

City Lights

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SUPER OVER BLACK:

"By the year 2031, advances in implant-assisted neurotelepathy allowed people the entire world over to communicate only through thought. For those who could afford it, language barriers were a thing of the past, as was miscommunication; everyone could now convey exactly what they were thinking to one another at a moment's notice.

As a result, traditional communication through speaking or text went unused and became quickly forgotten by the higher classes.

People with the implant lived in physical isolation, often with living situations set up such that there was no need to ever leave their homes."

CLOSE ON ALEXA'S FACE

We open on a close-up of ALEXA (28) looking up at us.

In front of her face floats DOZENS OF OVERLAPPING IMAGES: a frenetic blend of faces and places and colors, none of them lingering long enough to be made out clearly.

Alexa calmly watches the images as they blur by, processing them all at hyperspeed as we pull back to reveal:

INT. ALEXA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Alexa is sitting back on a sleek-looking RECLINED CHAIR that has several wires running into it.

On the top of the chair is a sensor-laden HEADREST that Alexa has her head on. The headrest has a blinking blue light on it that indicates it's working.

The whole room is lit by built-in blue and white lights that leave few shadows in the room - not that there's much in the room to cast them anyway; aside from Alexa's chair in the middle of the room, the apartment is mostly empty but for basic fixtures.

There's a LARGE WINDOW on one side of the room, and the camera turns away from Alexa to look out of it:

Across the street and a floor below, on ground level, is the WINDOW OF ANOTHER APARTMENT.

We can see someone walking around inside the other apartment as we-

CUT TO:

INT. RUTH'S APARTMENT - SAME

RUTH (26) moves around an apartment that's clearly nowhere near as nice as Alexa's; the whole place is a colorful nest of miscellaneous parts. Nothing matches, and everything looks like it's falling apart, but the whole place has a warm, homey feel to it.

Ruth is COOKING SOMETHING over a stove when-

THE LIGHTS FLICKER, and then DIE, leaving Ruth standing in the dark.

She sighs.

IN THE DARKNESS

Ruth flips on A FLASHLIGHT, followed by a few BATTERY POWERED LANTERNS, which she hangs up around the room.

RUTH'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

She then collapses onto her bed in a room still mostly dark.

Ruth turns onto her side, and just then she sees:

Out of the window of her room, the BRIGHT BLUE WINDOW of ALEXA'S APARTMENT across the street.

Ruth gets up, an idea forming in her head.

INT. HALLWAY - A LITTLE LATER

Ruth sneaks into the FANCY HALLWAY of Alexa's apartment is standing at AN ELECTRICAL BOX - a wire runs out of it towards Alexa's apartment.

She works carefully with PLIERS and a SCREWDRIVER to connect the electrical box to AN EXTENSION CORD that runs back towards her house.

RUTH'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Ruth runs back into her house - the lights are all ON again. A look of satisfaction spreads across Ruth's face just as-  
VWOOM - The lights SHUT OFF AGAIN...

ALEXA'S APARTMENT - SAME

And the power SHUTS OFF in Alexa's apartment too.

Alexa is suddenly SNAPPED OUT of the world of screens and lights in front of her face- She looks around, confused... she gets up, but not for any specific goal; she has no idea what to do in her powerless apartment.

She looks through her cabinets and around her kitchen when- SHE SEES A LIGHT coming from UNDER HER FRONT DOOR. A moving light, sweeping around outside.

Alexa approaches it cautiously, and opens the door-

INT. HALLWAY - SAME

And sees RUTH there, holding a flashlight.

Ruth was just trying to work on the electrical box - but she JUMPS BACK when Alexa opens the door, STARTLING Alexa just the same.

The moment of fear passes, and the two women look at each other, realizing that there was never any threat. Ruth LAUGHS.

RUTH  
(in Chinese, not subtitled)  
You scared me!

Alexa doesn't understand her, but smiles as a friendly response. Ruth notices that she doesn't understand.

Alexa POINTS at Ruth's flashlight, and then at her dark apartment. Ruth gets it - her power must be out too.

Ruth gives Alexa a "hold on" gesture, and runs out-

INT. RUTH'S APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Ruth hurriedly gathers up FLASHLIGHTS and LANTERNS in her arms, and rushes back out.

INT. ALEXA'S APARTMENT - A LITTLE LATER

Alexa's apartment is now GLOWING from the light of Ruth's flashlights and lanterns - Ruth sets up one last one, and Alexa tries her best to express her wordless thanks, but can't find the right gesture.

Alexa thinks for a moment - and then runs to her REFRIGERATOR, and pulls out a OPAQUE WHITE BOTTLE, which she rushes to bring to Ruth, offering it to her as a gift.

Ruth takes the bottle and politely DRINKS from it - and ALMOST GAGS. She looks closer at the bottle - on the front is a picture of FANCILY COOKED STEAK AND VEGETABLES.

Ruth looks up at Alexa, who is confused.

INT. RUTH'S APARTMENT - LATER

Alexa is now in Ruth's apartment, watching as Ruth WORKS IN THE KITCHEN, making something in the dim lanternlight.

