

STACCATO

Written by

Philip Weinman

INT. UPSCALE RESTAURANT - NIGHT

A tight booth, dimly lit by a small candle in the center. A woman lumbers over to it.

She has short, slicked brown hair. It's tucked behind her ears like her life depends on it. She's sporting a leg cast and wearing an enormous winter coat and scarf. Her presence looms large.

She spends an extra long moment removing her layers before planting herself with a large exhale.

This is SHERYL (late 40s).

SUPER: SECOND DATE

A waiter (20s) walks up to her booth and starts to fill two glasses.

OLLIE

Hi. I'm Ollie, I'll be your waiter tonight.

SHERYL

Hi Ollie, I'm waiting for someone.

OLLIE

Oh so, should I not pour this or--

SHERYL

No, no. It's fine. I'm just letting you know I'm not eating alone. Someone's coming to meet me.

OLLIE

Oh, okay. Right.

Ollie nods politely and walks away.

Sheryl takes a sip from the water in her glass. She grimaces, then reaches across the table and takes a sip from the other glass.

SHERYL

(nodding her head)

Oh, shit, yeah.

She grabs the glass across from her and switches it with the one in front of her. She takes another sip and crunches down on the ice.

BLACK.

INT. CAR - EVENING

A woman sits in the passenger seat of a car, her BOYFRIEND in the driver's seat. Both in their 20s. Both dressed nicely.

The woman's name is ELEANOR. She will be properly introduced soon. Her head is pressed against the window of the car, staring outside in a daze.

Her boyfriend reaches his hand out and places it on her thigh.

She quietly frowns at his touch and brushes it off quickly.

ELEANOR
(barely a whisper)
Ugh.

She takes a beat, realizing what she just said. She turns toward him.

He clenches his jaw, embarrassed.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)
(after a beat)
We're just, like... so different.

INT. CAR - A BIT LATER

The car is silent and tense. The aftermath of a fight.

ELEANOR'S BOYFRIEND
I don't even know how you expect to do anything now. You can't spend one second alone without calling me.

ELEANOR
That's not because I want to be with you. That's just because I don't wanna be alone. Don't give yourself that much credit.

ELEANOR'S BOYFRIEND
Knowing you you're gonna be dating someone tomorrow. Why are you even breaking up with me? I work too much? Make too much money? I'm too mature for you? I haven't proposed after a *month* of dating? You feel inadequate compared to me?--

ELEANOR

-- No. Every time I'm with you, I feel like I'm your hostage and you're my captor and I'm doing all these stupid fucking activities and saying these stupid little romantic things so I can have TV time when we get home and you chain me up or something. God.

(beat, exhales)

That's why I'm breaking up with you.

Eleanor's Boyfriend gapes at her. He can't get out any words.

It's silent for a beat. Eleanor fights these next words but they have to come out--

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

So, like... you can still drive me home?

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. CITY STREETS - DUSK

Eleanor walks along a street in a busy part of town. The cars are loud and the pavement is wet.

It't not fully dark yet.

We get a clearer image of Eleanor as she walks. She has short hair and she's wearing a blue floral dress that sort of shines in the dark. She has an old leather jacket over the top of it.

She wanders but keeps her pace. She doesn't look at anything with any sort of passion or interest. Her arms stay crossed.

After we follow her for awhile, she reaches a group of people in fancy clothes standing in front of a door to a ballroom, smoking, giggling.

One by one, they slowly head inside. Eleanor discreetly approaches them and slinks inside with them.

INT. BALLROOM - LOBBY/ HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

She follows the people through the lobby and down the and hallway into...

INT. BALLROOM - CONTINUOUS

Fancy. Bright. Loud. Full of people. Eleanor takes in her surroundings and heads to the bar.

She seems lighter now.

ELEANOR
(to the Bartender)
Hi.

BARTENDER
What can I get you?

Eleanor sputters for a second.

ELEANOR
Vodka tonic please.

The BARTENDER goes to make her drink.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)
Actually-- Can you just make me a
Shirley Temple?

The Bartender nods and starts to make the drink while Eleanor quietly scans the crowd.

BARTENDER
You here alone?

Eleanor considers saying something.

ELEANOR
(firm, but polite)
Can you just keep making my drink?

The Bartender nods.

Eleanor continues to look around the room and meets eyes with a DRUNK COUSIN who is lurking about ten feet away, clutching a tumbler of whiskey like a buoy.

DRUNK COUSIN
Hi there.

Eleanor musters a small, disinterested smile.

INT. BALLROOM - A BIT LATER

The Drunk Cousin talks to a lifeless Eleanor.

DRUNK COUSIN

For snack I like to do a veggie,
 but if I need something to really
 fill me up I like to go with some
 almonds. But the max is six, so I
 like to space 'em out. Have you had
 almonds before? Fuckin' phenomenal.
 Cashews not bad too. GOD, I miss
 coffee. How old are you?

The cousin keeps talking but his words and face drown out...

INT. BALLROOM - LATER

A swooning song envelops the entire screen.

We stare at the dance floor through a crowd of empty tables.
 Masses of wedding guests in their fancy attire. Class and
 elegance has been thrown out the window by now.

Everyone is densely packed together, inadvertently touching
 each other in all sorts of places as they swing their limbs
 hypnotically to the beat of the song. It's very rhythmic.
 Almost appealing. Slo-mo.

It's intoxicating for the time being. But before we sink too
 far in... it's cut short. A snap into reality. It's louder
 and faster and less appealing now.

Eleanor leans back in her chair, chewing the straw from her
 drink down to the bone. She's wearing her jacket like a
 blanket over her front half. She has her sight trained on the
 dancers.

We follow her sightline, entering the dance floor once again,
 focusing on one couple in particular: a man and a woman. Both
 about 30. Both attractive, both out of breath and sweaty.
 They politely grind into one another.

The man looks into the eyes of his GIRLFRIEND with sudden
 emotion. His forehead is glazed in sweat. Unclear what is
 dancing sweat and what is anxiety sweat. He buzzes with
 nervous energy. This is CHARLIE.

He touches his girlfriend's waist and stares into her eyes.

CHARLIE

(smiling)

Hey.

CHARLIE'S GIRLFRIEND

Hi.

Charlie fidgets with something in his pocket. He takes his girlfriend into his arms, whispers into her ear:

CHARLIE

Marry me.

Charlie's Girlfriend's face falls.

CHARLIE'S GIRLFRIEND

Oh, fuck...

Charlie drops her. A wave of quiet screams as she hits the floor.

Back OUTSIDE the crowd at Eleanor's table. Charlie comes trudging out of the pack of bodies. He looks especially vulnerable outside the large group of people.

He heads past Eleanor's table and out the door.

Eleanor's eyes follow him until he's out of sight.

INT. BALLROOM - BATHROOM - A BIT LATER

Eleanor is in a stall. Not going to the bathroom, just sitting there, listening to the muffled sounds of music coming from the ballroom.

She stays like this for a moment, almost frozen.

INT. BALLROOM - BATHROOM - A BIT LATER

Eleanor washes her hands at the sink. She looks at herself in the mirror.

She puts her head in her hands and leans on the sink.

NELSON (O.S.)

You didn't flush.

Eleanor snaps her head toward the door, where a young boy, NELSON, stands in a little suit.

NELSON (CONT'D)

Hi. I'm Nelson.

ELEANOR

(absorbing)

Hi, Nelson... Where are your parents?

NELSON
I lost them. I think they had
alcohol.

ELEANOR
Nice...

NELSON
... You look like a young mom.

ELEANOR
(waits a second)
Okay I don't remotely know what to
do with that. So I'm gonna help you
find your parents.

NELSON
Okay.

ELEANOR
Great.

NELSON
But I have to pee first. Can you
wait outside.

ELEANOR
Oh, um, okay-- In the... women's
room?

NELSON
It's cleaner in here.

Eleanor shrugs.

EXT. BALLROOM - HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Eleanor waits outside the bathroom. The toilet flushes.

EXT. BALLROOM - A BIT LATER

Eleanor exits the building. Charlie sits feet away on the
curb, dejected.

His eyes are worn and red. A RING BOX sits next to him.

Eleanor walks past him but stops.

ELEANOR
(still turned around)
Hey, are you okay?

Charlie perks up.

CHARLIE

Oh, I'm not really in the mood to talk right now. Sorry.

Eleanor turns around.

ELEANOR

Well neither am I. I just wanted to make sure you were okay.

CHARLIE

Why?

ELEANOR

... Because you look sad.

CHARLIE

Oh.

ELEANOR

So?

CHARLIE

So...?

ELEANOR

Are you okay?

CHARLIE

No.

ELEANOR

Well do you wanna talk about it?

CHARLIE

Not really.

Eleanor sighs, pauses, thinks.

ELEANOR

Okay.

Eleanor walks over to Charlie and sits down on the curb next to him. He scoots away about six inches on instinct.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

I'm Eleanor.

Eleanor reaches out her hand.

CHARLIE

Oh, hi, okay.

Charlie shakes it lightly.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
(quietly)
Firm grip.

ELEANOR
Sorry?

CHARLIE
(louder)
I said you have a firm grip?

ELEANOR
Oh. Okay. Sure.

Eleanor laughs quietly.

CHARLIE
Listen, I don't mean to be rude but
like I said I'm not really in the
mood... to talk and stuff.

ELEANOR
I know. We don't have to talk.
(beat)
I just like to have company when
I'm alone.

CHARLIE
Oh, okay.

Eleanor pulls a tin of mints from her purse. She offers one to Charlie.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
No. Thank you.

Eleanor downs all of the mints in one go. Charlie watches, almost impressed.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
What are you doing?

ELEANOR
(mouth full)
I'm eating.

CHARLIE
Mints aren't food.

ELEANOR
I didn't say they were food. I just
said I'm eating them.

Eleanor eyes Charlie's ring box. She takes a moment to think.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

You know, that, and also I wanna make sure my breath doesn't smell in case you wanna make out or something.

CHARLIE

Oh, that-- Thank you so much but I have a girlfriend, and--

ELEANOR

It's okay. I'm messing with you.

CHARLIE

(relieved)

Oh.

ELEANOR

I'm sixteen anyways.

CHARLIE

Shit, are you really?

ELEANOR

No.

CHARLIE

Oh okay, so why did you say--

ELEANOR

I'm always thinking of the quickest way to eliminate all romantic tension in a conversation.

CHARLIE

(disinterested)

Okay. Gotcha...

A beat.

ELEANOR

Listen, I'm gonna go get some food if you wanna join me... take your mind off of things?

CHARLIE

That's really nice but--

ELEANOR

No, that's totally fine.

Eleanor grabs her things and stands up swiftly.

Charlie stands too, almost out of instinct. It's just as much of a shock to him as it is to Eleanor.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

(beat)
You stood up.

CHARLIE

(unsure of it)
I did.

INT. DINER - LATER

Bright and white in here. Dumpy but enjoyable. Eleanor and Charlie are the only diners.

Eleanor and Charlie sit across from each other in a booth. Eleanor scours the menu. Charlie sits placidly.

SUPER: FIRST DATE

An offputtingly upbeat waitress (20s/30s) trots over to take their order. Her nametag says JENNA.

JENNA

Hi there! What can I get you two?

ELEANOR

(reading the menu)
I'll have... a burger, some large fries... hmmm... Oh! And some onion rings.

JENNA

Okay. Amazing.
(to Charlie)
And for you?

CHARLIE

Do you have any alcohol?

Eleanor stifles a laugh.

JENNA

Oh no I'm so sorry. We don't.

Charlie brushes it off, embarrassed.

CHARLIE

Okay, no worries. Forget it.

