

The City's Eyes

By

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1 TITLES: THE CITY'S EYES 1
2 EXT. THE LOOKOUT (RICK'S VIEW) - EVENING 2

Standing on top of a hill, an elderly man (70s) overlooks an industrial city. The spires of once grand cathedrals crumble in dilapidated ruin. The deep bass of club music merges with whining sirens from distant neon lit streets. A raspy male voice monotonously reads out news updates.

RICK'S NEWS VOICE (V.O.)
Protect yourself from pollution
with the clean-air respirator for
24.99... Le is down 0-2 in the
prelims tonight...

Rick's wrinkled eyes narrow with a mixture of disappointment and nostalgic yearning as he looks over his city. A low flying plane emits a dull roar through the overcast clouds.

RICK'S NEWS VOICE (V.O.)
The remarkable young poet Mira
Glau returns to Le after a two
week international tour of her
debut publication 'The City
Dreams'...

3 EXT. THE STREETS (RICK'S VIEW) - NIGHT 3

Rick walks down a pedestrian mall, lined with great Georgian buildings in various states of disrepair. Neon signs in foreign languages are parasitically attached to the old buildings and foreign food outlets have taken over many ground floor shops. A figure in a hoodie brushes past Rick in a rush, bumping him.

RICK
Watch it! (To himself) Idiot...

RICK'S NEWS VOICE (V.O.)
Reports of foreign gangs
recruiting from local
schools... Mira says: *Hey Dad -
got your message - I'm back late
tonight... can we do dinner
tomorrow instead?...*

The building facades surrounding Rick are covered in graffiti. Construction cranes loom overhead.

RICK'S NEWS VOICE (V.O.)
Foreign investment and
unprecedented immigration rates
are causing a relaxation of the
city's building codes...

4 EXT. THE APARTMENT (RICK'S VIEW) - NIGHT 4

Rick slides a key into a rusty metal door, set in a crumbling brick facade. Walking through it, he begins to climb a set of rickety stairs beyond.

RICK'S NEWS VOICE (V.O.)
Is the algorithm running the city
corrupt?... Remember the days
when democracy meant you elected
REAL people?...

5 INT. THE APARTMENT (RICK'S VIEW) - NIGHT 5

Rick is slumped in an antique armchair with a glass of whisky in hand. A near empty bottle sits on a nearby side table. The label reads 'Mahoney's Aged Whisky'. Next to it is a copy of 'Plato's Republic' and a framed photograph of Rick with his arm wrapped around a young woman.

RICK'S NEWS VOICE (V.O.)
Mira has scheduled dinner with
you at 6 tomorrow... Only
Mahoney's unique ageing process
gives you the real taste of
yesteryear... Chess Club has
moved its meeting location to
Westbridge Gardens...

The apartment is a period Georgian house. A decorative mantelpiece sits above dying embers in a sculpted marble fireplace. Stained mirrored glass is inset into wooden paneling on the walls. On the floor a decorative rug sits atop polished wooden floorboards. Halfway across the room, the nostalgic decadence fades away. On the wall opposite to where Rick is seated, paint is peeling, exposing crumbling brick and rotting timber. The floorboards are cracked and in some places fall away into a void below. Rick's chair faces a window overlooking the dark streets. In the abandoned half of the room, an old mirror faces Rick.

Rick watches shadows cast by the fire dance across the walls.

6 INT. THE APARTMENT (MIRA'S VIEW) - NIGHT 6

A door clicks shut. Mira (late 20s) sighs as she walks into her apartment, her footsteps heavy with fatigue. She enters a small roofless courtyard. A nightjar whistles. A young woman's voice speaks.

MIRA'S NEWS VOICE (V.O.)
Amelia says "Message me when
you're back and got a free hour
to catch up"... Start your day
bright and early with a

(MORE)

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MIRA'S NEWS VOICE (V.O.) (cont'd)
 subscription to Yoga with Andi...
 New sales data is available for
 review...

