

The Love & Sex Issue

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ABSYNTHE

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MEET JANE, YOU TARZAN

Dudley Melchior

Meet Jane. Jane is slender, brown-haired, brown-eyed, and gorgeous, with a love for animals and takeout. She is a veterinarian.

Meet John. He is tall, broad-shouldered, and handsome, with thick black hair and a deepish voice. He likes football and Italian food, and similar to Jane he works a nine-to-five, but as a carpenter.

Jane and John have dated for about a year and a half, and back in May, John asked Jane to consider moving in with him. Jane told him she would think about it. The whole summer passed and soon it became a crisp and chilly October.

Yesterday at work, John was bending over to pick up a 2x4 when a cold breeze scuttled across the yard and attacked him in his moment of vulnerability. The wind billowed John's shirt up around his face, and flew down the seat of his pants to grip his ass and balls with hands of ice. The chilling embrace left John very shocked, and more than anything he was reminded of his loneliness. He wanted a warm girl to hold in the soul-crushing darkness of winter. He thought of Jane.

That moment with the wind resolved in John's mind an urgency, one he had felt growing for a while. He resolved to once again bring up the idea of Jane moving in with him the next night over dinner.

Around 8:30, as per Friday-night tradition, Jane and John were eating takeout Italian food on Jane's couch, watching an episode of *The Sopranos*. They had the lights off in the house and only one little candle on the coffee table giving off a nice golden light (though it had to compete with the neon-blue glow of the TV).

John cleared his throat, took a deep breath, and steadied himself for his modest proposal.

"Jane," he said, "we've been together for a year and a

Meet Jane, You Tarzan



Meet Jane, You Tarzan

half now, and you mean the world to me.”

Jane turned away from the TV to look at John, fright in her eyes. “Oh God,” she said, “John, I hope you’re not -- please don’t propose. You’ll only make a fool out of yourself.”

John paused. Though she had misinterpreted the direction of his conversation, John couldn’t help but feel a heart-wrenching melancholy. His voice faltered.

“No, I was gonna...” He paused. “Never mind, it doesn’t matter.” He turned back to the TV and sank into the couch. He tried his best to feign interest in the show, but after a few moments he realized Jane was looking at him with amusement.

“John, what is it? What were you gonna say?”

“Nothing. It doesn’t matter. I’d feel dumb if I said it now.”

“Oh John,” she laughed, “don’t be such a poor sport. Listen, I won’t laugh at you, no matter how dumb your idea is.”

“Gee, thanks for that. No. Let’s just watch the show, please.”

“John, I promise I won’t laugh! You should be able to tell me anything. It’s important that you tell me what’s on your mind.”

Great, John thought, *she’s got me. Now if I don’t tell her, it will become an issue of me not trusting her, and a bitterness for each other will grow and grow until we break up. Fuck.*

“Well, what I was gonna say, was, well, have you thought about when I asked you to move in with me? Please? Will you?”

Jane laughed, then sighed, muttering, “John, John, John,” under her breath.

John sank deeper into the couch. His mind fluttered down to his heart, seeking some hope, but found in its chamber a cold wasteland instead.

Well, he thought, nothing she says can hurt me now.

Meet Jane, You Tarzan

“The answer is no. Fuck no.”

Looks like I thought wrong.

“The thing is, we’ve only been together 18 months--”

“Exactly,” John interrupted, “18 months! That’s enough time for a newborn to grow and learn to follow two-step commands and understand whole friggin sentences!”

“Okay, Doctor John,” Jane mumbled.

John picked up the remote and turned off the TV. Jane still looked at the black box, her lower lip in a pout.

“John, I’m not moving in with you.”

“Why not?”

“Because your house smells like wood dust, and we’ve only been together 18 months.”

“It doesn’t smell like wood dust... what’s wrong with wood dust?”

“Uh, it smells like a shop, John. I refuse to live in a wood shop, okay, John? With your dusty little puppets lining the walls of your house... nope. Hell no.”

John turned away from Jane to face the wall, his mouth wrenched upside-down in bitterness. “That’s a low jab, even for you, Jane. You know my dad dedicated his life to ventriloquism.”

Jane narrowed her eyes. “What do you mean, ‘even for you’? Watch where you’re walking, buddy. You might just bump into a wall!”

“I just mean that sometimes you say hurtful things without meaning it.”

“Well, I mean it this time. Drop this nonsense about moving in together, and let’s just watch the show like grown adults. C’mon, stop pouting. You’re being childish.”

“You’re being childish,” John muttered.

Meet Jane, You Tarzan

He turned to face the TV, not daring to look at Jane, his arms crossed and his lips pressed tight together. He stared at the TV and so did Jane, a look of silent disbelief written on her face.

Then she turned with disgust to the other man on the couch. "Who are you?" she asked.

John answered her question without turning his head. "He's the cameraman."

"Does he have to be here?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"Because it's my house."

"No it isn't. We're in my house, John."

Silence settled in the room. It was not a comfortable silence. After some time Jane reached to turn the TV on.

John shouted. "No!"

Jane rolled her eyes and fell back into the couch. "Why not, John? What's the matter now?"

"Let's talk!"

"I don't want to!"

"Well, I do!"

The cameraman zoomed in for a closeup on Jane's face, and the combination of her eyes rolling up into her head and the huffing sound of her prolonged sigh made it seem as though she was possessed. "Jesus, John, Jane and Joseph," she murmured, "What could you possibly want?"

"Jane, if we can't resolve this, I don't want part in this relationship anymore."

