

All Who Wander

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FADE IN:

EXT. BICENTENNIAL PARK - DAY

Talk about your perfect day.

The sun shines bright. Kids play in the fountain. A couple walks their dog. An older man meanders through a novel.

Everyone is happy. Well... almost everyone.

ELAINA (20's) sits cross-legged in the shade, eating her lunch. Alone.

She watches the happiness all around her, feigning contentment. Ever the voyeur, she creates backstories for these strangers, writing the imagined stories of their lives.

She starts with the dog walking couple, talking to herself between bites of her sandwich.

ELAINA

(to herself)

So. What's your story? (beat) You, sir, are... were an abusive alcoholic. You were at your wits end, sitting in your apartment, gun in your lap, when you heard barking outside your window. You walked to the window, gun in hand, and that's when you saw her, desperately hanging onto the dog's leash as he barked up a tree at a cornered squirrel. You put the gun down, went outside, and helped her reign in her dog. She offered to buy you a drink. You laughed and asked if maybe you could grab coffee instead. She laughed back, and the dog looked up at you, having no earthly idea that he just saved your life. (beat) Oooh, that's good.

Elaina reaches into the BACKPACK at her feet, produces a MOLESKINE NOTEBOOK and PEN, and scribbles away.

ELAINA

Now. Who's next?

(CONTINUED)

She looks up, and her eyes instantly find ERIC (20's) wandering through the park, brow furrowed, not watching where he's going. Instead, his eyes are fixed on the DEVICE in his hands.

ELAINA

Who are you? (beat) You're a computer geek who's stuck spending his lunch break remotely fixing the computer of some idiot who actually opened that million dollar email attachment from a Nigerian prince. (beat) No, that's not you. You're a late blooming Amish boy, finally partaking in Rumspringa. Someone handed you an iPhone and you're absolutely stupefied. (beat) Almost, but not quite. You're-

Eric TRIPS over his own feet, falls to the ground. The device in his hands goes flying.

ELAINA

- a klutz.

Elaina observes the folks closest to Eric. No one offers to help him up. Instead, they go about their day, pointedly ignoring this person who needs help.

ELAINA

Seriously? Bunch of savages in this town.

She gathers her belongings and makes a beeline to Eric.

Eric lies on the ground, eyes to the sky. He's not hurt, not that we can see, but he's not in any hurry to move. He's just... tired.

Elaina appears in his field of vision, blocking out the sky.

ELAINA

Hey. (beat) You're not gonna die or anything, are you? I'd hate to have you bleed out all over the grass here, especially with kids playing right over there.

ERIC

I wish.

ELAINA

What?

ERIC

Do you see my... thing?

ELAINA

Most guys buy me a drink before asking that.

ERIC

No. Not my... thing. My device. I dropped it.

ELAINA

I know.

She holds up his device. It's blocky, klunky... doesn't look modern at all.

ELAINA

Kindof ancient for an iPhone.

Eric reaches up and grabs it.

ELAINA

You're welcome.

ERIC

Sorry.

Eric stands, brushes himself off. He examines his device, toys with the screen, smacks it a couple of times. When it BOOP-BEEP-BOOPS, a relieved smile plasters itself on his face.

Awkward silence.

ERIC

I, uh, I gotta go.

ELAINA

Where?

ERIC

What?

ELAINA

Where are you going?

ERIC

I'm looking for something.

(CONTINUED)

ELAINA

You're not gonna find anything,
staring into that Palm Pilot.

ERIC

It's not a Palm Pilot. It's...

She waits for an explanation. He offers none.

ELAINA

What are you looking for?

A simple question, but it hits Eric like a sucker punch.

ERIC

You wouldn't understand.

Not the response Elaina was expecting. She processes this,
then checks her watch.

ELAINA

I've got time. Want a hand?

Not the response Eric was expecting. He processes this.

ERIC

What the hell?

INT. 16-BIT BAR AND ARCADE - DAY

Elaina pounds on the door until BRUCE (20's) opens up.

BRUCE

We're not open.

ELAINA

Great to see you, too, Bruce. Two
Bill Nye's. Please.

