

THE COTTON CANDY MAN

Written by

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FADE IN:

**NOTE: THIS WILL BE SPOKEN IN CEBUANO.

EXT. DUMAGUETE CITY BOULEVARD - MORNING

It is a pristine morning of color in the sky and the fluffiest clouds imaginable. A few PEDESTRIANS walk along the boulevard, everyone at their own pace. Others sit on benches gazing at the sea, some with grief on their faces and others with contentment. Sunshine glows on everyone's countenance though.

DIMPLE (6) and DIMPLE'S MOTHER (22) sit on a concrete bench together under a towering, twisting tree. Its shadow blocks the sun from reaching them.

Dimple is dirty with torn, wretched clothes. Her mother isn't fairing much better clinging to a purse that has been stitched back together so many times it could be Frankenstein's. While she's 22, she looks like she's 17 skinny as a rail.

They are both silent. Dimple's mother is deep in thought, a mixture of agitation and worry etched on her brow. Dimple is restless. She looks around for anything interesting.

Nothing strikes her fancy. A sigh.

DIMPLE
Can we go now?

DIMPLE'S MOTHER
Not yet.

DIMPLE
How much longer?

DIMPLE'S MOTHER
Till I say so.

Dimple sighs again.

DIMPLE'S MOTHER (CONT'D)
Don't back sass me, young lady.

A beat.

A SELLER with necklaces and portable phone charges walks by. He holds out his collection to Dimple's mother.

SELLER

Good morning. Anything, young lady?

Dimple's mother flinches a bit at the pet name she just used for her daughter.

SELLER (CONT'D)

Or for your sister?

Dimple turns to the seller in surprise.

DIMPLE

She's my mother.

SELLER

Sorry! Sorry!

Dimple's mother glowers at him. He darts off.

DIMPLE'S MOTHER

Come on.

DIMPLE

Where do clouds come from?

Dimple's mother walks so quickly along the pavement Dimple has to jog to keep up.

DIMPLE'S MOTHER

Dead dreams.

DIMPLE

Dead dreams?

DIMPLE'S MOTHER

(sighs)

Water. Clouds come from water.

DIMPLE

But you said dead dreams first.

DIMPLE'S MOTHER

I was joking. Can't you take a joke?

DIMPLE

How does the water go up? I've never seen water go up.

She glances at the sea, questioning.

DIMPLE'S MOTHER

I don't know. It just does.

Dimple's mother laughs a hard, ugly laugh that's joyless.

DIMPLE'S MOTHER (CONT'D)
(pointing up)
The water goes up when the time's
up. Up up up, out of reach.

They walk over to the street and

CONTINUE TO QUEZON PARK

Dimple's mother speeds down the street without noticing anything.

On the other hand, Dimple tries to take in everything: the sights, the sounds-

She trips. A childish SHRIEK.

DIMPLE'S MOTHER (CONT'D)
(without glancing back)
Come on, Dimple!

That look of tears to come. Dimple gingerly gets up. Brushes the dirt off her scraped knees.

Something bright and colorful catches her eye across the street.

A stand of pinks, greens, blues, yellows, and purples brim with vibrancy at the corner of St. Catherine of Alexandria's cathedral. There is a COTTON CANDY MAN (31) weaving together the sugary fluff.

Dimple spots her mom passing him already.

She dashes out into the busy intersection and nearly gets hit. People YELL. Dimple's mother looks back, sees her daughter is fine, and rolls her eyes before going forward.

Dimple goes up to the Cotton Candy Man.

DIMPLE
How much for one?

COTTON CANDY MAN
90 pesos.

DIMPLE
The pink one?

COTTON CANDY MAN
(grinning)
Still 90 pesos.

Dimple's head goes down. She turns to catch up with her mother.

He watches the sad girl disappear behind the gated fence into the church.

INT. ST. CATHERINE'S OF ALEXANDRIA CATHEDRAL - CONTINUOUS

Dimple scans the pews looking for her mother. She's in the last row, kneeling. Beseeching.

