

ROADSIDE

-Brian Wallace

INT. CAR. DAY.

Griffin and Evelyn, an attractive and fit outdoorsy-looking couple, drive along the highway.

Griffin is driving, wearing shades he thinks make him look edgy, but were really sold to him by a young fat kid at REI, and he knows he paid too much for them. He wears them out of denial now, and wonders what it is inside of him that made him want to impress a fat kid working at REI. Age, probably, because youth is all the fat kid at REI has that Griffin would want. But as soon as he thinks about getting older, he feels the urge to hike or camp or climb rocks. He also takes those stupid sunglasses off whenever he's around anyone he wants to impress.

Evelyn sits in the passenger seat. She likes these hiking trips with Griffin, but really wishes the two of them would just get married and buy a house already. But saying so out loud, she thinks, would scare Griffin off, and turn her into some off-label brand of her sister Becky, who insists on being called Rebecca now, and has a beautiful house and family, but uses that to judge Evelyn's life choices. Still, Evelyn would rather be puttering around her own place, mortgage, property taxes, and all, doing nothing this weekend, than driving 3-4 hours each way to go camping at some nature trail where, no matter how beautiful the scenery is, everything looks the same after an hour. Deep down, she knows she won't be growing old with Griffin, because they won't be able to afford to grow old together unless they make some fundamental changes and become more like Becky (to hell with Rebecca, Evelyn will call her what she wants to inside her own head).

As a rule, Griffin is more adventurous than Evelyn, but she's actually fitter and never gets into trouble out in the wild.

She munches on some beef jerky.

EVELYN

I think this has gone bad.
What's the expiration date?

She looks at the package.

GRIFFIN

I don't think beef jerky goes
bad, does it?

EVELYN

Everything goes bad eventually.
This doesn't taste right.

Beat.

My God, look at all these
chemicals!

 GRIFFIN
Don't eat it all, that has to
last the weekend.

 EVELYN
And sugar! Did you see how much
sugar is in this, Griffin?

 GRIFFIN
No.

 EVELYN
Why aren't you reading the
labels? Poor cow...

 GRIFFIN
Poor cow?

 EVELYN
If the butcher hadn't killed
him, all this shit would have.
Don't buy this kind again.

She tears into another bite.

 GRIFFIN
Cow is cow. I buy whatever's
cheapest. The less chemicals
they put in stuff, the more
expensive it is. I don't know
why that is. Should be the other
way around.

 EVELYN
Don't be so cheap when it comes
to nutrition.

 GRIFFIN
Whatever's in there, we'll burn
it off over the course of a
trail or two anyway.

 EVELYN
Yeah, if we were ten.

EXT. FREEWAY. DAY.

Their car passes LILITH, who limps along the roadside.
She's not quite hitchhiking, but looks out of place out

there. For one thing, she's wearing a nice dress—almost formal-looking. But it also appears torn and shaggy. She looks bedraggled and smudged up. But so would anyone walking along the roadside on such a day.

INT. GRIFFIN'S CAR. DAY.

GRIFFIN

Who is that?

EVELYN

I don't know.

GRIFFIN

Looks like she's having trouble.
Should we stop?

EVELYN

I'm not picking up hitchhikers.

GRIFFIN

(staring in the
rearview mirror)

I don't think she's hitchhiking.
She looks hurt.

He starts to pull over.

EVELYN

Griffin, what are you doing?

GRIFFIN

She might need some help.

EVELYN

I don't want to pick up a
stranger!

GRIFFIN

Evelyn, she's alone. She's
limping and headed in the wrong
direction. There's nothing in
front of her but more desert.
She's walking deeper and deeper
into it. Now what do you want me
to do?

EVELYN

I doubt we're the only people
who'd stop if she needed help.
I'm sure she knows what she's
doing.

GRIFFIN

She doesn't look it. She's got no pack. She's got no gear. She's wearing a dress for Chrissake.

EVELYN

She, she, she... convenient, isn't it?

GRIFFIN

Evelyn, come on. If that was you out there, I'd want somebody to stop.