"You don't have to be so melodramatic. Okay, let's talk... ugh!... what do you want to talk about?"

Meet Jane, You Tarzan

“Why won’t you move in with me?”

Jane hissed an obscenity between her teeth, feeling a scream rising in her. Then she turned to John with a pleasant smile.

“John, you decrepit turd, you don’t wear deodorant, you have three nipples, and I want my space!”

John started to say, “These are all petty issues--” but Jane cut him off to continue her rant. She grinned wide and started talking to the camera instead of John.

“You have a mouth like a toad, you walk like a toad, and you pee like a toad...”

“What does that even me--”

“...You wake up at four in the goddamn morning and bang all the pots and pans in the house while you’re at it! And your friggin puppets freak the fuck out of me! Those are some ugly ass puppets you have, John!”

“Jane, please--”

“Don’t ‘please’ me! I’m not done! You, you...” She thought furiously, but her anger had suddenly faded and she couldn’t think of anything. “Okay,” she said, slouching into the couch, “I’m done.”

“Jane--”

“Oh wait!” Jane said, snapping to sit upright, “Why don’t you move in with me? Why didn’t you ever suggest that idea, huh?”

“I thought it would be rude... But...” John perked up. “...would I be able to move in with you?”

“No,” Jane said, bashing his hope to bits.

There was another silence, and John used the moment to try to repair his morale and self-esteem enough to mount another offense. While Jane sat and stared at the black TV screen with dead eyes, John swallowed sadness and hurt that had risen up. He gulped down the moths of

Meet Jane, You Tarzan

rejection incessantly, and the sound annoyed Jane. Finally, she couldn't take it anymore.

"What are you, a fish out of water? Geez. Go get something to drink if you need it."

John stopped his depression-repairing process at 57 percent of his optimum mental health. "No, I'm fine," he said.

"You don't sound fine," Jane muttered, unfathomably peeved. She really wished John would leave.

There was another silence, and they continued to stare at the TV screen. John was mentally piecing together a plan to get Jane to move in.

He was struck with a brilliant thought.

"Jane," he said, "let's play a game."

"Oh great. I can't wait to play this game, John. Does it involve you endlessly harassing me about moving in?"

"No, Jane, it does not. It's called the 'get to know you' game."

"Booooooring," Jane said, faking a yawn.

"Jane, I think there's a lot about me that you don't know, and maybe you might just change your mind."

Jane looked at him, wild-eyed. "What'd you do, John? Kill a man? There's a lot you don't know about me, either." She smiled maliciously.

"What don't I know about you?" asked John, nervousness in his voice.

"You started this game, John. You go first. What don't I know about you?"

There was a silence. Already the dialogue was not going as he planned. John wondered about her secret.

"Okay, Jane," he said, with modesty in his voice, "I served in 'Nam."

Meet Jane, You Tarzan

"I knew that already."

John was stunned. "How?"

"Because you have your participation ribbons on display in your house. Add that to the list of reasons why I am never going to move in with you."

"Never?" John said, crushed. "Because of my participation -- because I fought in Vietnam?"

"No," Jane replied, waving her hand. "Because you laminated them and hung 'em above your toilet."

John just got roasted, the cameraman thought. He zoomed in on John's defeated face.

"What's wrong with that?" John cried.

"It's weird, John. It's really weird."

"Jane!" John shouted, his voice quivering, "I'm a good person! I should move in with you because I'm smart, I'm funny, I'm good looking, and I'm not neurotic, I promise!"

Jane looked at John with narrowed eyes. "Hmmm... yes you are, John. You are. You're very neurotic."

"But what about the baby, Jane?"

What a plot twist! The cameraman was exalted by the turn of events. He zoomed his lenses to reveal a baby grabbing at lint between the couch cushions.

"Ga-ga!" giggled the baby.

"Cut!" The director yelled, annoyed. The scene ended. The camera faded out, and John and Jane pulled out their phones to scroll through Instagram before the next scene.

The director considered doing another take but he couldn't tell whether the scene was good or bad. *This whole project should probably be scrapped*, he thought, but it was an irrelevant thought, for there was no going back once filming started.

SWAN SONG

Dylan Curran



It was like watching a car accident. I could hear his body falling into hers through the wall. What a sick tune. What an unfortunate melody. I listened for harmonies but only managed to decipher groans and grunts. I heard the tires squeal and somebody pumping their breaks. So hard. So fast. But it was no use. Not for either of us. I couldn't turn away from the noises. The driver couldn't stop.

I heard the crash.

I felt him slam into her, over and over. I listened for the damage. All I got was the sound of their friction. Breathing quickened in those last few moments.

I listened, hoping for radio silence, only to be met with a symphony of bed springs. It seemed to go on forever, I remember it playing as if it was on a loop. This wasn't the first time I'd heard these noises, but it had been a while.

It had been a messy, unorganized

split that time. They kept me up, banging pots and pans until my eardrums felt raw. Their break-up sex had my head ringing for days. I was almost relieved when I heard the door slam behind her. When I felt the click-clack of her heels slipping through the hallway and down the steps that's when the numbness crept back in. I listened to the rumble of furniture upstairs as he reorganized the apartment into his "bachelor pad".

