

# Parida Tantiwasadakran about YOUNG PEOPLE, OLD PEOPLE & NOTHING IN BETWEEN

“Once they went on a walk, holding hands”

Probably 7 year old Juice has never heard the word ‘Alzheimer’ before, but she surely realises something is changing about Grandma Lovely. As if her thoughts are all the time slipping through her fingers. Now Juice has a mission: to help Grandma Lovely to retain as many memories as possible. In the seclusion of a quiet countryside home, every memory becomes a small treasure.

YOUNG PEOPLE, OLD PEOPLE & NOTHING IN BETWEEN (screened in the BIKY Festival, Special Mention of the Jury) was made as a student short film, shot in Thailand by young American-Thai director Parida Tantiwasadakran:

Parida Tantiwasadakran: I know the title is long and obnoxious, but it refers to the concept I had in mind for the movie. I wanted to depict young characters under the age of 10, and old people over the age of 60; no person “in between” the age gap would

appear on screen.

**It tells something about the perspective you took in making the film.**

Tantiwasadakran: I just felt that older people in movies are underrepresented, and children are not taken seriously. I wanted to push back against those things. I remember being a kid and hated being infantilised and talked down to. Now I realise the elderly can also sometimes be infantilised. My grandma lived through so many difficulties - even war - she had to fight for food and duck underground. Not many films tap into their complexity or recognise the nuances that they live with.

**‘Authentic’ was the first word that came to my mind.**

Tantiwasadakran: The story is inspired by the woman who took care of me the first 14 years of my life; she wasn’t blood-related but I called her Grandma. When I went back to Thailand and



went to see her, she could hardly remember me. She knew who I was, but she would go all the time between me and my mum when recalling the past. *“Remember how I saved your life pulling you out of the river” - “Eh... that was my mum.”* She giggled about it, but I found it heartbreaking.

**Did the decision to use a voice-over in the closing scene stem from that pain of not being recognised?**

Tantiwasadakran: I really wanted a framing device for the film in order to refer to the past and talk about the future. You can say the most important words of the film come at the

end - *“I may have lost her but she never lost me”* - I couldn’t get this across without a voice-over and I thought it was beautiful enough to take the risk.

**How was the chemistry between both actresses, young and old?**

Tantiwasadakran: We had two informal rehearsals, reading the script and hoping to make them feel comfortable with each other. Once they went on a walk together, holding hands, which made me very happy. It was both their first main role in a film. Deedee Piamwiriayaku (playing Juice), who was only seven, memorised 20 pages. Her mum practised with her



every day, and so did Suwinya Kung-sadan (Grandma Lovely) with her daughter.

**Behind this film is an international construction. You are Thai, living in LA, but working with a Thai team.**

Tantiwasadakran: I was born one hour outside Los Angeles and grew up in Southern California but I would go back to Thailand every summer. I just knew that I had to make this film there. Years ago I met my translator (and the film's narrator), Chanakarn Kaewchaivijit, at an art gallery in Thailand and we became friends. Then, a friend had given me the name of a producer she knew, Pichsinee Wongthipphun. I pitched the project to her and she

said yes. Next was my fantastic DoP, Nisha Jurairattanaporn. That's how the team came together.

**Is there also a Thai perspective on 'old age' to the movie?**

Chanakarn Kaewchaivijit: It depends on each family, but in general Thai people do respect the elderly. It is very much in our culture to take care of them. But how much you would draw from their wisdom depends on individual family traditions.

**In your film I recognise the entire Alzheimer process, with grandma trying to hide what is going on, until at a certain moment she can't hide it any longer, and that's when anger**

**and frustration set in.**

Tantiwasadakran: I talked to many people and picked up knowledge from their stories. Two weeks before shooting, a friend told me the script was too cheery. So I added the scene in which grandma gets angry over losing her favourite cup. When I think about what Alzheimer's can do to someone, I feel compassion, but I never thought about the anger someone might feel, knowing that they are losing themselves. If you were once a bright and capable person, and you're conscious enough to understand what is happening to you, how can you not be frustrated and angry?

**Then there is the closing scene...**

Tantiwasadakran: ... often referred to as 'the cow scene'; it is the one scene that people recall from my movie. I actually remember my Grandma telling me as a child: do you know that cows are sad when their babies are taken away from them? They cry! That sentence broke my heart so much. I never forgot it and added it verbatim.

**For that scene you actually needed a cow.**

Tantiwasadakran: Cows have been an element throughout the film on an invisible level. But for that closing scene I had to call my producer and

ask her: tell me if it sounds crazy, I don't want to be a director from hell and I expect you to say no, but do you think you can get me cows? "Well... I guess that's not too hard." In Los Angeles, they might charge you a thousand per cow.

**How can I justify a full page dedicated to cow stories?**

Tantiwasadakran: The farmers were so generous - *"of course you can film here but I can't guarantee that the cows will come out."* Usually they came out for a walk around 5 PM and if the leader walks in your direction, the other ones might just follow. 4:45 PM comes and the whole team is lined up ready to shoot, and there they come, walking straight towards us, observing us across the line just like how we were observing them. They were probably curious and wanted to know what was going on. In terms of continuity, I tried not to freak out. All I could do was put my trust in the cows and hope they would walk really slowly and that it would all edit correctly. Even the last shot with the cows walking towards the horizon, I could never have planned it. They just did it.

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