Beat.

I'm not saying we're gonna pick her up, but let's at least see if she needs us to call someone, yeah?

EVELYN

I want to set up camp before dark.

GRIFFIN

Relax. We'll get there. Roll your window down.

EXT. ROADSIDE. DAY.

Lilith approaches Griffin's stopped car. She cautiously stops at Evelyn's window and surveys the interior carefully.

GRIFFIN (CONT'D)

Hey there, you all right?

LILITH

It's hot out...

GRIFFIN

Yeah, not a good place for somebody to be out walking.

(he removes his sunglasses)

Just wanna make sure you're okay out here.

LILITH
Yeah, no... my boyfriend and I
broke down back there last
night.

GRIFFIN
Last *night*?

LILITH
We were gonna go camping at the
trail. He went for help, but
hasn't come back yet.

EVELYN
What's his number? We can call
him.

LILITH
Oh, he wouldn't be home.

EVELYN
No, his cell phone.

LILITH
We just... have the one phone.

Lilith winces in pain.

Pause.

GRIFFIN
Well, listen. We're going that
way ourselves. Why don't you get
in? Maybe we'll pass him on the
road. If not, we'll find a
ranger station.

LILITH looks unsure and checks the backseat area.

GRIFFIN (CONT'D)
It's okay. It's not safe to be
out here.

EVELYN
You've gotta be overwhelmed. We
don't want you to get hurt.

LILITH
Okay. I guess. Thank you.

Lilith climbs into the back seat.

GRIFFIN
Here. You want some beef jerky?

LILITH
No, thanks. Lots of chemicals in
that stuff.

GRIFFIN
You must be starving. Want some
water?

LILITH
I'm okay for now, but thanks.

EVELYN
No *water*?

LILITH
I'm fine.

Griffin pulls the car back onto the road and drives on.

EVELYN
Wow!

(to Griffin)
You want your sunglasses back?

GRIFFIN
Nah, I'm good.

(to Lilith)
I'm Griffin. This is Evelyn.
What's your name?

LILITH
Lilith.

GRIFFIN
That's a beautiful name!

Evelyn glares at Griffin. He checks her sheepishly.

LILITH
Thank you.

EVELYN
You and your boyfriend from
around here?

LILITH
Monte Vista.

EVELYN
Monte Vista? Never heard of that
place. Where is it?

GRIFFIN
Sounds familiar...

LILITH
Pomona Valley.

EVELYN
Monte Vista...

GRIFFIN
Montclair! Isn't it called
Montclair now? Or is it near
Montclair...? Something like that?

LILITH
(detached,
looking out the
window)

I don't see him. I hope we're
going the right way.

GRIFFIN
Has to be this way. We didn't
see anybody else walking.

Beat.

EVELYN
Do you remember passing a broken
down car on the way out here? I
must have missed it.

GRIFFIN
No. Probably came up a different
route.

EVELYN
(under her
breath)
Been on the same road for 50
miles...

LILITH
We have a van.

EVELYN
Oh. A van.

Lilith looks out the back window. A van is following their car. She turns back to the front, betraying no emotion.

EXT. ABANDONED RANGER STATION. DUSK.

The car pulls up outside the station. The station is abandoned and padlocked, with cracked windows. Griffin makes haste for the station door, and Evelyn sticks close to him. Lilith stays in the car.

GRIFFIN

Well, this doesn't look promising.

EVELYN

(whispering
intensely)

Okay, what the fuck?

GRIFFIN

I know, I know, just relax.
Tried to do a good deed.

Griffin knocks on the station door or window, just in case.

EVELYN

They're van people, Griffin. You picked up some meth head who lives in an RV.

GRIFFIN

You don't know that. And calm down, she can see you.

EVELYN

I told you not to stop, I told you not to pick anybody up, I just wanna go home, and holy God, what the fuck is that smell??

GRIFFIN

Ugh!

They take a few steps around the station house for a bit and see a warning sign posted on the wall: "KEEP OUT-SEWAGE CONTAMINATED WATER."

