

DEAN THE DRUMMER

Written by

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EXT. GAS STATION - DAY

Two old gas pumps and a garage littered with car parts. The faded gas station sign is from the 90's. The asphalt is broken and pot holes have filled with oily run-off.

On a bench MIA JONES, 17, reads a school textbook. Her nails are done and her hair; make-up, short skirt, low boots, wife-beater tank.

Walking up to the bench a GUY, early 20's, takes a look at her and sits.

EXT. GAS STATION - GARAGE - CONTINUOUS

BEN DAVIS, 17, stands by a tired-looking station wagon where a MECHANIC checks the engine. Ben is tall and skinny, greased-back hair, acne, jeans hanging off his ass.

MECHANIC

Everything else looks fine. It'll take me fifteen minutes...thirty bucks.

Ben thinks.

BEN

Nah. I'll do it myself.

MECHANIC

You gonna change the oil yourself?

BEN

(hesitant)

Yeah.

MECHANIC

How you gonna reach the drain plug? The car needs to be jacked up.

EXT. GAS STATION - CONTINUOUS

Guy lights up a cigarette. Mia looks at him.

MIA

Can you *not* smoke here?

GUY

Where?

MIA

Here.

GUY
What, you own this bench?

MIA
Just go somewhere else!

GUY
You go somewhere else bitch.

She SLAPS the cigarette out of his mouth before he can move.

GUY (CONT'D)
The fuck!

He GRABS her by the neck.

MIA
Don't smoke in my face you piece of
shit!

EXT. GAS STATION - GARAGE - CONTINUOUS

Wrench in hand Ben stares at the engine confused when he
hears Mia.

MIA (O.S.)
You can fucking kill yourself but
leave other people out of it!

He hurries over holding his jeans up so they don't fall.

EXT. GAS STATION - CONTINUOUS

The Guy lets go of Mia's neck.

MIA
Ben he's smoking in my face!

BEN
All right baby.

GUY
You owe me a dollar for that
cigarette she knocked out of my
mouth.

Ben starts taking the Guy aside.

MIA
Don't pay him *shit*!

BEN
 (to Mia)
 Wait in the car.

GUY
 Yeah get in the car!

MIA
 Fuck you!

Ben gently pulls on the Guy who SHOVES him.

GUY
 The fuck you gonna do?

He shoves Ben again, who puts his hands up.

BEN
 Nothing. I'm gonna take her home
 now. So you can sit on that bench
 and smoke all day, ok?

GUY
 (taken off guard)
 The hell is wrong with her?

BEN
 If your girlfriend was pregnant you
 wouldn't want her inhaling smoke
 either, right?

The Guy stares at Ben who shuffles off. With an affected
 overly masculine gait Ben gets into the driver's seat of the
 station wagon.

INT. STATION WAGON - CONTINUOUS

The car is dirty; stickers on the dashboard, empty cans, take-
 out boxes.

MIA
 What'd you tell him?

BEN
 Nothing. It's stupid...what?

She crosses her arms.

He pulls out onto the highway. On each side of it only fields
 and sky. Here and there a small nondescript building.

BEN (CONT'D)
 Why are you so angry lately?

MIA
Did you get the oil changed?

BEN
...yeah.

He puts on music, a song with bass and groove, and he starts bopping his head to it. Driving with one hand he glances over his arm at her with an Elvis smile.

After resisting she finally smiles back.

BEN (CONT'D)
You want ice cream?

MIA
(sexual)
Yeah...

BEN
What kind of ice cream you want?

MIA
Your kind of ice cream.

EXT. LAKE - LATER

We hear moaning.

The water glimmers in the sun. Big rocks line the shore, with graffiti on them. And beyond them is a sparse forest.

In a patch of grass next to the station wagon they make love. It's *making love*, not *fucking*. But it's affected, pretend-masculine and pretend-feminine. Mia moans loudly, closing her eyes.

They lie side by side. She starts to kiss him, little kisses on every part of his face. When she stops he starts kissing *her* face everywhere.

They look up at the sky, their heads touching.

MIA
You gonna tell your Mom today?

INT. BEN'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Ben's Mom MARIA DAVIS, 50's, frail, is on the phone in front of her computer. She has coiffed hair, her shirt is ironed and her cracked shoes polished. Around her are piles of papers and notes -

College submission regulations / SAT prep courses / ACT prep courses / Financial Aid forms.

