

Meet Me at the Edge of the World

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It was a blue plastic case. About the size of the palm of his hand. It was unfamiliar to him. Winston had never seen her hold it so he couldn't be sure it had been hers. He opened it by pushing the two sides apart and inside was a note written on a piece of ripped paper, it was a song lyric he knew, "Take me to the river, drop me in the water". Then, in her own words, "Or maybe just Cali and the Pacific, haha". Her last note to him. It was meant as a joke but like much of her humor she meant it to be instructive.

PRESENT DAY

Lou's Car, a Subaru station wagon. Green. Lou (18) Driving, James (18) alongside asleep, Ellis (18) in the back sleeping with her head on Winston's lap. Winston (18) is looking out the window.

Sound of the road, occasional Cars.

Lou looks in the rearview mirror at Winston.

LOU
Hey, Where are you?

WINSTON
Years ago.

LOU
With Arden?

WINSTON
Yes

LOU
Where?

WINSTON
Camping

ELLIS
You went camping?

WINSTON
Yes. All the time. When we were little.

ELLIS

She never told me.

WINSTON

She was happy then. She didn't like talking about when she was happy. My parents used to take us when they felt like trying to be a family. Put us in tents, get closer to nature, get us worried about the bears and wolves so we could stop thinking about the other shit eating us up.

ELLIS

You shared a tent together.

WINSTON

Yeah, when she was old enough. I think my parents realized they couldn't do anything with her and maybe they thought I could help her grow up. It was probably the most fun we ever had together. We'd stay up late, tell stories, talk, share music, tell bad jokes, whisper secrets until my parents told us to go to sleep. She used to talk in her sleep and wriggle about and move her whole sleeping bag in the tent and then shout out in the dark for my dad to come rescue her and place her back on her sleeping pad. He would come in, pick her up, put her back on the pad, and she'd go back to sleep like it never happened. In the morning, she'd swear it never happened.

ELLIS

Wow.

WINSTON

Yeah. She never called out for me, even though I was right there. I never understood that.

LOU

Maybe she wanted to know if your dad loved her. Like if he would come rescue her.

WINSTON

Arden never asked for help from anyone. Especially my parents.

LOU

Exactly.

BACK THEN

Winston (12) and Arden (10) are in a tent, they are standing on their sleeping bags doing air guitar to the music (Killing in the name of by Rage Against The Machine). They are rocking out. Max rocking out. Wild, crazy, head rolling, hair shaking, rocking out. They are competing for who can rock out more. This goes on for awhile until Dad says, "Hey, knock it off in there". Winston jumps for the music to shut it off, Arden dives onto her sleeping bag laughing (trying to

suppress the “noise” of her laugh), Winston signals, be quiet for a second’, they freeze and listen, then Arden starts cracking up. She can’t help it. Winston starts laughing with her.

ARDEN (*whispering/laughing*)
What the fuck? You’re such a pussy

WINSTON
Oh, that’s nice

ARDEN
Well you are.

WINSTON
Why? If we keep playing Dad’s just gonna yell

ARDEN
So? When he leaves, you just turn it back on quieter

WINSTON
Quieter?

ARDEN
Yes

WINSTON
That’s a word.

ARDEN
Don’t be a dick.

WINSTON
You know for a 12-year-old your use of language is really...

ARDEN
Crappy?

WINSTON
Yes.

(They look at each other and laugh)

DAD'S VOICE

Winston?

WINSTON

Yeah dad

DAD'S VOICE

Keep it down, time to sleep.

WINSTON

Got it

DAD'S VOICE

Goodnight you guys

WINSTON & ARDEN

Night dad!

ARDEN

Wow

WINSTON

What?

ARDEN

That was so "happy family"

WINSTON

So, what's wrong with that

ARDEN

Nothing I guess

WINSTON

Let's go to sleep

ARDEN

I can't

WINSTON

Fine, turn out the lights then and lie here till you feel sleepy

ARDEN

K

Winston turns off the lamp by the sleeping bags, they lie down staring up thru the tent ceiling at the sky.

ARDEN

Stars

WINSTON (*yawning*)

Yep (*pause, silence, crickets*) Are you OK?

ARDEN

Yes.

WINSTON

OK

ARDEN

You have to stop pretending Win

WINSTON

What?

ARDEN

Pretending like it's going to be ok.

WINSTON

I'm not

ARDEN

You are. They're a mess

WINSTON

What are you talking about

ARDEN

They fought all the way here.

WINSTON

They didn't fight, mom just didn't like being in the car.

ARDEN

Fine.

(Silence)

WINSTON

You think they'll stay together?

ARDEN

No. *(Silence)* I hope not

WINSTON

That's a shitty thing to say

ARDEN

It's the truth. They hate each other

WINSTON

They don't

ARDEN

They do. They stay together because of you Win.

WINSTON

Stop

ARDEN

It's true

WINSTON

You too.

ARDEN

No. I'm just what came after.

WINSTON

After what?

ARDEN

After they fell out of love.

WINSTON

You don't fall out of love

ARDEN

Yes, you do. They did. Happens all the time. You need to tell them to stop. We don't need them together.

WINSTON

I'm not doing that.

ARDEN

Why?

(Silence)

WINSTON

I can't.

ARDEN

I know.

PRESENT DAY

The Car – Lou Driving, James and Ellis still dozing. Winston watching the road.

Sound Of The Road, Occasional Cars

ELLIS (*Waking up, getting up to look out the window*)

Where are we?

WINSTON

Lost

ELLIS
Stop

LOU
New Mexico

ELLIS
Unlikely

LOU
Why?

ELLIS
Longest I've slept in 2 days is 3 hours, when I went to sleep we were in Chicago, headed west, and we're still headed west, to get to New Mexico from Chicago would be like 1000 miles and would have involved at least 2 stops and I've woken up every time we've stopped, so, yeah, no way...

LOU
We drugged you.

ELLIS
Oh. Well in that case New Mexico is great progress. Nice work team.

JAMES
Team?

WINSTON
What's wrong with you?

JAMES
Nothing

WINSTON
Then why are you acting like a little bitch?

James turns to the back to say something to Winston but catches Lou's eyes, they say, "don't".

(Silence)

JAMES *(To Lou)*
How long will it take?

LOU
The trip or...

JAMES
The trip.

LOU
A week at most.

JAMES
No way.

WINSTON
Yes way

JAMES
This is stupid.

WINSTON
Fine. Lou, next city, drop him at the airport. I can't listen to this for 6 days.

JAMES
What? It's a long way to go for someone that's...

LOU
James...

WINSTON
Shut up. You don't wanna go, then leave. You had the option before we left, you still have the option, but please make up your mind what you want and just go do what you need to do, ok?

JAMES
Sounds so easy doesn't it Win?

WINSTON
What does that mean?

JAMES
You know exactly what it means

WINSTON
You know, you weren't always an asshole.

JAMES
Until what Win, hm? What is this anyway? Your little make-up tour? Sorry you died Sis, I got you now though, don't you worry...

LOU
James.

WINSTON
I swear to god I'm going to fucking kill you (*Goes for James in the front seat, Ellis gets in the way.*)

ELLIS
Stop, WIN, please! (*Win retreats pretty quickly*)

LOU
Please stop or at least wait until we stop driving...I'll pull over in a bit and you can both go kill each other. Just stop. James, just shut-up for 5 minutes. Win, ignore him, he's just grumpy from being in the car. Shit...

WINSTON
Why are you here?

JAMES
I don't know. She was my friend. I cared about her. I care about her

WINSTON
Then stop acting like a dick

JAMES
I'm not. I'm trying to look out for you. That's what people do when they care about each other. Not everybody just sits and pouts when the people they love decide to do something stupid.

WINSTON
If you think it's so stupid, why are you here?

JAMES
I don't know.

ELLIS
You said it James, you cared about her.

