

OUT OF TIME

by Phoenix Black

INT. CHURCH - DAY

A woman's delicate fingers play the cello. There's a pale shadow of an absent wedding band on her dark skin. A final forlorn note. A tear drops on the well-loved instrument.

Dapper CHURCHGOERS, most of them Black, share a silence that surrounds people sharing an absence; heavy, still.

Cool cat FINGERS (80s, Black) holds the room at the podium. Beside a coffin, a black and white photo of STICKS, a snazzy Black dude drumming feverishly. Sticks, back in his twenties, wears a pork pie hat and sixties suit. Smooth.

FINGERS

Your pa woulda loved that. Y'know
it's funny. Sticks called the best
damn fast-food joint in LA --

Cheers from Churchgoers.

FINGERS (cont'd)

He called his joint Out of Time, cos
Lilun you ain't. But I guess he is.

Light chuckles from Churchgoers. Sticks' elegant daughter LILUN (49, Black), seated at the cello, pastes on an expected smile.

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

Sticks' wake. A CROONER and JAZZ BAND (70s, Black) play an upbeat tune. There's a tributary buffet of diner classics.

Laughing Black CHILDREN, in their Sunday best, run between a small huddle of conservative white SMUG MARRIEDS (40s) and old Black HIPSTERS laughing at them.

Lilun stands alone. Sees everything, hears nothing.

AMAHLE (50, Black), Lilun's perfectly constructed cousin, touches Lilun's arm. She startles. Amahle air kisses her.

AMAHLE

Cousin, condolences. Seems like we
only see each other at funerals. Why
is that? Well, I suppose we do move
in different circles.

Amahle brandishes an engagement ring like a weapon.

AMAHLE (cont'd)

Simeon and I are engaged.

Lilun's face is pained. She reflexively fingers her absent wedding finger.

Chamber music starts. Lilun hurries to take her position at the cello, at the back of the ensemble. A long, sad note.

MONTAGE - SUN LOOKS FOR APARTMENTS

Divorced weekend rock star SUN (50, Asian American, male) wears black jeans and a black "ROCK HARD" band T-shirt revealing tattooed muscular arms. Walks into:

-- a sunlit apartment heaving with upwardly mobile couples in their 20s, feverishly completing rental applications.

-- a grungy apartment. Steps on a cockroach.

-- a dodgy ally with a "FOR RENT" sign in a window. Gets robbed at gunpoint.

END MONTAGE

EXT. OUT OF TIME DINER - DAY

Sun stops in front of an aging diner.

In the window, a local paper article on Sticks, former owner and jazz drummer. The photo shows Sticks hugging Lilun.

Sun peers through the window at Lilun, soundlessly giving CUSTOMERS attitude.

He spots the diner sign "OUT OF TIME" and the apartment above. Grins.

EXT./INT. OUT OF TIME DINER - DAY

Sun enters in a business suit and thick-rimmed glasses.

Through the swinging door behind him is an old FOOD TRUCK.

Out of Time diner is stuck in the '60s: a juke box, cherry red booths, wood paneling, checkerboard linoleum floors.

Lilun looks worn like her surrounds and clearly unhappy to be the new owner. A few customers and Fingers nurse coffees.

Lilun looks up from fiercely cleaning the bench.

LILUN
We don't have WiFi.

SUN
 Actually, I heard you had a room to
 rent. Upstairs.

Fingers looks at Lilun. Her hands burrow into her hips.

LILUN
 You heard wrong.

FINGERS
 Now hang on Lilun. Maybe that's not a
 bad idea. He wouldn' mind. Get in a
 lil' green.

Lilun's whole body says no.

FINGERS
 You's like an Asian Clark Kent. What
 you do son? Let me guess. Accountant.

Sun hides his callused fingers behind him and nods.

LILUN
 I'd have to clean out Pa's things.

FINGERS
 You single? Cos Lilun here is single.

Lilun gapes, mortified. She catches Sun's eye. He is an
 Asian Clark Kent. She tucks her hair behind her ears. He
 stares at her frankly.

SUN
 I'll take her as is -- I mean, the
 apartment.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Fingers opens a window in a spacious two-bedroom apartment.
 Sun picks up a record with Sticks and Fingers on the cover.

FINGERS
 Yeah, that's me and Sticks, Lilun's
 pa. She's not one for jazz though.
 She can pick up anything with strings
 and play it but she's stuck on
 playin' that sad ass cello. You play?

SUN
 Yeah. I'm in a tribute band for Rock
 Hard.
 (off Stick's shrug)
 From the eighties?

FINGERS

What you play?

Sun gives an energetic drum flourish.

FINGERS (cont'd)

(whoops)

Don' mention that to Lilun.

Sun opens a wardrobe of funky '60s clothes.

