

MIT Student

11.139 | City in Film

February 23, 2015

### Home

“One dolla! One dolla!” A man calls out with a thick accent. He stands behind a table laden with ripe fruits and vegetables; cardboard signs silently advertise the same mantra he chants. “One dolla!” He shouts to passerby, whose eyes and noses poke out from under thick layers of heavy jackets, knit scarves, and wool hats. Puffs of chilled breath hover around their concealed lips as they rush away to the nearest source of warmth.

Across from him another man displays another table of produce. “3 for \$1” a sign says, nestled within a crate of avocados; “3 for \$2” says another behind a stack of plastic boxes filled with blackberries. The man sees me approach and calls to me in a similar accent of a different flavor, “Hello, honey! What can I do for you?” The wrinkles at the corner of his eyes crinkle with the warmth of his hearty smile as he points to the avocados and says “very soft, very nice” then picks up an apple and says “very hard, very sweet,” his “r”s rolling gently off his tongue. As I hand him a few dollars to pick out some fruit, his smile gets bigger. “Very good!” he commends as he hands me a bag. As I make my selections, he greets another woman with “honey!” and gestures her attention to the bananas.

A row of stalls just like these two line the sides of the street as far as my eye can see. At the edge of the road where I stand, the stalls are exposed to the elements and the crowd is thin. The wind nips the rosy flesh of people’s cheeks as their heads burrow deeper into their coats and their thoughts. Deeper in, the hustle and bustle of customers thickens. Tarps lining the stalls billow in oscillating patterns as they shield buyers and sellers from the biting air and keep in the warmth of portable electric heaters. The wind yaps and the heaters whirl in a vigorous debate as lively accented voices float over the din with shouts of prices and produce.

This is the symphony of the city. Relentless yet invigorating. Intense yet soothing.

An older Asian woman standing behind her produce smiles contentedly at the scene before her with a sense of pride. A younger woman, perhaps her daughter, greets incoming customers and bustles around to grab them what they need. "One pound?" she asks one. "No more beans," she says to another. "Will there be more tomorrow?" "Yes, tomorrow. Come in the morning." People weave in and out of their makeshift tarp; some stop by to examine the goods; others only pass through to steal just a small bit of warmth before moving on.

As I tunnel deeper into the market, the prices rise, the avocados grow larger, the stalls get closer, and the heaters whirl louder. The stalls keep going, winding down the road, around a corner, filling every cranny and crevice of this unassuming street. In the thick of it all, I cannot see the John F. Kennedy Federal Building or Boston City Hall bordering the market.

All I see is the faces of the immigrant families that run these stalls, and I wonder if this is their first winter, just like the fruit they sell. I wonder how many miles they have traveled from the landscapes of their childhood. Perhaps farther than the vegetables they display. And I wonder if despite the differences in their mother tongues, they find comfort in the closeness of each other's bodies.

I wonder if they have found a new home.

I gaze at a man whose weathered hands show years of life and memories. And as if he has heard my question, the corners of his mouth gently tug upward. *Yes, his smile reveals, yes I have.*

MIT OpenCourseWare  
<http://ocw.mit.edu>

11.139 / 11.239 The City in Film  
Spring 2015

For information about citing these materials or our Terms of Use, visit: <http://ocw.mit.edu/terms>.