Bruce frowns, throws a suspicious look at Eric, then ushers
the two into the bar, locking the door behind them.

Elaina sidles up to the bar. Eric follows suit.

ELAINA

So. Tell me more...

ERIC

Of all the... places I've visited,
I've never met you. This is...
different.

(CONTINUED)

ELAINA

Okay. Once more, but let's pull back on the creep factor by six, maybe seven notches?

Eric is absolutely fascinated by this woman.

ERIC

Who are you?

ELAINA

Fair enough. I'll start. My name is Elaina. No last names, though, given the creep factor. I'm a writer... well, an aspiring writer, which means I'm dirt poor and I have to rely on the kindness of strangers if I'm going to make my way through this crazy world.

Bruce appears with the drinks. Elaina gives him a smile that could melt chocolate.

ELAINA

Thanks, stranger.

Bruce smirks, despite his efforts to remain indifferent.

ELAINA

Your turn, uh...

ERIC

Eric. (beat) Look, you already think I'm creepy. Maybe it's best if I don't dig that hole any deeper.

ELAINA

(suddenly intense)

I have one rule. Everyone talks. No one quits. You don't do your job, I'll shoot you. You get me?

ERIC

(boot camp soldier)

We get you, sir! Uh, ma'am!

Elaina nods her approval.

ELAINA

See. If you can quote Starship Troopers, you can't be all bad. (beat) Out with it.

(CONTINUED)

Eric slides the device across the bar. His hand lingers on the device as Elaina picks it up and eases it from his grasp.

ERIC

Ever seen the television show
"Slippers?"

ELAINA

Slippers? Is that some foot fetish reality show? Because if it is, to each his own, you know. (beat) But I do have beautiful feet. For the record.

ERIC

No, it's not... (beat) It's a show about this crazy smart kid who invents this... device that can open wormholes between dimensions. When he pokes his head through, he sees a world that looks almost like his, but not quite. There's usually just one little difference, some butterfly effect that created a whole new version of the world.

ELAINA

Wait a minute. Do you mean
"Sliders?"

ERIC

Sliders?

ELAINA

Yeah, Sliders. On the Sci-Fi channel.

ERIC

No. Slippers.

ELAINA

Sliders.

ERIC

Slippers.

ELAINA

I'm telling you, it's Sliders. Like White Castle, only without the god awful aftermath.

ERIC
Sliders? What the hell does that
even mean.

ELAINA
They slide between worlds.

Eric considers, then it clicks.

ERIC
Aaaaaahhh. Yeah. (beat) Huh. That
works so much better.

ELAINA
So. Slippers, Sliders, 80's
hardware. Connection?

ERIC
So it's not science fiction. It's
real.

Elaina sizes Eric up and down. He's not joking. He
absolutely believes what he's saying.

ELAINA
Bullshit.

ERIC
I'm serious-

ELAINA
(bad Japanese accent)
Bullshit!

Eric shrugs.

ELAINA
Prove it.

ERIC
I can't. It's recharging.

ELAINA
Right...

ERIC
There are other worlds than these,
gunslinger.

ELAINA
Sure. Why don't you tell me about
some of these other worlds?

ERIC

Well, on one world I visited, there were no Republicans, no Democrats, no Teabaggers. None of the constant political bickering.

ELAINA

So you visited Heaven?

ERIC

More like North Korea, only worse. It was a shithole. I barely made it out of that world alive.

ELAINA

Go on.

ERIC

On another world, all the major religions had finally shut up long enough to listen to each other and realized they were all saying the same thing. What did they call it? The Church of the Unified Prophets or something?

ELAINA

Another shithole?

ERIC

(grinning)

World peace, I shit you not. Turns out, people have a lot less to fight about when they take all the petty shit off the table.

ELAINA

All this traveling from world to world, do you ever go all Grand Tour: Disaster in Time or 11/22/63 and check out stuff like 9/11 firsthand?

ERIC

This isn't time travel, Elaina. Our perception of time is based on a mass consciousness that moves through a dimension we collectively perceive. If time travel was possible, there wouldn't be anyone there when I arrived.

