

Future Perfect

By Jaime F Ramirez

NOTE: This is chapter 1 of a 10-part story about characters maneuvering relationships in Los Angeles. This is a stand-alone spec script.

OVER BLACK.

We hear the gentle patter of rain and then a rush of cars.

FADE IN:

EXT. LA'S CHINATOWN - NIGHT

Nighttime shots of iconic Chinatown locations, including the West Gate, the plaza, and Hop Louie. There are people out and the streets are washed with rain.

SUPER: "EXODUS"

INT. RESTAURANT

We hear LAUGHTER and the CLINK of glass and tableware.

A row of worn RED VINYL booths line a wall opposite WINDOWS looking out onto the street. There are men and woman seated all around, some in groups, and some alone. The glow of twinkling CHRISTMAS LIGHTS strung throughout the room brighten its edges.

PAIGE (V.O.)

The Universe ends every day.

JULIAN (V.O.)

What are you talking about?

We pan across several empty booths and find JULIAN and PAIGE, both in their late 20's, sitting across from each other. We CLOSE on them, and Paige wears a BLACK JACKET, and plays with a TEACUP in her right hand.

Julian sets his CHOPSTICKS down and looks at her from behind his ROUND EYEGLASSES.

PAIGE

I've been wondering if we're
doing the right thing by getting
married.

Paige lifts the cup and moves it up to her RED LIPS, but doesn't drink.

JULIAN

So, what does the Universe have
to do with it. You know my
Grandma's mind is going, and --

PAIGE

Do you know what a Sutra is?

She takes a drink and then returns the teacup to the PLACE SETTING. Julian crosses his arms.

JULIAN

Like verses arranged into
aphorisms, right?

Paige sets her elbows down on the table and interlaces her fingers.

PAIGE

I read this line from one, "this
body itself is emptiness, and
emptiness itself is this body,"
and the idea came to me.

There is a beat between them.

JULIAN

Paige, life is short.

PAIGE

Exactly. So, are we doing what
we really want to be doing, or ...

JULIAN

Or what?

PAIGE

Or what people expect us to do?

JULIAN

We live in a dangerous world,
and its important to stick
together.

PAIGE

But that doesn't change the fact
that we're not doing this right.

JULIAN

You think we're going too fast?

She nods her response.

PAIGE

Don't you want to do things
right while you still can?
Before it's gone, just like
that.

She SNAPS her fingers.

CUT TO BLACK:

OPENING MONTAGE:

TITLE CARD "FUTURE PERFECT"

Images of Los Angeles, modern day: Downtown skyscrapers,
neighborhoods throughout the county - urban, suburban, rural
- and the networks of freeways, connecting them all.

The ocean and the sun on the horizon as the night blooms.

END TITLE SEQUENCE

EXT. BAR - LATER

The headlights of cars pass by a row of old HARLEYS parked
in front, and a NEON SIGN in the shape of a PITCHFORK hangs
above the door. We hear DRIVING MUSIC.

ADAM (V.O.)

Women don't want to be
impressed. They want to be
shocked.

INT. BAR

It's LOUD and FULL of people. A DISCO BALL moves above a
collection of men and women on a DANCE FLOOR near the
center. The women are beautifully dressed and youthful, and
the men are tall and thin and wear dark colors.

GRACE (V.O.)

(defensive)

That's bullshit.

We CLOSE on ADAM, GRACE, and SAM, all in their late-20's,
sitting together at a table near the corner of the room.

Adam smiles and takes a drink from his COCKTAIL. Sam puts his right arm around Grace.

SAM

This is why you're divorced.

ADAM

Technically, she hasn't filed the paperwork yet.

GRACE

Well, I want to be impressed.

Paige joins them, and as she SITS, she catches someone at the bar STARING INTENTLY at her.

SAM

Where's your boy?

Paige turns her attention to the group.

PAIGE

He has an early work thing.

ADAM

(sarcastically)

Maybe he's going to see his other lady.

Paige smirks.

PAIGE

Well, I could care less.

ADAM

So, you only keep him around because he's handsome and well connected?

Paige thinks about this.

PAIGE

That and because I want kids.

Sam and Grace look at each other.

PAIGE

(seriously)

My biological clock is ticking.

ADAM

(comically)

The useful time is slipping.

GRACE

(concerned)

But is that love?

PAIGE

Love? Of course not.

ADAM

No offense sis, but Julian is the kind of person that buys his dreams at Costco.

PAIGE

And why does that bother you? At least he can afford a membership.

GRACE

Ooo, that was cold.

ADAM

(defeated)

Ouch.

SAM

I like him. He's a good listener, and that's admirable.

PAIGE

(pointed)

Unlike some of us.

Adam RAISES his drink to toast, and the group breaks out in laughter. Paige looks toward the bar again, but it is empty.

INT. METRO TRAIN

Paige STANDS near the door, and a homeless man is SEATED nearby, his eyes shut. We CLOSE on his right hand covered with GAUZE and TAPE, and there is cardboard sign is next to him with the words, "Our Western Hearts Are Broken. God Bless," written on it in BLACK MARKER.

