

SHOPPING CART

By

Julie Gervais

01.248.842.5507
julieg@musichall.org

FADE IN

INT. NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

A young Asian guy, JAE, flashy clothes and grooming, dances and drinks with hard-partying friends. There's a propulsive beat, wild lighting, and hypnotic music.

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Jae sits slumped in the driver's seat of his expensive sports car, illuminated by the police car's flashing lights -- a similar lighting effect to the nightclub he just left.

EXT. LAVISH HOME - NIGHT

Jae slowly pulls into the driveway, followed by the police car. The officer gets out and escorts Jae to the door, waiting sternly while Jae gets his parents.

An older, elegant Asian couple comes to the door. The officer nudges Jae, who grudgingly hands the ticket to his parents.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Jae's mother hurries in and opens the drapes, flooding the room with sunlight as Jae remains sound asleep. She shakes him awake, then hurries out of the room.

EXT. GROCERY STORE PARKING LOT - DAY

Jae pulls his sleek ride up near the entry, parking it diagonally across two spots.

In his club clothes with giant headphones blasting, Jae sullenly surveys his new territory. He admires himself in the car's sideview mirror. Tries out a few dance moves.

A chauffeured car arrives, revealing Jae's father as the window slowly opens. He gives Jae a look of hell. Jae hustles into the store.

Moments later, Jae emerges from the store wearing an employee smock. No more headphones or jewelry. The car leaves.

Sluggishly, Jae returns a few stray carts to the corral.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Jae and his family -- father, mother, sister -- eat at the large table. It's subdued, little talking, just heads down.

EXT. GROCERY STORE PARKING LOT - DAY

In his store smock, now adorned with his name tag, Jae watches a customer drive off without returning his cart.

Jae yells out to him as the guy rolls by, slowing just enough to give Jae a snotty look.

A slick sportscar drives up, loud thumping bass. Jae's friends open the door. Jae hesitates a moment but climbs in. As they peel out, Jae throws his smock onto the floor.

They return and Jae tumbles out of the car as the guys continue to pass a bottle around. He sullenly puts his smock back on and resumes his duties.

EXT. GROCERY STORE PARKING LOT - NIGHT

In the rain, Jae pushes a line of carts from the lot to the store's entrance. He turns around just in time to see a man dressed in rags make off with a cart from a separate cluster.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

Jae chases the guy and the stolen cart up a neighboring block but the man is nimble and quick, losing Jae around a corner. Jae rants wildly, shouting throughout the neighborhood.

EXT. GROCERY STORE PARKING LOT - DAY

Sporting new sunglasses with attached side-view mirrors, Jae tests a variety of angles in the lot, finding he can see from any point and demonstrating his martial arts-style reflexes.

EXT. GROCERY STORE PARKING LOT & NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Jae arrives, counts the carts and finds they are short one. Angry, he runs to the neighborhood and finds a cart full of junk, which he throws to the ground before repossessing it.

EXT. GROCERY STORE PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Half-dozing, Jae sees a couple of young kids sneaking away with two carts. He easily catches up to them and grabs the carts back, and the kids begin to cry. Jae is chagrined and tries to calm them, to no avail. He pushes the carts back to the store entrance, watching the kids in his mirrors.

They sit stubbornly on the asphalt, staring at him.

EXT. GROCERY STORE - NIGHT

Jae emerges from the store juggling candy, fruit, and some cheap toys. He scans the lot for the kids but they are gone. He places the things in a neat pile on the ground and waits.

EXT. GROCERY STORE PARKING LOT - DAY

Jae attends to his cart duties all day, constantly scanning the lot for the kids from the day before. He makes a little stacked sculpture of the treats and toys he bought for them.

EXT. GROCERY STORE PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Jae perceives two large shadowy figures advancing toward the cart corral. He makes menacing gestures to scare them off.

As they depart, Jae realizes it's the two kids, each holding their mother's hand. Jae stares after them, forlorn.

EXT. GROCERY STORE PARKING LOT - DAY

Jae stoically, solemnly retrieves the carts -- no dancing or martial arts gestures, he is head down depressed. Suddenly he sees the kids, hiding behind a parked car. He waves and calls out to them and quickly fetches the gifts, but they are gone.

