

MINT CHOCOLATE

Written by

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INT. HOUSE - DAY

In a remote Chinese village near the south, we see a one-story house with outdated decoration. No lights are on. Even in the daytime, the interior is somewhat gloomy.

The TV is on, and a noisy and colorful commercial is playing on it. PIN (72) sits in front of the TV - needlessly close. His hair is completely white, his body is thin, and he is wearing pajamas.

PIN
(nervously)
Yu!

His eyes stares at the screen.

PIN (CONT'D)
C-come and look at this.

YU (O.S.)
I'm at the kitchen.

Still, she comes. We see YU (68), his wife, enters the room, wiping her hands on her apron.

On the TV screen in front of them is a McDonald's commercial. The TV is old, so the colors look a little distorted. But we can clearly see a group of children and their parents laughing and eating ice cream in the park. Underneath it reads, "Mint Chocolate flavor brand new."

Pin looks at the screen, then looks at Yu.

YU (CONT'D)
It's too cold for you.

PIN
I don't have any real teeth to be harmed by that.

YU
I mean your stomach.

PIN
I can hold it in my mouth until it's warm enough.

Yu is silent for a while. She watches as her husband is childishly flashing a shy smile that did not belong to his age.

On the bookshelf behind him is their black-and-white wedding photo. The man and woman on it are young and strong.

She looks at the man in that picture and then at her husband in front of her. She seems to have gotten used to the contrast.

YU
Have you taken your pills today?

PIN
I will.

Silence. The commercial ends. Now it's on a news channel. Yu walks away.

Pin looks at her direction.

PIN (CONT'D)
(in low voice)
Wan called a few days ago.

YU (O.S.)
What?

PIN
She said she found a new -

Yu rushes back. Pin seems a little frightened.

PIN (CONT'D)
A - a new doctor that may have some ideas about my disorder.

YU
Disorder? You don't want to leave the house, that's not a disorder.

PIN
She said I'm sick. Not my stomach but my mind. Very badly.

YU
She's trying to kidnap you, again.

PIN
She's our daughter.

Yu keeps silent. Pin approaches her.

PIN (CONT'D)
I mean, she said she can buy something I need on the way to the hospital.

Yu glances at him.

YU
You're not making this up for ice
cream, are you?

PIN
I can give her a call right n-

YU
Ok. I'm leaving.

PIN
Now?

Yu wears her coat. She counts the money in her pocket.

YU
Now. What's the flavor again?

INT. BUS - DAY

A crowded bus pulls up to the platform.

The bus door opens, and Yu climbs onboard step by step,
clutching the handrail.

People automatically make way for her. At the end of the road, a
MAN who is focused on playing with his phone stands up and moves
aside. The man does not look at her the whole time.

Yu isn't paying attention to the empty seat at all. She looks
outside of the window. The sun is shining but it begins to
rain.

YU
This means a fox is going to marry
someone.

CUT TO:

INT. MCDONALD'S IN TOWN - DAY - FLASHBACK

It is the year 2000.

Yu and Pin are sitting at one side of the table, and on the
other side sits WAN as a child, who is wearing a red dress and
has three ice cream sundaes in front of the three of them.

Pin looks around nervously, but smiles at Wan when she notices
him.

WAN

Ma, how can it be rainy and sunny
at the same time?

Before Yu answer her questions, outside in the street, someone
lights fireworks. We hear the sound of EXPLOSIONS in the sky.

Suddenly, Pin screams and hides under the table. He then
reaches out and pulls Wan and Yu down as well. All three of
them covered under the table.

PIN

Don't shoot me! I'm a man with a
family! Don't take me away! I'll
tell you anything!

Pin cries. Yu hugs him like a baby. People begin to notice
them.

WAN

Why is Dad like that?

YU

He had too much ice cream.

CUT TO:

EXT. BUS STOP - DAY

Yu stands in front of the A MCDONALD'S POSTER. She takes out
a pair of glasses and puts them on.

She takes out a pencil and small notebook and begins to
transcribe the contents of the poster.