JAMES
Yeah but I don't know if that means I should be driving cross country with her ashes.

WINSTON
Go. Don't go. I don't care. Just make up your fucking mind, ok?

JAMES (*Looking out the window*)
Sure. Whatever.

BACK THEN

James (16) walks up the brick steps to the doorway of Win (16) and Arden's (14) house. Plants on either side of the entrance. He is here to see Win. Arden answers the door.

JAMES

Hey

ARDEN

Hey

She turns and walks away from him.

JAMES

Win here?

ARDEN

He's upstairs, should I get him?

She turns and stares at him. It's a challenge. Silence as they look at each other.

JAMES

I'll text him

ARDEN

OK

She turns and walks over to a table where there is a notebook out. She sits down to write.

JAMES

What are you writing?

ARDEN

A poem

JAMES

About?

ARDEN

I don't know.

JAMES

Oh

She writes, he watches her.

Win comes in.

WIN
Hey

JAMES
Hey

WIN
Should we go?

JAMES
Yeah, I guess

They start to go. James stops.

JAMES
Arden

ARDEN *(She doesn't look up)*
Yeah?

JAMES
Can I read it?

ARDEN
What?

JAMES
The poem.

ARDEN *(She looks up)*
I don't know. Maybe.

PRESENT DAY

Ellis is up now, looking out the window. She is singing quietly, out loud but to herself, something heartfelt, folk singer-songwriter style, feeling the wind and sun on her face. Winston is asleep. James is reading something on his phone. Lou is still driving.

Winston half wakes, looks out the window and notices something out on the horizon, trying to squeeze his eyes to see.

WINSTON
What is that?

JAMES
What is what?

WINSTON (*pointing*)
That.

JAMES
Where?

WINSTON
There. (*Silence*) It's a person

JAMES
Out here?

ELLIS
Yes

LOU
Yep, that's definitely a person.

ELLIS
It looks like a girl

Dallas (17) is hitchhiking. She is calm. She appears VERY sure of what she is doing but concurrently terrified. She is strong and looks like she could take care of herself.

LOU
She's hitchhiking.

WINSTON
Where did she come from?

Lou checks her rear view, puts on her blinker, starts to slow and pull over.

JAMES
What are you doing?

WINSTON
She's pulling over

JAMES
I can see that but why...

ELLIS
We're going to give her a ride

JAMES
No

WINSTON
Yes

LOU
Person like that, out here, in the middle of nowhere. They need help.

JAMES
No way.

WINSTON
Come on James I thought you were into helping people.

JAMES
You're an asshole.

ELLIS
Shhhh...

She rolls down the backseat passenger side window

Hi!

LOU
Hitting the window button to lower the windshield on J's side.

JAMES
Noticing the window on his side going down and turning to Lou.

What the hell?

ELLIS
Shhh

LOU *(To Dallas)*
Hey!

DALLAS
Hey

LOU
Where you going?

DALLAS
Uh... West

LOU
Us too

WINSTON
You want a ride?

DALLAS
I guess

JAMES
You guess?

ELLIS
Shut up James. (*Opening her door*) Here, hop in, you wanna throw your stuff in back?

DALLAS (*A little nervously*)
No, thanks.

Dallas (17) gets in the car, Lou signals, looks over her left shoulder and pulls back out onto the freeway.

(SILENCE, just the road)

LOU
So, LA?

DALLAS
I guess

(SILENCE, just the road)

LOU
I'm Lou

DALLAS
Hi Lou, I'm Dallas

ELLIS
I'm Ellis

DALLAS
Hey

WINSTON
Winston

DALLAS
Hi

(Pause, James says nothing)

LOU *(To James)*
And this is where you say, Hi, I'm James. Sorry Dallas normally he's a little...

JAMES
Good afternoon Dallas, welcome aboard, I'm James and I'll be your host for this cruise

LOU
Nice.

JAMES
Whatever.

LOU
Sorry Dallas, try to ignore him. That's what we do.

Looks at Dallas in the rearview but Dallas doesn't say anything just looks out the window)

(LONG SILENCE)

LOU
We're headed to the ocean

ELLIS
We're taking his *(indicating Winston)* sister there. We're going to throw her in the ocean.

JAMES
Ellis!

DALLAS
Uh, ok, *(Thinking, looking at Lou, indicating)* is she the sister?

ELLIS
Oh, uh, no *(Reaching for the box with Arden's ashes)* this is her

JAMES
Jesus

DALLAS

Oh

ELLIS

Yeah. She's dead. (*Silence*) You want to come?

JAMES

Are you kidding me?

LOU

Uh, Ellis? (*to DALLAS*) Sorry

DALLAS

Sure.

ELLIS (*to Winston*)

Is that ok?

WINSTON (*looking at DALLAS*)

Sure.

JAMES

Jesus

(*Long silence*)

LOU

Dallas is a great name. I love that name.

DALLAS

Thanks. It means knowing or wise. My mom thought I was telepathic. She said she could see it in my eyes. She wanted me to be in the circus.

JAMES

And are you?

DALLAS

What?

JAMES

Telepathic.

DALLAS

No, I don't think so

JAMES

Good, because I'd be horrified if you could read my thoughts right now

LOU

Nice James. Always so friendly...

JAMES

Whatever...so are you in the circus?

WINSTON

Why are you always auditioning to be the permanent asshole?

JAMES

What? She said her mom wanted her to be in the circus.

WINSTON

Just shut up ok?

ELLIS

Why were you hitchhiking?

DALLAS

I don't have a car

ELLIS

Oh

(Long silence)

ELLIS

I think she's happy about this

LOU

What?

JAMES

Who?

ELLIS

Arden

LOU

Oh

ELLIS

Yeah

JAMES
Really?

ELLIS
Yes. I think she knows.

JAMES
Sure.

ELLIS
Don't do that.

JAMES
What?

ELLIS
Just agree with me

JAMES
What do you want me to say?

ELLIS
You don't think I can feel her?

JAMES
No, I don't think you can feel her. She's dead

LOU (*Looking at Winston in the rear view*)
James

ELLIS
That's fine. At least he's being honest now. Continue

JAMES
What?

ELLIS
You don't think I know what Arden is feeling.

JAMES
That's right.

ELLIS
Because she's dead.

JAMES
That's right.

ELLIS
Well what assures you you're not dead right now?

JAMES
Really? We're going to go into this, now are we?

ELLIS
Well, come on, you're the one that started it.

JAMES
Fine. You know what she's feeling. So, tell us Ellis, tell us, what is she feeling right now as we drive across the middle of freakin' nowhere.

ELLIS
I think she's happy we're all together.

JAMES
OK

ELLIS
And headed to where she wanted to go.

JAMES
Fine. Is that it?

ELLIS
Nope.

JAMES
What else?

ELLIS
She knows you're scared to death to admit she's gone.

JAMES
Yeah, well, can she hear you too?

ELLIS
I don't know. Maybe.

JAMES
Well tell her I said fuck her and fuck you too.

(Long silence)

DALLAS
I think the dead listen

JAMES
Shit.

ELLIS
You do?

DALLAS
Yes

LOU
How so?

DALLAS
What's the alternative?

WINSTON
What do you mean?

DALLAS
Well like they're just not there anymore? Like magic?

JAMES
Yes, that's right, like magic, Arden was here, now she's ashes in a box and can't hear us. End of story.

DALLAS
But if you talked to her right now you know what she'd say, right?

JAMES
Yes, we're out of our minds driving cross country to fulfill a wish for someone who isn't here anymore.

DALLAS
Exactly. You hear her words but she's not here just like if she was alive but not present.

ELLIS
But it's in our heads

DALLAS
What's the difference?

LOU

This shit's getting deep, I need some food.

ELLIS

Is it all a dream?

DALLAS

What?

ELLIS

All of this

DALLAS

No. I don't know. Depends on what you think of as a dream I guess. But I think all of what we experience is in our head in some way. So, if someone dies and they are still in our head. I would say their body may be gone but what we know as them is still there.