MARIA
 (into phone)
 Yes, sir, I do, hold on...

She puts on her glasses and reads off a document.

MARIA (CONT'D)
 (into phone)
 Twenty-five thousand...I'm a single parent. Financial Aid yes...oh it does? Oh. I didn't see that.

She nods concerned.

MARIA (CONT'D)
 And what about scholarships? What percentage of your students receive them usually?...I see. That's very low.

Silence.

MARIA (CONT'D)
 (into phone)
 Ok. Well, thank you for your time, Sir. I'll make sure he gets excellent grades and does well on his exam and we'll speak then. Yes, have a good day.

She hangs up.

INT. STATION WAGON - CONTINUOUS

His brows knitted now, Ben drives. Mia's eyes are on him.

MIA
 Are you embarrassed? Is that why you're not telling her?

BEN
 Baby...

MIA
 Well what? My clothes aren't gonna hide it anymore.

BEN

I'm just worried, ok? It's like, a huge thing. I want to tell her the right way.

MIA

What are you worried about?

BEN

You know, she could just kick us out...

MIA

Then we shouldn't be living there!

BEN

And where do you wanna go?

She glowers. Frustrated he sighs, puts his hand on her thigh.

BEN (CONT'D)

Come on. I love you.

He kisses her hand. But she won't look at him, her jaw clenched. Her eyes are fixed on the road.

He drives down desolate suburban streets; some residential, others dotted with gas stations and parking lots and fast food chains; others pushing through forests.

MIA

If you're not gonna tell her today then I will.

Stunned he turns to her, to see if she's serious.

BEN

I just said I wanna tell her the right way...

She looks away.

EXT. BEN'S HOUSE - EVENING

A small two-bedroom with peeling paint. The light above the front door is dangling and the weathered metal fence is falling apart. But there are flowers along the edge of the house and small wooden pots with herbs growing in them.

The station wagon pulls up on the driveway and parks behind a decrepit Chevy.

INT. BEN'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Pale-faced Ben walks in holding Mia's hand. But as soon as he sees Maria he lets go.

BEN

Hi Mom.

At the stove Maria turns, her face lighting up.

MARIA

Get over here!

She pulls him in and squeezes him, burying her face in his neck. He tears himself away and grabs the serving dish of food.

The table is set for two people.

MIA

Hello Mrs. Davis.

MARIA

Hello.

(to Ben)

You ready for some good news? I got a hold of the submissions coordinator at NYU today. It took *forever* to speak to him, *weeks!*

Mia grabs a plate and utensils for herself.

MARIA (CONT'D)

They're busy people in NY. Busiest place I ever visited.

Mia serves Maria food. Then serves Ben and herself.

MARIA (CONT'D)

I was only there for three days Ben, *three days*. And I can't tell you, it's...you've never seen anything like it.

LATER

Mia stares at her empty plate.

MARIA (O.S.)

You can live on the campus if you get a scholarship, but you'll have to live with roommates.

Uncomfortable Ben glances at Mia.

MARIA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Or else they give you extra money
for housing, but NY is expensive
and getting the dorm is a deal.

Maria, her glasses on, consults a page of notes.

MARIA (CONT'D)
And no pocket money, so you'll have
to get a job.

Maria looks up and sees Ben's face.

MARIA (CONT'D)
There are plenty of jobs around a
campus. And you don't need much.

BEN
There are plenty of jobs here, Mom.

MARIA
What kinds of jobs? You want to
work in a grocery store?

Ben stands up and grabs their plates.

MARIA (CONT'D)
Don't do that. Mia, can you clean
up please.

Annoyed, Mia shoots out of her chair and grabs their plates,
takes them to the sink. Slowly Ben sits.

MARIA (CONT'D)
You think everyone gets grades like
you? You can't let that go to
waste.

Mia comes back with a sponge and wipes the table. Maria's
eyes are on Ben.

MARIA (CONT'D)
You need to be focusing on your
studies, not keeping house. Or
driving around after school all day
or whatever you do.

Mia glances at Ben, who looks down embarrassed.

MARIA (CONT'D)

Don't even give me that look, Ben.
She's living here for free so the
least she can do is clean up.

Mia THROWS the sponge in the sink. She stares expectantly at Ben who won't lift his eyes off his plate.