JENNA
(hopeful)
Coffee? I have coffee.

CHARLIE
No, thank you.

ELEANOR
Can we also get a strawberry
milkshake? Two straws.

JENNA
Of course. Yes. Thank you-- You're
welcome.

Jenna leaves.

ELEANOR
No coffee?

CHARLIE
Coffee makes me sleepy.

ELEANOR
Really? Sleepy?

Eleanor senses Charlie's shifting attention.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)
I don't know if you're missing much
though. My uncle shit himself from
having too much coffee one time.

Eleanor makes a shitting motion with her hands.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)
In a cafe. In Paris I think. He
just... he shit himself in a cafe.
I can't drink a cappuccino without
thinking of...

CHARLIE
(grimacing)
Your uncle taking a shit in a cafe?

ELEANOR
... Yeah.

The sounds of Jenna singing and humming from the kitchen echo
throughout the room.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)
Why is she so happy?

CHARLIE
What do you mean?

ELEANOR
No one should be that happy working
the night shift at a diner.

CHARLIE
It's... nice.

ELEANOR
I worked the night shift at the
diner. She must be spitting in our
food for sport to be that happy.

CHARLIE
You're kidding.

ELEANOR
Or she's got some... you know.

Eleanor taps her nose and snorts.

CHARLIE
No! Are you serious? She's...
happy!

ELEANOR
("and it's weird")
Yeah.

CHARLIE
Wow.

ELEANOR
God, when is this food gonna get
here?

Distressed, Eleanor absentmindedly grabs a salt packet from
the table and beats it against her hand.

CUT TO:

INT. DINER - A BIT LATER

Eleanor has cracked open the salt packet and is slowly eating
pieces of from her hand. She does this as she talks at fever
pace.

ELEANOR
I mean, don't worry, I've never
done cocaine. That's like... my
line.

(MORE)

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

I think everyone sort of has a line of all the drugs they will and won't take? That's my line. I mean sure, yeah, maybe when I'm 80 and don't have the jaw strength to bite anyone, but right now, you know? It's just not worth the risk.

Charlie stares at her in minor shock. Jenna comes over.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

Oh god, finally. The food.

JENNA

(smiling)

Hi, guys.

Jenna's not carrying anything.

ELEANOR

Hey, Jenna, weren't you just making the food?

JENNA

(thrilled)

I was.

ELEANOR

You're not holding any food.

JENNA

Oh, well yes... I took a break from that to come ask *him* a question.

She turns to look at Charlie.

ELEANOR

(pointing, in disbelief)

Him?

CHARLIE

Hey...

ELEANOR

Sorry.

JENNA

I just wanted to come over and give you my phone number.

Jenna touches Charlie's arm.

Charlie backs away. Jenna recoils. Eleanor watches on, a little bit entertained, a little bit jealous.

Charlie waits a second, frozen in fear, as he figures out what to say.

CHARLIE

That is so nice of you and everything but I actually have a girlfriend... So...

Jenna frowns.

ELEANOR

Sorry, *girlfriend*? Correct me if I'm wrong, but did your proposal not just get rejected a mere hour ago?

CHARLIE

Hey!

ELEANOR

Sorry!
(to Jenna)
But, hold on. I mean, we could've been on a date right now. Was your plan just to come over and hit on my boyfriend?

CHARLIE

But I'm not your boyfriend.

ELEANOR

No, of course not. I never said that.

JENNA

Oh, I just assumed you two were siblings. I mean there's *no* chemistry here--

ELEANOR

Okay! Yeah, thanks.

CHARLIE

(to Jenna)
Can you... leave? Maybe?

JENNA

(politely)
Oh, okay. Well, thank you for listening and you know where to find me. I hope I didn't make an ass of myself.

She smiles woodenly and walks off.

CHARLIE
What the fuck?

ELEANOR
I know, fuckin' weirdo.

CHARLIE
No, I mean-- I don't want you
bringing up my... failed proposal.

ELEANOR
Oh. That.
(beat)
Fuck, I didn't know it was touchy--
I mean, of course it's touchy. I'm
sorry. I'm just-- Sorry.

CHARLIE
It's fine.

Beat.

ELEANOR
How long did you guys date?

CHARLIE
Wh-- it's not a past tense thing.
We're still together.

ELEANOR
No, I didn't mean it like that.

CHARLIE
W-- Why are we talking about her? I
thought you wanted to get my mind
off of all of this. Sorry, but I
don't want to talk about this with
you. Sorry.

A stiff, long silence.

ELEANOR
No, don't apologize. It's my bad.
(beat)
So, um, has anyone else that you
know...

Eleanor waits a second, like this next sentence has to come
out but she doesn't want it to.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)
... ever shit themselves after--

Jenna comes over solemnly with all of the food and plops it on the table. Eleanor and Charlie jolt back a little bit.

Jenna walks away.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

Okay...

(beat)

Um, you can feel free to get in on any of this.

CHARLIE

Oh, that's fine. I don't really share food. It's-- I don't like when it's all touching. It's fine.

Eleanor takes a fork and parts all of the food into separate ends of the plate.

ELEANOR

It's here when you want it.

Charlie smiles a little bit.

CHARLIE

Thanks.

ELEANOR

Have you ever dipped an onion ring in ketchup and then in a milkshake?

CHARLIE

Don't do that--

INT. DINER - LATER

Charlie and Eleanor are deep in conversation. Her plate of food is nearly gone. The milkshake is half down. Charlie takes an absentminded sip from it.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. UPSCALE RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Sheryl checks her watch for the time.

Ollie comes by to refill her water.

OLLIE

Hi.

SHERYL

These waters taste different.

OLLIE

Pardon?

SHERYL

Well the one across the table is really quite unpleasant. But this one was excellent. Did you use two different batches?

OLLIE

No, I poured from the same pitcher... Maybe it's the cup that's different?

SHERYL

I don't see how a cup could affect the taste of water.

OLLIE

Well maybe if I spit on one rim but not the other?

SHERYL

Did you spit on one rim and not the other?

OLLIE

No.

Sheryl shakes her head a little bit.

SHERYL

Well, I don't deal with hypotheticals. No need to put an idea in a fancy dress.

Ollie cracks an appreciative smirk at Sheryl.

Sheryl grips the edge of the table firmly. And almost without pause between her last thought:

SHERYL (CONT'D)

This table is quite well made. Is it doweled?

OLLIE

Uh, sorry?

SHERYL

Is the table doweled? The wood plugs they use instead of screws.

OLLIE
I'd... have to check.

SHERYL
Alright.

Sheryl shakes the table a little bit.

SHERYL (CONT'D)
It's nice and sturdy. I betcha it's
doweled.

OLLIE
I'll... take your word for it.

SHERYL
No, no, don't take my word for it.
I'd check with your lumber supplier
first. Just to make sure.

OLLIE
Oh... kay. You enjoy your water.

SHERYL
Oh. Right. Thank you.

Ollie walks off.

Two people at a table adjacent to Sheryl look over at her in sympathy. She waves.

SHERYL (CONT'D)
He's on his way.

She takes an uncertain sip of her water.

BACK TO:

INT. DINER - NIGHT

Eleanor's plate is empty. Her glass too. Jenna comes over with the check. Her phone number rests atop it on a ripped piece of paper.

ELEANOR
(re: the phone number)
Of course.

JENNA
This is for you two. Here you go.
Thank you.

Jenna lingers creepily next to Charlie for a second. Then she leaves.

ELEANOR
(sighing)
They're cash only.

CHARLIE
Oh, no worries.

Charlie reaches down to get his jacket. He pats around for it.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Fuck. I left my jacket at the wedding.

Eleanor looks through her purse.

ELEANOR
I don't have any cash.

Charlie pats his pockets frantically. His face goes cold.

CHARLIE
Shit. I don't have my ring.
(beat, pleading)
I can't go back there.

INT. DINER - MOMENTS LATER

Charlie watches Eleanor walk out of the diner and down the street. His eyes follow her, just trying to figure her out. He watches, a little bit enamored.

EXT. BALLROOM - A BIT LATER

Eleanor rounds the corner, walking toward the doors of the ballroom.

She makes it to the curb, bending down to look for Charlie's ring box. She finds it tucked in a little corner. She grabs it.

INT. BALLROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The ballroom is nearly empty of guests now. Some of the workers start to clean up.

Eleanor sifts through the carnage of the wedding, looking across the tables for jackets. She eventually finds Charlie's and checks it for his wallet and his keys. She grabs it.

She walks toward the doorway and stops. She thinks for a moment. Hard.

She walks over to a radiator that sits below a high ledge. She climbs on top of it tentatively, ring box in hand.

She sets the ring box up there, pushes it to the wall, and leaves.

INT. DINER - SAME TIME

Charlie bounces his leg, looking around, waiting for Eleanor to get back.

He meets eyes with Jenna. He smiles politely, quietly. She winks at him and walks into the back.

Charlie browses out the window, looking for Eleanor. His eyes catch on a man dressed in all black with a beanie and a backpack on. The man walks hastily toward the door to the diner.

Charlie's eyes widen.

CHARLIE

Ohhhh shit. Shit. Okay.

Charlie hurries under his table and scoots to the very back. We only see what he sees.

The bell on the door dings as the door opens. Charlie stays silent as he listens to the man walk a few steps. His eyes close and tighten, preparing for some sort of bang or yell.

Jenna walks out of the kitchen. Charlie grimaces. It's silent. Charlie shudders, trying to control his breath.

More footsteps.

Then silence.

And then, out of fucking nowhere, Jenna peeks her head beneath the table silently, but also so incredibly loudly.

JENNA

(cheerful)

HEY!

Charlie JUMPS and SMACKS his head on the bottom of the table. It's followed by a quick clash of silverware and plates.

JENNA (CONT'D)

OH!

CHARLIE

OH, FUCK! Oh...

Charlie laughs, but one of those laughs that's only a cover for a cry. He clutches his chest.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Oh, it's just you.

(beat, gasping)

I thought...

ANGLE ON: Charlie under the table, Jenna checking on him, and the man in black sitting at a corner booth with his beanie off and his backpack next to him, reading a book. He's nobody.

BACK UNDER THE TABLE:

Charlie tries to calm down. His eyes are wide and alert. He's breathing hard.

JENNA

Are you okay?

CHARLIE

(instinct)

NO!

Jenna backs up.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Sorry, no. That wasn't me.

(beat, shaky)

Yes. I'm fine.

He tries to laugh.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

That was so stupid. Sorry. I thought that he was a...

He laughs again. Every muscle in his body is fighting tears. He's so close.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

I thought he was a robber or something.

He chuckles, calming down a little bit now.

And then a long drop of blood trails from his hair and down his face. He wipes his face instinctively, not looking at his hand.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Whew, I'm sweating.

EXT. CITY STREETS - SAME TIME

Eleanor stops off at an ATM and withdraws some money, Charlie's coat in hand.

A group of TEENAGERS walk past her. Eleanor looks at their feet, then at the heels on her feet.

ELEANOR
Hey, hey.

They all stop.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)
(to one of the girls)
Can I pay one of you for your shoes.

TEENAGE GIRL #1
Well what size are you?

ELEANOR
(defensively)
Normal teenage girl size.

TEENAGE GIRL #1
Are you sure?

ELEANOR
You want cash or not?

TEENAGE GIRL #2
You can have mine.

ELEANOR
Amazing, thank you.

TEENAGE GIRL #2
I don't need cash though. Your heels. Gimme your heels. Then I'll give you the boots.

ELEANOR
(apprehensive)
... Fine. But I need your socks
too.

Another teenager chimes in.

TEENAGE GIRL #1
Ew. Are you gonna give them to your
boyfriend or something?

