

DRUMMER BOY

Written by

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Logline: Two gap year siblings move to South Korea for a teach abroad program but soon learn that their cheap and extra cozy apartment comes with more than they had initially paid for.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREET, KOREA - NIGHT

A BIRD swoops down from an aged 20-storey APARTMENT BUILDING. Lands on a greasy, dead FISH kept on ICE in front of a STORE. It pecks at the FISH EYE with a rhythmic repetition.

A TAXI pulls up outside a FRIED CHICKEN SHOP.

JULIET (21) emerges. Wide-eyed with wonder and anticipation. Breathes in the ambient air, she's always wanted to be here.

THOMAS (21) anxiously steps out, and straight into a PUDDLE of blood-stained, fishy waste water. Here to try forget home.

SMOKE from the BBQ restaurants disperse light from the Neon. LOCALS eat kimchi, shot Soju. Thomas shakes his sodden shoe.

THOMAS
What a shit hole.

JULIET
No, just not like Kentucky. OK...
That's us straight ahead. I think.

EXT. STUDIO APARTMENT - NIGHT

A 'GAME OVER' arcade TONE and a flash of RED LIGHT. Fail! Juliet tries the door code again. Tugs on the handle--

JULIET
Strange... It won't open?

Juliet keys once more. Gets a GREEN light, a positive CHIME--

THOMAS
Jeez... Finally.

JULIET
Shut up!

I/E. STUDIO APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Thomas switches on the LIGHT as Juliet trundles two heavy cases to the only DOUBLE BED. Thomas throws his bag down!

JULIET
Come on... We shared a womb for 9 months. And it's only a week, then we get teaching.

Juliet opens one CASE. It's rammed with English TEXT BOOKS.

THOMAS

Square!

The apartment is tiny! A bed. Tiny table. Kind of a bathroom?
A few *ANIME* pictures are on the walls. There are NO WINDOWS.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

You hungry? I saw a chicken shop.

Juliet finds her nail VARNISH buried under the text books.

JULIET

Thomas, we're in Korea... All you
can think about is fried chicken?

THOMAS

Yeah. Korean fried chicken.

Thomas approaches the only other DOOR. Opens it--

The bird flies away from the Juliet BALCONY. Ominous CROW!
Thomas is SPOOKED and backs off with fear from the height.
Not Juliet, she rushes to the balcony to check the vantage.

JULIET

Wow! Isn't it beautiful... Huh?

Thomas grabs hold of Juliet firmly round her waist-- GOTCHA!
Juliet FREAKS OUT. Drops the varnish OVER the balcony...

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREET, KOREA - CONTINUOUS

JULIET (O.S.)

Don't ever do that!

A middle-aged WOMAN kneels and prays by a SHRINE with small
bowls of FOOD, CANDLES, a faded black and white PHOTOGRAPH--

A little Korean BOY.

TEARS in her eyes, she finishes her STAMMERS and trudges off.

The varnish falls hard into the shrine, knocks the photo over
the burning candles. Catches alight. The photograph slowly
melts, distorts and the boy's sad FACE fades into the FLAMES.

A faint TAPPING sound begins...

EXT. FRIED CHICKEN SHOP - NIGHT

DRUNKS stumble out of a KARAOKE BAR. Thomas waits. Impatient.
A MAN with a PATCH over his eye fusses over the burned table.

THOMAS
What a shit hole...

INT. STUDIO APARTMENT - NIGHT

A CHOPSTICK stabs a piece of chicken, drenched in red sauce.
The faint TAPPING SOUND continues...

THOMAS
Can you hear that?

Juliet frowns, doesn't know what he's talking about.

THOMAS (CONT'D)
3/4 time signature? Tap-tap-tap--
You can't hear that?

Thomas tries to eat with chopsticks, looks more like play...

THOMAS (CONT'D)
I knew I should've brought a fork.

