

HOLD MY HAND

by

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FADE IN:

- 1 INT. APARTMENT BEDROOM - DAWN 1
In a small room, a scrawny teenager SHAOZU (17) sleeps.
HEAVY FOOTSTEPS in the hall wake him.
Wiping the crust from his eyes, Shaozu turns to his sister
JUN (7) sleeping peacefully in the opposite of the room.
- 2 INT. APARTMENT HALLWAY - DAWN 2
Shaozu finishes URINATING in the bathroom, he shuffles out
to see his DAD holding a suitcase at the hallway end.
Shaozu freezes, idling at his DAD who NODS then walks
downstairs - we hear the door SLAM.
- 3 INT. APARTMENT KITCHEN - DAWN 3
Three empty breakfast bowls sit on the dining table -
Shaozu stands in the doorway. There's a lonely SILENCE.
- 4 INT. APARTMENT MASTER BEDROOM - DAWN 4
Shaozu peers into the master bedroom - Clothing drawers
are still open, the bed hasn't been made and industrial
work tools sit on the floor.
ANGLE ON MIRROR: A photo of Shaozu, Jun and Dad stuck to
the mirror - the photo is creased where Dad stands.
- 5 INT. APARTMENT LOUNGE - DAWN 5
Sitting on the couch Shaozu stares at the blank screen of
an old television - his reflection muted.
- 6 INT. COMMON ROOM, CHINESE COMMUNITY CENTRE - AFTERNOON 6
A group of Chinese TEENAGERS have cake and fizzy drinks -
They're celebrating a birthday in glee.
Some of the group have Chinese opera masks lifted on their
scalps, wiping sweat from their foreheads. Jun is amongst
them, being praised by an INSTRUCTOR LIM (40s).
Lim passes a CASH BOX around the group - each person
places a cash donation inside. We get a sense someone is
watching this group.

7 INT. HALLWAY, CHINESE COMMUNITY CENTRE - AFTERNOON 7

Sitting on a bench is Shaozu, he fondles a Chinese opera mask with his hands while glancing into the common room.

SHAOZU'S POV: The EYE of one of the TEENAGERS briefly locks eyes with Shaozu - who immediately looks away.

Shaozu leaves the opera mask on the bench and shuffles down the hallway - he passes another class that are rehearsing a traditional Chinese dance.

Shaozu exits the hallway to a large staircase.

8 INT. STAIRCASE, CHINESE COMMUNITY CENTRE - AFTERNOON 8

Shaozu collects a box of CANDY from a vending machine, he then peers over a railing of a tall, spiraled staircase.

SHAOZU'S POV: A duo of KIDS wearing masks walk up the stairs, one following the other to land their feet exactly where the other started - it's a game.

We hear CLAPPING from the common room.

The DOOR OPENS and the teenage group walk downstairs. None of them take any notice of Shaozu.

Jun is the last to leave, her eyes widen and lips smile at seeing the waiting Shaozu. She holds Shaozu's hand as they start to walk down the staircase together, but stop as...

LIM (O.S.)

Shaozu.

From behind, Lim closes the metal CASH BOX.

LIM

(in Mandarin)

How come you didn't come in?

Shaozu doesn't answer.

9 INT. TRAIN - DAY 9

Jun follows Shaozu's footsteps through the carriage, she holds his hand. They find a vacant space to stand.

The train stops, a group of attractive HIGH-SCHOOL PAKEHA GIRLS get on. They eye Shaozu holding Jun's hand with curiosity - WHISPERING and GIGGLING to each other.

Embarrassed, Shaozu loosens the grip of Jun's hand, he leans against the window. Jun then tugs on Shaozu's shirt, and he reluctantly holds her hand again.

(CONTINUED)

The high-school girls move elsewhere, still GIGGLING.

Jun gazes up to Shaozu, asking with her eyes "Why did you do that?" Shaozu bends to her eye line and places a piece of CANDY in her palm - Jun eats it and relaxes.

