visiting hours. I didn't get
finished at work fast enough. I'm
kind of slow.

SERINA
Yeah, the stuff about my mom...

She looks at Oscar and notices his nose is bleeding. She
gets a tissue out and gives it to him.

SERINA
Here, have a Kleenex.

She watches her overlays, and more to herself says...
Man, you make so little there is no
point to spamming you, is there?

OSCAR
Huh? Thanks.

I know it's hard to talk about,
like, the documentary guy wanted me
to talk about my mom but I
couldn't. But I know with you,
you've been through it too. You
know how you can tell someone's a
good person?

Serina looks at him with dead eyes.

SERINA
How?

OSCAR
No, I mean-- here it is.

They're looking at an unremarkable suburban house.

SERINA
Kind of puny.

OSCAR
That's funny. I was thinking it's
way bigger than I remembered.

He looks at her with a smile but she looks away. The rapport
over the last few hours has been lost. She puts on her
sunglasses.

SERINA

I'm gonna -- check out that house
down the block. The big one.

OSCAR

Oh. OK.

Serina walks off.

Oscar watches her go and then walks into the backyard of his
childhood home.

He walks along the side of the house, touching the brick in
the wall, looking at the thin little path worn in the
ground.

The backyard is sparse. There's a small area around the
sliding doors of patio stones and a barbeque, with a picnic
table.

On the picnic table is a seven year old boy, Past Oscar.
He's lying down and holding an army man and a spider against
the sky, making them fight, squinting.

Oscar stands over his past self.

PAST OSCAR

OK, I'm ready for a surprise!

From the dim light of the house, we see the silhouette of
Oscar's Mother. Oscar sees her, and steps back.

OSCAR'S MOTHER

Are you suuuuure?

Oscar's Mother slides back the screen door and steps out
with a cupcake with a bunch of candles on it.

OSCAR'S MOTHER

Surprise!

Past Oscar mimes complete and ecstatic surprise. Oscar
smiles at this. He has trouble looking at his mother, like
he's staring directly into the sun.

Oscar walks towards the house, and sits down against the
house on the patio stones. From this perspective he can see
the present she has hidden behind her back.

EXT. UNDER THE BRIDGE. DAY.

Anton is under the bridge where his brother had the accident.

Anton is trying to change the time, unsuccessfully.

He's gesturing with frustrated movements, occasionally looking up to see if he can see anyone on the bridge above.

Eventually he does it. We can see Toph starting to climb down over the edge.

ANTON
(more to himself)
Toph! Don't, Toph.

Then, Toph swings on the rope and ends up landing on a hidden ledge under the bridge.

Keeping the rope taut, he pulls out something from his backpack and throws it over the side, at the same time as throwing the rope back. A few seconds later it makes a splash.

Anton's face moves from shock, to joy.

ANTON
I knew it, I knew you'd never slip
Toph, I -- you're alive. You're
alive!

From above, we see Past Anton's head poke over the side, and his howl. This makes Toph flinch. We can see him move to the edge, and look up, then look down.

Finally, Toph finds a place to sit and wait. Anton's face is reflecting his gradual hurt realization of how he's been abandoned, deliberately.

ANTON
You're alive?

INT. FANCY SUBURBAN HOME. DAY.

Serina is walking around in an utterly silent house.

At first it appears empty as she slowly walks through it.

But then she notices a woman sitting alone in a chair. She's got a sudoku puzzle going but she's mostly just looking out the window.

Serina looks at the woman for a second, a slightly disturbed look on her face, and then she turns away.

EXT. SUBURBAN BACKYARD

She walks to Oscar's backyard along the skinny little path. The sound of people (in contrast to the previous lonely silent house) makes her smile.

At first, she doesn't notice Oscar sitting there, just Past Oscar and his mom playing and fooling around with the new toy.

She sees Oscar then crosslegged on the patio stones. He's facing away from her, slumped, deathly still.

A small blip of blood hits the patio stones.

She comes slowly around and her face, for the first time, shows genuine concern.

We see Oscar's face. His eyes, closed, are streaming blood, as are his ears and nose.

Serina steps away, and the noise wakes Oscar.

OSCAR
(his voice slurred)
I wasn't crying.

SERINA
I -- OK.

OSCAR
I've been here too long.

Serina takes his hands.

SERINA
We've got to get you some help. Can
you stand?

Oscar does.

Fade to black.

