

RAIN DOWN

written by

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UNLESS INDICATED OTHERWISE WITH ITALICS, ALL DIALOGUE IS
SPOKEN IN LAO.

FADE IN:

EXT. PADDY FIELD - DAY

The sun shines bright.

A GENTLE BREEZE runs through the plants, making them whisper.

A pair of SKINNY LEGS trudges through the yellow stalks. A HAND closes around several strands and yanks them out of the ground.

This is KITA (10). He wears a conical *koup* hat, a baggy blue T-shirt and white shorts. Though young, he wears the frown of a man many times his age. He stares at the plants in his right hand. Weeds.

Behind him, we now see a corridor of space as wide as Kita stretching to the edge of the paddy; the tunnel he has dug out of the field of dead crops. He's fighting a losing battle.

Kita drops the weeds and continues his work, ripping out more and more. As he does, we see the empty sleeve where his left arm ought to be.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - DAY

A simple structure of bamboo, raised on stilts over the ground, topped with a thatched roof. A small veranda juts out from the front door.

A MAN (40) dangles his legs from the veranda. His face is gaunt, haggard, and endlessly angry. Leaning back, he quaffs greedily from a glass of beer. He stares out to his son in the weeds, fifty yards away. A dark look.

FATHER

Kita!

Kita turns. His father beckons him with a drunken flap. Kita walks down his corridor and out of the field.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Kita ascends the steps to stand at his dad's side.

FATHER
What are you doing?

KITA
(brandishing weeds)
It's killing the rice. There's no
rain.

A moment's silence.

Father snatches the weeds. He then grabs Kita's hat and
flings it on the ground.

FATHER
No more work today.

KITA
(beat)
It will come soon.

Father snorts as he tips his empty BeerLao bottle into his
glass. He hands the bottle to Kita.

FATHER
Close the door behind you.

Kita takes the bottle and goes inside. Father resumes staring
at nothing. The sun beams down.

INT. FARM HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

THE SOUND OF A CRYING CHILD.

Kita enters the cool, shaded main room of the house and
closes the door. He walks to a small cooler at the far wall.

As he does so he passes a little wooden bench where his
MOTHER sits, breastfeeding a BABY. A SMALL GIRL CRIES as she
pulls on Mother's sleeve.

Mother turns to look at Kita as bottles CLINK. He returns her
gaze for a second as he heads back outside.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Kita proffers the bottle.

KITA

One left.

Father takes the bottle without looking at Kita, and pours it into the glass. He then offers the glass to Kita. After a moment he takes it and has a sip. He returns it to Father, who drains it.

With a loud, wet GASP he lies back on the veranda floor.

FATHER

Rain will come soon. Rain will
come soon...

Kita looks down at the drunken man.

EXT. PHOUMI'S HOUSE - DAY

Kita stands at the bottom of the steps of another farm house, looking up.

KITA

Hey! Hey Phoumi!

Nothing. Kita glances around, and ascends the stairs. On the last step he trips and falls. Looking behind him, he sees a HAND gripping his ankle, and hears CACKLING LAUGHTER.

PHOUMI (9) pokes his head out from beneath the veranda.

PHOUMI

I got you! I got you!

KITA

Get off!

Kita kicks his leg free and stands up. Phoumi hangs from the steps. He wears a purple vest top and green shorts.

PHOUMI

Okay, okay!

KITA

It's not funny.

PHOUMI

Did I hurt you?

KITA

(scoffing)

No.

PHOUMI

What do you want anyway?

KITA

I need that thing. Do you still have it?

PHOUMI

What thing?

KITA

Your father's.

PHOUMI

Why?

KITA

You got it?

PHOUMI

Sure, it's in here. Come on.

Phoumi bounds up the steps into the house.

INT. PHOUMI'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Phoumi turns from the wall to face Kita. In his hands he holds a METAL DETECTOR.

PHOUMI

It should still work.

KITA

(reaching out)

Thanks.

PHOUMI

Why do you want it?

KITA

I need to borrow it for a while.
Till the rain comes.

PHOUMI

Why?

KITA

None of your business.

PHOUMI

Then you can't have it. It's my father's. Where were you gonna take it?

KITA

I can't tell you. Give it to me.

