

RAPPERS

Written by

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Based on, If Any

INT. AMANDA'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM.- NIGHT (IN LOS ANGELES)

LOUD hip-hop music BLASTING in the room, AMANDA ZI QING FAN, 25, American Born Chinese in her loose T-shirt and long black hair, a girl-next-door type of beauty. Standing in front of a condenser microphone with a lit joint in her hand.

AMANDA

The show's taking applications now?

Amanda reads the instructions carefully half drunk.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

...record yourself freestyling and submit through hashtag...

Amanda zooms in to read it again.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

...Don't be a pussy...

Amanda finishes her whole can of beer.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

Fuck it, let's go!

Amanda records herself rapping freestyle, she grooves to the music as she raps with her distinctive husky voice.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

(rapping)

*"they be telling me do this not that/
If I like nice things then Imma spoiled ass brat/
If I ain't married by thirty that makes them sad/
but I'm too busy making cash not fucking with them lads/
I'm tired being told to behave like Cinderella/
Dainty little thing can't afford some glass slippers/
I ain't beggin' no fairy god mother to gimme that/
Imma be my own prince charming where my bad bitches at!"*

Amanda ends the recording and replays it a couple times on her phone to hear herself. Beat. She takes a deep breath.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

Fuck it.

Amanda hits upload and added the hashtag to submit her video. She collapses and falls asleep on the floor.

INT. PHILIP'S HOUSE. - NIGHT.

CHRISTINE FAN, 50, a middle aged Chinese woman who looks younger than her age, hangs up the phone.

CHRISTINE
(in Chinese)
Why is Ziqing not picking up her
phone?

PHILIP FAN, 50, a middle aged Chinese man scrolling through his phone, looks at his wife.

PHILIP
(in Chinese)
She's probably still on her way
home.

CHRISTINE
She's supposed to call me when she
gets home!

PHILIP
She's a big girl now. Relax.

CHRISTINE
I'm just worried...let me call
Harry.

Christine dials her phone to Harry.

INT. HARRY'S CAR - NIGHT

HARRY LAU, 27, a gentleman looking American born Chinese Morgan Stanley broker, in his blue buttoned shirt with folded sleeves showing some muscles, drives his black Mercedes AMG coupe, gets a call from Christine.

HARRY
Hi Aunt Christine?

CHRISTINE
Harry! Do you know if Ziqing is
home yet?

HARRY
I just got off work. I can go check
on her.

CHRISTINE

Thank you son, appreciate it! Drive safe!

Harry chuckles and hangs up. His smile fades away.

INT. AMANDA'S APARTMENT. - NIGHT.

Harry enters their home. The living room looks tidy. As he walks toward the bedroom, he finds empty beer cans scattered everywhere and finds Amanda sleeping on the floor.

Harry sighs and takes a deep breathe. He walks over to Amanda to check on her. Harry kneels down.

HARRY

Babe?

Harry taps Amanda's arm. Amanda opens her eyes.

AMANDA

Babe?

HARRY

You and your beer...

AMANDA

It's Friday...let me live a little.

Amanda falls back to sleep. Harry rises and cleans up the trash. He carries Amanda to bed and put covers over her. Amanda grabs Harry's arm.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

...Don't go...I want you here...

Harry sits next to her bedside and kisses her forehead.

HARRY

Sorry babe...I know I've been busy...

AMANDA

I understand...I just wish I could see you more...I missed you.

HARRY

I'm working hard so that we can start our family.

Harry kisses Amanda.

AMANDA
I wanna cuddle you...

HARRY
Give me 15 minutes to the shower.

Amanda pulls Harry in for a kiss. Harry leaves to take a shower and Amanda falls asleep.

INT. QC VENTURE CAPITAL OFFICE. - DAY.

Amanda sits at her cubicle with her airpods on. Listens to Hip Hop Trap beats with CHINESE INSTRUMENTALS and scribbles lyrics in her small notebook while her computer screen is showing spreadsheets and reports of startups seeking funding from her company.

KYLIE, 25, Amanda's college bestie is in the next cubicle. She nudges Amanda when SAM, 45, the real life Devil wears Prada, approaches Amanda.