White muslin curtains billow in a light breeze around a large open window. Dense foliage hangs overhead and the soft gurgle of a small fountain can be heard nearby. Mira settles into a hammock like chair next to a table and a small tree. Curled up in the chair, she pulls a blanket up around her shoulders.

7 INT. THE APARTMENT (MIRA'S VIEW) - MORNING

7

Morning light streams through the window to Mira's courtyard. Flowers dangle from leafy trellises overhead. The floor is a tastefully weathered timber. A Japanese water feature covers half of the floor space.

Silhouetted in the shafts of morning light entering the courtyard window, Mira - dressed in exercise gear - performs a sun salutation. Outside the window swallows flit through the air. A marketplace is being setup on a tree-lined pedestrian mall below.

MIRA'S NEWS VOICE (V.O.)
 Breathing deeply, rise into
 mountain pose. Feeling through
 your heels, push those toes into
 the floor.

A shower head explodes with water. A kettle boils. A teabag branded 'All Natural Jasmine' is placed in a cup.

MIRA'S NEWS VOICE (V.O.)
 Stay healthy with organic produce
 from 'All Natural'... The City
 Dreams is now on the best seller
 list of 5 international
 retailers... Your subscription to
 InStyle auto-renews today...

Made up and dressed in street clothes, Mira stands by her chair sipping tea from a tumbler. Finishing her tea, she places it on her side table. Barely visible in the background are a photo frame and an empty glass bottle.

She heads down the light filled stairwell that connects her apartment to the street. Wisteria dangles overhead.

8 EXT. THE STREETS (MIRA'S VIEW) - MIDDAY

8

The high street is a pedestrian arcade, lined with trees and nestled within forested mountains. Mira walks briskly and cheerfully.

MIRA'S NEWS VOICE (V.O.)

Urban Voice: Support us by tuning into our midday exclusive broadcast of the young writers awards... The Times: New businesses are growing following city-wide rent reductions...Weekend Style: Urban chic meets fairy princess...share Weekend Style for exclusive offers to local events...

She passes a cluster of boutiques nestled amongst trees. They display very similar fashion ranges. A sign on the window of one store reads "Mira - your favourite designers are in stock, three pieces in your size". Next to the boutiques is a cafe, with luscious cakes on display in the window. Again there is a painted sign; "Mira - your favourite table is available - gluten-free range just baked". She walks past the cafe as her gaze trails over the cakes in the window.

9 EXT. THE LOOKOUT (MIRA'S VIEW) - AFTERNOON

9

Mira sits atop a hill and surveys the city below. Busy market streets wind between rainbow coloured mountains. She lifts her face to the sun and breathes deeply. Then she opens her eyes and looks at the scene again - more pensive this time. She has soaked in her surroundings. Now she is trying to analyse her experience and capture with words what her senses are telling her.

MIRA

Tendrils of beauty cover shady passageways - they lead to secrets as yet unknown, undiscovered, a delight to share. Forests of glass glimmer with summer's early rays - the call of joy, of urban hope - come out and see it, come out and feel it - the city song of eternal youth.

10 INT. THE APARTMENT (RICK'S VIEW) - AFTERNOON

10

MIRA (V.O)

It's just a moment - it will burst as you hold it to your heart. A moment - you can wrap it in the soft tissue of memory and take it out to hold on your lap and remind you of joy. A moment in this city, of voice vibrant and face so rich...

Rick is sitting in his armchair, playing chess by himself. A copy of The City Dreams is open on the table. Rick looks

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out the window and frowns with concern as hooded figures gather outside in the dilapidated streets. He glances at a clock on the wall - it is 5.30 pm. There are two plates already laid out on the dining table behind him.

11 EXT. THE LOOKOUT (MIRA'S VIEW) - AFTERNOON 11

MIRA

A moment of triumph - no delete.
A transient moment - no. ah.
delete.

She is stuck on this last line. She sits up tall and stretch her back, then flopping back into the grass with a sigh. A notification alert sounds.

