

ELEVEN ELEVEN

*by g.g.*

*“Screw eleven eleven I wish I never met you.”*

version #4

9/12/2021

**2 people (2 performers):**

RED, *fourteen*

*who grows up in REILLY, twenty-four*

CRICK, *fourteen*

*who grows up into CORT, twenty-four*

**when:**

september nights: two in 2014, two in 2024

**where:**

the huge corn field owned by judith b outside of steltson, nj  
unsurprisingly, no one visits too often

**symbol key:**

-- is for interruption.

// is for crisscrossing.

... is for losing thought.

Words written like this denote some type of shift in inflection.

**songs to listen to:**

Bodys by Car Seat Headrest

Dead of Night by Orville Peck

What Kind Of Man by Florence & The Machine

**SCENE ONE : IT'S NOT DIRTY**

*(A severely dry corn field. The type that would give you one thousand cuts if you ran in them. Random objects from who knows where lay on the ground: a shopping cart, a male mannequin torso, a tricycle and a trunk with a padlock. RED is sitting on the trunk with a K-Mart bag between his feet, looking at the bright stars. The stalks rustle as CRICK creeps out from the cornfield.)*

CRICK

So I'm going to be honest, I didn't think you'd even be able to find this place.

RED

The field or this specific clearing?

CRICK

Honestly, both.

RED

Everyone we know knows about this field, it's not a super well kept secret.

CRICK

I don't think it's fair to say everyone knows.

RED

No, absolutely everyone knows there's a cornfield here, whether or not they go into the cornfield is up to specific people. How was the drive?

CRICK

I didn't drive, I walked.

RED

You walked all the way from your house?

CRICK

Of course I did, it's the middle of the night, I'm not trying to wake everyone up and get them to peek through their blinds to figure out who's driving through town. Everyone's so nosy.

RED

I skated.

CRICK

I've always wanted to learn how, it seems fun. It's a more stealthy way to get around instead of driving. Although here, even walking is kind of attention grabbing I guess. There was this group of possums scurrying around where I got off the road into the field, they genuinely scared the heck out of me.

RED

Yeah there's a lot of them near here, like this one passel that continuously eats whatever we leave in the compost bin.

CRICK

There's some holes in our fence, and there's this really big one I use to sneak out. And possums can climb, so I guess the fence is kind of useless.

RED

Opossums, there's opossums here.

CRICK

That's what I said.

RED

No you said possums, not opossums. We don't have possums, we have opossums.

CRICK

First time I've ever seen a tassel of them this far outside of the town.

RED

Passel. Is this what you do for fun? Talk about the resident wildlife or is it limited to opossums.

CRICK

I don't think it's fun, it's scientific, it's serious. Possum or not they're still getting through our fence.

RED

That's sad.

CRICK

Oh yeah it is, my dad spent so much money setting it up--

RED

Not the fence, the opossums. Getting traps for them.

CRICK

They're just big rodents.

RED

Opossums aren't rodents.

CRICK

The big worm looking tail says otherwise.

RED

They're marsupials, like kangaroos.

CRICK

Wait, seriously?

RED

They have pouches like kangaroos--

CRICK

Possoms have what?

RED

Opossums have pouches. Baby opossums are called joeys.

CRICK

Like baby kangaroos.

RED

Exactly.

CRICK

That's so cool. You're so intelligent.

RED

I just read it in a book in the library.

CRICK

That's intelligence.

RED

All it is is reciting information, it's like learning all the lyrics to a song. You might not know all the metaphors and weight in it, you just know what word comes next in the sequence.

CRICK

Why do you think it's sad?

RED

It's stupid.

CRICK

Is it stupid or sad.

RED

It's sad but it's also stupid, they're not mutually exclusive Crick.

CRICK

I'm sure it's not stupid.

RED

Just... they're really cute, you know? They're pretty dumb, but weirdly clever? They've got their little gloved hands and they look like little burglars but they're super chill, opossums are crazy passive in the wild. And they're solitary. Multiple families might coop up in one burrow together sure, but for the most part they're drifters. Strolling along through the woods until they stumble upon some new somewhere, or really anywhere with water and a good safe to sleep. They won't even spend too much energy on building burrows, they purposefully look for already dug out and abandoned ones left behind by other opossums or other animals. I really love them a lot.

*(RED is truly in love with sharing his knowledge. And CRICK is completely hooked.  
Then:)*

CRICK

When my dad finds one underneath the porch, he likes to swing over his head by the tail and then he strings them up off the gutter with some twine.

RED

Why would you say that, that's really messed up.

CRICK

No it's not, it's what he does, it's fine. Look it's not even like they can feel it, they do the playing possum thing and my dad says they can't even feel anything when they're like that so when you catch one and it plays possum-- oh wait is that where the term comes from?

RED

Yes, but that's not--

CRICK

He says they don't feel anything so you can just wind them up as hard as you want and they just basically go to sleep until they die. My dad knows things like that.

RED

That's not always true.

CRICK

Playing possums means they go unconscious right? It's involuntary so they don't even feel it.

RED

Still messed up.

