

500 TIMES

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FADE IN:

INT. LIBRARY AFTERNOON

A page from a book. Blurred Chinese words, then the words become clear.

An Chinese American college girl TINA is reading a Chinese novel in the library. She is a quiet and serene girl, who loves the culture of her homeland.

Tina's index finger is sliding under one sentence of these foreign words. It's a famous Chinese proverb about love. She whispers in English.

TINA (O.S.)

If you met him 500 times in your
previous life, you will fall in
love the first sight you meet him
in this life. How beautiful it is!

Tina looks up to the clock, it's the time to go to class. She packs up her books into her bag, puts on her scarf. Takes her umbrella, and leaves.

CUT TO:

EXT. OUTSIDE OF LIBRARY AFTERNOON

Tina is walking out of the library. She takes out her cellphone and check her class schedule. After knowing the location of the class, she heads to her last class of this week.

It's late autumn now. The weather is cloudy. Trees lost their leaves, only left bare trunks. Tina walks on a long road with trees aside.

A student riding bicycle passes Tina slowly. That's a mountain bicycle with big wheels. We follow one of the bike wheel rolling on the ground. The road is covered by red leaves.

The big mountain bike wheel is still rolling on the ground.

MATCH CUT TO:

An Old thin iron wheel is rolling. The road changes to old stone road. The story flashbacks to Tina's previous life.

EXT. OLD STREET MORNING (CHINA, 1932)

The bike wheel is rolling on the street.

Camera pans from road to the street view. It's 1930 China. People wear linen Chinese style clothes.

A boy SHAN (12) is riding that old bike. The bicycle is too big for him, but he rides well. He has short haircut, which makes him looks clean and neat. He wears an oatmeal color linen shirt and ordinary black pants.

There is a paper bag in the bicycle basket. Shan glances at the bag and smiles.

EXT. BIG HOUSE MORNING

Shan rides to a big and gorgeous house. A typical wealthy people's house in republican period of China. Shan rides by the iron gate but he does not enter the gate. He detours to the small back door and enters that door.

Shan parks his bike in a shed, and takes the bag with him. He runs to the front door from outside of the house. It takes him a while because the house is so big. He waits outside of the front door under a tree, doesn't want anyone to notice him.

A 9 year-old girl LILY walks out with a maid. The girl is Tina in her previous life. Lily wears a deluxe school uniform, white socks and new black leather shoes.

The maid MRS. TANG (30) is Shan's mother. She wears a white cotton apron and walks behind her little master Lily.

Lily sees Shan standing under the tree. She smiles happily to him, and runs to Shan. The maid sees Shan, she shakes her head and sighs.

SHAN

(Nervous but happy)
Good morning, Miss Lily.

LILY

Shan, I'm going to school. Wait for me please. It's so regretful that you can't go to school. But I will tell you what I learn today.

SHAN

As your servant, I don't have the privilege to go to school. But...Thank you, Miss. Lily.

Shan hands the bag to Lily.

SHAN (CONT'D)
Miss Lily, your favorite pumpkin
pancake.

Lily takes the bag and smells the fried pumpkin scent, she swallows and smiles.

LILY
(Excited)
Thank you Shan! You are so sweet!

A man TANG (35) walks to Lily. Tang is Shan's father ,and the driver of the wealthy family.

DRIVER TANG
Miss Lily, it's time to go to
school.

LILY
I'm coming, uncle TANG. Goodbye
Mrs. Tang. Bye Shan.

SHAN
Have a nice day, Miss. Lily. Safe
drive, Dad...

Tang looks at Shan, says nothing. Lily leaves with driver Tang.

The Maid Mrs. Tang walks to Shan. She rubs Shan's head gently. Love and worries in her eyes.

MRS. TANG
(Softly and gently)
You get up early to buy Miss Lily
breakfast again?

Shan does not answer. He looks along Lily walking away and jumping into a car.

CUT TO:

EXT. SCHOOL GATE AFTERNOON

Shan is waiting in front of the school gate, his bike is beside a tree. When he sees Lily coming out, Shan smiles and walks ahead.

SHAN
MISS. Lily, how was school today?

Lily is also happy to see Shan. She runs to Shan and takes out her textbook.

LILY
(Proudly)
I learned a new poem today. Let me teach you...

The driver Mr. Tang walks to them.

MR. TANG
Miss. Lily, it's time to go home.

LILY
Uncle Tang, can Shan go with us?

MR. TANG (O.S.)
No, Miss Lily. He can't. He has the bicycle. He can go home by himself.

Lily left with regret. Shan gives her a warm smile.