JULIET
Learn to embrace it--

THOMAS
Can you not hear that? You deaf?
It's just changed to a 4/4--

JULIET
It's all in your head... Listen,
you can try out for the academy
again. Next time. It's only a year.

Thomas violently SPEARS a piece of chicken with a chopstick.
Juliet rolls her eyes, using hers normally...

Thomas picks up the other stick, pretends they're drumsticks.
He plays a CADENCE on the table as if it was a snare drum.

One Anime picture frame falls. Hits the floor with a BANG!
Juliet and Thomas GASP. They're startled for a moment...

Thomas feeds himself with his hands, true American style.

THOMAS
Chicken tastes weird here. What?

INT. STUDIO APARTMENT - A DIFFERENT EVENING

The little boy straddles the balcony. DRUMS on the wood...

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)
 (in Korean)
 Artists never make money. He should
 be engineer. Want our boy to sell
 fish, like us?

MALE VOICE (V.O.)
 (in Korean)
 He wants to be a drummer.

The boy leans out, right out, over the edge--

I/E. STUDIO APARTMENT - NIGHT

Juliet SNORES away. Dead to the world, on the double bed.
 Thomas is restless on a child's COT, which he's too big for.

Thomas rises off the cot. His EYES OPEN, but nobody's home.
 He creeps across the room. Opens the door and an eerie WIND
 ruffles his hair as it fills the room.

DRUM TAPS repeat a beat, a little louder.

Nonchalant, Thomas climbs out onto the balcony and straddles
 the wooden rail. He takes out a set of DRUMSTICKS.

Thomas begins to play the Jazz BEAT. His drumming ECHOES...
 No-- It's more like a rhythmic reply.

The bird returns and perches. It crows, TWICE. Taunts Thomas.
 It stares into his ABSENT EYES. Thomas looks DOWN. 20 floors.
 And with deep melancholy, Thomas leans out, over the balcony--

JULIET (O.C.)
 THOMAS-- Don't do it!

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREET, KOREA - DAY

The locals set up their TRADE STANDS in the MISTY DAWN light.
 One VENDOR has to shoo the bird away. It flies up. 20 floors.

JULIET (O.S.)
 I had a weird dream last night.

INT. STUDIO APARTMENT - DAY

Juliet pours BOILING WATER over two pots of kimchi NOODLES.

THOMAS
 Oh yeah? Me too... Are these
 noodles spicy?

TAP-- TAP-- TAP-- TAP--

THOMAS (CONT'D)
Please tell me you can hear that.

Juliet DROPS the kettle--

She scolds herself-- Tries to speak, no words come.

TWO CHOPSTICKS FLOAT in mid-air. COUNTING IN... 1, 2, 3, 4...
Metal on metal tap in a 4-count. Ready to play...

Thomas turns around. The chopsticks poke him in the chest.
Juliet SCREAMS. Terrified! She's out of control--

The balcony door opens--

Juliet is propelled against the rail. Metal chopsticks bend around her wrists and ankles and shackle her to the balcony. The bird perches next to her. It crows, hysterical.

THOMAS (CONT'D)
Quit yelling! I think it wants me
to play something...

Nervous, Thomas collects the chopsticks from the air.

From memory, he starts to drum a nice Jazz beat on the table. He uses cups, plates, bowls like it was his drum kit.

The kitchen drawer opens. Another set of chopsticks float up. They join in. Collaboration with Thomas, like they're a band. Thomas doesn't know what else to do, just keeps on playing...

A little Korean boy (8) materializes...

He GRINS at Thomas. Thomas swallows hard, grins back as the tune picks up TEMPO. Their hands and arms vibrate in time. Their silver drum-chopsticks become a blur... Then--

Silence. The tune is over--

The bird flies away--

The boy is gone!

Juliet falls forward. The balcony door slams shut and the Anime pictures fall off the walls to reveal WINDOWS behind. The apartment is flooded with day light.

Shocked, the two twins mirror a common, confused stare.

THOMAS (CONT'D)
Wow! Can we get a hotel now?