

FIFTEEN

written by

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OVER BLACK:

MISSY (V.O.)
I member my first daddy.

EXT. URBAN STREET - MORNING

An unkept cement sidewalk stretches on for days.

MISSY (15), a skinny, Black girl, dressed in rayon shorts, stretchy top that clings, and pink Crocs, sits on the curb.

Next to her is a vacant tree well, notched in the concrete.

Out of frame, a car drives by and a BEER CAN rattles on the road top and stops within inches of her feet.

MISSY
(to herself)
Ha. You missed.

Missy has unbelievably smooth, flawless brawn skin. The creases around the flare of her nose are oily. She has beautiful straight teeth that could use some brushing.

We are in tight with her now.
Missy breaks the fourth wall.

MISSY
Sometimes there's a quiet.
(beat)
And if you hold real still... you
can jot that down after...
(beat)
... as a peaceful moment.
(beat)
And if you collect enough of them
in the same day... you can win.

Missy looks away.

MISSY
That's what I call it.
(beat)
A win.

Silence.

RODNEY (O.S.)
(irritated)
Girl!

SMASH TO BLACK.

OVER BLACK:

TAMMY
(animated)
It's time tested... Yep.

EXT. RURAL STREET - DAY

No shoulder. Just pavement and weeds.

TAMMY (15), a skinny, White girl, wears a white tube top and denim cutoffs, cropped high on the sides, to show her thighs, walks along the road.

TAMMY (V.O.)
This stretch... yes.

An approaching CAR.

Tammy steps onto the weeds.

Out of frame, a car drives by.

We are in tight with her now.
Tammy breaks the fourth wall.

TAMMY
This stretch is my lucky stretch.
Most days, it won't take more than
two hours to get picked up.
(beat)
But I refuse. Hear me? Refuse.
To walk on the weeds.

Tammy's blonde hair is noticeably greasy. She has it pulled back tight in a ponytail. There is a sprinkling of freckles across her nose.

The low flutter of a TRUCK MUFFER approaches out of frame.

Tammy looks up. Smiles.

TAMMY
There we go... Hot dog.

Tammy steps out of frame.

SMASH TO BLACK.

Silence.

OVER BLACK:

A HORSE BREATHES.

MAHDEM (V.O.)
(in Farsi)
Kind... I hope he is kind.

EXT. ALPINE MEADOW - DAY

An unbridled HORSE walks out of frame, revealing a vast, lush green alpine meadow in the foreground, transitioning into dense, dark pine forests on the hillsides, leading up to towering, craggy mountain peaks with patches of snow under a dramatic, billowy, white cloud against a pure blue sky.

A single road cuts through. With a single bus stop.

MAHDEM (15) stands beside a rusted, faded signpost.

She is one more striking speck of color against lush alpine meadow. She wears a traditional Balochi, a knee-length tunic of deep, faded violet, heavily decorated across the chest with intricate, geometric hand-embroidery. A matching, lightweight sarig scarf is draped over her head, pinned tightly under her chin, slows in the breeze.

Her feet stand in cheap plastic sandals, her knuckles white, her expression completely numb.

We are in tight with her now.
Mahdem breaks the fourth wall.

MAHDEM
I'm not an idiot.

A beat.

MAHDEM
A temporary marriage contract? No.
(beat)
It's called Harem.

An old unkept BUS approaches.

MAHDEM
At least it will feed my family.

The bus passes between us.

SMASH TO BLACK.

OVER BLACK:

Silence.

And then...

POUND of a cargo ship crawling through relentlessly waves.

FIVE GIRLS

Oh...

INT. CARGO CONTAINER - DAY

Black.

TAMMY (V.O.)

Most of what I see... is black.

The interior of the Cargo Container has been modified with four holes, each a five-inch perfectly circular hole.

TAMMY (V.O.)

The holes are what sustain us.

Maydem's face leans into life-sustaining proximity to one hole. She breathes deeply.

TAMMY

They give us air to breath.

Missy's vacant face, basks in the only light entering the room, through a second hole.

HELKA (15), a Swedish girl with striking blue eyes, looks out a third hole.

JIN (15), Chinese, a feather of a human being, perches on Helka's shoulder with a clamped hand, sharing the view.

And then...

POUND

FIVE GIRLS

Oh...

TAMMY

But most of all.

(beat)

Looking back, they gave us hope.

SMASH TO BLACK.

OVER BLACK:

Silence.

JIN (V.O.)

Tammy.

INT. CARGO CONTAINER - DAY

Jin leans on a sleeping Helka in the dim glow of light streaming through their hole.

JIN

Tammy...

(beat)

Don't just sit there in the dark,
dying.