Elaina gapes, trying to comprehend what he just said.

(CONTINUED)

ERIC

But this isn't time travel. This is real.

ELAINA

And what are you looking for again?

ERIC

A better me.

The sadness in his voice hits her hard. Her smile waivers. There's real pain behind his words.

ERIC

In the real world, my world, I'm nobody. I'm just another face in the crowd, working a shit job for shit wages with no hope of going anywhere or doing anything. I go home to my shit apartment and stare at one screen or another until my eyes get heavy enough that I can shut down my mind long enough to not be me for a few hours. Then I wake up and do it all over again.

Elaina doesn't have a comeback for this revelation. Eric finishes his drink.

ERIC

I want to find a version of me where I matter. Where the stuff I do makes a difference. I want to find a version of me where I wake up and spend my time doing the things that make me happy. Follow your bliss and all that. I want to come home to an apartment with someone waiting for me, someone who cares whether or not I had a good day. Someone who cares whether or not I'm even alive.

Silence.

ERIC

I want to find a better me.

Elaina takes his hand, a gesture of comfort and understanding.

Eric pulls his hand away. He picks up his DEVICE and starts fiddling with it.

(CONTINUED)

ELAINA

Maybe... and bear with me here...
maybe the answer isn't in there.
Did you ever stop to think that the
reason you can't find the version
of you that you're looking for is
because you're not looking in the
right place?

Eric offers her a weak smile. She takes his hand again, but this time he doesn't pull away.

That's when Elaina sees ANOTHER ERIC walk by the window OUTSIDE THE BAR.

The device BOOP-BEEP-BOOP's in Eric's hand. He looks from the device the Elaina, then over his shoulder, then back to Elaina.

Elaina keeps her eyes fixed on the door, stunned.

ERIC

That was him, uh, me, wasn't it?
You saw him?

Elaina nods, still stunned.

Eric rises, tugs at Elaina's hand.

ERIC

Come on.

He leads her out of the bar.

EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY

Eric and Elaina emerge from the bar just in time to see Eric round a corner. They race after him.

As Eric (Alpha) rounds the corner, he calls to Eric (Beta).

ERIC ALPHA

Eric!

Eric Beta stops, turns.

ERIC BETA

The fuck?

The two Eric's face off, neither moving a muscle.

(CONTINUED)

ERIC ALPHA
I know this is confusing, but I
need to ask you some questions.

A long pause before Eric Beta responds.

ERIC BETA
The fuck?

ERIC ALPHA
Where do you work?

ERIC BETA
Warehouse gig, loading and
unloading. Just until, you know...

ERIC ALPHA
You still play guitar? Any gigs?

ERIC BETA
Haven't gigged in a while. (beat) A
long while, now that I think of it.

ERIC ALPHA
And when your shift ends, who do
you come home to?

ERIC BETA
No one.

Eric Alpha throws a knowing glance at Elaina. He turns his
back on Eric Beta, rounds the corner, and Elaina follows.

Eric Beta stands there, unable to move.

ERIC BETA
(to himself)
The fuck?

EXT. ALLEY - DAY

Elaina grabs Eric by the arm and spins him around.

ELAINA
What was that?

ERIC
That was me.

The device in his hand BOOP-BEEP-BOOP's one more time.

(CONTINUED)

ERIC

Finally.

He touches the screen, and a PORTAL TO ANOTHER WORLD opens up at the far end of the alley.

ERIC

I, uh, I gotta go. It was nice meeting you Elaina.

Elaina, stunned again, doesn't respond.

Eric nods, turns to leave.

ELAINA (O.S.)

Eric!

Eric turns to face her.

ELAINA

When you find him, this other you, what will you do?

Eric considers.

ERIC

I don't know. I just... I need to know that he's out there. Does that make sense?

Elaina nods.

Eric gives her a heartbreaking smile, waves, and disappears into the portal. The portal vanishes.

Elaina stands alone in the alley for a long moment. When she snaps out of her fascinated reverie, she reaches into her backpack and produces her Moleskine notebook and pen.

Elaina leans against one wall of the alley, slides to the ground, and starts writing.

FADE TO BLACK.