10 INT. APARTMENT KITCHEN - DUSK 10

Jun sits on the bench, watching Shaozu preparing a basic meal of pasta. Shaozu pours boiling water into a pot and adds the spaghetti. Shaozu then chops an Onion.

JUN
(in Mandarin)
Where's Dad?

Shaozu stops the cutting, he hesitates for a moment.

SHAOZU
(in Mandarin)
Gone on a work trip. He'll be
home in a week.

JUN
(in Mandarin)
Did he tell you?

The water begins to BOIL over the pot, gushing outward. Shaozu quickly takes it off the element, making a mess.

11 EXT. APARTMENT - NIGHT 11

Shaozu wheels a green bin to the curb, there is YELLING and SCREAMING from a neighbours apartment.

12 INT. APARTMENT LOUNGE - NIGHT 12

Jun sleeps on the couch with the television playing, her finished dinner plate lay on her lap. The sounds of neighbours ARGUING echoes in the lounge.

Shaozu delicately picks up the sleeping Jun. She wakes.

JUN
(in Mandarin)
Shaozu. I had a bad dream.

SHAOZU
(in Mandarin)
It's okay. You're awake now.

Suddenly the neighbours argument PEAKS to GLASS BREAKING and a PAINFUL CRYING, Jun gets nervous - Shaozu stops.

SHAOZU
(in Mandarin)
Hey, wanna do something fun?

13 EXT. APARTMENT ROOF - NIGHT 13

FLICKERS of red light explode from a SPARKLER firework. Standing on the roof of their apartment, Shaozu hands Jun a burning sparkler.

SHAOZU
(in Mandarin)
Hold it steady.

Shaozu gets an unlit sparkler and touches Jun's lit one, making the two of them BURN BRIGHT.

SHAOZU
(in Mandarin)
As long one of them burns, the other one's always gonna light.

As Jun's Sparkler starts to die, she gets another one and burns it against Shaozu's - it ignites.

SHAOZU
(in Mandarin)
See?

Jun smiles seeing her Sparkler come to life then digs her head into Shaozu's chest, hugging him tight.

14 INT. APARTMENT LOUNGE - MORNING 14

Shaozu flicks the switches to the lights, but none work. Jun comes out of the shower with wet hair.

JUN
(in Mandarin)
The shower's cold!

In the fridge, Shaozu feels the food temperature is warm.

SHAOZU
(in Mandarin)
The power's out.

Suddenly an AGGRESSIVE and BOOMING KNOCKING at the door gets their attention. Shaozu heads downstairs.

15 INT/EXT. APARTMENT - MORNING 15

The knocking stops, Shaozu opens the front door - no one is there except for a letter stuck to the door.

Shaozu takes the letter, it reads - **EVICTION NOTICE, FINAL WARNING -**

Confused, Shaozu gazes down the road - no one can be seen.

16 EXT. SCRAPYARD - AFTERNOON 16

Twisted scrap metal piled into small mountains cover the yard. Shaozu and Jun walk to the office building.

SHAOZU

Wait here.

17 INT. WORKERS LOCKER ROOM - AFTERNOON 17

A heavy-set, scruffy man TREVOR (50s) leads Shaozu to a set of workers lockers.

TREVOR

Your Dad didn't say nothin' when he left. But come to think of it, he never said much anyways...Here we are.

They come to a locker, Trevor opens it. Looking inside, Shaozu sees a large pile of UTILITY LETTERS, they spell out - **OVERDUE -** and - **FINAL PAYMENT -**

TREVOR

Take what you want, I'm clearing it out for new staff.

Shaozu puts the letters back in the locker, closing it.

18 INT. LOBBY, POLICE STATION - DAY 18

Jun sits next to an ELDERLY MAN of the waiting area. Shaozu stands over the counter talking to a large POLICE WOMAN, she reads the eviction notice.

POLICE WOMAN

This is between your Dad and his landlord. He can either pay them or move out.

Shaozu keeps silent.

(CONTINUED)

POLICE WOMAN
He's coming home, isn't he?