They all laugh.

ELEANOR
Okay, no. Absolutely not. Gross. I
just don't have any and I can't
wear boots without them.

TEENAGE GIRL
(snippy)
I don't wear socks with these.
Breaks 'em in faster.

ELEANOR
(quietly)
Makes 'em smell good too I bet.

Silence in the group.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)
Okay well I need socks.

Beat.

TEENAGE BOY
You can have mine.

ANGLE ON: A tall pair of socks with the words "FOOT GUY" on
them.

INT. DINER - SAME TIME

The trail of blood continues down Charlie's face. He wipes it
again.

Jenna points at his forehead with fear in her eyes.

Charlie looks at his hand.

CHARLIE
Oh... OH.

JENNA

I'm really afraid of blood so I might-- I might just go hang out in the living room.

CHARLIE

WHAT?!

Jenna backs away.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Wh-- You're supposed to help me!

JENNA

I--

Jenna scurries from under the table and out of sight.

CHARLIE

(dazed, yelling out)

Is it a lot? It feels like maybe a lot, I-- I'm not afraid of blood but I am when it's coming from my head.

(beat)

JENNA!

After a moment, Charlie crawls out from the booth. It's a slow and clumsy process. He moves like a bug that's leaking.

EXT. DINER - CONTINUOUS

We can sort of see a bit of the commotion from out here. Charlie tries to lift himself from the ground and into the booth.

Jenna runs into the kitchen.

The man in black tries to help both of them simultaneously but fails and gives up. He just stares from the side, pretending to do things.

Then Eleanor walks up (sans her heels, in some Doc Martens).

Charlie's blood is on the window where he leans. Eleanor squints and sees what's going on.

ELEANOR

Oh, shit.

She runs inside. Fast.

Eleanor drops Charlie's jacket at the entry and runs to the counter. She grabs a napkin holder and brings it to the table.

She walks on the table to get behind Charlie. She holds the napkins to his head for a second, tosses them away, pulls more fresh ones.

She repeats. Blood covered napkin after blood covered napkin after blood covered napkin.

INT. DINER - CONTINUOUS

Eleanor lifts another napkin off of Charlie's head.

CHARLIE
Is that brain?!

ELEANOR
No! No. It's just hair.

We hear Jenna vomit from back in the kitchen.

CHARLIE
I'm tasting metal.

ELEANOR
Probably just the shitty food here.
It's fine.

CHARLIE
Okay...

ELEANOR
Just imagine it's like a bloody
nose. But coming from your head.

CHARLIE
OHH, bloody noses really freak me
out.

ELEANOR
God dammit.

Jenna staggers back into the dining area, pale. She tries to help and grab some ice but becomes a problem herself and drops it everywhere.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)
I need more napkins! Jenna!

Eleanor turns to the man in black.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)
Hey! Hi, can you call 9-1-1?

The man backs away meekly.

Jenna sinks into the corner and starts crying.

JENNA
(muffled through her
hands)
IS HE GONNA BE OKAY.

ELEANOR
YES. But you are being super
unhelpful right now. He's gonna be
fine.

The bloody napkins keep piling up.

Behind Eleanor, the man in black quietly steps over to the cash box. He tries to open it, fails, tries again, and just RIPS it off the counter.

He runs out of the building with it.

JENNA
HEY!

Jenna tries to get up but slips in a bit Charlie's blood. She makes a noise that borders on groan and cry.

Eleanor turns around and sees the man in black running out with the cash box.

ELEANOR
WHAT THE FUCK?!

Jenna lays on the ground and succumbs to it all. Still crying.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)
JENNA! Oh my god. Call 9-1-1.

JENNA
No, I can't!
(beat)
I'm on drugs! I'm gonna get in
trouble.

ELEANOR
(at Charlie)
I FUCKING KNEW IT.

CHARLIE
ELEANOR!

ELEANOR
Okay, not the time

Jenna cries some more.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)
It's fine, Jenna. Just do it! Or
else... he'll die.

CHARLIE
I WILL?!

ELEANOR
No, I'm lying so she calls 9-1-1.

JENNA
You are?!

ELEANOR
GOD FUCKING DAMMIT. CALL 9-1-1.

Eleanor's yells upset Jenna even more. But she manages to
crawl out of the blood and teeter over to her phone. She
calls.

JENNA	ELEANOR (CONT'D)
Hi. Hello. It's me. The ship is going down. I repeat, the ship is going down.	<u>WHAT?!</u>

EXT. DINER - CONTINUOUS

We watch everything unfold silently from out here. The
pandemonium ensues as the main titles come in.

TITLE CARD (SUPER):

STACCATO

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - EXAM ROOM - LATER

A DOCTOR prepares stitches. Charlie sits up on a bench with a
large compress to his head. The tissues paper crinkles under
him as he shifts around.

Eleanor sits on a chair to the side. She looks absolutely
obliterated after the events at the diner.

With his free hand, Charlie tears little by little at the tissue paper, trying to make it into a line. It's tedious and slow and goes on forever.

RIP. RIP. RIP. RIIIIIP.

CHARLIE

Oh shoot. I messed this one up.

Eleanor rolls her eyes, exasperated. But she says and does nothing.

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - EXAM ROOM - A BIT LATER

Charlie gets worked on. We hear the snips of scissors and stitches.

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - EXAM ROOM - A BIT LATER

Charlie has a bandage secured to the top of his head. His hair is tamped town in the back because of it.

Now is a good time to notice Charlie and Eleanor both have various bloodstains plastered across their clothes.

DOCTOR

You don't have a concussion, but you do have a small abrasion on your head that needs to be cared for.

CHARLIE

Small seems relative... You weren't there.

DOCTOR

If you feel any pain in the next couple of days, just take an Advil as advised and this should subside completely in the next week or so.

(beat)

Avoid strenuous activity. No sex, sports, etcetera. No alcohol for at least 24 hours. Just precaution.

Charlie nods.

ELEANOR

And if we don't follow your advice?

DOCTOR
Then don't come back in here
complaining.

ELEANOR
Good with me.

CHARLIE
Not good with me.

EXT. EMERGENCY ROOM - A BIT LATER

Charlie and Eleanor walk outside. Charlie looks at Eleanor.
She catches him staring, spaced out.

ELEANOR
What?

CHARLIE
Oh, nothing.

Charlie gathers himself.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Uh, thanks for the napkins.

ELEANOR
I wouldn't do it for most people.

CHARLIE
You should probably drive, right?

ELEANOR
Your car's back at the wedding
hall. You know that right?
(beat)
Are you sure you're okay?

CHARLIE
Yeah. I'm fine.

ELEANOR
What day is it?

CHARLIE
Saturday.

ELEANOR
Okay and what's your middle name?

CHARLIE
... Why?

ELEANOR
Because I have a feeling it's
really embarrassing.

CHARLIE
Oh, it is.

ELEANOR
Oh my god tell me.

CHARLIE
No. Never.

EXT. BALLROOM - PARKING LOT - LATER

Charlie and Eleanor head toward Charlie's car.

CHARLIE
He was dressed in all black, he had
a beanie on in spring, and had... a
backpack.
(beat, sighs)
He walked weird, okay!

ELEANOR
You should sue him.

CHARLIE
For what?

ELEANOR
You could just lie and I'd back you
up. We could take him for
everything he's worth.
(beat)
I'm kidding-- by the way.

CHARLIE
Yeah. I know.

ELEANOR
Oh, okay. Cool. I'm just making
sure you don't think I'm a terrible
person.

CHARLIE
Well are you a terrible person?

ELEANOR
Um... no?

CHARLIE
That's a question?

ELEANOR

It's complicated. There's a difference between a good person and *not* a terrible person. There's a difference between a bad person and a shitty person.

(beat)

I mean, I forgot to feed my neighbor's expensive ass saltwater fish when I was a teenager and it died. And then I lied and said the fish killed itself because it was suicidal from having to stare at this ugly painting the family had hung up next to its tank. Turns out their kid painted it, and that *really* threw him for a loop.

CHARLIE

Jesus.

ELEANOR

Okay, I mean I didn't kill a dog or anything. I didn't cheat on a test in college and get caught and then, to save my ass, tell on everyone else who cheated too.

CHARLIE

You definitely did that last one.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

Okay, so I did do that-- But I also saved your life earlier. Completely selflessly some might add. So...

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Good person.

ELEANOR

(not convinced)

Yes. Good person...

INT. CHARLIE'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

They get in the car. Eleanor in the driver's seat, Charlie in the passenger seat.

It's silent for a second.

ELEANOR
 (rambling)
 I can take you home. I don't
 know how the whole car thing is gonna work out but--

CHARLIE
 Or we could go somewhere?

Eleanor smiles.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)
 Oh, uh... yeah. Okay.

EXT. LOOKOUT SPOT - LATER

Charlie and Eleanor walk along a path that overlooks the city.

They're mid-conversation.

ELEANOR
 What kinds of music do you like?

CHARLIE
 Whatever's on the radio.

Eleanor stops them dead in their tracks.

ELEANOR
WHAT?

CHARLIE
 (taken aback)
 What? What did I say?

ELEANOR
 People are supposed to be so
 opinionated about music.

CHARLIE
 I just-- I like all kinds of music!

ELEANOR
 Okay so now I have more questions.

CHARLIE
 No, no, I wanna ask you stuff.

ELEANOR
 Oh, no, no.

CHARLIE
 You have to give me *something*.

ELEANOR
Not if I keep you talking.

CHARLIE
I don't know anything about you!
(beat)
You can't force me out here with
you and talk the whole time without
saying anything.

Eleanor tries to brush this off.

ELEANOR
You know my name, you know what I
look like, you know that I'd make a
killer war doctor and that I've
never tried cocaine. What more do
you need?

Beat.

CHARLIE
I'm gonna go ahead anyways. Dogs or
cats?

ELEANOR
Dogs or cats?

CHARLIE
Yeah?

ELEANOR
That's a horrible question. Give me
something better. Harder.

CHARLIE
Like?

ELEANOR
Like... would I rather murder
someone or be murdered--

CHARLIE
Oh my god, just answer! Dogs or
cats!

ELEANOR
Neither! I hate pets.

CHARLIE
Are you... like, trying to win some
cynicism contest or something?

ELEANOR
 (immediately)
 A cynicism contest would never
 work.

EXT. LOOKOUT SPOT - A BIT LATER

Charlie and Eleanor lean against a railing.

CHARLIE
 Have you ever done the thing where
 you make up backstories for
 strangers.

ELEANOR
 Yes. I love that game.

CHARLIE
 Okay let's see...

They survey the small crowd of people. Eleanor discreetly
 points a couple about 100 feet across the walkway from them.

ELEANOR
 Okay, what do you think their names
 are?

CHARLIE
 Hmm, I think...

ANGLE ON: Charlie and Eleanor, from a perspective about 100
 feet away; from the perspective of the couple they're
 watching.

MAN
 She looks like a Jen. He looks like
 a Glen.

WOMAN
 Okay, yeah. Let's see...
 backstory... They're both
 rebounding and they don't like each
 other but they're afraid to admit
 it.

BACK TO ELEANOR AND CHARLIE'S PERSPECTIVE:

ELEANOR
 They're married with three kids who
 are all way too close in age--

CHARLIE
 Eleanor, wait.

ELEANOR

What?

CHARLIE

Are they looking at us?

Eleanor squints.

TO THE MAN AND THE WOMAN:

MAN

Wait...

TO ELEANOR AND CHARLIE:

ELEANOR

They're looking at us.

CHARLIE

Are they talking about us?

TO THE MAN AND WOMAN:

WOMAN

I think they're talking about us.

TO ELEANOR AND CHARLIE:

Charlie awkwardly waves.