WINSTON

Maybe you're right.

ELLIS

I like that.

(SILENCE, just the road)

BACK THEN

Ellis(17) at Arden's (15) house. They sit at a table by the window in their family's kitchen. Ellis has her nail kit on the table, little colored bottles out. Ellis is looking at Arden's nails which she is about to paint.

ELLIS

Black?

ARDEN

And Red

ELLIS

Two colors.

ARDEN

Yes.

ELLIS

OK

ARDEN
What?

ELLIS
Nothing. I've never seen anyone do that.

ARDEN
Oh.

ELLIS
No, it's fine, it's cool. It'll look great.

ARDEN
OK

ELLIS
Give me your hand. So which color first?

ARDEN
Red.

ELLIS
OK

(SILENCE, Ellis paints her nails)

ARDEN
You like Win?

ELLIS
Yes

ARDEN
That's good.

ELLIS
I'm glad you think so.

ARDEN
Will you stay with him?

ELLIS
What?

ARDEN

You know...

ELLIS

Uh, I don't know, I guess, I mean, I hope so

ARDEN

That's good. You can't always do what he says you know.

ELLIS

What?

ARDEN

You can't always do what he says. I mean he won't tell you what he wants because sometimes he's afraid. You'll have to make him do things he's not sure about

ELLIS

Like what?

ARDEN

Like sex or like marrying you, stuff like that, he won't ask

ELLIS

Oh...ok, got it

ARDEN

You love him.

ELLIS

Yes.

ARDEN

Yeah, so, you'll have to ask him. It'll be up to you.

ELLIS

Ok. (Silence) I'll remember that.

ARDEN

Good.

PRESENT DAY

Later, it's evening now, Win is driving, Lou, James and Dallas are asleep in the back seat. Ellis is up front with Winston and looking out the window when she turns and says,

ELLIS

Hey

WINSTON

Hey

ELLIS

Where are you?

WINSTON

Lost.

ELLIS

I know. (*Silence*) Are you with Arden?

WINSTON

Yes. Sometimes. I hear her laughing. At us. Like she knew all along how it would turn out.

ELLIS

I told her I loved you before I told you.

WINSTON

That's good. I'm glad she knew.

(*SILENCE*)

ELLIS

Lou was right, you know. You couldn't have stopped her. She went to hell. She knew you wouldn't go or wouldn't find her until it was too late. There was nothing you could have done.

WINSTON

It would have been better than this

ELLIS

No.

WINSTON

What made my life more important than hers?

ELLIS

You decided to live.

WINSTON

How is that a choice?

ELLIS

I don't know, but it is. At a certain point, you see so much, like what you saw with Arden or like what happens when they shoot up a school. It's horrible and in the middle of all that are these choices we make, a lot of the time we don't even know it's happening but there it is. You choose. You react. Whoever you are in that moment just comes out. Maybe it wasn't the best choice or the one you hoped you'd make but it was your choice and so now you're alive and you have to decide what to do next.

WINSTON

I want to build her a monument

ELLIS

That sounds good

WINSTON

Two parents fighting while a baby carriage rolls away

ELLIS

That's kinda cliché

WINSTON

Maybe, but it says what needs to be said

ELLIS

It wasn't just them you know or you

WINSTON

What do you mean?

ELLIS

A lot of us watched it happen

WINSTON

El. You were there. You gave her money. You did a lot.

ELLIS

Maybe

WINSTON

No, not maybe.

ELLIS

I could have stayed with her. I hated being at school without her. I could have stayed with her until she agreed to stop, or I could have stopped her. It's not hard to figure out, you just stay. There's not a lot she could have done.

WINSTON

She would have found a way back to it.

ELLIS

She was strong. She knew what she was doing. I hate thinking that, but I know it's true.

WINSTON

You're right.

ELLIS

So here we are.

WINSTON

Stuck with living.

BACK THEN

Winston (15) is asleep in his sleeping bag. He is sleeping on his left side with his right hand on the floor near his face. Arden (13) is sitting beside him looking at him. She has a small bracelet made of thread and a few beads in her hand that she has made for him. She watches him sleep. Finally, she decides to try and tie the bracelet around his wrist. She is very focused on carefully slipping the thread underneath his wrist and tying the two ends together. As she does this Winston slowly opens his eyes and watches her without moving. She is unaware that he is awake.

WINSTON

What is that?

ARDEN

It's a bracelet I made.

WINSTON

Oh.

ARDEN

It's called a Rakhi

WINSTON

Hmm...

ARDEN

Thank you. Happy Raksha Bandhan.

WINSTON

What?

ARDEN

It means I am your protector and will always look out for you and take care of you wherever you are and however far apart we may grow.

WINSTON

How do you know about this?

ARDEN

Picking up her phone, she reads something, then takes a picture of his wrist.

School. A friend. We did a cultural traditions thing, and this is what she showed us.

WINSTON

So, you are my protector now.

ARDEN

Yes. Forever.

WINSTON

OK. Thank you.

ARDEN

You're welcome.

WINSTON

Does this mean I have to wake up now or can I go back to sleep?

ARDEN

You can sleep

WINSTON

OK. What are you going to do?

ARDEN

I'm going to watch over you.

WINSTON

OK

PRESENT DAY

Lou is driving now with James in the front passenger seat. Winston is asleep next to his window. Ellis is also asleep. Dallas is messaging on her phone with her earphones on and reading something.

LOU
I need a cigarette

JAMES
You don't smoke

LOU
I know but it's always like in the movies when they get to that point where something needs to happen, and somebody says, "I need a cigarette"

JAMES
Reaches into his backpack and pulls out some pills, puts one in his hand, then cuts it in half.

Here

LOU
What's that?

JAMES
Half a Prozac

LOU
Jesus, I don't need that shit

JAMES
Better than a cigarette, less damage to your lungs and cuts your anxiety in two

LOU
Whatever

JAMES
Don't talk trash til you try it *(takes the pill)*

LOU
What are you anxious about

JAMES
Everything

LOU
I don't get that

JAMES
What?

LOU
You and anxiety

JAMES
What's not to get. The world's a tragic pit of despair and no one cares. Our president's a lying, philandering, abusive, racist, dangerous psychopath...we go to school every day wondering who the shooter is and the only alternative is to find God, who's already dead or pledge our allegiance to some cause like the environment...we are gloriously and righteously fucked or like my Great Aunt Helen used to say, "Darlin', we're all just going to hell in a handbasket"

LOU
Thank you, great Aunt Helen.

JAMES
Am I making you feel perky?

LOU
Uh, Not. So, I guess a Prozac a day keeps the monsters away

JAMES
Yep.

LOU
Makes sense to me.

JAMES
Yep.

LOU
Whatever works.

JAMES
So, what ails you my dear?

LOU
(*Silence*) Anger

JAMES
Oh, this should be good, what are you angry about?

LOU

Everything. I don't know. Maybe I'm not angry. Maybe I'm just sad or...

JAMES

What?

LOU

Or I feel guilty.

JAMES

About what?

LOU

Arden.

JAMES

What?

LOU

I knew James. I knew before Win. I saw her.

BACK THEN

Arden (15), is at school, outside in a parking lot, after lunch, sitting by herself. She looks around, pulls a small bottle of pills from her pocket, takes 2 and chews and swallows. Lou (17) after parking her car, sees Arden across the way as she takes the pills and stuffs the bottle away, she watches Arden for a bit then walks over.

LOU

Hey

ARDEN

Hey

Staring at Lou

LOU

What are you doing?

ARDEN

What?

Lou keeps looking at her; Arden stares back hard at her. There is a pause before she speaks.

ARDEN (*Confronting Lou*)
Getting by, how about you?

LOU
What is that?

ARDEN
What?

LOU
Arden

ARDEN
Painkiller

LOU
Really?

