

a town called visalia, california

written by

Josh Park

joshupark98@gmail.com

A MAP OF CALIFORNIA.

ELIZA (V.O.)  
This is the state of California.

ZOOM IN to the middle of the state.

ELIZA  
And right smack in the middle here  
is Visalia.

IMAGE of crop fields.

ELIZA (CONT'D)  
We're known for our agriculture.

IMAGE of students at a community college.

ELIZA (CONT'D)  
A mediocre community college.

IMAGE of the sun beating down on the town.

ELIZA (CONT'D)  
And our unreasonably hot weather.

OVER BLACK.

ELIZA (V.O.)  
It's hell on earth.

INT. CONVENIENCE STORE - NIGHT

Eliza (25) wears an SFSU hoodie. She stares, dead-eyed, at a shelf full chip bags.

She grabs a bag of Hot Cheetos. And a bag of Doritos. And also Takis.

In walks JOHNNY (25). He has a thin pencil moustache and the eyes of a wide-eyed baby boy. He stops in his tracks when he sees Eliza, as she grabs all the snacks she can.

Eliza, meanwhile, doesn't notice him at all. She goes to the other aisle and takes a liter bottle of Coke Zero. The space in her arms is all exhausted.

She heads to the counter. Splays the bounty in front of the CASHIER, who doesn't seem amused.

ELIZA  
Could I get a scratcher please.

The Cashier pulls out a scratch-off.

CASHIER  
Is that all?

Eliza nods.

Johnny comes in, puts a pack of LICORICE on the table.

JOHNNY  
On me.

ELIZA  
(bothered)  
Listen, I appreciate it, but--

She turns, notices it's Johnny. She's taken aback, but pleasantly surprised.

ELIZA (CONT'D)  
Hey...

Johnny forks over his credit card.

INT. ELIZA'S CAR - MINUTES LATER

Eliza TEARS open a bag of chips. Johnny sticks a bunch of licorice in his mouth all at once, and they dangle out his mouth like Cthulu.

ELIZA  
You're still on that twizzler tip.

JOHNNY  
It's great. I don't use them like straws anymore.

ELIZA  
So gross.

Eliza eats a chip.

JOHNNY  
Yeah. You weren't a fan in high school, either.

ELIZA  
I'm such an ass.

JOHNNY  
No, no no. I was fuckin' gross.

ELIZA  
But that was like, the grossest  
thing you did. You weren't like  
uh...

Eliza snaps her fingers, trying to remember.

JOHNNY  
Billiam?

Memories of this character Billiam flood back to Eliza.

ELIZA  
God! BILLIAM! What's that guy up  
to?

JOHNNY  
I think he's in jail.

ELIZA  
Did he have sex with a 16-year-old?

JOHNNY  
Oh, no no.

Johnny takes a bite of licorice.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)  
Seventeen.

ELIZA  
(sarcastic)  
Oh. Good. Better.

JOHNNY  
Yeah. Great guy.

Eliza pops open her Coke Zero.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)  
Why'd you land back here?

ELIZA  
Why not?

JOHNNY  
I mean. Okay, Janice and Corey and  
I, we'd stay up all night just  
stalking your instagram.

ELIZA  
(embarrassed)  
Oh no.

JOHNNY

You went to cool galleries and  
shit. You made sick stuff. You were  
dating that tech guy.

TECH GUY'S FACE in front of a BLACK BACKGROUND.

TECH GUY

My dad owns this this complex.  
Well, technically, he co-owns it.  
Wanna room?

TECH GUY (CONT'D)

I think The Bay is getting a lot  
better.

TECH GUY (CONT'D)

I FUCKIN' HATE FOLK PUNK!

TECH GUY (CONT'D)

I got an offer from Samsung, but I  
think I'll stick with Facebook.  
They have a better cereal bar.

TECH GUY (CONT'D)

Folk punk is fuckin' tight.

BACK TO CAR.

JOHNNY

So why come back?

ELIZA

It was cool. It just got hard to  
afford.

JOHNNY

Ah. Guess that's an upside of here.  
Can't say I'm not happy to see you  
though. We gotta let the crew know!

ELIZA

You all still hang out?

JOHNNY

Hell yeah! Oh, actually, you should  
come to Maria's party tomorrow! We  
won't even tell anyone, it'll be a  
crazy, like--

He gestures his head blowing up.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

Right?

ELIZA  
I'll let you know. What's going on  
with you?

JOHNNY  
Ah, same old, same old. I work at  
Burger King now.

ELIZA  
Wait, the one back that way? Near  
the freeway?

JOHNNY  
The one.

ELIZA  
Isn't that place, like, extremely  
closed?

JOHNNY  
Should be. I don't see more than  
maybe five people a shift.

ELIZA  
God.

JOHNNY  
But they do buy five hundred  
whoppers each, so it evens out.

Eliza LAUGHS. She takes a sip of Coke.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)  
Feeds my kid though, so I can't  
complain.

Eliza CHOKES and COUGHS. She bops her chest. COUGHS a bunch.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)  
Are you okay?

Eliza nods. She coughs a few more, weaker than the others.  
She recovers, catches her breath.

ELIZA  
You have a kid?

JOHNNY  
I forget you're not caught up on  
shit. Yeah, he's a champ. Ten  
months strong.

ELIZA  
Jesus. Jonathon Baker is a father.

JOHNNY

Yeah.

ELIZA

Is there a... where's the mom?

JOHNNY

Oh. Yeah. Long story, she's not in the picture anymore. I'm not sure where she is, actually.

ELIZA

I'm sorry.

JOHNNY

No, don't be. It was never gonna last.

ELIZA

What's the boy's name?

JOHNNY

Carson.

ELIZA

Wow.

JOHNNY

Yeah. He's with my mom right now, she tries to spend like every waking moment with him.

ELIZA

That's sweet.

JOHNNY

I guess so. Gives me some free time, at least.

ELIZA

Yeah.

JOHNNY

Hey, you still writing plays?

ELIZA

Kinda. That's what I tried to do up in San Francisco.

JOHNNY

"Tried to"?

ELIZA

Well, when you have a million people writing exceptional plays, there's only so many companies can put on.

JOHNNY

That sucks. I remember they were good.

ELIZA

Oh no. Trust me, everyone up there was playing leagues above me.

JOHNNY

I guess. But yours were nice.

ELIZA

Thanks.

JOHNNY

I bet if you talk to Julio he'd put a production together.

ELIZA

That's... true. You really think he'd do that?

JOHNNY

Dude. Julio loved your shit. We all loved it.

ELIZA

Yeah. I guess I should.

Johnny's phone RINGS. He picks up.

JOHNNY

Hey. Yeah. Oh, okay. Yeah, I'll be there. Okay, seeya.

Johnny hangs up.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

That's my mom. Gotta get home to Carson.

ELIZA

I thought she wanted to spend all her time with him?

JOHNNY

Every WAKING moment. Once she gets sleepy, all bets are off.

Johnny opens the car door and steps out.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)  
It was really good to see you.

ELIZA  
Yeah. Good to see you, too.

Johnny shuts the car door. Eliza rolls down her window.

ELIZA (CONT'D)  
You wanna get coffee or lunch  
sometime?

JOHNNY  
Of course.

Johnny gets in his car. He waves at Eliza, and backs out. He drives off into the night.

Eliza sits back. Clears her dashboard of all the snacks. She takes out her scratcher and scratches.

She scratches a space. \$200.

Another. \$200.

The third. Reveals the last \$200.

She holds the ticket up. Smiles.

CUT TO BLACK.

THE END.