I didn't like the music he played when he was alone. It was the kind of sadness that knocks you backwards and still keeps pushing. He played them on a loop – over and over again until I feared they were drowning him. They were drowning me. Even now I can't listen to Sinatra without gasping for breath half-way through. He didn't sing, although I couldn't really remember if he had before. Maybe she had been the one all along. I missed her for a while, but it wasn't very long and then she was back. I didn't notice for a few days. Not until I heard the shower running and

Swan Song

then two pairs of feet as they settled in the tub. I wasn't sure at first - but I knew it was her from the soft giggles I heard through the pipes.

I missed her voice, too.

Someone padded barefoot across the hall. I knew this because I'd just about memorized the creaks in their floorboards. I imagined the colour of their walls - a light, creamy blue. Nothing like the mustard yellow that Ana had insisted that we paint ours. I waited for more footsteps. After a while, I gave up. The record player collected dust in the far corner of my bedroom. The electric keyboard, long since unplugged, haunted me with memories of her fingertips leaving waves of goosebumps across my skin. I could have gotten rid of them years ago. But it's like watching a car crash, I still can't seem to bring myself look away. I can't forgive myself for replaying our songs or hearing her voice in my head.

Just one more time.

They were at it again sometime time later. I heard the couch as it squirmed under their weight. I know they sometimes try to wiggle one of the cushions between the wall and the arm but this time around they must have been forgetful. I sometimes try to imagine what they must look like - some days they are lustful twenty-somethings with fire in their bellies and courage in their loins. Other days, I picture a woman in her mid-forties with three kids and a minivan parked outside our apartment building still registered under her husband's name who ran off to get nailed by some down-on-his-luck type.

I don't know why their story matters.

Some days I like to pretend that they're in love. At least, that they were once. Even if all they are now is a piece of meat for each other, at one point they used to give a shit. Maybe there had even been a time when they considered it. I bet he tried to tell her he loved her and she broke his heart. That kind of thing happens all the time.

I can't be the only one.

Listening to them on the couch is more like watching grass grow or paint dry. My theory is that the couch is just so comfortable that they sink right in. Like the furniture is trying to tell them to cut it out, but they won't listen. They don't care about anyone hearing them. They go on for ages and ages. In the meantime, I can't cook. I can't clean. I can't even read the paper. With the two of them going at it up there all I can muster up is a long queue of unfortunate memories. I don't like those much.

She used to play the violin. I thought to ask her to teach me once, but I forgot again once she walked in the door. Once she walked in the door I could forget just about anything. I'd manage a word or two before everything I knew was wiped clean out of my mind. A brand-new slate. As soon as I heard the front door wheeze as it swung open I had already lost half my train of thought. I couldn't help but ease into that sweet Nirvana of nothingness. Once she walked in the door I was like putty in her hands.

A loud bang. Had someone fallen? Maybe he'd swung her off the couch. Maybe she'd gotten off only to drink some water. Maybe it was her turn on top. Maybe he liked it better that way. Maybe I should stop listening. Another bang. This one was different than before. It seemed to linger,

Swan Song

echo. The sound was moving. Building momentum. It was more forceful than the last. I heard a noise escape her lips. I wondered if that made him happy.

Ana had freckles on her back. I liked to watch as them as we moved together. The way they rolled over her spine and circled the scar she's earned from a pickup game of hockey that she always brought up.

My brothers thought it was a great idea, sometimes she would chuckle as she said this. Other times the memory was like a bad taste in her mouth. She'd be quick to spit it out. In this case, it'd been the latter. I could never figure out why. They said if I wanted to play I'd have to show I was tough like a boy. 'No pads,' my brothers were asses. I told her how I liked her ass better. Most of the time she wouldn't laugh, but she did once. Wiped a tear from her eye and told me she loved me. I remember the taste of her tears and the smile that shaped her lips as she pressed them to mine.

They'd stopped. I took this time to make myself a cup of tea. I used the same mug every time. I didn't bother to buy new sets if they weren't needed. This one worked just fine, Ana had made it special for me.

The last time we fucked I knew she was leaving me for that other guy, but I couldn't help it. All that mattered at that moment was that she was still mine. For a few moments longer, I'd try to hold it, try to hold her. I knew it wasn't what she wanted. I knew it was about work, about her family. At the time it was the kind of life I had no use for, but the kind of life she wanted, the kind of life that was taken away before she'd even had a chance.

I watched Ana's car pull out of the lot after she left my place. It was our place, but she'd left. I got the call from her mother about an hour later. Some idiot had run a red light and smashed into her blue corolla. Ana didn't make it. The funeral was on Sunday. They had decided to have her cremated. Already it felt like I was forgetting the colour of her eyes and the shape of my favourite constellations. I didn't bother telling her mom about the breakup. Ana had left her too, and somehow, I felt like my loss didn't count. I listened to Ana's records on repeat for about a month. I only stopped when the neighbours moved in. They had their own music. It was louder, more painful than mourning Ana the normal way. I didn't like the noises they made, why put up with a somebody that makes sounds like that while you're making love?

A few minutes later I hear them click on the TV. I like this sound even less. It means I need to move onto something else. I've got plenty but none of it will bring back Ana. I hear sirens coming from their episode of Law & Order. It is too loud, too much.

I storm into the kitchen. I grab the broom. I march with purpose into the living room. I begin to lift the rod to the ceiling. I'm about to start banging when all of a sudden there is a knock at my door.

It's Ana's mom.

In her hands is a box marked in loopy script, ANA MISC. She pulls out an envelope. Bulky, yellowing over the edges. I see my name written on the label. I waste no time in ripping it open, only to reveal a cassette.

Who even uses cassettes anymore?

Fucking Ana.