DIMPLE'S MOTHER
(whispering)
Hail Mary, full of grace, the lord
is with you-

DIMPLE
(whispering but badly)
Can I have 90 pesos, please?

DIMPLE'S MOTHER
(sharply)
No.

DIMPLE
(getting louder)
Pleeeeeease.

DIMPLE'S MOTHER
Shhh. No.

DIMPLE
Well, how can I get 90 pesos?

DIMPLE'S MOTHER
What?

DIMPLE
How does someone (she gestures
around) make 90 pesos?

DIMPLE'S MOTHER
They work. What do you need 90
pesos for?

DIMPLE
Something special.

DIMPLE'S MOTHER
Which is?

DIMPLE
Cotton candy.

Dimple's mother loosens her clasped hands out of prayer. She grips the back of the pew hard. Her knuckles turn white.

DIMPLE'S MOTHER

If I had 90 pesos to give you, I wouldn't let you waste it on *cotton candy*.

DIMPLE

It's not a waste.

DIMPLE'S MOTHER

(seething in rage)

How do you know? You've never had it.

DIMPLE

(hesitantly)

Something that pretty can't be bad.

Another ugly laugh escapes the mother's lips.

DIMPLE'S MOTHER

Cotton candy rots your teeth. Many pretty things are bad for you.

Dejected, Dimple sinks down into her pew.

DIMPLE

So when a person works, how do they get the money?

DIMPLE'S MOTHER

(sighs)

Someone gives it to them.

DIMPLE

Who?

DIMPLE'S MOTHER

The boss.

DIMPLE

What's a boss?

DIMPLE'S MOTHER

For the love of god! That's enough!

DIMPLE

(muttering to herself)

I bet Jesus was a boss. He could eat all the cotton candy he wanted.

They both sit in silence.

Mass begins. The ROAR OF A DOWNPOUR can be heard outside the stain glass windows.

A low hum of a hymn crescendos.

A PRIEST begins his greetings, his gospel, his goodwill for his sheep. His words fill the background.

Mass drags on. Dimple appears bored out of her mind. She sits slumped in her seat.

Her mother glances down at Dimple, sees her poor posture, and smacks her to sit properly.

The donation basket circulates its way around. Eventually it gets to Dimple.

She eyes the money enviously. For a moment, her hand hovers over the loose bills and coins.

DIMPLE'S MOTHER
(hissing)
Don't you dare.

She seizes the basket out of Dimple's hands and drops a 5 peso coin in.

Dimple looks at the priest and flinches. He saw her contemplate stealing.

Words drone on and on. Mass gradually comes to an end.

The priest walks over to Dimple and her mother.

PRIEST
Do not take from the basket next
time, my child.

DIMPLE
Who gets the money?

DIMPLE'S MOTHER
Dimple!

PRIEST
The needy.

DIMPLE
What do they need?

PRIEST
Many things. Food. Shelter-

DIMPLE

I'm needy.

PRIEST

And what is it you need?

Dimple fidgets. She implores her mother with a look. Dimple's mother scowls.

DIMPLE

Cotton candy.

PRIEST

What a foolish dream! That is not something you need. Don't mix the two up, my child.

DIMPLE'S MOTHER

She needs to learn how to be grateful. *I* put food in your mouth. *I* give you a place to sleep. *I* take care of you every day. No one else, just me!

The priest places a hand on Dimple's head. She fidgets with more discomfort.

PRIEST

(closing eyes)

Let us pray for forgiveness, my child. 'Forgive me father, for I have sinned.'

Dimple remains silent.

PRIEST (CONT'D)

Repeat after me. 'Forgive me father, for I have sinned.'

DIMPLE

Forgive me father, for I have sinned.

PRIEST

I have tried to steal from you, from the poor-

DIMPLE

I have tried to steal from you, from the poor-

PRIEST

Who have righteously suffered.

DIMPLE
Who have righteously suffered.

PRIEST
I will not commit this sin again.

DIMPLE
I will not commit this sin again.