ARDEN
Yes

LOU
What hurts?

ARDEN
Everything

LOU
Ar...

ARDEN
Yeah, no, I'm not doing this, I gotta go. (*She gets up and leaves, leaving Lou there*)

PRESENT DAY

JAMES
That's not your fault Lou. You tried. She wasn't going to listen.

LOU

Yeah, so anyway, now, I'm just angry, or sometimes I just start crying, then I get pissed off for acting like a "little girl" so then I just get angry again. Kind of bathe in it sometimes. I saw this Ted Talk once where this woman said we're all liars and that it's something genetically built into what we do, so great, now I've got to get past genetics in order to move towards being a decent person. But then I thought, she's right. So, I went down to our basement where my dad keeps his boxing shit and I walked over to the punching bag and I hit it. I hit it as hard as I could. I balled up my fist and I squeezed and I hit it. Then I hit it again. And again. And Again....I think I hit it twenty or thirty times until my hands turned red and the skin on my knuckles started to blister and peel. Then I hit it with my other hand another 20 times or so until I was out of breath and I just sat there listening to the clock ticking, and the sound of my little sister's feet walking across the kitchen upstairs, and I thought so what's the goddamned point of all this anyway. Then I got up and put my dad's gloves on and swung at the bag some more until my arms felt heavy and I was sweating. Just hitting something felt good. I could feel my heart and the blood in me and my sweat and I didn't want to do anything about any of it, fix it or change it or anything. I just wanted to look and listen and breathe and think. And there was this little tiny space in my head where I could fit and I thought I can get thru another day.

JAMES

Well that sounds good

LOU

Yeah, well at least I'm not walking around like a depression zombie

JAMES

Really?

LOU

Well you say it helps but everyone I know looks so flattened by meds it's scary. Like, you can't get angry OR happy or anything...just...

JAMES

Blah?

LOU

Yeah

JAMES

Yeah well that's pretty much the story but at least we're not...

James looked behind him to see if Winston and Ellis were still sleeping

LOU

What?

JAMES

You know.

James wanted to say, "at least we're not dead like Arden" but he couldn't.

LOU (*Follows James eyes and gets it*)

Maybe you're right.

LATER. PRESENT DAY.

It's nighttime now. Lou is driving, everyone else is asleep. Winston's head on Ellis's shoulder. Win's body reflexively tightens up and he squirms against Ellis and speaks in his dream.

WIN

Blankets...you need blankets...

ELLIS (*Waking*)

Win, shh, it's ok, go back to sleep

LOU (*Looking at Ellis in the rearview*)

He's talking again?

ELLIS

Yeah

LOU

What's he saying

ELLIS

Something about blankets

LOU

Is he cold? Should I turn on some heat?

ELLIS

No, I don't think so.

BACK THEN

It is winter and night. Cold. Dark. Winston (17) is wearing a jacket, hat, and gloves. He is on a side street off of downtown. There are garbage cans, dumpsters, and stuff put out on the street. He's looking for Arden (15). He comes on someone in a seated position but curled up against the cold. At first he can't tell who it is. They are leaning against a wall trying to hide from the wind. It's Arden, she is pale, white, skinny, strung out. Like a ghost.

WINSTON

Arden

ARDEN

She doesn't move at first. Then she looks at him thru her hair.

Win. (Silence) (She looks away) How did you find me?

WINSTON

Ellis

ARDEN

El. I Love you El.

WINSTON

Yes

ARDEN

She gave me money.

WINSTON

I know

ARDEN

Anything to be liked. So transparent.

WINSTON

She loves you

ARDEN

No.

WINSTON

Yes. (*Silence, just the wind*) You look like shit

ARDEN

Thanks bro. (*Silence*) Do you have money?

WINSTON

A little

ARDEN

Can I have it?

WINSTON

Yes, here (*Hands her whatever cash he has, a few dollars, he watches how she takes it and puts it away.*)

ARDEN

What?

Silence. They look at each other.

WINSTON

You gotta come home

ARDEN

No

WINSTON

Ar...

ARDEN

No

WINSTON

Mom says...

ARDEN
I don't care what she says

WINSTON
Ar...

ARDEN
Go away

WINSTON
No

ARDEN
I'm dying.

WINSTON
No

ARDEN
Win. Yes. Look at me. I'm already dead.

WINSTON
We can get you help. Dad says if we can...

ARDEN
No. I tried. I can't. I just want more. Please Win, just leave. Leave. GET OUT. GO. I'M
ALREADY DEAD. JUST GO!

*She starts coughing, he moves toward her and she takes out a knife. It is a rusty old thing she's
recovered from a dumpster for self protection. She stops coughing. Her voice is calm.*

Winston I will kill you if you come closer. I don't want to, but I will. You know I will. Please
don't.

*Winston stops and looks at her for a long time until both relax a bit. Finally, he turns and starts
walking away. Arden starts coughing again. Winston breaks into a run and does not look back.*

MEXICO BY THE STAVES

Winston and Arden's father and mother are seated at a round table. It is late afternoon and the lights are out. A professional looking woman comes in and places an urn with Arden's ashes, comes in with Arden's ashes and places them on the table and leaves.

Arden's parents sit and stare at the box. Eventually they get up and leave.

Winston comes in, sees the box, walks over to the table, picks it up carefully and leaves.

PRESENT DAY

Early morning. The sun is coming up on the horizon. Lou is driving, James and Dallas asleep. Ellis is up and Win is awake looking out the window and leaning back against Ellis who has her arms around Win.

The silence of a morning sunrise.

ELLIS

I like it when morning comes, and the colors come up on the horizon. At first there's just a gray silhouette but then there's a glow, an orange mixing with the beginning blue of the sky, then, a spread of color across the horizon and finally the glow of the sun.

It makes me feel like something could be different today.

(Silence)

ELLIS

Things change Win. They do. As long as you're still here. They will. I promise.

(Silence, sounds of the road and the wind)

END OF ACT 1

ACT 2

PRESENT DAY

Early morning. In the car. James is sleeping in the back with Ellis and Winston who are also trying to sleep but are more awake than sleeping. Lou Driving. Dallas, up front with Lou, looks uncomfortable.

DALLAS

Hey, do you mind pulling over for a second?

LOU

What?

DALLAS

You know, can you pull over?

LOU

Like right here?

DALLAS

Yeah. I promise I just need a second. I'm a little car sick.

LOU

Looking in her rearview, puts on her right blinker, slows the car and pulls over.

Ohh K...no problem

JAMES (*Waking up*)

Why are we stopping?

LOU

Dallas doesn't feel well

JAMES

Are you serious?

WINSTON

Yes James, she feels car sick

JAMES

Great

WINSTON

Just shut up ok?

The car stops, blinkers on, they are on the side of a freeway, deep in the night, not a lot of cars going by but some...Dallas opens the door, sees a place where she can walk behind some bushes, goes behind them.

JAMES

Jesus, car sick, really? Who gets car sick on a straight freeway after 4 hours of driving?

LOU

Just stop James ok, she doesn't feel well, it happens, El you want to check on her

ELLIS

Uh, Not really

WINSTON

I'll go

Winston crawls across Ellis in the car to leave thru same door as Dallas, just as he gets out of the door we see Dallas coming back, looking a little pale.

WINSTON

You ok

DALLAS

Yes, I'll be fine. Sorry

WINSTON

It happens...do you want us to stop for a bit

DALLAS

What? No, I'm fine, we can go.

WINSTON

Because we can, I mean you look a little uneasy, we can wait

DALLAS
No, I'll be fine

WINSTON
OK

Winston gets back in the car, crawls over Ellis back to his side, then Dallas gets in.

LOU
Everybody good?

DALLAS
Yes, thank you

LOU
No worries

Lou signals, pulls the car out and accelerates back onto the freeway.

JAMES
So, does that happen a lot?