DISSOLVE TO:

MONTAGE - VARIOUS

A) EXT. YARD DAY

Lily and Shan is happily watching ants in a yard. They smile happily. Shan is telling Lily how ants move food back to their nest.

C) EXT. A HILL DAY

Shan and Lily sneak out to a hill and see cherry blossoms.

D) EXT. SCHOOL GATE AFTERNOON

After handing Lily her favorite snack, Shan watches Lily left with his father Mr. Tang in the car. Although smile still on his face, Shan is frustrated.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. A SMALL ROOM NIGHT

Shan (16) and his parents are sitting in their room. It has been four years later because Shan is much taller than before. His face becomes a little bit mature and handsome.

Although Shan and his parents live in a big house, they only have a small room for their whole family. The atmosphere in the room is cold. Shan seems not happy.

MRS. TANG

So your father and I decided to leave Master Wang. We will start our own business. We will have our house and store. You can even go to school... Shan, it's better for us. We can't depend on Master Wang forever.

Shan says nothing but nods his head.

CUT TO:

EXT. OUTSIDE OF A BIG HOUSE AFTERNOON

Mr. and Mrs. Tang with bags and old luggage in their hands. Shan holds a bag too. They are leaving. Shan looks back to the big house for many times, as if reluctant to leave.

A girl's voice.

LILY (O.S.)

Please wait!

Lily (14), much taller and more slender, with her long black hair tied up, runs to Shan and his parents. She is panting.

Shan is surprised and happy to see his little master here.

LILY (CONT'D)

Mr. and Mrs. Tang, are you leaving right now?

MRS. TANG

Yes, Miss Lily. Thank you for a long time.

LILY

(Softly)

Can I talk to Shan for a while.

Mrs. Tang nods, and left with Mr. Tang.

LILY (CONT'D)

Shan, I don't want you to leave.

SHAN

Miss. Lily, I will always wait for you at the school gate.

LILY
 (Smiles)
 Fine. We will hang out just like
 before. Shan is my favorite person.
 Being with you is my favorite
 thing.

Lily shyly runs away, leaving Shan along. Shan smiles. He looks at Lily running into the huge house, and he turns away to catch his parents.

CUT TO:

INT. LILY'S HOME AFTERNOON

Lily enters the house and heads to her bedroom. Blush still on her face. She walks upstairs, passes a room and the door is ajar. She hears the solemn voice of her dad.

MR. WANG (O.S.)
 LILY.

Lily's body slightly shocked, she answers timidly.

LILY
 Yes, father.

Lily does not enter the room because her father doesn't allow her to do so.

MR. WANG (O.S.)
 The Tangs left?

LILY
 Yes, Dad.

MR. WANG (O.S.)
 Since they left, you don't have to
 see them anymore. Especially that
 boy.

LILY
 But Dad, Shan and I are real good
 friends!

MR. WANG (O.S.)
 (Strictly)
 You and him are in different social
 classes. I will not allow you to
 see him again.

LILY
(Trying to argue)
Dad!

MR. WANG
(ruthless)
Enough! Go back to your room.

Lily frowns and pouts her lips. We can see that her father's words don't change her a bit.

DISSOLVE TO:

MONTAGE - VARIOUS

A) EXT. THE HILL DAY

It's spring again. Lily sneaks out to meet Shan. They go to the hill to see cherry blossom just like they did for every spring.

B) EXT. STREET FAIR DAY

Shan and Lily go to a fair. Lily stops in front of a nest of baby rabbits. She kneels down and touches the rabbit. Her look is gentle. Shan looks at her.

Shan buys Lily a rabbit. They walk out with the baby rabbit in Lily's hands.

C) INT. LILY'S ROOM IN BIG HOUSE NIGHT

Lily is writing a letter to Shan, the rabbit is sitting in a cage beside Lily.

Lily's face is full of love. She looks at the rabbit, which has grown up a lot, and puts her fingers into the cage. The rabbit kisses Lily's finger. Lily smiles.

D) INT. SHAN'S ROOM NIGHT

Shan's room is much simple and plain compare to Lily's room. Shan lies on the bed. He is reading Lily's letter. Happiness is on his face.

Shan gets up from bed and closes his door. He starts to write back to Lily.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SCHOOL GATE AFTERNOON

Lily and her classmates (several girls) are walking out of school. They are in school uniforms.

Time flies, Lily is turning 18 today. She is no longer the little girl, she becomes mature and confident. She has her black long hair down, and her face is beautiful.

Lily sees Shan standing under a tree, just like he always does. Shan is 20 now. He becomes tall and handsome. Because of everyday labor, Shan has healthy muscles on his body.

