

FADE IN:

ACT ONE

EXT. PORTLAND, OREGON - DAY

The city is dusted in snow. Garlands, lights, Christmas trees. Dogs walk by in Santa outfits. Hipsters drink eggnog under patio-heaters.

It's Christmas in the Pacific Northwest.

INT. DONUT SHOP - DAY

A busy donut shop, decked out for Christmas. The name of the shop? 'HOLE-Y DONUTS'.

SOFIA ZHÀO (28), a quick-thinking, assertive, but chronically indecisive young lady in a suit, looks into the display case at the many Christmas-themed donuts.

SOFIA

What's better, the 'sugar plum crullers' or the 'frosting the snowman' ones?

The CASHIER (22), is forcefully cheery.

CASHIER

Honestly I like the snowballs.

SOFIA

Hmm, those look great too...
(beat)
Just give me five of each.

The Cashier boxes up Sofia's order.

CASHIER

Big presentation today?

SOFIA

You know it - hole-y donuts are my secret weapon!

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

Downtown Portland. It's busy, but not NYC busy.

Sofia walks briskly through the crowd, her phone DINGS. She checks it --

TEXT: Melanie <3 - "Cancel your plans, date night!"

She rolls her eyes, but smiles and clicks on Melanie's name. The phone RINGS.

MELANIE (O.S.)

Date night!

SOFIA

Only if it's just you and me.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. GAME STUDIO - OFFICE - DAY

MELANIE MWAMBA (28), creative, confident and mischievously playful, stands in an office overlooking the river. TOYS of video-game characters and colourful POSTERS adorn the room.

MELANIE

How does you, me and my new board game sound?

SOFIA

And no boys?

MELANIE

And... Jackson.

SOFIA

Jackson! You know my rule, one date per guy per week.

(with dread)

Lately he's been sharing his hopes and dreams with me.

MELANIE

Sofia, we need three people for my game. Please.

SOFIA

(knowingly)

You've already invited him.

MELANIE

No, you invited him. I emailed him from your account.

SOFIA

I changed my password this morning!

Sofia passes a Salvation Army SANTA and drops some money in his tin. He SMILES.

MELANIE

All of this from the girl with
three guys on the go.

SOFIA

That's how dating works! You spend
time with different guys until you
feel that spark.

MELANIE

You and your spark! What does a
spark even look like?

SOFIA

(unsure)
A big romantic... thing.
(beat)
I'll know it when I see it!

MELANIE

Has jogging with 'sporty Josh'
sparked any big romantic "things"?

SOFIA

You know we're just friends!

MELANIE

So he *doesn't* want you to meet his
mom?

Sofia goes into a tall building. While opening the door the donut box SLIPS out of her hand - she smoothly reacts, catching them perfectly, and heads inside.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - LOBBY - DAY

A beautiful lobby, Sofia walks towards the elevators.

SOFIA

I've already told you, Josh asks
everyone to meet his mom.

MELANIE

'Just friends' do not meet each
other's moms!

SOFIA

Listen Mel, I have my big presentation this morning and I need to focus. Hack back into my email and tell Jackson not to come.

MELANIE

I'll think about it.
(hesitant beat)
I also saw the email from your boss.

Sofia rolls her eyes as she waits for the elevator.

MELANIE (CONT'D)

How long has he been signing off as 'love Derek'?

SOFIA

It's nothing. My office just has a very affectionate work-culture.
(beat)
Plus, he's helping develop my carbon-neutral townhouse idea.

MELANIE

Does he like your ideas? Or does he like you?

SOFIA

I'm changing my password again.

The elevator arrives and Sofia steps in.

INT. ELEVATOR - DAY

MELANIE

Sofe, that's three guys! That's too complicated even for you.

SOFIA

This is how dating works. You date multiple people until you spark.
(beat)
Love is supposed to be complicated!