PRIEST
Amen.

DIMPLE
Amen.

He makes the sign of the cross and she follows suit. So does Dimple's mother.

DIMPLE'S MOTHER
Have a good afternoon, father.

PRIEST
And to you, my child.

Dimple's mother grabs her daughter by the wrist and escorts her

OUT TO THE STREET

DIMPLE
Why does he call you a child too?

DIMPLE'S MOTHER
Do not embarrass me like that ever again. As if I don't have enough to deal with. We have nothing, Dimple, nothing! No one to help us! And now you try to shame us in the church, will we have no dignity too?

DIMPLE
I'm sorry.

She hangs her head in shame. Her mother drags her like a rag doll down the busy road. It's lightly spitting rain.

EXT. KITCHEN - AFTERNOON

The kitchen is outside of a small bamboo hut that's in shambles. Drying clothes hang on a rusty wire, gently floating in the breeze.

Dimple's mother is sitting on a wooden seat with a hook-like device at the end, hacking away at a coconut for its meat.

She wipes the sweat from her brow. There is a big pile next to her.

Dimple comes around the corner and gives her mother a glass of water.

DIMPLE
Can I go play?

DIMPLE'S MOTHER
It's raining.

DIMPLE
It stopped. But it's too wet to help with laundry, right?

DIMPLE'S MOTHER
(sighs)
Yes, it's too wet to do laundry.

Dimple runs off. Her mother cries over the coconuts.

EXT. PINEAPPLE FARM - AFTERNOON

Dimple meanders under coconut trees and pineapples shooting up. She spots a FARMER chopping away at his fruit.

DIMPLE
Do you need help?

He looks at her in surprise.

DIMPLE (CONT'D)
For 90 pesos.

He laughs and shoos her away.

Dimple continues on her aimless

PATH THROUGH A FIELD

And passes caribou.

A giant truck goes by. It stops to let a passing dog cross the road. Dimple sneaks on board.

EXT. MARKET - AFTERNOON

Dimple hops off at the market. It's hustling and bustling. Bargains are heard, cargo is moved, the sound of buyers scurry to and fro.

Dimple sees an OLD WOMAN selling beans of every kind handling an exchange. She gives a customer her change.

DIMPLE

Do you need some help, mam? For 90 pesos?

The old woman laughs.

OLD WOMAN

I have my grandson.

A YOUNG BOY waves at Dimple from the corner. Without batting an eye, Dimple takes off.

MONTAGE BEGINS

**TRADITIONAL MUSIC PLAYS

-Dimple asks a FISHERMAN cutting up fish over ice if he needs help. He dismisses her.

-Dimple asks MOVERS moving large crates whether they need help or not but they ignore her.

-Dimple walks to a restaurant in town and asks a WAITRESS if she needs help as she carries a tray of food out. Ignored.

-Dimple passes a group of students at Silliman University and asks. They rudely guffaw in her face before departing.

-Dimple ends up at the shady drug swap corner of shacks and a whitened stream from detergent. She walks in on TEENAGERS playing a billiards game.

MONTAGE ENDS

EXT. SHADY CORNER - LATE AFTERNOON

Dimple eyes the caged roosters. The teenagers watch her.

TEENAGER #1

Are you lost, little girl?

DIMPLE

No.

TEENAGER #2
Maybe she wants to play.

He says a swear word.

TEENAGER #3
I bet she doesn't even know what
that means, do you?

They all laugh.

DIMPLE
Do you need help?

TEENAGER #1
Help?

DIMPLE
For 90 pesos?

They glance at one another in amusement.

TEENAGER #2
I'll tell you what you can do for
90 pesos.

TEENAGER #1
Knock it off.

TEENAGER #3
Just a handy!

TEENAGER #2
It's either me or an old white man.
Who would you rather she please?

TEENAGER #1
Stop it.

TEENAGER #3
Yeah, man, I was just kidding.

TEENAGER #2
Me too. Me too. Can't take a joke.

He's clearly not joking.

