

Your Day is My Night – Film Transcript

TC – 00:03:16 – Bedroom

MALE VOICE OVER: (In Chinese) This bed doesn't necessarily belong to any one person. Sometimes I sleep by myself...and sometimes I sleep with my dad. When there's an open bed, I'll sleep there. And if there's none available, we'll sleep together.

TC – 00:04:40 – Men's Bedroom

YUN XIU HUANG: (In Chinese) I made enough money to pay the snakehead. He gave me the documents and brought me to New York. He found me a closet in Chinatown to live in. It was so noisy and hard to sleep! From the very first night I got here, I knew that my strong singing voice would allow me to survive in this city. People like my singing. And I like bringing them happiness. But I'm just a tool for their celebrations. To survive you have to sacrifice, right? I don't know if you can feel it, but all my songs are about traveling and wanderlust. One night I was singing at a wedding, with the spotlight on me, it was like I was back in Club 86. The songs I sing are about crossing oceans and shedding your worries. China is so far away. My songs are like a bridge, helping my guests go back to their homeland of their dreams. Everyone misses their homeland, right?

TC – 00:06:43 – Exterior City Street

One time I went by myself into the subway. I was proud that I could take the train alone. A man made an announcement over the speakers that I couldn't understand. Everyone looked nervous. They told me to get out of the station ... "Go, go, go!" I didn't know where to go, or what to do! At that point, I was really scared. I started to cry. But now I'm fine. I don't take the subway anymore. I don't leave Chinatown, and I'm not afraid of anything.

TC – 00:08:14 – Women's Bedroom

ELLEN HO: (In Cantonese) I called my grandmother Yan-Yan. When I was seven, the village farmers were out of control. They came and broke down our door and beat my Yan-Yan and me. They tied us together. And took all our money and treasures. We had nothing left.

LINDA CHAN: You had nothing?

ELLEN HO: Yeah, nothing. Such terrible times. Unforgettable. But my Yan-Yan, she was a seamstress, and also a magician. She could use her magic powers to untie the rope. And so the two of us were able to escape. From then on, I slept with Yan-Yan on the same foam mat. We each had our own spot. She slept on the left and I slept on the right. As I grew bigger, she started to shrink. We could tell which side was which just by feeling our imprints on the mat. On my 12th birthday, she gave me a hard-boiled egg, which was a big deal.

LINDA CHAN: It was?

ELLEN HO: Yeah, a very big deal. She happily told me, “Starting today, we'll switch places on the bed mat.” I should sleep on the big side, and she would sleep on the small side. By the time I turned 14, she was gone, and I had the mattress all to myself. But I still reserved her spot, and slept on my side. The small side.

ELLEN HO: (Singing in Chinese, untranslated)

TC – 00:13:40 – Men’s Bedroom

KAM YIN TSUI: It's hot today. Spring is here. Huang what are you up today? Oh, so much money! No need to count it, just get out there and spend it!

KAM YIN TSUI:

(Singing “Happy Birthday” in English)

YUN XIU HUANG: Think about your tone.

(Sings “Happy Birthday”)

You're still out of tune.

HUANG: Could it reach us here?

TSUI: New York City isn't afraid.

HUANG: I get scared. Aren't your scared?

TSUI: It's dangerous on the West Coast, but it's too far away from us.

HUANG: But if war breaks out, it'd be disastrous.

TSUI: If a bomb hit a nuclear power plant...

HUANG: - a ton of people would die.

TSUI: The more technology, the more trouble.

HUANG: It was fine back when people were just farmers. No one got sick.

TSUI: Let's forget electricity and just use oil lamps.

TSUI: Huang!

HUANG: What?

TSUI: These shoes are dirty. You know they're not allowed inside.

HUANG: These shoes cost hundreds of dollars!

TSUI: Take them out, quickly!

HUANG: I'm not taking them out. If I take them out they'll be stolen. I'll put them here.
Do you have to be so picky? So picky!

TC – 00:16:21 – Women in Kitchen

SHEUT HING LEE: They need you to audition to hear how you sing. If you sing good enough, they'll accept you.