The elevator doors slide open. Sofia steps forward, but stops halfway --

-- Her boss, DEREK COOPER (40), standing with one hand behind his back, the entire ARCHITECT FIRM around him, balloons, cake, a banner that says 'CONGRATULATIONS'.

DEREK

Sofia Zhao, the three months that we've worked as partners together have been the best of my life.

(beat)

I used to look at blueprints and see timber, brick and steel. But you've taught me that it should be about the people inside.

Derek gets down on one knee and pulls out a RING. Sofia freezes. The elevator starts to BEEP to alert it wants to close. BEEEEEEEEEEEP.

DEREK (CONT'D)

(yelling)

I WOULD LIKE TO BUILD OUR HOME TOGETHER! WILL YOU MARRY ME?

BEEEEEEEP. The onlookers wait with bated breath. Sofia steps backs slowly. The doors close and the beep mercifully stops.

From the phone, held at Sofia's side:

MELANIE (O.S.)

(muffled)

Oh my god what just happened!

INT. CHRISTMAS TRAIL - DAY

A running trail through a park. The trees are hung with festive lights. It's the Christmas running trail!

Sofia JOGS next to JOSH FAVROVELLI (32), sporty, handsome, and fully decked out in a spandex running suit. Josh, panting hard, slows down and calls out:

JOSH

Sofia cool your jets! What's gotten into you today?

Sofia reluctantly stops.

SOFIA

Work was rough.

JOSH

The big presentation didn't land?

Sofia kicks a patch of snow in frustration.

SOFIA

It didn't do anything! Turns out my boss's priorities weren't what I thought they were.

JOSH

Was it rescheduled or something?

SOFIA

I thought this was my chance. I know that if the board actually sees my plans they'd love them. This is the real deal, Josh. With these designs normal people can finally afford fully carbon-neutral homes!

JOSH

I love your passion, but if we don't slow down I'm going to need a carbon-neutral hospital.

Sofia LAUGHS. Josh puts her at ease.

JOSH (CONT'D)

C'mon, I'm calling it early - I know what'll cheer you up.

EXT. CHRISTMAS MARKET - DAY

A beautiful market full of stands selling handicrafts and tasty food. Sofia and Josh drink HOT CHOCOLATE next to a Christmas tree. She has cooled down quite a bit.

JOSH

I was talking to my mom, and she thinks you should just start your own architecture firm.

SOFIA

Sure, that's the dream, but these things don't work alone. I'd need a partner.

JOSH

I know you'd be able to handle yourself.

(beat)

If you're worried about money I can always help you out.

SOFIA

I'm not taking your money Josh.

JOSH

I'm a surgeon Sofia. My mom says these hands aren't just good at saving lives, they're also good at saving money!

Sofia reaches the bottom of the hot chocolate. She tilts her head back, drinks the rest --

-- and FREEZES. Something is in her mouth. She reaches in and pulls out a RING.

She turns to Josh, who is down on one knee.

JOSH (CONT'D)

Sofia Zhào, I know you've been too busy to meet my mom, but I want to make your dreams come true.

(beat)

Will you be my life architect?

Sofia, too shocked for words, stares at the ring in her hand. Tears well up, this has been an emotional day.

JOSH (CONT'D)

It's my mother's ring.

Tears burst. Sofia thrusts the ring at Josh and RUNS off.

EXT. SOFIA'S HOUSE - DAY

A cute, but old, two-storey heritage townhouse. A little snow covers the scruffy lawn, paint is chipping, it's nice, but it could use a bit of love. A plastic Santa waves from the lawn.

But, honestly, no one is looking at Sofia's house - her neighbour's Christmas decorations are the pride of the block. The house bristles with lights and figures. Santa isn't going to miss this house.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

This house was last renovated in the 70s - dark wood panelling, shag carpet, salmon-coloured walls. The room is FULL of furniture. Multiple couches, armchairs and coffee tables, lamps everywhere. It's like an ugly time capsule.

Sofia lays on one of the couches in a posture of defeat. Melanie sits like a therapist in the nearby armchair.