THE LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL

Ву

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EXT. TUNNEL - NIGHT

A dark sky littered with stars. Crickets CHIRP somewhere in the woods. An owl HOOTS in the distance.

The stars begin to move upward, bare tree branches substitute their place, and an old, brick tunnel sets in.

At the mouth of the tunnel sits a four-door passenger car. MUSIC emits from the open windows and overtake the CHIRPING of the crickets.

BETHANY (17) leans against the front passenger door, cell phone in hand and an expression of boredom hangs from her face, illuminated by the phone screen.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

In the driver seat of the car is VICTOR (17). He HISSES in a deep breath as he sucks on a joint, holds it, and passes it to TAZ (17) in the back seat. He takes a drag and coughs out the smoke.

VICTOR

Pussy.

TAZ

Gets me higher, bitch.

INT./EXT. CAR - NIGHT

Bethany GROANS in bored frustration and stuffs her phone into her pocket.

BETHANY

Okay, seriously, how much longer do we have to be here?

VICTOR

You were the one who wanted to do this.

BETHANY

No, I said I would tag along. You two idiots were the ones who heard about this stupid story.

Taz sticks the joint out of his window at Bethany.

TAZ

Take a hit and shut the fuck up.

Bethany snatches it from him.

BETHANY

And you wonder why you're still single, asshole.

She inhales.

VICTOR

We still have five more minutes before it's supposed to happen.

BETHANY

This is stupid. I'm freezing.

TAZ

Then how about getting in the car and we'll roll up the windows, dipshit.

Bethany shoots Taz a death glare and angrily gets inside of the car. Victor rolls the windows up.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Victor turns the heater on as Bethany gets comfortable in her seat.

BETHANY

(slightly to herself)
This is exactly how I wanted to spend my Saturday night. Chasing ghosts with fucking Ren and Stimpy.

TAZ

I'll take that as a compliment. Ren and Stimpy were badasses.

VICTOR

You know that tonight was the only night that we could do this. Otherwise we would have to wait until next year on the twenty-<u>forth</u> anniversary.

BETHANY

Oh, yes, because the stars have aligned and the moon is new and you two are as gullible as fuck.

VICTOR

Actually, people have claimed it only works the night that it happened.

TAZ

(to Bethany)

You don't even know the actual story.

BETHANY

Like I even care. Some people were driving through this tunnel with their headlights off because they were being idiots, just like the both of you, and ended up crashing head-on with another car, getting themselves and others killed.

VICTOR

The accident happened at 11:42 PM. When it's time, you flash your headlights three times and wait. Story has it that you see the headlights of the ghost car on the other end of the tunnel.

BETHANY

(unimpressed)
And then what?

VICTOR

We turn our headlights off and drive as fast as we can through the tunnel. Supposedly the ghost car will drive right through ours, and you can even see the spirits of the victims from that fateful night.

BETHANY

(acting serious)

Oh my God, that's really scary...

Victor and Taz exchange glances--they've successfully scared her...

BETHANY

So scary that it makes absolutely no fucking sense.

Bethany pulls her phone back out.

BETHANY

You two will believe anything.

VICTOR

Just have a suspension of disbelief. It's fun.

The three sit in silence as Bethany plays with her phone and Taz and Victor exchange the joint.

The windows of the car begin to fog on the outside. Victor flips the switch of the windshield wipers and clears his view of the tunnel: an abyss of blackness, the other end barely visible in the low light of the night.

Taz stares out his window and up at the starry night sky, joint in hand.

TAZ

Do you guys believe in aliens?

BETHANY

Shut up, turd.

TAZ

No, I mean, like, what if aliens exist? Like, what if they're the ones who brought us here?

VICTOR

Give me the joint, Taz.

Taz hands Victor the joint.

TAZ

I'm serious. Like, there are ancient depictions of flying saucers and shit. You know, cave drawings and hieroglyphics of UFOs in the sky.

VICTOR

Yeah, but do any of them show them putting people on this planet?

TAZ

Well...no, but it's just a theory.

BETHANY

You can't even figure out who your own dad is, Taz, what makes you think you discovered the origin of life?

TAZ

You know what, you're a real fucking bitch, Bethany. Fuck you.