LINDA CHAN: If your singing is bad, they won't let you on stage. Same with dancing, if you're no good, you can't perform.

SHEUT HING LEE: You can audition, but you may never get on stage.

LOURDES: Hey. I'm Lourdes. I'm gonna be living here.

LINDA: (In Chinese) The landlord told me a new tenant would be moving in with us. (In English) The landlord told me about you. My name is Linda. Lourdes.

LOURDES: (English) Sue...Sue Lee?

SHEUT LEE: (English) Yeah.

LOURDES: (English) Ellen?

Ellen: (English) Ellen.

LINDA: (English) Wash your wash your hands when you walk in. We are very clean.

LOURDES: Sure.

SUET LEE: (Chinese) I don't recognize her.

ELLEN: Yeah, me neither.

SUET LEE: The landlord told you about this?

LINDA: Yeah

SUET LEE: I didn't know about it. She's washing her hands. OK, so I guess we know no someone's moving in. Why did they landlord find a westerner to live with us Chinese?

LINDA: (English) Take off your shoes!

(Wedding Announcements and singing in Chinese. No translation.)

TC – 00:18:43 – Wedding

HUANG: Back in '92, I owned a popular nightclub. I called it "Eighty-Six". Everyone knew what 86 meant. It was smart to name it that. The New Economic Policy salary was 86 RMB a month. The government mandated it. So that's why I picked that name. If you work hard in a work unit, you make 86 RMB. If you're just messing around, you still make 86 RMB. You come to my Club 86, drink some beer and forget all your worries.

(Pop Music in Chinglish, Huang Singing untranslated)

TC – 00:23:55 – Men's Bedroom, Group in Kitchen

YI CHUN CAO: I'm a counter. Forwards. Backwards. I'm always figuring out how long it's been, how long until...my mind works that way. When Chiang Kai-shek left China in 1949, my whole family followed him to Taiwan. I was just a little boy. They left me behind and said they'd come back to get me. It didn't happen. They disappeared. Thirty years later I got a letter from my brother. It carried the missing pieces to the puzzle. Through him I came to know the exact dates when my parents died. Now I honor them each year on those precise days. Even though they were strangers to me, having the dates allows me to feel their presence.

TC – 00:27:12 – Bedroom

LOURDES: (English) I needed to change. I needed something drastic to happen, like a change. So I moved here to see more, to get away.

HUANG: (Chinese untranslated)

LOURDES: Yeah I ran away. I escaped.

HUANG: (English) I go to America...my friend...my friend's closet. Closet...small.

Moon, working, sun, sleeping.

TC – 00:28:12 - Kitchen

HUANG: Eat, Eat, lot of!

LOURDES: I'm fine with one! Are you eating?

HUANG: (English) Your mother, father, Puerto Rico?

LOURDES: Yeah.

HUANG: (English) You call you, mother talking? Lot of money!

LOURDES: Sometimes. I talk with them sometimes.

HUANG (English) Linda...today. (Chinese untranslated)

LOURDES: Dancing? To go see them?

(Traditional Chinese Music Performance)

TC – 00:29:58 – Community Center Auditorium

GIRL: (In Chinese) There have been some changes to tonight's performance. So now you will see the Wu Lao Dance Team. They will dance to music that has a Spanish influence. So we hope to you will be able to experience some of that Spanish feeling. Thank you.

TC – 00:33:16 – Kitchen

CHUNG QING CHE: Ah we've got moon cakes! Just eat it like this?

LINDA: Today is the Mid-Autumn Festival. Happy Zhong Qui Jie to everyone. We're all here together under the full moon. We're lucky to all be living in this apartment.

SHEUT LEE: It's good, it's good!

HUANG: Too sweet, I'll get fat? Is this a sweet one?

SHEUT LEE: This one's little, for you?

CHE: Raise 'em up!

HUANG: These are "cookie cups", haha!

LINDA: Dry cup! Dry cup! Cheers!

It used to be 5 dollars a box, now I don't know.

TSUI: \$26 bucks!

TC – 00:36:02 – Ext. Window City Street

HUANG: We don't want that. It's too dirty! (untranslated Chinese)

CHE: But it's a good, big mattress.