CRICK

No it's not.

RED

What about the little ones?

CRICK

The joeys you mean. See, I pay attention.

RED

The little ones don't always react that way. Sometimes they don't do the unconscious thing, they just freak out. What does your dad do with the babies?

*(CRICK turns to RED.)*

CRICK

They only live to be like two years old anyway. It's part of life, you know? Don't be such a cry baby Red.

RED

It's ok to cry.

CRICK

I feel so gross. I didn't shower.

RED

Feels like it's not a good idea to shower before you come to the middle of the corn field anyway.

CRICK

What's that supposed to mean?

RED

Like, imagine showering--

CRICK

Ewww gross. Don't imagine me showering, don't be weird.

RED

No, I mean--

CRICK

I know what you mean.

RED

It's just a hypothetical situation, I'm not imagining--

CRICK

You totally are.

RED

What I'm trying to say is, your logic makes sense. Why would you shower if you're going to go outside and get dirty?

CRICK

This place isn't dirty. The outdoors aren't dirty.

RED

The outdoors have dirt. Dirt is dirty.



CRICK

That was a stretch. Like when girls say... b-words are dogs, and dogs bark, and bark is on trees, and trees are part of nature, and nature is beautiful, so thanks for calling me beautiful.

RED

Does anyone really say that?

CRICK

I don't know but it's funny.

RED

The outdoors are dirty.

CRICK

No they're not, dirtiness is all contextual. What's dirty to a maid is nothing to a farmer.

RED

Well then sit down somewhere.

*(CRICK leans against the shopping cart precariously.)*

That's just cheating, sit on the tricycle.

CRICK

Heck no.

RED

Why not?

CRICK

It's... it's not dirty, but it's rusty and who knows there might be a rabid possum under it.

RED

Right.

CRICK

Every mammal can get rabies. Once you're bit and start exhibiting symptoms, it's already over for you. There's less than one thousand cases a year, but what if I'm one of the statistics! I'm too young to be read about in medical journals.

*(CRICK has collapsed to the ground in desperation.)*

RED

The chances of an opossum getting rabies is extremely rare. Their body temperature is too low for the virus to properly take hold. If you got bit we'd go to the ER but you'd be fine.

CRICK

Oh. Pretty chill then.

RED

So then sit with me.

*(CRICK goes to sit but stops at the last second.)*

CRICK

What about the infection rate from the bite itself, how bad is their dental hygiene?

RED

Hate to break it to you but there's no Colgate Optic White for Suburban Mammalia. Just sit on the honking tricycle.

*(CRICK slowly sits on the tricycle.)*

See, not so bad. And what is it?

CRICK

Dirty.

RED

You were just saying the flipping outdoors weren't dirty Crick.

CRICK

The outdoors themselves are not inherently dirty. Things that are outdoors however, are usually dirty.

RED

We were talking about showers and then you said the outdoors weren't dirty, so then I told you to sit on the tricycle if it's not so dirty, to which you wrote an essay on rabies to try to get your way out of, and now you're telling me it is dirty.

CRICK

Yeah... I don't remember all of that.

*(RED scoots over on the trunk and pats it.)*

RED

This is way cleaner, trust me.

CRICK

Give me a second, I'm kind of stuck.

RED

Here let me help--

CRICK

I don't need your help Red, I'm good.

*(RED holds out a hand, and CRICK doesn't take it, just struggles. Eventually he gets out of the tricycle with a hooray and sits on the trunk. RED just quietly retracts his hand.)*

RED

I bet you there's a corpse in this thing, or pieces of one.

CRICK

Jeez Red, come on.

RED

You were going Steve Irwin about hunting possums, but me suggesting we're sitting on a corpse is too far for you?

CRICK

You're so annoying sometimes.

*(That shuts RED up real quickly.)*

RED

I've never been out here.

CRICK

Dude seriously?

RED

It's an overgrown cornfield.

CRICK

Do you know it's story?

RED

I'm pretty sure Lucy tried to find out this one time, like we spent an hour digging through web searches on the computers at the library. And not just like we were looking up "cornfield outside of Steltson" on Google and giving up when it's not the first or second result, no we went mining really. Going eleven pages of results in and there's just nothing. We eventually just tried to go the old fashioned way and flip through some books, but things are bound to get kind of messy when the town historical society got burned down by a crashed fire truck. Which is super ironic.

CRICK

I'm not sure if you used ironic the right way. It's all word of mouth out here, you should know that.

RED

I should.

CRICK

This used to be part of the Bleecker chicken farm. It was left to Old Judy's sister when their grandfather died but then...

RED

I know.

CRICK

Sucks. Must've been messy.

RED

Insensitive.

CRICK

It's not insensitive, she just went missing.

RED

It's weird that no one remembers her name.

CRICK

I'm sure her sister does, but it's not like anyone is super close with her. How did she not wake up?

RED

Well I assume she was awake, you kind have to be awake if you're going to run away.