ADD IT UP

Tyler Majer

I'm eating Frosted Flakes
When a particularly sharp piece
Hits the roof of my mouth.
It doesn't cut me,
However,
It hurts more than coming to terms.

The train always arrives late
And you feel out of place
Even on your greatest date.
A Smile spreads
Across interstate lines
It's all you've wanted for quite some time.

The rediscovery of hope
Hurts more than the first time

I really enjoy scratch tickets
But I've never won big,
Like big-BIG
I haven't had to rediscover hope
I'm staying waiting around
For my first round.



Truthfully,
Bleeding out in the desert
Sounds alright at a time like this

I've been watching YouTube videos
Of a nice man,
from Texas
Who makes Youtube videos
And I always liked Jackass as a kid.
It seems that my addiction
Don't come back to haunt me
They're just in front of my face
The whole time.

It's something I've taken a while to realize
A harsh and simple truth
In front of my face
For the first time.



UNION

Zachary Barmania


The question was simple, I suppose: would I marry him? The answer would prove to have more complicated consequences.

He asked at dinner and didn't do anything corny. I prefer that to kneeling down in some elaborate proposal; recorded and posted online. I'll be in nobody's YouTube compilation. We were in my favourite restaurant; in a booth as usual. He slid a jewel across the table for my consideration. I answered yes, because I love him.

I would become a wife.

The ceremony of the wedding was all that need take place, but it was no little matter. Here, something more than money is needed to seal a marriage. We left for the Union Shrine at sunrise the next day.

The dying lay on their backs, attended by pairs of fiancés. The place looked more motel than church; lit by God's fluorescent light. We were led to meet our officiant; a man of



over 95 years. It was almost his time, and he insisted on helping a couple marry. His family honored that wish, so he lay in wait for them in the second-to-last room down a very long row of curtained doorways. The room had all the essentials: a sink and mirror, television, bed, and two sturdy wooden stools. The curtains ensured some privacy. The man shook both of our hands and smiled. He said his name, that he was very happy for us, and we thanked him for it.

He seemed content to watch the television and doze for a while, so we did. Weddings could take days, so patience was a must. I read, I watched, I napped, I chatted softly to my fiancé as our officiant napped. We talked about our hopes and our fears in that quiet dusty room, and the sun went down outside.

That night, I read aloud from an old newspaper at the old man's request. It helped him relax. I read until both men fell asleep. Soon enough, I was down too. I didn't dream, or at least I didn't remember any when I awoke at two in the morning. My hand rested gently atop the frail, cold fingers of our officiate. He had passed while we had slept, and I had been a wife. I could not say for how long, but it was certainly true. I knew in that moment the meaning of my choices; the stakes that were at play. Fear crossed my mind, as I'm sure it crossed every mind in the room. I didn't disturb the peaceful scene. Instead, I rested my head back on the bed, and fell back asleep.

SITE 96

Warren Oliver

Part VI

LINDSAY

Forties.

Has a stronger connection with ISAAC, and everyone else.

ISAAC

Sixteen.

Has a stronger connection with LINDSAY, and everyone else.

ALVIN

Late twenties.

Has a strong connection with everyone.

JACOB

Nine.

Has a strong connection with everyone.

WES

Late sixties.

Still warming up to everyone.

ALENA

Seventeen.

Fearful of her home life.

1. EXTERIOR: CAMPGROUND BEACH - MIDDAY

LINDSAY, ISAAC, ALVIN, JACOB, and WES arrive at the beach. LINDSAY is carrying a bag, ISAAC is carrying two chairs, WES is carrying his chair, ALVIN is carrying a cooler and his chair, and JACOB is carrying an alligator floaty tube.

JACOB: Ba-ba-ba-beach!

ALVIN: Chill, buddy. You still need sunscreen on.

JACOB: Really?

ALVIN: Yep.

WES: Surprisingly enough, cancer isn't discriminative.

JACOB: I thought black don't crack, though.

ALVIN: Everybody cracks.

LINDSAY: Jacob, how about a song?

JACOB: (Singing) Life's a beach, sweeter than a peach, suck on you girl, like a leech.

ALVIN: JACOB!

JACOB: I'm sorry, but I heard an older kid say it one time.

ALVIN: I don't care.

JACOB: I'm sorry, but you know, Wes never yells at me.

ALVIN: I wonder why.

2. EXTERIOR: CAMPGROUND BEACH - MOMENTS AFTER

JACOB waits impatiently for his sun screen to dry. LINDSAY, WES, ALVIN, and ISAAC sit on their chairs.

JACOB: Is it time yet?

ALVIN: Yeah, it's probably dried. You're good to go.

JACOB grabs his floaty tube and sprints into the water.

LINDSAY: (To ISAAC) Are you having fun?

ISAAC: (Dispirited) I guess.

LINDSAY: Is everything alright?

ISAAC: Yea.

LINDSAY: Where did you go last night?

ISAAC: Just took a walk is all.

JACOB: (Still in the water) Isaac, you wanna come in with me?

ISAAC: I'm good for now, Jacob.

JACOB: Wes? I promise I won't call you Rukia.

WES: I will if you can stay underwater longer than me. My record is about twenty-five minutes.

JACOB: Hey! Lindsay, what about you?

LINDSAY: Maybe in a bit, Jacob. Ask your father.

JACOB shrugs, then continues playing. LINDSAY looks at ALVIN.

ALVIN: He gets like that when we've spent too much time together.

LINDSAY: You try too hard.

ALVIN: I know.

WES: You could end up driving him away, you know.