ELEANOR

What are you doing?

CHARLIE

I dunno. It felt right.

TO THE MAN AND THE WOMAN:

WOMAN

Is he waving at us?

The man starts to wave back.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

Why are you waving?

TO ELEANOR AND CHARLIE:

Charlie starts mouthing and speaking quietly.

CHARLIE

(enunciating with his
mouth)

I - AM - CHARLIE.

ELEANOR
What are you doing?

CHARLIE
I'm mouthing my name.

Eleanor gapes, dumbfounded.

ELEANOR
... You think he can see you?!

CHARLIE
I just wish he'd mouth his name.

TO THE MAN AND WOMAN:

The Man does the exact same thing Charlie is doing.

MAN
(disappointed)
Why isn't he doing it?

WOMAN
He-- He can't see you!

TO ELEANOR AND CHARLIE:

CHARLIE
I wonder if he knows sign
language...

Charlie starts to sign. Eleanor walks off.

EXT. LOOKOUT SPOT - A BIT LATER

Charlie and Eleanor are a bit further down the path now.

CHARLIE
Do you watch movies?

ELEANOR
Only ones that I know. I haven't
seen a new movie in years.

CHARLIE
What's your favorite?

ELEANOR
Anchorman 2.

CHARLIE
Anchorman 2?

ELEANOR
It's the funniest fucking thing
I've ever seen.

CHARLIE
I'll have to watch it.

ELEANOR
Okay, but don't watch it because I
like it. Watch it because you wanna
watch it.

CHARLIE
What?

ELEANOR
Because people think if someone
recommends you a movie you're
entitled to yell at them about it
later.

CHARLIE
That's the best part about movies.

ELEANOR
Movies are for people to experience
alone.

CHARLIE
What a terrible thing to say.

ELEANOR
No worse than your music thing.

CHARLIE
Are we just terrible people?

ELEANOR
Well one of us is right. One of us
is wrong. So either you're terrible
or I'm terrible.
(beat)
50% chance it's you.

CHARLIE
Or you.

They take a minute to soak in the view. Both deep in thought.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Okay, dream dinner guest-- Dead or
alive.

ELEANOR
Dead. Definitely dead.

EXT. LOOKOUT SPOT - A BIT LATER

Charlie and Eleanor walk down to the car. A HIKER walks up the hill, about to pass them. Charlie flags him down to ask him a question.

CHARLIE
Excuse me?

Eleanor looks on, puzzled.

HIKER
Yeah?

CHARLIE
(knowing the answer)
Do you think movies are meant to be
enjoyed alone or together?

HIKER
Oh, well. Together. For sure.

CHARLIE
Thank you.

The Hiker heads off.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
See. I'm right.

ELEANOR
No, you're not. You're just wrong,
with company.

INT. CHARLIE'S CAR - LATER

Charlie yawns in the passenger seat.

ELEANOR
No. No, no, no. Don't fall asleep.

CHARLIE
I'm sorry. I can't help it.

ELEANOR
Why don't we go get some food.

CHARLIE
More food?

ELEANOR
Spicy food. It'll wake us up. I
know the best place.

EXT. DELI - A BIT LATER

Charlie and Eleanor walk toward a grimy street corner,
approaching a Deli.

CHARLIE
The sign says it has a C+ health
score.

ELEANOR
That's a passing grade.

INT. DELI - MOMENTS LATER

Eleanor and Charlie peruse the menu board.

CHARLIE
Do you know what you're gonna get?

ELEANOR
Yeah.

She points to an item.

CHARLIE
That has five peppers next to it.

Eleanor walks up to the counter and speaks to the DELI
EMPLOYEE.

ELEANOR
Hi, can I have the "Beef Aneurysm"?

INT. DELI - A BIT LATER

The two eat their sandwiches.

CHARLIE
Hey. If I was in a time loop...
would you believe me?

ELEANOR
Yeah.

CHARLIE
Cool. I'd believe you.

ELEANOR

'Kay.

Eleanor's face is red and pained. Involuntary tears fall out of her eyes.

CHARLIE

Are you okay?

ELEANOR

This sandwich is really spicy.

CHARLIE

Okay, but like how spicy? Just have some water.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. DELI - MOMENTS LATER

Things have escalated. Eleanor shoves napkins in her mouth and silently suffers.

Charlie goes to fill up her water.

ELEANOR

(mouth full of napkins)

No, no, no. Milk.

CHARLIE

(to the Deli Employee)

Do you have milk in here??

DELI EMPLOYEE

No.

CHARLIE

A fuckin' deli without milk. What's next? The... white house without... white people? No, stop. Forget I said it like that.

ELEANOR

MILK!

Charlie snaps back into focus.

CHARLIE

Yeah! Sorry.

EXT. DELI - MOMENTS LATER

Eleanor sprints out the door, Charlie in tow.

EXT. CONVENIENCE STORE - A BIT LATER

Eleanor heads toward the doors.

ELEANOR
 (to Charlie)
 Don't come in with me. I promise
 you don't want to.

INT. CONVENIENCE STORE - A BIT LATER

Eleanor finds a small carton of milk and chugs it right next to the refrigerator case. She doesn't come up for any air.

INT. CONVENIENCE STORE - MOMENTS LATER

Eleanor slams the empty jug of milk on the counter. She speaks to the CASHIER.

ELEANOR
 Do you have a trash can back there?

CONVENIENCE STORE CASHIER
 Oh, you have a little...

He wipes his upper lip. Eleanor wipes hers.

CONVENIENCE STORE CASHIER (CONT'D)
 Just a tiny little milk mustache
 there.

ELEANOR
 Yeah. Thanks.

CONVENIENCE STORE CASHIER
 I'm jealous though.
 (beat, points to himself)
 Hormone deficiency. But it's okay.

ELEANOR
 Oh.
 (beat)
 Hey, at least you still have milk
 mustaches.

She laughs, emotionless.

CONVENIENCE STORE CASHIER
I'm lactose intolerant.

ELEANOR
(quietly)
Come... on.

INT. UPSCALE RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Sheryl checks her watches again. Then her phone dings. She pulls it out.

She waves her hand out eagerly to signal Ollie.

OLLIE
Hi, yes?

SHERYL
I just wanted to let you know that he has just texted me. And he *is* on his way.

OLLIE
Oh, good--

SHERYL
Oh, shit, you are my waiter, right?

OLLIE
Yes, yes, it's me.

SHERYL
Oh, good. You all look the same. Not all waiters I mean. Just all 20 year olds.
(beat)
Couldn't tell you all from a pack of dead whores. Sorry, shit, I mean horses.

Sheryl stares off for a moment, confused.

OLLIE
I still don't think that's--

SHERYL
Oh, I like you by the way.

OLLIE
(baffled)
Oh... Wh-- good.

SHERYL

You should come water my plants when I'm on vacation next month. My neighbor usually does it for me and he's just terrible at it.

(derogatorily)

He's 15, you know, so who the hell even knows.

OLLIE

... Right.

SHERYL

I appreciate you coming over to chat with me.

OLLIE

Oh, you called me over here.

SHERYL

Oh right. He had car troubles so he's walking here now.

OLLIE

Oh, and through the snow. He must like you a lot.

SHERYL

I hope so.

OLLIE

First date?

Sheryl freezes for a second.

SHERYL

No.

(shaking her head)

Yes. It is. Sorry. I don't know why I just lied. I don't lie.

OLLIE

Oh, that's okay.

SHERYL

Would you... go grab me some water?

OLLIE

Of course.

SHERYL

Thank you.

Sheryl's tight smile wavers as Ollie walks off.

BACK TO:

INT. CHARLIE'S CAR - NIGHT

Eleanor is speeding down a highway.

CHARLIE

Uh, where are we going? Also...
you're driving so fast.

ELEANOR

A casino. Also, sorry.

She eases off the gas.

CHARLIE

Seriously?

ELEANOR

I thought, well we've only had bad
luck today. The only thing that can
come next is good luck, right?

CHARLIE

Or more bad luck?

ELEANOR

Now who's the cynic.
(beat)
Anyways, I'm amazing at blackjack.
We'll be fine.

CHARLIE

Okay, I mean-- Sure.

ELEANOR

But the thing is I don't get good
until I'm losing by a lot.

CHARLIE

My uncle's the same way.

ELEANOR

Really?

CHARLIE

Yeah!... He's not allowed within 12
steps of a casino anymore.

Eleanor glares at Charlie.

EXT. RURAL ROAD - LATER

Charlie's car hurtles down a sprawling road. Large fields on either side and absolutely nothing else.

INT. CHARLIE'S CAR - SAME TIME

Charlie yawns in the passenger seat.

ELEANOR
Don't fall asleep on me.

CHARLIE
I can't help it.

ELEANOR
The food was supposed to wake you up! But you didn't eat.

CHARLIE
You ordered the hottest possible option and then we had to leave the restaurant.

ELEANOR
I was just trying to stay awake.

CHARLIE
I feel like I need a shower after going to that place.
(beat, a little more serious)
I just don't know why we couldn't have gone to a cafe or something.

ELEANOR
Is that supposed to be a rhetorical question?

CHARLIE
I just mean I don't know we had to go to this place with the best and spiciest food ever. Not everything has to be the best of something or the most extreme. Can't we relax in the... medium or something? I dunno.

ELEANOR
I'm sorry. I just wanted to go somewhere fun and not do boring date stuff-- not that this is a date. Like... you know what I mean.
(MORE)

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

(beat)

Medium is so sad.

CHARLIE

Medium is how most things are.

ELEANOR

And most things are sad...

The deafening silence in the car is interrupted by a rattling POP. The car starts shaking.

EXT. SIDE OF THE ROAD - CONTINUOUS

From far away, we Charlie's lone car peter out and pull over to the side of the road. It lurches to a stop.

CLOSER NOW: Charlie and Eleanor getting out of the car to inspect.

ELEANOR

I think the tire popped.

Charlie pulls out his phone and starts typing.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

CHARLIE

Oh, I'm just writing down your astute observation.

ELEANOR

(flat)

Do you have a spare.

CHARLIE

Yeah.

ELEANOR

Tools?

CHARLIE

What am I, a fuckin' mechanic?

ELEANOR

You have a spare tire but no tools?!

CHARLIE

Why would I pay for Triple A if I had the tools to change a tire?

ELEANOR

As the owner of a car you have the responsibility to--

CHARLIE

Responsibility?! You're talking to me about responsibility?! You didn't even have enough cash in your wallet to pay for dinner!

ELEANOR

You had that one ready, I guess. And keeping cash is hard because whenever you have cash all of your friends take it because they never have any and they never give it back to you and it's really fucking awkward to ask for it back!

CHARLIE

Do you even pay taxes?

ELEANOR

What does that have to do with *anything*?

CHARLIE

If you're gonna lecture me about responsibility, I'm gonna lecture you about responsibility.

ELEANOR

Okay, well I DO pay taxes. And on time, usually.

CHARLIE

I pay insurance, car insurance, taxes, rent, I even pay 100 dollars a month for my dog to get walked while I'm at work!

ELEANOR

What the FUCK are you talking about?!

CHARLIE

I'm so fucking responsible!

He kicks the pebbles on the side of the road.

ELEANOR

I'm so fucking happy for you!

CHARLIE

If it wasn't for you wanting to a stupid casino we wouldn't be here, stranded and... it's FREEZING.

Eleanor points aggressively at Charlie's head.

ELEANOR

You banged your head on the bottom of a fucking DINER table! My cousin did that when he was THREE and he still cried less than you.

CHARLIE

I didn't cry, okay?! Cause I think I was in shock. Second, would it hurt you to be like an ounce nicer? It'll get you further in life. Has anyone told you that?