SAM
Amanda?

Amanda takes out her Airpods and turn to Sam.

SAM (CONT'D)
We have to move up the deadline.
The client wants the pitch a lot sooner.

Amanda sighs.

AMANDA
...How soon?

SAM
In one to two weeks.

AMANDA
From a whole month to just barely two weeks!?

SAM
I know. But you always deliver so I know you can handle it.

Sam pads Amanda's shoulders and leaves. Amanda sighs and closes her eyes and grunts.

AMANDA
UGGGHHHHHH!

Kylie puts a coffee on Amanda's desk.

KYLIE
Girl drink up that latte.

Amanda takes the coffee and drinks it.

AMANDA
This fucks up my whole agenda! I
have other projects also due around
that time!!

KYLIE
Dude if you need help, I can help
you with that new project.

AMANDA
They really be thinking these
reports just magically happen to be
placed nicely on their desks.

KYLIE
And their coffees too.

AMANDA
Don't even get me started on that
fucking customized drinks.

KYLIE
RIGHT.

AMANDA
Thanks for the latte by the way.

KYLIE
I got you.

Amanda's phone vibrates and a notification pops up. Amanda reads her phone. It's an email and Instagram DM from the Hip Hop Competition show notifying her acceptance.

AMANDA
...inviting you to the first round
live audition at Nightingale
Nightclub in two weeks!?

Kylie rolls over to Amanda's cubicle.

KYLIE
Shit! You have an audition in two
weeks!?

AMANDA
Everything's clashing in two
weeks!!

KYLIE
We gotta finish the two projects
before you go to that audition.

Amanda finishes her coffee.

AMANDA
May the all nighters begin.

Amanda puts her airpods back on and listens to upbeat hip hop
tracks.

INT. ERIC'S RECORDING STUDIO. - DAY (NEW YORK CITY)

ERIC YANG, 25, an American born Chinese Ghost Music Producer,
wears a black hoodie that covers half of his face, playing on
a piano keyboard wired to his iMac while Logic Pro X is on.
RICKY, 25, nodding his head to the beat. He turns to Eric in
his rolling chair.

RICKY
Yo bro how's yo track doin'?

ERIC
Almost there.

RICKY
Bruh every rapper wants that Travis
Scott type beat now.

ERIC
I know. Migos too. They all want
what's hot in the market.

RICKY
How are people not tired of it yet?

ERIC
It's copy and paste at this point.

RICKY
But hey, it kinda makes our job
easier and faster. We already know
the drill.

ERIC
I guess.

Eric resumes to work on the track. His phone pings and a notification pops up. Eric grabs his phone and reads it. His mouth drops open. Ricky lights up a joint.

ERIC (CONT'D)

BRO!

Ricky smokes the joint and exhales.

ERIC (CONT'D)

I might be flying to LA soon.

Ricky chokes.

RICKY

The fuck you mean you flyin' to LA?

ERIC

I'm flying to LA in two weeks for a competition.

RICKY

Bro we have a fucking deadline!

Ricky stands up and turns Eric's rolling chair to face him.

ERIC

I can still work on the other half of the album. I can work as long as I have my laptop.

Ricky smokes his joint.

RICKY

Would you still be part of this if...

Eric sighs.

ERIC

If I became a rapper?

Ricky nods.

ERIC (CONT'D)

Nicki Minaj produces her own songs with her music producers. I don't see why I can't do both.

RICKY

I'm happy with how our business's doin', but with just the two of us we're barely getting days off...and now you're gonna be in LA for God knows how long!?

ERIC

I told you about the competition.

RICKY

You didn't tell me you were gonna go for it!?

Eric sighs.

ERIC

I'll rush my part out before I leave for LA...

Ricky grunts and smokes the joint.

RICKY

...Bro a head's up would've been nice.

ERIC

I'm sorry man.

RICKY

Why didn't you tell me?

ERIC

I never thought I'd be accepted you know.

RICKY

Right...they be getting thousands of submissions a day.

ERIC

IF...it's a big if. If I ever made it, I'd never leave you behind.

