

OLD MISS  
(Eng version)

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1 INT. MISS'S APARTMENT - EARLY MORNING/SUNRISE 1

A window of a tiny flat that looks out to the empty, suburban sky. A damp, leaking spot on the ceiling. It drips down and forms a puddle.

On that windowsill, someone has planted a small vegetable patch in a big rectangular plastic container. Tiny seedlings have sprouted, latching to small sticks in the soil.

A wrinkled hand appears and inspects the baby leaves. It's MISS (60, Vietnamese).

She looks at the puddle, grabs a rag and cleans up the mess. She puts an empty bowl under the leak to gather the droplets.

TITLE: OLD MISS

2 INT. STAIRWELL - MORNING 2

Top view of a winding stairwell. Miss descends slowly, grabbing onto the railing, taking care with every step.

3 EXT. SUBURBAN TRAM STOP - MORNING 3

A tram pulls up. Doors open, waiting. Miss hurries to catch it.

She makes it at last. The tram leaves.

4 INT. TRAM - MORNING 4

There are a few empty seats but Miss chooses to stand near the entrance. Miss looks at the scenery outside.

INSERT: The gray landscape of the small city slides past outside the window.

5 EXT. FAMILY'S RESTAURANT - MORNING 5

Miss gets off in front of an Asian restaurant.

Next to the restaurant is a side door to an apartment building. Miss rings the buzzer. She enters.

6 INT. FAMILY'S APARTMENT - HALLWAY - MORNING

6

Miss takes off her shoes in the hallway. Two kids, BI (5) and TÛN (7) run out to greet her. Bi's cardigan is inside out.

BI & TÛN  
Aaaah! Miss!

Their MOTHER (40s) approaches while tying her apron.

MOTHER  
(in Dutch)  
Kids, don't run in the house!

Miss helps Bi put his cardigan on correctly.

MOTHER (cont'd)  
(in Dutch)  
Go play in your room.

The kids run back where they came from, their footsteps like elephants. Mother turns to Miss.

MOTHER (cont'd)  
Let's talk. In the kitchen?

7 INT. FAMILY'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - MORNING

7

Mother sits down at the dining table, while Miss stands at the counter and puts the electric kettle on.

MISS  
You're working on Sunday too?

MOTHER  
It's busy in the restaurant. I need to come down and give them a hand.

Miss opens the tea cupboard.

MISS  
Black or green tea?

MOTHER  
Black, please.

The kettle boils. Miss makes small talk as she makes tea in two small tea cups.

MISS

You know, back in Vietnam I never drank black tea. But it's actually quite good for your health. No wonder that guy likes it so much, you know, that guy you've been seeing. He's English, right?

MOTHER

Yes.

MISS

Englishmen love Earl Grey, don't they. When are you going to marry him? Hurry, or he'll run away.

MOTHER

That's what I want to talk to you today.

Mother wrings her hands. Her fingers find an envelope that's been sitting on the table.

MOTHER (CON'T)

We're getting married end of the month. I'll move to England to be with him.

MISS

Oh, so we're going to move to England? That's great!

MOTHER

Just me and the kids.

MISS

Ah...I see.

A beat.

MOTHER

I have a friend who needs a nanny. I can introduce you.

MISS

And who'll look after Bi and Tũn?

MOTHER

I will find someone new.

Miss sits down at the table opposite Mother and grabs her hand.

MISS

Or, maybe how about I go with you?  
They won't like someone new.

The Mother says nothing.

MISS (CON'T)

It's no problem. I don't need much,  
just a bed, a closet or something.

The Mother slides the envelope across the table.

MOTHER

This is thank you for taking care of  
the kids.  
I'm going to trouble you one last  
day. I'll be home around five.

Mother stands up and leaves. Miss doesn't touch the  
envelope.

8 INT. FAMILY'S APARTMENT - HALLWAY - NOON

8

Bi and Tũn poke their little heads out of their room, their  
nose sniffing. They slowly approach the kitchen where the  
nice smell is coming from.

9 INT. FAMILY'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

9

Miss stands near the stove top, stirring a pot of soup. The  
white envelope lies untouched on the dining table.

Two heads poke in, one after another. Four eyes look at  
their nanny with wide, curious eyes.

MISS

Hey, don't you come near me. There's  
a boiling pot here.

Tũn sidles up to the envelope on the table and tries to have  
a look inside.

Miss turns from the stove, squats the girl's hand away, and  
puts the envelope in her trouser pocket.

