

TRACKS OF FATE

Written by

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EXT. TRAIN STATION - DAY

The train whistle blows. KELLY (mid-20s, Asian) waits in line for her turn to board. She has a clean appearance.

The line moves forward. Kelly shows the ticket to THE ATTENDANT. As he helps Kelly to get her suitcase into the car, someone on the platform catches his attention.

THE ATTENDANT

Hey Miss! The train is leaving in a minute, you gotta hurry up!

Kelly looks back with curiosity. She sees a woman (middle-aged, Southeast Asian) drags two suitcases and carrying a backpack as she makes her way towards the front of the train. They make a brief eye contact, Kelly experiences a sense of déjà vu.

The woman takes a quick look at the clock, then quickens her pace. The way she hurries along with all her luggage makes her look flustered. Kelly glimpses at her a few more times before boarding, looking concerned.

Few seconds later, an alarm sounds, and the lights flash red. Then, all of the doors close.

INT. KELLY'S ROOM IN THE SLEEPING CAR - DAY

A knock on the door. The attendant comes to check on her dinner reservation, but Kelly's mind is elsewhere.

KELLY

Did that lady manage to get on the train?

THE ATTENDANT

Yes I suppose. I saw her hopping onto the car.

KELLY

Oh that's good.

THE ATTENDANT

(causally)

You know each other before?

KELLY

Um, no, I don't think so. But she did seem kinda familiar to me.

Kelly lies back in her seat, gazing at the vast plain stretching beyond the horizon. That woman triggers her a sense of familiarity but she can't remember the details. Kelly decides to take a walk to the sightseeing car, hoping to get rid of that odd feeling.

3 INT. THE SIGHTSEEING CAR - DAY

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Kelly strolls down the aisle. She looks around and realizes that most of the seats were already taken. But the moment she decides to go back to her room, she sees that Jenny was also in this car.

Jenny is sitting alone by the window, staring at the passing sceneries outside. Kelly can't shake the feeling of familiarity off, so she decides to take this opportunity to get acquainted with Jenny. Kelly walks over to her.

KELLY

Hi, nice to meet you.

JENNY

(politely)

Hi.

KELLY

Excuse me. I was wondering if we've met before? Um...you look kinda familiar.

Jenny freezes, she looks closely at Kelly and seems hesitant for a second. But in an instant, she's back to normal.

JENNY

Well, we just met on the platform, no?

KELLY

I mean, before that. It's really strange...I don't have any memory about you, but I just have the feeling that we've known each other long time ago.

JENNY

(teasingly)

Come on girl, this is too cliche, it's just straight out of a movie, even for someone my age.

Kelly blushes, feeling embarrassed. She wants to explain, but stumbles over her words.

JENNY (CONT'D)

Okay, easy. I know you didn't mean that. I'm Jenny, by the way.

KELLY

I'm Kelly.

(pauses)

I'm sorry for the awkwardness. But it's really strange though, I just can't shake the feeling that we've met before. Did you...?

Jenny interrupts Kelly, while avoiding eye contact with her.

JENNY

Hey, just let go of it, I've never met you before in my memory. You know, maybe you just have one of those moments where faces seem familiar.

KELLY

Maybe... But have you ever lived, or been to Hong Kong, by any chance?

Jenny's discomfort is visible now. She forces herself to smile, pretending to be normal, but she's nervous.

JENNY

No, never. I've been in the states for almost two decades now.

It is obvious that Jenny is evasive towards this conversation. She tries to change the subject.

JENNY (CONT'D)

Though Hong Kong is an interesting place, I heard. I've always wanted to visit there someday. Are you from there?

Kelly does not want to push further at this moment since they just get to know each other. She chooses to continue with that conversation.

KELLY

Yes I am. But I'm planning on staying here, for work.

JENNY

Cool. There are tons of opportunities here, but...
(shrugs)
Sometimes things are not as straightforward as it seems.
Just be prepared for that, do some expectation management, you'll be fine.

Kelly smiles optimistically.

KELLY

Yeah. I believe things would work out either way. What about you? Was it hard for you when you first came here?

Jenny hesitates, a mixture of nostalgia and exhaustion in her eyes.

JENNY

Well, it's a lot more complicated for people like me--comparing to your experience, I assume.

KELLY

What do you mean?

JENNY

It is the land of opportunities, no doubt. But it's in its own way.

(sighs)

It ain't just about arriving and having everything fall into place. It was never that simple.

Kelly seems to be pondering on Jenny's words.

JENNY (CONT'D)

Ah, forget my rambling. My experience may not be fit for you young people. Just enjoy the journey, then.

It's now around dusk, and the car is filled with people from other cars who have come to the sightseeing car to enjoy a better view of the sunset. The sky is covered in a stunning gradient of pink and purple hues. Jenny and Kelly sit at the table beside the window, chatting while enjoying the view. The atmosphere is relaxed until a PASSENGER(an old man) who's just passing by murmurs something.

