

BETTER PLACE Written by Ammar Zafar

S#1. EXT. BUS STOP - DAYLIGHT

It's a warm day on a less busy bus stop with a tuck shop beside it. People are coming and going through the bus, while some are buying items from the tuck shop. Unnames Girl (07) is sitting on the bench, holding a stuffed toy and wearing a backpack. An Unnamed Woman(35), who is apparently her mother, is sitting on her knees in front of her, whispering to her while putting some cash and change in her bag.

UNNAMED WOMAN(IN KOREAN)

You'll be alright!

The Unnamed Woman then stands up while holding Unnamed Girl's face in her hand with teary eyes. She sees a bus approaching, and immediately moves away from the girl and faces the bus but is stopped by the voice of Unnamed Girl.

UNNAMED GIRL (IN KOREAN)

Mommy! I'll wait for you!

The Unnamed Woman tries to suppress her tears and without answering her question, she boards the bus. The bus moves away and The Unnamed Girl is seen left alone on a deserted bus stop.

CUT TO:

S#2. EXT. BUS STOP - NIGHT

Match cut to night. The Unnamed Girl is still sitting on the bench at the deserted bus stop. Its cold at night, and she notices some people buying hot beverage from the tuck shop. While others are busy eating while standing here and there. She notices an unnamed man (South Asian) who is suspiciously sitting on ground a little farther away from then tuck shop, trying to burn something (burning his passport), implying that he is an illegal immigrant trying to erase his identity. The passport catches fire, and he puts it on ground. The Unnamed Girl slowly walks towards him and put her hands over the fire to keep her hands warm. Afraid and shocked to see The Unnamed Girl, the man immediately puts off the fire with his feet. He stands up and

smiles in fear saying "It Is Cold". He then walks away and stands near the tuck shop, waiting for the cue to end. The Unnamed Girl notices that The South Asian Man trying to ask for food with hand gestures, but he doesn't have any money. The shopkeeper tells him to bugger off, so he comes back and sits on a old bench. The Unnamed Girl looks at him as The South Asian Man tries to search his wallet for something but doesn't have anything.

CUT TO:

S#3. EXT. TUCK SHOP - NIGHT

The Unnamed Girl approaches the tuck shop and gets the same cash out of her bag that her mother gave her. She buys two cakes and one chocolate milk for her. She walks away.

S#4. EXT. BUS STOP BENCH - NIGHT

The South Asian man is still sitting a bit away from the bus stop, as if he doesn't want to be seen. The Unnamed Girl approaches him with smile and gives him one cake. She then sits beside him, opens the cake and eats it while also drinking chocolate milk. The South Asian man looks at him in shock and awe, and then he opens the cake and devours it in one bite. He soon realizes that the girl is abandoned and nobody is accompanying her. After a brief moment of silence, he speaks.

SOUTH ASIAN MAN (IN ENGLISH)

What your name?

(pause)

Mummy papa where?

The girl looks at him but doesn't say a word. He assumes that girl cannot understand him. The South Asian Man takes a deep breath and takes the bottle of milk from The Unnamed Girl's hands and drinks. He shuts the lid and returns it to The Unnamed Girl, immediately standing up. He starts to walk away. The Unnamed Girl is looking at him as he walks away.

CUT TO:

S#5. EXT. ROAD - NIGHT

The South Asian Man is walking on road and slowly, he notices footsteps following her. He realizes that The Unnamed Girl is walking along with him. He looks at her and gets surprised that she is following him. He stops, and talks.

SOUTH ASIAN MAN (IN ENGLISH)

You go there! (points in other direction)

Mummy papa waiting... Go!

The girl doesn't say a word. The South Asian Man continues walking and The Unnamed Girl continues walking too. The South Asian Man after gradually losing his patience, turns around and shouts.

SOUTH ASIAN MAN (CONT'D)

I tell you to go there... Why you come behind me?(pause, louder) Go now!

The girl's smile disappears. Her eyes become immediately wet. She stands there, frozen, as The South Asian Man walks away.

CUT TO:

S#6. EXT. ROAD END - NIGHT

The South Asian Man is walking alone on the road, when he suddenly stops and immediately hides behind a tree. He notices a police patrol car with two officers checking ID's of the passersby. He turns back and starts walking fast towards the other direction, almost running.

CUT TO:

S#7. EXT. BUS STOP - NIGHT

The South Asian Man reaches the same bus stop, out of breath. Its even quieter now, with no one else around except the tuck shop owner. He notices The Unnamed Girl sitting alone on the bench. He goes towards the bench and sits next to her.