Later on, Jae talks to a customer as the two kids approach from behind and tap him on the leg. He is overjoyed, giving them big smiles and running to get their gifts.

They open up to him, describing a favor which he obliges. The kids climb into a cart, and Jae wheels them fast all over the lot, doing donuts and wheelies, everyone having a great time.

Finally he parks the cart, exhausted. The kids climb out and indicate that he should follow them.

EXT. CITY STREET & BUS STATION PARKING LOT - DAY

The kids and Jae plant themselves at a battered picnic table.

As people begin to trickle out, the two women from a couple of nights ago approach the new arrivals with some old rusty shopping carts. The arrivals look exhausted, raggedy, lost.

They are refugees. The greeters loads their few belongings into the rusty carts. The kids join their families and leave.

EXT. HOMELESS ENCAMPMENT - DAY

From a distance, Jae follows discreetly to the destination.

The group arrives at an encampment -- decrepit, but tidy and orderly. Outside each tent is a shopping cart, full of a family's belongings.

He watches people rummaging through the carts for things -- food, a child's jacket, some tools for repairing a tent. Each cart has a large plastic bag attached for rain protection.

Jae walks, deep in thought, back to the grocery store lot.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Jae and his Dad converse at the large dining table. Jae is trying to be persuasive but the father is impassive, standing to signify that the conversation is done. Jae leaves.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jae works at his computer, his face illuminated by two large screens. He is completely absorbed in something.

INT. HOME OFFICE - DAY

Jae's father is at work in his imposing space. Jae enters, bows, approaches his father with CAD-style drawings. His father waves him away.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jae does search after search. His screen shows images of metal baskets, small wheels, canopies, and lockable boxes.

He experiments with stuff strewn all over his desk -- wire, plastic bits, fabric, etc. He tries sticking things together but they keep falling apart.

INT. BIG BOX HARDWARE STORE - DAY

Jae wanders up and down the aisles, looking at bits of hardware and supplies, fiddling with things. Frustrated, he abandons his cart and leaves the store.

He realizes he left his cart in the aisle. Goes back, puts it in the corral, and leaves again.

EXT. GROCERY STORE PARKING LOT - DAY

Jae goes about his duties, dogged but grim.

EXT. HOMELESS ENCAMPMENT AND NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

Jae arrives at the encampment and watches from a distance. The community prepares and shares a dinner, cooking over an open fire, laughing, singing. He leaves, dejected.

Jae walks through the neighborhood, deep in thought. He sees an unconventional-looking house under construction, and cautiously ventures onto the property to see it closer up.

A sign on the property reads: THE HOUSES OF THE FUTURE. 3D PRINTED TO ORDER. The name of the company is on the sign.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jae again works in the glow of his screens, engrossed and excited.

EXT. GROCERY STORE PARKING LOT - DAY

Jae hustles his territory. There are no stray carts, just an orderly lineup, which he pushes from the corral to the store.

A customer unpacks her cart and almost abandons it, but Jae sprints over with a friendly wave. She brings it to him and he adds it to his stack.

A delivery truck pulls up, Jae goes to meet it. The driver opens the rear door, lowers the ramp, and pulls out his cargo. It's in plastic and hard to see, but Jae is excited.

EXT. HOMELESS ENCAMPMENT - DAY

Jae arrives breathless, gesturing to the residents. They are wary of him. But the kids emerge from the crowd, and serve as intermediaries. Soon, the whole group accompanies Jae.

EXT. GROCERY STORE PARKING LOT - DAY

The blob in plastic wrap sits near the store's entry. Jae uses a utility knife to free it, pulling out a folded cart which has been manufactured to Jae's designs: lockable compartments, canopy attachment, wheels with locking casters.

Nearby, there is a pallet containing a whole pile of blobs.

Together, Jae and the group work to unpack and set up the carts, excitedly examining the parts and features. The kids demonstrate their ability to climb into them.

Soon they have ten carts ready to roll. The kids hug Jae's legs. The people hug him, teary and excited, and depart with their carts. Jae beams, watching them.

A few moments later, a driver leaves her cart unattended after unloading and drives off. Jae retrieves the cart.

FADE OUT