

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 TÜN (7) run out to greet her. Bi's cardigan is inside out.

BI & TÜN
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 Tūn?

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 Tün 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.

Tün 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, Tün, or I'll spank you.

Miss turns back to the pot.

TŪN
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 Tūn sit obediently on the couch, eyes glued to the huge TV on the wall. Tūn 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.

TŪN (O.S.)
I want McDonald's.

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

TŪN (O.S.)
Can you?

MISS (O.S.)
Of course.

Miss finishes spoonfeeding Bi. Bi and Tūn 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. Tün says out loud the name of things she sees.

TÜN
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. Tün 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.

TÜN
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.

TÜN
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!!!

TŨN

And pigs?

MISS

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

BI & TŨN

Wowww

MISS

You wanna go see?

TŨN

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 TŨN'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.

TŪN
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 & TŪN
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 Tün wander around, opening drawers after drawers, inspecting everything they can see.

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

INSERT: An old picture of a young woman.

TÜN (O.S.)

Who's this?

MISS (O.S.)

That's me. Pretty, right?

INSERT: A red áo dài.

TÜN (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 Tün 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 mi*, you know?

Bi and Tūn shake their head.

MISS (cont'd)

Oh boy, you can't call yourself Vietnamese without knowing *bánh mi*!

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/Tūn 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. Tūn hugs the other.

MISS

Do Bi and Tūn love Miss?

TŪN

Yes!

MISS

So you'll listen to me?

TŪN & BI

Yes!

MISS

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

TŨN

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 cỗ 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 Tūn run up, but halfway through, look back at her.

MISS
Go on, Mommy's waiting.

TŪN
How about you?

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

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

Tūn 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