CRICK

Not the sister, Old Judy. How did Old Judy not wake up when their rooms were right next to each other? Unless she lied to the police, and she did wake up. Maybe she didn't even sleep, maybe she knew it was going to happen and couldn't sleep and when she heard her sister leaving for the last time, she just laid there for hours until the sun came up, walked into her sister's room and called the police to tell them that she--

RED

Can we seriously please drop this? Please. It makes me sad, thinking about how lonely she is without another family member.

CRICK

And the she you're referring to is...

RED

Both of them.

CRICK

My dad says the sister was a lesbian, that's why she ran away.

RED

I wouldn't take your dad's word for it.

CRICK

Come on, why.

RED

The Trump sign on the front lawn--

CRICK

I don't agree with his politics.

RED

Besides the point.

CRICK

That doesn't mean he hates queers. Queer people.

RED

Doesn't mean it doesn't.

CRICK

I don't think that's how it works.

RED

But you agree that's probably proof he's kind of... he's kind of the type of person who would say an older woman recovering from the death of her father--

CRICK

Grandfather.

*(RED is getting fed up with being cut off.)*

RED

An older woman recovering from the death of her father figure, who already had a history of mental illness would abandon her little sister because she was a lesbian.

CRICK

She was fifty when she ran away and Old Judy was thirty when it happened. She didn't leave a seven year old to run a chicken farm all by herself.

*(CRICK picks up the mannequin torso, holding it out and looking at it.)*

CRICK

I'm pretty sure this is from K-Mart.

*(RED knocks on the trunk.)*

RED

What do you think is in here?

CRICK

Not a corpse. We would smell it.

RED

It already smells out here.

CRICK

That's the smell of the outdoors, not the smell of rot.

RED

You would know.

CRICK

What's that supposed to mean.

RED

Whatever you want it to mean.

*(Moment. CRICK doesn't respond.)*

CRICK

Where do you think his arms are?

RED

Why did you invite me out here?

CRICK

What did you say?

RED

The mannequin?

CRICK

Yeah like, where the heck did his arms go.

*(He shakes the mannequin.)*

Who did this to you! Who took your arms!

RED

If only he could tell us where they took them, for that he'd need a mouth, and by extension, the most obvious thing he's missing, sentience.

CRICK

Let's face it, those arms are probably jammed in a beaver's dam half way up a Raritan tributary by now.

RED

Your friends must be geniuses through mitosis with the amount of wildlife trivia you have in your head.

CRICK

I don't share everything I know with them often, I think it would bore them. Billy maybe, Steve... Steve's just a jerk who'd probably find it stupid.

RED

What about Winnie?

CRICK

What about her?

RED

You don't talk to her about it?

CRICK

No. What did you ask before?

RED

I was wondering why you invited me out here.

CRICK

Is inviting someone to a corn field a crime?

RED

Technically we're trespassing on private property, and I don't know, I just didn't expect it to happen. We're not super close, you and I.

CRICK

Well, that's on you. I'm just being nice.

RED

I'm not not enjoying it here, I'm just surprised, I guess.

CRICK

I'm full of surprises.

*(CRICK puts the mannequin in the shopping cart.)*

Ok, I'm one hundred percent sure this is from K-Mart too.

RED

Why are you obsessed with mentioning K-Mart?



CRICK

You want me to be honest?

RED

Yes.

CRICK

Like do you want me to be really honest?

RED

Yes, be honest.

CRICK

You've had that K-Mart bag for like fifteen minutes and you have not once told me or mentioned it or touched it.

*(RED pulls Milk Duds out of the bag.)*

RED

They're for you.

CRICK

I don't like Milk Duds. Do you know how much corn syrup is in those things? Really bad for your heart.

RED

Oh.

CRICK

I mean I'll take them though. I'm sure Billy or Winnie will like them.

RED

Ok.

CRICK

Thanks though, I appreciate the gesture.

*(CRICK hugs RED and takes the Milk Duds. RED makes a face.)*

Stop being weird.

RED

I'm not weird, I'm not being weird, I'm so normal I could be a model in stock photoshoots for social studies textbooks.

CRICK

See, that's weird.

RED

That's one of the most boring aspirations a high schooler could ever have.

CRICK

You made the same face when you were imagining me showering.

RED

You stink. You reek. Smell. Stench. You should've showered.

CRICK

I knew I was coming out here so I didn't--

RED

You said it wasn't dirty out here so you could've showered anyway. Unless you told your parents you were going to shower in the morning so you could sneak out to meet me.

CRICK

Shut up.

RED

Where are you going to put the Milk Duds? You're going to need to hide them.

*(CRICK shrugs.)*

Just slip them in your book bag when you're home and give them to your friends in the morning.

CRICK

Could I ask you something? Is the girl you hang out with a lesbian?

RED

Lucy? I don't think she is. She's never... I'm pretty sure she's not.

CRICK

You're with her a lot.

RED

She's my best friend.

CRICK

Your best friend can also be a lesbian. Are you?

RED

A lesbian?

CRICK

Do you like boys Red?

*(RED doesn't even flinch.)*

RED

No.

CRICK

People think you do.

RED

I know they do.

CRICK

Just thought you should know.

