

Manuscript # 7

BY IAN CARLO BUNDOC

The film opens with a young adult, Genesis, who is bent over a blank notebook. He is sweating, his eyebrows are scrunched up, and he taps a pencil on the table. He taps faster and faster until he reaches a crescendo. He stops abruptly as an older woman, his mother, comes in- pissed, and telling him to stop. Minutes later, he decides to pack his bags and leave home.

The week before, his editor, Ben, tells him that he needs to take his time in releasing his book, and that he shouldn't rush it. Genesis reveals that he feels he's pressed for time, that maybe if he took too long he'd lose his readers- aside from the need for money due to the struggling economy. Ben replies by reminding him of his drive as a young writer, how Genesis came to him all those years ago asking to be his editor once he's older. He ends it by telling Genesis that he's not just afraid of losing his readers, he's afraid of losing himself. He then suggests that Genesis should go with one of the writing teams he's helping out, to accompany them in their journey to bring storytelling around the Philippines. He doesn't need to worry too much about expenses, Ben would even handle it. Genesis is reluctant at first, but he agrees to try and meet the team.

Genesis gets in touch with the team, and meets them a couple days later. They introduce themselves as a 5-person team, and they soon explain to him the goal of their trip; to travel in order to write articles about featured people doing their best despite the country's situation, all while providing support and goods after interviews. They have 3 stops, and will leave in a week. Genesis listens quietly. At the end of their meeting, they bid him goodbye, and he doesn't contact them for a few days- he doesn't think it'll help him with anything.

He struggles to come to terms that he's at a bad state of mind; he sees his peers smile at photos of their successful book signing event, other friends have good businesses, and others are working on feature films. He spends his days and nights sulking.

We arrive on the day that the team is scheduled to leave, he is bent over a blank notebook, trying to get words out for his manuscript- we see piles of papers on the floor, two of which are labelled "Manuscript 1" and "Manuscript 2", respectively. His mother barges in, tells him to stop tapping his pen. He decides that he needs a change of pace, and a change in environment, so he packs his bags in a hurry and leaves.

He chases the crew, and makes it in time to be able to join them. They are surprised, but they agree to let him come.

The road trip took longer than he expected, with the crew attempting to strike conversations with him in order to get to know him better. He is guarded, and replies shortly, so they eventually ease up. Genesis enjoys the view on the way, and is happy he came.

He falls asleep, and wakes up to see that they're about to park next to a mountainside cafe. The view is stunning. He spends his time enjoying the place while the crew interviews the business owners. The overall vibe is very uplifting and gives him hope that things are going well after all. Genesis often sits down to try and write, making drafts of Manuscripts- often thinking that they are great ideas, but gets frustrated when he can't flesh them out more. All this time, he doesn't help the crew with anything and tells them that he's busy when asked for help.

They stay overnight, and leave the next day. This time Genesis tries to strike up conversations with the crew, and this time they give short replies. He feels that they don't want to talk to him, so he sits again in silence.

Come nighttime, they stop by at a local motel, and decide to stay there for the night. When he gets the chance, he talks to one of the crew, and asks about what's going on. The crew-member reveals that they had not planned to take an extra person, this was just a favor granted to him because their leader and his editor are close. At dinnertime, Genesis apologizes and promises to pull his weight from now on.

The next morning they leave again, and arrive just in time for lunch at their next stop. It is a home for the aged. They come inside and greet the residents. They have lunch, and Genesis is noticeably making an effort to help out. He is awkward around the residents, but gradually makes an effort to be friendly towards them. He helps the crew out as they conduct interviews, and helps carry goods that will help the aid the facility through tough times. Every once in a while, he jots down notes and writes as long as there isn't much work to be done or help needed.

He feels a pang of sadness seeing them left behind, and seeing the people running the home struggle to keep up with the hard times.

Nighttime comes and he and the crew are tired, but have done a lot of work. Genesis has unexpectedly built an exceptionally good relationship with one of the residents- Rene, a 70 year old whose kids had left him at the home after leaving to work in other countries. He is also a writer. Genesis asks for advice, and Rene gives him words of wisdom. This is more than he could ask for. Together, they head out to dinner. Genesis continues to help proactively.

The next day, he and the crew leave again. This time, they all engage in conversation and get to know each other better while on the road. They approach their last stop: an orphanage for children with disabilities. Genesis was not aware of this, so he was visibly surprised when he came in. He saw children with wheelchairs, and ones that are bed-ridden, among others.

They conduct interviews all day long, with the people who run the facility, and some of the children. He jots down notes a lot. After a while, one of the children comes to him, curious about what he's writing. He explains that he is someone who loves to tell stories. Some of the facilitators and children find out, and he spends the rest of the day telling stories to the children- all of which become very hooked. He gets along with a lot of them, and listens to their stories as well.

Although a bit sad to see them struggling, Genesis feels a surge of newfound love for storytelling. As they leave to go home the next day, he feels very grateful to the kids, and all the other people they've met so far during the trip, including the crew.

He returns home, more relaxed in his demeanor. He opens a notebook, presumably bought from their travel, with signatures of people in it cheering him on. He writes a quote at the start:

"I slept and dreamt that life was joy. I awoke and saw that life was service. I acted and behold, service was joy."

- Rabindranath Tagore

He then writes on the next page, in big bold letters:

MANUSCRIPT # 7