

THE MEXICAN CHEST

Written by

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FADE IN

INT. CARIBBEAN SEA - SUNSET

Inside of the sea, floats a Mexican Chest, ornate with Dahlia flowers, the carvings show age. Bubbles come around the chest, one after another, a group.

Light casts on the chest, the metal of the chest shines, like a gem.

The chest sinks down. The bottom of the ocean is lively with colorful corals. A shark, swims by, no threat.

Unknown, mysterious, and full of magic.

WOMEN'S VOICE (V.O.)

Once upon a time, there is a
Mexican Chest in the Caribbean sea
that sealed a story between a
Mermaid and a Mexican Prince.

INT. BALLROOM - NIGHT

DAPHNE, a Chinese woman, 42, dressed in black gown arrives at the benefit. Her husband, FELIPE, 40, with bow tie and pressed suit stands close to her. He looks like a spare. Their son, ERIC, 7, adorable as a pie, dressed in suits too, tags along Daphne.

People scatter around the ballroom. It's grand and crowded. Eric distracts himself with a plate of strawberry off center, and walks away from Daphne. Daphne, doesn't notice.

Eric, steals strawberries out of the plate.

In the center of the ballroom, a giant bouquet with daisies and exotic flowers such as Dahlia. Daphne passed by the bouquet, gazes at one Dahlia, it's her favorite. She quickly turns around and motions to a man, TOM, 50, in grey suits.

TOM

Look who's coming!

A kiss on Daphne's cheek, Daphne shows uneasy.

TOM (CONT'D)

Where have you been? Look at you,
life has been good! You were,
what, the secretary at the front
office, when I met you. How long
has it been?

Daphne is embarrassed. Tom wants the whole world to know his existence.

DAPHNE

What brought you here, Tom?

TOM

Well, you know, I wouldn't miss Children's Hospital for a beat. There are many tender souls here, including yours.

Daphne feels disgust. What does Tom want?

TOM (CONT'D)

I see your husband over there -- you'd better keep an eye on him. You know, he is --

DAPHNE

Younger? That's not news any more.

Daphne scans the room, finds Felipe.

He flirts with a WOMAN, holding a glass of red wine. The woman is in red dress, athletic built.

She giggles, loud, draws attention. Her hair drapes on her shoulder. She swings it, WAVES. She is all curves.

Daphne strides across the room and meets Felipe.

DAPHNE (CONT'D)

May I join your conversation?

Daphne is polite.

FELIPE

Oh, let me introduce you. Here is Carmen. Carmen Smith.

Carmen lifts her eyes, seductive. Felipe smiles, distancing himself.

DAPHNE

Nice to meet you.

Daphne, a matter of fact, offers her hand.

Carmen, takes one hand off the glass, offers her hand.

CARMEN

I heard a lot about you, sorry, my hands are wet.

Daphne takes a close look at Carmen -- heard a lot about me?

DAPHNE

I hope they are all good words.

Daphne nods at Felipe, diplomatic.

Dead silence.

CARMEN

I'd better get going so I can crush
others' party.

Carmen leaves.

DAPHNE

She looks hot.

Felipe switches the topic.

FELIPE

Where's Eric? Shouldn't he be with
you?

Daphne notices Eric is missing. She feels guilty.

She surveys the room. Eric, at the center of the hall.

Daphne runs over to Eric. Eric, snatches a daisy out of the
bouquet, and shuffles it into his pocket.

DAPHNE

Where have you been?!

Eric, doesn't utter a word.

A few guests turn their head toward Daphne. Daphne, knows she
has lost her composure. She recollects herself.

DAPHNE (CONT'D)

Go to Daddy.

Daphne holds Eric back.

DAPHNE (CONT'D)

Just be with me.

Eric is confused.

ANNOUNCEMENT (O.S.)

Attention, ladies and gentlemen,
our auction results are in!

The hall is quiet.

ANNOUNCEMENT (CONT'D)
The grand prize, Disney Cruise for
a family of four, goes to --

Louder.

ANNOUNCEMENT (CONT'D)
Daphne Chang, IT Director of Waama!

All eyes on Daphne, she is too important to ignore.

Daphne means business. She walks toward the stage. She accepts the voucher from a FLASHY WOMAN, an Emcee of the event.

Applause.

Auction announcement continues, various sounds of surroundings.

Felipe emerges and holds Daphne in his arms.

FELIPE
Congratulations!

DAPHNE
Congratulations to us.

Daphne holds Eric in her arms.

EXT./INT. DAPHNE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

House after house, big lot size, fancy architecture, green and neat lawns, extravagant landscapes, everything speaks affluent.

