

TEN THOUSAND

A short film

Written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. HONG KONG STREET - DAY

JANIE, a 19 year old photographer, rides in a pedi-cab as it pulls up in front of the Yuen Po Bird Market.

Janie hands the driver too much money.

JANIE  
(in cantonese)  
Thank You.

She gets out of the pedi-cab and--

EXT. YUEN PO BIRD MARKET - DAY

-- Stands in front of the market.

Janie looks around at the strange place she has found herself in. There are millions of cages full of birds and other animals going down into the market.

Janie enters into this world full of many bird cages hanging from the ceiling.

Janie walks deeper into the bird market to explore.

She looks over the many different cages that hold various types of birds and other animals.

She approaches a group of children that gather around a cage and poke at it. As she gets closer Janie realizes the monkey inside and smiles at the children as they poke their fingers inside it.

Janie continues down through the market past more and more stands and cages.

Janie stops suddenly and pulls out an old photo from her pocket.

The photo is worn out and slightly faded. It's a picture of a store front in the bird market that was taken about twenty years earlier. In front there is her Father JOHN, much younger, with his arm around a young Hong Kong man. They smile brightly.

Janie checks the picture. She looks up and checks to make sure she's in the right spot.

EXT. BIRD MARKET STAND - DAY

Janie approaches a stand and ducks under a few cages until she is--

INT. BIRD MARKET STAND - DAY

-- Standing in a small space full of beautiful birds and other animals in the multiple cages that hang from all areas of the stand.

JANIE  
(in cantonese)  
Hello.

An OLD MAN, small in his 80s, sits at a small table. He works on the wooden bird cage in front of him. He looks up at Janie as she approaches.

JANIE (CONT'D)  
(in cantonese)  
Do you speak english?

OLD MAN  
Yes.

Janie relieved shows the picture to him.

JANIE  
Do you know this man?

OLD MAN  
Yes, Mister John. He love to eat  
and take pictures.

JANIE  
When did you last see him?

OLD MAN  
He come here. Eat with me.

JANIE  
He was here.

OLD MAN  
Yes, Mister John here a lot.

JANIE  
Was he here recently?

OLD MAN  
Yes, yes. Mister John get  
directions to Temple.

JANIE  
What temple?

OLD MAN  
He go to Ten Thousand Buddhas  
Temple.

Janie confused pulls out a map and lays it down on the table.  
She begins to look for the temple on the map but has no  
success.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)  
It's here.

Old Man points to the location. He smiles.

JANIE  
Thanks.

Janie looks at the map again. She checks her phone.

OLD MAN  
My son take you. He spend to much  
time not working.

JANIE  
Oh no, it's fine. I can get there  
by myself.

OLD MAN  
No, no. Willy takes you. WILLY!

From a doorway that is covered with a colorful cloth, WILLY,  
20 dressed nicely for being in a bird market, emerges.

He smiles at Janie and walks towards them.

WILLY  
(in cantonese)  
What do you need, Dad?

OLD MAN  
Take her to Mister John. He go to  
Ten Thousands Buddhas Temple.

WILLY  
Dad, I have to go study and--

OLD MAN  
Willy, take her to Temple. She find  
Mister John.

JANIE  
That's okay, I can find it-

OLD MAN  
No, no. Willy takes you. Come,  
come.

Old Man ushers Willy over to Janie.

Janie grabs her map off the table.

Old Man ushers them out of the stand until they are--

EXT. YUEN PO BIRD MARKET - ALLEY - DAY

-- Back in the long alley full of bird cages.

OLD MAN  
Tell Mister John he come eat with  
me again. He good man.

JANIE  
Okay.

Old Man goes back in his stand leaving Willy and Janie alone  
in the chaos of the growing busy market.

Janie looks over her crumpled map. She tries to find the  
temples location again.

WILLY  
So, you need to find Mister John?

JANIE  
Yeah, he was supposed to meet me at  
the airport this morning. But when  
he didn't show up, I figured that  
he probably went to the bird market  
or something... But I can go and  
find him.

Janie looks closer at her map and tries to make out a street/  
location.

Beat. She doesn't have any success.

WILLY  
I'll take you.

Willy begins to walk through the market the same way that  
Janie had wondered in.

She begins to follow closely. Eventually she loses sight of  
him.

Janie stands confused looking for Willy.

Willy emerges in front of her and takes her hand.

They find there way through the crowd and reach the entrance to the market.

Willy heads over to a row of mopeds that are lined up by the entrance. He goes to his moped and unlocks it. Willy gets on and pulls the moped out so that Janie can get on the back.

Janie hesitates.

WILLY (CONT'D)

Get on.

JANIE

Are you sure. I can just take a  
Pedi-cab. It's much safer.

WILLY

By the time you get to the temple  
on one of those things, Mister John  
will be back at your hotel.

Janie looks around for another mode of transportation to take her.

WILLY (CONT'D)

Get on. This is the fastest way to  
get anywhere in Hong Kong.

Janie agrees. She secures her map in her bag. She hops on the back of the moped and they ride off down the street into the chaotic Hong Kong Street traffic.

EXT. HONG KONG STREET - DAY

On the moped, Willy and Janie zoom in and out of traffic as they go through the city streets.