HUANG: It's dirty as hell! I'm telling you, don't bring that up. We don't want it!

CHE: I can't carry it myself. Come help me!

HUANG: You're crazy!

TC – 00:38:34 – 2nd Shift Bed Apartment

WOMAN LANDLORD: Oh, your back? Off of work? Come, let me show you around the apartment. These here are the things I sell.

HUANG: Where's your bed?

WOMAN LANDLORD: Over here. This one here just got off work. And this one's a boss. He moved in recently. This is Ah Fu. He makes deliveries for a restaurant. If you like it here, I'll fix up a spot for you!

HUANG: I've already got a place to live.

WOMAN LANDLORD: The market's no good anymore. I should rent out more beds. Business is really bad out there, I'm telling you.

TED HUNT: And how's your son?

HUANG: He's all grown up, and still in China. And yours? Isn't he here in America?

TED: My son's about the same age as yours, 20-something.

HUANG: And is he married?

TED: This I don't know. Kids won't tell you about these things. He could be a father and I wouldn't even know.

HUANG: My son's the same way. I call but he never picks up. When I left, the little one couldn't even walk yet.

TED: So he doesn't remember you? He wouldn't recognize you?

HUANG: It's really tough. You raise them but they each go their own way.

TED: It used to be good to come to America, but not anymore.

HUANG: And now it's nicer to live in China.

AH FU: And here we are, all living in one room.

HUANG: I don't know what to do when I get older. Might have to kill myself. I have neither Chinese nor American citizenship. If no one takes care of me when I'm old, might as well jump off a bridge. I'll give Linda a call to come take care of the body.

TED: It's no use, she won't come. Not her business.

TC – 00:41:11 – Stairwell

CHE: ...and there was a very good mattress.

TSUI: Why didn't you bring it up?

CHE: I really wanted to!

TSUI: But Huang said no. He wouldn't let me take it. It was very good.

TSUI: Why don't you do it anyway? It might come in handy.

CHE: Yeah, it was a good one, but Huang said, "no no no!"

TC – 00:41:54 – Kitchen

LOURDES: (in Spanish) I will stay if I like it – I don't know, maybe six months to a year. I'm not neglecting the Island. Not everyone has to live in El Barrio. Mom, there's Puerto Ricans living all over New York. Believe me. Yes I have same job. I'm planning to quit, but I haven't found anything yet. Things are bad everywhere. I don't know – Kimchee, nuts...something green. Fujinese food.

TC – 00:44:31 – Men's Bedroom

CHE: You probably can't imagine what it was like to sleep on a stone bed. Sounds like some kind of ancient punishment. But if you think that's the case, you're wrong. Our stone beds had little spaces underneath for a fire. I was a well-fed, warmly dressed, energetic, happy, lucky, little boy. But in the snowy winter of 1947, events took a turn for the worse. A gang broke into our house. I watched them push my father to the ground. His face and neck were covered in blood. They took everything except the bed. It was too heavy. Maybe this was our luck. Every night afterwards I slept on the stone bed with no fire underneath. There was no more wood. I rolled my body into a ball to stay warm, but it didn't help that much. Three days later, I was woken in the night by the cries of my grandmother and mother. By the time I woke up, my father had already died. Who could I complain to? I would always wake up with an empty stomach and nothing to eat. Sometimes I would smell my mother's delicious soup. The smell filled my nose and wrapped around my body. It was so rich and aromatic. But it was only in my dreams. Only in my dreams. Then I came here to America, where it's very prosperous. A lot people here like to collect things like jade, gold necklaces, and other valuables. As for me, I collect mattresses. Since I've been here, I've slept on an American made mattress. Extremely soft and plush. When I sleep on it I feel very relaxed and blessed. There are people here who sleep on the street. Others under vegetable stands. After I collect the mattresses, I clean them up. Sometimes I wrap them in plastic. I give them away to people who need them. Of course, you guys don't understand why I do this. I do feel a little guilty. But I keep doing it. We all live here together, with such little space, I can understand your way of thinking. So you to my friend, I apologize.