Lily says goodbye to her friends and walks to Shan. So many years after, every time she sees Shan, blush is always on her face.

Lily smiles shyly. Shan smiles too; he takes out a budding rose. The stem of the rose is wrapped with a handkerchief.

SHAN

Why is this flower so expensive? I don't think it has many differences from the flower in my backyard.

LILY

(Pouts and smiles)
It's called Romantic! Shan, you will never understand.

SHAN

Fine... Happy birthday, my Princess
Lily!

Lily joyfully takes over the rose, grabs Shan's arm and left with him. They are chatting and laughing. The rose is bloody red, water droplets are on its petals.

CUT TO:

INT. BIG HOUSE NIGHT

Lily arrives home with the lonely rose on her hand. It's late, so she creeps in and quietly walks upstairs. The door of her father's room is still ajar.

When she pass the room, Lily hears her father's voice again, with strict and fury.

MR. WANG (O.S.)

Where did you go?

LILY
(aggrieved)
Dad! It's my birthday!

MR. WANG (O.S.)
Lily, Come in!

CUT TO:

INT. MASTER WANG'S ROOM NIGHT

Lily enters her father's room. She bows her head, hides the rose in the back. Her eyes are staring at the floor.

Lily's father MR. WANG(60) is fat and in luxurious pajamas. He sits in a huge couch. His face is impassive.

MR. WANG
I told you stop seeing that boy!
Why don't you listen to me!

LILY
(aggrieved)
Dad, we love each other.

MR. WANG
(Furious)
You don't understand love! You two are born to be different. For girls like you, deserve a rich husband who is in the upper class. After marriage, you will have a comfortable life just like I've given you.

LILY
(Starts crying)
I don't want a comfortable life. I just want to follow my heart!

MR. WANG
Stop talking to me like this! I'm the one who is in charge of your marriage!

CUT TO:

INT. BIG HOUSE NIGHT

Lily leaves her father's room with tears on her face, feeling her heart had gone. She walks back to her room.

Lily glances at the RABBIT CAGE, but finds out the cage is open. The rabbit is gone. She becomes nervous. She searches the room, but doesn't find the rabbit. Suddenly, Lily sees the OPENING WINDOW. A bad feeling is in her mind. She walks slowly to the window and looks out...

Lily starts to cry heavily.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE HILL DAY

The cherry blossom flowers are all withers.

Shan is digging a small hole under a cherry tree. Lily holds the dead rabbit in a handkerchief, and softly put it in the hole. Lily's eyes are red. Shan looks her warmly and sadly.

SHAN

Don't be sad, Lily. The tree will take care of her. In the next year, when we come back and see the cherry blossom. You can see her again.

She falls to Shan's arms and crying. She is so sad not only because the rabbit is dead, but also because her father's opposition.

Shan knows that as well. But there is nothing he can do to change the situation. The only thing he can do now is holding her tight.

CUT TO:

EXT. CAMPUS AFTERNOON (BACK TO PRESENT DAY)

Tina walks in the campus. She passes a group of campus tour crowd. The crowd gathered around a memorial. The TOUR GUIDE stands in front of the memorial and introduce the history of the memorial. As she walks away, Tina hears the sound of the tour guide:

CAMPUS TOUR GUIDE

Here is a World War II memorial on campus. It honors students and faculties who served and dedicated during World War II...

CUT TO:

EXT. OLD STREET DAY (CHINA, 1942)

People walk on the street just like it's an usual day. Suddenly, a row of SOLDIERS running across the crowds. People become quiet, and all step aside, make road for them, seems don't want to be in trouble.

Shan is in the crowds, he also steps aside when these soldiers run across him.

The arrival of soldiers make the atmosphere nervous and serious. After they left, the street returns lively and noisy.

A peddler is shouting and selling newspaper. He is spreading the most important news of today's paper:

PEDDLER

Japan has invaded in! Government is now recruiting soldiers! Join in the army and protect our nation!

The peddler passes Shan. Along with the peddler's sound, shan sees notices about RECRUITING are posted all over the street. Shan frowns.

CUT TO:

EXT. AN OLD LIBRARY DAY

Lily (20) with a book in her arms is standing in a small alley outside of an old library. She wears a white dress.

The wall of library building is covered with ivies. In front of Lily, it is Shan (22). Shan just finished his work today; he wears a navy linen clothes with several patches on it.

LILY

(Staring at Shan)
What?! You said you are going to the army?

SHAN

(Avoids lily's gaze)
Yes.

LILY

Are you crazy!? It's too dangerous! You may die in the war.