MISS (cont'd)

Don't mess around, Tũn, or I'll spank  
you.

Miss turns back to the pot.

TÛN  
Miss cooks better than Mom!

MISS  
Go sit in the living room, lunch's  
ready in ten minutes.

The kids dash off, leaving Miss behind to herself.

10 INT. FAMILY'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - AFTERNOON

10

Bi and TÛn sit obediently on the couch, eyes glued to the huge TV on the wall. TÛn eats on her own while Bi is so distracted Miss has to spoonfeeds him.

INSERT: The clock points 1PM.

Bi laughs while eating.

MISS (CON'T)  
Bi should copy your sister. See how  
her bowl is almost finished.

Bi finally swallows.

INSERT: A cartoon on TV, with a hamburger-eating character.

TÛN (O.S.)  
I want McDonald's.

MISS (O.S.)  
That's just some overpriced unhealthy  
food. I can make it better at home.

TÛN (O.S.)  
Can you?

MISS (O.S.)  
Of course.

Miss finishes spoonfeeding Bi. Bi and TÛn return to the TV.

MISS (CON'T)  
Let's go to the supermarket, buy some  
ingredients. I'll cook McDonald's my  
style for you.

The two kids scream in excitement.

11 EXT. FAMILY'S RESTAURANT - AFTERNOON 11

The kids, dressed in thick jackets, run down to the curb. Miss follows them. The kids grab hold on to each of Miss's hands.

12 EXT. STREETS - AFTERNOON 12

The kids' eyes are wide with wonder as they take in their surroundings. Tũn says out loud the name of things she sees.

TŨN  
Restaurant...Spar...Albert Heijn...

INSERT: Streets. People. Crowded, foreign city.

13 EXT. SUPERMARKET - AFTERNOON 13

From outside of the supermarket's large glass window, we see Miss and the kids at the cashier.

When they step out, Miss is holding a bag of groceries. Bi tries to dig into the bag. Miss takes out two bars of chocolate and gives each to the kids.

14 EXT. PARK - AFTERNOON 14

Miss spots a free bench and sits down. Tũn sits down next to her, munching on her chocolate bar. Bi squats and plays with some leaves on the ground.

Miss pulls up her trouser legs and massages her knees.

TŨN  
Your shoe has a hole.

Indeed, there is a tiny hole on Miss's left shoe. Miss wiggles her toe.

MISS  
Don't worry, I have a lot of other shoes at home.

TŨN  
Is your home far away?

Miss points to a tram stop nearby.

MISS

Yes. I take the tram, but it's so much further than to your school. So far I sometimes see cows, deers, even goats.

BI

Goats!!!

TÛN

And pigs?

MISS

And pigs. And chickens, foxes, ducks, rabbits, you name it.

BI & TÛN

Wowww

MISS

You wanna go see?

TÛN

Yes!

BI

I love goats best in the world!

Miss pinches Bi's pink, puffy cheeks.

15 EXT. CITY TRAM STOP - AFTERNOON

15

The tram pulls up to the curb. They get on board.

INSERT: Billboards and signages that slip by them out the window.

INSERT: Tram clock: 2:10 PM.

16 EXT. SUBURBAN STREETS - AFTERNOON

16

Bi rushes out of the tram like he can't wait to see what's out there. Miss holds TÛn's hand - they follow behind.

MISS

Bi, don't run!

There is a wild rosehip bush growing by the sidewalk. Bi immediately grabs some rosehips and inspects them under the light. He squeezes. The juice stains her hands.



MISS (cont'd)  
It's dirty, don't eat.

BI  
Can Bi grow a tree out of them?

MISS  
I don't think so.

Miss take the rosehips from Bi and puts them in her trouser pocket.

MISS (CON'T)  
We need to wash them first.

She takes out a handkerchief to wipe Bi's hands clean.

17 EXT. CANAL - AFTERNOON

17

INSERT: Boats. Water. Ducks lazing on the waves. The suburban sky.

The trio walk along the canal. A long, wide shot where their tiny figures dwarfed by the scenery. Only their voices are heard.

TÛN  
I'm hungry.

MISS  
Hang in there, you're about to have McDonald's, Miss-style.

BI  
When are we going to see the goats?

MISS  
You want to see goats or you want to eat?

BI & TÛN  
Eat!

They continue.

18 INT. STAIRWELL - AFTERNOON

18

The kids dash up the stairwell, excited. Miss follows slowly after.

