

THE BEACH

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A river on a summer day. The surrounding forest buzzes with wildlife. Above this ambiance of nature, a soft voice rises from someplace distant. Soon after, a double-floatie emerges from around a bend, making its way downstream.

SOFT VOICE (O.S.)
*...it's okay to give you and your
partner permission to start over,
however many times either of you..*

ELIJAH [mid/late 20s] sits, posture straight, in the floatie. He's wearing a white t-shirt and swimming trunks. A Bluetooth speaker, playing a relationship help audio book, sits in the second seat. He listens closely to what the voice is telling him, thoughtfully jotting notes down in a recently purchased notebook. He takes a bite from an orange.

Breaking his concentration, a **bing** lets out next to him. Annoyed, he grabs his phone from under a backpack and checks for notifications. On his phone's cracked screen, we see he's received an IG DM from a user named "brainyjade":

BRAINYJADE (TEXT)
"Hey.. I know it's been awhile, but
you wanna go to rock cannon this week
or something? ... lol"

Interesting. Elijah was not expecting this. He looks up from his screen, lost in thought. Making a decision, he drags his thumb across the screen, deleting the message.

SOFT VOICE (O.S.)
*... the distancer in the relationship
often harbors resentment towards ..*

Back to business. Elijah resumes jotting, when suddenly, the sound of tearing fabric jolts his body alert. Elijah looks around. Did he just hear something? Then, with terrifying immediacy, the floatie begins deflating entirely.

ELIJAH
Holy shit. Woah. Help. HE---!

Elijah, despite his efforts, sinks in the river with the floatie. His feet are tangled in it and he struggles to remain afloat. His belongings, the notebook and the speaker (still playing self-help), have begun floating downstream.

Elijah attempts to swim away but the floatie has a tightly wound grasp on him. He wiggles his body, legs, and arms attempting to release himself. The fight is heroic, until:

He submerges completely. The wildlife ambiance resumes from before. The river's current continues. It's peaceful, until:

Elijah re-emerges! He's freed himself. He gasps for air and swims to the sides, looking for a spot suitable to climb. Finding it, he pulls himself onto land, weathered and frightened. He looks downstream. His belongings cross a bend, disappearing from sight and down the river forever. The audio book's recording fades well into the beyond.

2 EXT. ROADSIDE - LATE AFTERNOON

2

Elijah, hunched over, walks from the direction of the river. He is a wet, frazzled mess. A couple walking towards the river, equipped with a floatie and a cooler, cross his path. He makes a "do you have a cigarette?" gesture with his hand. They shake their head. He marches forward, talking underneath his breath, clearly very upset about the event.

3 EXT./INT. OUTSIDE ELIJAH'S APARTMENT - SUV - MORNING

3

PUSHING IN on a neighborhood. An SUV rolls to a curb and slows to a stop in front of a low-income apartment complex.

Inside the SUV, JADE [20s, refined] sends a text message. We know her from the profile picture of the IG DM we saw previously. A Polaroid camera is slung around her neck.

Her eyes inspect the apartment. She checks the time on her watch. Restless, her attention shifts to the radio as she turns it on.

NEWS RADIO (O.S.)
*... multiple accounts of wild fires
 plaguing--*

Jade switches the station.

2ND NEWS RADIO (O.S.)
--floods devastated the entire--

Jade switches the station, again.

COMEDY RADIO (O.S.)
*...and I'm serious, Phyllis listen..
 the toilet was broken until my cat--*

Jade cracks a smile. She decides on this one. She exhales deeply, shutting her eyes. All is peaceful, until....

The passenger window knocks. Startled, she looks towards it. Elijah, finishing a cigarette, is there. He ceases knocking, smiles kindly and waves to Jade. He talks louder to be heard over the SUV's window. Jade turns down radio.

ELIJAH

Sorry! Didn't want to smoke near the building. Mayana doesn't like it.

Jade does a thumbs up, unlocking the door. He takes a final drag, holding onto the butt. He motions somewhere o.c.

ELIJAH (cont'd)

I'm gonna toss this 'round the block.

JADE

Just toss it on the street.

ELIJAH

But... the Earth?

Jade shrugs. Thinking about it, Elijah throws the butt. Jade opens the door. He hops in. She quickly puts the car into drive and rolls down the street, focused on the road.