LILY (CONT'D)

I'm not kidding Shan, I will not let you go!

Shan doesn't move or talk. A while of silence.

Finally, Shan looks up, he does not hesitate any more. Shan looks into Lily's eyes, very determined.

SHAN

I have decided, Lily. I'm going. In order to complete my obligation as a citizen, I have to go. Also...Only by joining the army, I can raise my social status. Only if I change your father's opinion on me, I could have the chance to marry you.

LILY

Shan...

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET DAY

It's cloudy. Shan and Lily is walking shoulder to shoulder on the street. Lily still wears a white dress. Shan holds a big bag in one hand, an old oil-paper umbrella in the other hand.

Shan is leaving today.

EXT. MILITARY BUILDING DAY

They walk to the military building and stop. Two soldiers standing in front of the main door. Shan turns his head to Lily.

SHAN

Lily, that's enough. I have to go.

Lily looks at her love, sadness and worries in her eyes. She bites her lips.

LILY

Shan, take care of yourself. I will wait for you.

Shan puts down the bag and embraces Lily in his arms. His eyes are red, tears almost rush out. Shan closes his eyes.

LILY (CONT'D)

Be alive Shan, you must survive!

Lily's voice is gentle but determined. Shan opens his eyes, holding her tighter.

SHAN
For you, I won't die.

It starts to raining suddenly. Shan looses his arms and opens the umbrella. The sky is dark. Shan grabs Lily's hand and hands the umbrella to her.

SHAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Take this, I will no longer need
it.

After saying the last sentence, Shan picks up his bag and turns around. He walks into the building without looking back.

Shan knows if he looked back, he wouldn't make his mind again.

Lily holds the umbrella in rain. The rain is so heavy that We cannot tell it's rain or tears on her face.

CUT TO:

EXT. CAMPUS AT DUSK (BACK TO PRESENT DAY)

The rain starts suddenly, students open their umbrellas or put on their hoddies's hats. Some students who don't have umbrella are running to buildings.

Tina opens her umbrella. She sees a classmate walks by.

THE CLASSMATE (O.S.)
Hi, how was your first week?

TINA
It was busy, but I like the
feeling. I'm going to my last class
of this week. I'm running late.
I'll see you later.

Tina walks faster. The sky is getting darker.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. OLD STREET DAY (CHINA, 1945)

People on the street seems happy and exciting. The war ended. The paddler sells newspaper is shouting the headline.

PEDDLER

Japan has announced surrender
yesterday, the war ended. No more
fighting in our nation!

A black car slowly rolls by. Lily with a black dress sits in the back. It has been three years since Shan left. Lily perms her long hair curly, make her more mature. She hears the peddler shouting the news. Lily rolls down the window, tears in her eyes.

LILY

It's three years Shan. Where are
you? I'm waiting for you at home...

Suddenly, Lily sees a crowd of people gathering in front of a notice. Some people is crying, others have sadness on their faces.

LILY (O.S.) (CONT'D)

(To the driver)

Stop the car.

Lily gets off the car and walks to the crowds. Her face becomes more and more dull. When she sees the title of the notice, she prays in her heart.

Lily's eyes is moving on the notice. Suddenly, her eyes stop moving. More and more tears rush out.

The notice: TO HEROS--DEATHS IN THE WAR

A list of names.

The name SHAN TANG is in the middle of the list.

CUT TO:

EXT. CAMPUS DUSK (BACK TO PRESENT DAY)

Tina finally arrives, she closes her umbrella and enters the building. Tina walks across the hallway. There is sound inside the last classroom down to the hallway. As she is getting closer, the sound is getting clear.

It's a man's voice calling names, sounds like he is taking attendance.

Tina gently opens the door, the TA is right calling her name.

TA

Tina Cheung?

Tina is cleaning up water on her clothes, and tying up her umbrella. She answers without looking up.

TINA

That's me.

Tina looks up. When she sees the TA, she freezes. Her eyes are staring at his face.

SHAN'S FACE.

The TA seems surprised as well, and He gazes at Tina.

They have never known each other, but feel destined. It's the feeling that they know each other for a long time.

It's noisy in the classroom. Other students are chatting and laughing. But for them, the world is absolutely silent. Other students disappear, desks and chairs disappear, only two of them left.

They just stand and gaze at each other, Tina's pupils dilate. Complex emotions in her eyes. Zoom in to Tina's eye. Shan's face is in her pupils.

Zooming out from Tina's pupil, the scene changes to the old, familiar mountain hill.

Shan and lily are standing under the cherry tree and look at each other.

Love in their eyes.

Cherry blossoms spread out the mountain.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END