19 INT. MISS'S APARTMENT - AFTERNOON

19

Miss puts the burger meats in the pan. They sizzle.

Miss prepares the burgers: First, the buns, followed by the meat, vegetables, and some fermented cabbage. She adds some leaves from the vegetable patch. She tops everything up with sriracha sauce.

A phone rings. Miss takes the call.

MISS

Hello.

(pause)

We're just at home. They finished lunch. They're watching TV.

(pause)

Four? I thought you said five.

(pause)

Ok. Ok.

Miss hangs up.

INSERT: The clock on a table reads: 3:15 PM.

Bi and Tũn wander around, opening drawers after drawers, inspecting everything they can see.

INSERT: A series of still objects in Miss's house: Bi & Tũn's discoveries. A wall full of calendar pages. A cabinet full of quaint items from the secondhand store. A drawer full of knickknacks.

INSERT: An old picture of a young woman.

TŨN (O.S.)

Who's this?

MISS (O.S.)

That's me. Pretty, right?

INSERT: A red áo dài.

TŨN (O.S.)

Pretty dress!

MISS (O.S.)

I haven't worn this in ages. I probably can't fit in it anymore.

Miss hands the kids a bunch of newspapers. Bi and Tũn throw them on the floor haphazardly.

Miss puts the tray with the plates down on the floor. They sit and eat. Bi frowns.

MISS  
I put some more fermented veggies in there, you like it? It's like *bánh mì*, you know?

Bi and Tũn shake their head.

MISS (cont'd)  
Oh boy, you can't call yourself Vietnamese without knowing *bánh mì*!

Miss pokes at them in the sides. The kids laugh.

20 INT. MISS'S APARTMENT - LATER

20

The children bring the empty plates to Miss. Miss dump everything in the sink.

Miss gets one of the children's jackets and holds it out for Bi/Tũn to slip their arms in.

MISS  
Let's put on your jackets, we're going home.

BI  
No!

MISS  
Now now, it's getting dark. Mom's waiting.

BI  
No!

Bi hugs Miss's legs. Tũn hugs the other.

MISS  
Do Bi and Tũn love Miss?

TÛN  
Yes!

MISS  
So you'll listen to me?

TÛN & BI  
Yes!

MISS  
Then let's go home. We'll save the  
goats for another day.

TÛN  
Promise?

MISS  
I promise.

INSERT: The clock says 3:55PM. The seconds drag on, like it  
wants to stop.

21 INT./EXT. TRAM - EVENING

21

The three are on the backseat of the tram. Bi and Tũn nestle  
under Miss's arms, sound asleep.

Miss looks into the distance. A Vietnamese old lullaby comes  
to her lips, instinctively, unconsciously.

MISS  
(humming)  
Con cò mà đi ăn đêm...đậu phải cành  
mềm lộn cổ xuống ao...

All sounds fade, leaving Miss with the kids in their own  
little bubble.

They pass the family's restaurant outside the window. Miss  
stays still where she is.

The tram stops.

Then, the phone rings. Their bubble is burst. The sounds of  
reality come rushing back.

Miss immediately jumps to life. She stands up and ushers the  
kid out of their seats.

MISS (cont'd)  
Come on, let's go, we're home.

Miss grabs the kids by the hands. They exit the tram just in  
time.

22 EXT. FAMILY'S RESTAURANT - EVENING

22

The three of them draw close to the stairs in front of the  
restaurant. Miss ushers the kids to go up, but she herself  
stays put at the foot of the stairs.

Bi and Tũn run up, but halfway through, look back at her.

MISS  
Go on, Mommy's waiting.

TÛN  
How about you?

MISS  
I'll rest for a bit. Catch you later.

Bi runs up and presses the buzzer. The door opens.

Tũn still looks at Miss. Miss waves her up. She joins Bi.  
The kids disappear behind the door.

Miss watches the shut door for awhile, but then turns around  
and walks away.

23 INT. STAIRWELL - EVENING

23

Miss climbs, her steps heavier than ever.

24 INT. MISS'S APARTMENT - EVENING

24

The evening sky is grey and overcast as sunset approaches.

The leak on the ceiling continues its silent descend on the  
windowsill. The bowl has run over.

Miss approaches the windowsill. She rummages inside her  
trouser pocket and takes out the rosehips that Bi picked  
earlier.

She packs the berries underneath the dirt. Then, with a  
hand, she cups the leaked droplets and directs them to fall  
onto the newly buried rosehips. Drip, drip, drip.

FADE OUT