INT. HOSPITAL

Shot of Oscar in a hospital bed, looking worn out and destitute.

The Asian doctor from the clinic is berating him.

OSCAR

(v.o.)

I suppose it was a risky thing to do.

EXT. STREET

Shot of Serina, walking alone, her face impassive and her sunglasses on.

SERINA

(v.o.)

It was a stupid thing to do.

INT. HOSPITAL

Oscar's face lights up as Serina arrives. She's come to visit him.

OSCAR

(v.o.)

But I can't say I totally regret it, though.

INT. SERINA'S APARTMENT

Oscar is sitting on Serina's couch. In the background we catch glimpses of Willy, playing with the toy that Oscar liked as a kid.

DOCUMENTARIAN

But you probably wouldn't do it again, though.

OSCAR

No, I mean, when I originally agreed to be on the show --

Serina hands him a glass of water and sits down beside him. She's eating a bowl of ice cream.

(CONTINUED)

OSCAR

Thanks. I guess I just needed to connect with people. But then, all that stuff happened, and I came close to losing my job...

DOCUMENTARIAN

Did they discover that you'd let people in-world?

OSCAR

Kind of, well... I think they were gonna fire me, but then Serina's people got in touch with them.

SERINA

Yeah. Class action labour suit changed their tune.

OSCAR

They actually moved me from a sub-sub-contract to a sub-contract. Which is good, shorter hours, better pay...

SERINA

Much better pay. It's worth talking to him now. Damn, this Yummer's is so creamy.

Oscar laughs at this.

SERINA

I'm serious. If I need to go out for groceries, I'll just talk to him about some mutual fund packages or something.

OSCAR

She does! It's usually pretty informative, too.

DOCUMENTARIAN

And does this bother you?

OSCAR

I spend all day looking at brands and logos, so I'm pretty immune to it.

Though I have a sudden craving for a bowl of that Yummer's.

They laugh and he leaves the shot.

(CONTINUED)

DOCUMENTARIAN

Did you invite him to move in with you?

She looks a little uncomfortable at the question.

SERINA

He still gets dizzy spells occasionally so it's good to have someone else around... and his place was a total dump. I hated staying over there. (looks up self-consciously)

Not that I was staying over there, like every night or anything, but...

Oscar sits down with his ice cream.

DOCUMENTARIAN

Is this a case of opposites attract?

Oscar laughs. Serina gets up, an appalled look on her face.

SERINA

I think we're done here.

She walks off. A shot of Oscar with a small smile, eating his ice cream.

INT. SILK STATION

A shot of silk being measured.

It's being measured by Anton, who's working behind the counter. He's bantering easily and enthusiastically with the silk gatherers.

ANTON

(v.o.)

Yeah, I guess I was down to my last bottle of water when I came down to Harry's. He said I could run the counter, and since I pretty much know everything there is to know about the biz, it worked out.

CUT TO: Anton, twirling on the chair behind the counter. He's eating an apple.

(CONTINUED)

ANTON

I'd really rather not talk about him. No, you know what, I will, who cares what he thinks. My so-called brother Christopher came by a few weeks ago after your show aired.

He claimed he'd only done it to scare me away from the Tower. He's working as a farmer now -- a shit-heel farmer!

He brought a bunch of vegetables. As if I'd eat his bribe.

DOCUMENTARIAN

What did you do with them?

ANTON

(rolls eyes)

No.

I traded them for explosives.

Anton gets out a hardcover journal named TOWER ASSAULT II. Puts on a pair of glasses.

ANTON

(flipping through pages)

So you know how my stupid brother was always going on about how dangerous it was to climb the tower?

Shows a diagram of the tower on its side -- the mental model is of a tree being felled.

ANTON

Well, fine. If we can't go to the tower, why not bring the tower to us? By my projections, this should bring the sweet sweet spizz a few blocks from here.

DOCUMENTARIAN

You're planning to blow it up?

ANTON

Don't worry, we'll let you know so you can film it.

(CONTINUED)

DOCUMENTARIAN
But isn't that illegal?

ANTON
(scoffingly)
Illegal.

Maybe in Sri Lanka, or wherever it
is you're from, but this is the
wild wild west.

INT. STUDIO

The lights go up and the audience applauds.

ANNETTE
Well, first thing -- explosives?

DOCUMENTARIAN
We checked that. It was actually
some kind of potters' clay.

ANNETTE
Phew!