(beat)

One thing I know... is that looking
outside is better for you.

In the dark crease between the adjacent wall and floor, Tammy sits alone.

She raises her head toward Jin.

TAMMY

Yeah? How the fuck would you know?

A moment passes.

JIN

Because the first time...

I sat in the dark, dying. Like you.

(beat)

And a girl dragged me across the
floor, and shoved my face in a much
smaller hole.

(beat)

And I lived.

TAMMY

You gotta be fucking kidding me.

(beat)

You've done this twice.

(obnoxious)

Ha ha ha ha haaaa....

Jin's gaze at Tammy lingers.

JIN

Come. Take my place.

Helka looks up at Jin, private. She quickly shakes her head.

TAMMY
No thanks. You and that Kraut bitch
can keep your comfy view.
(beat)
Leave me alone.

Jin reluctantly lies her head back on Helka's shoulder.

INT. CARGO CONTAINER - MOMENTS LATER

Across from Helka and Jin, Missy's face lies beneath a darker hole than Helka and Jin. Her eyes are open, staring up into the darkness.

Above her, in the corner, Mahdem's attention is diverted away from the hole, to Tammy.

MAHDEM
(in Farsi)
Hey, blonde girl.

Tammy turns her face to Mahdem.

TAMMY
Don't talk that shit to me, 911.

Mahdem points to her hole and then tries to wave Tammy over.

Tammy smiles grotesquely big.

TAMMY
Ha ha... Right.
Like that's gonna happen.

Tammy turns away from her.

TAMMY
(calmly)
Fuck off.

Silence.

MISSY
Y'all stop with your jibber-jabber.
You're harshin' my peaceful moment.

TAMMY
(calm)
Shut up.

MISSY
That's what I'm sayin', Cracker.

LOUD SHIP'S HORN.

Missy snaps.

MISSY
FUCK!

Tammy is entertained. She laughs heartily.

MISSY
Shut up. Jesus that's loud.
(beat)
Nine days. Still not used to that
damn thing.

Missy stands.

Tammy looks up defensively.

MISSY
No. No. Not this time.
(beat)
Just gotta piss.

Tammy points.

TAMMY
Far corner, sistah. Latrine.

Tammy looks.

MISSY
Would you leave---

TAMMY
Your cup. Where's your cup?

Missy stops.

MISSY
Alright.

Missy doubles back to her hole, reaches down, picks up the
bottom half of a water bottle, heads back.

Tammy clocks it.

TAMMY
And then out the hole.
Number one, number two, doesn't
matter.

Missy walks on .

Tammy's gaze follows her half way.

TAMMY (V.O.)
The girls hated that.
(beat)
When I would remind them about
using the cup.

FLASH MEMORY:

Tammy and Helka stand at odds, nose to nose, near the latrine hole.

Tammy with the bottom half of a water bottle in her hand.

HELKA
Get off my fucking back!

Tammy extends the cup to Helka.

TAMMY
Take it, Kraut girl.
Do NOT piss inside.
Piss into the cup and then pour it
out through the hole.
(beat)
My hole.

Their fierce staring lingers, but only a moment.

HELKA
Fine!

Helka takes the cup.

Tammy backs away.

BACK TO SCENE

TAMMY (V.O.)
But one thing's true. The whole
time we were in there... alive,
It never stunk.

Missy walks back by with an empty "cup", show it to Tammy.

TAMMY
Thanks.

Silence.

FADE TO BLACK.

OVER BLACK:

CHUNK!

All five girls scream.

INT. CARGO CONTAINER - MORNING

Missy scrambles awake and quickly looks through her hole into the morning light.

Too bright. She shades her eyes.

MISSY
What the fuck was---

CHUNK!

Screams again.

Mahdem whimpers.

Missy slowly, gingerly, looks back out her hole.

MISSY
Holy fuck.

HELKA
What the hell is it?

Missy makes a downward clawing motion.

MISSY
It's a claw. You know. Like at the
pizza parlor, in the back, near the
games.

TAMMY
Lemme look.

MISSY
Come on, then.

Missy taps her shoulder.

Tammy hesitates.

Then goes to her. Right behind her. And like Jin to Helka,
Tammy uses the space above Missy's shoulder to look through
the hole.

TAMMY
They's offloading the container
straight across.

Suddenly, Mahdem is in a panic.

MAHDEM
(in Farsi)
Jin, Jin. Come her.
Come here. Look at this.

Nobody moves.

Mahdem turns directly at Jin.

MAHDEM
JIN! CHINESE!

Jin scrambles.

JIN
I don't know what she's saying, but
apparently...

Mahdem physically positions Jin in front of her, pointing at
a large shipping label attached to the container two rows
over.

Jin is frozen.