ALVIN: Yea, I'll keep that in mind.

WES: Just saying.

LINDSAY: Is anyone thirsty? Isaac, do you want something to drink?

ISAAC: No. I'm gonna go for walk, okay mom?

LINDSAY: Okay.

ISAAC gets up, and walks away.

WES: Where do you think he went last night?

LINDSAY: He said bathroom.

WES: He 'said' bathroom. Where do you think he really went?

LINDSAY: Where do you think he went?

WES: A boy his age, alone for the week, girlfriend not here, sharing a tent with his mom, very little privacy.

ALVIN laughs out loud.

WES: He gets it.

LINDSAY: Gets what? What could he be doing?

WES: Lindsay, a man... Well everyone has needs, but men seem to be more comfortable sufficing those needs wherever they feel like it. In this case, alone in the woods.

LINDSAY: (Devastated) No.

WES: You asked.

LINDSAY: But with who?

WES: With whom. And with whom?

LINDSAY: Who could he be meeting up with?

ALVIN: He has a girlfriend, right?

LINDSAY: Yes.

ALVIN: So...

LINDSAY: So?

WES: Could you ever picture him cheating?

LINDSAY: No, of course not.

WES: Obviously, but maybe we'll ask someone with a little less of a bias. Alvin?

ALVIN: I don't see it in him.

WES: So, if he's not cheating, the only other way to suffice himself would be?

LINDSAY: (Even more devastated) No.

ALVIN and WES both start laughing.

LINDSAY: No he does not. In the woods?

WES: It happens.

LINDSAY: Ew.

ALVIN: It happens.

LINDSAY: Is that where you think he went to now?

WES: What? No, its broad daylight! Of course not.

ALVIN: Maybe, though.

LINDSAY: What, really?

WES: Would you do it in broad daylight?

LINDSAY: Of course not!

WES: Then it's a safe bet that he probably wouldn't either.

ALVIN: Or would he?

LINDSAY: Stop it.

ALVIN: I'm just saying, testosterone is clouding his mind, probably making him do all of these weird things.

LINDSAY: But that?

WES: It gets lonely in the woods.

LINDSAY: Oh God. Maybe I should give him some space.

WES: Why? He seems capable of marking his own.

LINDSAY: You're the worst.

3. EXTERIOR: CAMPGROUND BEACH - MOMENTS AFTER

JACOB holds his head underwater. He suddenly bursts up gasping for air dramatically.

JACOB: Wes! That was twenty-five minutes!

WES: That wasn't even ten seconds.

JACOB falls backwards into the water. He floats on his back looking at the sky. He stands up again.

JACOB: Wes, please.

WES: Alright, I'm coming in.

WES stands up, takes his shirt off, and begins to walk to the water. ALVIN whistles, and begins to cat-call. WES turns around and does a mock laugh.

WES: (Dryly) I'm gonna drown your son.

JACOB: Wes, what are you doing? Grab the Frisbee!

WES grabs a Frisbee from LINDSAY's bag. He walks into the water and throws it to JACOB, who in turns throws in back.

JACOB: What a nice day.

WES: It's not bad.

JACOB: Not bad? There's not a cloud in the sky.

WES: Clouds add character.

JACOB: No way.

WES: They do.

JACOB: Explain yourself, young man.

WES: A day like this: it's nice, but that's all there is to it. Nothing else to say. It's just a big empty sky.

JACOB: Is that why they call it, "Feeling blue?"

WES: Maybe.

JACOB: Do like it when it rains then?

WES: In moderation.

JACOB: Where's that?

WES: I like it when it rains sometimes.

JACOB: Wow, you must have hated this week than.

WES: No, it's been alright. There's been a few clouds, here and there. But that could change.

JACOB: I don't think so. Everything looks c'est bon.

WES: Things change.

JACOB: I once saw a cloud that looked like a fidget spinner.

WES: Really? I once saw a cloud that looked like a macramé owl.

JACOB: A what?

WES: Exactly.

4. EXTERIOR: FARTHER ALONG THE BEACH - MOMENTS AFTER

ISAAC walks along the beach alone. He comes to the edge of the beach, where the landscape becomes forest again. He leans on a pine tree, and looks out onto the water. ALENA seemingly comes out of nowhere.

ALENA: Careful. You'll get sap on yourself.

ISAAC stands up straight. Sap sticks to his shirt.

ISAAC: Where do you keep coming from?

ALENA: Wherever.

ISAAC: Hey, listen—

ALENA: I'm on break right now. Let's just enjoy the moment.

ISAAC: Okay.

A pause.

ISAAC: You're right. I think I need to enjoy what I have here.

ALENA: Good. When do you leave?

ISAAC: Tomorrow.

ALENA: Then what are you doing here?

ISAAC: Thank you for being so wise.

ALENA: I only help people to help myself.

ISAAC: If I don't see you again... it's been really great to meet you.

ALENA: You too. Say hi to Wes for me, will you?

ISAAC: Always.

ISAAC leaves. ALENA stays.

5. EXTERIOR: CAMPGROUND BEACH - MOMENTS LATER

ISAAC arrives back at the spot where LINDSAY and ALVIN are sitting. JACOB and WES are still throwing the Frisbee to each other. ISAAC takes his shirt off, drops it onto the ground, and walks into the water.

ISAAC: Jacob! Toss it.

JACOB: My man!

WES: Jacob, I'm getting cold.

WES begins to walk out of the water.

JACOB: No, Wes, you stay. We'll throw it together.