DALLAS
No. Sorry

LOU
It's ok, I used to get car sick all the time. It's why I drive now.

Silence

DALLAS
I wasn't car sick

LOU
Oh?

DALLAS
I'm pregnant

JAMES
Shit

Ellis looks at Winston.

LOU (*Looks in rearview*)
Oh...(Silence) well I guess that makes more sense then.

PRESENT DAY

They are stopped at a roadside stop. There is a picnic table nearby. Lou is standing and stretching. Winston is sitting on the picnic table. James is sitting in the front passenger seat with the door open facing the picnic table. Ellis and Dallas are in the bathroom.

JAMES
Pregnant. Jesus. So, what do we do now?

LOU
What do you mean?

JAMES
I mean what do we do with her?

WINSTON
What?

JAMES
Well she's pregnant. We can't just leave her

WINSTON
We're not, we're taking her to wherever she needs to go. She said she wanted to go west so she probably has a plan, maybe family or a friend somewhere and we'll get her as close as we can.

JAMES
What? And then just leave her somewhere without any idea who's going to look after her?

WINSTON
Yes

JAMES

No, Winston, it doesn't work that way – we need to know she's going to be ok

WINSTON

Why?

JAMES

Why?

WINSTON

Yes, why? She can obviously take care of herself. She's gotten this far.

JAMES

Hey, I didn't even want to pick her up.

WINSTON

What does that mean?

JAMES

Well, once you involve yourself in someone's life you don't just get to drop in and then say, goodbye, fuck you, nice knowing you, whatever...there's a relationship now...

WINSTON

Whatever

LOU

Win, James is right. We need to at least make sure she's going to be safe wherever she's going.

WINSTON

Fine. We get her to some place safe and if she needs to go a distance from where we're going then we put her on a train or a bus or whatever.

JAMES

Wow. Look at the sweetness of Winston. Always looking out for people

WINSTON

Hey, fuck you, you never looked after anyone other than yourself your entire life.

JAMES

Yeah well at least I'm not advocating dropping a pregnant girl by the side of the road to figure out her "life journey"...we're involved now and we have to do something about it, that's just the way it is, we can't just sit here and watch, it's not like...

LOU

James

WINSTON (*to James*)

What?

JAMES

Nevermind.

WINSTON

Say it

JAMES

You can't just always do nothing, that's all...sometimes you're involved, like when it's your family. You have to say something, maybe it sucks but that's just the way it is.

WINSTON (*Walking over to James*)

What do you think you know?

JAMES

Only what I saw

WINSTON

And what was that?

They look at each other. Then Lou spots Ellis and Dallas coming over from the bathroom.

LOU

Hey, so here they come so let's just leave it at this for now, we try and find out where she's going and who she's connecting with and then we figure out a way to get her safely there, ok? (*Getting in front of James*) OK?

JAMES

OK

WINSTON

Fine

JAMES

Yep

LOU

OK! *(To Ellis and to Dallas)* Everyone OK?

DALLAS

Yes, thanks, much better.

ELLIS

There's something about finally finding a place to pee that turns even the ugliest roadside stop in the history of mankind into an Oasis

LOU

OK, please tell us more Ellis

ELLIS

I'm just saying, when you get to go after holding it for a 100 miles it's like a miracle, this place is now heaven in my book. God Bless St George, Utah!

DALLAS

I'll second that!

LOU

Wow, OK, the major pee break is now a miracle. I think it's time to go.

PRESENT DAY

Further down the road. Lou is driving, James up front with her. Dallas, Ellis, Winston in their usual spots.

JAMES

So, who do you know in LA?

(Dallas tries to ignore the question)

JAMES

Sorry, I said...

ELLIS

I think she heard you, but I don't think she wants to talk about it

DALLAS

Oh, sorry

Silence

ELLIS

It's ok.

Silence

DALLAS

No one really

JAMES

What?

DALLAS

I had a friend there. But I don't know if she's still there.

ELLIS

Oh.

DALLAS

I'm going to try and find her.

ELLIS

Got it.

DALLAS

Santa Monica pier.

ELLIS

What?

DALLAS

That's what she said. She lives near Santa Monica pier. She said if I ever came out to just go look for her there.

ELLIS

Oh.

LOU

Well that sounds good. That's near the water and we just need to get to the ocean. You know for the ashes.

ELLIS

Yes, remember I said we're throwing his sister in the ocean.

DALLAS

Oh right

JAMES

Jesus do you have to say it that way every time?

WINSTON

What? That's what we're doing.

JAMES

Fine. (To Dallas) So Santa Monica Pier?

DALLAS

Yes.

JAMES

Does she know you're coming?

DALLAS

No. I don't think so.

JAMES

Oh.

DALLAS

I haven't heard from her in over a year.

JAMES

Oh, *(James is looking at Lou)*

ELLIS

So, who's the father?

JAMES

Jesus

ELLIS

What?

JAMES

That was subtle.

ELLIS

Oh, sorry, I didn't mean to pry.

DALLAS

That's ok. He's a friend.

JAMES

I'll say...

LOU

You're such a judgmental bitch sometimes.

JAMES

Whatever

ELLIS

A friend?

DALLAS

Yes, someone I know from home.

ELLIS

So, you meant to get pregnant?

DALLAS

Yes.

ELLIS

Oh, So, why isn't he with you?

DALLAS

He's finishing school.

ELLIS

Oh

JAMES

But you're leaving?

DALLAS

No. I'm moving.

ELLIS

To LA.

DALLAS

I guess.

ELLIS

And he's going to come out after?

DALLAS

Yes.

ELLIS

You're very strong.

DALLAS

I guess.

ELLIS

Do you love him?

DALLAS

I don't know. He's my friend. He's my best friend.

JAMES

Can't be that good if he's not here with you.

DALLAS

You don't know anything.

ELLIS

Sorry Dallas. James just thinks he's Oprah. I'm glad he's not a jerk.

DALLAS

Who?

ELLIS

The father.

DALLAS

Oh, no, he's not. We have a plan.

ELLIS

That's good.

PRESENT DAY

Later. They are stopped outside a roadside stop. Hundreds of cars and trucks. Families stopping to get food. Truckers stopping to get gas or sleep. It's busy. James and Dallas wait in the car while the others get food. James' door is open and he's sticking his feet out to stretch.

JAMES

What is taking them so long?

DALLAS

There's a lot of people here. I saw the burger line backed up out the door.

JAMES

It was rhetorical.

DALLAS

Oh

JAMES

So, a baby.

DALLAS

Yes.

JAMES

That's your life choice

DALLAS

I guess

JAMES

Hmm

DALLAS

Are you jealous?

JAMES

Stop

DALLAS

Why are you so angry?

JAMES

Lou's the angry one. I'm just depressed.

DALLAS

Depression is just anger inverted.

JAMES

Who said that?

DALLAS

Me, I guess.

JAMES

That's good. And you know this how?

DALLAS

My friend, you see...

JAMES

Sorry, did you just tell me you're having a baby with your depressed friend?

DALLAS

Yes

JAMES

And you think this is all ok and not some form of messed up distraction on the part of "your friend".

DALLAS

Yes, it's fine.

JAMES

Well Dr. Dallas, why don't you tell me more about your plan?

DALLAS

I want to be a parent.

JAMES

That's about the most fucked up thing I've ever heard anyone say

DALLAS

I know. That's what all my friends say. But the idea that I could have a baby, that I had this place in me that could be so good for someone else. That in some ways my body was designed to take care of someone else. It made me so happy. So warm. It's all I've ever really wanted to do.

JAMES

Yeah but I don't think you were "designed" to have a baby without a way to take care of it. You know, a job, a roof over your head, stuff like that...

DALLAS

Sure, I get it. But don't we get all those things to do the other thing.

JAMES

Not always.

(Silence)

So where's the boyfriend now?