ELEANOR

You realize you basically just told me, a *woman*, to smile more.

CHARLIE

First and foremost: I *am* actually sensitive to that issue, alright? I'm a feminist and stuff... but I also think you're just MEAN!

ELEANOR

Okay, maybe if I go apologize to the rock our tire'll be magically fixed.

CHARLIE

SHUT! UP!

Eleanor starts walking around, smiling aggressively at Charlie.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Oh, stop that. Stop it!

ELEANOR

I'm sorry, but if it wasn't for me, you would've bled out in a diner! God, you wouldn't last a second in a war zone! You wouldn't even make it through basic.

CHARLIE

Oh there go my hopes and dreams of joining the ARMY!?

Charlie guffaws.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

And why the FUCK would I need to last in a war zone?! Why does everyone always say that?!

ELEANOR

In case you get drafted!

CHARLIE

I won't get drafted! I have asthma!

Eleanor guffaws.

ELEANOR

Oh, of course you do.

CHARLIE

(nothing else to say)

AHHHH!

Charlie kicks his tire. Him and Eleanor make fiendish eye contact.

EXT. SIDE OF THE ROAD - A BIT LATER

Far away from the car.

A single light in the car turns on. We can faintly make out Eleanor and Charlie inside (we'll say O.S. just for the sake of it).

We hear sounds of kissing, off and on interrupted by:

CHARLIE (O.S.)

This is how people die in horror movies.

ELEANOR (O.S.)

This isn't a horror movie.

CHARLIE (O.S.)

Just saying.

ELEANOR (O.S.)

Okay but like how would a serial killer make it out here? Would he just wait at a random spot in the country for a car to pull over? That's stupid. How would he get food?

CHARLIE (O.S.)

Fair.

A CLICK of the lock of the doors.

ELEANOR (O.S.)

(slightly annoyed)

Really?

INT. CHARLIE'S CAR - SAME TIME

Eleanor and Charlie make out in his car. Eleanor is straddling the passenger seat. It's very tight in here.

After a little while, Charlie stops to pull off his shirt-- But it's a button down. He takes a second to undo a couple of the buttons as Eleanor waits on top of him.

He lifts his button down off. He attempts to take his undershirt off but it doesn't work.

CHARLIE

Whatever.

They resume kissing.

Charlie unzips the back Eleanor's dress. She manages to get her arms out of the straps, but not much else is able to happen. It's fine.

They make out a little while longer.

And then Eleanor hits the glove compartment with her back.

ELEANOR

Can you move your seat back?

CHARLIE

Yeah.

They stop kissing for a second so Charlie can concentrate.

He fiddles with a lever next to the seat. Finally, the chair starts moving-- and it moves the slowest anything has ever moved.

A quiet humming of the motors.

Seconds pass as Eleanor sits on top of Charlie. She looks around, doing anything so as to not make eye contact.

Charlie rolls his head to the side.

HMMMMMMMMMMMM. WHRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRR.

It's still going back. This all goes on for an excruciatingly long time.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
I'm a virgin.

No response.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
That was a joke.

ELEANOR
(drier than sand)
It was funny.

More whirring.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)
You know you don't have to move it
all the way ba--

CLUNK. We're at the back now.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)
Great.

Charlie clicks something else and the seat back starts to angle. The two of them lower and lower.

CHARLIE
Do you want this all the way down
or...

ELEANOR
This is fine.

CHARLIE
Cool. Cool.

Eleanor leans down and starts kissing Charlie. It's not the same. It's unbearable now.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
We shouldn't be doing this.

But he doesn't stop anything. Through the kissing:

ELEANOR
It's fine.

CHARLIE
It's cheating.

ELEANOR
No, it's fine. I promise.

CHARLIE
No, it's not. It's cheating.

ELEANOR
No it's not!

CHARLIE
Why not?!

ELEANOR
Because you don't have a
girlfriend!

They stop.

Charlie turns his head around to avoid eye contact with Eleanor.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)
(earnest)
Shit, I'm sorry. I didn't mean
that.

CHARLIE
Will you... un-straddle me.

Eleanor does.

After a second, she lands back in the driver's seat. Charlie is still half-shirtless, Eleanor's dress is still folded down awkwardly.

They just stare ahead for a second, afraid to move.

ELEANOR
Sorry.

CHARLIE
(terse)
'S fine.

A beat.

Eleanor slips her arms back in the straps of her dress. Charlie puts his shirt back on. They accidentally cross limbs as they do this.

EXT. SIDE OF THE ROAD - A BIT LATER

The car door slams. Eleanor gets out and leans against the side of the car. She closes her eyes briefly. Charlie gets out too.

It is pitch black out here.

CHARLIE
I should call Triple A.

ELEANOR
Lemme find out where we are.

They both pull their phones out. This provides a some light in the immediate area.

A long, tense beat.

CHARLIE
I don't have service.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)
There's no service.

Charlie looks around. There's a collection of lights up ahead one way and not much else the other way.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Should we walk that way?

ELEANOR
And leave the car here?

CHARLIE
What do you suggest?

They start walking. They're at least four feet apart from each other.

EXT. SIDE OF THE ROAD - A BIT LATER

Charlie and Eleanor walk side by side. Eleanor is huddled into her jacket. Charlie shivers with only his undershirt and an open button down on.

ELEANOR
(after a moment)
Listen, I'm sorry I said that about your girlfriend. About you and your girlfriend, I mean. I shouldn't--
We were making out and your seat takes forever to recline and--

CHARLIE
No, don't.

They share a look.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

(earnest)

She's not my girlfriend.

(beat)

I'm not... stupid. I know that she's not my girlfriend anymore. Just-- Don't act like you know what I'm going through.

ELEANOR

Okay, I won't. I promise.

CHARLIE

It's harder than you think to just accept something's-- Yeah.

(beat)

I don't know how the hell we're getting home.

All we hear for a little while is the gravel crunching beneath Charlie and Eleanor's feet.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

It's cold. Isn't it supposed to be summer?

Beat.

ELEANOR

You can have my jacket.

CHARLIE

No, then you'll be cold.

ELEANOR

No, I'm fine, really.

CHARLIE

Are you sure?

ELEANOR

I said I'll be fine. So I'll be fine.

CHARLIE

Okay...

Eleanor takes off her jacket and hands it to Charlie who puts it on. It doesn't fit well and it makes him look like a scarecrow. But it works.

Eleanor crosses her arms and digs her nails into her skin. She's cold.

Charlie looks over at her.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Hey, so... do you like weddings?

Eleanor is just a little surprised Charlie is offering up conversation. She hides it.

ELEANOR

Um, no. I hate weddings.

CHARLIE

Yeah. Duh.

ELEANOR

And you...

CHARLIE

Love weddings.

ELEANOR

You know what really in love people do? They have a wedding with ten people in the middle of the woods. No big cameras, no DJ, no second and third cousins and their plus ones.

CHARLIE

If you hate weddings so much why do you go to them?

ELEANOR

I dunno.

Charlie gets a little closer to Eleanor; he's about to hit a nerve. He can feel it.

CHARLIE

Who'd you come to the wedding with tonight?

ELEANOR

My mom.

Beat.

CHARLIE

Okay and assuming that's true that would mean you ditched her at the ballroom alone. Sure.

ELEANOR
 (nodding)
 I find that women are very
 forgetful.

CHARLIE
 Bride or groom?

ELEANOR
 ... Groom.

CHARLIE
 Whose name is...

Charlie and Eleanor make eye contact.

ELEANOR
 ... John Smith. ?

CHARLIE
 You hate weddings but you crashed a
 wedding? What's your deal?

Eleanor silently curses herself.

ELEANOR
 Maybe I just like free alcohol.

CHARLIE
 Right.

Charlie doesn't buy it.

More gravel crunching for a little bit.

ELEANOR
 I like your suit. Well, I liked
 your suit. Before it got blood on
 it. I meant to say that earlier.

CHARLIE
 Oh. Thank you.
 (beat)
 I like your dress.

ELEANOR
 Thanks.

They smile.

As they walk on, some light begins to shine on their faces.
 They arrive outside a gas station surrounded by two or three
 dark, small, closed businesses.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)
If we die here I blame you.

CHARLIE
So now you're worried about murder
too?

ELEANOR
Well there's actual people to
murder us here.

They walk across oil stained concrete into the gas station's
mini mart.

INT. GAS STATION MINI MART - CONTINUOUS

A painful white light contrasts the blackness of the country
at night.

CHARLIE
God, I'm so stressed I could just
scream.

ELEANOR
(beat)
So scream.

CHARLIE
What?

ELEANOR
Scream. It'll make you feel better.

CHARLIE
Really?

She shrugs. A pause.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
AHHHH--

KAY
HEY, hon! Absolutely no
screaming out here.

ELEANOR
Don't actually scream,
Charlie!

CHARLIE
(immediately, to Kay)
She told me to!

He points accusatorially at Eleanor.

ELEANOR

Dude!

ANGLE ON: The mini mart employee, KAY (50s). Her vest is covered in decorations. She takes a drag from her vape. It's bedazzled with rhinestones.

Eleanor and Charlie wave at her. She waves back impatiently.

They both check their phones for WiFi and start typing away furiously.

KAY

Hey, cuties, you gotta buy something to use the WiFi in here, yeah?

Beat.

Eleanor looks Kay up and down quickly.

ELEANOR

(genuinely curious)

So are you allowed to vape in here?

KAY

I own the store. So are you allowed to ask me if I'm allowed to vape in here? No.

Charlie stands by awkwardly as this conversation continues.

ELEANOR

Oh, I didn't know gas stations were good investment opportunities.

KAY

They're not.

Another drag from the vape.

KAY (CONT'D)

But I'm about to make some free cash off of the Wifi that my son pays for so...

ELEANOR

Well actually we don't need WiFi to use our phones. We just needed service, which you do have, so...

KAY

So...

ELEANOR
So it's not WiFi we're using.

KAY
Yeah but I don't give an elephant's
shit.

ELEANOR
I'm just saying it seems unethical.

KAY
Hmm, is it just me or would it take
a real long time for someone to
find your bodies all the way out
here?

CHARLIE
(to Kay, inserting)
-- Alright, we'll buy something.

ELEANOR
(to Charlie)
She's kidding.

CHARLIE
It was *hilarious*.

Charlie moves to the corner to call Triple A. Eleanor leans
on the register counter.

ELEANOR
I'd like to buy your largest,
dirtiest carton of cigarettes.
(beat)
And I have a question about some of
the local establishments... My
husband and I are looking to go
dance somewhere, maybe have a glass
of wine. Can you suggest a place?

Kay makes dull eye contact with Eleanor.

KAY
There's a shitty little bar about
five miles up the road.

ELEANOR
Okay, any more directions you can
give me?

KAY
Up the road.

ELEANOR

Alright, and... in terms of it's offerings do you have any more information for me?

KAY

Dunno. It's shitty.

A drag of the vape. This time in Eleanor's face. Eleanor tries her hardest not to cough.

ELEANOR

(agitated)

My husband will be so pleased. He's been waiting to go to a shitty little bar for quite some time.

Kay sets down her vape.

KAY

Alright. What's your deal?

ELEANOR

I'm getting tired of that question to be honest with you.

KAY

You come in here, all annoying and stuff with your walk and stuff, make up a fake story about you and your 'husband'. I hope that's not your husband cause I can tell you right now you'll be gettin' a divorce real soon.

Kay laughs at her joke.

KAY (CONT'D)

You're askin' for cigarettes, lookin' for a place to dance... is it all a big joke to you or do you have a real question for me?

Eleanor walks away, smiling antagonistically.

