

RAW PROVOCATIVE HUMANE PLAYS

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Carry Me On
Very Short Holiday Play
by
Will Clark

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CARRY ME ON

Moonlight spills through the window of a dormitory room. A couple lie still in bed. JACKSON, 20, opens his eyes. He very delicately shifts his weight and glances over his shoulder at the girl next to him. She's asleep.

He slowly crawls out of bed and scans the room for his clothes, fumbling for them in the dark. He pulls on his pants and his shoes, scoops his shirt off the ground, and grabs his jacket off a hook on the door.

MARAI

You forgot your keys.

MARAI rolls over in bed and flips on the lamp on the bedside table. Jackson quickly re-hangs his jacket.

JACKSON

I was just going to the bathroom.

MARAI

With your shoes on?

JACKSON

Paranoid. Fungus. You know.

MARAI

Uh-huh.

JACKSON

You think I was gonna walk out of here shirtless?

MARAI

You don't have to stay Jackson. But don't do that.

A beat.

JACKSON

I should go.

MARAI

Thank you.

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Marai throws Jackson his keys. Jackson starts for the door.

MARAI

Where are you going to go?

JACKSON

Just home. McFaddin.

MARAI

I mean where are you going to stay? Dorms close tomorrow for break.

JACKSON

I've got places I can go. I'll be fine.

MARAI

Alright.

Jackson nods.

JACKSON

Merry Chris--

MARAI

Cause I was thinking maybe you'd like to come home with me. For the holidays.

JACKSON

That's...it's nice of you to offer, but really, I'll be fine.

MARAI

I'm not worried about whether or not you'll be fine. I want you to come.

JACKSON

I'm not fun to be around during the holidays Marai. Just trust me, you don't want me to come.

MARAI

I tired of this Jackson. I am sick of waking up in the middle of the night to see that you've left again.

JACKSON

My classes are on the other side of campus. And you know I don't sleep here.

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MARAI

You think I sleep once you've left? I'm up every night trying figure out what's wrong with me.

JACKSON

It has nothing to do with you.

MARAI

Well I'm sorry that it doesn't feel that way, but this...what is it? Arrangement? I don't know what it is, but it seems awfully convenient for you, which is not something I am interested in being.

JACKSON

Convenient? What is convenient about the schlep up to North Campus?

MARAI

Well this can be the last time you make the schlep.

JACKSON

What do you want from me Mar?

MARAI

I don't want anything from you Jackson. I'm just not going to do this anymore. I'm not going to invest anything in this just to have you fence me out like everyone else. I've decided.

JACKSON

I don't do that.

MARAI

No? Why can't you go home Jack?

JACKSON

I told you, it's complicated.

MARAI

Were things complicated at Drexel too?

JACKSON

What are you talking...you know what? I don't have to do this.

MARAI

Why did you come here Jackson? Just answer that for me.

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JACKSON

I wanted to see you before you left.

MARAI

I mean to Cornell.

JACKSON

Because they wanted me.

MARAI

So what if they wanted you, I'm asking you why did you leave Drexel?

JACKSON

I don't know. I wanted to do bigger things. They told me that I would do bigger things here, so I transferred.

MARAI

I thought you wanted to teach.

JACKSON

I could still do that here.

MARAI

And you were still doing big things at Drexel. All the work you did to get published. Clearly the Journal of Applied Mathematics thought you were doing big things. You told me your faculty mentor nominated you for a Fields Medal for crying out loud. So why come here with a year left to go.

JACKSON

All of that work amounted to nothing. Other than getting everyone's attention here. And maybe if I had been here in the first place someone would have caught my mistakes before the world saw them.

MARAI

That journal is peer-reviewed Jackson. Plenty of people saw what you did before the world did. You're just avoiding the point. The reason you came here was to get away from her.

JACKSON

No. Don't. Don't try to make this about Jessica.

MARAI

I'm not Jackson, you are. You are letting all of your relationships get effected by one failed one, and whatever she did to you is making it impossible for you to be with me. I'd love to try to work through that, but it's impossible when I have to drag the truth out of you in bits and pieces and then I am left to do that math.

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You couldn't even be honest about leaving two minutes ago when you were sneaking out my door. And I know things have been hard, but I can't keep waiting for something to change. It has to change now.

A beat.

JACKSON

Hard? At 19 I reached the peak of my career by doing something no one could do for hundreds of years, and then watched everyone turn their head in embarrassment when someone else proved me wrong. Don't try to tell me you understand what that feels like, because no one does.

MARAI

You're right. I don't. But I don't think the solution is turning your back on everyone in return. Do you?

JACKSON

I don't know.

A beat.

MARAI

I thought of you in class yesterday.

JACKSON

Yeah?

MARAI

I told you I have been working with Professor Keeton right?

JACKSON

The pigeons?

MARAI

Yes. The pigeons. Did I tell you what he was working on?

JACKSON

No.

MARAI

He was attaching magnetic bars to the backs of these pigeons to prove that it interfered with their own ability to use the earth's magnetic field as a way to guide them home. Basically he is trying to prove that they have their own internal compass.

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JACKSON

That sounds cruel.

MARAI

It is kind of, but that's not the point.

JACKSON

Well what is?

MARAI

It just made me think that if you would just stop carrying around all this crap on your back you would know which way to go.

JACKSON

Well, the trouble is Marai, that's not the kind of internal compass I come equipped with. Mine is the other kind. The kind that's good at drawing circles. And measuring distances on a map.

Jackson pulls his shirt over his head.

MARAI

Well that's good. Let me map this out for you then. You can stay here, and we can do this for real. Or you can walk out that door and figure out what your next destination is. Which you are free to do. And I'll be fine. I'm just not doing the circles anymore. That's my gift to myself this year. Maybe it should be yours too.

A long pause.

JACKSON

I don't sleep.

MARAI

Neither do I.

Jackson crosses back toward the bed. He looks at Marai once more before reaching into his pocket and tossing his keys back onto the nightstand. He turns off the lamp.

End of play.

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