WES: I'm cold.

JACOB: The sun is shining, the water is boiling, and you're lying. Come on!

JACOB throws the Frisbee to WES. WES walks back in and throws it to JACOB. JACOB throws it back to WES.

JACOB: No, you have to throw it to Isaac.

WES: Right.

WES unenthusiastically throws it to ISAAC. It lands between them. ISAAC wades through the water to get it.

ISAAC: Good throw.

WES: Where'd you go last night?

ISAAC: Bathroom.

WES: I don't think so.

ISAAC: Why's that?

WES: I don't think most boys your age enjoy spending thirty minutes in a bathroom.

ISAAC picks up the Frisbee and throws it to JACOB. JACOB catches it.

ISAAC: Why does it matter to you?

WES: Just curious.

ISAAC: About?

JACOB throws the Frisbee to WES. WES catches it.

WES: Where you went last night, which was wasn't the bathroom.

WES throws the Frisbee to ISAAC. ISAAC catches it.

ISAAC: Alena says, "Hi."

ISAAC throws the Frisbee to WES. WES catches it.

WES: Who? Oh, her. Is that who you went to see last night?

WES throws the Frisbee to ISAAC. ISAAC catches it.

ISAAC: Maybe.

JACOB: Isaac, you're supposed to throw to me.

ISAAC throws the Frisbee to WES. WES catches it.

WES: If it is, I hope your intentions were as noble as they were the day all three of us met.

WES throws the Frisbee to ISAAC, this time. ISAAC catches it.

ISAAC: They were.

ISAAC throws the Frisbee to WES. WES catches it.

WES: So what happened between you two?

WES throws the Frisbee to ISAAC, even harder than the last time. ISAAC catches it.

ISAAC: Just came to a realization.

WES: Which was?

ISAAC: I'm sorry for what I said to you and how things started between us.

WES: Are you?

ISAAC: I am. You've been good to my mom, and I haven't been good to you.

WES: Well... Alright.

JACOB: HEY! Throw me the Frisbee!

ISAAC: My bad.

ISAAC throws the Frisbee to JACOB. JACOB catches it.

JACOB: Finally.



6. EXTERIOR: CAMPGROUND BEACH - MOMENTS AFTER

WES, ISAAC, and JACOB continue to throw the Frisbee. ALVIN and LINDSAY sit in their chairs relaxing.

ALVIN: As if.

LINDSAY: What?

ALVIN: Taken until our last day for all of us to get along.

LINDSAY: At least it's happening.

ALVIN: Yea.

LINDSAY: I've always like Isaac's shirt. He looks like his dad in it.

LINDSAY picks up the shirt and notices the sap stain.

LINDSAY: Oh God. No.

ALVIN: What?

LINDSAY: His shirt. Look at it. Look at the stain.

ALVIN: Stain? Oh...

ALVIN begins to laugh.

LINDSAY: It's not funny. I might have to talk to him about.

ALVIN: Lindsay, please, do not do that.

LINDSAY: What else is there? What if someone sees him?

ALVIN: I doubt he went off just to do that. Just let it go and give him his privacy. You'll scar the kid if you mention it.

LINDSAY sees JACOB having fun.

LINDSAY: Why can't Isaac be that age again?

ALVIN: It is what it is.

LINDSAY: Were you like that when you were his age?

ALVIN: No. He gets it from his mother.

LINDSAY: Must have been quite the free spirit.

ALVIN: The most attractive thing about her was that she always wanted to have a good time.

LINDSAY: Why did she leave?

ALVIN: I don't know. She had her reasons.

LINDSAY: Why do you think she left?

ALVIN: Once he was born, everything stopped being fun. Her life imploded on itself, and she wasn't ready for that.

LINDSAY: You're doing the right thing.

ALVIN: I know. But every day he reminds me of her more and more.

LINDSAY: If you're that afraid then find balance.

ALVIN: I'm not afraid.

LINDSAY: Still, you two deserve each other, but you don't deserve to be alone together.

ALVIN: That seemed well rehearsed.

LINDSAY: I've just been thinking a lot this week.

ALVIN: It's been fun, huh?

LINDSAY: More than I ever thought.

LINDSAY and ALVIN smile at each other. WES, ISAAC, and JACOB continue to play Frisbee. The scene gives a sense of warmth and unity within the group. Everything is perfect.

7. EXTERIOR: CAMPSITE - EVENING

LINDSAY, ISAAC, ALVIN, and WES sit at the picnic table eating dinner. The feeling of happiness from the previous scene has carried over.

JACOB: Lindsay, what's your favorite song?

LINDSAY: The ones you sing.

ALVIN: Please, don't encourage him.

JACOB: I am a songbird, Dad. But no, Lindsay, what's your favorite song?

LINDSAY: I don't know. Songs come and go for me.

JACOB: Okay. Isaac, what's yours?

ISAAC: Wake Up by Arcade Fire.

JACOB: Never heard it. Dad what's yours?

ALVIN: 2Pac, Keep Ya Head Up.

JACOB: Wes?

WES: Anything by The Band.

JACOB: What band?

ALVIN: It's the name of the group. The Band.

LINDSAY: What's yours?

JACOB: I don't know. Actually, the one that Wes taught me.

ALVIN: How does it go?

WES: Well, we don't-

JACOB: (Singing)

"Let me break it to you, son
Your shit's fucked up."
I said, "My shit's fucked up?"
Well, I don't see how-"
He said, "The shit that used to work-
It won't work now."