TC – 00:48:36 – Ext. Street Night, into Women's Bedroom

(Whispering in Chinese, untranslated)

TC – 00:50:05 – Women's Bedroom

SHEUT LEE: (In Cantonese) In Hong Kong, I lived with my mother and six brothers and sisters. In that same room, there was another family of six or seven. Lots of people.

They all snored heavily. We thought it was funny. Everyone had their own unique sound. Like music. And my mom - she cooked with so many different colors. Three kinds of sweet potatoes, red, yellow, green. As we ate we would push the rice around the bowl and shape it into face. But my father – I never met him until I was 18. Never. My mother always told us – when we were sleeping, “You must think of your father.” And so my brothers, sisters, and I, together we would use our brains to imagine him.

LINDA: (In English to Lourdes) When you got to sleep, falling him, you have to memorize to have a dream. Dream your father.

SHEUT LEE: I'd never met this person, yet I could see him in my dreams. There are many versions of him. Sometimes in my dream he was like, sometimes like that.

LINDA: (In English) Some are tall, some are short, some are fat, some are skinny.

SHEUT LEE: Sometimes he appeared like a talking bear.

LINDA: (English) Sometimes like a bear, he was talking.

TC – 00:53:05 – Coffee Shop

SHEUT LEE: (In English) I don't like the black color.

LOURDES: Like this?

SHEUT LEE: (In English) Yeah, I don't like it. Twenty years ago, I go to the movies movie, I like the movie! Sometimes, oh, very good! I like it.

LOURDES: Do you remember when we went to see the Ai Wei Wei sculptures at Central Park?

SHEUT LEE: Yeah, in Central Park.

LOURDES: Why didn't Huang come with us”

SHEUT LEE: He's scared. He has a wife in children. A lot of family in China. He's scared.

LOURDES: What could happen?

SHEUT LEE: I don't know. What happened, do you know? I don't know.

LOURDES: Okay. Just wondering.

TC – 00:54:16 – Bedroom

HUANG: What the heck is this thing Lourdes wants me to watch? Oh, It's called "Please Forget Me" Is this it? "Please Forget Me." It's starting. People in China nowadays are crazy like this. My son is probably this crazy too. Everyone's like that in China now. Young people drive cars, and their lives are better now. Ten years, in the blink of an eye. How is my son doing? I don't even know how he looks now. If we met, I wouldn't recognize him and he wouldn't recognize me. I've been in American for 18 years...Oh, it's a love story. He's 29 and still single. I guess life in China is good. Back in my day, we didn't even have decent shoes. Couldn't bear to buy them. Didn't have the money. But now, it's all about driving cars and searching for love. No wonder none of them want to work. Just ask Dad for money. The old man keeps working while the kids enjoy life. He only calls to ask for money. I can never get a hold of him. That little rascal. Now I see the way things are in China. But I can't go home. I don't have the documents. Chasing love, chasing love.

TC – 01:00:04 – Chinatown

LOURDES: (In Spanish, Reciting Lorca Poem)

Forgetting does not exist, nor dreams: just raw flesh.

Kisses tie our mouths in a tangle of new veins.

Those who hurt will hurt without rest,

Those who fear death will carry it on their shoulders.

*Let there be a panorama of open eyes
and burning bitter wounds*

Nobody sleeps in the world

No one, no one.

I said it before.

Nobody sleeps.

TC – 01:01:44 – CREDITS

Your Day is My Night
a film by Lynne Sachs

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Featuring

Yi Chun Cao

Linda Y.H. Chan

Chung Qing Che

Ellen Ho

Yun Xiu Huang

Sheut Hing Lee

Kam Yin Tsui

and Veraalba Santa as Lourdes

with additional participation by

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Wai Ying Lim

F.W. Leong

Kok Soon Tay

and the Wu Lao Dance Troupe

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Lynne Sachs

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Excerpted Poetry:
"Ciudad sin sueño - Nocturno del Brooklyn Bridge"
"Sleepless City - Brooklyn Bridge Nocturne"
by Federico Garcia Lorca
Lorca lived in New York City for a year in 1929.
Read by Veraalba Santa

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