SOUTH ASIAN MAN (IN ENGLISH)

It is late! Why you here!

The girl doesn't answer. The South Asian Man stays quiet for a while, but then he hears her voice.

UNNAMED GIRL (IN ENGLISH)

I am sleepy!

The South Asian Man is surprised to listen to her voice and a language he can at least understand. He immediately becomes happy and he speaks up.

SOUTH ASIAN MAN (IN ENGLISH)

Why you don't sleep?

UNNAMED GIRL (IN ENGLISH)

I want my bed!

The South Asian Man looks at her, and then smiles as he speaks.

SOUTH ASIAN MAN (IN ENGLISH)

You want bed... I give you bed!

The South Asian Man immediately takes off his jacket, lays it over the bench and folds his muffler into a little pillow.

SOUTH ASIAN MAN (CONT'D)

Look! (smiles) Bed!

The Unnamed Girl cackles and lies down. The immigrant puts his hand over her head, helping her sleep. After a longer pause, The South Asian Man speaks.

SOUTH ASIAN MAN (CONT'D)

My daughter also like you... Same same age!

UNNAMED GIRL (IN ENGLISH)

Where is she?

SOUTH ASIAN MAN (IN ENGLISH)

When we coming here... (long pause, starts speaking in Urdu)
Hum log jis kashti mein arahe thayy...(even longer pause, sad) Wo kashti doob
gai....

The South Asian Man stops talking, his smile fades away as painful memory kicks in. He wipes off tears and smiles again, as he continues.

SOUTH ASIAN MAN (IN ENGLISH) (CONT'D)

(wiping tears, smile) It is okay! She in better place!

The South Asian man finishes his sentence, and notices that The Unnamed Girl has fallen asleep, and hasn't been listening to him for a while now. The South Asian Man wraps his jacket around her and lifts her up in his hands as if he is preparing to leave.

CUT TO:

S#8. EXT. POLICE CHECK POST - NIGHT

The South Asian Man walks towards the same police check post holding the girl in his hands. One of the police officer tries to hit the torch on his face but The South Asian Man immediately turns, trying to avoid light.

SOUTH ASIAN MAN (IN ENGLISH)

Don't do this... My daughter will wake up!

Police man looks at him for a while, and then he shines torch at the girl's feet hanging off his lap. The officer then shines the light on The South Asian Man's face. He is suspicious now because of the skin color. South Asian Man begins to sweat, as he is afraid.

SOUTH ASIAN MAN (CONT'D)

(slowly)My... wife...(pause)Korean!

Police officer is now even more suspicious. He comes a bit close to take a clear look at him but suddenly, The Unnamed Girl wakes up and speaks while half asleep.

UNNAMED GIRL (IN ENGLISH)

Papa! Can we go home! I want to sleep!

The South Asian Man suddenly smiles as he speaks.

SOUTH ASIAN MAN (IN ENGLISH)

Yes beta! We going home now! Papa talking to policeman! (slowly, to officer) I go now?

The police officer looks at him for a brief moment, and then shouts.

POLICE OFFICER (IN KOREAN)

Okay, let him through!

The South Asian Man goes past the check post as assistant police officer opens the barrier. The South Asian Man keeps walking. The police check post becomes less and less visible in the background as we see The South Asian Man walking straight on the road.

CUT TO:

S#9. EXT. PARK BENCH - DAWN

The South Asian Man reaches a park bench. The Unnamed Girl has fallen asleep. He puts her stuff toy under her head, and that is when some change and a banknote falls off her bag.

He looks around and quietly puts the banknote and change into his pockets while wrapping his muffler around his neck. He stand up and looks at The Unnamed Girl in silence.

CUT TO:

S#10. EXT. STREET FOOD VENDOR - MORNING

Its morning now. The South Asian Man walks towards the street food vendor wearing The Unnamed Girl's backpack, implying he has taken her bag. He is counting coins on his palm. He stops at food vendor and starts looking at names of food items he can't read. Finally, he points out at something and asks the vendor to make two. While taking the food items, he hears a familiar voice. As he turns, he bumps into the same assistant police officer who opened the barrier the previous night. They share a brief eye contact, and the assistant officer notices that The South Asian Man is wearing the girl's bag.

CUT TO:

S#11. EXT. PARK BENCH - DAYLIGIHT

The girl wakes up to the sound of birds chirping. Its crowded in the park now, and its almost afternoon. She finds out that the stuff toy is under her head. Her bag is missing, and so is The South Asian Man, who she thought would be there for her. She realizes that she has once again, been left alone.

CUT TO: BLACK