Ruth OPENS UP A FLASHLIGHT and drops the batteries out of it into her hand, then grabs some STEEL WOOL from a cabinet over the sink, and rubs them together - launching SPARKS into a HOMEMADE FIRE-COOKER lined with bits of paper and wood for tinder.

The fire CATCHES, and Ruth quickly sets a PAN over it, and begins to prepare some FOOD... REAL FOOD.

AT RUTH'S KITCHEN TABLE - LATER

Alexa sits at Ruth's table as Ruth sets a plate in front of her - with REAL COOKED MEAT and some other foods.

Alexa sets one in front of herself too, and together they begin to eat. It's silent, but it's not awkward- Alexa tastes the food and LOVES IT, and Ruth watches her intently.

For a quiet moment, it's nice-

And then Alexa BURPS - a LOUD one too.

Ruth stares at her, ASTONISHED.

(CONTINUED)

Alexa rushes to cover her mouth, immediately embarrassed.

Ruth takes a deep breath, and then BURPS BACK at Alexa, even louder.

Now Alexa LAUGHS, and Ruth begins to laugh too.

AT RUTH'S FRONT DOOR - LATER

Alexa prepares to leave, and wordlessly thanks Ruth with a polite WAVE.

Ruth goes for a HUG - Alexa BACKS AWAY from it at first, but then lets it happen. As she pulls away from it, Ruth lets her hand LINGER on Alexa's arm for just a moment. She smiles at her.

Ruth gives her a FLASHLIGHT and Alexa walks out the door.

EXT. OUTSIDE RUTH'S FRONT DOOR - CONTINUOUS

Alexa closes Ruth's front door... but it DOESN'T CLOSE ALL THE WAY. Something's blocking it.

Alexa looks down - it's AN EXTENSION CORD, and it's leading back TOWARDS HER APARTMENT.

Ruth comes out now, seeing that the front door wouldn't close all the way. She goes to stop Alexa-

But Alexa is already walking back towards her apartment, FOLLOWING THE EXTENSION CORD WITH HER FLASHLIGHT as it snakes down the street.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Alexa follows it all the way back to the ELECTRICAL BOX right outside her apartment. She realizes what Ruth was doing there when she found her.

Ruth appears in the hallway behind Alexa, and Alexa turns to look at her- a look of disappointment spread across her face.

Alexa turns and walks into her apartment, not looking back, and closes the door behind her, leaving Ruth out in the cold.

## MONTAGE - VARIOUS

Alexa sleeps in the dark that night. Over the next couple weeks:  
She talks to the BUILDING MANAGER and reports the electrical issue.  
A REPAIRMAN fixes the electrical box.  
Alexa returns to her normal life in her reclining chair.  
Ruth returns to her normal life in her dark, powerless home.

## INT. ALEXA'S APARTMENT - A COUPLE WEEKS LATER

Alexa is in her RECLINED SEAT, but she looks BORED.

She hits a BUTTON on the armrest, and the lights and screens of the machine SHUT OFF.

Alexa stands up and stretches. She looks out her window, towards Ruth's apartment. Almost instinctively, she RUBS HER ARM with her other hand- just slightly, but in the same spot where Ruth left her hand linger.

Alexa opens up the FRIDGE. She's greeted by nothing but DOZENS OF WHITE BOTTLES, each with a DIFFERENT PICTURE OF FOOD ON IT. Disappointing.

She opens up her FREEZER- it hasn't been opened in a while, and the inside is thick with freezerburn and frost. She digs deep inside it and finds SOME FROZEN CHICKEN.

## AT HER KITCHEN

Alexa doesn't have a stovetop, so she grabs some DISHES and the FLASHLIGHT that Ruth gave her.

She finds a piece of METALLIC MESH in a drawer and, just as Ruth had done, she takes the BATTERIES out of the FLASHLIGHT and rubs them against the metal.

It SPARKS, and Alexa tries to use it to catch the small bits of tinder (some napkin bits) on the plate - she's not nearly as skilled at it as Ruth was.

But on her fourth or fifth try- a bit of napkin CATCHES THE SPARK, and begins to BURN.

Alexa smiles.

And immediately her FIRE ALARM goes off. The whole place begins to FLASH RED LIGHT - a bit overdramatic, for the small napkin burning on the plate.

EXT. ALEXA'S APARTMENT - SAME

From outside Alexa's apartment, we can see the FLASHING RED LIGHT in her window.

INT. ALEXA'S APARTMENT - SAME

With a disappointed sigh, Alexa begins to CLEAN UP what she was doing, putting out the little fire as the ALARM continues to blare.

Suddenly, there's a FRANTIC KNOCKING at the door.

Alexa opens the door to find-

RUTH, out of breath, sweating - clearly having just seen the alarm and run upstairs to Alexa's apartment. She sees Alexa is okay, and a look of relief washes over her.

Alexa is shocked to see Ruth. She opens the door a little more so that Ruth can come in.

Ruth sees the flashlight and burned napkin bits on the table and puts the pieces together. She laughs heartily.

Alexa laughs too, and puts a hand on Ruth's shoulder. They smile at each other.

THE END