

The Fix

By Jacqueline Page

1705 Crestview Dr
Potomac MD 20854
jlp@sy.edu

FADE IN:

EXT. YUAN VILLAGE- MORNING

The sound of a rooster crowing awakens the small Chinese village. The bright emerald green of the rice fields shimmer under the rising sun, and the golden rays reflect dilapidated households. There are distant sounds of village households starting their morning routines.

INT. ZHANG'S ROOM- MORNING

ZHANG (16), is a lanky slender Chinese boy who has distinct tan lines from working out in the fields for long hours.

Zhang rolls over to his side and focuses on the thoroughly worn used high school TEXTBOOKS that lie on his desk in front of him. He then looks past the books with his new focus on the RICE FARMING TOOLS that lie in the distance. Slowly Zhang rises from his bed, stretches, and moves past the books toward the tools.

INT. KITCHEN -MORNING

MA (40) stands over the wood fire stove quickly, yet efficiently cooking breakfast. MA is petite and pretty, yet her sun beaten face and hunched physique reflect her years of hard manual work.

MA

Family, it is time for breakfast!
We have a long day ahead of us!

Zhang and PA (42), a man with sun damaged skin and dominant posture, walk into the kitchen and reach for a PLATES. Zhang hesitates allowing PA to get a plate first. Pa notices this hesitation yet ignores the gesture.

PA

We have a long day ahead of us
Zhang. You better not forget any of
your tools like you did yesterday.

LING(14), a young teen with naturally athletic body, scurries into the kitchen carrying a OLD BACKPACK and holding a messy array of PAPERS.

LING

Why do I even have to go to school?

MA

Ling you only have one more year
before you can start working in the

MA
fields and join the family
business.

LING
What's the point of even making me
go? Who cares if I don't know how
to do long division!

Zhang snaps up from his food, his face reflecting his
agitation.

ZHANG
Don't say things like that Ling. I
would do anything to be back at
school.

EXT. HOUSE - MORNING

Ling strolls out of the house and starts walking down the
street toward the school. Young school boys run past him
with urgency not to be late for class.

Zhang and Pa file out of the house next. Carrying various
tools for rice farming. Pa carries himself with confidence,
his tools neatly organized and strapped to his back. Zhang
struggles to not only hold the tools but keep up with his
fathers quick pace.

EXT. YUAN VILLAGE- MORNING

The village is alive and bustling. Working like a machine
children walk to school, women sweep and clean, and men walk
to various levels of the rice terraces, all methodically and
practiced.

EXT. VILLAGE CENTER - MORNING

As Zhang strolls past the village center, he notices a new
posting on the Municipal Announcements board. He pauses to
read the new listing as the men behind him continue to walk
toward the terraces.

"ANNOUNCEMENT: SEEKING ANY GRADUATES OF BASIC EDUCATION.
UNITED STATES COLLEGE RECRUITERS WILL BE ATTENDING THE
ANNUAL MUNICIPAL SCIENCE COMPETITION. THE COMPETITION WILL
BE HELD THIS FALL."

Pa farther up the road, turns noticing Zhang was no longer
behind him.

PA

Zhang we are going to be late for work, the terraces aren't going to farm themselves!

Zhang quickly turns, giving one last skim of information, and sprints to catch up with Pa.

EXT. RICE TERRACES - MORNING/AFTERNOON

Zhang and Pa work tirelessly in the field. Knees deep in the mud and their backs bent, Zhang and Pa methodically burrow seedlings into the mud.

MONTAGE

Zhang and Pa complete the first layer of the terrace. Both exchange glances and wade through the mud toward the road.

Zhang and Pa sit on the side of the road overlooking rice farmers on different terraces. Zhang reaches inside his cargo pockets for his lunch. Pa fumbles with his pocket to pull out his cigarettes and lighter. The pack of cigarettes is damp and destroyed.

PA

Why is it so difficult to keep my cigarettes dry.

Pa reaches for the lone dry cigarette and lights it.

ZHANG

It's because the container is not water resistant Pa. The paper wrapping becomes saturated with water and sweat from work.

