

The Ballad of Jon and Athena

By

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INT. KITCHEN - DAY

We are in a galley kitchen, early afternoon or late morning. It is impossible to tell. There isn't anything out of the ordinary for a kitchen, its clean but not too clean. The only thing on the fridge is a save the date post card. There is a cardboard box on the counter, only sealed by the top flaps being folded over each other.

On the counter an espresso machine brews a cup of espresso.

JON (early 20's) sits in a chair across from the counter, just watching the espresso.

We hear a cell phone vibrating. Jon reaches in his pocket, takes his cell phone out, and answers it.

JON

Hello... yeah... come on in.

Jon takes the back off of his phone and removes the battery. He puts the phone back together and puts it in his pocket, he slides the battery under the fridge.

Another young man (early 20's) walks in. His name is FRIEND. He has an ominous kind of vibe about him, he is wearing black shoes, black pants, a dark sports coat, and sunglasses. Friend stands there for a moment.

FRIEND

Ready?

Jon visibly gets uncomfortable, feeling rushed. He stands up and walks to the espresso machine. He takes a ceramic mug out of a cabinet. He removes the coffee pot before it is finished brewing, leaving it to spill onto the counter, and fills the mug. He replaces the pot and motions that he's ready.

They leave the kitchen.

INT. CAR - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Friend gets into the driver's seat, Jon puts the box in the back seat and then gets in the passenger seat. Friend takes a joint out of the center console, lights it, and hands it to Jon, who begins smoking it.

Friend starts the car and they drive.

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FRIEND

How are you feeling?

JON

Pretty good, you know-
considering...

Jon's focus is out the window, staring, puffing away. Friend breaks his glance from the road once or twice to glance at Jon.

After a silent car ride they pull up to a house. Jon puts the joint out and gives it to Friend who puts it in the center console.

Jon takes eye drops out of seemingly nowhere and drops a few drops in each eye. He then sprays himself down with body spray. He then chugs the rest of his coffee.

FRIEND

Good luck.

Jon exits the car.

INT. ATHENA'S LIVING ROOM - DAY - CONTINUOUS

ATHENA (early 20's) is sitting in a chair reading *The Stranger* by Albert Camus. The living room is part rustic, part just old. There are corners of clutter, but it isn't a messy place. Against one wall is a turntable and a box of vinyl records. There is one small coffee table, on it is a mug of tea and a bowl of hard candy.

There is a knock at the door. Athena looks up from her book. There is another knock.

She gets up and answers the door. Jon is on the other side. She is surprised to see him.

ATHENA

Jon? Hi! I haven't seen you in
forever. What's up?

JON

Oh, nothing. I just heard you were
back in town so I wanted to stop
by, hoping you were free.

ATHENA

Come on in.

They walk into the living room. Athena sits in the same chair as before, Jon sits across from her on the couch.

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These two have an undeniable chemistry, they have a connection, a past. Whether it's good or bad, its there.

There is a moment of awkward silence, which they giggle off.

JON

Wow, uhm... I don't even know what to say now. How's college?

ATHENA

Well, I just finished.

JON

Really?

Jon is genuinely surprised.

ATHENA

Yeah, grauation was Friday.

JON

Oh my god...

ATHENA

What?

JON

I could have a college degree by now, I spent for more years in my home town instead.

ATHENA

At least you're around your family all the time though. What about Charlotte? Are you two still together?

Jon takes a hard candy out of the bowl and begins to unwrap it, playing with it more than anything else.

JON

Yeah, we actually moved in together a couple months ago.

ATHENA

Really?

JON

Yeah, her parents helped out a lot, but I'm officially in the working class. Paying for bills and rent and everything else.

ATHENA

That's what I mean, you have all kinds of ties here. It's actually pretty lonely being in a beautiful place with no roots or connections... I just can't believe it.

JON

What?

ATHENA

I went to college and you turned into an adult!

Jon looks down at the candy, finally unwrapped.

JON

Yeah, I'm even engaged.

Athena is shocked by this, a glimmer of jealousy rushes over her. Jon starts to feel like he shouldn't have let that information out.

ATHENA

You two are engaged?

JON

Yeah.

Athena isn't sure how to take the news, so she distracts herself. She shoots up with her next question.

ATHENA

Hey- Can I get you something? Tea? Coffee?

JON

Water's fine.

Athena leaves the room, leaving Jon alone in silence. He scans the room looking for something something he knows- or hopes is there. His searching stops at the box of vinyl records.

JON

Hey, do you remember that album I gave you?

Athena walks back in with Jon's water, the glass half full, and giggles.

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ATHENA

Yes.

JON

Why laugh?

ATHENA

Because it was really bad.

JON

It wasn't that bad was it? You never told me you didn't like it.

ATHENA

Well, it was one of the first things you ever gave to me. What am I going to do? Hate it? Besides, I thought you foun that at goodwill, why get offended I didn't like the music?

JON

Wow, you remembered that. Do you remember why I gave it to you?