THE PASSENGER

(mockingly)

Look. They're now letting just
about anyone pollute the train.

The passenger eyes Jenny's outfit--a strapless frock--with obvious disdain. Jenny ignores him, while Kelly glares at the man.

JENNY

(to Kelly, in a low voice)

Don't pay any attention to him
Kelly. It's not worth it.

The atmosphere tightens. At first, Kenny and Jenny choose not to respond to his aggressive words. However, having seen that no one stood up to him or stopped him, this passenger became even more intrusive.

THE PASSENGER

You people... You just come here
and bring down our standards.

(smirks)

Go back to where you came from!

Jenny still maintains herself, trying not to let the situation get escalated. Kelly, however, can't contain her anger. She stands up.

KELLY

I suppose the only one here that's
talking shit about others is *you*,
sir.

THE PASSENGER

You better watch your mouth, young
lady!

The entire car starts to fall silent. Other passengers become wary that this might be evolves to a physical fight. Some go to look for the attendant and some are trying to stop that man.

KELLY

No, you should watch yours. You
ignorant *pig*.

The old man is infuriated, he makes a move as if to strike Kelly in the face. Kelly, however, stands her ground. The man gets much more irritated.

JENNY
(whispers to Kelly)
Kelly, let it go. We don't wanna
get in trouble.

Kelly, though, doesn't flinch.

JENNY (CONT'D)
We've just met. You don't have to
do this for me.

KELLY
(turns to Jenny)
We are in the same boat here. I
don't wanna see him just simply get
away with it after saying those
words. That's unfair, to both of
us. We have to stand up against
this.

Most of the passengers in this car are watching this. The once vibrant sunset now becomes a backdrop to their confrontation. The attendant rushes to separate Kelly and the man. The old man, now more hesitant and aware of the other passengers' gazing, mumbles an apology and retreats to the far end of the car.

As the man disappears from their view, Kelly, now free from the immediacy of that confrontation, finally begins to feel the aftershocks. A rush of mixed emotions of anger and fear courses through her. She trembles, and her hands are slightly shaking.

KELLY (CONT'D)
(still seething)
That guy... He needed to be called
out. We can't let people like him
think they can just spew hate
without consequences.

Jenny places a hand on Kelly's shoulder, comforting her.

JENNY
Kelly, It's over, he's gone.

Jenny sighs. The way she looks at Kelly as if seeing a glimpse of her younger self in Kelly.

JENNY (CONT'D)
I know you believe in the goodness
of people and the opportunities
that come with it. But sometimes,
they're not that straightforward.
(MORE)

JENNY (CONT'D)

I left hometown with the hope for a better life. But what I found here wasn't what I expected.

KELLY

But still--we don't have to accept it as it is.

Jenny looks at Kelly, a mixture of concern and appreciation in her eyes.

JENNY

Kelly, I thought the same way when I came here. But sometimes, it's not just about change, about fighting back, it's about survival.

Kelly meets Jenny's eyes, not being able to realize the weight of Jenny's unspoken struggles and experiences.

KELLY

You're not here to lecture me. Survival isn't just about keeping quiet.

JENNY

...Kelly, you don't understand what it's like for people like me, sometimes fighting back only makes it worse.

Kelly seems starting to understand what Jenny says.

JENNY (CONT'D)

(emotionally)

It's not about letting them. It's about choosing our battles wisely. I've seen what happens when you challenge the wrong people.

KELLY

How do you know that's not just an excuse for not doing anything, for letting fear dictates ourselves?

JENNY

But what do you know about fear, Kelly? You've lived in a bubble. I know your family loves you, but they shielded you from the realities of the world too well.

Jenny suddenly stops, her eyes widening in realization. She has unintentionally let a secret slip.

KELLY

Wait...how do you know that?

Jenny hesitates. She looks out the window at the passing sceneries, and finally decides it's time to reveal her personal experience that she's been concealing.

INT. AN OLD-STYLED TRAIN - FLASHBACK - DAY

The sceneries outside the train transforms from the Rocky Mountains into a vivid flashback of the bustling streets of Hong Kong. Young Kelly played in a narrow seat of an old-styled train; while Jenny, a younger version, watched over her.

JENNY (V.O.)

(nostalgic)

I knew you from the very beginning,
Kelly. I was there when you were
just a child.

INT. KELLY'S CHILDHOOD HOME - KITCHEN - FLASHBACK - DAY

Jenny, wearing an apron, prepared food in the kitchen. A younger Kelly entered, looking up at Jenny with adoration.

JENNY (V.O.)

I came to your home right after you
was born, I was the only helper in
your house back then.

EXT. KELLY'S CHILDHOOD HOME - LITTLE GARDEN - FLASHBACK - DAY

Young Kelly's 4-year-old birthday party. Jenny, with a homemade cake, led everyone in singing the "Happy Birthday" song. Kelly's parents and other family members clapped hands alongside.