RED

I do know, I know it like the back of my own hand.

CRICK

I don't listen to rumors though, I just wanted to get the answer right from the source.

RED

We should go home. It's a school night.

CRICK

Hey, by the way, there's going to be a party on Saturday at Billy's house. I'll pick you up if you want to come. To be honest I don't think I've ever seen you at parties, I'm not entirely sure if it's your scene so I--

RED

Sure.

*(RED cutting CRICK off disrupts the flow of the universe.)*

CRICK

Obviously you can bring Lucy. If you want. If she wants.

RED

Ok. Yeah. Yeah, I think I'll do that. I'll ask her.

CRICK

See you later Red. As in like, later later. Tomorrow later. In the hallways later.

RED

Bye.

**SCENE TWO : TWO DRUNK KIDS**

*(The random objects might be reconfigured; maybe the shopping cart is now upside down, or the mannequin is sitting on the trunk. The tricycle is gone. The stars are still twinkling, but slightly dimmer than they were before. Laughter and loud footsteps as RED and CRICK stumble out of the stalks, both very drunk and eating corn dogs. CRICK wears a pink cowboy hat.)*

RED

We're here!

CRICK

We are in fact, here!

RED

How did we end up here?

CRICK

I was following you.

RED

I was following you, I thought I was walking you home.

CRICK

In some ways you are-- you live the other direction, why would you be walking me home?

RED

Well you're kind of--

CRICK

No I'm not, I'm not drunk like hold on, look, just look.

*(CRICK unhooks himself from RED, stretches and assumes a wrestler's starting pose in the middle of the field. It is quiet until:)*

RED

What are you doing?

CRICK

Am I not doing it?

RED

Unless you were meaning to stand still in the middle of the field like a scarecrow then no, you're not doing it.

CRICK

I guess I'm drunk.

*(RED tries to fluidly steal CRICK's hat but it's kind of haphazard. CRICK doesn't mind.)*

RED

Cool hat.

CRICK

It's not mine.

RED

Is it Winnie's?

CRICK

It might be, not entirely sure. It's all kind of vague. I saw the hat and I liked the color and I put it on my head.

RED

You say that like you just found it at the party.

CRICK

Well it wasn't on my head when I picked you up from your house now was it. You'd notice if I was wearing this hat immediately, especially a pink cowboy hat. A pink cowgirl hat.

RED

It's a cowhat, no reason for it to be a boy or a girl.

CRICK

A cow hat would be a hat with cow print or alternatively I guess a hat that's shaped like a cow.

RED

Mr. Cindy told my class there used to be tons of cow farmers here in Steltson. Ninety percent cows, ten percent chickens. He said they all got bought up and turned into condominiums or office buildings or--

CRICK

OHMIGOSH. The cow farms used to be... K-Mart.

RED

What.

CRICK

The K-Mart used to be cow farms! We could've had cows and they turned it into a frigging K-Mart.

RED

Ohhh that's not fair!

CRICK

It's so not fair!

RED

There should be a trial, this is an injustice!

CRICK

Where's Batman when you need him.

RED

In Gotham.

CRICK

Gotham's in New Jersey actually.

RED

Is it really? That weirdly makes sense. Batman would save our cows, he'd save us from the iron fist of K-Mart and K-Mart subsidiaries.

CRICK

Who's the CEO of K-Mart?

RED

Uhhh...

*(RED holds a finger up and searches on his phone.)*

CRICK

Batman could do a lot in this town. He could save the cows and destroy K-Mart and he could help find Old Judy's sister so she wouldn't be so lonely. He's not an expert detective for nothing.

*(RED is still searching.)*

Well I guess it's kind of a double edged sword though. Batman's mere existence practically dares for there to be something equally bad. And you wouldn't have Batman without Bruce Wayne, so we'd have a rich playboy over our heads, and that's kind of not the general energy of this town, you know? It's pretty middle class.

RED

Low middle class. And the CEO of K-Mart is some person named Eddie.

CRICK

Batman could mess Eddie up.

RED

He could. We still have to find out where you got the hat from.

CRICK

From the party.

RED

But from who?

CRICK

Who?

RED

I'm asking you.

CRICK

You who!

RED

You you!

CRICK

Whoop whoop.



RED

Whatever you kept drinking really messed you up.

CRICK

It was that stuff Lucy brought in her military sized thermos, I just kept asking for some and it wasn't alcohol but I mixed it with some from Billy's secret storage.

RED

Chicha Morada.

CRICK

I'm pretty sure it was just grape vodka, which sounds nasty and is nasty, Billy keeps it in the back of his closet.

RED

No, the thing Lucy brought is called Chicha Morada. It's a Peruvian drink, her mom makes it.

CRICK

It's delicious.

RED

It's made from corn.

CRICK

Oh, like?

*(CRICK shakes some of the stalks close to him.)*

RED

Oh gosh no you think this type of corn would make something so good? From this town? This town is horrible for your stomach. Everything made here leaves a bad taste in your mouth. Like these corn dogs.

CRICK

These are from K-Mart.