She comes back with a 1 liter bottle of soda.

ELEANOR

I will take this.

KAY

Great.

Kay rings up Eleanor.

KAY (CONT'D)

You know, he's definitely got the face of a man but he's got the frame of one of those little music box ballerinas. One wrong word and you might snap him in half like a stale bugle chip. I've seen it happen before.

(beat)

Metaphorically, o'course. And not so metaphorically, too.

ELEANOR

Wow. Quite the picture.

Kay gives her a look. Eleanor gives her an acknowledging look back.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

(a beat, offhandedly)

... to be honest with you I think I've said a lot of wrong words to him already.

Eleanor looks back at Charlie.

EXT. GAS STATION MINI MART - MOMENTS LATER

Kay lets out a plume of smoke from her vape as Eleanor and Charlie walk off. Eleanor isn't as alert as she was before. She's thinking hard right now. Worried.

CHARLIE (PRELAP - V.O.)

Triple A said they'd be here in three hours.

EXT. SIDE OF THE ROAD - A BIT LATER

They're walking back to the car. A small array of lights behind them, blinding darkness ahead.

CHARLIE

I might just stay with the car. You should get an Uber or something.

ELEANOR

No. I'll stay with you.

Charlie smiles discreetly.

CHARLIE

Okay.

ELEANOR
What if we leave the car though?

CHARLIE
It's gonna get stolen.

ELEANOR
It can't drive.

CHARLIE
It'll get broken into or something.

ELEANOR
Well we're not gonna just sit there
for three hours. Let's go
somewhere.

CHARLIE
(looks around, baffled)
Where?

ELEANOR
I heard about a shitty little bar
five miles up the road.

CHARLIE
Oh... kay.
(beat)
And we'll get there how?

Eleanor sticks her thumb out into the road.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
No! Don't.

ELEANOR
What?

CHARLIE
I'll give you all of the money in
my pocket to put your thumb away.

ELEANOR
(laughing)
Why?

CHARLIE
Hitchhiking freaks me out so much.
(beat)
The only people crazy enough to
pick up a hitchhiker are crazy
enough to be hitchhikers
themselves. And hitchhikers are
crazy.

ELEANOR
Technically, we're hitchhikers now too.

CHARLIE
You're a hitchhiker. I'm just stranded.

ELEANOR
If we die tonight they can put that on our tombstones.

CHARLIE
(a beat)
That's the second time you said we're gonna die tonight.

ELEANOR
It's a figure of speech.

CHARLIE
No. It's not.

ELEANOR
I guess I just weigh all of my decisions against death? Maybe.

CHARLIE
You do?

ELEANOR
Don't you?

CHARLIE
No. Not at all.

Somewhere around this point, Charlie and Eleanor return to Charlie's car. They lean against it.

ELEANOR
Death is like the end of everything. It's the biggest thing there is. So it only makes sense to judge your choices against the biggest thing that'll ever happen to you.

CHARLIE
Death is the smallest thing to ever happen to you.

Charlie points at the soda bottle Eleanor carries.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

It's the bottle cap to a jug of
soda. Small by comparison.

ELEANOR

But crucial. It keeps the soda in
the bottle.

CHARLIE

So then what do you think about
birth?

ELEANOR

Small. It just happens to you.

CHARLIE

So does death.

ELEANOR

Not really. I mean... I can kill
myself but I can't decide to give
birth to myself.

Eleanor lifts up her bottle of Mountain Dew.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

You see this here?

(points to the cap)

We have the end.

(points to the body)

We have the middle.

(beat)

Where's the beginning? It's not
here.

CHARLIE

It's right... here.

Charlie points to the little plastic nub that you might find
on the bottom of a plastic soda bottle.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

This little nubby guy.

ELEANOR

Bullshit.

Charlie puts his hands up.

CHARLIE

Just trying to keep up
conversation.

ELEANOR

We are! What, I can't disagree with you?

CHARLIE

It's just that you only disagree with me.

ELEANOR

Well do you want me to lie?

CHARLIE

No, but I'd like you to open up a little more and not just reject everything I say.

(beat)

I'm just saying-- I'm trying to get to know you.

ELEANOR

And I'm saying I'm sick of it.

Eleanor laughs. Charlie doesn't.

CHARLIE

Okay. Then I guess we won't talk.

Eleanor scoffs.

ELEANOR

So you're withholding conversation from me.

(nodding)

That feels in line with someone who hit their head on a table earlier.

Charlie takes a deep breath.

CHARLIE

Fuck you, man.

ELEANOR

Okay. Okay, I'm sorry that I'm just a little tired of this whole thing.

CHARLIE

What whole thing?

ELEANOR

YOU, Trying to get information out of me that isn't there. Why are you trying to make this more than it is?!

(MORE)

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

I just wanted to hang out and have a fun night. You clearly wanted something else.

CHARLIE

You're the one who started this whole thing! You dragged me out to that diner that I didn't even want to be at. You never asked me if I wanted to come, you never asked me anything! You just led us everywhere! Because you're so lonely you'd rather just be with a body who follows you around than an actual person? I guess.

This strikes something in Eleanor. She gives Charlie a harsh laugh.

She starts walking out into the street. Charlie follows her.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

I'm just trying to get you to open up for one fucking second because you matter to me and you're refusing because I'm-- I'm inconsequential?

ELEANOR

No, it's because there's nothing about me to tell! You wanna know more about me because you think there's something deeper. But there isn't! There's no more to this. Good face, good hair, shitty tolerance to lactose. That's it.

CHARLIE

I wanted to get to know you as a person, not as an idea. But I guess you had a different idea. Yeah, you wanna use me and control me and you just want me to be a stranger to you.

ELEANOR

Don't make it sound like that. Why can't we be strangers?

CHARLIE

Are you that shitty of a person that you don't want anyone to know your real personality?

(MORE)

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Why the hell would you want to be strangers when you can know someone?

ELEANOR

Because I LOVE strangers. Oh my god! They're so much better than regular people! There's no one to let down and no expectations and I could go-- I could go and throw a fucking pie in a stranger's face if I wanted to and the next day it wouldn't matter. Because I could just never, ever see them again. And then just start over with someone else.

(beat)

I know most people would say that's not the way to do it. But it feels so good. It feels fucking great, actually.

Eleanor catches her breath after she finishes talking. She and Charlie have a moment of silent eye contact. Both cut by the other.

Charlie turns around and gets into the car. He locks the doors.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

Oh, are you FUCKING kidding me?!

Eleanor laughs. It borders on a cry. She paces back and forth across the length of the car a few times.

She crosses the road, grabs something, and heads back. She holds up a huge ROCK to Charlie's window.

He has no reaction. It just makes him even more hurt. She drops it.

A beat.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

Fuck.

(beat)

It feels great, Charlie.

(beat)

Amazing. You should try it.

She bats on his window a couple of times.

CHARLIE

It does. It feels good?

ELEANOR

It does.

Charlie doesn't add more.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

Listen, I'm sorry. But I want you to know that... you haven't been amazing either, okay? You were giving me nothing for the first two hours. Being with someone and knowing they don't wanna be there is pretty much the shittiest feeling ever. So that sucks.

Eleanor pauses.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

Maybe not as much as what I was doing to you. Maybe.

(beat, quietly)

That might not be an apology. Jesus...

(beat)

Roll down your window.

Charlie mimes, signaling that he can't hear her.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

Oh, you can hear me. ROLL DOWN YOUR WINDOW.

After a moment of reluctance, he does. Eleanor sits down on the gravel right next to his door.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

It feels great. It does. It does.

(beat)

But then it doesn't?... Then it doesn't. Like when you love something so much for so long that eventually it just makes you sick to think about. I dunno.

Charlie lets it sit in silence for a second.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

I mean I hate weddings. Yeah. Cause I hate people getting married. But I love weddings. That's why I crashed the wedding tonight-- your wedding or whatever-- I thought it would feel good. I should've been happier there.

(MORE)

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

It should've made me happy. But this time it just felt off.

(beat)

Then I was watching everyone dance. They were all tired and drunk and sweaty. It was gross.

CHARLIE

I wasn't one of the sweaty ones.

ELEANOR

Yeah, you were. But it's fine. Just-- They should've left! You were there. The wedding was over. Why wasn't anyone leaving?-- I mean, I wasn't leaving... But, I wasn't mad, I mean. I liked it. I like the noise everyone makes.

FLASH TO: MATCH CUTS of Eleanor's tired, lethargic, dazed face in crowds of people with different sequences of light shining on her face frenetically. Each setting is something different but it's all the same. BALLROOMS, WEDDING VENUES, PARTIES, etc.

These images are INTERCUT with shots of Eleanor in her BEDROOM. Laying on her bed. All of the *tomorrow mornings*. Contrasted with the chaos of all of the crowds.

Her sheets are white and her pillows are white. They're not dirty and not clean. Light from the windows assaults Eleanor's face as she wakes herself up. Exhaustion from the night before is splayed across her face every single time.

We can hear her skin rub against the sheets. It's the only sound here.

Back and forth, back and forth between the two opposite lives. The night and the day.

BACK TO:

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

My life feels so permanent and inescapable. And I feel like no one else wants to escape their life? Why am I the only one? If someone gave me the option to start over, I would. I think I could do better a second time around.

FLASH TO:

Elation, then boredom, then regret, then the crushing tiredness of it all. It all repeats on a cycle.

In her BEDROOM, she struggles to open her eyes and sit herself up. Most of the time she just lays with her face in the sun and stares at her ceiling. Sometimes she mounts the effort to get up, but when she does, she just sits there.

BACK TO:

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

Like, it sounds weird, but right now I can't imagine anything harder than just waking up and eating breakfast tomorrow. Because then what?

(beat)

I don't really know what comes next for me. And I'd just like someone to tell me so I can stop using up all my effort.

Eleanor bites her tongue.

INT. CHARLIE'S CAR - SAME TIME

Charlie sits in the driver's seat, leaning against the window. Taking a long moment to absorb every bit of what Eleanor just said.

In the windows behind Charlie, we see Eleanor start to SPRINT away.

It takes a second for Charlie to notice. He sees her in the side mirror.

CHARLIE

Eleanor?

He hops out of the car.

EXT. SIDE OF THE ROAD - CONTINUOUS

He stops for a second.

CHARLIE

(calling out)

ELEANOR!

She keeps going. He goes after her.

ELEANOR
(under breath)
What the fuck what the fuck what
the fuck...

CHARLIE
What the FUCK!!

Eleanor is about 100 feet in front of Charlie. She slowly
peters to a stop, her hands on her knees.

She trudges off the road into the grass.

EXT. SIDE OF THE ROAD/ GRASSY FIELD - NIGHT

Charlie sees Eleanor.

CHARLIE
Eleanor!

Eleanor turns around.

Charlie, wheezing, comes tumbling down off the side of the
road into the grass. Eleanor moves, trying to catch him, but
completely misses.

ELEANOR
I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

CHARLIE
What was that?!

ELEANOR
I think I was embarrassed.

CHARLIE
You THINK?!

ELEANOR
No, I know. I know. AH. I just feel
like I'm ruining everything right
now. I'm so sorry for putting you
through all this shit.

She calms herself down.

Charlie weakly splays himself on the weeds. After a beat,
Eleanor does the same.

CHARLIE
It's okay. It is.

ELEANOR

Okay.

It's silent now. But it's not one of their awkward silences. It's full of comfort. Somehow.

EXT. SIDE OF THE ROAD - MOMENTS LATER

Charlie and Eleanor hike up from the side of the road. They stand face to face. In silence, for awhile.

CHARLIE

I don't know if we can come back from this.

This hits Eleanor like a ton of bricks.