(raises an appraising eyebrow)

And what about Bonnie and Clyde?
People are wondering if they got
away with their strange heist.

DOCUMENTARIAN
I wasn't able to do a follow-up
with them...

Audience and Annette moan.

So instead I arranged for something
different.

Karen, dressed glamorously for a TV appearance, strides out.
She waves at the audience as she seats herself. The audience
goes nuts.

ANNETTE
Welcome!

DOCUMENTARIAN
Hi Karen.

KAREN
It's funny to see him in real life.
You know, instead of just a flycam
with a voice.

(CONTINUED)

ANNETTE

Does he look like you imagined him?

KAREN

More or less. I imagined him with a mustache, the Asian patriarch style.

ANNETTE

Oh. So he's a big disappointment.

KAREN

Not at all. Younger than I imagined.

The documentarian squirms a bit under the ladies' scrutiny.

ANNETTE

So when last we saw you and Clyde, I mean Gary, you had just broken into a rich man's bank account. What happened next?

KAREN

Well, as you saw -- we were pretty excited. We logged out and went home, talking about which robot conferences we should go to first, how we'd be eating at the moving restaurant in Hanoi, you know that one--

ANNETTE

Oh yes, we had the head chef on last week. I never thought I'd like predatarian food but -- yum!

KAREN

I saw that! I love your show, by the way. It's a real thrill to be here.

ANNETTE

Thank you! But go on, go on.

KAREN

As I said, top of the world -- and then we got home. And we were promptly arrested.

Annette seems shocked by this, but the documentarian chuckles.

(CONTINUED)

KAREN

Yep. We were busted for attempted phishing, second degree.

ANNETTE

It looks like you got the right lawyer, though. If you're here.

KAREN

Well -- because of the in-world recording, we were advised to plead guilty. We were sentenced to five to ten years in Kingston Penitentiary, which is where I am now.

ANNETTE

I'm confused. How can you be there and--

KAREN

Thanks to some very generous sponsorship from Yamaha, I was able upload schematics and have them manufacture a robot proxy of myself to appear on the show.

Annette is surprised. Karen unflaps a part of her skin and reveals the robotics underneath in an almost flirtatious way, like you would show someone a peek of a tattoo on your shoulder.

ANNETTE

Un-be-lievable.

She takes Karen's hand and examines it.

ANNETTE

That's just phenomenal craftsmanship.

So you're sitting in a cell in North America somewhere.

Karen nods. Annette leans over and whacks the documentarian, who is chuckling.

ANNETTE

"We're going to get Karen to appear on the show" he says. I say "We don't have the budget for an intercontinental flight." And he says, all mysterious, "Don't worry about it."

(CONTINUED)

That's just marvellous. Just beautiful work. I'm sure you have a bright future ahead of you. When you get out of jail. (audience laughs) If not in battlebots, obviously you can do amazing proxybots to order.

KAREN

Oh, no more made-to-order bullshit for me. I'll be sticking with battlebots.

Annette is a little thrown off by this. She gives Karen a look, but Karen stares back with a steely gaze.

ANNETTE

Well...

KAREN

Probably stealth battlebots like this one.

ANNETTE

Like this...? I... I've never heard of a stealth battlebot.

KAREN

Well, I expect everyone will have heard about them after this hits the news. It's my own line, I'm calling it the Prepare To Be Anhillated brand.

Her eyes iris to reveal gun barrels.

DOCUMENTARIAN

Oh my god.

ANNETTE

Maybe we should cut to commercial. Can we... (looks at Karen) can we cut to commercial?

KAREN

Sure. It's your show.

The three of them sit there for a second.

KAREN

Are we off?

(CONTINUED)

ANNETTE

Yes.

Karen relaxes, rubs her arms.

KAREN

Boy, these lights are bright, huh?

The others nod and smile nervously.

DOCUMENTARIAN

So, uh... how's Gary getting along?

KAREN

Not so great.

He was stabbed to death the second week he was in prison.

Annette puts her head in her hands.

Someone says that the commercial break is over.

Karen starts to get up.

DOCUMENTARIAN

Please don't kill us.

KAREN

No, no. This was just a product demo. I hope you don't mind. I really do appreciate the opportunity, by the way.

They breathe a sigh of relief.

KAREN

But before I go I'm going to kill a couple of audience members, though. Just to create a bit of buzz for my new line.

She walks towards the camera with a pleasant smile, her gun-eyes shining, and the screaming starts.

CUT TO BLACK.