

Happy Birthday

by 曾佳彥 Louis Jia-Yang Tseng

CHARACTERS

Joe

Mr. Kim

Mrs. Kim

Gloria

Sunny

Mr. Clooney

Serena

Hank

SCENE 1

In the office, Joe is burying himself with his work. It's near five o'clock in the afternoon. Most of his colleagues are getting to leave. Then the boss, Mr. Clooney, comes in and walks to Joe.

MR. CLOONEY. What are you up to, Joe?

JOE. I'm making an outline of our project next year.

MR. CLOONEY. Next year? Wow, are you serious?

JOE. Yeah. Is there anything wrong?

MR. CLOONEY. Of course not. It's just...you really impress me.

JOE. Impress you?

MR. CLOONEY. You're too outstanding. I decide to promote you to be our project manager.

JOE. My god! I just came here last month. Thank you, Mr. Clooney!

MR. CLOONEY (*laughing*). You're definitely better than the others. I know you'll be a successful manager.

JOE. Thank you! But how about Hank and Serena? I think they're talented, too.

MR. CLOONEY. Are you kidding? I think they're rubbish. They're always flirting, not working.

JOE. Flirting? So...they're a couple now?

MR. CLOONEY. You must have been focusing on your jobs all the time, good boy.

JOE. I seldom chat with the others. I know I'm a freak.

MR. CLOONEY. A freak is better than a gossip.

JOE. Well...thank you.

MR. CLOONEY. So, as our new project manager, you'll have to attend the party tomorrow night.

JOE. What party?

MR. CLOONEY. You haven't heard of it? *(He puts the invitation on Joe's desk)* The president's engaging to his eleventh wife.

JOE. But tomorrow is...

MR. CLOONEY. Is what?

JOE. Tomorrow is my birthday, and also my daughter's.

MR. CLOONEY *(laughing)*. Don't make me laugh, Joe! Just buy a Barbie doll for her. No big deal.

JOE. But I promised to celebrate with her together. She has been expecting.

MR. CLOONEY. So you're telling me you're not going?

JOE *(tensely)*. Sorry, Mr. Clooney. It really means a lot to my daughter.

MR. CLOONEY *(coldly)*. Listen, I'm not threatening. But, sacrifice your career for her joy. Does that worth it?

JOE *(nervously)*. Sacrifice?!

MR. CLOONEY. Yeah, you know what I mean.

JOE. Oh! I'm sorry, Mr. Clooney! I never mean to...

MR. CLOONEY *(crossly)*. Don't fool me around, Joe. You know what's more important. Make more money. Buy expensive gifts for your daughter. And she won't give a damn that fucking birthday celebration! Use your head to think about it. You're no three-year-old. *(leaving)*

JOE. Wait! Mr. Clooney!

MR. CLOONEY. See you tomorrow.

JOE. Wait!

(Joe doesn't know how to make a choice. He ponders for a while, and then falls asleep at his desk.)

(At Joe's home.)

SUNNY. Mommy, why hasn't daddy come home?

GLORIA. Maybe he's still busy at work. I called him, but he didn't answer.

SUNNY. I'm a little worried, mommy.

GLORIA. Don't worry, honey. I'll call him again later, and it's time for you to go to bed now.

SUNNY. Does he remember that tomorrow is...

GLORIA *(hesitantly)*. Yes. Yes. Of course... Tomorrow is his birthday, too. He can't forget.

SUNNY. Alright... Good night, mommy.

GLORIA. Good night, honey.

SCENE 2

In the office, Joe is still sleeping at his desk. He dreamt of an old dream in his

childhood.

JOE. Hey Dad, I'm home!

MR. KIM. Happy birthday! We've been waiting for you!

MRS. KIM. Happy birthday! Come on, Joe!

JOE. Oh my god, I can't believe it! A huge chocolate cake!

MR. KIM. Your favorite! It took a whole afternoon to make it.

MRS. KIM. Haha! Look at our dirty clothes!

MR. KIM. Who's gonna wash them? (pointing at Mrs. Kim)

MRS. KIM. In your dream!

MR. KIM. Hey, I bought the stuff!

MRS. KIM. So what? I made the cream!

MR. KIM. I gave the idea!

JOE. Stop, you kids! Today is my birthday, okay?

MRS. KIM. Oh, sorry, honey. Go wash your hands!

MR. KIM. Yeah! Let's get ready!

(Joe puts down his book bag and washes his hands. Mr. and Mrs. Kim set things up on the table. They all get ready, and sing the Happy Birthday song together.)

MRS. KIM. Make a wish! Make a wish!

(Joe closes his eyes and makes his wish.)

MR. KIM (cheerfully). Puff out the candle!

(Joe puffs out the candle and they clap and laugh together.)

MR. KIM. Happy birthday, son!

MRS. KIM. Happy birthday, honey!!

JOE. Thank you! Dad, Mom, I love you!

MR. KIM (affectionately). You know what? You remind me of my childhood! When I was eleven years old...

JOE. God. It must be a century ago.

MRS. KIM. Yeah, wake up, old man!

JOE (laughing). Wake up, Dad!

MRS. KIM (loudly). Wake up, Joe! I'm gonna be late. Get up now!

JOE (drowsily). What time is it, Mother?

MRS. KIM. Seven o'clock. And it's my turn today to drive you to school. Don't make me late for work.

JOE. Okay, I'm getting up...

(Five minutes later.)

MRS. KIM (impatiently). Can we go now?

JOE. Just a second.

MRS. KIM. Quickly!