WES takes a sip from his mug and avoids eye contact with everyone. ALVIN stands up.

ALVIN: Jacob, stand up! You're going to bed!

JACOB: What did I do? It's just a song.

ALVIN: I don't care. You know you aren't supposed to swear.

JACOB: What? I've sworn before.

ALVIN: Not like that! You're getting too comfortable. Now move because you're going to bed.

WES: Let's slow down, everyone.

ALVIN: Don't say a word to me.

WES: It was just a song.

LINDSAY: Wes, I'd just stay out of it.

WES: No. Alvin, you think you're going to protect him from what the world is like?

ALVIN: I am not in the mood for a discussion, Wes. You are not talking to my son again.

WES: You're acting like I've corrupted him. Like this isn't the only thing bad thing I've taught him.

ALVIN: Is it?

WES: Yes.

ALVIN: (To JACOB) Is it?

JACOB: We talked about drugs too.

ALVIN: Okay, you're not even going to think about him until all of us are far away from this park.

WES: He asked me. Maybe he wouldn't have if you didn't live in a shitty neighborhood.

ISAAC: Wes, stop it!

WES: It's true, Alvin. What are you protecting him from? The kid's already been offered drugs, he knows what fuck means, he knows what shit means. If your aim at parenthood is stopping him from learning all of this, then my friend, you've already failed as a father.

ALVIN: You'd know what that feels like wouldn't you?

LINDSAY: Okay, everyone, let's take a step back. This should not be what our last night is like.

WES: Lindsay, don't. Alvin needs to wake up.

ALVIN: Did your wife leave you because you like she needed to wake up too? Or did she leave because she realized what kind of person you are?

WES: I don't know. Why don't you tell me why your wife left? Or were you two even married?

LINDSAY: No more; both of you!

WES: Lindsay, don't. Just shut up.

ISAAC: Don't you dare talk to her like that.

WES: (To ISAAC) Back at it again, I see.

ISAAC: Fuck you.

WES: And we made such progress today.

LINDSAY: Everyone! Calm down. Some things were said, but we need to move past this. What happened to the people who were on the beach together? Let's go back to that.

ALVIN: No.

ALVIN grabs JACOB and begins to carry him to their tent. WES stands up.

WES: He's going to resent you if you keep pushing.

ALVIN: (Still walking) Shh.

WES: He already told me he's going to try drugs. You can't protect him forever.

ALVIN stops, puts JACOB down, and turns around to face WES.

ALVIN: It's probably easy for you to be such a great family man, given all the hindsight you have. It's a shame you're too old to get a new one, though.

WES approaches ALVIN, so that they are face to face.

WES: You wanna overreact over a few words, go ahead. But you're going to push your kid away.

ALVIN: And then I'm going to end up like you, huh? End up like someone who is without a doubt going to die alone. Tell me, what would you do if you were me?

WES: How about instead of sheltering him from reality, you face it, together. That way at least you have some control over it. But what you're doing, hiding him away from it, it's going to invite him to explore it more, without you. And then what? You two are both fucked.

ALVIN grabs WES by the collar.

ALVIN: Not in front of my son.

ISAAC: Stop it!

ISAAC picks up the mug WES was drinking from. He throws it at WES and ALVIN with the hope it hits one of the two. It does not. It misses them both, and smacks JACOB in the face instead. JACOB is knocked down, and begins to cry. His forehead begins to bleed. ALVIN lets go of WES, looks down at JACOB, then glares at ISAAC. ISAAC stares, horrified at what he did.

LINDSAY: Isaac!

ALVIN begins to walk to ISAAC, with never before seen intensity. LINDSAY gets in front of ALVIN, in an attempt to calm him down.

LINDSAY: Alvin, I don't know what he was thinking, but listen to me: I will sort it out. You need to calm down.

ALVIN brushes past her. ALVIN approaches ISAAC, grabs him by the throat, and pushes him into a tree.

ALVIN: You're lucky I don't fucking knock your teeth in right now.

LINDSAY: Alvin, let him go!

WES: Guys--

LINDSAY: Let him go!

ISAAC: I'm sorry. I'm so sorry.

WES: HEY!

LINDSAY turns around to focus on WES. ALVIN's gaze remains on ISAAC.

WES: Where did Jacob go?

ALVIN immediately lets go of ISAAC and turns around, looking devastated.

8. EXTERIOR: CAMPGROUND WOODS - MOMENTS AFTER

JACOB runs through the woods, crying, trying to wipe blood from his forehead. He falls into the hole he was digging earlier for the bear; now much deeper than before. He lies on his back, dazed, and as he looks around he notices a snake has slithered onto him. He is startled, so he shakes it off. More snakes begin to slither around him, revealing that he has landed on a large pile of snakes that begin to writhe on top of him. JACOB screams.



WALKS IN NATURE

Keira Purdon

Part IV: Harold Town Conservation Area

SUMMARY

Cost: Free!

Location: About an 8-minute drive outside the city on Old Norwood road, just off of Parkhill Road East and Television Road

Naturality: 3 out of 5

Gear: Ice grippers in winter!

Watch out for: Canines, bikers, loose rocks, mud, ice, and steep hills!

As promised in my last article in this series (Part III: Mark S. Burnham Trail), I hit up a conservation area in hopes of finding a suitable trail open in winter. Harold Town Conservation Area fulfilled my desire and more! With multiple trails and stunning views, I had a pretty enjoyable hike. However, I didn't completely factor in the iciness. It made for an extra challenge and upped the risk factor.