FINGERS (cont'd)

Y'can have 'em. No use to him now.

INT. OUT OF TIME DINER - NIGHT

Lilun, wearing headphones, wipes the bench to classical music. Stops. A tapping. She takes off her headphones. Tap, tap, tap. Looks around. It stops. She goes back to cleaning. A loud drum flourish. Lilun looks at the ceiling.

LILUN

Oh no.

INT. STAIRS - NIGHT

Lilun stomps up the stairs to the crash of Sun's drum solo.

INT. CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Lilun, poised to knock, hears Rock Hard's hard rock ballad.

SUN

(sings off-key)

How can I love again

When my heart's still breaking?

But I got to pretend

I'm so tired of faking.

Lilun's face softens. She leans against the door and smiles.

INT. OUT OF TIME DINER - DAY

Sun comes down the stair whistling last night's song. He's suited up. Back to Asian Clark Kent. Lilun serves up coffee to regulars. Looks up and smiles. Nothing to worry about.

INT. OUT OF TIME DINER - DAY

Dumbstruck CUSTOMERS (70s) look at the ceiling.

Electric guitar cuts through a heavy bass drum. Lilun gives Fingers a withering stare.

THUMP! The light swings. Fingers shrugs.

FINGERS

At least they're in time.

INT. OUT OF TIME DINER - NIGHT

The BAND descends the stairs, all big hair and sunglasses. Sun tips his sunglasses. Gives Lilun an exaggerated wink.

BAND MEMBER

She's so uptight.

Sun snorts and leaves with the band, all swagger, his drumsticks in the back pocket of his tight leather pants.

Lilun takes off her apron and throws it at Fingers.

INT. LILUN'S PLACE - NIGHT

Lilun, in a long flowing black dress, puts on pearl earrings in front of a floor-length mirror. Her hair is rolled up in a bun. Classic, refined.

Lilun lunges. Jump switches. Lunges the other side. Squats like a frog.

INT./EXT. LILUN'S PLACE - NIGHT

Lilun carries her cello out the front door. She's living in the food truck.

EXT. OUT OF TIME DINER - NIGHT

Sun fumbles with the diner keys.

INT. LILUN'S PLACE - SAME TIME

Lilun's in a short nightgown, knees around the cello. Her face is calm, bow in hand. She springs to life, as she rocks out on her cello to a Rock Hard hit.

INTERCUT SUN AND LILUN

-- Sun turns. Sees Lilun through the blinds. Soundlessly whistles. Sexy.

-- Lilun looks up. Sprung! She stops playing.

-- Their eyes lock and linger. They smile, laugh softly.

-- A woman's cackle. A DRUNK WOMAN drapes herself over Sun.

-- Lilun's face hardens. She returns to classical cello.

-- Sun slowly turns. Exhales heavily. Lets Drunk Woman inside.

MINI MONTAGE OF SUN'S POST-DIVORCE SEX-AS-THERAPY PHASE

Lilun watches a succession of WOMEN do the walk of shame down the stairs during the morning non-rush. Seasons change as they go from crop tops to winter coats.

INT. OUT OF TIME DINER - DAY

Fingers watches Lilun. She scoffs and shakes her head as another PARTY GIRL leaves the diner. Sun bounces into the diner. He unfolds 'GO', an Asian board game, on the bar.

LILUN

Good morning, man whore.

SUN

(hands in prayer)
My favorite jealous nun.

LILUN

Hardly. I just don't treat sex like a competitive sport. It's disgusting.

Lilun and Sun play Go (Asian board game) between her pouring coffee for two customers. There's an easy friendship.

SUN

So why'd you keep me around?

LILUN

I can't afford to lose you.

She closes the nearly empty cash register.

LILUN (cont'd)

At least I'm not morally bankrupt.

Fingers guffaws. Sun feigns an arrow through the heart.

Lilun opens her mail. A gold envelope. Lilun winces. Sun reads her face for an explanation.

LILUN (cont'd)
It's a wedding invitation. My cheating husband is inviting me to his wedding.

SUN
You're not going though, right?

LILUN
It's also my cousin's wedding.

SUN
Ouch.

Lilun chucks the invite in the trash. Opens another envelope. Reads quickly.

SUN (cont'd)
You okay?

LILUN
It's the tax department. Pa didn't do his taxes... for five years.

SUN
Give it here. They see an Asian accountant coming they'll be quaking in their boots. Hey, sometimes the stereotype's gotta work for us.

INT. ART GALLERY - NIGHT

Lilun and Sun walk through a gallery of massive paintings of vaginas. It's a corporate function. A little black dress hugs Lilun's curves. A good-looking GUY (40s, white), eyes Lilun. Sun notices.

