

Hot Road
by
Pedro Chaves

Revisions by
Pedro Chaves

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Pedro Chaves
Georges Wibierdreef 14, 9040 Gent, BELGIUM
+32473815608

INT. BUILDING HALL - NIGHT

A clean white hall, mailboxes hanging from the wall, a door to a lift.. The iron doors of it, shining in splendor. The lift goes up.

V.O.

A month ago, a colleague of mine named John broke his neck in a stupid accident while he was on his way to meet his new girlfriend. Talk about bad luck, right ?

INT. THIRD FLOOR HALL - NIGHT

TRAVELLING RIGHT TO LEFT

We pass through the hall going from door to door, on every door Christmas decorations are hanging, going from the simplest ones to the most extravagant ones, except for DOOR 377 that doesn't have the slightest Christmas decoration hanging.

V.O.

Paralysed, John also seems to have broke some of his nerves, making him lose his sight and hearing.. He is still with us, but... His universe seems limited to his hospital bed...

INT. LIVING ROOM APPARTMENT 377 - NIGHT

CAM PANS through the room, although it's Christmas time, nothing in this room could show it, except for the one very small Christmas tree inside a plastic box on a shelf. A Tree that should be shining in all his glory instead of being in a package.

V.O.

Alone with his chimeAKANE, with no possibility to escape...

A voice suddenly breaks to VOICE OFF.

MOTHER (V.O.)

Don't forget to clean your cup !

V.O.

It's generally after losing them,
that we become aware of how
precious some things really are...

We finally see to who the V.O. Belongs !

ASADA is in his early twenties, brown mid-long hair. He is drinking coffee from a cup. He turns to answer to his MOTHER which is at the door, heading out.

ASADA

Where is dad ?

The MOTHER stops at the door, but doesn't turn back.

MOTHER

(coldly)

At Kate's.

Beat.

The MOTHER suddenly refrains. She sees she shouldn't have said it like that.

MOTHER

Asada, we are close to your final exams, you shouldn't go to bed at such late hours like you've been doing those days.

The MOTHER leaves, shutting the door quietly behind her, leaving ASADA in the empty apartment.

ASADA (V.O.)

Lately, my father has been hanging a lot more with that woman than at his own home.

ASADA is sitting against the table. Putting the mug on the table. Suddenly his phone makes a noise. He grabs it from his pocket.

It's a text-message saying : "YOU COMING?" He puts it back into his pocket.

ASADA (V.O.)

My mother works in a very fashionable store.. As she likes to repeat, her clothes are more than just plain decoration, they are weapons of war..

He sits on a chair and starts putting his shoes on, but when going for his left foot, he puts a protection on. He doesn't look happy about it, making it clear it's a ritual he doesn't appreciate.

ASADA (V.O.)
The ones like the others, they all seem to pass their time, resigning to the risks of life.

He stands up. Looking at the small tree in the box.

ASADA (V.O.)
But me,... I hate to resign..

EXT. GAKANELEI - NIGHT

CLOSE SHOT OF ASADA

ASADA
If I was in John's place, I'd really wanted to be killed as quickly as possible...

ASADA is walking with his friends. The streets are covered in snow. Everyone is packed with gloves, coats and hats. ASADA and his friends are walking by the river, which continues her flow even in this snow and cold.

FRIEND 1
Dude, don't talk like that...

ASADA
Why is that?

FRIEND 2
It's not an easy decision for the family, you got to respect that...

FRIEND 1
Where are we going by the way?
Shouldn't we invite Jim?

FRIEND 2
Yeah, at this hour he might be home.

ASADA walks a little further.

ASADA
Still...

He looks at the river. His friends are chatting with each other, having a good time.

ASADA (V.O.)

It was Winter period, it was my last year at college, I satisfied myself by living my own way, Sinatra `style. Drowning, slowly but with certainty into the hell of life... After my foot injury last summer, I wasn't able to play in the championship anymore... Making me quit basketball.

One of his FRIENDS suddenly points to the other side of the street. And turns to the others.

FRIEND 2

Hey, isn't that Elie, John's girlfriend?

FRIEND 1

Yeah, that's her, walking around instead of being with him.