BETHANY

I don't even want to be here, especially with your high ass back there--

TAZ

Oh sure, the only reason you're
here is so that you can let Victor
stick it in you and stir it around
a bit--

VICTOR

It's time.

The three look at the car radio. The clock reads 11:42 PM.

They look up through the windshield into the dark throat of the tunnel.

VICTOR

Alright, you guys ready?

TAZ

Let's do this!

BETHANY

(sarcastically)

And get it over with!

Victor flashes his headlights. Once. Twice. Thrice. And then they remain off.

Silence, except for the CHIRP of the crickets.

The three continue to stare ahead of them.

Nothing happens.

BETHANY

This is real exciting, guys.

Victor HUSHES her.

VICTOR

Just wait.

Bethany lets out a loud SIGH and gets more comfortable in her seat, crosses her arms.

Taz, higher than a kite, looks ahead with a lazy stare.

Victor grips the steering wheel tight. Tighter.

Silence. Stillness. Blackness within the tunnel. And then...

A low HUM, as a small ball of light fades in, and then fades out almost as quick.

VICTOR

Did you see that?

TAZ

Holy shit...

Bethany sits up, intrigued.

Another low HUM, and another small ball of light.

The three exclaim their surprise as the ball of light fades in and out more frequently.

Victor suddenly SLAMS the car into drive. Tires SQUEAL. Smoke billows out from behind the vehicle and the car disappears into the abyss of the tunnel.

INT. CAR/TUNNEL - NIGHT

The only illumination is from within the car. Victor looks determined, Bethany looks frightened (by Victor's driving), and Taz...Well, Taz is too high to make any kind of expression.

The ball of light ahead of them grows brighter, the HUM grows louder.

BETHANY

Victor, slow down! I'm not going to get killed because of your dumb ass!

TAZ

Why is there only one light?

VICTOR

Relax, Bethany! Can you believe this?!

Bethany pushes herself back into her seat as they ZOOM down the tunnel.

The light continues to grow brighter and brighter.

Victor looks at his speedometer. The needle progresses past 50...65...

VICTOR

Someone get their phone out and film this--

BOOM! A large blast of white light washes over the three kids, the car, illuminates the entire tunnel, brighter than daylight. A sound similar to a low TRUMPET NOTE, louder than a train horn, accompanies the light. It makes the SCREAMS inside the speeding car inaudible.

Victor SLAMS his foot on the brake pedal. The tires SCREECH and leave behind a trail of smoke. The car swerves and threatens to flip at any moment. The three passengers throw their hands in the air as they SCREAM--it's all that they can do.

The car comes to a sudden halt, and the white, blinding light immediately disappears, as well as the sound that accompanied it.

Everything is completely still. No crickets CHIRP. The engine of the car is dead.

The car sits in the middle of the road and faces the mouth of the tunnel. The smoke from the tires clears and wisps away into the darkness, revealing the three kids inside, scared stiff.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

They sit there for what seems like minutes before Bethany turns and punches Victor in the arm.

BETHANY

You fucking idiot, you could've gotten us killed!

VICTOR

What the fuck was that?!

TAZ

Those weren't headlights, that's for sure!

BETHANY

Shut up, Taz! Victor, you dumb piece of shit, what the fuck is wrong with you?!

VICTOR

I didn't know it would do that!

TAZ

Is anyone else's ears ringing?

BETHANY

Get us out of here right now.

Victor attempts to start the car, but all it does is SPUTTER and die. He tries again. And again.

Taz touches one of his ears and looks at the blood on the tip of his finger.

BETHANY

Jesus, I feel sick.

TAZ

Me too.

VICTOR

(to the car)

Come on, come on...

He continues to turn the key, but the engine refuses to start.

BETHANY

Oh great! Did you just get us fucking stranded out here?!

VICTOR

Bethany, stop! I don't know why it
isn't starting!

BOOM! The white light blinds the three kids again, and the sound of the TRUMPET HORN RUMBLES through the air. It lasts for only a few seconds, but seems like forever.

The HORN sound ceases, and the three look up ahead of them through the foggy windows.

The white, blinding light shines from the other end of the tunnel.

The car radio glitches and automatically seeks through every FM station, each broadcast a jumbled BUZZ and GARBLE of voices, music, and static.