MIRA'S NEWS VOICE (V.O.)

Don't forget - dinner with Dad
6pm...

12 INT. THE APARTMENT (RICK'S VIEW) - EVENING 12

Rick sits in silence as he stares expectantly at Mira, sitting opposite him at a long dining table. The fire burns behind them. A clock ticks in the background. She is smiling absent-mindedly while picking at a salad in a bowl. Rick's dinner is a barely touched sandwich that sits on the plate in front of him.

RICK

So. How was the tour?

Mira doesn't answer - it is as if she hasn't heard.

Mira is in her courtyard. Her father is sitting opposite her on a long table. Her eyes trace the path of a hummingbird darting between flowers on her trellises. As she plays with bits of salad in a brightly painted bowl, she listens to her fan-mail.

MIRA'S NEWS VOICE (V.O.)

From Megan: Your work is sooo
inspiring, you always show me
beauty whenever I am down... From
Tim: The City Dreams is my
favourite thing ever - keep the
genius flowing...

RICK

Mira. Are you even listening?

MIRA

What? Oh sorry.

RICK

It's like I'm not even here.

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MIRA

Gee Dad, OK...

She takes a contact lens out of her eye. Her world view disappears. They are sitting at a table in a bare white room. QR code like markings adorn the walls, furniture and the tableware. Mira's salad is actually in a plastic container. No fire burns in the fireplace. Over her shoulder a hammock and an armchair face the window, with the side table in between. The photo frame is empty bar a QR code in the centre.

MIRA

Happy now? (Impatiently) The tour was great. Flew around, saw a lot. Heaps of people really see what I'm trying to do here.

He nods, not knowing what to say next. He is still in his own view. More silence. Then:

RICK

(Slowly) I'm glad people like your stories.

Mira sighs in exasperation. *Her poems are not stories. They are poignant revelations of truth.*

RICK

You know I like your work.

MIRA

(To herself) Have you even read it...

RICK

I just worry that you think the world is some fairytale.

This is a familiar conversation to both of them.

MIRA

Of course you'd say that. You can't see it, how could you. You spend all day listening to fear-mongering, and the only people you ever see are those... old men at the chess club. You buy the same things you bought twenty years ago. To see what I see you'd have to live my life.

RICK

Mira. The city is changing. It's not safe anymore.

MIRA

Oh my God, not this again. We're not moving. This city is my life.

She gets up abruptly, putting her lens back on. Her flowered courtyard returns. She walks away toward a door.

Rick sees Mira walk toward the broken floorboards toward the crumbling wall. She fades from his view and disappears. He is left alone at the dinner table.

13

EXT. THE LOOKOUT (MIRA'S VIEW) - MORNING

13

Mira lies under an apple tree on the top of the hill. Chewing on an apple she is revising the last lines of her poem, but without much success.

MIRA

It's just a moment - it will burst as you hold it to your heart. hmmm. Delete burst - its just a moment, it will something as you hold it to your heart. A moment - you can wrap it in the soft tissue of memory - blah. You can wrap it in soft remembering... yuck, clear all!

Exasperated. Mira sits up and stares at the city.

MIRA

Play messages.

MIRA'S NEWS VOICE (V.O.)

From Nick: I proposed to my girlfriend by wrapping a copy of Dreams with her engagement ring. I honestly don't know which one she liked better...

Mira grins sheepishly.

MIRA'S NEWS VOICE (V.O.)

From No Username Found:

The gender and accent of her news voice changes - as if her audio has been hacked.

UNKNOWN NEWS VOICE (V.O.)

Mira Glau you are popping blue pills. Churning out trash to give the masses their thrills. You are like the blind men describing the beast. You have a loud voice, but your eyes see the least. You want true art, well it's time you were showed. A new way to see, written

(MORE)

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UNKNOWN NEWS VOICE (V.O.) (cont'd)
 in code. So step out of the cave,
 look at the skies. I give you
 this gift: The City's Eyes.