SUN
Thanks for coming. I hate this kind of thing.

LILUN
Really?

SUN
I like to keep work and life separate. This cross-over makes me nervous.

LILUN

Afraid they'll find out your true
identity Clark Kent?

(considers the art)

I thought this would be the perfect
date for you. Vaginas everywhere.

A well-built MAN IN TUXEDO (50s, Black) checks Lilun out.
She's oblivious. Sun is not.

SUN

God no. It's an invitation for
questions. Where is this going? How
many women have you slept with? Which
vagina am I? What? They've never
looked in a mirror?

Lilun screws up her face. Sun chuckles.

SUN (cont'd)

What? You never looked in a mirror?
You should. I'm sure you've got a
perfectly acceptable vagina.

INT. LILUN'S PLACE - NIGHT

Lilun sits in bed, watching an old romantic movie. Pauses
it. Opens her bedside drawer. Pulls out a makeup compact
slowly. Flips it open. Looks into the small mirror.

LILUN

Ah, what the hell.

She lies down, wriggles down her pants. Awkwardly shuffles
and angles the mirror. Peers.

LILUN (cont'd)

Hmm!

INT. MOVIE THEATER - NIGHT

Lilun and Sun eat popcorn from the same oversize bucket. A
rom-com plays.

LILUN

How many women have you slept with?

SUN

I don't know. It's not like I write
their names in a book.

LILUN
If you did, would it be a short story
or War and Peace?

SUN
An airport novel. A light read.

LILUN
Ew.

SUN
What? I'm an accountant in a rock
band. I've got the good girls who
want to be bad market cornered.

Their hands reach into the popcorn bucket at the same time.
Lilun quickly retrieves her hand.

INT. JAZZ CLUB - NIGHT

Lilun and Sun watch Fingers play the piano in a JAZZ BAND.
He's the oldest and coolest guy there. The room is full.
Toes tap under the tables. A platter of mixed tapas is
placed on their table.

LILUN
So is that what you want for
yourself? A smorgasbord of women?

SUN
Well my wife didn't believe in
monogamy and she seemed pretty happy.
What do you want for yourself?

LILUN
I always wanted my own place like
this, where I could play what I want.
But that's not going to happen. I
can't sell the diner. That's all I've
got left of Pa. Being a musician's
just gig work now. I need something
solid. Even if it's just a building.

EXT. OUT OF TIME DINER - NIGHT

Lilun and Sun watch a super-moon hang over the city. Sigh.

LILUN
It's magnificent.

SUN

And tomorrow it'll be gone. It's like
we've got one moment for a big life
and you don't want to miss it.

They contemplate the universe. The mood snaps back.

SUN (cont'd)

Well, good night.

LILUN

See you at breakfast.

Sun unlocks the diner. Lilun unlocks the food truck. They stop. Look at the moon. Then enter their homes.

INT. OUT OF TIME DINER - DAY

On the coffee maker is an envelope marked "ROCK ON."

Lilun shakes the contents on the counter. A USB stick and sheet music. She looks up. Sun smiles shyly.

SUN

Lilun, this place isn't all that's
left of your pa. I don't want the
cello to be sad any more.

Lilun's face is a torrent of emotion. She sniffs.

The diner door swings opens. Hits the wall with a bang.
Lilun looks up to behold Amahle, designer clad.

AMAHLE

Hello Ella.

LILUN

Amahle.

Amahle looks Sun up and down. Sucks her bottom lip.

SUN

Ella?

AMAHLE

Like Ella Fitzgerald. Her parents had
such high hopes.

(smirks)

I just wanted to check you got the
wedding invite.

LILUN

You didn't get my RSVP?

Amahle inspects the diner. Wrinkles her nose.

AMAHLE
Perhaps it's lost. Mail's so
unreliable. So it's just you, right?

Silence.

AMAHLE (cont'd)
Well, I hear Jackson's divorced so
you might have a shot third time
around. Ciao ciao!

She leaves, waving her fingers in goodbye.

LILUN
She's a monster.

SUN
Sorry, I got to run.

LILUN
(as he runs out)
Well thanks for listening!

EXT. OUT OF TIME DINER - DAY

Sun catches up to Amahle. She stops, turns. Ogles him.

INT. OUT OF TIME DINER - NIGHT

Sun awkwardly waltzes with Lilun who steps on his foot.

SUN
I lead. One-two-three, one-two-three.

LILUN
The accountant can count.

SUN
I know it's a family wedding but --

LILUN
She's hired my ensemble and she's
family. I can't not go. Anyway, it's
not a sit down thing. I'll just play
then melt into the background.

INT. WEDDING VENUE - BALLROOM - NIGHT

Lilun plays the last note on her cello. Takes in the lavish venue. It's a formal sit down dinner.