MIA

You've been very nice to let me
stay here, Mrs. Davis, I'm really
grateful...but I think I've found
another place to live.

Jaw dropped, Ben looks up.

MARIA

That's great, Mia. You're showing
you can stand on your own two feet.
That's great.

BEN

(panicked)
Wait...

Confused Maria turns to him and he goes silent. Mia stomps out of the room.

INT. BEN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Biting his nails, Ben's eyes are on Mia.

She takes the cushions off the couch, and from a cupboard she pulls out sheets and a blanket.

BEN

Can I tell her in the morning?

MIA

Jesus, Ben.

From under the couch she pulls out a pillow.

BEN

Ok ok, I'll tell her...

He backs out of the room. Out of sight he ducks into the bathroom.

INT. BEN'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

And he pukes in the toilet. He wipes his mouth, then his sweaty face.

INT. BEN'S HOUSE - MARIA'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Maria is in her pajamas, her glasses on, separating their laundry.

Ben shuffles in, sits on her bed. Hunched over he stares at his feet.

MARIA

I have pills if you can't sleep.

Seeing how tense he is, she sits next to him and puts her arm around his neck. Gives him a squeeze.

MARIA (CONT'D)

Hey...

BEN

I've just been thinking, about some things. That I want to talk to you about...I don't like that you've decided where I'm gonna go to college, and what I'm gonna do with my life.

MARIA

I'm sorry. It's my job to worry.

BEN

Yeah -

MARIA

- I'm still angry at *my* parents for not helping me get out of here. They didn't know any better.

He looks up at her, hurt.

BEN

If you had left you wouldn't have met Dad, and then you wouldn't have had *me*...

MARIA

That's not what I'm talking about.

BEN

What if I don't want to leave?

MARIA

What are you gonna do here? Be honest. Do you have a plan?

BEN

I want to stay with Mia.

Maria's face flushes but she keeps her composure.

MARIA

Maybe she can apply for the same college, who knows? Maybe the two of you can be together. Do you know it's tomorrow by the way, when the universities visit your school?

BEN

She's pregnant.

A sudden confusion on Maria's face, like she's been slapped. Slowly her cheeks turn red, her breathing grows louder, her eyes dart about the room.

BEN (CONT'D)

Mom.

MARIA

But...I told you to use condoms. I taught you that, we had that conversation, I remember it.

He looks down.

MARIA (CONT'D)

But Benny, *oh God...*

(confused)

Why didn't she take the pill if you weren't using condoms? Did you talk to her?

(panicked)

Ben...no. This is your whole life, your *whole* life in this one decision.

She covers her mouth horrified.

MARIA (CONT'D)

Was I stupid? Did you try to talk to me and I didn't listen?

BEN

You didn't do anything, calm down.

Her tears roll.

MARIA

I took you away from Tom so you could have a chance. Don't do this...you have your *whole* life...

BEN

Mom...

MARIA

How am I gonna help you now?!!

He fights the tears.

BEN

I'm sorry! But everything's fine.

MIA (O.S.)

Don't apologize.

Ben and Maria turn to see Mia in the doorway.

MIA (CONT'D)

(to Maria)

We don't need you to help us, ok?

BEN

(to Mia)

Let me talk to her!

Ben moves Mia out of the room.

MIA

(to Ben)

Who's side are you on?! I should be a part of this conversation!

MARIA

(to Ben)

Look at her! Is this what you want to have a baby with?

MIA

(to Ben)

Are you gonna let her talk to me like that?!

BEN

(to Mia)

I need to talk to her alone.

Ben closes the door on Mia.

MIA (O.S.)

Fuck you Maria! It's his baby too!

The sound of Mia stomping away. Panting with rage, her eyes bulging, Maria paces from the bed to the laundry and back. She shakes her head.

MARIA
She did it on purpose...

BEN
What...?

MARIA
You don't understand anything!

INT. BEN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Mia stands listening.

MARIA (O.S.)
I want her to leave...I don't want
her here.

INT. BEN'S HOUSE - MARIA'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Ben stares at Maria confused.

BEN
What are you talking about?

MARIA
Get her out of my house!

He leans back frightened. She turns away crying. And he backs away out of the room.

INT. BEN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Mia's gone.

EXT. BEN'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Ben walks out and looks both ways.

BEN
Mia?!

He hurries down the street.