Mira sits stunned. *All her insecurities have been voiced by a stranger.* She tears up a little.

MIRA'S NEWS VOICE (V.O.)
 One software package available
 for download.

MIRA
 (Bleakly) Install.

MIRA'S NEWS VOICE (V.O.)
 Warning. Software is unverified
 and is attempting to access your
 personalisation profile.

MIRA
 (Hesitates) Allow.

Slowly, as if being rendered in real-time, new areas of the city emerge in Mira's view. Mountains are replaced with towering blocks, and industrial complexes appear in gaps between the streets that are so familiar to Mira. She stands, blinking away her shock.

14 EXT. THE STREETS (CITY'S VIEW) - AFTERNOON & EVENING 14

A montage sequence reveals the city through the city's eyes, as Mira rediscovers her environment. Walking through the pedestrian arcades, the shops that she is so used to passing are covered in messages - not only to her but to countless other people. Areas of the street that for her used to be impassable green walls have opened up to reveal streets never before noticed, leading to unknown parts of the city. The facades of the buildings around her are a patchwork, sometimes pristine, sometimes falling apart, sometimes host to climbing creeper vines, and sometimes covered in foreign signage.

She wonders down a street she has never seen before and discovers a slum; make shift dwellings piled into an impenetrable mass of buildings. Her attention is drawn to various personal moments: a child's drawing on a wall, signs welcoming families for dinner, a stall advertising mixed nuts, and a wedding ceremony in a small hall.

As she explores, her news feed is taken over by voices, in all accents and languages.

UNKNOWN NEWS VOICE (V.O.)
 [*a soundscape of many different
 adverts, notifications and
 stories - as diverse and random
 as possible]

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Buildings that she passes appear as chimaeras of multiple styles and functions - a single doorway leads to a church, a bar, and a community centre.

She eats in a foreign food stall in a market crammed between Georgian facades. She stands watching in the doorway as a religious ceremony takes place.

She stands at the edge of a road where industrial vehicles zoom across criss-crossed highway flyovers.

By dark, she arrives back at her front door. Her apartment building is barely recognisable. The door is half the warm painted wood she remembers, and half a scratched and rusted metal sheet. The iconic vines and creepers of her facade now climb over broken windows and cracked walls.

Sliding her key into the lock, she is relieved to find it still works. She runs up the rickety stairs inside. Wisteria hangs in patches.

15 INT. THE APARTMENT (CITY'S VIEW) - NIGHT 15

For the first time, Mira sees the apartment as a hybrid between her own courtyard and her father's period home. Lit by the light of the fireplace, Rick sits alone in his chair, holding a copy of *The City Dreams*. The photo frame is clutched under his arm. A soft snore confirms that he is asleep.

Close on Mira as she catches her breath. She half smiles, eyes full of tears. Slowly, she walks to Rick's chair, poignantly aware that she has not within her memory walked this side of the room. From behind the chair, she wraps her arms around him.

CUT TO:

16 EXT. THE LOOKOUT (CITY'S VIEW) - MIDDAY 16

Mira sits under the tree, composing poetry again. It could be the next day, or years later. The city in front her is far more complex than we have ever seen it, and she gazes with a confidence and self-awareness she has not found before.

MIRA

In my father's time, to really know a place, you had to live there. You had to walk the streets, both day and night, and you had to explore - the secret laneways that led to that little restaurant - and the cafe that made chocolate cake just like your mother did, when you were little.

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In my father's time, the city was an adventure, a tasting-platter of new experiences. You only had to look - and then you would see it - this city.

Nothing has changed. We still have legs - we can still explore. Day and night; the barriers, of fear and habit - they are shadows, meaningless. They are cast by the fire of our own collective genius and while they warm us, they also blind. So every once in a while we must rub our eyes and step out of the cave and look up - past the forests of glass and up at the sky, to see the soul of the city, you must look through her eyes.

THE END