DALLAS

He's not my boyfriend. Not ever. I told you he's just my friend. My best friend. We just made a plan to be parents. It was what we wanted to do. Neither of us wanted all that boyfriend/girlfriend stuff. What was that going to do for us anyway? We just wanted to have a baby, maybe two and take care of them the way they are meant to be taken care of. Raise them right. Everything else was just stuff we needed to do to make it happen.

JAMES

Like leaving town

DALLAS

Yes.

JAMES

Why?

DALLAS

Too much noise there. Too many people with too much judgment. It just made it too hard. We knew we needed to get out. Find jobs. Settle, put down roots and see what was going to grow.

JAMES

I'll tell you what's going to grow

DALLAS

Haha

JAMES

Seriously, do you have any idea how this turns out?

DALLAS

What do you mean?

JAMES

When I was 4 and my sister was 7 my mother told us to get into the bathtub. We were completely dressed, and we didn't understand. She said it was a game, something that would be fun for us to pass the time. She turned on the water and then she just sat there looking at us until she started crying. When she got up and walked out, I looked at my sister because I wasn't sure what to do next. Finally, I just turned off the water, we got out, dried off and we never talked about it again. When I was 9 my dad gathered us all together and said mom was going away to the hospital because she didn't feel well. When I asked my mom if her stomach hurt she said no it was her head and that was all

The next time I saw her it was Christmas and she looked better

When I was 16, she and my dad had split up and he was living with someone else. My brother had moved out and my sister was in college, so it was just her and me in the house. One morning she woke up and said, James I figured it all out, I'm going to kill you, your sister and brother and then your father and myself and life will be much better. We talked all day until it got to around 6 o'clock and then she said she was hungry and we made dinner and she said she felt much better and we went to bed. That happened every day for a month.

I don't remember feeling afraid, but I think I probably was. All I can remember was going to sleep and thinking I am not going to let this happen. Whatever it takes, whatever I have to do, I am not going to let my mother kill herself.

I don't know what you have in mind for the rest of your life but if having your baby is part of that plan you need to know what can happen.

DALLAS

I think I do.

Lou walking back with food, looking at her phone and walking back with Ellis and Winston, when she's done she looks up.

LOU

Well ladies and germs I'm proud to say we only have about 12 more hours to go.

DALLAS

Hey, can we stop in the desert somewhere?

LOU

You mean, like Vegas?

DALLAS

No, before then, somewhere where there's nothing. Just rocks and sand and heat.

LOU

Uh, sure, I guess, Ellis, you want to look with Dallas and find a spot?

ELLIS

Sure

PRESENT DAY

It's later in the day now, Lou driving, James on his phone, Ellis listening to music, Dallas drifting out her window, Winston drifting out his window.

LOU *(To Dallas in rear view)*

So why the desert?

JAMES *(Looking at his phone)*

Arghhhhhhh....

LOU

What's wrong?

JAMES *(Stabbing at the phone with his finger)*

My phone. I hate my phone.

ELLIS

I told you not to look at it. All it is, is more bad news

JAMES *(As he looks at his phone and reads)*

Aw snap? What the hell does that mean?

ELLIS

It's an error message James.

JAMES

A what?

WINSTON

An error message, it means you did something wrong boy wonder.

JAMES

But I didn't do anything. I was just looking at "What to Expect When You're Expecting".

LOU

James

ELLIS

You're an asshole, you know that.

JAMES (*Angry*)

Well fuck you all and fuck my phone too. (*Throwing his phone down*)

(*Silence*)

LOU

I think we're going to need some ice cream soon.

ELLIS

Yes, yes, yes, ICE CREAM!

WINSTON

Blackberry swirl

DALLAS

Oh my god, yes!

ELLIS

Dude, you don't know anything about ice cream. Blackberry swirl...you should be embarrassed. What are you a Cub Scout?

WINSTON

What?

JAMES

I think she just tried to humiliate you and your choice of ice cream.

ELLIS

Blackberry swirl, that's so sad, do you want that in a little cup with a napkin? You need to man up here, you need a double chocolate, banana split, chocolate sauce, 2 cherries, sprinkles, whipped cream w/mint chip on the side...AND...wait for it...a Rootbeer float...hehehe...it's what the Aztecs would eat before they would wander off into the desert on their vision quest.

DALLAS

I absolutely love how you think.

JAMES

Is that legal? Can you seriously do chocolate sauce on chocolate ice cream?

ELLIS

It's actually a secret cure for everything. Very few people know of it. I did it once and binge watched every Harry Potter movie over a weekend. It was epic.

WINSTON

Are you sure I'm ready for that?

ELLIS

Oh, yes, you need this, trust me, you need this

LOU

OK, but he's not getting in the car after...he has to run along side for a few hours just to ease off the sugar high....

ELLIS

So harsh, no faith,

PRESENT DAY

It is much later in the day, approaching dusk. Lou driving, Ellis and Dallas huddled together reading Ellis's phone. Winston dozing. James in his phone which now seems to be working. Ellis pointing to her phone and showing Dallas.

ELLIS

Here? You sure?

DALLAS

Yes

ELLIS

OK, *(To Lou up front)* Lou, can you take this exit coming up.

LOU

Uh, sure, *(Reading the sign as it goes past.)* The Valley of Fire?

ELLIS

Yes.

JAMES

What?

WINSTON

The Valley of Fire, I like that...

JAMES

We have enough gas, right? And Water?

LOU

We're fine James, we're taking an hour, sit back and roll with it.

JAMES
Thanks mom.

LOU
Whatever. *(Taking the exit)* OK, here we go...

Lou exits and turns onto a two-lane road. The speed and feel is very different from the highway. Everyone feels it. The car gets very quiet as they ride and watch as the scenery unfolds.

(Silence, wind, road, open space)

LOU
It's like Thelma and Louise

DALLAS
Exactly

ELLIS
What?

LOU
Old movie. Two women, they steal a car and run into every misogynistic male ever created, finally they say the hell with it and drive the car off the side of a cliff.

JAMES
Sounds very uplifting

LOU
It's right up your ally James, whole worlds' going to hell so why not take a joy ride to doomsday.

JAMES
So, is this going to be Us and Louise?

LOU
Ha ha. No, don't worry, we still got shit to do. *(Looking in the rearview)* So, Dallas, why are we here?

DALLAS
Everyone remembers the scene at the end...

JAMES
Where they drive off the cliff?

DALLAS
Yes. But I liked when they were driving in the desert at night. They're in this convertible and it's warm and they looked like they were part of the night, like they were part of everything.

Like everyone in the movie keeps pushing them out and they keep fighting back just to feel like they belong, and they finally get to the desert where there's nothing and they get to relax for a bit and feel like they're part of everything.

I just wanted to see it. Can you pull over up here and stop for a minute?

LOU
Sure. OK

Lou pulls over and stops. They all get out of the car to look. They are on the edge of a canyon on the side where the car is parked. It's a steep drop. There is a wide open sound of wind but also quiet. Nothing moving. They stand and look out for a long time.

Silence. Wind.

JAMES
OK, nice cliff. Can we go now?

DALLAS
Yes, sorry.

JAMES
No, it's ok, we all need our little moments, although you do seem to have your share.

DALLAS
Sorry, I was jus...

LOU
Hey wait, where's Win?

(They look)

ELLIS
Win?

LOU
Win

JAMES
Probably just went off to pee

DALLAS *(Pointing)*
Wait, is that him?

LOU
Win?

ELLIS

Win

Win is standing at the edge of the canyon. Looking down. Thinking about it. They start to walk over but Ellis puts up her hand to stop them. She continues walking towards him.

ELLIS

Win

WIN

It'd be so easy.

ELLIS

No.

(Silence)

WIN

It was for birth control.

ELLIS

What?

WIN

The blue case. The note. That's what it was. *(silence)* right?

ELLIS

Yes

WIN

Who? Did she?

ELLIS

I don't know. I don't think so.