RICKY

You bet yo ass yo ain't leavin' me behind!! Imma hunt yo ass down!!

Eric and Ricky laugh.

RICKY (CONT'D)

I'll hold down the fort until you come back.

Eric gives Ricky a bro hug.

INT. NIGHTINGALE NIGHTCLUB. - NIGHT (IN LOS ANGELES)

A sea of candidates seated and waiting. The judge panel consists of 3 judges: JAY, NICKI and GD. JAY in his iced out all denim outfit. NICKI in her black and gold extravagant Balenciaga outfit and bubblegum pink hair. GD in his silver bomber and white cap covering half his face. Jay walks towards the center of the stage facing the camera. He smiles and hypes up the crowd.

JAY

Y'all will go through rounds and rounds of quests until only one remains. The champion gets a contract with my label, Apollo Records. You'll have access of my most trusted music producer, GD, who's also on this panel. Last but not least, we have the Rap Queen Nicki graces her presence and we're here to find the next super rap star! LET'S GET IT!!

Candidates scream and cheer as Jay waves back and walks to the judge panel. Nicki and GD applaud.

MONTAGE:

DWAYNE JACKSON, (30) a battle rapper with THE ROCK type of built in a black hoodie and dreads. Aggressive heavy beats drop as he starts rapping with his deep smoky baritone voice.

MEGAN WEBSTER, (22) an androgynous melanated beauty with an athletic build in her cream cropped tank top and military green ripped jeans showing off her tatted up body and styled pixie cut. She raps with a rapid fire flow, spitting out tongue twisters like lyrics on the beat and stunts everyone with her Spanish and English words blended in a verse.

RUBY LEE, (19) a doll-like silver wavy haired Korean rapper in her denim skirt and tight cropped top showing off her slender build. She raps in relaxed flow and dances to the beat and charms the judges. Megan stares at Ruby and cannot take her eyes of her.

END MONTAGE.

ERIC YANG (25), an American born Chinese ghost music producer, 6-foot tall and lean muscular build with a tatted arm, ears pierced and messy black hairdo like a Calvin Klein model, dressed in a black T-shirt, gold chains on his neck and ripped jeans. A total bad-boy.

Eric raps in his light raspy voice and has a slight mumble rap style to his performance. His agility in switching up flows impresses the judges.

Jay applauds and stands up. Nicki claps and nods. GD claps.

JAY (CONT'D)

Damn you a bad motherfucker!

GD

Your profile says you're a ghost producer?

ERIC

Yeah. I'm a ghost producer.

GD

What made you join the competition?

ERIC

I do love music producing, I want a new challenge so I wanna try to be the front of the scene cuz I've been behind the scenes for almost seven years.

GD

Seven years...fair. You do have what it takes to be on stage.

Eric bows to show appreciation.

JAY

You're a full package. Y'ALL AGREE!?

Jay stands up to hype up the audience. Nicki winks comedically. Audience cheer for Eric. Eric chuckles in embarrassment.

NICKI

You'll get used to it. Welcome on board, we'll see you next round.

Eric smiles and bows then leaves the stage.

INT. QC VENTURE CAPITAL OFFICE. - NIGHT

Amanda dozes off in front of her work desk in the dark empty office. Computer screen showing reports and statistics. Amanda's phone BLOWS UP and RINGS and wakes her up. Amanda frantically picks up the phone and quickly cuts the call off.

AMANDA

FUCK!

Amanda picks up everything and RUNS OUT the office.

INT. NIGHTINGALE NIGHTCLUB -BACKSTAGE. - NIGHT

Amanda frantically runs to the set in her work attire, white buttoned up blouse and black slim fit office pants and heels that shows off her curves. The PA escorts her onto the stage. Amanda unbuttons the top buttons, rolls up her sleeves to look less office-like and takes off her employee badge as she walks on stage.

INT. NIGHTINGALE NIGHTCLUB. - NIGHT

Amanda walks on stage and freezes for a few seconds. Jay, Nicki and GD wait for her to start rapping. Jay and GD are giving each other a look.