LATER

Lilun looks for her table. Finds it.

She sits at the table, right in front of the bridal party. The table is full of PREGNANT COUPLES.

SIMEON, unfortunately smoking hot, nods at her. Amahle poorly hides a smile. A WAITER pours wine into her glass.

LILUN
Just leave the bottle.

The women shoot Lilun a disapproving look.

TAP TAP! A microphone. Amahle leans over to Lilun.

AMAHLE
You're going to love the band.

Onto the stage swaggers Sun with Rock Hard. His rippled arms and tats are on display. Women run to the stage. He drums. Tap-tap-tap. Women are enthralled. He builds up to a steady rhythm. Chests heave.

Amahle shoulders through the crowd. She's up front. Stares at Sun frankly. Nothing bridal pure about that look.

Sun stares back. A sexual beat builds to a climax.

Amahle's hips writhe.

Lilun watches the exchange. The looks, the beat.

Her brow furrows. She turns to leave.

A final drum flourish.

Sun stage jumps. The crowd cheers.

Sun hurries to Lilun.

SUN
Where are you going?

Her face is flushed.

LILUN
Why are you here?!

SUN

I didn't want you to be alone.

A tall, modellesque Black man, JACKSON (50s), stops behind Lilun and kisses her neck.

He reaches around her to extend a hand to Sun.

JACKSON

I'm Jackson. Ella and I used to date.

Sun and Jackson shake hands firmly, a game of dominance.

SUN

I'm Sun.

JACKSON

Great set out there. Must be hard to make a living.

Jackson, behind Lilun, puts his arm around her waist.

SUN

I get by.

JACKSON

Are there any live venues now? Or is it just weddings and bar mitzvahs?

Jackson squeezes Lilun's hand and spins her to him.

JACKSON (cont'd)

No escaping me now.

He drags her to the dance floor.

Sun watches Jackson pull Lilun close. Sun's mouth twitches.

INT. OUT OF TIME DINER - DAY

Fingers wears a cast. Sun helps him cut up his food.

FINGERS

You know, all these women ya got, is just fast-food, no nourishment.

They watch Lilun pour Jackson coffee then kiss him.

FINGERS (cont'd)

I'll tell you something son, as a musician and as a man. You can't wait for the timing to be right. You have to get the timing right.

Sun looks at Lilun beam and laugh softly.

INT. OUT OF TIME DINER - DAY

Sun stands close to Lilun, looking over papers.

SUN

Luckily this place makes no money so no taxes. But if you don't turn this place around, you'll have to sell, just to meet costs.

LILUN

Maybe I should. Music is dying here. This neighborhood is dying. What reason do I have to stay?

Sun looks at his hands. He's about to speak --

LILUN (cont'd)

Jackson has a connection at the Philharmonic in New York. There's an opening. It's steady work.

SUN

New York? I thought --

LILUN

What?

SUN

You wanted to play your own music.

LILUN

That's never going to happen.

SUN

What if I could make it happen? I have an idea. Do you trust me?

LILUN

No.

Sun takes Lilun's hand. Looks at her intently.

SUN

Lilun, you can count on me.
(laughs lightly)
Pun intended.

EXT. OUT OF TIME DINER - NIGHT

SUPER: SIX MONTHS LATER

A super-moon. The food truck is refurbished with a bright "OUT OF TIME" logo with musical notes across it. There's a line of people ordering as they wait to get into the diner.

INT. OUT OF TIME DINER - SAME TIME

The diner has been converted into an intimate club with a band. The place is packed. Fingers stands at the microphone.

FINGERS

So, it's been a year since Sticks
passed on. And I'd like Sun, who
brought his place back to life, to
help us celebrate him.

Fingers sits at the piano. Sun takes his place at the drums. He wears Sticks' jacket and pork pie hat. A double bass stands center stage.

FINGERS

And to Ella, our Li'l One who you
know as Lilun, you take yo' place.

Lilun takes center stage. A spotlight shines on her. She stands and plays the double bass.

Amahle is at the front table next to Jackson. Under the table she strokes his leg. He whispers in her ear. Lilun and Sun notice and laugh together.

Lilun sings, in a voice rich with Ella Fitzgerald. It's a jazz cover of Rock Hard's hit.

LILUN

*How can I love again
When my heart's still breaking?
But I got to pretend
I'm so tired of faking.
And then I met you
And I'm healed at last
All the pain that I felt
Is a thing of the past.*

LATER

Sun and Lilun spin across the small dance floor. They kiss. Lilun wears an engagement ring.

Fingers, at the piano, wipes a tear.

Lilun and Sun look out the window to the super-moon.

SUN (V.O.)

We've got one moment for a big life
and you don't want to miss it.

FADE OUT.