PHOUMI

No.

KITA

Please.

PHOUMI

No, it's mine! You have to take me with you.

KITA

You're too young.

PHOUMI

I'm the same age as you!

KITA

No, you're still only nine.

PHOUMI

You can't have it unless I go with you.

Phoumi wraps both his arms around the detector. Kita looks at it, then at Phoumi.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

The boys trod out of the village along the dirt road. Rolling hills hug the horizon. We can still see Kita's house. Kita walks slightly ahead of Phoumi, the detector over his shoulder.

PHOUMI

Slow down! You've got longer legs than me!

Kita doesn't slow down.

EXT. GRASSLANDS - DAY

The boys walk through a grassy plain. Phoumi has caught up.

PHOUMI (CONT'D)

How much will we get, do you think?

KITA

Depends what we find.

PHOUMI

I think we'll find lots. Hundreds and hundreds. Maybe thousands.

KITA

No, not that much. They get rid of more all the time.

PHOUMI

A whole plane! An American plane that crashed underground and no one ever found it! Father told me once lots of planes crashed and the pilots never went home.

KITA

No, he was lying to you. He was just kidding you.

PHOUMI

What do you know? My turn.

KITA

I'm going to use it.

PHOUMI

It's mine so you have to give me it.

KITA

It's my idea so I'm using it.

PHOUMI

Come on, give it to me!

KITA

No! Just walk, will you?

MAN (O.S.)

(in English)

Hey, you two!

The boys start and look across to see three or four LAO, headed by a WHITE AMERICAN a hundred yards away.

They all wear military apparel, and hold shovels and metal detectors of their own.

AMERICAN

*You can't come down this way
boys! Go on home!*

Kita and Phoumi stare right at the American, faces scrunched up in distrust.

AMERICAN (CONT'D)

You can't-

He sighs, gesturing to one of the Lao for assistance.

LAO

*You're not allowed here. Turn
around now!*

Kita grabs Phoumi's arm and walks away. They both glance back at the American.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Kita and Phoumi duck under the branches into the dappled shadows of the trees.

PHOUMI

*If they see us we'll be in
trouble.*

KITA

*They won't. They won't come this
way. They already cleared most of
it.*

PHOUMI

Is this where one got you?

KITA

*(beat)
How does this work?*

PHOUMI

Here, I'll show you.

KITA

No, just tell me.

PHOUMI

Hold it close to the ground.

(Kita does so)

If there's anything there it'll
make a--

The detector immediately BUZZES feebly. The boys look at each other.

PHOUMI (CONT'D)

Keep going.

The NOISE GETS LOUDER as they march brazenly forward.

KITA

See anything?

PHOUMI

No, I can't--

Phoumi stops dead. Kita doesn't notice, takes a few more steps.

PHOUMI (CONT'D)

Kita!

Kita turns around to find Phoumi rooted to the spot.

KITA

What?

PHOUMI

I feel something. There's
something under my foot.

Kita moves closer to Phoumi, who is breathing very fast now.

KITA

Which one?

Phoumi nods down at his right foot. Kita crouches down; his face stops an inch from Phoumi's foot.

KITA (CONT'D)

I can't see anything.

PHOUMI

I can feel it. What do I do?
Kita?

KITA

Hold on, I'm thinking.

PHOUMI

You've got to do something!

KITA

Ssh! Let me think!

PHOUMI

(beat)

Did it hurt? When you--

Kita stands up.

KITA

You're going to be fine.

PHOUMI

No I'm not, no I'm not!

KITA

Shut up! We'll just have to run.
If you run fast enough you can
get away.

PHOUMI

Really?

KITA

Sure! You ready?

PHOUMI

You can't run before me.

KITA

I won't. We'll go at the same
time. Ready?

(Phoumi nods)

Three... two... one!

The boys run in different directions, SCREAMING, and dive
behind the closest trees.

Nothing.

After a second, Kita opens his eyes and peeks around his
tree. He sees Phoumi doing likewise.

Kita starts laughing.

PHOUMI

Shut up! It's not funny!

Kita continues to giggle, and Phoumi can't help himself. He joins in. They walk back to where they were standing, and Kita stoops.