PA

Saturated? Here you go again with those big school words.

Zhang pauses as Pa takes a drag from his cigarette.

ZHANG

Pa, I noticed today there was an announcement for the annual science fair. Can you believe that US colleges are coming to judge?

PA

I think thats a bunch of nonsense. What's the point? Our village is perfectly fine the way it is. We

PA
don't need no foreigners coming in
trying to take our sons to learn
nonsense in a book!

ZHANG
Pa there is so much more than just
books when learning, its about
experiences! Innovation!

PA
Son get your head out of the
clouds. We have everything we need
here. You have the honor of
carrying the family business. You
know Ling understands. He is eager
to join us in the fields.

Zhang looks down and finishes his meal. Pa motions for them
to return to work.

EXT. YUAN VILLAGE-DUSK

Exhausted and worn, the villagers slowly meander back from
the rice terraces toward their homes. In the crowd of
workers Zhang walks next to Pa. He then notices various
pieces of trash rolling on the road. He slows down to pick
various pieces of plastic waste.

INT. KITCHEN -NIGHT

Ling sits at the table looking over his science textbook
while Ma cooks dinner. Pa and Zhang enter the kitchen,
muddy, tired, and expressionless.

Pa and Zhang sit down at the table, both exhale
simultaneously.

PA
This time next year work will be
easier with Ling helping us.

Ma places the large rice bowl and cooked meat on the table.

LING
Pa, Ma, let me just quit now.
Theres no point in me learning
about... procarrots.

Ling reaches for meat and rice, and hands the serving
utensil to Zhang.

ZHANG
(exhales) Ling you mean
prokaryotes.

LING
See! There's no point.

MA
Ling you need to stay in school.
Its government requirement you make
it through basic education. Now eat
up and finish your reading its late
and we all need rest.

INT. ZHANG'S ROOM- NIGHT

Zhang sits at his desk looking down at all the plastic he collected from the day. He reaches for a box under his desk that contains various pieces of trash. He leans over his desk and works on an unknown project.

INT. ZHANG'S ROOM- MORNING

Zhang's bed is empty and Zhang is slumped over on his desk. The sound of the rooster crow jolts him awake and he abruptly sits up, plastic pieces stuck to his face.

He quickly pulls the pieces off, shoving all materials back into the box and places it underneath the desk.

INT. KITCHEN -MORNING

Zhang stumbles into the kitchen to find the family already well into the morning routine. Ma has a broom and is sweeping the kitchen floor. Pa sits mid way through eating his breakfast. Ling sits across from Pa looking at his science textbook with a confused expression.

MA
Zhang hurry and eat your breakfast.
We can't afford for you and Pa to
be late again.

Pa glances up at from his meal pausing to look at Zhang rubbing sleep from his eyes.

PA
Zhang you look terrible. Were you
up late last night?

Zhang quickly snaps to attention.

ZHANG

No father. I was just up reading.

Zhang reaches for a bowl and fills it with food.

PA

Reading? Why?

ZHANG

No reason, I just enjoy reading.

Zhang looks down to avoid eye contact with Pa. Zhang begins eating his food.

PA

Zhang you need to focus on your health and our work. As the ancient proverb goes "Dig the well before you are thirsty".

EXT. YUAN VILLAGE- MORNING

Pa and Zhang walk down the dirt road toward the rice terrace. School children run past them in the opposite direction. Pa occasionally waves and acknowledges villagers as he passes. Zhang glances up as he passes the village center to see the poster on the bulletin.

EXT. RICE TERRACES - MORNING/AFTERNOON

(Montage)

Pa and Zhang methodically burrow seeds into the ground.

Zhang uses tools to form and build the mud walls of the terrace.

Pa takes a cigarette breaks. He looks into the box frustrated as he sees half of the cigarettes damp or ruined.

EXT. YUAN VILLAGE-DUSK

Pa and Zhang walk back down the dirt road. A piece of trash rolls toward them like a tumbleweed in a Texas desert. Zhang reaches down to pick it up.

PA

Why are you picking that up, the trash workers will collect it later.