ELIJAH (cont'd)

Well if you don't judge me I won't judge me.

JADE

Right...

ELIJAH

... Hi!

Jade looks over to Elijah, sensing his stare.

JADE

Hi!

ELIJAH

Long time no see.

JADE

I knnnnoowww.

ELIJAH

How you've been?

JADE

Good, real good! You?

ELIJAH
Surviving. You hear of the fires?

JADE
A bit. I'm sure I'll hear it at work tomorrow, so, what-the-fuck ever.

4 INT./EXT. CHEVRON LOT - SUV - THAT MOMENT

4

A masked gas attendant, holding a credit card, runs from Jade's side of the parked SUV and into the Chevron.

ELIJAH
(calling to gas attendant)
Thanks!

Elijah turns to Jade, who is giving her full attention for the first time. This makes him slightly uncomfortable.

ELIJAH (cont'd)
I can Venmo you for --

JADE
No no no, don't worry about it.

ELIJAH
You sure?

JADE
I get paid way too much saving the world, so seriously, it's okay.

ELIJAH
Oh, right, I forgot. Well, we need anything from here? Beer?

JADE
Nope! There's plenty of that. 'specially since neither of our partners ended up coming out.

ELIJAH
Oh! Really. I didn't know you were seeing anyone...

A FLASH erupts on Elijah's face. He's temporarily dazed. Jade puts the Polaroid down as it dispenses the photo. She is satisfied with her secret success.

JADE

Yeah. His name's Gabe. Politician type. I don't think you two would get along, honestly. So, it works out!

The gas attendant arrives back to the window with her card, leaving as quickly as he came.

JADE (cont'd)

Thank you!
(to Elijah)
You see that asshole's hair?

5 EXT. I-84 HIGHWAY - DAY

5

The SUV buzzes forward on the I-84 HIGHWAY.

6 INT. SUV - DAY

6

Comedy radio is on. Jade is entertained. Elijah is annoyed.

ELIJAH

Can I can smoke if the windows are down?

Jade rolls her window down.

ELIJAH (cont'd)

Nasty habit, I know.

Jade shrugs. Elijah lights his cigarette, inhales deeply, blows the smoke out of the car. A moment passes.

ELIJAH (cont'd)

Why'd you take a picture of me? Earlier?

JADE

Well.. it's .. part of the reason why I invited you out here. Tbh.

ELIJAH

Really? Woah. How mysterious...

Jade makes a "lips sealed" gesture. She turns the radio knob, the comedy radio becomes louder. Elijah rolls his eyes and looks out the window. Awkward silence.

7 EXT. NUDE BEACH - ROCK CANNON - DAY

7

TRACKING a nude beach. Well-populated. Everybody is wearing masks.

Jade and Elijah walk onto the shore. Jade breathes in the fresh air, relaxed. Elijah, behind Jade, carrying a cooler, is fidgety. He takes a short breath and promptly drops his shorts. He's naked from the waist down, and walks towards the other beach goers, unsure. Jade turns around, shocked:

JADE

Woah dude. The fuck are you doing?

ELIJAH

What--I thought. Well, I thought.. Because it was a.. nude beach.

JADE

No, I'm not getting naked, haha. I didn't.. This wasn't that. There's a place I want to show you.

ELIJAH

Oh! Oh my God. I'm sorry, I-

Elijah, totally humiliated, picks his pants up.

ELIJAH (cont'd)

I am so so so sor--

FLASH. Elijah's was caught off guard, again. Jade took another picture. She is delighted with herself.

JADE

That's hilarious. No, don't worry about it. The spot I want to show you is this way, far from those gross people, you and I.

Jade walks away, light-footed. Elijah, hesitant and unsure, follows slowly behind.

8 INT. BEACH - ROCK CANNON - DAY

8

The secluded area of the beach. The two are walking the shore. Jade is some yards ahead of Elijah, talking fast and in a good mood. She looks straight ahead, not looking once back to Elijah. It almost seems like she could be talking to herself. Elijah follows, smoking a cigarette frantically.

JADE

... and Milo was just so open, you know? To me, the crowd, I'm sure you too, being closer to him than I was maybe. You remember that one show we were all at? At Horse Brass?