KITA

It's stuck pretty good.

Straightening up, Kita holds out the "BOMBLET"; green, rusty, the size of a plum.

PHOUMI

Wow...

Kita throws it to Phoumi, who catches it, giggling. They pass it back and forth. Eventually, Kita pockets it.

PHOUMI (CONT'D)

How much?

KITA

Not a lot. A few kip. We need to melt it down first. Let's go.

EXT. GRASSLANDS - DAY

Kita and Phoumi step out from under the trees into a deserted stretch of land. The grass is littered with GIANT STONE "JARS".

Phoumi races ahead of Kita, who frowns at the ground, sweeping left and right with the detector.

Phoumi shoves Kita's shoulder as he sprints past. He runs around a jar, laughing. Kita looks up and smiles. He races after Phoumi; they chase each other, laughing and whooping. Just two kids playing.

Phoumi climbs atop a squat jar and sits down, looking out to the horizon. Kita rests the metal detector on the stone and tries to hop up, his one arm flailing above his head.

Phoumi laughs, and kicks out at Kita's hand. Kita slaps Phoumi's foot. Phoumi makes as if to take Kita's hand, before pulling it back to run through his hair.

PHOUMI

Whoop!

Phoumi laughs some more. Kita pants as he jumps, embarrassed now. He grabs Phoumi's foot and yanks, hard.

Phoumi comes crashing to the ground with a THUD. He leaps up and shoves Kita, who responds in kind.

The boys stare at each other; furious, shaking.

Phoumi turns to the jar and snatches up the metal detector.

PHOUMI (CONT'D)

I'm going home.

He walks past Kita, who grabs the detector out of his hand.

PHOUMI

It's not yours!

KITA

So?

PHOUMI

It's my dad's! You have to give it to me!

KITA

Your dad's not here.

PHOUMI

Shut up!

KITA

I need it!

PHOUMI

(shoving Kita)

Give it back!

Phoumi gives chase to Kita. They race between the stones, PANTING and YELLING.

EXT. GRASSLANDS - MOMENTS LATER

Kita rounds one of the jars and stops dead.

He turns round, throwing his hands up in time to stop an oncoming Phoumi. Phoumi looks past Kita's shoulder.

At the foot of a jar ten feet away the TAIL END OF AN ARTILLERY SHELL sticks out of a SMALL CRATER. Shaped like a rocket, it's about a foot long and thick as a tree branch.

The boys look at each other - they've struck gold.

PHOUMI (CONT'D)

That's more than a few *kip*, isn't it?

Kita's eyes are now fixed on the rocket. He takes a step towards it, and Phoumi grabs his T-shirt.

PHOUMI (CONT'D)

Wait, wait--

Kita slaps his arm away, violently. He takes another step. Phoumi looks less sure.

PHOUMI (CONT'D)

Be careful.

KITA

I told you you were too young for this. You're still just a boy.

Kita is nearly at the rocket. Phoumi gulps and takes a step forward.

EXT. CRATER - MOMENTS LATER

The boys stand above the rocket, hand on hips.

PHOUMI

Is it safe?

KITA

It's deactivated.

PHOUMI

How do you know?

KITA

Come on.

Kita squats down on his haunches and starts digging at the earth with his fingers. After a moment's hesitation, Phoumi follows suit.

Phoumi's hands shake as he scrapes the dirt from the cold, rusted metal beneath. He takes a deep breath.

CLINK. CLINK.

Phoumi starts and looks up.

He finds Kita holding a large rock. He brings it down against the shaft of the rocket, scraping a large clump of earth away.

PHOUMI

Stop that!

KITA

It's faster.

PHOUMI

No! You're crazy!

KITA

Dig!

Phoumi rises and walks away.

KITA (CONT'D)

Why are you so scared all the time?

Phoumi returns and picks up the metal detector. Once again, Kita grabs it, leaping to his feet. They stare at each other; Phoumi upset, Kita resolved.

PHOUMI

I'm not scared.

KITA

Yes you are. Scared little baby.

PHOUMI

Shut up! You're just crazy! Let go!

A tug-of-war ensues.

KITA

You'll never be a man! You can't look after anyone!

PHOUMI

Let go!