A big entry of a house. Cadillac pulls into a big three-car driveway. A BMW and a Porche, park next to each other. Cadillac pulls next to the Porche.

Daphne, Felipe and Eric get off the car.

Daphne opens the door.

Three of them walks inside, in order, Daphne, Felipe, Eric.

Daphne takes off a set of pearl earring and lays them on the entry table. She takes off her high heel strap shoes and rubbed on her sore feet.

After a deep breath, she recovers. She beams happiness.

DAPHNE

Isn't that a great party? I met Tom, can you believe I haven't seen him for FOUR years?! And I've won the auction, I haven't won anything for years, and now it is. That's a good sign, isn't it?

FELIPE

That's not a win, that's called we're too rich and we need to spend money for a good cause, a cause we don't even believe in.

DAPHNE

Stop being so sarcastic!

FELIPE

Am I? We don't have anyone in Children's Hospital. How did we get involved, isn't it for networking? I bet it is.

Daphne feels she is poked by these words and she shoots back.

DAPHNE

You surely had good time too!

Felipe goes silent and hangs his suit on a wooden hanger.

FELIPE

Whatever you say, Darling!

Eric, puzzled by the conversation, disregards it and hurries to his room.

INT. ERIC'S ROOM

A floor of LEGOs, a chaos.

Eric sits down and starts playing.

He takes off his suit and throws it on the floor.

Dirty clothes, socks, shirts scatter on the floor. The suit goes into the same pile.

Two LEGO colorful and plastic wheels. Eric pulls them over in front of him. A body of a bus is in front him. He pushes the wheels into the body. They fit.

He studies the structure and is satisfied.

A red framed and transparent window sits in the pile. He grabs it. He takes off a piece on the bus body. He assembles the window piece on.

INT. STUDY - NIGHT

Bookshelves, by the wall, one shelf after another.

Books are in order, titles are prominent. "Tipping Point", "Lean In," and we stop here "Speak like a CEO." Felipe picks that one up.

Two desks, next to each other. One faces the window, the other, the wall.

Felipe sits down with the book, puts his iphone on the desk.

Daphne passes by him, on the way to the kitchen.

Iphone vibrates. Felipe takes a quick look. He sits up, and checks the clock on the phone. 10:14.

Felipe texts, quickly, nervously.

 DAPHNE (O.S.)

 Do you want something? Green Tea?

Felipe stands up and sits down, rubbing his palms, nervous.

 FELIPE

 Honey, the work, it is urgent. I need to go.

Daphne emerges.

 DAPHNE

 That late? An important project? Didn't hear you mentioning anything. Is it important? Quarterly review or something? Are you working on something - important?

Daphne couldn't say "important" enough times. Felipe squeezes out a smile.

 FELIPE

 Yeah, last minute stuff.

Daphne nods, she understands 'last minute.'

Daphne hugs Felipe and pecks a kiss on his cheek.

Felipe hurries out, grabbing a windbreaker.

His book "Speak like a CEO", faces down on his desk. His iPhone, faces up on the desk.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Daphne takes out tea leaves from a tin. The tin is in blue flowers, a Chinese pattern.

She adores the pattern for a minute.

She puts the tea leaves in a cup, puts the cup under a an electric hot water maker, and pushes the release button.

Steaming hot water fills the cup and stops at the brim.

She sets the tea cup aside.

Leaves open up in the cup.

INT. ERIC'S ROOM - NIGHT

Door opens.

Eric, still plays with the LEGOs.

 DAPHNE
Time to go to sleep!

 ERIC
I don't want to!

 DAPHNE
You have to!

Daphne argues like a child.

She pulls out a pair of pajamas from the drawer of a dresser.

She pops Eric up, undresses him and pulls the pajama on him.

 DAPHNE (CONT'D)
Now, go to bed.

Eric pulls himself together and drags himself to bed. Daphne pulls a sheet over him.

 DAPHNE (CONT'D)
Have a good dream.

Daphne smiles. Eric, his face shows unwillingness to sleep.

Daphne turns off the light and closes the door.

INT. STUDY - NIGHT

Daphne passes the study, stops, and looks at the book, facing down. Title "Speak like a CEO". Daphne chuckles. The phone vibrates.

Daphne takes up the phone, checking the message. "Are you here yet?"

An image, Carmen, kissing, faces Daphne.

Daphne puts down the phone, draws a breath, and pauses. Her world is still.

INT. CARIBBEAN SEA - DAY

Corrals in various colors are swinging at the bottom of the sea. Mexican Chest sinks into the bottom. Fish around the chest spread out and swim around it.