FRIEND 2

Some people just don't have regrets.. Right, As-..

FRIEND 2 looks around, ASADA is nowhere to be seen.

FRIEND 2

Where did he go?

EXT. SMALL ROAD - NIGHT

A small road, only the small lights of the shops are lighting this street. ELIE is walking there.

ELIE is early twenties, mid-long blond hair, very pretty.

ASADA (O.S.)

ELIE!

She turns and sees ASADA, standing in front of her after a short run, with a smile on his face.

EXT. KORENMARKT - NIGHT

ELIE and ASADA are now walking side by side, the Korenmarkt meanwhile is packed with people, celebrating the Christmas time. The market place is covered in Christmas lights, providing a fairy look to the market, making it all seem like a dream.

ASADA

.. at the statue of the canon?

ELIE

(nods)

It's romantic, don't you think?

(beat)

We decided to meet there that day, we were planning to go for warm waffles at Fieldstreet. Walk around the Christmas market, having some gluewine.

(beat)

All those plans... Since then, I come here every day.

ELIE looks absorbed while talking about this, but suddenly get's a grip on herself and turns to ASADA with a smile.

ELIE

It's funny, it's been a while since we talked like this... You were impossible to talk to since you went into the basketball team. I even remember that at one time you even had a fan club, didn't you?

ASADA

Yeah, right. That ugly, fat girl that was haAKANESing me every single day...

ELIE

I heard she's after the captain of the soccer team now.

(smiles)

ASADA

Really?

She nods.

ASADA

Even that ugly girl left me... This really means it's over with me.. Thinking I was team captain... I miss those cheer-up screams during a game.. I seems all so far away now..

ELIE

Why do you say that? You just need to start up basketball again and you will regain your popularity, right?

ASADA

You know about my injury..

ELIE looks down. They are at the statue of the canon.

ELIE

Weren't you running to catch up on me?

Beat. ASADA looks at her. She smiles.

ELIE

You know Asada, the worst injuries aren't the physical ones, but the ones that go for our heart...

ASADA looks down, he know's she is right. Still...

ASADA

Elie,...

ELIE

Yeah?

ASADA

Don't tell me you are going to wait for John all evening?

ELIE doesn't react. She seems lost in her thoughts.

ELIE

I'm sure he will come... whatever it takes..

ASADA

Hein?

ELIE (CONT'D)
 I know that he wants to see me and
 that right now, he is walking in
 our direction, telling himself that
 he has to hurry...

ELIE gives a small smile, but not an happy one.

ELIE (CONT'D)
 Because I'm waiting for him..
 (sobs)
 I-I'm sure...

A drop of SNOW falls slowly from the sky across ELIE's face.

ELIE (CONT'D)
 That this is what he is thinking...
 At the moment...

She drops down on her knees. ASADA looks at her not knowing
 if he should grab her.

ASADA
 I'm sorry Elie...

ELIE is now crying. The snow is now falling slowly, covering
 the streets slowly, covering them and the injuries of their
 hearts. ASADA looks up to the sky.

ELIE (CONT'D)
 (crying)
 ... And when he will arrive I'll
 tell him that he is late... And..
 Will sl-slap his should-..

It's to much for her.. ASADA keeps watching the sky, the snow
 falling into them...

ASADA (V.O.)
 The ones like the others, we all
 seem to pass our time, resigning to
 the risks of life.

The snow falls harder.

FADE TO WHITE

ASADA (V.O.)
 It's really a shitty life.

FADE IN:

EXT. CHRISTMAS MARKET - NIGHT

The annual Christmas market is taking place, several wooden houses grew like toads in the market place. A huge crowd is filling the place, families with their children are buying gluewine, waffles and other tasty food. The Christmas lights shine over the houses covered in snow. A typical Christmas day.

GWEN (V.O.)

A winter chill.. A blow becoming damp.. A little street in the night..

CAM PANS through the crowd, passing by the people, the stand of waffles with Grand-Marnier, ..

A girl is walking by.

GWEN is early twenties, brown short hair, very cute. She is dressed warmly but still wearing a skirt and boots.