ATHENA

(imitating Jon, almost mocking)

Something about the cover just drew you to it, the same way you were rawn to me. Something made you think of me, of course I'm going to remember it. I still have it you know.

Jon looks up at Athena surprised but also excited.

ATHENA

Wanna see it?

JON

Yes, of course!

Athena walks over to the box of vinyl and starts rifling through them.

ATHENA

Hey, so I kind of cut you off with my bad review. What made you think of the recor in the first place?

(CONTINUED)

JON

Oh, I was listening to an old ipod
on the way here and a song off it
played. It was an interesting
coincidence is all.

Athena finds the album: "Surfing With The Shah" by Menorum
Rx. She hands it to Jon.

ATHENA

That's a bold faced lie.

JON

You've always been good at calling
me out on bullshit, you know.

ATHENA

And you've always been good at
avoiding questions. Why did you
bring that album up?

Jon studies the album for a moment.

JON

I was going to make a confession
but got cold feet.

Athena gets excited, or slightly worried, trying to hide
whatever it is.

ATHENA

Confess what?

Jon takes a long sip of water.

JON

This was my band.

ATHENA

You're kidding.

Jon shakes his head.

ATHENA

...So the whole story about
goodwill and the magic pull?

JON

I kind of... made it up.

ATHENA

Why did you do that?

JON

Well I was hoping you'd fall in love with it and I could turn around and say that I made it.

ATHENA

And then what? How come you never did?

JON

You never really even gave me a review of it, besides, I think the romanticism surrounding the goodwill story outdid reality.

ATHENA

It was a lie.

JON

I know. I'm sorry.

Jon looks out the window, avoiding eye contact.

Athena takes the record from Jon and studies it as she walks back over to the turntable and puts the record on top of it.

ATHENA

I missed you, Jon.

JON

I missed you, too. That's why I'm here.

Athena turns to look at Jon. She studies him for a moment. Just the way he looks, the way he's sitting. She's noticing details maybe she hasn't seen or thought of before.

She shakes herself out of this trance, like she has to jump back to reality. She remembered something.

ATHENA

Engaged?

JON

Yeah.

ATHENA

That seems like such a huge step to make so soon in life. Don't get offended but you two were never very... exciting.

Jon looks back at Athena.

JON

But you and I were... Charlotte is more down to earth. Contentment spreads itself thinner than glimmers of excitement.

ATHENA

But then where's the rush of living?

JON

It's there, just... subdued I guess.

Athena walks back over to Jon and sits next to him on the other side of the couch.

Athena takes a long sip of tea, buying time to think about what to say next.

ATHENA

So how is residential engaged life anyway?

JON

You know, it started out really awesome. We moved into a quaint duplex with a lot of privacy, we both have solid jobs, we're in love. We fell into a routine that all people seem to fall into, just our own version of it.

ATHENA

What do you mean?

Athena listens intently to Jon as he speaks. Imagining her and Jon living out the life he describes.

JON

Well, I work nights, and she works in the middle of the day. So instead of the nine to five, happy hour, dinner, tv, bed...

Throughout Jon's line we get to see into Athena's imagination: Jon and Athena in professional attire get ready for work; An analog clock jumping from 9:00 to 5:00; Two martini glasses clinking together; A plate of steak and potatoes, a knife cuts into it; Jon and Athena on Athena's couch watching t.v. at night; Jon and Athena in bed making out.

(CONTINUED)

Throughout the rest of what Jon says we get to see the reality of Jon's life, we also get to see Charlotte for the first time.

JON

...We get up a little later, have breakfast, go to work, come home, stay up late watching netflix or whatever, and do it all again.

The reality:

Charlotte making breakfast in Jon's kitchen, Jon walks in looking like he just woke up; Charlotte getting in her car riving away; Charlottes car returning later; Jon and Charlotte on their couch watching t.v.

Back to the living room:

ATHENA

Damn... your life sounds pretty put together.

JON

Yeah... and then things started breaking.

ATHENA

Oh?

Throughout Jon's line we see flashbacks of what he describes, almost like nightmares coming back to haunt him.

JON

Yeah, just things around the house. Faucets wouldn't work, outlets. The water in the shower was never hot, locks on the doors wouldn't work. And of course our landlord is never anywhere to be found so we had to deal with all of it ourselves, and then on top of it we're always worried about the rent, and electricity, and car insurance... And in between all that we would argue about it all. Growing up is actually pretty straining on a relationship.

Flashbacks:

Jon turning a faucet, no water comes out; Jon unplugging and replugging cords in a wall outlet; Jon in his bathroom with

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just his arm in the shower waiting for it to heat up; Jon examining a lock on the door; Jon and Charlotte looking confused in a hardware store; A bill from Empire Properties drops on a table, then one from National Grid, then one from State Farm; Jon and Charlotte arguing with each other; Jon and Charlotte sitting on opposite sides of the couch, making a point to not look at each other.

Back to Athena's living room:

Athena is now much closer to Jon, next to him.

ATHENA

That's a hell of a lot more than most people our age can say that they have, you've built a life—more or less. That's something a lot of people can't figure out until they're in their 30's. I definitely couldn't handle it.