EXT. URBAN TRAIN STATION

Paige and a few other people exit the train and make the journey toward the stairs to get to street level.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING

Paige walks up steps and the motion sensor light TURN ON. She moves toward a glass door, behind which is a dimly lit hallway.

INT. APARTMENT HALLWAY

Paige KNOCKS on the door and then pulls out her phone to send a text. As she's texting, we hear a DEADBOLT push back, and then the door OPENS to reveal EMILY, a pretty, gold-haired woman in her late 20's wearing a night gown with a floral pattern.

EMILY

(softly)

You're late.

PAIGE

I got held up with my brother.
Did I wake you?

EMILY

No, I was reading on the couch.
I'm glad you came, I would have
never gotten to bed.

Emily KISSES Paige on the lips and then turns around and Paige follows her into the apartment.

INT. EMILY'S APARTMENT

The apartment is well kept and decorated with MID-CENTURY MODERN furniture. There is a sleek grey couch against the

wall and above it hangs a picture of ALBERT EINSTEIN riding a bicycle.

Emily picks up an OPEN BINDER from the table in the center of the room and shuts it, and then continues toward the kitchen.

EMILY

Do you want wine?

PAIGE

Please. Thanks.

Paige sets her things down on the table.

PAIGE

How was your night?

EMILY

Good, boring. There's a push to make us more accessible at work, so I'm going through proposals.

PAIGE

Sounds painful.

EMILY

Mind numbing. How about yours?

PAIGE

I saw Julian, and then I met Adam and some friends.

Emily turns around and faces Paige.

EMILY

(inquisitively)

Did you tell Julian?

PAIGE

(modestly)

We talked.

EMILY

And?

PAIGE

He said he'd slow down.

EMILY

But did you tell him about us?

Emily motions BACK AND FORTH with her index finger. Paige doesn't speak.

EMILY

(frustrated)

Why do you keep doing this to yourself?

PAIGE

(defensive)

I feel like I have to maintain the lie, you know?

Emily walks into the kitchen and OPENS the fridge door, looking for wine. Paige follows her.

EMILY

I don't understand. What are you holding on to?

PAIGE

Well, a sense of normalcy, but also now is just not the right time. I would break his heart.

Emily GARBS a bottle and CLOSES the fridge and then takes two TUMBLERS from the cupboard.

EMILY

You're too soft Paige. I know who you are, and what you can be, but I can't wait forever.

INT. APARTMENT - LATER

The POPS and HISSES coming from the TURNTABLE are part of the background noise of the mostly silent room. We look down on Paige and Emily on the WOODEN FLOOR from OVERHEAD.

Emily's head rests on Paige's stomach and they both stare at the ceiling. Tumblers of RED WINE sit on coasters nearby, and a LIT cigarette is in an ash tray next to them.

The glow from of a STANDING LAMP bleeds from the corner of the room, and there's a beat before the record plays.

EMILY

(contemplative)

I love you.

PAIGE

I love you too. That's why I'm here.

Paige gently moves Emily's head, SITS UP, and then leans over and KISSES her softly on the lips.

EMILY

Is this wrong then? Are we doing something wrong?

PAIGE

Why would this be wrong?

Emily is THOUGHTFUL about the next few words.

EMILY

Everybody is doing something they're not supposed to be doing.

She focuses on Paige and her eyes are now SERACHING, like watchtowers in the distance.

EMILY

Everybody is playing with fire.

INT. BEDROOM - DAWN

Emily is asleep on a BED, turned away from Paige. Paige lies with her right hand behind her head and her eyes OPEN. She is lost in a thought. We CLOSE on her eyes.

We hear Paige BREATHE through her nose, and the sound of BIRDS outside the window waking up, and then we --

CUT TO:

EXT. GARDEN - DAWN

An OVERGROWN GARDEN and Paige, dressed in a LONG BLACK DRESS, moves through it, heading toward a house.

We can hear the WIND and the branches of the heavy trees SWAY and CREEK. The CRUNCH of leaves under each step is steady.

We CLOSE on a pair of eyes, in the shadows, observing her from a distance.

We hear a steady HEARTBEAT.

EXT. LARGE COLONIAL HOUSE

Paige walks up a small set of stairs, toward the RED FRONT DOOR. The HEARTBEAT is gradually increasing.

INT. HALLWAY

Paige walks through a hall, moving past pitch-black rooms, and STOPS in front of a doorway.

The HEARTBEAT works harder, nearing full strength.

INT. ROOM

Paige CAREFULLY runs her right hand over objects in the dark room, and then finds a LIGHT SWITCH.

We CLOSE on her hand over the switch and she flips it with her INDEX FINGER and the HEARTBEAT STOPS.

Paige stands in the BRIGHT room, her back to a SILHOUETTE of someone in the doorway. She turns in its direction.

PAIGE

It's good to see you again.

FADE TO BLACK.