JOE (*putting on his coat*). Okay. Okay. Let's go.

(*At the car.*)

JOE. Mother, do you remember that tomorrow is...

MRS. KIM. Is what?

JOE (*disappointedly*). Nothing. Never mind.

MRS. KIM. Oh, I remember. Tomorrow is your birthday, right?

JOE. Right.

MRS. KIM. So what do you want this time? PS4?

JOE. There's no PS4.

MRS. KIM. Or Wee?

JOE. It's "Wii."

MRS. KIM. Whatever. You got any ideas?

JOE. I haven't thought about that.

MRS. KIM. You can think about it now.

JOE. Why? It doesn't matter anyway.

MRS. KIM. Then what matters to you?

JOE (*absent-mindedly*). I don't know. I don't want to talk about it now.

MRS. KIM. Alright.

(*Ten minutes later, they arrive at Joe's school.*)

MRS. KIM. Okay, here we are.

JOE. Mother...

MRS. KIM. What?

JOE. Will you be free tomorrow night?

MRS. KIM. Uh, no. I have to meet my clients.

JOE (*lowing his head*). But tomorrow is my birthday...

MRS. KIM. I know. But it's important.

JOE (*shouting*). What's more important?!

MRS. KIM (*uneasily*). Don't shout, Joe. You embarrass me.

JOE (*still shouting*). Father's on his business travel, and you have to meet your clients. What about me?!

MRS. KIM (*crossly*). Are you mad? We got our work. We're making money! You have no idea...

JOE (*sobbing*). I just want you to spare more time on me. Am I wrong?

MRS. KIM (*impatiently*). Listen. You have to calm yourself down. You totally lose your mind. Go, quickly, or you'll be late.

JOE (*shouting*). I hate you!

(*Joe gets off the car and leaves.*)

SCENE 3

It's eight o'clock in the morning. Serena is the first person to get into the office. Then she finds Joe sleeping at his desk. She is surprised.

SERENA (*loudly*). My god, Joe! Why are you here?

JOE (*drowsily*). Hello, Serena... What time is it?

SERENA. It's eight o'clock. Did you work all night?!

JOE (*laughing*). Of course not. I slept all night.

SERENA (*laughing*). Good, or you'll shock me.

(Some others come in, too.)

HANK. Good morning, guys!

SERENA & JOE. Good morning!

(Nine hours has passed, and it's five o'clock in the afternoon. Joe is ready to tell Mr. Clooney his decision, so he walks to him.)

JOE. Mr. Clooney. I have made my decision.

MR. CLOONEY (*smiling*). Good. Good. Then what are you waiting for? Go change your clothes!

JOE (*firmly*). I'm not going to the party.

MR. CLOONEY. I beg your pardon?

JOE. I'm not going to the—

MR. CLOONEY (*getting furious*). How dare you! Are you sick or something? I told you it's very important. You don't understand!

JOE (*firmly*). Yes, I understand! But I want to be with my family. Today is a big day for us.

MR. CLOONEY (*furiously*). What a fucking big day! It's surely worth celebrating, cause you're gonna be fired!

JOE (*calmly*). It's up to you. At least I know what I'm doing.

MR. CLOONEY. You know what? I know your parents. They're successful people. But you're never gonna be like them!

JOE. I don't care. Who says I wanna be like them? They live for making more and more money, but I'm not born to do this shit.

MR. CLOONEY. You're such a Broken Brain!

JOE. Mr. Clooney, do you have children?

MR. CLOONEY. Of course I do!

JOE (*loudly*). I really feel sad for them! (*getting to leave*)

MR. CLOONEY (*extremely furiously*). What?!

JOE (*loudly*). Take my words. And by the way, you can fire me anytime you want. Good bye!

(Joe goes back to fetch his own stuff and leaves the office. Mr. Clooney is still wooden

there.)

(At Joe's home.)

SUNNY *(cheerfully)*. Mom, we made it!

GLORIA *(cheerfully)*. Wonderful! It will be a big surprise for him!

SUNNY. Are you sure?

GLORIA. Definitely sure!

(They hug each other joyfully. Then the bell ring.)

SUNNY *(excitedly)*. It's dad!

GLORIA. Go open the door!

JOE. I'm home!

SUNNY & GLORIA *(loudly)*. Surprise!

JOE *(amazedly)*. Oh my god! A huge chocolate cake! How did you know it's my favorite?

GLORIA. Cause you keep saying "chocolate cake" when you're dreaming! Haha!

SUNNY. Dad, do you like it? It took a whole afternoon to make it!

JOE. Of course I like it! It's the best birthday present I've ever received... Oops!

GLORIA. What's up, honey?

JOE. I forgot to prepare Sunny's birthday gift...

SUNNY *(laughing)*. It doesn't matter, dad. I'm so glad that you didn't forget our birthday! *(hugging Joe)*

JOE. Thank you, Sunny... Happy birthday!

SUNNY. Happy birthday, daddy!

GLORIA *(laughing)*. Happy birthday to you guys!

JOE. You know what? You made my "dream" come true... I love you. *(feels like crying)*

GLORIA. I love you, too. Oh my god, are you crying?!

SUNNY *(taken aback)*. Are you okay, dad?

JOE *(smiling)*. Yeah. I'm fine! Wow, look at your dirty clothes!

SUNNY. Who's gonna wash them? *(They point at Gloria.)*

GLORIA. In your dream!

(All of them laugh out loud. Then they sing the Happy Birthday song, enjoy the delicious chocolate cake, and have a wonderful and unforgettable night together.)

~~The End~~