She studies the map of the village and town next to the bus
stop, copies it into her book, and then uses a red pencil to
mark the McDonald's branch on it.

On the other side of the bus stop, a few middle school students
are waiting for the bus. They stare at Yu and whisper about her.

WAN (O.S.)

They laughed at me, Ma!

Yu freezes. She turns around, we see Wan in a school uniform,
wiping tears from her face.

WAN (CONT'D)

The point is you are a huge liar!
They told me Dad is crazy and sick.

YU
(in a low voice)
He's not.

*
*
*

WAN
And I'm also crazy because I said
I'd be afraid of gunshots if I ate
ice cream!

*
*
*
*

Yu looks at her daughter in her hallucination.

*

YU
You're 30 now. You are not here,
you are in Shanghai.

*
*
*

WAN
I hate you!

*
*

Yu closes her eyes and opens again. Wan is gone.

*

Yu finishes her work. She stares back at those student, and
speaks in a low voice.

*

YU
Yes, I'm a spy from the Soviet
Union.

No one makes a sound. Yu takes off her glasses and walks
back.

EXT. MCDONALD'S IN TOWN - DAY

Yu waits in line at the dessert station.

WAITER
Hello. What would you like to have
today?

*
*

She shows her notes to the waiter.

YU
Can I have one of those Mint
Chocolate flavors, please?

WAITER
(confused)
Mint what? Never heard of that.
(glances at Yu)
Are you ok? Who's with you?

YU
It's a new flavor - May I speak to
your manager?

WAITER
It's our busiest time, I'm afraid
you can't.

CUT TO:

INT. MCDONALD'S IN TOWN - DAY

The manager, Mr. ZHAO(32), talks with Yu near the door.

ZHAO
This flavor is not offered here.

YU
But this is a McDonald's flavor.

ZHAO
I know.

They look at each other.

YU
So where can I find it?

ZHAO
In a larger city such as Shanghai,
I guess.

YU
Alright. Where's the nearest train
station?

CUT TO:

INT. HOUSE - EVENING

Yu returns home. Pin eats corn paste in the dark.

Yu begins to pack her suitcase.

PIN
Are you leaving me?

YU
Yes. Because you eat corn paste all
the time.
(beat)
I'm going to Shanghai. Pack your
stuff.

PIN
To see Wan?

Yu pauses.

YU
It's not about her. Let's go. Just
us.

PIN
(confused)
You're not going to see our little
girl?

YU
She's thirty now. She can buy her
own ice cream.

*
*

Pin washes dishes behind Yu.

PIN
There's... People outside... I
don't...

YU
There are always people outside.

Knowing his answer, Yu turns on the stove to cook.

CUT TO:

INT. HOUSE - EVENING

Six lunch boxes are laid out in the refrigerator.

YU
For the next two days, you will eat
these.

She takes the suitcase and leaves.

A few seconds later, Yu returns. She checks the rice cooker.

PIN
Yu.

YU
Yes?

PIN
Watch out for the people outside.

INT. TRAIN STATION - NIGHT

It is Yu's turn to stand in front of the service window. It is very noisy in the background and we can't hear the conductor's voice.

YU

Yes... A ticket to Shanghai... I'm okay with the sleeping berth. No, I'm alone... What do you mean by 'people over sixty-five years old'? I'm not ill.

Yu rummages around in her bag for a while and finds a faded green certificate. It reads "Health Certificate".

She turns over the certificate and inside is a photo of a plump brunette girl, about twenty years old.

YU (CONT'D)

See? That's me. Can you say No to that girl?

INT. TRAIN - NIGHT

Yu is sitting in the sleeper coach. Across from her are a MOTHER and DAUGHTER. The daughter, about three years old, has an electric doll on her lap that keeps playing a children's song on a loop.

The daughter climbs up on Yu's lap and smiles at her.

THE MOTHER

She thinks you look exactly like her passed-away grandmother.

YU

All older people look exactly the same.

(turns to the little girl)

I'm nothing like your grandma. See? I'm breathing.

The girl begins to cry.

INT. MEETING POINT - DAY

Yu waits for a taxi with her suitcase.