RED

Oh my gosh you know what fuck K-Mart.

CRICK

Don't take this the wrong way but my gosh is that smell you or me.

*(CRICK smells his own pits, which is gross.)*

Oh no it's me, wow I smell-- I smell super gross. I didn't shower. I feel like I've been sweating a lot lately.

RED

You're shivering.

CRICK

It's nothing, I'm fine.

RED

I feel like sometimes I see you walking in between classes and you're either freezing, all bundled up in too many sweaters or sweating a bucket a minute. I guess it just could be how weirdly the school is with the thermostat and air conditioners though.

CRICK

Yeah it's that. That must be why. I've never heard you curse.

RED

I curse, I curse often.

CRICK

Not around me you don't.

RED

This is only the second time it's been the two of us. We don't spend a lot of time together.

CRICK

Right now we are.

RED

That we are.

*(They look at each other. They kiss. It is not slow. It is just a quick but meaningful kiss. You might not be able to tell who leaned in first. Each of them thinks it's the other. RED pulls back.)*

Was that ok? CRICK

Yes. RED

I wasn't sure, I just felt like it was... right. Was I ok? CRICK

Yes. RED

Ok. CRICK

*(CRICK knocks on the trunk. Moment.)*  
I think someone's been here.

That's ominous. RED

The stuff moved. CRICK

That's even more ominous. RED

As in someone moved the stuff dummy. CRICK

It's public property. RED

Old Judy owns it though, so it's private. CRICK

You said it yourself, she doesn't really care for this place so it's public, at least to people like us. RED

Bored high schoolers. CRICK

RED

Low middle class.

CRICK

We're not that low middle class.

*(RED tosses the corn dog stick into the field.)*

RED

Last week that theater company from New Brunswick did that musical about the opioid crisis. It's not just random schools they go to. They know what our future might look like, it's a very targeted choice of where they go.

CRICK

I'm trying to think of who's the most likely to get into it.

RED

You can't place bets on these things, it could be anyone. Winnie--

CRICK

She wouldn't.

RED

Or Billy.

CRICK

Fifty fifty.

RED

Steve.

CRICK

One hundred percent.

RED

Could be one of us.

CRICK

No it couldn't.

RED

Oh I suppose you know everything about both opioids and me super well for you to make such a bold claim.

CRICK

We're just not the type of people who would.

RED

There is no type of people, that was the point of the musical.

CRICK

I wouldn't call that a musical.

RED

Right, because you know so much about theater.

CRICK

Never said I do because I don't, however doing six singing solo numbers in a taped off box in Cafeteria A where we all sat in a semi circle where you couldn't see past the head of the person in front does not a musical make.

RED

Still doesn't mean we're somehow free of the wandering hands of heroin.

CRICK

Neither of us would be caught dead walking through the halls in a Princeton sweater from the thrift store with twinkie stains and gym slides.

RED

That was oddly specific.

CRICK

That was literally one of the costumes in the musical.

RED

You yourself own slides.

CRICK

Yeah ok, but not a Princeton sweatshirt, checkmate. We wake up at six in the morning for class until two fifty, which is honestly such an annoying end time, and for what? So some people who can't be bothered to tie the drawstrings of their sweatpants to clog up the hallways? If there's people on opioids and everyone knows it, get them out, simple as that.

RED

Don't you think you're being a bit harsh? We were quite literally just underage drinking at the son of the deputy's house and now were trespassing on private public property.

CRICK

That doesn't mean we're below criticizing other people!

RED

Here it comes.

CRICK

In fact, our life experiences and the fact we're not perfect makes our words even more true. If we don't fall, how can people who have it arguably better nosedive into the dirty dry dirt of this dumb town. No one needs to do heroin, it's not going to help you be better, but it's cool and it's what people do in this town so you think you're desensitized to it. You think it's just routine. Nature versus nurture doesn't count when you're under the influence during the pregnancy.

RED

Jesus christ.

CRICK

Seriously, what did I do now?

RED

I'm conflicted.

CRICK

On what.

RED

Why are you so upset? Is this personal, this feels like it's personal.

CRICK

It's genuinely not. I don't know anyone who does it. Or anyone who would--

RED

Besides Billy. Or Steve.

CRICK

I don't really like Steve if I'm being honest, he's kind of sketchy. I wouldn't mind if he--

RED

Don't say that.

CRICK

Why?

RED

Just don't.

CRICK

Billy I could see fifty fifty and I pray I won't see him in the losing half. It's not personal. It just makes sense.

RED

I guess to you it does. The other thing was that you look handsome when you're upset.

CRICK

Oh, do I?

RED

I think so.

*(Moment. CRICK tosses his half eaten corn dog away and scoots closer to RED. They might kiss again, but RED's phone goes off with a notification.)*

CRICK

Ignore it.

RED

You're a bad influence.

CRICK

I could say the same about you.

*(Another notification before RED can respond.)*

Ugh, who's ruining this moment?

RED

So we agree it's a moment?

CRICK

I'm curious to see if it's a moment or not.

*(RED chuckles and checks his phone. CRICK sees who and what it is.)*

Oh.