JAY

(whispers)

Damn, another Ruby?

Nicki glares at the two.

NICKI

(whispers)

Shh! Cut it!

The three face Amanda. Amanda nods at the DJ and the beat drops. The beat has Chinese instruments sounds sprinkled to it. Amanda starts rapping about women empowerment and social expectations. Her distinctive deep husky voice captivate the judge. Amanda bounces around the stage and engages the audience at every corner.

She almost trips over her heels. She kicks off her heels and stands on the stage bare foot. She keeps on rapping until the beat ends. The judges and audience applaud for her.

NICKI (CONT'D)

That was impressive. Where are your heels?

Amanda looks around and picks up her heels and wears them.
The judges laugh.

NICKI (CONT'D)

The beat's dope. I love the sounds
of it. You're a ball of surprises.
Your voice and face don't match but
that's what makes you special.

Amanda giggles.

JAY

You have a cute face but when you
rap, the savage comes out.

GD

Did you produce your own track?

Amanda nods. GD lifts up his cap smiling and gives her a
thumbs up.

JAY

Congratulations!! You may move onto
the next round!!

Audience cheer for her and Amanda smiles as she leaves the
stage.

INT. NIGHTINGALE NIGHT CLUB - BACKSTAGE. - NIGHT

Amanda walks towards the crafty and grabs a bottle of water
and DEVOURS it. She takes deep breathes and lets out deep
sighs.

Eric walks in and approaches her.

ERIC

(in Chinese)
Ziqing?

The light yet raspy voice flashes through Amanda's memories
and strikes her like a lightning. Her Chinese name is not
known to many. She turns around and sees a familiar face.

AMANDA

Eric?

Eric stands next to Amanda. The two share a moment.

ERIC

It's been a while.

Amanda flusters and avoids eye contact.

AMANDA
Yeah...five years?

ERIC
Probably more than that.

Eric takes a quick glance at her, sees her faded phoenix tattoo at her left ankle.

ERIC (CONT'D)
You still look the same the last time I saw you.

AMANDA
You...your arm...

Amanda points at Eric's left arm. Eric chuckles, pulls up his sleeves and extends his muscular left arm to Amanda.

AMANDA (CONT'D)
You did it.

ERIC
It hurt so bad.

Amanda chuckles.

ERIC (CONT'D)
You did great back there.

Amanda nods and smiles, takes a quick glance at Eric and notices his worn out phoenix tattoo on his left ankle.

AMANDA
Thanks! You too.

ERIC
Wanna get a drink next weekend?

Amanda is caught of guard.

AMANDA
Uh...I can't...

Eric chuckles.

ERIC
No pressure, I get it. You have my number.

Eric leaves and walks toward the other rappers and socialize. Amanda puts her employee badge in her purse.

INT. NIGHTINGALE NIGHT CLUB. - NIGHT

Judges gather the selected candidates at the main area. Amanda and Eric arrive separately. Eric takes a peek at Amanda. Amanda turns to look at Eric and he dodges the eye contact. Ruby approaches Amanda.

RUBY

Hi! Are you Amanda?

AMANDA

Yeah! You're Ruby!?

Amanda fangirls over the silver-haired doll standing in front of her.

RUBY

I loved your performance! You were amazing!

Amanda laughs and bonds with Ruby.

AMANDA

I wish I got to see yours! I fell asleep in the office.

RUBY

You still made it here. I've been wanting to do this so long.

AMANDA

To rap?

RUBY

Yeah, cuz I don't look like a rapper.

AMANDA

Girl as long as you have the skills, you do you and fuck the rest.

Judges go over the rules for the next round.

JAY

The next round is a cypher. Y'all will be put in groups and each do a verse on a beat. The groups are random so I'm gonna announce the teams now.

Judges announces a list of names.

JAY (CONT'D)
...Dwayne Jackson, Megan Webster
and last but not least Ruby Lee.
That's team 2.

Ruby whines.

RUBY
No! I wanted to be with you Amanda!

Amanda laughs.

AMANDA
You're adorable! You'll be fine.

Judges announces another list of names.