WIN

There's so much we don't know. Just hints and secrets and shit.

ELLIS

Yes.

WIN

She loved me

ELLIS

Yes

WIN

I loved her. She told the truth. She was more honest than I will ever be. She saw everything that was happening.

ELLIS

Yes

WIN

What am I supposed to do next?

(Silence)

ELLIS

Trust her.

WIN

What?

ELLIS

Do what she told you to do.

(Silence)

(Ellis moves closer to him, Win turns)

WIN

I miss her.

ELLIS

Me too.

PRESENT DAY

It's night now, about another 1-2 hours since Valley of Fire, but they've been driving most of the day, everyone is a bit frazzled, Lou driving, James up front with her, Dallas, Ellis, Winston in back. They are coming into downtown Vegas. Headlights coming from the other direction bouncing into the car on Lou's face.

LOU

Ladies and gentlemen welcome to Las Vegas.

DALLAS (*Leaning forward to the front seat*)
Wow, this is so great. I love all the lights.

JAMES
Great?

ELLIS (*to Dallas*)
You've been?

DALLAS
Yes.

ELLIS
What's it like?

DALLAS
I was in a hotel room most of the time, so I don't really know. Lights. Lights all the time. I had room service and watched TV while my mom played cards.

JAMES
Your mom played cards.

DALLAS
Yes

WINSTON
What did she play?

DALLAS
Poker. Texas hold'em

JAMES
Your mom played poker.

DALLAS
Yes

JAMES
For money?

DALLAS
She won eleven thousand dollars once.

ELLIS
Wow. So, what happened?

DALLAS
What do you mean?

ELLIS
Well, your mom made 11 thousand dollars playing cards

DALLAS
Oh, uh, we just went home.

ELLIS
That's it?

DALLAS
Yes, I was still in school and my mom would never have let me skip school.

ELLIS
Did she buy you anything?

DALLAS
No. She paid off a loan.

LOU
I'm taking this exit, I gotta drive the strip, this is so awesome.

JAMES
Jesus

LOU
Shut-up James. We'll be thru in 20 minutes and on our way.

DALLAS
She bought me this. *(She reaches into her bag and pulls out a snow globe of Vegas and hands it to Ellis)* Shake it up.

ELLIS *(Showing Lou)*
It's snowing in Vegas.

LOU
Nice.

WINSTON
That's awesome.

JAMES
It doesn't snow in Vegas

DALLAS

Sure, it does.

JAMES
OK, a dusting whatever

DALLAS
So?

JAMES
I'm just saying your snow globe? Is about deception. That's all. It's a trick. Your mom was trying to distract you.

DALLAS
OK.

JAMES
That's what parenting is. It's about distracting your kids from reality long enough that they can make it to their next meal.

DALLAS
That's not true.

JAMES
Sure, it is. Our friend in the box there died because her parents tried to distract her from the fact that their marriage was a lie and when she decided she couldn't watch anymore and started using the shit really hit the fan and so they tried to distract Win over there from what was really happening.

WINSTON (*Menacing, threatening*)
Shut up James

JAMES
Did you show it to your friends?

DALLAS
Yes

JAMES
Great so how many little Nebraskans grew up thinking there was snow in Vegas just like home?

WINSTON
Jesus

JAMES
Shut-up Win, you think it's a little thing but it's not. We're all lying all the time...right Lou.

LOU

What? Don't drag me into this. I just told you about that Ted Talk. I didn't say I agreed with her

JAMES

Well I do. All we do is lie. And Vegas? Well boys and girls we are looking at the biggest lie ever told.

WINSTON

Don't you think you're overreacting to a kid's toy?

JAMES

No, this is what hell looks like. Junkie here, junkie there, teenage girls advertising porn, then let's go visit the Bellagio and see the fountains! Tomorrow morning, when the sun comes out, it'll be 110 in the shade. I just can't believe people build homes for their "family" to live here. The devil hiding in your own backyard....

LOU

Well that's a buzzkill

ELLIS

Look at you, Mr. Moral high ground

JAMES

It has nothing to do with morality. This place is hell on earth. Billions of dollars trying to distract us from who we are and what we do to each other. *(Looking out the window)* Oh look, Dallas there's another teenage pregnant girl, just like you!

DALLAS

I need to get out. You need to stop, please let me out.

JAMES

What, "car sick" again?

DALLAS

No, I'm sick of you, please stop

(Lou pulls over, Dallas reaches for her things and gets out and starts walking. Lou opens her door and comes around)

LOU

Dallas! wait

(She keeps walking, but Lou finally gets her to stop)

LOU

Please wait...Dallas...please...James...he just says stuff, I know, I'm sorry, we're all so used to it, we just let it travel you know, don't pay much attention, he's just angry, like the world's ripping him off and he wants his fair share or to start over or something, I don't know, but I'm sorry, he didn't mean it, please come with us, we love having you and we want to help you get to the coast.

JAMES (*coming up from behind Lou*)

I wouldn't stop here honey Vegas is a lot different than Nebraska.

LOU

Shut up James, you've said enough already. What happened to "we need to help her"

JAMES

We do, I'm trying, somebody has to tell her the truth.

LOU

Oh, and that's you?

JAMES

Yes. Lou, when Arden left home we all sat there and did nothing. We all knew what was happening and none of us said a thing. Win told us to leave her alone, that it was family, she was ok, he was going to figure it out and then what happened? She was dead. You know how long that took, from the time she left home until they found her body. 10 months. That's it. And we did nothing to stop what could have been stopped. So maybe I'm not the best person to tell how it is, but right now I'm the ONLY person who's trying.

WINSTON (*Coming up from behind James*)

So, you think you're on a mission to tell the truth? Is that what this is...Mr. honesty, say it like it is...You're the smartest person I know, and you don't know shit. About us, about you, about any of this...oh sure you've probably read more than any of us put together, but you know what comes out James? A bunch of facts all smashed together and weaponized to convince other people they don't know shit about themselves or their world. You just want to laugh at them or punch them in the face. Does that sound like you're angry? You bet. Do I know if you're angry? No, I don't. I'm guessing. Just like you're guessing what's going on with me and what happened with Arden and like you're guessing about Dallas and where she's from but the "truth" is, you don't know shit about any of it and it terrifies you and turns you into a manically driven asshole trying to fight everyone for superiority in the name of helping them. But then, when people turn to you for help you don't have the first idea of what to do or how to go about doing it, so you end up just foisting more hate on them for loving you. Why does everyone have to only care about what you say is important James? Maybe they care about something else? Something you have no fucking clue about, like a memory or feelings or a kid's toy. Leave Dallas alone and stop trying to fix everything because you can't do it.

JAMES

Like the way you fixed everything with Arden, right Win?

LOU

James...

WINSTON

I'm fine Lou. Thanks. Arden is dead, James. She was my sister and now she's dead. That's what happened, and I was there for all of it. I did everything I could possibly do. But you know who the only person was that knew what I did? Arden. She knew, and she told me to stop. You know why? Because she loved me, more than anything, more than herself. She knew if I kept trying to rescue her, sooner or later my life would end like hers because I would either lose my mind trying to save her or get sucked into whatever she was doing, and she could not stand the thought of killing me. Saving me by pushing me away was the only choice she had left in her. So, I stopped visiting her because she asked me to. Was it the right thing to do? I have no idea. I will never really know. None of us will. But I do know it was what she wanted and what she believed was right and that somehow that was relevant to me and to her and that's relevant to all of this...sometimes James, we have to let people make up their own minds about what happens next and the awful truth is all we can do is watch.

ELLIS (*Walking over to Dallas who has stopped and listened to Winston and James*)
You forgot your snow globe Dallas. (*Hands it to her and looks at her.*) Please, come with us.

Ellis turns to Winston and they look at each other and start to head back to the car, they walk past Lou, when they do Lou watches them walk back towards the car then turns to James.