ELIJAH

Ya.

JADE

Where he was talking about his weird porn habits? And his balding medication and the fact that it was giving him erectile dysfunction?

Elijah tenses. He finishes a cigarette, tosses it on the shore. He pulls his pack out, lights another, and inhales.

ELIJAH

Uh-huh.

JADE

So so so funny.. God, you know, I think that was the day I realized I could be with him forever. Even if, you know, there would always be a problem with his boners.

ELIJAH

Right.

Jade sighs deeply and fondly. They continue walking in silence until suddenly, Jade stops. Surprised, Elijah stops too. By Jade's feet, a green ribbon wrapped around plywood sticks up from the sand. Jade turns around to Elijah, proud.

JADE

K! We're here.

9 EXT. CAMP SITE - ROCK CANNON - EVENING

9

Jade and Elijah have built a makeshift camp site around the green ribbon. Elijah is sitting on one of two rugs, the cooler beside him and a very small log fire in front of him. He is smoking a cigarette and drinking a beer. He is in a sour mood. Not too far out from shore, Jade swims in the ocean, basking in the waves. After a beat, she walks back to the campsite with an extra pep in her step.

ELIJAH

You want a beer?

JADE
No thanks! It's almost time!

Jade plops down on her rug. She grabs her Polaroid and an apple next to her, immediately biting big chunks out of it.

ELIJAH
Jade... This is making me
uncomfortable, what did you in--

FLASH! Jade has taken another picture. The Polaroid begins dispersing the photo. Jade stashes it with the others.

ELIJAH (cont'd)
Jade! What the fuc--

JADE
What did you last say to Milo?

ELIJAH
What?!

JADE
Before he died. What was your last
conversation with him?

Elijah takes a long swig from his beer, finishing it, and opens another.

ELIJAH
I don't remember.

10 EXT. CAMP SITE - ROCK CANNON - NIGHT

10

Later in the night. Jade and Elijah sit around a more robust fire. Six empty beers surround a very drunk Elijah. Jade sips on ginger beer. Elijah is talking to Jade, leaning in a little too close.

ELIJAH
... it just wasn't -- We were
never -- it was never good ...

JADE
What ... ?

ELIJAH
Timing! You and me, someone was
always dating somebody else.. But,
after Milo.. after he.. passed.. I
had a shot, right?

JADE

Yeah. You did. But, it was because you reminded me so much of him.

Elijah straightens up, the comment temporarily sobering him. Jade lifts the Polaroid at a sunken Elijah, finger on the shutter.

ELIJAH

Dude! STOP! NO! No more! What are you doing??!?!?

Jade, surprised by the outburst, lowers the Polaroid down.

ELIJAH (cont'd)

Why did you bring me out here Jade?!?! I have a partner you know. I can't be -- I don't -- She doesn't know I'm here!

Jade sighs, stands up. She offers Elijah her hand.

JADE

Okay. Come on. Something I wanted to show you. Let me take you.

ELIJAH

You put the Polaroid down and I'll go.

Jade removes the Polaroid strap from her neck and places it on her rug. She grabs the photo's that it has dispensed and holds them in one hand. Elijah, slurry and almost falling over, grabs Jade's other hand as she helps lift him up.

11 EXT. FURTHER OUT ROCK CANNON - NIGHT

11

Jade leads the way, Elijah stumbling behind. They are shrouded in a moonlit darkness except for a flashlight emitting from Jade's iPhone.

Up ahead, the flashlight finds a red ribbon stuck into the sand exactly as the green one was.

JADE

Hold this.

Jade hands Elijah her iPhone. He aims it towards Jade as she drops down at the red ribbon. She digs around it with one hand, the other hand holding the photos. Elijah watches, clears his throat. Suddenly, Jade stuffs her arm deep in the sand, struggling for something.

ELIJAH
 ... You need hel--

Abruptly, Jade releases from the sand, falling over. She stands up, smiling widely, turns to face Elijah. A small, black box is in her left hand. She displays it to Elijah.

ELIJAH (cont'd)
 ...what is that?

JADE
 Aim the phone upward and come closer
 so we can both use the light.