JON

Yeah, I suppose...

They look at each other for a moment, and then lay back into the couch, never breaking their stare.

Jon is working up the courage to say something.

JON

Can I be honest with you?

ATHENA

You have been haven't you?

JON

Yes.

ATHENA

So go ahead.

JON

I'm holding back an urge to kiss you.

Athena doesn't respond right away, this surprised her, but not completely. She thinks about what to say.

ATHENA

Well... you should keep holding.

(CONTINUED)

JON

I'm sorry, I shouldn't have said anything- I just had an urge- something pulling me.

She stands up an paces. Jon unwraps a candy, but never eats it. Athena looks at Jon, watching what he's doing. She stops pacing.

ATHENA

You haven't changed at all. You know that?

This catches his attention, he looks up and right in her eyes.

ATHENA

Regardless of you having an adult life, coming clean on an old lie, being fucking engaged... Behind every word you say there's something you aren't telling me, like a child... And you know what? I don't even care, because its your secret and I'll never get it out.

JON

I'm dieing.

This catches her completely off guard.

ATHENA

What?

JON

I'm... going to die, soon.

ATHENA

What is it?

JON

It doesn't matter. It's inside me, beyond my control. It was too late anywayby time they figured it out, why define it? I'd rather be able to define my death.

Athena sits down. She is shaken up by the news, tears fall from her face but she never sobs.

ATHENA

What do you mean?

JON
Just... that I feel powerless...
helpless.

ATHENA
How long have you known?

JON
Not long.

ATHENA
How much longer do you have?

JON
Not long.

ATHENA
...Does Charlotte know?

JON
No.

ATHENA
What the fuck...

Athena stands up, upset.

ATHENA
...are you doing here? You owe it
to your fiancée to let her in on
this, to spend your last moments,
days, whatever with her. Not go to
your ex-girlfriend's house to try
to figure out if you've been
missing out on something. We broke
up for a reason, you know.

JON
I'm sorry, I should leave.

ATHENA
I don't mean to parent you, I'm
just pointing out the obvious.

Athena turns towards the window and stares out it.

Jon stands up and heads for the door. He grabs the vinyl
record on his way.

Athena turns her head and watches Jon head for the door,
unsure of what to do. And then she notices the record.

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ATHENA

Jon-

Jon stops and turns to Athena.

ATHENA

Why are you taking the record?

JON

I need it.

ATHENA

For what?

JON

I don't really expect you to understand... I'm sorry.

Jon turns and heads back toward the door, Athena rushes over to him. Right as Jon grabs the door knob, Athena grabs his shoulder to stop him. She kisses him gently on the cheek.

Jon looks at Athena.

ATHENA

You should leave.

INT. CAR - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Friend sits in the driver's seat just waiting. He seems bored, surprised this took as long as it did.

Jon opens the back door, puts the vinyl record in the box, and then gets in the passenger seat.

Friend takes the remainder of the joint out of the center console, lights it, and passes it to Jon. He then starts the car and begins driving.

They ride in silence, Jon is completely still, not puffing on the joint or anything, just staring out the window.

FRIEND

How did it go?

No response from Jon, he just sits there, and they ride in silence.

EXT. POWER LINES - DAY - CONTINUOUS

The road ends. From this point on it is a pathway cut through trees for powerlines like they themselves are parting the trees. The car drives as far as it can and stops. Jon and Friend get out of the car, Jon holding the box, and start walking along the powerlines.

By the road, partially hidden by brush, is an old wooden chair, friend grabs this and drags it behind them as they walk in silence.

After a while of walking in silence, Friend stops and sets the chair down. Jon then sits in the chair. He opens the box and looks at the contents inside: a beat up teddy bear, a eflated happy birthday balloon, several folded up pieces of notebook paper, a guitar pick, a coffee mug, a save the date postcard for Jon an Charlotte's wedding, and the record.

He focuses for a second on the record.

CUT TO:

INT. GOODWILL - DAY - FLASHBACK

A younger Jon is walking down an aisle, determined, like he is being magnetically drawn to something.

We see what he is being drawn towards, on a rack, partially hidden by a misplaced t-shirt, he grabs "Surfing With The Shah" by Menorum Rx.

CUT TO:

EXT. GRAVEL PIT - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Jon closes the box, and for the first time we see that there is writing on it: "A life contained: The memories of Jon Walker 1991-2014.

From his back pocket, friend takes out a hand gun. He slowly extends his arm and aims the gun right at Jon's head. Jon just sits there, filling himself with doubt and regret.

Friend's arm shakes slightly, nervously.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

There is a full cup of espresso on the counter.

Jon walks in and chugs the mug of espresso.

The door opens. Charlotte walks in to the apartment and straight to Jon with a huge smile on her face. She is in love.

CHARLOTTE
Hello, beautiful!

Charlotte leans in and gives Jon a passionate kiss on the lips.

CHARLOTTE
How was your day?

JON
Good.

Charlotte kisses him again.

CHARLOTTE
I missed you.

A moment of silence before:

CUT TO BLACK.