ZHANG

I just thought it would be easier
to bring it home.

Pa huffs and continues walking. Zhang places the trash in his pocket.

INT. ZHANG'S ROOM- NIGHT

Zhang sits at his desk cutting different pieces of plastic trash into uniform sizes and shapes. He holds a square object toward the light and grins. He places the object and materials back into the box and climbs into bed.

INT. ZHANG'S ROOM- MORNING

Zhang is awake at his desk working on his project. Spread on his desk are the old high school textbooks and various squares of plastic from bottles, bags, and containers. The sound of a rooster crows.

Zhang stands and grabs his materials moving leaving his room and the materials on the desk.

INT. KITCHEN -MORNING

Zhang is first in the kitchen. Zhang begins putting out plates and bowls. Ma enters the kitchen.

MA

You're up early Zhang and energized
I see!

Zhang hands Ma the cooking bowls. Ma lights the wood stove.

ZHANG

Yes Ma, I was up early reading my
high school textbooks.

Ma pauses and looks at Zhang.

MA

Zhang. Do you know why we are rice
farmers?

Zhang puts down the bowls and sighs

ZHANG

Because your father was a farmer,
Pa's father was a farmer, and the
job goes generations back.

With a firm expression on Ma's face she turns her body toward Zhang.

MA

This rice field has been supporting our family for three generations now. It was given to my grandparents during the communist era. It is both yours and Ling's destiny to carry the tradition of farming. Zhang you get too carried away with dreams of education when in reality all we need to survive is already here.

Pa and Ling enter the kitchen and sit at the table. Ma turns back to cooking and Zhang goes to a bin that holds utensils.

LING

Wow breakfast is already being made and the table is set. Zhang maybe you should quit farming and become a waiter.

Pa, Ma, Ling, and Zhang chuckle. Ma places the food plates on the table. Zhang hands out utensils to each family member.

EXT. RICE TERRACES - MORNING/AFTERNOON

Pa and Zhang sit on the road overlooking the rice terraces. Zhang takes out his lunch and begins eating. Pa takes out his cigarettes and frustrated he removes three soggy ones.

ZHANG

Pa, I think I have a solution to your cigarette issue.

Pa starts to light his cigarette.

PA

What kind of solution Zhang.

ZHANG

What if you put the cigarettes in a plastic container?

Pa takes a drag of the cigarette without physical acknowledgment of Zhang's proposition.

PA

Whats the point? I am not spending our hard earned money on a fancy cigarette holder.

Zhang takes a bite of his food, and looks off to the workers below.

INT. ZHANG'S ROOM- NIGHT

Zhang is covered from the knee down in mud. Zhang walks into his room to find...

Ma standing over his desk looking at his project.

MA

So this is what has been keeping you up late and having you get up early.

Zhang stands shocked and hesitantly steps forward.

ZHANG

Ma its not what it looks like.

MA

Why are you wasting your time with this nonsense!

ZHANG

What does it matter? I am still working in the fields!

Pa enters the room.

PA

What is all the commotion about?

Pa looks between Zhang and Ma. Pa then notices the science material.

PA

What in the world is this?

ZHANG

Nothing I was just studying past readings.

Pa picks up the square plastic object.

PA

Is this for that silly competition in the fall! I told you that it was pointless, worthless, and silly.

ZHANG

Pa, what does it hurt to apply? It doesn't affect you it doesn't affect the family?

MA

Doesn't hurt the family? If you aren't focused, if you are busy dreaming about education then you aren't working the best you can!

Pa angrily places the object in his cargo pocket, grabs the box of materials and storms out of the room.

ZHANG

Where are you taking that?

Zhang starts to go after Pa but Ma gives a stern look to stay put.

Ma leaves the room with Zhang standing speechless and defeated.

Angered Zhang takes his textbooks and throws them in the trash.

INT. KITCHEN -NIGHT

Pa sits at the kitchen looking at the materials and object. Pa toys with the object in his hand. The object is square and fits perfectly in his palm. The object is comprised of layers of fine cut plastic.