The chest opens a slit. It opens wider and wider.

Something is coming out that we can't make out the shape it.

Long hair draped in the shoulder, it's a fine delicate young woman's face.

She swims out. A blue dress, hugs her body. No fins, no fish tail. She swims freely. Her legs splash water. She is a MERMAID.

She breathes easily without effort. Water bubbles rises up. Her mouth looks tender.

She swims around the fishes, among the corrals. She plays hide and seek with them.

A pearl necklace dangles from her neck, swings around her chest.

One pearl breaks from the chain, and she chases it.

Pearls fall off one by one.

She chases after the pearls, playfully.

Pearls settle down at the bottom of the ocean. A light in the ocean cast on the pearls. They shines, subtle yet glossy.

A stir of water. Fishes quickly swim away, behind the corrals.

Mermaid panics and swims swiftly.

The lid of Mexican Chest, wide open.

Mermaid swims up to the Chest, and shrieks into it. Her arms lift up, and the chest lid closes behind her. The chest shakes a little and settles back to the bottom.

Water stirs more.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Daphne scrapes off the tea leaves from the teacup. Trash can lid opens, tea leaves are dropped in there. Remaining tea leaves runs down to the sink from the tea cup.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Daphne walks through the entry way and approaches the door. She turns on the switch by the door, the light of the porch turns on. She pauses for a moment, not sure if Felipe would come home.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Daphne, in the nightgown, slips into the sheet. She turns on the light of the night table. She picks up a book lying on the side of the bed, pops up the pillow and reads, doesn't care what she reads.

INT. HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

A wind breaker, thrown on the floor. Loafers, fly next to the shoe rack. Slippers, slide on the feet, patterned socks. Felipe walks through the hallway to the kitchen.

He pulls a wine bottle out of a cupboard. He examines it and is satisfied.

He takes out a glass. He blows off the dust from the glass. The glass sets down on the table. Red wine is poured into the glass.

Felipe holds the glass, and walks to -

INT. FAMILY ROOM - NIGHT

Brick fireplace. No flame.

Wall is empty, no pictures. Blue drapes, minimalist. Two bookshelf full of books stacked.

A 75 inch TV, sits on a plat stand. Bose speakers, stand in two poles. At the corner of the ceilings, small speakers composes a 5.1 surround system.

Felipe sits down by the sofa and savors the wine. He sinks in.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Daphne breathes in, knowing Felipe won't come in soon. She closes her book.

The clock shows 1:24 AM. She turns off the light on the night table.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Some dark circles underneath Daphne's eyes. Daphne, cracks an egg in a flat frying pan.

Felipe, looks energetic. He shuffles coffee beans into the cup, puts in the drip coffee machine and waits.

Steam comes out of it, he pushes on the button, coffee drips down into a cup.

He moves to the dining room table and holds the cup. He opens the front page of the New York Times.

The scrambled eggs are ready. Daphne scoops them out of the pan and flops them into a China plate next to her.

 DAPHNE

 (casually)
 When did you come home last night?

 FELIPE

 Can't remember. Such a long night.

Daphne looks at Felipe -- tell me about it.

 FELIPE (CONT'D)

 They say more crazy nights ... I
 may need to go in more. You know
 how that feels.

Daphne moves in with the plate of the scrambled eggs. She eats, as natural as she can be.

 DAPHNE

 Work is important. It's important.

Eric shows up in the kitchen with Pajamas.

 FELIPE

 Morning! My little guy. How's it going?

Daphne soon stands up, scoops some cottage cheese from a container, picks up some strawberries from a box, washes them, mixes them with the cottage cheese, all in a quick motion.

A bowl slides on the table and Eric has a mouthful of the mix.

Daphne assembles a lunch box for Eric. Carrots, rice, meatballs, are squeezed into a container. A small bottle of water. All in a zipper bag.

INT./EXT. HALLWAY - DAY

Daphne collects Felipe's shoes and windbreaker to the side. She picks up the car key.

Eric flies out of the door. Daphne hurries, with a lunch box in her hand, remotely opens the Cadillac's door.

INT. DAPHNE'S OFFICE - DAY

Big glass walls, tall ceilings, a huge office space, number of EMPLOYEES walking in fast paces, tech geeks in sneakers and jeans. Daphne, a bit more dressed up in a skirt topped with a casual blouse, steps in. People are minding their own business, not paying attention to her.

Daphne finds her own office, not too big. A printer and an empty desk.

The room clean and orderly. A framed poster on the wall, a person climbing up a mountain. The text above the picture says "Goal."

Daphne sits down, opens her briefcase, and a MacBook slides out. She turns on the laptop, types in her name and password. She logs in.