RED

When did Winnie get my number, I don't even have hers.

CRICK

I might've given it to her.

RED

Why does that look familiar?

CRICK

It doesn't.

RED

Is that Billy's living room?

CRICK

The Steltson police force is huge, those could be anyones.

*(RED looks at CRICK as if to say "you must think I'm very stupid".)*

RED

Sure a lot of cops get medals way too often and undeservedly but how many of them put Billy's mom's Officer of the Month photo in a nice frame next to their own medals? Why would Winnie just so happen to have a selfie with this weird shrine to the only female deputy of Steltsons? Why would she be doing this while sweating off her make-up in purple LED lights? Winnie was at Billy's. Winnie is still at Billy's--



CRICK

Ok big whoop so is everyone who matters.

RED

Why is Winnie of all people asking me where you are, why doesn't she know where you are?

CRICK

I'm not her, how am I supposed to know--

RED

Why doesn't your girlfriend know where you are?

CRICK

She does, she does. She does know.

RED

"Hey, it's Winnie, do you know where Cort is?" Then the photo. That's what she sent me, that's what it says. So she doesn't know. What's the truth Crick.

*(Moment.)*

CRICK

Did you hear that?

RED

Stop changing the subject.

CRICK

It sounds like someone's out there.

*(CRICK picks up a rock and throws it into the field.)*

RED

Crick listen to me--

CRICK

Where did the rock go, I didn't even hear it hit the ground.

RED

Cort.

*(Moment.)*

CRICK

We're friends.

RED

That has nothing to do with anything.

CRICK

It has everything to do with something to me. I wanted to open with that. We are friends Red.

RED

I'm beginning to doubt that now. I don't think I know the type of person you are at all.

CRICK

I didn't lie to her--

RED

Lying by omission is still lying, that's why the word lying is in the phrase in the first place.

CRICK

I don't think you're being fair.

RED

I'm not being fair.

CRICK

No, you're not being fair.

RED

How in the world am I not being fair right now?

CRICK

You have to let me tell you my side of the story!

RED

Ok fine. Tell me your side of the story, Crick.

CRICK

When we were at the party together, Winnie found out I was there too, you know how house parties are, word travels fast. She found me by the punch tub thing, we talked to her for a little bit and I guess I took her hat. Then I found you. Then we left.

RED

So you didn't tell her where you were going. She didn't even know you were going to be there.

*(Moment.)*

CRICK

Yes. To both.

RED

Why didn't you tell her, why isn't she here with us.

CRICK

Cause I don't want her here!

RED

She's your girlfriend!

CRICK

I know she's my girlfriend! If my girlfriend was here I wouldn't have kissed you, if anyone was here I wouldn't have kissed you.

RED

Well I'm so sorry you decided not to bring your moral companion to hold you back from doing that.

CRICK

What's that supposed to mean?

RED

I'm going to admit it's messed up that I kissed you when I know you're dating someone, who for all intents and purposes is a good person. That's on me, I admit it wholeheartedly. But you did it because you knew, or at least suspect that you wouldn't get caught. Because no one was here.

CRICK

I won't get caught.

RED

There is nothing stopping me from telling Winnie. Or Billy. Even Steve. You know how Steve is, he might even tell Mr. Cindy or Old Judy if he could-- hell he could even tell your dad if I told him.

CRICK

You wouldn't.

RED

Why wouldn't I? You ignore your girlfriend, you lie to her, you kiss--

*(CRICK pushes RED over the trunk. RED hits his head on the shopping cart on the way down. There is an audible crack.)*

CRICK

No one even knows we're here! Winnie probably texted everyone, she might've even texted me but I'm smart enough to shut my phone off when we're together so there's not even an inkling of a hint it's just the two of us. I was the only person in this fucking school to give you a fucking chance, and you just had to ruin didn't you? No one likes you. Not one. Not even me. Goodnight.

*(CRICK stomps off into the field. RED does not move.)*

**SCENE THREE : TOWN ON FIRE**

*(The corn field, ten years later. The night sky is considerably dimmer. The mannequin is leaning against the trunk, who's padlock has broken off. The shopping cart is nowhere to be found. CORT sits on the trunk, smoking. REILLY enters, holding a bag of kettle corn.)*

CORT

I didn't think you'd come. I'm super happy but I also feel like I'm going to vomit if you look at me right in the eyes. How have you been?

*(Without responding, REILLY pops the kettle corn bag. The noise might as well be a hunting rifle gunshot. Throughout the scene, he eats the kettle corn, one kernel at a time.)*

REILLY

Well this is clearly a big deal. You got all dressed.

CORT

I got you this.

*(CORT pulls out a stuffed opossum plush. REILLY takes it gingerly. Moment.)*

CORT

I'm not going to--

REILLY

Could we just--

*(Moment.)*

REILLY & CORT

You first.

CORT

You first, go.

REILLY

Could we just get this over with.

CORT

I'm not going to monologue at you.

REILLY

Of course you're not, you never were the type of person to talk things through.