ELEANOR

We don't have to think about that yet.

EXT. SIDE OF THE ROAD - MOMENTS LATER

Charlie and Eleanor run along the side of the road.

INT. GAS STATION MINI MART - A BIT LATER

Charlie and Eleanor loudly enter the mini mart. Very out of breath.

ELEANOR

(to Kay)

Do you have control over the music that plays in here?

INT. GAS STATION MINI MART - MOMENTS LATER

Eleanor places a pack of gum on the counter. Kay rings it up and places it onto a pile of several other gum packs.

ELEANOR

(sharp)

I think that's enough.

KAY

Yeah, fine. That's 30 dollars kids.

Eleanor pays, Kay hands over her phone.

KAY (CONT'D)

Have at it.

MUSIC CUE: "Strange Overtones" by David Byrne & Brian Eno

We begin an energetic sort of MONTAGE:

A) INT. GAS STATION MINI MART - A BIT LATER

The song is at full volume, full power.

Charlie and Eleanor prance through the aisles, dancing, singing along.

Kay watches them, unamused, chewing gum and taking drags from her vape.

B) LATER, as the song still rages, Eleanor takes drags from Kay's vape (Charlie doesn't).

We then see Kay has a healthy 10 dollar bill on the counter in front of her. (Payment for the temporary usage of the vape.)

Eleanor blows rings with the smoke.

Charlie and Eleanor continue to dance as the song reaches it's peak. They meet at the back of the store, tucked into a tight aisle. They stand across from each other, making unbroken eye contact. Just ruined enough not to care.

C) EXT. GAS STATION MINI MART - A BIT LATER

Through the window we can see Charlie and Eleanor enjoying the song and dancing together through the smoke in the air.

The song and its momentum carries through--

D) EXT. GAS STATION MINI MART - A BIT LATER

Charlie and Eleanor, still energized from the dancing, wait on the curb, their thumbs sticking out into the street.

E) INT. CAR - A BIT LATER

Charlie and Eleanor are being driven in a pickup truck. They're both in the back, sticking their arms out opposite windows. The wind bites at them.

F) EXT. SHITTY LITTLE BAR - A BIT LATER

Charlie and Eleanor and their DRIVER (Old T-shirt, old boots, old vest) all enter the bar.

G) INT. SHITTY LITTLE BAR - A BIT LATER

Charlie and Eleanor cheers and take shots. Their driver sips on a beer.

Clink. Shot.

Clink. Shot.

Their shot taking is interspersed with SHOTS of Sheryl in the restaurant, *gulping* her glass of water, over and over.

Clink. Shot. *Gulp.*

Clink. Shot. *Gulp.*

END OF MONTAGE, END OF SONG.

Things calm down for a moment.

FADE TO:

INT. UPSCALE RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Both glasses of water on the table are now empty.

Sheryl, leaning so far off her chair she's barely sitting anymore, inspects the bottom of the table.

After a second, in walks a man, also in winter clothes. We can't see his top half.

MAN (O.S.)

Sheryl?

Sheryl shoots her head up, briefly hitting it on the bottom of the table.

SHERYL

Oh, shit. Hi. Charlie. Hi.

ANGLE ON: CHARLIE. In winter clothes. Hair a bit shorter. Posture a bit straighter. Some time has passed since we last saw him.

CHARLIE

Yeah, hi. So sorry I'm late.

SHERYL
No, it's been okay.

Charlie takes off his coat and sits down. Sheryl adjusts into her chair.

And somehow, without communication, they both slowly stand up and lean across the table for a terse, polite hug.

They sit back down.

SHERYL (CONT'D)
I thought you would smell bad.
Since you walked all the way over
here. But you don't. By the way.

Charlie quickly laughs, not sure what else to do.

CHARLIE
Uh, thank you.
(beat)
You smell nice too.

Sheryl turns her nose down toward her sweater and sniffs.

SHERYL
(pleasantly surprised)
Oh I do, don't I.

Charlie reaches for his glass of water and lifts it to his mouth. He sets it back down.

CHARLIE
This is empty.

INT. UPSCALE RESTAURANT - LATER

Charlie sits squarely upright in his chair. Sheryl leans back in hers, a bit more relaxed.

CHARLIE
So, um, what are you looking for in
a relationship? I guess.

Sheryl picks apart a piece of bread as she talks.

SHERYL
A hard commitment. Marriage. Long
term relationship until the flaming
end. And I know that's hard for
some people to wrap their heads
around but to me it's simple math.
(MORE)

SHERYL (CONT'D)

One lonely person plus one lonely person equals one fulfilled couple. Why not read between the lines, take that wedding cake topper at face value and just jump straight ahead into the inevitable?

CHARLIE

Wow, um... that almost sounded rehearsed.

SHERYL

See, I take that as a compliment.

Sheryl smiles in a way that seems lack all confidence.

CHARLIE

But I don't know if that's how it works. I mean, I don't think you can just skip ahead like that.

SHERYL

If you're organized enough you very much can-- And I'm very organized by the way.

CHARLIE

Well, that must be very nice for you.

Charlie chuckles awkwardly.

SHERYL

How long has it been since you've gone on any romantic endeavors?-- If you don't mind me asking. But then again even if you did mind me asking you wouldn't say anything because no one ever does.

Charlie pauses, still not used to this way of talking.

CHARLIE

Oh, well. It's been a little while. Long term relationship. It ended. Amicably.

SHERYL

It wasn't amicable.

CHARLIE

Sorry? What makes you say that.

SHERYL
 Well if it was amicable you would've said the amicable part first. But instead you said it last which means you reached the end of your thought and realized you should probably add it onto the end to make it seem less sad.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
 (unable to hear this any longer)
 -- Well I actually proposed to her and she said no. So.

SHERYL (CONT'D)
 Oh well that's a wrench to the tits.

CHARLIE
 (beat)
 Uh. Yeah. It was.

SHERYL
 Well, I'm sincerely sorry to hear that.

CHARLIE
 Thank you. But, no, it's okay. It ended up being... really good.
 (beat)
 So to answer your question: four years. It's been four years since my last date.

Charlie's cheeks redden.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
 Uh. So I told you mine. Now you... tell me yours?

Sheryl sits herself up. Her body language becomes more dominant.

SHERYL
 Long term relationship also ended. He died.

She says it a little too casually, brushing over the emotion of it.

SHERYL (CONT'D)
 This is my first date since. If I'm being honest-- And I am being honest because why would I lie-- I can't stop thinking about him.
 (beat)
 (MORE)

SHERYL (CONT'D)

Oh god, I'm sorry. I shouldn't be talking about him on a first date.

CHARLIE

I don't mind.

SHERYL

No, I'm fine. I've been reading a lot about how to manhandle your feelings. The professionals call it "wrestling with your emotions." And I'm... It's going great. Really.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

I'm not sure that's what that means.

Sheryl takes a sip of red wine and smiles boldly, revealing a light reddish stain across her whole smile.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

I hope I'm not overstepping, but I don't know if that's the best way to do things.

SHERYL

Well I don't know if it's the *best* way. But it's working. It is.

(beat)

I don't wanna open it all up and have everything tumble out. That's messy.

CHARLIE

Doesn't it feel heavy?

Sheryl looks Charlie straight in the eyes. Her concrete expression is unreadable.

It softens. The ostentatious optimism falls.

SHERYL

I don't want to ruin our date.

CHARLIE

You won't be ruining anything.

SHERYL

(beat)

I am remembering one thing...

(beat)

And then I'm done.

Charlie nods.

Sheryl takes a deep breath. Like this is a task to complete.

SHERYL (CONT'D)

He was older than me. In his 50s.
He was short and he was cute enough
but more than anything he was just
funny.

Sheryl smiles as she talks.

SHERYL (CONT'D)

He always thought he was boring but
I made sure to tell him everyday
that he was funny. But what's funny
is that no one else found him
funny. At all. It got so bad that
no one wanted to spend time with us
because they found him so
relentlessly boring.

Sheryl laughs.

SHERYL (CONT'D)

And I don't blame them, he was
probably boring as shit. But I
wasn't lying when I said he was the
funniest person I knew. Because I
just found him funny. And
eventually he didn't give a shit if
other people thought he was boring
and neither did I. He just cared
about me and I cared about him. We
were boring together and we found
it so interesting. Isn't it funny
how that works...

(a beat as she thinks)

I just think maybe I used my one
up. There's none more left out
there for me. And it'd have been
worth it. I think just an answer
would be good.

CHARLIE

I think we all have more than one
person. Because most of us screw up
the first time around.

Sheryl sits with this for a second.

SHERYL

You're a very good listener.

CHARLIE

Well you're a very good talker--
Er, no, forget that. Sorry.

(MORE)

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

I mean-- It's nice. The way you talk about him. Your husband.

They share a quiet smile.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

And I'm sorry.

SHERYL

No. It's fine. I mean, It's not okay but it's okay.

(beat)

You just missing having someone to do things with. You know?

CHARLIE

I know.

They share a smile.

SHERYL

You know, I don't feel a love connection between the two of us but I enjoy your company and I think we should remain friends.

Charlie is at a momentary loss for words.

CHARLIE

Oh-- Wh-- Sure, yeah. No, same. But do you still wanna... order and eat and stuff?

SHERYL

Oh yeah, of course.

CHARLIE

Oh, okay. So should we order?

SHERYL

Oh, sure.

Charlie pulls up his menu.

CHARLIE

It's always so hard to see in these dark restaurants.

CLICK.

Sheryl has pulled out an actual, full sized, utility FLASHLIGHT from her purse and is shining it on her menu as she reads it, unbothered.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
(quietly)
Of course.

BACK TO:

INT. SHITTY LITTLE BAR - NIGHT

Charlie and Eleanor sit slumped against each other.

The room surrounding them is lined with old wood and dangerously dark along the periphery. It's mostly lit only by the dance floor's lights at the room's center.

The bar is chock full of old decorations and antiques and it's filled with people.

A small band in the corner plays a mellow tune.

Charlie and Eleanor toe the line between tipsy and drunk. But their adrenaline has already taken them a few levels out of reality.

Eleanor turns to the BAR OWNER, who is making drinks.

ELEANOR
(changing the subject)
Hey, Mikey, why is it so hot in here?

BAR OWNER
My name's not Mikey.

ELEANOR
Why did I call you Mikey?

BAR OWNER
Happens all the time. And, uh-- Air conditioner's broken. Our repairman's drunk.

Now is a good moment to notice that everyone in the room is glistening in sweat. Most of them don't care.

ANGLE ON the end of the bar where we see a burly REPAIRMAN fiddling with the zipper of his tool case as he balances a whiskey in his hand.

He cups the rim of the whiskey glass in his neck as he uses both hands on his zipper.

Charlie and Eleanor watch on in tipsy awe.

INT. SHITTY LITTLE BAR - A BIT LATER

The band starts playing a stronger tune. '80s pop/rock type of song. The energy swells in the room as the song grows in volume. Louder and louder.

ELEANOR
Hey!

CHARLIE
Hey?!

ELEANOR
Let's dance!

CHARLIE
(starting to slur)
The... Triple A is gonna come here soon. We should head back. Can we take, uh... her. Our driver.

Charlie points to their driver.

ELEANOR
No, you can't hitchhike a round trip.

DRIVER
I'm happy to take you two back.

ELEANOR
No, no, no. No, we're gonna dance first. Is that okay?

DRIVER
Perfectly fine.

Eleanor heads to the dance floor. Without Charlie.

Charlie smiles. An unbridled, carefree smile. The first time maybe all night.

He watches Eleanor and waits a beat.

CHARLIE
I guess we're dancing first.