The parking lot was nearly full when I arrived around 3 PM. It was a relatively warm day, around -1 with the wind chill making it much colder. I forwent long-johns but later regretted that decision.

While looking for a place to enter the trails, a brave winter biker passed me. I had a few issues finding the trail head. There is a large, open hill that I believe is supposed to be the primary entrance or exit to the trails. I try not to use ice grippers unless absolutely necessary, since they can harm tree roots, and therefore left mine at home. Without them, I felt weary about attempting that hill. Others did though, so maybe I was being extra-cautious. I followed the biker into a trail I would learn is called Hot Breakfast.

The primary use of the conservation area seemed to be biking. As such, the trails were set up for bikes, not walking. I imagine in the on-season, hikers would have to watch out for descending and ascending bikers since they might not have the best control on the muddy, winding trails.

Hot Breakfast was full of loopy switchbacks that made climbing the incline fairly easy. The ice, mud, and snow made for technical walking and would no doubt present a challenge for bikers in any season whether heading up or down. The evergreens provided a pop of colour on an otherwise dreary backdrop of white-grey

Walks In Nature

snow and brown deciduous trees. They also provided shelter from the wind, making the walk much more enjoyable.

Surprisingly, for the number of cars in the lot and the number of dogs I heard, I encountered almost no one. I was able to completely immerse myself in the landscape. Still, I kept an eye out in case I had to dart to the icy, sloped trailside to make room for anyone.

One thing I've learned on my quest to find the perfect hiking spot, is that anywhere you hike in the Peterborough area, you will find some sort of interesting feature. This time it was the remnants of an old house. I ventured into it and managed to capture some cool (?) photos. There were also a couple of piles of rocks either left over from the grooming of the trails or farmers trying to clear the land for plowing, which is a common feature for the area.

Every once in a while, after climbing another incline and before another switchback, I could catch a magnificent view. Farms and houses dotted the countryside. Each view was different and grew more impressive the higher in elevation I got.

At the top of Hot Breakfast was a gothic-looking tree which I just thought was cool and wanted to include! I then came out on what I consider the main path which resided at the top of the aforementioned open, steep, icy hill. It was here I was grateful for my neck tube which cut the wind. From there I accidentally left the trail. I followed someone else's footprints to particularly tall part of the hill to get a good lookout. And then I couldn't get down! I ended up hilariously surfing down without falling. If someone had been with me, I would have taken a bow!

All the parting trails were labeled. I turned my attention to the route called "Screaming Trees". And I easily envisioned how it why it was thusly dubbed: tight switchbacks weaving among cedars on a steep slope. Hot Breakfast seemed to go more up the major height of land; Screaming Trees seems perched on the side of it, threatening precariously to throw me off. I would have snapped a photo but all four of my limbs and all my concentration were needed to navigate my footing.

At the bottom of Screaming Trees was a collection of littered objects. Old pallets, some kind of metal structure presumably used for a fire, and the second interesting feature of the day! Two jumbles of sticks seemed to be an attempt at a house or structure. A shield-shaped wood plank was attached to what looked like the supposed house. It reminded me of a much-loved movie and book from my childhood: *Bridge to Terabithia!*



Walks In Nature

I ventured my back along a groomed, and thankfully flat track back to the parking lot. I did need the water that I left in car, but not enough to have warrant me taking it along. If I had done more than two trails, I would for sure pack water and a sack with me.

Harold Town Conservation Area isn't the place for those looking for an easy, gentle walk. Neither is it overly-challenging. I wouldn't say it's not for beginners, since hiking is no different than

putting one foot in front of the other, but with the varied terrain due to weather conditions, it deserves a higher than average degree of caution. The multiple routes and paths make it ideal for those looking for a longer hike or ride. And the scenery is definitely something to see! It's a place I will definitely return to—with my bike and with my hiking boots—in the warmer seasons. Until then, I'm going to avoid it until I find my ice grippers!



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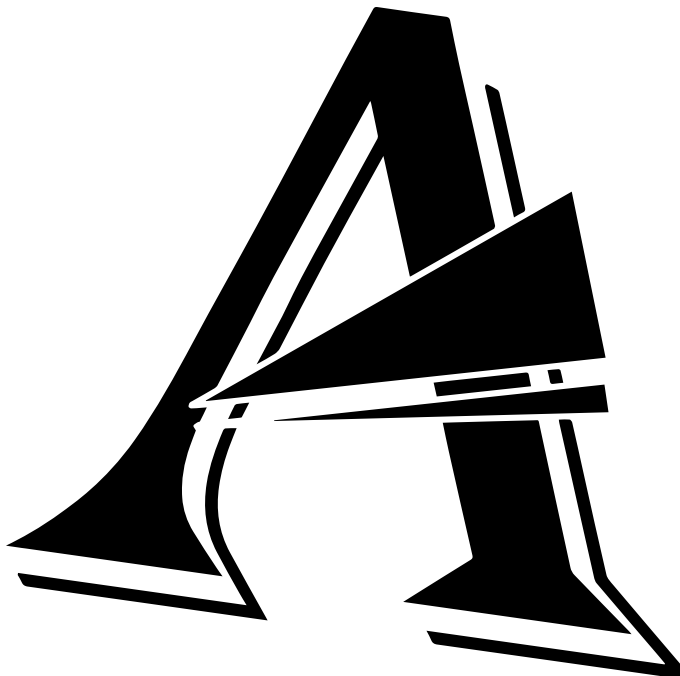
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