She pulls down a schedule from the laptop. On the line of 10:00 AM, it writes "Status Meeting."

Zoom: "Status." Cursor blinks.

She clicks the schedule to minimize it to the side. Daphne opens a new window. The company website. Stock symbol and its price blink on the screen.

Daphne opens a new window. She hesitates.

She types "www.linkedin.com/"

A Linked In page pulls up.

"Look for person." An empty box is close by.

"Carmen Smith" text is scrolling. Click.

A few "Carmen Smith" show up on the screen. She sees: a Carmen Smith she knows -- the sensual looking woman.

She glances outside of the office from the glass windows. She observes no one passes by her office.

She pulls up a screen. Scrolling down to "Education."

"Harvard College."

Daphne takes a deep breath, a strong contender. She closes the laptop.

Her iphone beeps. She opens the phone, a reminder for her 10:00 quarterly meeting.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

A wide projection screen in the wall. A projector is on the ceiling.

A group of PEOPLE sit by the rectangular table, no empty seat.

Daphne walks in with a deck of presentation files and her laptop.

She plugs her laptop in the outlet and turns on the bluetooth. It pairs up with the projector.

 DAPHNE

 Thanks for coming. Let's get right
 to the topic.

 (MORE)

DAPHNE (CONT'D)

Today's presentation is about moving our current functions into the cloud. Right now our system heavily relies on the network. I suggest we need to at least move the fulfillment to the cloud. Here is the diagram...

Daphne clicks on the slide. A clear diagram shows the job flow.

All heads turn.

DAPHNE (CONT'D)

You can see from the diagram, to be able to move everything to the cloud, we need to revise the protocol of the infrastructure...

Another slide. Another diagram.

DAPHNE (CONT'D)

It needs a coordination of a few departments, including a strong design team, customer service and operation team...

Heads are turning to each other. An uncomfortable moment.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Daphne collects her slides and unplugs her laptop. People exit the room.

CEO (50), a man in pressed suit, stops by Daphne.

CEO

Good presentation, keep on plugging. They will be uncomfortable about it, but they will adjust. We have to get it done.

Daphne nods, agreeing.

INT. DAPHNE'S OFFICE - DAY

Daphne pushes her laptop toward the end of the table. She breathes in, and head to -

INT. REST ROOM - DAY

Toilet flushing SOUND.

Daphne closes the toilet door behind her. She walks to the sink, washing her hands. No one else is in the rest room.

She starts to sob, then it turns into cry.

She cries really hard, the stress of the presentation and now this woman.

She holds her face and comes to a gradual stop. She pulls a paper towel from the dispenser. She wipes her face with the paper towel and throws it in the trash can.

She straightens out her shirt. She has red swollen eyes.

EXT. SCHOOL YARD - RECESS TIME

Eric is playing sandbox alone. Some KIDS on the other side are playing with the swings.

Two boy BULLY (10, 11), much taller and more solid than him, find their target, approach him. One picks up the fight.

BULLY 1
You, what'cha you doing?

BULLY 2
That's sand it's it?

Eric is building a castle out of it.

Bullie 1 kicks the castle off.

BULLY 1
Oh, I'm sorry.

BULLY 2
Yes, I am.

Eric tightens his fist, then he puts it down.

BULLY 1
Alone by yourself ehrr?

BULLY 2
Where's your classmates, are they
so not wanting you?

Eric, tightens his fists again.

A strong hit, on the stomach of Bully 1. Bully 1 is angry.

Then a hard hit, on Eric's face, misses his eyes, but right on the nose.

Nose bleed.

Bully 2's fist is right on Eric's shoulder.

DAISY (7), walks by, stops for a moment, then runs to the direction of the principle's office.

INT. DAPHNE'S OFFICE - DAY

Daphne pats some powder around the eyes. The iphone rings, and it indicates "Eric School."

SCHOOL NURSE (O.S.)
I'm sorry Mrs. Lopez, Eric is badly injured, can you pick him up now?

DAPHNE
Will be there!

Daphne collects her briefcase. She walks out and stops at one of the cubicles.

DAPHNE (CONT'D)
Mellisa, can you tell others that I'm out to Eric's school? He had an accident.

MELLISA (26), her secretary, types a memo for her.

MELLISA
No worries.

DAPHNE
Don't send out anything yet.

MELLISA
Got it. Hope everything is OK.

Daphne rushes, the glass wall is behind her and she walks fast toward the door.

INT. SCHOOL NURSE STATION

The school nurse station door opens wide to the corridor. Daphne rushes into the station. The car key is held tight in her hand.