

Polen LY
Excerpt from a screenplay

RED INK

SCENE 1 – INTERIOR: Bopha's room

A flower-shaped candle is burning.

SCENE 2 – EXTERIOR: A canal

Two rows of small houses stand alongside a canal crossed by a bridge.

SCENE 3 – EXT: A shore

In late afternoon, on the shore, next to a small community of fishing boats, a group of kids are playing on the sand. A girl, about 10-11, sits nearby, blowing soap bubbles. She glances at the river, listens to the sound of the engine coming closer. As soon as she sees a fishing boat land, she runs to it.

She stops and stands on the shoreline, soaking her feet in the water and watching the boat preparing to dock.

A man turns off the engine. The boat docks in the perfect position. A girl of 14-15, her older sister, comes out of the boat with a bracket of fish in her hands. She appears sad and dry, a waterless flower.

'Take the fish to your mother.' Her father says from the boat as he's lighting up a cigarette.

The girl on the shore tries to observe her older sister's face as she walks toward her. When she comes close, the younger girl looks her straight in the eyes. She says nothing, only feels the rapid breath out of her older sister's mouth. She continues looking down at the ground. Then she quickly walks away with her bracket of fishes. The smaller girl runs after her

SCENE 4 – EXT: The market

They arrive at a small market next to the street. There are twenty-some sellers. Most of them sell fish, others vegetables, laid out on the ground. The two

girls head to a woman busy preparing fish for her customer. When they arrive, the girl puts down her fish and starts helping the woman.

- 'Go back home and help your father,' orders the mother.

The girl sits still.

- 'Bopha, did you hear what I said?' asks her mother.

Bopha still doesn't move.

- 'Go!' Demands her mother in a higher voice.

- Bopha rises and walks away.

SCENE 5 – EXT: The way home

On the way to her house, the young girl stops when she notices Bopha behind her.

- 'Go play with your friends!' Bopha tells her younger sister.

The young girl looks at her without moving.

- 'Go. Did you hear me?' Demands Bopha.

The young girl starts to walk off. But then she stops and turns back.

- 'Go on.' Says Bopha.

The younger girl continues to walk away. When she gets far enough, Bopha turns way to the left and walks across the thick long grasses. She sits down, curls up and sobs.

SCENE 6 – EXT: The way home 2

The light of the day begins to wear off. The western sky is painted pink. Bopha is walking back to her house. She stops and looks at a boy, a bit older, coming toward her. He stops too. They both stare. The boy gives her an angry look. Bopha looks at him fearfully. The boy takes a step toward her. She appears more frightened.

'Stop right there!' Shouts Bopha's mother from behind.

'Don't come any closer!' Continues the mother while she grabs a rock into her hand.

The boy stops. The mother quickly grabs Bopha's hand and pulls her straight to their house.

SCENE 7 – EXT: The staircase

Bopha and her mother arrive home and they see a woman sitting on the staircase. She stands up and comes towards them. She greets Bopha's mother.

- 'Aunt,' She begins. 'I haven't seen Bopha in class for couple of weeks.'
- 'Oh professor,' Says Bopha's mother. 'I decided not to send her to school anymore.'

The woman nods and glances to Bopha.

- 'I really don't want her to stop.' Says the professor 'She was a smart student.'
- 'I know,' Replies the mother 'But you know already what happened to her.'

Soon she says goodbye and grabs her bike. Bopha looks at her professor riding away while her mother returns to the house. Her feet knock over a flower pot at the front door, and it breaks. She looks at it, bends slowly down, picks up the flower and brings it into the house.

SCENE 8 – INT: The Houses

The day becomes night. In the fishing village, the inside of every house lights up with a white light bulbs. You can hear the spoons scrapping the plates--the sound of dinner. The mother sits to eat in front of the father while the young girl and the older girl sit opposite of each other. The mother and the little girl glance at Bopha from time to time; she is slow in every way, puts food in her mouth, chews it disinterested.

- 'Why did you stand there looking at him this evening?' Asks the mother. 'Don't stay close to him. He could try to rape you again, you know.'
- 'If he does it again,' Begins Bopha's father 'I will cut his throat open this time.'

In another house, a family of three boys and their parents are also having dinner. The boy from earlier in the evening gulps his dinner really fast. His father gives him an angry look, then knocks him on his head with his fist.

- 'You a piece of shit!' Shouts the father. 'You were born only to waste the weight of the earth!'

- 'I told you I never raped her!' Claims the boy loudly. 'I haven't even touched a hair of hers!'

The father slaps the boy's face. The boy runs out of the house.

SCENE 9 – INT: In the mosquito net

The nocturnal wind pushes the boat and makes it squeak. A neighbor plays the Cambodian violin. The sound lulls Bopha, who is laying down but still her eyes are open, next to a candle. She stares at the flower on the table. After a while, she picks it up and touches it with the candle's flame.

Flash back

The boy from the evening comes to Bopha with his hands closed. He opens them, and then there's a tiny green plant growing in a pot made from a banana leaf. Bopha plants it in a clay pot, and the boy waters it.

They both sit next to each other near the plant. The boy's name is Raksa.

- 'What is your biggest fear?' Asks Raksa

Bopha is quiet for a while, thinking.

- 'My biggest fear?...' Begins Bopha, 'Hmm...my biggest fear is to lose my freedom.'

They both smile to each other.

Fade to reality; Bopha begins to bite her hand more and more violently. Tears well up. Then she closes her eyes slowly.

SCENE 10 – EXT: Under the house

The morning came. The wind blows the waves to the shore. The people in the village rise. Some boats leave to go fishing. Bopha's mother gets ready to go sell fish. Her father prepares to leave for fishing.