Elijah obeys. As they're huddled, Jade presses a button on the black box. A red light emits from the center. A distorted, raspy voice crackles alive from it.

BLACK BOX
 ... Hello. How are we today?

ELIJAH
 ... The fuck is this? Jade?! The
 fuck is this?!?

Jade begins feeding the Polaroid photos into the side of the black box. Awkward, blurry photos of Elijah disappears into it, the box gently humming as this process takes place.

JADE
 Ok... well, as you know, Elijah... I dated Milo for six months. And, it was the best time of my life. Really. Truthfully. But, as I'm sure you already know about.. I was greedy and didn't treat him right.. I wanted more than what was reasonable and tried finding that with other people... He was unhappy and so he broke up with me. It's taken awhile to accept that. He's the love of my life and I miss him every day. So, because why not.. ha.. I decided to build him. At least replicate him.. from spare parts at work. The last six months.. this is what I've been doing... I hid him here and I talk to him every weekend. The more I talk, the more I realize how fuckin' stupid it was for me to keep him here. I'm still being the selfish person he broke up with...

(MORE)

JADE (cont'd)

I know you'd like to talk to him as much as I have. Frankly, I don't think I can talk to him anymore. I've exhausted myself. I needed these photographs because that's how he remembers people. It's how I designed him. He needed your photos so he can remember you too.

Elijah is too astonished to respond. The black box has stopped humming, the photo's are done being fed into. A raspy, distorted tone emits from the box again.

BLACK BOX

Hey Elijah.. remember in sixth grade when you dropped your pizza in front of everybody? Haha. Retard.

ELIJAH

Oh my God. It's him. You built him.

BLACK BOX

Elijah? Come on, you pussy. You there?

JADE

He wants to talk to you, Elijah. He wants to know you again.

Elijah clears his throat, faces the black box.

ELIJAH

Milo? ... Remember when you ate shit at Governor's Park?

BLACK BOX

Haha! And my head cracked open! ...

Abruptly, Jade hands a stunned Elijah the black box, and takes her phone, the flashlight, out of his hand. She leaves the two in darkness. She walks towards the camp fire 50 feet ahead. Elijah and the Black Box's strangely fond conversation fades into the sound of waves crashing.

12 EXT. CAMP SITE - ROCK CANNON - LATE, LATE NIGHT

12

Jade returns to the camp site. She grabs her rug, the Polaroid camera, and the cooler. Carrying all of this, she walks down the shore of Rock Cannon, towards the exit.

13 EXT. ROCK CANNON PARKING LOT - DAWN**13**

Jade has found her way back to Rock Cannon parking lot. It's deserted and dark. She presses a button on her car keys. An SUV lights up somewhere far away.

She opens the passenger door to the SUV, throwing her belongings in the back seat. She closes the door, then walks to the driver's seat and enters.

14 INT. SUV - HIGHWAY - DAWN**14**

Jade drives on the highway. She is listening to the RADIO.

NEWS RADIO

.. exhausted fire crews worked on Sunday to beat back raging wildfires that have scorched millions of acres across three Western states ..

Suddenly, it begins raining ash outside her car. Jade looks out her front window. Above her, a huge cloud of wildfire smoke looms. The scene is apocalyptic, almost biblical.

15 EXT. OFFICE SPACE - INTEL - DAY**15**

Jade, in a bunny suit, types on her laptop at a small desk in a modest but modern office space. She lets out a yawn. Self-conscious, she looks around. Cubicles are placed six feet apart from each, her colleagues all in bunny suits. No one noticed the transgression. Her eyes float: draped along the ceiling is a banner reading "SAVING THE WORLD!".

On her desk sits the Polaroid camera. Propped by a wooden frame is a photo of Jade with her arm alongside her boyfriend, Gabe. He is a handsome fellow. The photo is them at some ballroom event. Suddenly, a cough rises somewhere off camera. Jade is disrupted from typing and turns from her computer to the office space. Intel employees in bunny suits surround her, holding a cake.

INTEL EMPLOYEE

We're promoting you, Jade. Your exemplary work in saving the world does not go unnoticed here. We salute you. Your new office is up there, on the higher floors. Good luck.

Jade looks towards the corner of the office. A moving elevator pushes an occupant up. Jade rolls her eyes.