KITA

I need it! My family will starve!

PHOUMI

That's not my fault!

KITA

It will be! I need it till the
rain comes back! We have nothing!

PHOUMI

Because your father's a drunk!

Phoumi heaves with both arms. Kita doesn't stand a chance. He falls to the ground as the detector slips from his hand.

Both boys are spent. Kita looks up at Phoumi with hateful tears in his eyes.

PHOUMI (CONT'D)

He's a drunk.

Phoumi walks away from Kita as fast as he can.

Enraged, near hyperventilating, Kita pushes himself to his feet and takes three steps--

An EXPLOSION sends Phoumi flying to the ground. A BURST OF SMOKE shoots upwards from the spot Kita was standing on.

He's not there anymore.

Phoumi flops over onto his back. Blood drips from his ears. A RINGING NOISE fills his world. Terrified, he looks around for his friend through the fading fog.

Nothing. Just charred earth.

Phoumi's chest heaves up and down. His eyes fill up. Every bone shudders. He lies there for a couple of seconds. He looks at the ground around him.

He spots the detector against a stone jar several yards away. It has SNAPPED ALMOST IN HALF. He looks back at the ground around him. He understands. Nowhere is safe.

Very slowly, he tucks his feet beneath him, and gets to his feet. He puts his arms out to steady himself. He can still hear only RINGING.

PHOUMI (CONT'D)

(muffled)

Kita! Kita! Kita!

Tears flow freely now.

PHOUMI (CONT'D)

Help! Help!

EXT. CRATER - DAY

The sun is low now. Clouds are gathering. The shadows of the jars have stretched long.

Phoumi has not moved. His arms are wrapped around him, his legs are shaking. He brings one foot up to his behind, giving his knee a rest. He looks around.

Phoumi puts a hand to his ears, red and flaking, caked in dried blood. He rubs it, but this makes him cry in pain.

He looks to the distance.

The forest.

He looks at the ground.

Crater. Forest. Ground. Crater.

He takes a deep breath. He almost takes a step.

He can't do it.

He sinks into a squat, his head between his legs. A WHIMPERING, MOANING NOISE escapes him.

He is still for a moment.

His fists clench. His shoulders rise and fall as he sucks in air. The moaning is replaced by a GROWL that becomes a SCREAM.

Phoumi shoots upright and sprints.

Eyes shut, mouth open, he sprints in a straight line, narrowly missing walls of stone; his arms flailing, still screaming.

The ground rises into a small slope. Phoumi trips and falls to the ground. With a YELP he opens his eyes. He's fine.

He's too exhausted to cry.

Behind him lies the FOREST. With a mighty effort he gets to his feet.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

WATER crashes out of a hose into a huge BLACK PLASTIC TUB with a THUNDEROUS RATTLE.

A WHITE AMERICAN WOMAN sits perched in the open door of a TRUCK. She wears a beige vest over her white shirt with the legend USAID across the shoulder. A camera hangs around her neck.

The hose is propped up to reach into the tub by a couple of LAO VILLAGERS. The hose snakes back to a tanker in the back of the truck. The truck bears a GREEN SIGN reading ECO-RESCUE.

The woman looks around - and frowns. She hops off her seat.

Phoumi staggers slowly down the path. His eyes are open, but glazed, downcast. He doesn't seem to have noticed the truck or the people.

The woman approaches him. Though her mouth moves, Phoumi hears nothing. The RINGING has not subsided.

She crouches and turns his head to look at his crimson ears. Her mouth moves some more.

Phoumi looks past her as she picks him up and takes him to the truck. The villagers start walking towards them.

INT. TRUCK - MOMENTS LATER

Phoumi sits in the passenger seat, staring at nothing. Through the driver's door, the woman continues to talk at Phoumi, concerned.

When she gets no response, she looks down, biting her lip, thinking. Looking back at him, she takes her camera in hand, and points it at Phoumi.

His eyes move past to focus on something behind her...

The evening sun behind KITA'S DISTANT FARM HOUSE gives the weeds of the dry paddy an AMBER GLOW.

Though far away, we can see Kita's father sitting in the same spot.

Phoumi tears up.

Raindrops start to splatter the windscreen.

FADE TO BLACK