

Xueni Yang
FIR
Advisor's review
Miroslav Janek
June 1st, 2023

The graduation film by Xueni Yang FIR is a story of loneliness, looking for identity, looking for a place to be in this world. All this is accomplished by absolutely simple, yet compelling means. The classical three act structure could be in this case called: prologue, the story and epilogue. When talking about the story or about the plot one could say that this is a kind of film in which "nothing really happens". All the drama is happening inside the two main characters - the Chinese school girl born and living in Czech Republic and the Chinese student just arriving to his new temporary home. All the information about the feelings and opinions of these two characters are not to be found in the dialogue between them but in a very slow and minimalistic action, in their gestures and looks and in unanswered questions and silence between their dialogue. This I consider the strongest aspect of Xueni's way of storytelling. Not a single line of dialogue wasted on giving us plain factual information. Yet we can very strongly feel the situation of both characters. Both lost in a way in their loneliness and doubts about the places they live in.

The minimalistic way of storytelling is supported by a conventional, yet firm and unobtrusive camera work, by relatively slow editing pace and by long takes which give the audience plenty of time to read the emotion of the characters and the meaning of the story. The casting of the Chinese girl is excellent. One can see through her eyes directly into her soul. I also appreciate very much the director's decision to never show the mother's face. As if she did not exist which for the little girl is the reality. The mother feeds the girl and provides a home for her but that is most likely the limit of her abilities. Again it is amazing how this part of the story is told in clever and economic way. If I was to look for some weak part of the filmmaking it would be the casting of the schoolmate in the epilogue. She is too much aware of the camera and it shows. Facing a problem like this should lead to a directorial decision to either get the natural performance out of the girl by all means or cast a different one.

In conclusion, I recommend the work for defence and propose the evaluation "A."

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "M. Janek". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.