

THIS ISN'T HAPPENING

Written by
Benjamin J. Gohs

Copyright (c) 2021

benjamingohs@gmail.com

FADE IN:

EXT. CITY APARTMENT - DAY

Hip young couple CASS and MEL comes down the steps to the street where their car is parked.

They shoulder big overstuffed camping backpacks and are so supremely happy, they cannot stop smiling.

EXT. CAR - CITY APARTMENT - DAY

Mel puts their packs in the trunk and, while his back is turned, Cass' smile melts into a mournful glare. Something terrible is going to happen.

Trunk closed, he glances up—her cheery expression returns.

MEL
Happy birthday.

He takes her hands. They kiss and hug. Their chins on each other's shoulders: he grins; she has a thousand-yard stare.

INT./EXT. CAR - CITY LIMITS

Mel drives and Cass opens a "Frankenstein" paperback.

Excited for their big adventure, they head through the city and out of town.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - HIGHWAY - DAY

A LITTLE LATER.

Nothing but trees and more trees on this lonely road.

INT./EXT. CAR - COUNTRY HIGHWAY - DAY

Cass closes her book and digs through a travel bag.

CASS
Babe, did you pack my phone?

MEL
Thought I did.

She roots around but no luck.

CASS

Not here.

MEL

Shoot. I'm sorry. I thought I grabbed it.

Cass gives him a dubious side-eye.

CASS

We can go back and.

MEL

Don't wanna spend two extra hours.

CASS

Four. When you figure going all the way back and then back just to where we are right now. But I don't mind.

MEL

Ya sure?

CASS

I mean, could just use mine.
Less there somethin' you
really need to.

MEL

No. It's OK.

Mel turns to the window, a worried look on her face.

INT./EXT. CAR - COUNTRY HIGHWAY - DAY

He's engrossed in driving. She closes her book and breaks the silence.

CASS

Babe, I gotta pee.

MEL

Why didn't you go when we stopped for gas?

CASS

I did.

MEL

Ned to lay off those giant sodas. Not good for ya. (off her silence) Dunno when the next town is. Can you hold it or you want me pull over?

CASS

Can I use your phone?

He eyes her a moment before handing it over.

She forces a smile of thanks.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

More and more trees.

EXT. CAR - COUNTRY HIGHWAY - DAY

Reflection of trees whizzing by as Cass stares out the passenger window. They are truly in the middle of nowhere.

INT. CAR - COUNTRY HIGHWAY - DAY

LATER STILL.

She's fidgeting and looks very uncomfortable.

MEL
Can just stop here. Pop a squat.

CASS
I can make it.

MEL
But can the seat.

She slaps his arm. He laughs.

MEL (cont'd)
Hold on I think there might be. Yup.

EXT. ROAD SIGN - COUNTRY HIGHWAY - DAY

CLOSE ON road sign reads: "GAS TWO MILES"

EXT. COUNTRY GAS STATION - DAY

A quiet little place. The very last of civilization.

INT./EXT. CAR - COUNTRY HIGHWAY - DAY

They pull off the road and into the station.

She's unhooking her safety belt and opening her door before he's even stopped.

CASS
Aah! Hurry.

Messing with her, he hits the gas to speed back up.

CASS (cont'd)
Stop or I soak the seat.

MEL
Stopping. I'm stopping.

EXT. GAS STATION - CAR - DAY

The car screeches to a stop.

Cass jumps out and shouts as she runs to the restroom.

CASS
Asshole!

EXT. WILDERNESS - DAY

From high above this sea of trees, the only evidence of human activity is the little gas station.

EXT. CAR TRUNK - DAY

Mel sits on the trunk, looking at his phone.

ON MEL'S PHONE SCREEN:

Photo of a young woman their age. Headline reads: "Family keeps hope alive on one-year anniversary of daughter's disappearance"

BACK TO SCENE

Mel looks very concerned. A JINGLING O.S. startles him.

EXT. GAS STATION ENTRANCE - DAY

The door JINGLES as a relieved Cass exits the store, her arms loaded with bags of snacks.

EXT. CAR - DAY

Mel quickly pockets his phone and rushes to open Cass' door for her.

MEL

Make it?

CASS

Photo fucking finish.

MEL

Sorry.

CASS

Next time I go on the seat.

He laughs.

EXT. CAR - GAS STATION - DAY

They pull back onto the highway.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

POV driving the long winding road.

INT./EXT. CAR - COUNTRY HIGHWAY - DAY

Reading silently from "Frankenstein" she pauses.

CASS

Hey listen.

MEL

Name's not "Hey" but I'm listenin'.

CASS

(reading)

"As I spoke, a dark gloom spread over my listener's countenance. At first I perceived that he tried to suppress his emotion. He placed his hands before his eyes and my voice quivered and failed me as I beheld tears trickle fast from between his fingers. A groan burst from his heaving breast. I paused. At length he spoke in broken accents: (**Cass does a weird old man voice**) "Unhappy man! Do you share my madness? Have you drunk also of the intoxicating draught? Hear me; let me reveal my tale, and you will dash the cup from your lips!"