They walk back to the car, their footsteps sloshing along the way all of a sudden. Griffin opens the driver side door and speaks to Lilith.

GRIFFIN

Okay, so here's the deal...

EVELYN

Do not get in the car with those shoes on!

Annoyed, Griffin keeps his feet on the ground and removes his shoes. Evelyn gets plastic bag from the trunk and removes her shoes. Lilith peers out one of the backseat windows.

GRIFFIN

So it doesn't look like this station's been manned for a while. And I don't think they'll be coming back anytime soon.

LILITH

I think you should drop me off back at the road.

EVELYN

How far is the next ranger station?

LILITH

No. Listen.

GRIFFIN

The trail goes a long way. And it'll be dark soon. I think we should just camp tonight and then see about it in the morning when the rangers might be back.

LILITH

You want me to camp tonight with you guys?

GRIFFIN

You were gonna come camping tonight anyway, right?

EVELYN

Griffin. We only have the one tent.

Pause.

LILITH

I don't know. I'm having second thoughts.

GRIFFIN

Well, we can't abandon you. And who knows, if your boyfriend made it this far, he might very well be out there somewhere on the trail. We might find him before the rangers do.

LILITH

I can take you to the spot where we usually go. He might be there.

GRIFFIN

Works for me. Let's just get some food, get some rest, and then stuff will start to make more sense. Yeah?

Heads up, Ev.

He tosses his shoes to EVELYN, who begrudgingly puts them in the plastic bag with her own.

EXT. CAMPSITE. NIGHT.

A campfire burns and Evelyn and Griffin sit next to each other, finishing a meal. The tent has been set up. Lilith stands apart from them, back turned, and staring into the dark wilderness. Griffin swigs from a bottle.

EVELYN

I don't want you drinking.

GRIFFIN

It's just a beer. You want one? It'll take the edge off.

EVELYN

That's what I'm afraid of. I just need you to be on top of things tonight.

GRIFFIN

Look, Ev, I know this isn't what we planned. I'm sorry. If I had to do it over, I wouldn't stop. I'd feel bad about myself, but I'd just keep driving.

EVELYN

No, I'm glad you stopped. I know I didn't want you to, but I'd eventually be mad if you didn't.

Evelyn looks back at Lilith, who is out of focus in the background.

EVELYN (CONT'D)
Why doesn't she eat anything?

GRIFFIN
She's upset. Worried and upset.
Ruins your appetite.

EVELYN
So does meth.

Griffin chuckles.

Griffin, I'm not kidding. If her story's true, she's been walking for 24 hours with no food or water. Doesn't make sense.

GRIFFIN
Well, take her something. Let's not treat her like she's a burden.

Evelyn grabs the beer from Griffin, gets up and walks several paces towards Lilith.

EVELYN
Hey, Lilith...?

But Lilith is not there. Without a sound she has disappeared. Evelyn scans the wilderness in front of her, but sees nothing. She calls back to Griffin.

EVELYN (CONT'D)
Griffin, she's not here.

GRIFFIN
She probably went into the woods to use the bathroom. She'll be back.

EVELYN
What could she be pissing out?
She hasn't drunk anything.

SFX: Music builds with the tension

Evelyn trudges closer into the dark woods. She's afraid, but more afraid of not being able to account for this woman.

As she walks deeper into the wilderness, a wild animal shrieks, and she stops in fright. Gathering herself, she trudges forward, steps stammering in the dirt.

EVELYN (CONT'D)

Lilith...?

Evelyn trips over what appears to be a burrow. Sitting up though, she feels around and discovers this burrow is more like a ditch.

Crawling to one end, she stops at a large stone. Inscribed upon it are the words:

LILITH ADAMS

Gone Too Soon

Evelyn shrieks, as it dawns on her she has fallen into an open grave. She looks towards the wilderness and sees Lilith standing in the distance, dress billowing in the shadows of the night. They make eye contact and Lilith releases an unholy howl.

LILITH

Luke!!!!!!

Evelyn panics, pulls herself from the grave and runs back to camp.