Charlie heads to the dance floor and joins Eleanor. Lots of the bar patrons join in too as the song plays.

A light over the dance floor bathes the room in a soft, dark, janky blue. A couple of the lights are probably broken. It makes the room darker.

Again: Everyone is covered in sweat. Jackets off, sleeves rolled up.

The bar owner flings open doors and windows for air.

Charlie and Eleanor start swaying to the song. As more and more people pile onto the floor, they get closer to each other.

It's hard to discern what exactly is going on in their minds at this moment. The heat and lights dull all of their senses to a fleeting happiness.

It's hot and itchy and gross and infectious.

They close their eyes and wrap their arms around each other.

As they savor their moments, we move out of the crowd, to a spectator's view. Like at the very beginning. Just watching.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. CAR - LATER

The Driver, upbeat, drives Charlie and Eleanor back to Charlie's car.

Charlie and Eleanor have their arms perched out the window, trying to escape their nausea. They look exhausted.

ELEANOR

(a little hoarse)

Hey, excuse me, can you stop up at this gas station here?

DRIVER

Sure.

EXT. GAS STATION MINI MART - CONTINUOUS

The driver pulls up to the curb. Eleanor pulls herself out of the car and staggers toward the mini mart door.

INT. GAS STATION MINI MART - CONTINUOUS

Eleanor strides inside and plays a game of hit and miss with the aisles. Finally, she finds a loaf of bread.

She heads toward the counter. The bright lights are doing a number on her, but maybe clearing her brain up.

Eleanor comes face to face with a random CASHIER (20s).

MINI MART CASHIER

Hi.

ELEANOR

(suspicious)

Hey.

(beat)

What happened to the woman who was here before?

MINI MART CASHIER

What woman? I've been here all night?

(beat)

Ha. Just fucking with ya.

ELEANOR

(dull as a rock)

Haha.

MINI MART CASHIER

Kay took off. Shift was over. But she showed me the security tapes. Looks like you guys had fun.

ELEANOR

Ah. Yeah...

(beat)

And then some more fun.

She laughs emptily, nauseously.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

I do not recommend.

EXT. GAS STATION MINI MART - CONTINUOUS

Eleanor walks outside, chewing on bread, now relishing the cool breeze and darkness. She savors the quietness and stops here for a moment.

INT. CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Eleanor gets in the car. She lightly hits Charlie on the shoulder. He's dozed off. (He moves in and out of sleep for the next few minutes.)

ELEANOR

Hey. Hey. This is for you.

CHARLIE

Huh?

ELEANOR

You haven't eaten anything all night. You're gonna feel horrible tomorrow.

The driver starts off again.

Charlie eats a plain slice of the bread. Eleanor laughs.

CHARLIE

What?

ELEANOR

You look so stupid.

CHARLIE

Oh, fuck off.

Charlie falls a little bit in his seat, close to sleeping.

The driver pulls over at Charlie's car after a moment.

DRIVER

Here we are.

ELEANOR

Thank you so much.

DRIVER

Get home safe now.

Beat.

ELEANOR

Hey, how far do you live from here?

(The driver speaks with a small country twang.)

DRIVER

Oh, about thirty minutes.

ELEANOR

If I can ask-- Why did you drive us all the way out here?

DRIVER

I wanted to.

ELEANOR

Why?

DRIVER
Because I like what you guys are
doing.

ELEANOR
And what exactly is that?

CHARLIE
-- I'm gonna throw up!

ELEANOR
SHHH go to sleep.

The driver waits a second.

DRIVER
It's really nice when you can find
someone who will do just about
anything with you as long as
they're with you.

ELEANOR
Oh.

Charlie and Eleanor look at each other with a lost, confused
look. Both wondering the implications of this comment.

EXT. SIDE OF THE ROAD - MOMENTS LATER

Eleanor shuffles with Charlie slumped over her shoulder.

ELEANOR
Okay, hey. It's fine. We're almost
to the car.

EXT. SIDE OF THE ROAD/ GRASSY FIELD - A BIT LATER

Eleanor throws up into a grassy gulch off the side of the
road.

She breathes heavily. Sighs of relief.

EXT. GRASSY FIELD - MOMENTS LATER

Eleanor heads far from the car and deeper into the fields.

She keeps walking until she gets far enough to feel
sufficiently alone.

She sits down and stares out at the nothingness. As far off as she can see, there is the smallest shard of light breaking above the horizon line.

She starts to chew her nails as she thinks and watches. It gets more angry and tense. Eventually she stops this and starts fiddling with her rings instead.

She slides one up and down her finger and then stops cold.

FLASH TO:

INT. BALLROOM - EARLIER

Another angle, but events we've already seen. Eleanor places Charlie's ring box on the ledge.

She leaves it there and exits the room.

BACK TO:

EXT. GRASSY FIELD - DAWN

Eleanor remembers what she did.

ELEANOR
(quietly)
Fuck.

She savors the solitude out here while also letting it eat at her.

EXT. SIDE OF THE ROAD - A BIT LATER

Eleanor hikes back up onto the road. She regains momentary composure and prepares herself. She opens the car door.

INT. CHARLIE'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Eleanor gets in the car and moves to tap Charlie and wake him up, but she stops. She sees him sleeping.

She doesn't touch him.

EXT. SIDE OF THE ROAD - CONTINUOUS

From AFAR, we watch Eleanor turn the front seat light on and mess around with something in the glove compartment. She opens Charlie's door again and sets something on his chest.

She grabs all of her things and takes them with her.

She walks toward the gas station.

INT. CHARLIE'S CAR - MORNING

Maybe about 5 or 6 AM. There's a rapid banging on the window.

MAN (O.S.)

HEY!

Charlie wakes up and starts screaming.

MAN (CONT'D)

(calming him down)

Triple A! It's Triple A!

His panic and clamoring stops.

CHARLIE

OH GOD... so much hangover.

Charlie looks around the car for Eleanor. Still too groggy to be sufficiently confused. He picks up the napkin on his chest. It says TO CHARLIE on the front.

EXT. SIDE OF THE ROAD - MOMENTS LATER

Charlie steps out of the car, shaky. Napkin in hand. He squints as his eyes adjust to the light.

CHARLIE

Hey, there was supposed to be a...
woman in that car with me. But
she's gone now... Did you see her
running or walking or--

(off the concerned look of
the Triple A Driver)

And I'm gonna stop talking now.

INT. BALLROOM - LOBBY - SAME TIME

CLOSE on Eleanor's face. Morning light shoots through the doors and onto her face.

Her eyes struggle to open. But they do. She wipes some stray mascara from her face and raises up.

She's slumped onto an enormous, wooden chair in the lavish ballroom lobby. She looks around and realizes how out of place she is right now.

The ring box sits on top of her, tucked into her coat.
She struggles to get up.

EXT. SIDE OF THE ROAD - SAME TIME

The TRIPLE A DRIVER hands Charlie a slip of paper.

TRIPLE A DRIVER
Tire's fixed. Careful on these
roads. These out here are some
vengeful little pebbles.

CHARLIE
Thank you.

The Triple A driver walks off.

And here, we take a moment to really look at Charlie. Things slow down.

His button down is covered in a patchwork of blood and grass stains. It's also buttoned wrong. The hair around his wound has crusted. He looks pale and a little bit sick.

He's standing alone on this dusty road as early in the morning as it gets.

INT. BALLROOM - LOBBY - SAME TIME

Eleanor stands. We examine her appearance in the fresh light: Her dress is wrinkled and covered in blood and grass stains. Her makeup runs a bit. Her hair is tamped down in awkward places.

And then BACK TO CHARLIE, standing like she is, bruised, shaky, lost, confused, tired.

Their night is imprinted on their faces and bodies.

And BACK TO ELEANOR again. In the same state as Charlie. And BACK TO CHARLIE:

EXT. SIDE OF THE ROAD - SAME TIME

The Triple A Driver has driven off. Charlie is alone out here.

He unfurls the napkin in his hands, maybe all too prepared for what it says.

INT. BALLROOM - LOBBY - SAME TIME

Eleanor gathers her things somewhat messily and heads down the hallway apathetically.

She walks with confusion. Like she's still half asleep. She's on a withdrawal from her influx of emotions.

INT. BALLROOM - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Eleanor walks down the hallway and stops at the ballroom. It's empty.

She ENTERS THE BALLROOM. For now, we stay planted in the hallway and watch her through the doorway.

She takes a pause to admire how much it's changed since last night.

Her gaze continues to wander around the room. It's so quiet and still we can hear the dust fizzling in the air.

We ENTER THE BALLROOM.

Eleanor looks over to the corner where she was sitting the night before. Nothing lies there anymore.

She looks over to the dance floor. Empty of all people, just left with a few scuff marks and shoe prints that have yet to be cleaned.

As Eleanor stares off at the bare dance floor, the room darkens and FILLS with a warm, dreamy light. The sounds of mutters and insignificant footsteps come flooding in.

Eleanor is staring at a dance floor full of people. It's the night before. But Eleanor is where she is now, watching the crowd ten or so feet removed from them. She stares at them, just as transfixed as she was the night before. She sees Charlie in the crowd. He's dancing alone in there. He's enjoying himself. His face blurs in the masses of people.

The lights, the sounds of music, the sounds of people, all of it floats around Eleanor like a drug. The warm light showers down on her.

INT. BALLROOM - HALLWAY - SAME TIME

We can still see the flashing lights and some of the crowd from out here. But the sound seems muffled and far away.

After the longest beat, Eleanor starts to back away from the crowd. She fights it.

The music dulls to silence. But the light and the crowd is still raging.

Eleanor turns around and walks away from it all. Her footsteps echo in the empty room full of people.

And like a light switch turning off:

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. BALLROOM - HALLWAY - SAME TIME

The people are gone, the lights are gone. Eleanor continues out of the ballroom and out of view.

INT. BALLROOM - LOBBY - MOMENTS LATER

Eleanor walks up to the front counter and speaks to a RECEPTIONIST.

ELEANOR

Hi.

(beat)

So in a little while there's gonna be a guy who comes in here. His name is Charlie. He's gonna be frantic and angry and a little crazy. He has a little bandage on his head. That's how you'll know who he is. Just know that however angry or irrational he is... he's probably right for it. I wrote him a little note on a napkin explaining some things that don't matter to you but the napkin was small and the pen didn't really work-- And I was kind of hoping he was gonna show up here by now but I guess not, so.

(beat)

If you could, I'd like you to give him this. Tell him it's from me. I'm Eleanor. He'll probably know that. But just make sure.

Eleanor hands her over the ring box. She takes a second to think and regain her composure.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

Um. And then... if you could just tell him thank you. And I'm sorry. Or the other way around. Um... I'm sorry. Then thank you. And make sure you really hit that thank you hard cause, I mean it.

(beat)

There's other stuff, but it's too complicated and I'm not gonna make you say all that. And I'm noticing you're not writing any of this down and I just gave you a lot but I trust that you'll... keep it up there.

(beat)

Yeah, that should be good.

Eleanor exhales.

The Receptionist nods. Maybe says something. It doesn't really matter.

Eleanor walks outside and turns a corner. She's gone.

FADE TO:

EXT. SIDE OF THE ROAD - DAY

Where Charlie's car once was. Now just a bare road.

A QUICK FLASH to the night before. Charlie and Eleanor sit on the ground, leaning against his car, laying against each other. Maybe real. Maybe not.

And then, BACK TO NORMAL. Day again.

FADE TO:

INT. BALLROOM - HALLWAY - DAY

Peering into the ballroom through the doorway.

There's a quiet, indiscernible ringing in here. The type of noise that accounts for no noise at all.

It's white and empty. But somehow it feels warm.

THE END.