Pa opens the flap of it and notices that it is comparable in size to a cigarette pack. Pa reaches into his pocket and removes a damaged empty cigarette pack. Pa aligns the sizes next to each other. Pa sighs and places the object and the empty cigarette pack in his pocket.

INT. CONVENIENCE STORE -MORNING

Pa enters the convenience store. The store is old and has sparse items, it is poorly lit and majority of the store is lit from natural light pouring in through the front windows.

BOLIN (47), skinny build and receding hairline, stands at the front counter wearing a less than clean uniform and name tag.

BOLIN

Good morning! Already back for another pack?

Bolin gestures to the wall of CIGARETTES behind him.

PA

Morning Bolin. Yes, back again.

BOLIN

Tao just came in earlier said he's going through packs a week. He went on about them getting wet or soggy or something. Anyway, would you like another pack of HaoMao?

Pa looks at the wall of cigarette brands and prices. The HAOMAO pack of cigarettes has the price of "15RMB"

PA

With all the cigarettes I waste at work, do you have a cheaper brand I can try?

Bolin turns around and immediately picks up one of the packs on the lower rows.

BOLIN

Of course! We actually have a deal on YuXi for 9RMB.

Pa nods. Bolin hands him the pack. Pa reaches inside his pocket and pulls out crumpled MONEY and the object. Pa hands Bolin the crumpled money and opens pack of cigarettes.

Pa sets the opened pack of cigarettes on the counter. Pa picks up the object and with his free hand begins removing cigarettes from the open pack and placing them neatly in the object.

BOLIN

Wow, thats one nifty creation you got there. Is there anything more to it than for show?

PA

My son, Zhang, made it. I think its suppose to hold cigarettes.

Bolin nods and grins.

BOLIN

Well tell Zhang he better not be handing those out left and right. Cigarettes are most of my entire business after all!

Pa chuckles, puts the object back in his pocket and leaves the store.

INT. KITCHEN -MORNING

Ling sits at the kitchen table doodling on a piece of paper. A untouched textbook sits on the table across from him within hands reach. Zhang lethargically enters the kitchen and looks around.

LING

Zhang! Just the brother I was looking for! Will you help me with my math homework?

ZHANG

I'm not in the mood.

LING

Please! I am barely passing science and I'm on the cusp for math.

ZHANG

Why? Whats the point. Just like you said you'll be working in the fields.

Ling becomes increasingly defensive, his face turning from playful to angry.

LING

Zhang so what. I still need to pass. I'm not trying to stay stuck in this forever.

ZHANG

It's not difficult stuff. Why don't you stop being lazy with school and read for once.

Pa slowly enters the kitchen. Hesitant after over hearing bits of the conversation. Both Ling and Zhang have not noticed Pa's entry as they are too involved in the argument.

LING

I spend my time doing what I like, which happens to be working out. don't pretend I don't notice you always hiding around working on some project.

Ling hit a nerve in Zhang. Zhang's face fills with anger.

ZHANG

Ling, heres a quick life lesson for you. We all have to do things we

ZHANG
don't want to do in life. At least
yours is temporary.

Zhang turns to leave the room. Zhang notices his father standing in the doorway, he looks down, and storms past him.

EXT. RICE TERRACES - AFTERNOON

Zhang and Pa work silently. Zhang quickly places seeds in the ground and moves to the next task. He is methodical and rhythmic in his work. Pa stops working watching Zhang work.

PA
Zhang. Its time for a lunch break.

Zhang pauses gathers his tools and walks past Pa without a glance.

Pa and Zhang sit on the road overlooking the rice terrace. Pa reaches inside his pocket and pulls out the object. Pa opens the box and inside the cigarettes are perfectly intact, unaffected by the water of the fields.

PA
Zhang. I am sorry. You are a bright
young man. Ling will be able to
continue the business with me.

Pa reaches into his other pocket and pulls out trash.

PA
I saw these pieces on the way to
work today.

Zhang slowly begins to grin and meets eyes with Pa. Pa offers his hand with the trash. Zhang and Pa shake hands exchanging the trash.

FADE TO BLACK