LOU

James

James turns and looks at Lou, then he looks back at Dallas.

JAMES

Sorry. That was shitty. Sometimes I'm just an asshole.

(Silence)

DALLAS

I'm not you or your life.

(Silence)

JAMES

That's fair.

So then why don't you come with us and at least we'll get you where you need to go.

PRESENT DAY

A parking lot near Santa Monica pier. They can see the pier from where they are.

They have parked by the beach. It is very early in the morning and the sun has started to show. It is a warm, Sunday morning, light breeze, very few people around, the sound of seagulls and waves. Lou has gotten out of the car and is seated by herself on a bench facing the ocean. She has a cup of coffee. Ellis climbs out of the car, the others are still trying to sleep, more or less. She walks over to Lou.

ELLIS (*Trying to look at the ocean*)
OK, that's bright...

LOU (*Passing her cup to Ellis*)
Coffee?

ELLIS
No thanks

LOU
Sorry, no oat milk. I'd offer you a cigarette if I smoked.

ELLIS
What is it with you and cigarettes?

LOU
I don't know. It looks cool. My dad smoked. It smells like morning to me. That's weird right? But it does. All those old movies with people smoking. There was something soothing about the smoke and the heat. The warmth.

ELLIS
Yeah, the possibility of dying kinda spoils all the cool stuff.

LOU
Fair point. You know El, you really do know what's going on.

ELLIS
Uh, thanks? What does that mean...

LOU
I don't know, sorry, I mean, you know, all your good looks and what not, and the way you just say things straight out like you don't know what you're doing. I take it all back, El, you're amazing and I love you.

ELLIS

Wow. Thanks Lou, I guess. That's the nicest thing anyone's ever said to me at 6am on the beach. *(Silence)* Thanks for driving.

(Dallas has woken up and extricated herself from the car and makes her way over to the bench)

LOU

You're welcome. Wasn't all me, Win did some.

ELLIS

Hardly

LOU

OK, fine then, you're welcome. My pleasure. Morning Dallas.

DALLAS

Morning

LOU

Coffee?

DALLAS

Uh, sure *(she takes a sip and hands it back)* Thanks

LOU

Sure

ELLIS

You ok?

DALLAS

I think, yeah, I'm fine.

ELLIS *(Pointing)*

That's Santa Monica Pier.

DALLAS

Yeah?

ELLIS

Do you want to walk down there?

DALLAS

Oh. Uh. No, not just yet anyway.

Silence

ELLIS (*Looking at Dallas, not asking a question*)
There isn't anyone coming.

(*Dallas looks at Ellis*)

DALLAS
No.

LOU
Shit, El. There you go again.

(*To Dallas*)

So no friend?

DALLAS
No.

ELLIS
And your friend at home.

DALLAS
Oh, he's real.

ELLIS
I'm sure he'll come. He sounded nice.

DALLAS
He's ok.

LOU
Well here you are.

ELLIS
So, what are you going to do?

DALLAS
I don't know. Find a place to stay I guess. A job.

LOU
Sure.

ELLIS
Do you have any money?

DALLAS

Yes, some. Enough to get started. First month, last month, some for food.

LOU

Damn. How did you...?

DALLAS

Two jobs, two years. I knew what I wanted.

Silence

You think it's always this sunny?

ELLIS

Yep.

LOU

Cali

DALLAS

I didn't bring any sunglasses.

(Winston is walking over)

LOU (To Win)

Hey

WIN

Hey

LOU

Cali

WIN

Yeah, I noticed. Sunglasses woulda been a good idea.

LOU

No shit.

ELLIS

Where's James?

WIN

Still sleeping. Dallas, you want to walk over to the pier?

ELLIS
There's no friend.

WIN
Got it.

Silence as they look at the ocean.

Well, Surf's up.

LOU
Dude...

ELLIS
Dude. You sound like a native

LOU
Thanks, Dude

WIN
Dude.

Silence

ELLIS
Should we get Arden?

LOU (*Seeing James is coming from the car carrying the box with Arden's ashes*)
Good morning sunshine.

JAMES
I didn't think she'd want to miss this

James walks over with the box and hands it to Win who takes it and stands looking out.

ELLIS
Can I go with you?

WIN
Sure

Win and Ellis walk out to the ocean just to where the waves are coming in.

This is fine. She'd want to be part of the beach too.

He unceremoniously opens the box and tips out the ashes as he does so he notices the bracelet on his wrist that she tied there years ago. He starts to take it off. Ellis stops him.

ELLIS

Not yet. She told me to make you wear it for awhile

He looks at it. Looks at Ellis

Really? (*Ellis nods. Win squats down*)

Love you Ar

Win and Ellis stay for a bit then get up and they walk back to the rest of the group by the bench, Lou hugs him, Dallas hugs him, James hugs him

JAMES

It was the right thing to do.

LOU

Wow

JAMES

What?

LOU

I don't know, last I heard it was "stupid"

JAMES

That's fair. I changed my mind.

WIN

Good.

LOU

Well, we've got a long drive ahead of us. But first? Breakfast. A BIG breakfast.

ELLIS

You and food

LOU

Yeah, I know, it's like my thing but isn't it kinda traditional? Like a wake or something?

JAMES

I think that usually involves booze

LOU

Hey I'm game.

WIN

I'll settle for some eggs.

LOU

There you go. He wants eggs. Eggs it is.

DALLAS

I think it's time for me to move on.

LOU

What? No, at least have some breakfast with us.

JAMES

What happened to meeting your friend?

LOU AND ELLIS

No friend

JAMES

Got it.

DALLAS

Thanks for the offer, but I think I should go.

LOU

Wow. OK.

ELLIS

Where are you going?

DALLAS

Home

JAMES

What?

DALLAS

I'm going to find myself a home.

JAMES

Gotcha.

Winston and Ellis look at each other, Lou notices the silent communication, Win and Lou look at each other

ELLIS

Dallas, what if you stayed with us for a while?

DALLAS (*She looks at both of them*)

Uh, what?

LOU

Wait, what? Are you guys serious?

WIN

Sorry Lou, I know I should have said something. This was always a one-way trip for El and I. Schools over. No reason to go back.

LOU

Shit, I feel like we're breaking up or something.

WIN

Stop, we'll see each other again, you know it.

LOU

Sure, yeah, I guess so.

WIN

Dallas, if you want to stay with us, it's fine.

DALLAS

Thanks. But no. I think...I need to find my own place. Get settled. Figure things out.

WIN

Sure. Got it. The offer stands if you change your mind.

ELLIS

You ok James?

JAMES

Oh yeah sure I'm fine. I'm just not an ending person.

ELLIS (*Hugging James*)

Love you James

JAMES

Oh, sure you say that now...

ELLIS

Shut up

LOU

Looks like it's you and me, Mr. Happy, and 3000 miles...unless you gotta a surprise waitin' for us too.

JAMES

Nope junior college and my future awaits.

LOU (*To Win with sarcasm*)

What could be better than that?

WIN

Lou...

LOU

No, Win, it's cool, I get it, it makes sense...

WIN

I just wanted to say thanks for making this happen.

LOU

Don't thank me dude, it's my parents' car...no, seriously, no thanks needed, I'm glad we did it, I wanted to be there for Ar and for you and just to be part of it was great. Call me when you need me, k?

WIN

You bet.

(James starts to head toward car)

LOU

Hey! Where are you going?

JAMES

We're leaving right?

LOU

Not without breakfast dude. Breakfast first, drive later. And it's going to be a big one too so just relax Rosemary, all in good time. My man, Win, is buying. Whadaya say bro? Breakfast on you?

WIN

Sure. (*Turning to Dallas*) I think you kinda have to come to breakfast now.

LOU

Not exactly Thelma and Louise I know.

DALLAS

This'll do just fine. Thank you. Thank you all.

MUSIC PLAYS – BLACKLIST BY JOHN MORELAND