TEENAGER #1
Get out of here.

He motions for Dimple to leave. She runs away. Dimple

WALKS DOWN THE STREET

With the ocean beside her. It's serene. Peaceful. A few FISHERMEN in the distance.

MUSIC softly reverberates in the background. It steadily gets louder the more dejected Dimple looks on her mission.

Drums. A thick beat. The sound of traditional dance music. The banging of sticks can be heard.

EXT. DANCE STUDIO - CONTINUOUS

Dimple stops in front of the dance studio and peers into the windows. The loud music stops.

YOUNG GIRLS dash out with their things. PARENTS collect their kids in the parking lot.

INT. DANCE STUDIO - CONTINUOUS

Dimple furtively enters the studio. A DANCE TEACHER and a BUSINESSMAN are in a heated conversation.

DANCE TEACHER

I can't find someone, train her, and then have her compete in 2 days. It's impossible.

BUSINESSMAN

They have to compete-

DANCE TEACHER

I know, I know. But they can't-

BUSINESSMAN

You haven't even tried to find someone!

DANCE TEACHER

I just found out this morning. It's not my fault Danica broke her leg.

BUSINESSMAN

We're going to have to refund the parents for this trip and you know we can't do that.

DANCE TEACHER

I'll call the organizers, maybe they'll make an exception-

BUSINESSMAN

You know they won't.

The dance teacher is about to say something but her eyes catch sight of Dimple watching them.

DANCE TEACHER
Can I help you?

DIMPLE
Can I help you?

DANCE TEACHER
That's what I just said. Where's your mother?

DIMPLE
Do you need help? For 90 pesos?

DANCE TEACHER
Excuse me?

BUSINESSMAN
What's your name?

DIMPLE (CONT'D)
Dimple. I need 90 pesos. My mom says if I work for it, I can get 90 pesos.

The businessman turns to the teacher with raised eyebrows. He claps his hands.

BUSINESSMAN
See? A miracle.

DANCE TEACHER
No, no, nah-uh. Not going to happen.

He pulls out a purple bill.

BUSINESSMAN
Here, Dimple. Consider it an advancement. You'll get another one if you do this.

He winks at the teacher and heads out the door. She sighs.

DANCE TEACHER
Where's your mom?

DIMPLE
At home.

DANCE TEACHER
Does she know you're here?

DIMPLE
(confidently)
Yes.

DANCE TEACHER
And she's okay with you dancing?

DIMPLE
Yes.

DANCE TEACHER
Have you ever danced before?

DIMPLE
No.

Dimple sees the teacher's exasperation.

DIMPLE (CONT'D)
But I work hard.

DANCE TEACHER
(smiling)
That's good. Let's get to work
then.

She goes over to a stereo to turn the music back on. It
PLAYS. The teacher begins to instruct a certain movement.

SEVERAL HOURS PASS

Dimple progresses exceptionally well. The teacher is
impressed.

EXT. ST. CATHERINE'S OF ALEXANDRIA CATHEDRAL - EVENING

The dance teacher is in her car yelling through the open
window. Dimple stands on the street.

DANCE TEACHER
8am tomorrow morning. Sharp.

DIMPLE
Yes.

DANCE TEACHER
I'll just wait till your mother
comes.

Dimple waves to a random FEMALE PASSERBY on the street coming
her way.

DANCE TEACHER (CONT'D)

That's your mom? Great. Tell her
I'll meet her tomorrow, I've gotta
run!

She drives off. As soon as her car is out of sight, Dimple speeds down the street for the cotton candy stand.

He's nowhere to be seen.

Dimple is devastated, holding her money in hand.

A WORKMAN notices the girl just standing at the corner and her shell-shocked expression.

WORKMAN

What's wrong?

DIMPLE

Where's...where's the cotton candy?

WORKMAN

Oh, he moved to Escano. He's there
every evening.

Dimple immediately hails down a pedicab. She hops in. They

DRIVE DOWN ESCANO ROAD

There, with the blue ocean behind him, is the cotton candy man at his stand. The colors are still vivid. He's scrolling on his phone.