- 'Today I take Sroh with me.' Says the father to the mother.

Bopha looks back at her father as she holds a bracket in her hand to leave to the boat.

- 'Bopha is too slow.' Continues the father.

Bopha looks straight at Sroh excitedly jumping up and down on the ground.

- 'So,' Says the mother 'Bopha comes to help me at the market.'

SCENE 11 – EXT: The shore

As the boat is ready to leave, Bopha's father calls Sroh to come onboard.

Bopha is holding her sister. Sroh tries to leave her embrace.

- 'Bopha, let go off your sister!' Told her mother. 'And come with me!'

Bopha still holds on to Sroh.

- 'What's wrong with you, Bopha?' Said her mother while she comes to grab Sroh to put her the boat.

Sroh sits on the front deck while her father starts the engine at the other end. The boat begins to leave the shallow water. Her mother keeps calling Bopha to come while she keeps looking at her sister till the boat fades away.

SCENE 12 – EXT: The river and the market

The river:

The boat heads forwards on the river. Sroh sit on the front deck blowing her soap bubbles. They fly off in the air.

The boat stops in the middle of the river along with other fishing boats. Sroh helps her father to put the fishing net in the water. After this, he starts to fish with the throwing net. Once he lifts the net, Sroh excitedly screams to see the fishes trapped. After a while, they begin to lift the long net from the water. Sroh helps her father to pick the fishes from the net and puts them in the boat. She claps her hands and laughs.

The market:

In the market, Bopha sits still looking down at a cutting board with a fish.

- 'Bopha,' Speaks her mother 'Prepare the fish! They'll be coming to get it soon.'

SCENE 13 – EXT: The river

The sunshine sprinkles like diamonds on the surface of the river. The sun rises higher. By the time the fishing is done, the boat is ready to leave. Sroh sits on the far end of the deck enjoying the air which blows her hair like silk.

SCENE 14 – EXT: The shore and the market

The shore

The boat arrives at a shore where there aren't any fishing boats. The engines stops, the boat docks next to the line of long grasses.

The market

At the market, Bopha keeps looking down on the cutting board. Her mother slaps her on the shoulder. Bopha appears frightened.

- 'Hurry up, Bopha!' Orders the mother.

Bopha looks up and stares.

The shore

On the boat, the father begins to jump off to get on the shore.

- 'Sroh,' Calls her father 'Help me bring the fish tank here.'

Sroh takes the tank and jumps off the boat too.

The market

In the market, Bopha keep staring at her mother.

- 'Raksa didn't rape me.' Bopha begins.

Her mother stops moving and stares straight in her eyes.

- 'I lied.' Continues Bopha.

Her mother stares straight at her.

The shore

Next to the boat, Sroh walks with the tank in her hand towards her father.

- 'Where are we going?' Asks Sroh.

The father doesn't reply. Sroh keeps follow her father till she disappears into the thick long grasses. For a moment, a frightening scream rises up. Soon, Sroh's voice is silent.

SCENE 15 – EXT: Next to the grasses and the shore

In the tall rushes, her father tries to lay his body on Sroh's. Her screams are muffled under her father's hand pressing against her mouth. She tries to pull his hand off her mouth. She struggles to reach her father's neck. She moves, she screams, she fights until both her hands drop and her body doesn't move anymore.

Suddenly somebody pushes away the father!

'You beast!' Screams the mother.

She grabs Sroh quickly from her husband. Sroh is unconscious. Blood sheds on her legs. She carries her quickly to the other boat where Bopha is waiting. The father runs after them with the stick in his hand. He hits her in the head. Then she falls off on the ground and appears unconscious still with Sroh in her embrace. Bopha quickly jumps out of the boat and hits her father with the paddle. She rushes to garb Sroh while he is on the ground. He soon gets back up back. Bopha carries her sister away into the forest on the shore.

- 'Help!' Screams Bopha. 'Help!'

SCENE 16 – EXT: The forest and the pond

The father chases after her with the stick in his hand but can't find her trace. He stops and looks around with his sharp eyes. Next to his feet in a pond Bopha is hiding with her sister in the water under a lotus leaf. Her sister wakes up. Bopha quickly covers her mouth not to make any sound. Without blinking, she keeps her eyes on her father's feet for a while. Then her father

moves on. After seeing her father disappear, she quietly gets out of the pond and runs straight back to the shore.

SCENE 17 – EXT: The shore

As she arrives, her mother regains consciousness.

- 'Mother,' Says Bopha 'Get into the boat quick! Father is coming!'

Her mother manages to drag herself to the boat and Bopha puts her sister down into the boat. Soon, the shouting of her father approaches. Bopha starts the engine. Her father arrives. The boat leaves. He picks up the stick and throws it after them. He can do nothing more, only stand and watch the boat getting further and further.

SCENE 18 – INT: A prison

In a tiny room enclosed by old walls, a man in blue prisoners clothes enters, with a letter in his hand. He sits down on the bed, opens it, sees the small red stain in the center.

The letter reads:

"Dear father,

For all these years, a thorn has been stuck in my heart. It is the thorn of hatred. As long as it's there, it feels like it's killing me. Oh! Father, I forgive you.

A tear falls across his wrinkle cheek of Bopha's father.

The letters continues:

The guilt can suck your bones dry to death. I don't want you to live with it.

*The red ink is my blood--the blood that came from you.
And it always is yours.*

Your daughter,

Bopha"

SCENE 19 – The way home

Sunset leaves nothing but soft light on the field of green grass. Crickets and frogs sing. For a moment Bopha and Sroh, dressed in school uniforms, walk together along the field towards the silhouette of a house blending into a tree line on the horizon.

- THE END -