HELKA
Jin?

Nothing.

Missy, still looking out the hole.

MISSY
What? What are you lookin' at?

Jin's feet are close enough for Tammy to touch.

She does.

Jin begins to cry.

TAMMY
(gentle)
Hey, hey. It's okay. What is it?

Jin looks up to her.

JIN
China... We're going to China.

Missy turns her head to Tammy.

MISSY
(quietly)
Is that bad?

TAMMY
Jin. Calm down. Tell us.
What's there? Why are you crying?

Jin whimpers again.

She motions with her hand out the hole.

JIN
(frustrated)
China! Shanghai, China!

Tammy remains calm.

TAMMY
Yes. Shanghai.

JIN
That's where I started!
(beat)
I was taken in Shanghai, CHINA!
(beat)
And I been in TWO METAL BOXES!

She softens.

JIN
(quiet)
Only to come right back there.

Tammy hears it.

TAMMY
There. So not here.

JIN
No. We are in Singapore.

DARKNESS.

KAKLUNK!

Screams.

SMASH TO BLACK.

OVER BLACK:

MISSY
Calm Down! All of you.
Fucking hell.

HELKA
Jin. Please. Come back.

Jin crawls back to Helka. They embrace.

Mahdem looks out her hole.

MAHDEM
(in Farsi)
Look. New neighbor.

MISSY
Look. A new container.

Tammy looks.

TAMMY
Good. Not us.

MISSY
Not yet, anyway.

Tammy motions to return to the darkness.

Suddenly, Missy reaches out to Tammy's thigh.

MISSY
Don't... Don't go back. Stay.

Tammy hesitates.

TAMMY
I don't...

MISSY
It's not like that.
Just stay.

Tammy softens.

TAMMY
Okay.

She settles back in.

Mahdem smiles at her.

Tammy stays.

INT. CARGO CONTAINER - LATER

Tammy and Missy lie back to back.

Helka spoons Jin.

Mahdem sits up, her hands on her knees, an empty water bottle in her hand.

She looks around.

MAHDEM
Wha tuh time.

No response.

MAHDEM
(a little louder)
Wha tuh time.

HELKA
Oh. Yes. My turn.

Helka scrambles to her feet.

She picks up her empty water bottle, takes Jin's from her.

Missy and Tammy sit up, each offering their empties to Helka.

TAMMY
Just remember to---

HELKA
Yeah. Yeah. I got it.

Along the far left, opposite the latrine, there are twelve bottled water cases, stacked in the corner.

Helka repositions the five empty bottles inside the top case.

She turns to the two remaining cases with water in them and removes five bottles.

Helka walks back.

Standing next to the water bottle cases are five empty cases of dried food along with a single remaining box still full.

A closer look at the box reveals:

SEVEN OCEANS - EMERGENCY RATIONS FOR LIFEBOATS AND LIFERAFTS

SMASH TO BLACK.

OVER BLACK:

JIN
Where did they capture you?

INT. CARGO CONTAINER - NIGHT

Intimate perspective of Jin and Helka lying under their black hole.

HELKA
I was in Amsterdam.
(beat)
On vacation with my parents.

JIN
Oh God.

HELKA
We were walking...
(beat)
... like so many families do,
(ha)
through the Red Light District
At night.

Jin just shakes her head.

JIN
You were kidnapped.

Helka tilts her head.

HELKA
Yeah. Weren't you?

Jin hesitates.

JIN
No.
(beat)
I was working... Dubai was an
upgrade for me... He said I would
be glad to go.

HELKA
He.

JIN
My manager... Um. My pimp.

HELKA
I hate him.

Jin looks long and soft at Helka.

JIN
I love you for saying that.

Helka smiles and give Jin a kiss on the top of her head.

Jin smiles.

ACROSS THE CONTAINER

Mahdem shivers and trembles. Her eyes are openly looking at the two pairs, Helka and Jin, and Tammy now spooning Missy.

Hahdem holds her stomach briefly. She gently gets to her feet, steps behind Tammy and lowers herself to the ground.

Very slowly, she inches closer to Tammy. The warmth and comfort of Tammy's body immediately calms her.

She sighs.

And then, Tammy turns her head. Periferal vision, she sees.

Mahdem holds her breath.

And then...

Tammy nods one time and then rolls back over.

Mahdem waits.

Nothing.

She grins and then closes her eyes.

TAMMY (V.O.)
There were times... when we wanted
to kill each other.
(beat)
And then there were others... when
we felt lucky. Real lucky.

INT. CARGO CONTAINER - CONTINUOUS

Helka and Jin spoon on one side, Mahdem, Tammy, and Missy spoon on the other.

Silence.

FADE OUT.

THE END