CORT

Well I mean, if you think monologuing is a good way to talk things through, then I think I should monologue because I think we need to talk things through.

REILLY

I don't care what you think, genuinely. Not an opinion, just a fact.

CORT

That's not true.

REILLY

You doinked this up big time.

CORT

I did not doink it up.

REILLY

You so perfectly doinked it up people study this specific doinkening when they're trying to define it.

CORT

Doikening? The verb form of doink is doinkening?

REILLY

Do you have a better suggestion?

CORT

Just doinking works!

*(REILLY pops some kettle corn into his mouth.)*

I should--

REILLY

I had so many opportunities to talk to Steven Duong in high school. I could've spilled everything to him, got him all riled up. I bet he would've split your lip three ways to Saturday. I would get stuck in the blaze too, but I didn't care as long as it reached you.

CORT

You clearly cared enough to not tell him. Did you ever come out here with other people?

REILLY

Lucero didn't like it out here. So no.

CORT

I was the only friend to ever bring you here?

REILLY

You weren't my friend, you were just some person I saw in the hallways and you happened to have my number from when we worked together in biology.

CORT

I knew it was leftover from a group project, I just didn't know what class.

REILLY

Biology, we did it on food chains, you basically insisted we do it based on the ecosystem of this corn field. I had to explain to you how birds of prey aren't the end of the chain. It's cyclical. You always forgot about decomposers like mushrooms.

CORT

Mushroom shmushroom, forget the end of the line, be in the present with me.

REILLY

You're nothing to me. Not even an ex-friend. You're an ex-something that could've been good.

CORT

We should talk.

REILLY

No, we don't. In what world would you make a great choice for a conversationalist?

CORT

I'm--

REILLY

Oh my gosh don't even! Don't even. There is so much more to fill the time before you even consider telling me those words. And honestly, I wouldn't believe you. You'd be lying.

*(Moment. CORT picks up the mannequin.)*

CORT

It's good to see you. I feel like if you were sentient and had arms you'd hug me so...

*(CORT hugs the mannequin.)*

REILLY

It's dirty.

CORT

I don't mind.

REILLY

Cort it has dried gum for nipples, that's disgusting.

*(CORT chucks the mannequin to the ground.)*

CORT

Gum is so gross.

REILLY

It's such a juvenile thing, getting bored with gum and then sticking it to the closest surface, but I feel like it happens more as adults than it did when we were kids. One of my coworkers was telling me about how one time she took the train and this mother and her kid were sitting behind her. She waved at them as she sat down. You know how it is when you see a young kid in public, you're just pulled into this little moment of recognizing them as another soul. She got off the train and found out there were two separate clumps of gum in her hair, and she got really upset because what parent doesn't stop their kid from putting gum in people's hair. Or rather, what parent realizes what their kid did and doesn't even notify the person it happened to. Anyway the point is the kid had braces so it wasn't them, it was the mom.

CORT

Yikes.

REILLY

Very yikes.

CORT

I promise I wouldn't be lying. You came here, that has to be some level of trust.



REILLY

Not really. I brought kettle corn with me because I'm just like a little kid sitting on a sidewalk while a building burns down. Not much you can besides watch.

*(Kettle corn being chewed.)*

I felt like I was going to cry the entire drive here. I just want closure, but I feel like my fingers already got slammed in the door.

CORT

You'll--

REILLY

I'm sorry that you feel the need to explain everything to me. I was there. I'm not bothered by you taking this long to muster up the energy to actually do this, I understand it's tough for you or whatever. I'm bothered by you thinking it was ever going to be time. I'm bothered by you thinking I would be proud of this development. I'm bothered by you thinking I ever wanted to unpack or give space or discuss what happened. A text asking me to come to our old spot is a very immature mature move.

CORT

You'll never know what I felt when I sent you that text.

REILLY

You'll never know how I felt when I got your texts. Not this one, the ones I thought were from my friend. About how you talked to your dad about killing opossums, about how you subscribed his emails to the green party. I remember you telling me how you were surprised I didn't know what eleven eleven wishes were.

CORT

I know I messed up.

REILLY

That's putting it very lightly. You broke my skull and then acted surprised when I walked into school on crutches the next week.

CORT

Do you think anyone fell for it?

REILLY

Even if they got a weird vibe, you covered all your tracks that led to me really well. Can't really figure out what weird tension is between two people if you've been led to believe they would never even think of each other.

CORT

I'm--

REILLY

No, not yet. No. You don't get to choose when. I'm cold, and tired, and hungry, and I honestly just want to go somewhere warm.

CORT

Come with me, I got this new space heater and it's super helpful for these weird September wind chills.

*(Kettle corn is chewed.)*

Would you like to know something cool?

*(REILLY doesn't respond.)*

I found out that Judith's sister tried to light the house on fire before she left. Steven Duong told me it should've worked, but for some reason it just didn't light well enough. He's a firefighter now, did you know that? From middle school scum to righteous citizen. Judith swore up and down that the house would've burned down in minutes considering it's all old wood, and then the corn and the chickens would go up with it.

REILLY

Why did you just find this out?