Dimple SHOUTS for the PEDICAB DRIVER to stop.

She hands him her precious purple bill. He gives her 90 pesos in change.

Dimple runs to the cotton candy man as fast as she can, nearly getting hit by a motorbike along the street again. She doesn't care.

DIMPLE

Here.

She wipes sweat from her brow. He looks down at her.

COTTON CANDY MAN

What color would you like?

DIMPLE

Pink, please.

He pulls one down for her. She jumps up and down in anticipation.

Dimple takes her first bite of cotton candy overlooking the sea. White fluffy clouds decorate the sky. It's pure ecstasy.

A BOY (6) who's just as dirty in torn clothes as she is approaches her. He watches her devour the sugary goodness.

Dimple looks at him, back at her cotton candy, and then back to him.

She splits it in half. Gives it to the boy. He smiles from ear to ear.

They eat their cotton candy together.

The cotton candy man watches them in amusement, then joins them.

COTTON CANDY MAN

Do you know what cotton candy is made of?

DIMPLE

Dead dreams.

COTTON CANDY MAN

What?!

DIMPLE

It's a joke.

He looks at her suspiciously, unsure to laugh or not.

COTTON CANDY MAN

Sugar. Sweet, sweet sugar.

He follows her gaze to the clouds. The boy is utterly engrossed in his treat.

DIMPLE

My mom says clouds are made of dead dreams.

The cotton candy man doesn't know how to react to this new information.

COTTON CANDY MAN

Look at them. They are up so high because they always reach for their dreams and you know what? They get there. Every time.

DIMPLE
Every time?

COTTON CANDY MAN
Every time. Sometimes people just forget how to reach.

DIMPLE
Can you reach?

COTTON CANDY MAN
I can. Not too many people know I went to college. I paid for it selling cotton candy.

DIMPLE
What's college?

COTTON CANDY MAN
School. I paid for school.

DIMPLE
What happened?

COTTON CANDY MAN
I missed selling cotton candy when I got a "good job" (air quotes). It runs in my veins.

DIMPLE
I want cotton candy to run in my veins.

He laughs.

COTTON CANDY MAN
My grandfather made cotton candy. My father made cotton candy. And now I make it. Want to see?

Dimple trails after him alight with curiosity.

He opens up his contraption: a steel pedal that's cranked for churning. He opens up the giant pot where the cotton candy is spun, pulls out a little merry-go-round looking device, and sets it on fire.

He spins cotton candy into creation.

When it's done, he wraps it up for Dimple.

DIMPLE
I don't have 90 pesos anymore.

COTTON CANDY MAN

It's buy one get one free today.
And don't worry, you'll get 90
pesos again. Money comes and goes
like water. Like clouds.

DIMPLE

Thank you.

INT. DIMPLE'S HOME - NIGHT

Dimple's mother is seated in an old bamboo chair, clearly
panicked about her daughter's absence.

Dimple quietly opens the front door.

DIMPLE'S MOTHER

Where have you been? I asked the
neighbors! You know I don't have
load to call-

The tirade begins. She's full on screaming.

Dimple pulls out the cotton candy and gives it to her mother
as a peace offering. Tears streak down her face.

DIMPLE

It's for you. It's for you.

DIMPLE'S MOTHER

You stole this?!

DIMPLE

No! I worked for it!

A beat.

Dimple's mother collapses to the ground and hugs her daughter
close. She's crying too.

They hug and weep and laugh.

DIMPLE (CONT'D)

(opens the bag)

Have some. It will make you happy.

DIMPLE'S MOTHER

(trying it)

This *is* good. It's my first time.

Dimple embraces her mother. She returns it.

DIMPLE
What's your dream, mom?

DIMPLE'S MOTHER
(holding her daughter's
face)
To be a good mother. I'm so sorry,
Dimple. I'm so so sorry.

DIMPLE
It's okay. We have cotton candy
now.

FADE TO BLACK.