SHAOZU
Of course.

The Police Woman looks toward Jun, notices something awry.

POLICE WOMAN
You know Child Youth and Family
have an office nearby.

Shaozu grows uneasy hearing this.

19 INT. APARTMENT KITCHEN - AFTERNOON 19

Opening the fridge to spoilt vegetables and meat, Shaozu throws them in the bin.

ANGLE ON: Cupboard doors open, Shaozu finds cookies, half a loaf of bread and a can of tuna.

20 INT. APARTMENT LOUNGE - DUSK 20

Lit with candles around the house, Jun sits at the dinner table. Shaozu places small sandwiches of tuna.

Jun eats the meal at a ravenous pace. Shaozu then passes over half of his sandwich, Jun finishes it and smiles.

21 INT. APARTMENT BEDROOM - NIGHT 21

Jun sleeps in her bed as Shaozu pulls out a shoebox from underneath his bed. The neighbours begin ARGUING again.

ANGLE ON SHOEBOX: Inside are some playing cards and cents worth in coins - they're completely broke.

Shaozu holds the coins and looks over at Jun who starts to softly WHIMPER in her sleep, having a nightmare.

Shaozu moves to her, placing his hand on her shoulder.

JUN
Dad.

22 INT. APARTMENT BATHROOM - NIGHT 22

Shaozu uses a candle to light the bathroom, he turns the faucet but no water comes out - the water has been cut.

Shaozu looks at his hands - they're dirty. He gazes at his own weary reflection then blows the candle out.

23 EXT. PUBLIC PHONE BOX - NIGHT 23

Inside a phone booth, Shaozu has the receiver to his ear. The waiting tone changes to the operator.

OPERATOR (O.S.)
Hi sir, the number you gave has
been re-registered overseas.

Shaozu takes a while to answer.

SHAOZU
Did you speak to them?

OPERATOR (O.S.)
I'm sorry, he didn't want to take
the collect call...Can I help
with anything else?

Hanging up the phone, Shaozu exits the booth and looks at the dark street ahead - he walks into the night.

24 EXT. GREAT SOUTH ROAD - NIGHT 24

Shaozu shuffles down the strip. Passing a bar, a heavy-set BOUNCER stares at him with a testing gaze.

He carries on walking past a takeaway store where a trio of DRUNK TEENAGERS verbally abuse each other in a oddity of humiliation and competitiveness amongst friends.

SLOW MOTION: Behind the grill is an ASIAN COOK (40s) frying food. The cook locks his weary eyes with Shaozu, they share a moment separated by the glass window.

A bottle SMASHES, interrupting their connection. One of the drunk teens stumble to the ground - the friends LAUGH at his drunken fall.

Shaozu carries on trudging into the lonely street.

25 EXT. PRIMARY SCHOOL - MORNING 25

Kids are dropped at school by their parents and caregivers. Holding hands, Shaozu walks with Jun and stops outside the gate - GRIPPING Shaozu's hand tight.

SHAOZU
What's the matter?

JUN
Will you pick me up after school?

(CONTINUED)

SHAOZU
 (crouching to Jun's eyeline)
 Of course.

Jun takes a moment, looking at the other parents with their kids.

JUN
 What about Dad?

Shaozu notices the kids with parents around them.

SHAOZU
 Don't worry...He's coming home.

JUN
 When?

Shaozu sees the anxiety in Jun's eyes.

SHAOZU
 Today...He's gonna be home this afternoon.

Jun bursts into a smile, as does Shaozu seeing her relax.

SHAOZU
 I'll be here after school okay?

He holds Jun's hand and takes out the candy box, giving the last three pieces to her. She eats one and pockets the others - Shaozu watches her enter the school grounds.

26 INT. STAIRCASE, CHINESE COMMUNITY CENTRE - AFTERNOON 26

Shaozu walks up the large staircase - He sees a CCTV CAMERA in the corner and keeps his head toward his feet.