JAY
...Eric and finally Amanda. That's
team 3.

Amanda in shock and turns to look at Eric and finds him also
looking at herself in shock.

Amanda looks away and takes deep breaths. She feels someone
tapping her shoulders behind her.

ERIC
We'll be fine.

Amanda jumps.

AMANDA
You scared me!

Eric chuckles. Eric does it again.

AMANDA (CONT'D)
Asshole!

Eric chuckles.

ERIC
Once we know the beat, it'll be a
piece of cake. Don't stress about
it.

Amanda nods.

AMANDA
It'd be a fucking expired piece of
cake.

Eric chuckles and Amanda sighs.

ERIC
Expired chocolate cake.

Amanda laughs, not paying attention to the instructions.

JAY
...and it's a wrap! Thanks
everybody!

The judges leave the venue and the film crew cleans up the set.

ERIC
You wanna walk out together? It's
late and dark.

Amanda and Eric walk out together.

EXT. NIGHTINGALE NIGHT CLUB. NIGHT

Amanda and Eric walk out together. Amanda sees a black Mercedes AMG Coupe pulls up to the curb. Harry gets out of the car. Amanda runs towards Harry and hugs him.

AMANDA
I GOT IN!!!

Harry hugs Amanda and smiles.

HARRY
I knew you could do it! Get in
babe, it's cold.

Amanda gets in the car and Harry closes the door for her. Harry looks up and sees Eric looking at him. Harry and Eric gazes at each other for a second.

Harry gets inside the car and leaves. Amanda waves at Eric as Harry drives away. Eric lets out a sigh as he watches the Mercedes leaves. Eric turns his back and goes to his car.

INT. ERIC'S HOTEL ROOM. - NIGHT

Eric leans on the windowsill and stares at the city views deep in thoughts. He vapes and exhales.

MONTAGE:

EXT. KINDERGARTEN. - DAY.

Eric (4) finds a shy Amanda (4) and gives her a piece of chocolate.

INT. ERIC'S CHILDHOOD HOME. - DAY.

Eric (7) gets Amanda (7) to sit with him to listen to a song together. They share a earphone together.

INT. CINEMA. - NIGHT.

Eric (15) and Amanda (15) eating popcorn and laughing together.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL HALL. - DAY.

Eric (17) and Amanda (17) perform on stage for the school's anniversary. They hip hop dance together. The dance ends with them staring at each other up close. Audience applaud.

END MONTAGE.

Eric vapes again and his phone rings. He picks up the call.

INTERCUT - PHONE CONVERSATION WITH RICKY IN NEW YORK.

RICKY

Bro how you been?

ERIC

I got in.

RICKY

YOOO leggo!! You don't sound that happy bro.

ERIC

I'm beat. It's late on your end. You pullin' all nighter again?

RICKY

Listen, we just got another client. That's why I'm still working.

ERIC

If you can't handle it solo just let me know. I can help.

RICKY

Oh I will. Don't you worry!

Eric laughs.

ERIC
I got you man.

RICKY
What is it? You sound off.

ERIC
...She's there.

Eric takes a deep breath and sighs.

RICKY
Oh hell no. That's not good.

ERIC
It's been more than five years,
that's ancient.

RICKY
You wouldn't bother to tell me if
you ain't bothered.

ERIC
Bro I'm fine.

RICKY
I don't wanna see you fucked up
again.

ERIC
...Yeah. I know.

Beat. Eric hangs up and goes to take a shower.

INT. GYM. - DAY

Amanda and Harry in their workout outfit on the treadmill. A few gym buddies wave at them.

GYM BUDDY 1
Hey you guys!

Amanda smiles at him.

GYM BUDDY 2
I saw you on TV the other day! I
didn't know you could rap!!

Harry doesn't know how to react. Amanda laughs and appreciates them.

AMANDA

I've always loved rap! That's what
I listen to when I work out.

GYM BUDDY 1

Girl I was all over your SoundCloud
and Spotify!! I had to save all
your songs.

Amanda chuckles with them. Harry looks at Amanda with mixed
feelings while the gym turns into a her little fan club.