JENNY (V.O.)

I was an orphan back in Philippine,
but in Hong Kong, for the first
time I feel like I belong. Your mom
and dad treated me like a family.

INT. KELLY'S CHILDHOOD HOME - BEDROOM - FLASHBACK - NIGHT

The sound of rain pelting against the window. Young Kelly, frightened, clutches her stuffed animal.

JENNY (V.O.)

Your parents are usually too busy with business, so most of my work is to babysit you. I loved you like my own.

Jenny enters the room, carrying a tray with a cup of hot chocolate. Jenny sits by Kelly's bedside, comforting her during the storm.

JENNY (V.O.)

There were nights you'd wake up scared. I'd stay until you felt safe again.

INT. KELLY'S CHILDHOOD HOME - FLASHBACK - DAY

JENNY (V.O.)

But...

Jenny packed her belongings with tears in her eyes, as a young Kelly watched, confused.

JENNY (V.O.)

There was a man, someone I thought I couldn't live without. He said he went to the US, to "chase his dream", and I bought it.

Kelly's parents tried to explain Jenny's sudden departure to the young and perplexed Kelly.

JENNY (V.O.)

So I made a decision. I contacted a smuggler, left everything behind, and went to LA.

Jenny(present) chuckles, as if laughing at her naivety back then.

JENNY (V.O.)

But Kelly, life in here wasn't what I'd imagined. That dream crumbled a long time ago, and I was left with a reality far from the fairy tale I'd hoped for.

I/E. LOS ANGELES - FLASHBACK - DAY

Jenny, now in her early days in America, struggled with multiple jobs to make ends meet. A montage depicts her washing dishes in a restaurant; doing laundry for others;

making deliveries on crowded streets; and engaging in various jobs that a newly arrived illegal immigrant might undertake.

INT. JENNY'S APARTMENT - FLASHBACK - MID NIGHT

The clock pointed at 1am. The apartment was cramped and the light was dim. Jenny, exhausted, counted her meager earnings. She pushed herself to work harder and harder, in order to repay the debts to smuggler and her immigration lawyer as fast as she could.

JENNY (V.O.)

I never got the chance of seeing that man. But I thought, at least, I have tons of opportunities waiting ahead of me. But after a year had I realized that those glittering opportunities were just not for me.

INT. A RESTAURANT - FLASHBACK - DAY

Jenny was a waiter in this restaurant, when she was carrying the trays and bottles, she accidentally touched a customer, spilling water all over himself. Jenny kept apologizing, but the customer just wouldn't let up and even called the manager. They abused her with tons of insulting words. At that time, Jenny was still young, she wanted to argue and got into the fight with the customer, and was fired in public.

JENNY (V.O.)

Since then I have realized that, some things that can be done for other people, but I don't, because I don't have the cost to pay its collateral value.

Sighs.

JENNY (V.O.)

I buried myself in work. I would do any job just to get some money. Well, opportunities were there, but they were not the opportunities I had dreamt of.

INT. A BEDROOM IN A MOTEL - FLASHBACK - NIGHT

Jenny sited on a worn-out bed in a dimly lit bedroom. A man stood nearby, negotiating terms. Jenny's eyes reflected a mixture of resignation and willingness to survival.

JENNY (V.O.)

Those nights of...desperation and shame, really changed me. I became someone who had to survive, no matter how low my status is, no matter what is the cost.

INT. THE SIGHTSEEING CAR - NIGHT

Kelly stares at Jenny, tears filled her eyes. She tries to hold Jenny's hands, but Jenny subconsciously avoids.

JENNY

In some moments, I felt the weight of that "dream" crushing me. I did things I never thought I would, all for a dream that turned out to be nothing but a mirage. Those nights are shadows I can't escape.

KELLY

Jenny, If you ever want to come back home...

JENNY

No. Please. I don't need a savior.

Jenny unconsciously clenched her hands, as if in penance.

JENNY (CONT'D)

I was so ashamed of what I had to do to survive that I couldn't bring myself to contact anyone back in Hong Kong. The person I became in those moments was someone I wouldn't, and couldn't face again.

As she speaks, the train snakes through the vast landscapes of the Rocky Mountains. The jagged peaks and expansive valleys stand as a silent witness to Jenny's unspoken sorrows.

Jenny gazes at the mountains, lost in thoughts.

JENNY (CONT'D)

I used to tell you, mountains carry memories. Each peak, each valley has a story.

KELLY

And every person too.

Kelly stares at Jenny, finally understands her struggles.

KELLY (CONT'D)

But your story, your past doesn't
define you. It's not all of you.
Maybe it's time to face those
shadows, to let go of the shame.

JENNY

You're right.

Jenny hugs Kelly.

JENNY (CONT'D)

You've grown, Kelly.

The train traverses the landscapes, leaving behind the Rocky Mountains, and carrying with it the shared journey of two women whose lives intersected in the tapestry of the world.

FADE TO BLACK.