GWEN (V.O.)

If I liked this place it's because it gave me the feeling that this winter chill would take all my feelings or doubts away..

GWEN walks through the market, straight to the cathedral that lies at the end of the market, climbing the stairs of the cathedral to have a better look at the market.

GWEN (V.O.)

I often wondered if things would turn out as we always hoped.. If the steps we make were not worthless.. What is scarier than to step into the world without knowing if we would succeed...

It looks like she is waiting for someone.

She looks at her watch.

CU OF WATCH : 22:00

She sights..

GWEN

Where are you..

GWEN looks around on last time. She starts descending the stairs. Kids pass running in front of her playing under the sound of Christmas carols.

GWEN (V.O.)
 Finals are a pain,.. A jail to a
 future we don't know..

A kid cries. GWEN suddenly snaps out of her thoughts, looking at the direction where the cry came from.

A kid just dropped his warm sugar apple on the icy ground... Next to him his mother is trying to comfort him.

CHILDREN (V.O.)
 (softly)
 She dropped... She dropped..

DISSOLVE TO:

FLASHBACK

EXT. SCHOOLYARD - DAY

A small version of GWEN is standing in the school yard, with an ice cream that she dropped on the floor in front of her. Two KIDS are making fun of her.

KIDS
 GWEN DROPPED IT! GWEN DROPPED IT!
 NOW YOU HAVE TO EAT IT!!

The boys walk away, leaving GWEN alone with her ice cream.

An hand picks the ice cream from the floor.

AKANE (O.S.)
 Stop crying!
 (looking at the ice cream)
 What? It's just this?

He points to the ice cream that is not fifty at all. He cleans the ice cream.

AKANE
 You got nothing on your mind or
 what? Look! It isn't that
 difficult!

He hands the ice cream to GWEN.

AKANE
Here! DEVOUR IT!

GWEN doesn't pick up the ice cream. She looks even more scared now.

AKANE
Alright, have mine then!

AKANE hands his ice cream.

CU OF HIS HAND WITH THE ICE CREAM

BACK TO:

END OF FLASHBACK

CU OF HAND HOLDING A CUP OF GLUEWINE

EXT. CHRISTMAS MARKET - NIGHT

Damp comes out of the cup. It's gluewine.

GWEN looks amazed at the person in front of her. It's the grown-up version of the kid. But this time handing a cup of gluewine. No reaction comes from GWEN. He has his own cup of gluewine hanging from his month.

AKANE is early twenties, black hair, dressed warmly.

AKANE
(with cup in his month)
Drink it up!

Beat.

GWEN is still taken a-back from the flashback. AKANE comes closer.

AKANE
If..

He takes his cup out of his month, holding the two cups now.

AKANE (CONT'D)
If you don't want it, I'll drink it the. I know I'm late but that's no reason to give me a blank here!

GWEN
Euh... Thanks AKANE.

GWEN smiles, reaching for the cup with both hands.

GWEN
Whaa... It's hot!

AKANE
Of course it's hot, I just bought
it! C'mon let's go!

They start walking further into the market, reaching time to
time for a sip of gluewine.

GWEN
You know,... It would be good if we
continued in the same school.

A drop of snow suddenly falls slowly, passing by GWEN's face.
She looks up, and so does AKANE, the sky is getting full of
little snow flakes.

GWEN
You know...

AKANE
What?

GWEN
I really want those exams to end
quickly, we have so many things to
do. And because we lost our freedom
until January...

AKANE
What are you talking about, you
little idiot? Don't you think you
are more than free already? You are
not a bird in a cage! Do you really
think that people without freedom
would wander in a place like this?

GWEN is taken a-back. She understands her worries are not
founded.

GWEN
No, you're right. They probably,
wouldn't be able..

AKANE is taking a sip of his wine.

GWEN (CONT'D)
..to have a cup of gluewine.

AKANE smiles.

AKANE

Or eat some warm pancakes.

They both smile.

AKANE

Let's go deeper into the crowd.

GWEN nods, they start to walk. They walk through the crowd, surrounded by people all around, when suddenly..

GWEN (V.O.)

Why be afraid..

ASADA (V.O.)