EXT. CAMPSITE. NIGHT.

EVELYN

Griffin? Griffin!

But the campsite is empty. The fire still flickers, supplies are still where they were left. But Griffin is gone.

A snake slithers across the ground.

Evelyn jumps and rushes to the car and tries to get in. But it's locked and she doesn't have any keys.

She crouches behind a tire of the car, and dials her phone. But the call keeps dropping. She tries texting:

EVELYN TEXT

Where are u? HELP ME!!!!!!!

The text is delivered. Evelyn, huffing and puffing, tries to get control of herself. She stays in place but looks around frantically to make sure she's well hidden. Finally, her phone dings.

GRIFFIN TEXT

What's wrong??? U ok???

EVELYN TEXT

Don't have keys. Need to go!!!

GRIFFIN TEXT

Stay there. On my way.

Evelyn breathes heavily. She doesn't relax, but feels better knowing Griffin is coming. A few moments pass in silence, punctuated only by the sound of her breath keeping time with the noises of the night.

Evelyn opens her phone's browser and types in "Lilith Adams."

Search results populate her screen, all of which include the word, "murder."

Evelyn scrolls until she finds a photo that looks like Lilith, only fresher-faced and smiling. She clicks on it.

As she scrolls, she zeroes in on phrases, "killed by her boyfriend," "loved the outdoors," "shallow grave," and "living in a van."

Suddenly, footsteps are heard prowling from the other side of the car. Evelyn moves softly around, trying to peer over the vehicle. She sees nothing but what the flicker of the firelight allows. Through the car windows a figure dashes past. She crouches in fear.

Footsteps move around the campsite again, only it isn't clear who's there.

Then they stop. Several seconds pass in silence. Evelyn holds her breath, afraid to make a sound.

Then her phone dings with a new text.

She tenses up in panic, and grabs the phone.

GRIFFIN TEXT

I'm in the tent.

Evelyn exhales, stands, and makes her way to the tent. As she approaches it, however, she has second thoughts, and slows her pace.

EVELYN

(whispering)

Griffin?

The sound of movement from inside the tent.

EVELYN (CONT'D)
Griffin, is that you? Say something.

Her phone dings again.

GRIFFIN TEXT
I'm inside. I have the keys.

MID SHOT

Evelyn faces the tent, the campfire blazes behind her.

EVELYN
Why won't you come out?

Suddenly a dark, indistinguishable figure rushes past her from behind. Frightened, she turns to look behind her, sees nothing, and instinctively rushes towards the tent in panic.

INT. THE TENT. NIGHT.

Evelyn enters the tent. Using the flashlight on her phone, she scans the interior.

EVELYN
Griffin...?

The tent appears to be empty. Her phone scans past a sleeping bag, a couple backpacks, the bag of beef jerky, etc. Finally, it lands on Lilith, sitting quietly to the side.

Evelyn screams.

LILITH
I'm sorry, Evelyn.

EVELYN
Where's Griffin?

LILITH
I'm not a bad person. I'm not.

EVELYN
Who are you?

LILITH
He told me if I brought him someone else, I could come back.

EVELYN

Who?

LILITH

My boyfriend.

EVELYN

Where is Griffin?

LILITH

I told you to take me back to
the road.

EVELYN

Where's Griffin?!

LILITH

I just needed to give him
somebody else.

Evelyn's phone dings.

LILITH (CONT'D)

But Luke wants a woman.

Evelyn looks at her phone. It displays a photo of Griffin's
dead body.

From behind Evelyn a pair pf masculine arms thrust though
the tent, grab her, and drag outside.

Amid the terrible sound of muffled screams and something
heavy pounding into something soft, Lilith bows her head,
almost in a meditative state, and looks at peace.

EXT. THE ROADSIDE. DAY.

The next morning, the air feels bright and fresh, not
oppressive or hot. Lilith walks down a highway, still in
her torn dress, but she appears cleaner and invigorated.

She smiles a gentle grin that exudes contentment, if not
happiness.

A car pulls up alongside her and stops.

She gets in.

The car drives away.

END