They pass local shops, restaurants, and bakeries.

They pass OLDER LOCAL MEN sitting on plastic stools in front of their houses.

They pass CHILDREN playing soccer in the street.

They pass WOMEN doing laundry in their front yards.

They pass BUSINESSMEN heading home from the MRT stations.

They pass traditional style houses until they--

EXT. PAU TAI STREET - DAY

Turn onto Pau Tai Street and head towards the government building complex.

They arrive at the front entrance to the temple and Willy parks the moped.

Janie looks around confused at the neatly made modern complex.

JANIE

This doesn't look like a Buddhist temple.

WILLY

That's because it's not. Follow me.

Willy locks the moped and leads the way to the entrance.

EXT. TEMPLE ENTRANCE - DAY

They walk through the busy white complex.

They enter and begin to go up a path that has NO signs pointing them into the right direction.

Janie and Willy walk along a wire fence.

EXT. TEN THOUSAND BUDDHAS TEMPLE STAIRS - DAY

Janie and Willy arrive at the bottom of the stairs. There are golden painted buddhas on either side of the path that leads to the top.

Willy begins to enter and starts to climb the stairs.

Janie stays put, taking the beauty of the path in.

Willy notices that she isn't behind him and turns back.

WILLY

You coming?

Janie snaps out of it and begins to follow him up the steps.

They climb slowly. Janie focuses on the golden buddhas enchanted by their beauty.

Willy eventually slows to walk next to Janie.

WILLY (CONT'D)  
So you're Mister John's wife?

JANIE  
He's my dad, actually. We were  
supposed to catch a flight back  
home to Savannah this afternoon.

WILLY  
Oh, sorry. I assumed.

JANIE  
It's okay. I'm Janie.

WILLY  
Mister John talks about you all the  
time. He always tells stories about  
you to my Dad.

JANIE  
I'm sorry about that. Don't believe  
anything he's said. He's always  
exaggerating stuff.

WILLY  
It's all good stuff. Trust me.

They share a smile.

EXT. TEN THOUSAND BUDDHAS TEMPLE - STAIRS - DAY

Janie and Willy reach the top of the stairs.

They walk into the somewhat busy pavilion.

EXT. TEN THOUSAND BUDDHAS TEMPLE - LOWER PAVILION - DAY

They go from temple to temple and look for John.

Janie heads over to the main large temple with smaller  
buddhas in it.

INT. MINI BUDDHAS TEMPLE - DAY

Janie enters. She is entranced by the beauty of the room.

Willy stands behind her looking around.

They don't find John.



WILLY

Let's try the upper pavilion.

They exit.

EXT. TEN THOUSAND BUDDHAS TEMPLE - UPPER PAVILION - DAY

Janie and Willy emerge at the top of the temple.

They walk onto a bridge and there is a picturesque view of Hong Kong.

Janie walks to the railing and looks out. She is lost in it's beauty.

Willy stands next to her - watching her.

JANIE

Isn't it just breath taking. I mean look at all the culture that's at our finger tips.

WILLY

You're lucky to have a chance to see the world.

JANIE

It's not as fun as you think.

WILLY

I'm sure. But at least you know that there's something else other than a fancy destination out here.

JANIE

I guess. Really I just love all the different cultures. How people are in different countries and how there's always something new to learn.

From the other side of the upper pavilion JOHN emerges from behind a golden buddha. He wears glasses perched on the edge of his nose. His khaki vest and pants match and he wears a short sleeved plaid button up shirt.

JOHN

Janie? Is that you?

JANIE

Dad... There you are.

Janie runs over to John and hugs him.

JANIE (CONT'D)  
We missed our flight.

JOHN  
I know. It's fine.

JANIE  
It's not fine. We have to  
reschedule it and make sure we get  
home in time for me to start  
school.

JOHN  
I'm sorry. I just needed a few more  
sketches.

John reveals his sketch book full of notes and small detailed  
drawings.

JANIE  
A few more sketches. You spent our  
entire week sketching at tons of  
temples.

JOHN  
I know. But this one--

JANIE  
This one what? Has better buddhas?  
They're all the same Dad.

JOHN  
Janie, none of these buddhas are  
the same. They each tell a story of  
a person who gave their lives to  
help better the world. Something we  
should all do.

John takes Janie over to the edge of the bridge and points up  
the hill where there are many golden buddhas sitting  
throughout the grass.

JOHN (CONT'D)  
Each of these buddhas are here  
because they did something to  
further humanity.  
(pause)  
I came here today looking for an  
understanding of what it means to  
really further humanity. I thought  
studying these would show me a way.

JANIE  
They're just statues Dad.

JOHN

No Janie, they're more than that.  
They're an example of what we can  
be like if we do better to make the  
world better.

They look together over the buddhas.

Janie sighs. She understands.

JOHN (CONT'D)

By the way, how'd you get here?

JANIE

Willy helped me find you.

Janie points over to the bridge railing where Willy stayed.

Willy walks over to meet them.

JOHN

Thank you.

WILLY

Of course Mister John.

They shake hands.

John packs his notebook back into his backpack.

JOHN

Let's go catch that plane.

The three leave the upper terrace.

FADE OUT.