27 INT. HALLWAY, CHINESE COMMUNITY CENTRE - AFTERNOON 27

Staff members walk past Shaozu into a rehearsal - he keeps his head low and comes to the empty Common Room.

On the desk sits the CASH-BOX, a staff member runs down the hall to the class. Shaozu sees it's clear to enter.

28 INT. COMMON ROOM, CHINESE COMMUNITY CENTRE - AFTERNOON 28

Shaozu walks inside, his eyes on the cash-box. The echo of LAUGHTER and MUSIC playing comes from the rehearsal.

Shaozu snatches the cash-box and quickly exits.

29 INT. HALLWAY, CHINESE COMMUNITY CENTRE - AFTERNOON 29

Trudging down the hall, Shaozu glances at the rehearsal and moves to the staircase door - he opens it and...

30 INT. STAIRS, CHINESE COMMUNITY CENTRE - AFTERNOON 30

Standing in front of Shaozu is LIM, the instructor.

LIM
(in Mandarin)
Shaozu! You came back!

Shaozu hides the cash-box behind his back and shuffles to the side of the staircase, close to the edge.

LIM
(in Mandarin)
We don't start till four.

Lim notices he's got something behind his back.

LIM
(in Mandarin)
What have you got there?

Lim steps forward to the edge of the stairs. Unsure of his behaviour she freezes then suddenly reaches outward, grabbing Shaozu's arm - revealing the cash-box.

Shaozu RETRACTS his arm, accidentally PUSHING Lim backwards. She loses her footing on the stairs, tumbling to the next floor - smacking her head on the marble surface. She doesn't move.

Terrified, Shaozu looks around, frozen. He steps down and crouches to Lim's flickering eyes and soft WHIMPERS.

Blood begins to drip down her head and eyes. Shaozu looks upward at the CCTV camera face on - he stands with the cash-box and runs down the stairs, not looking back.

As he reaches the bottom of the staircase, he hears the DOOR ABOVE OPEN and SHRIEKS call out from staff members.

31 EXT. SCHOOL - AFTERNOON 31

The bell RINGS, students exit the school grounds to their waiting parents. Jun sits on a bench, looking for Shaozu.

JUN'S POV: Students are hugged, kissed and hold hands with their parents as they're led to cars or walk home.

Soon the grounds are empty and Jun is alone. She picks up her bag and walks down the road.

32 EXT. MOTORWAY UNDERPASS - DUSK 32

Underneath the motorway, Shaozu SLAMS the cash box against a concrete pillar, it opens on the second throw.

Shaozu looks inside the box - there's no cash, only some candy and a family photo of Lim holding a baby.

Shaozu's hands tremble as he holds the photo. He steps underneath the pillar, shrouded in a dark shadow.

33 INT. APARTMENT ROOF - AFTERNOON 33

Jun scrapes the burnt out sparklers against each other, the ash falling off until all is left are bent wires.

34 INT. APARTMENT KITCHEN - AFTERNOON 34

Jun turns the faucet, no water comes out. Looking through the cupboards there's no food.

35 INT. APARTMENT BEDROOM - DUSK 35

Laying on her bed, Jun wipes tears away when suddenly the sound of the entrance DOOR-SLAMs from downstairs.

36 INT. APARTMENT HALLWAY - DUSK 36

Jun waits in anticipation as the sound of HEAVY FOOTSTEPS ascend from below. A FIGURE comes to the top, silhouetted in dim light. The figure freezes and looks toward Jun.

Silence. Jun steps forward, her eyes hopeful.

JUN

Dad?

The figure EXHALES and comes into a window light, revealing it to be Shaozu - completely broken.

Jun freezes, her gaze becomes a frown of confusion and anger. She steps back as the deranged Shaozu advances.

Shoazu freezes, looking to Jun with sorry eyes. Jun stares back, riled and crushed. Shaozu bows his head in shame.

Seeing his pain, Jun goes to Shaozu and stares deep into his pupils, she holds his limp hand and grips it tightly as they stand together in the hallway - inseparable.

We hear a POLICE SIREN in the distance.

FADE TO BLACK.