Why such a pain..

We can spot a known face walking in a opposite direction. It's ASADA, just passing, next to GWEN.

FRAME freezes. We can see them, passing in different directions, each his own life, their own world, their own sorrows.

GWEN and ASADA say this at the same time during this frame freeze.

GWEN & ASADA (V.O.)

What a ..

GWEN (V.O.)

..great..

ASADA (V.O.)

..shit..

GWEN & ASADA

Life..

FRAME goes back to normal.

ASADA looks back at AKANE and GWEN, but he is not looking at them in particular, just at his past. The things he did those last months.

ASADA (V.O.)

The ones like the others, they all seem to pass their time, resigning to the risks of life..

(beat)

But..

GWEN (V.O.)
 The snow has the power to cover old
 injuries of the past and to hide
 them.

ASADA walks through the market, watching those happy faces.

ASADA (V.O.)
 It has the power to bring back lost
 memories..

GWEN (V.O.)
 And maybe one day..

GWEN is with AKANE having some gluewine and laughing. Her
 trouble gone with the snow.

ASADA (V.O.)
 Maybe one day..

GWEN (V.O.)
 The snow will eAKANEe our steps..

CUT TO:

EXT. SOMEWHERE - NIGHT

ELIE is there, surrounded by darkness and snow, she turns
 around, someone is there, we can't see his face. A huge smile
 appears on Elie's face, while tears shed from her heart. She
 runs to the person and jumps in his arms.

BACK TO:

EXT. CHRISTMAS MARKET - NIGHT

Asada is still walking.

ASADA (V.O.)
 ..will eAKANEe today's landscape..

GWEN (V.O.)
 ..will eAKANEe our smiles..

ASADA looks at the sky. It stopped snowing. Just the stars
 are shining.

ASADA (V.O.)
 Even though..

ASADA smiles.

GWEN (V.O.)
Even though..

ASADA (V.O.)
She won't eAKANEe the objectives I
made..

GWEN and AKANE are walking side by side.

GWEN (V.O.)
I'm planning to hang on to this icy
road..

ASADA (V.O.)
.. And to continue to walk
forward..

GWEN
Yes, I will continue to walk
forward, on and on!

INT. LIVING ROOM APPARTMENT 377 - NIGHT

ASADA walks into his apartment. His mom is sleeping on the
couch. She might have been waiting for him.

ASADA (V.O.)
Imagine the best plane in the
world, with the best fuel ever, if
you cut down his wings and replace
them by the those of an old bird,
will it still be able to compete
with the better ones?

ASADA takes off his shoes, grabs his protection and puts it
on the table, smiling. He looks at his mom.

ASADA (V.O.)
To fly over the worries of mankind?

ASADA cover his MOM with a long coat. He suddenly stops the
small Christmas tree in the packet and walks to it, grabbing
the box. He smiles.

ASADA (V.O.)
Never forget Elie,...

GWEN (V.O.)
..those memories AKANE..

EXT. CHRISTMAS MARKET - NIGHT

We are back to AKANE and GWEN, that are in front of a pancake stand.

ASADA (V.O.)
.. Those tears, those laughs..

GWEN (V.O.)
..never forget them..

They just bought some of those small pancakes.

ASADA (V.O.)
From now on, let's just try to have
good memories..

GWEN (V.O.)
And make our way into life, by
making each day count..

ASADA (V.O.)
By walking forward..

Beat.

GWEN (V.O.)
Those lights burning as fireflies,
the roads which we walked on that
market, all those thinks are past
but they remain forever ..

GWEN looks at AKANE.

GWEN
Say, will we go to beach?

AKANE
What?

GWEN (V.O.)
And burn some of those small
fireworks?

AKANE smiles.

AKANE
Hurry up and eat your pancakes.

GWEN gives on last big smile.

CAM slowly travels away from GWEN and AKANE slowly.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM APPARTMENT 377 - NIGHT

On a table, the foot protection is still there, but next to it is the small Christmas tree, free from it's box with is in pieces in the background.

We can see in the alley, ASADA walking away into his bedroom.

GWEN (V.O.)
Just walk forward..

THE END