The interior lights slowly HUM to life by themselves, and the inside of the car becomes more and more illuminated.

TAZ

I'm too fucking high for this shit, you guys!

Bethany sinks down in her seat and pulls her coat collar up to her face in pure fear.

Victor stares into the light, wide-eyed and emotionless.

BETHANY

(to Victor; quietly)

Victor...please...get us out of here...

CLUNK. Bethany looks over at Victor, who opens the door and pulls himself out of the car.

BETHANY

Victor?! VICTOR!

Victor shuts the door and slowly walks toward the tunnel, toward the light, in a trance-like state, like a moth to flame.

BETHANY

What the hell are you doing?! Get back in the fucking car!

Behind her, Taz opens his door and slowly steps out of the vehicle. He, too, is in a trance-like state, and he begins his journey toward the light.

The light silhouettes the two as Bethany watches them in fear. She's speechless as the whiteness engulfs her friends.

Suddenly, the light disappears. The car radio BUZZES off immediately. The interior lights burn out.

Bethany is left in silence and darkness.

Tears stream down her face as she remains sunken in her seat, the collar of her coat jacket still squeezed around her cheeks.

She slowly sits up, shakes in fear. The mouth of the tunnel is pitch black with no sign of Victor or Taz.

Common sense flows back into her mind and she rips the phone from her pocket. It greets her with a black screen, out of power, and Bethany WHINES in defeat.

BOOM! The blinding white light sprays out of the tunnel and washes out Bethany and the car. The TRUMPET HORN crushes the setting, and Bethany covers her ears in pain. She SCREAMS.

The HORN ceases, and Bethany looks up. A figure slowly walks out of the light. Is it Victor? Taz?

Another figure emerges from the whiteness.

BETHANY

Victor? Taz?!

Another figure. Then another. Tall. Thin. <u>Very</u> thin. <u>Inhuman</u>. They glide more than they actually walk, and their silhouettes are blurred from the foggy windows.

BETHANY

Oh my God...

Furiously, Bethany punches down the lock on each door as the figures near the car. She jumps in the front seat and tries her damnedest to start the car, but it continues to SPUTTER and WHEEZE.

The figures draw closer. CLOSER.

They surround the car.

Bethany BEGS to them incoherently in between SOBS and CRIES.

Each figure stands at and faces each door of the car, their features a blur of dark shadows behind the foggy glass.

BETHANY

What do you want?!

The figures do not answer, and remain almost motionless as they stand next to the car.

BETHANY

(quietly; afraid)

Who are you?

The figure at the front passenger door slowly raises its hand.

With its index finger, it writes one word. Even backward and reversed in Bethany's POV, it's legible: "GOD"

INT./EXT. CAR - NIGHT

The tires of the car slowly begin to roll forward, toward the tunnel.

Toward the light.

BETHANY

No...NO! Please! Stop!

The car rolls faster and faster toward the light, a car seemingly with a mind of its own.

BETHANY

Help! Somebody! HELP!!!

The light gets brighter and BRIGHTER.

Bethany becomes speechless. The light is blinding but her eyes are wider than ever.

It engulfs her completely, washes her out, a light brighter than the sun.

EXT. TUNNEL - MOMENTS LATER

BETHANY'S POV: the bright, blinding light BUZZES in her vision before it quickly flies away and reveals the face of a PARAMEDIC.

PARAMEDIC

This one's still alive! Let's get her out of here!

BACK TO SCENE

The paramedic turns off his flashlight and sets it on the ground.

Bethany--bruised, cut, beat up--lays broken in the middle of the road at the mouth of the tunnel. She stares straight up at the sky, her eyes still wide open, her face expressionless.

The paramedic talks to Bethany, keeps her conscious, while two others roll a stretcher over to her. They slowly lift her head up and wrap a brace around her neck.

Beyond the mouth of the tunnel is the wreckage of the smashed and rolled-over car.

Taz's body hangs halfway out of the back passenger window. His twisted form looks like a ragdoll tossed across a room.

Victor lays beyond the car, face down with a streak of blood trailing behind him that shimmers in the flashing lights of the ambulance and police cars. Something pulpy oozes from his head.

Police asses the scene and set flares around the accident.

She stares up at the clear, night sky. It's full of stars, and nothing else.

THE END