A noise that was not in reality. Yu does not look back, but she stands frozen in place and does not move otherwise.

*
*

Behind her, we see Wan crouching by a seat in the train station with two escort-like women, trying to pull out Pin, who is hiding under the seat. *

PIN *

I don't know you! I want my wife! *

Yu! Yu! *

WAN *

Dad, please - *

Yu closes her eyes. The hallucinatory scene continues. *

A slightly younger Yu rushes to them. She pushes aside the caregivers, and take her husband into her arms. *

She raises her head and looked angrily at Wan. *

WAN (CONT'D) *

You have to take him to a doctor sooner or later, Ma. *

YU *

By stealing him away from my house? *

No. *

WAN *

You can't take care of him forev- *

Yu gives up, she runs away from this scene. *

She gets into a taxi.

INT. TAXI - DAY

Yu closes the door.

YU *

Please take me to the nearest Mcdonald's. *

DRIVER *

There's one near this station. *

YU *

I - I don't want to be here. Just drive. *

She sighs.

YU (CONT'D)

Actually, can you take me to this
address? I'll find the letter M by
myself.

*
*

She passes the driver her NOTEBOOK. On that page, we see a
young woman's photo with the name Wan under it.

CUT TO:

INT. MCDONALD'S IN SHANGHAI - DAY

*

Yu waits in front of the counter.

*

Not too far away, there are some children playing on the slide
in the playground area.

*
*

After a while, a waiter comes out and gestures to her with his
hand to order from the machine.

*
*

Yu walks up to the machine alone, looking a little scared. She
tries to tap the screen with her hand and the pattern on it
immediately moves.

*
*
*

She glances at the waiter, who sweeps over, then unties his
apron and goes to the back of the kitchen.

*
*

Yu takes a deep breath.

*

She clicks a few times with trembling fingers, but each time
it's not right. She has to switch to another machine and then
click on the mint chocolate ice cream on the poster.

*
*
*

Finally, the payment window appears.

*

She looks for her bank card for a moment and sticks it in the
machine. Before entering her PIN, she looks around.

*
*

Everyone is busy with their own business.

*

She enters her PIN. The machine spits out the invoice. She takes
the invoice and walks to the counter to wait.

*
*

The waiter reappears and lazily makes a mint chocolate ice cream
and hands it to her.

*
*

Yu takes the ice cream and finds a seat. She licks it slowly.

*

INT. WAN'S APARTMENT- DAY

*

Yu knocks on the door. We hear small footsteps, the door does
not open. The voice of Wan's son, NAN (6), comes.

*
*

NAN
We don't buy things.

YU
I'm not here to sell.
(beat)
I'm here to give.

She shows A WHOLE PACK of ice cream.

YU (CONT'D)
Call me grandma.

The door opens.

CUT TO:

INT. WAN'S APARTMENT- DAY

Nan eats ice cream while Yu put them inside the fridge.

NAN
You're way cooler than Ma. Is that
why you're the GRAND-Ma?

YU
And you're way cooler than your Ma.
GRAND-son.

NAN
How come you've never been to our
house before?

YU
I live too far.
(beat)
And I had some misunderstanding
with your Ma.

NAN
Is that why you brought ice cream?
My Ma said that if you're sorry,
you have to apologize. Better bring
a gift.

Yu turns on the AC and sees one of Nan's paintings on the wall.

YU
Oh, Buddha. Please don't make him
an artist.

She gets up. Her back CLICKS.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Yu comes home. Pin eats corn paste in the dark.

She opens the fridge. Hot wind blow out. Something is wrong with the circuit.

Yu takes out the packed ice cream. It's all melted. *

Pin sits near her. He DRINKS the ice cream. She drinks with him. *

The phone RINGS. Pin picks up. *

PIN
It's for you. *
(beat) *
It's Wan. *

YU
Oh. *

Yu stands up. She looks nervous. *

YU (CONT'D) *
How - how do I look? *

PIN *
Great. *

Yu turns back. On the other side of the room, Wan, wearing a school uniform, nods, then steps into the shadows and disappears. *

Yu picks up. *

FADE TO BLACK.