CORT

It was in the fire reports down at the station. The news didn't talk about it because... it didn't happen. Why would you report on an almost fire.

REILLY

It's like the field knew she was the last person who could care for it. Like it's living.

CORT

Let's reel it in Mulder.

REILLY

Did you ever get that weird feeling about this place when we were kids? Even now honestly, it gives me goosebumps. The weird way everything shifts when no one's looking, maybe it's not other people, it could be the field. Rearranging the furniture like a house. I don't think it's capable of such a big sway. It isn't evil. It might not even be fully alive. It's more like an urge, or a mumble. Something ambient and ancient and happy being here, just causing little miracles and tragedies.

CORT

This sounds wild.

REILLY

For example... not in eleven hundred years would I imagine you inviting me to your house. I don't think you would imagine that either, until you stepped into this place for the first time in a decade.

CORT

Is that a tragedy or a miracle?

REILLY

I'm not sure, and I don't think the field does either.

CORT

Sometimes cycles exist though. Opossums go from burrow to burrow. Some die. Some live. The world is full of echoes, it's not just this field somehow influencing the world. Fires go out, some burn on, it's... it's boring.

REILLY

You're no fun.

CORT

So would you like to come home with me?

REILLY

Fuck no buddy.

CORT

Understood buddy.

REILLY

Don't buddy me, buddy.

CORT

Sorry.

REILLY

I just said for you not to say it you fucking-- ugh!!!

CORT

What!

REILLY

You said it! You said the word.

CORT

Sorry?

REILLY

Stop it!

CORT

It wasn't the big sorry I was saying sorry for calling you buddy!

REILLY

You ruined it.

CORT

What did I ruin?

REILLY

The second you said the word I started to forgive you.

CORT

Honestly, all I did was call you buddy, it's not that intense.

REILLY

Do you know how many times I wished I would hear you say that word when we were younger? That word means everything to me. I burned so many stupid eleven eleven wishes on you, well screw eleven eleven I wish I never met you!

*(A rock comes sailing out of the corn like a bullet, hitting CORT in the eye.)*

CORT

FUCK!!!

REILLY

Are you ok? Let me see, move your hands Cort seriously, I need to see.

*(REILLY applies pressure, CORT whimpers.)*

Scary, isn't it? Proves my point.

CORT

Is it bad?

REILLY

I mean you're not Wolverine so it's not going to get better anytime soon.

CORT

You drove here, right?

REILLY

No.

CORT

You told me you did.

*(Moment.)*

I feel like we had deeper conversations as kids.

REILLY

I'm not driving you to urgent care. Not then, not now, not ever.

CORT

Reilly please, if there's one thing I didn't mess up, I know it's your kindness, your willingness, you practically devote your life to helping people all the time.

REILLY

You actually know nothing about my life now. You just knew, past tense, what I let you. And you're the last person I'd ever be the judge of who I was.

CORT

Ok ok I'm sorry--

REILLY

Yeah, you're sorry. Everyone's fucking sorry. You, Winifred, Bill, Steven Duong. But none of you get it. You guys are exactly what happened to me that one night, but every night. Going around hurting people and taking whatever you wanted from their pockets, all while the whole town is burning down around you.

CORT

The whole town isn't burning down.

REILLY

Not yet. I hope it does.

*(Moment. CORT is in a lot of pain.)*

Come on. Let's go to the fucking emergency room. Seems likely I'd end up there whenever I'm with you.

**SCENE FOUR : IN MEMORY OF STEVEN**

*(By now, the sky is completely empty. It's like the stars have been erased. The mannequin is gone. CORT and REILLY are sitting on the trunk. CORT wears an eyepatch, and periodically ices it with a bag of frozen mini corn dogs. A K-Mart bag sits between them.)*

CORT

So he's really dead. Just like that. I think he's the dead first person I know who I haven't been related to, isn't that weird. I would've thought it would be me or Bill honestly, we were reckless. So was Steve I guess.

REILLY

Recklessness isn't the same as stupidity. They're connected for sure but not entirely the same.

CORT

That sounds so familiar. The news made it sound weird. They made it sound like it was a great travesty, some type of big shucking the entire town's population was subject to. Which it is, it is a travesty, but I don't think I knew the photo they showed on the screen to honor him. It wasn't recognizable. It wasn't what I remembered.

REILLY

Are you ok?

CORT

No. I am not ok.

REILLY

I meant your eye.

CORT

It's ok, I can't drive safely yet so I had to walk. Mini corn dogs were the only thing in the freezer so here I am icing my eye with corn dogs.

REILLY

The fields got an affinity for corn and corn related things it seems.

CORT

Narcissist. Plot of dirt with urges or not, it does like to preen.

REILLY

We don't have to talk about this. We can stop.

CORT

Well we can't talk about the big thing, so this is what we can talk about.

REILLY

I didn't recognize him either. That photo wasn't of Steve. That photo was of Steven Duong, born and raised in Steltson, he was a firefighter and he died fighting a fire not four hundred feet from where we're sitting. Tragedies and miracles.

CORT

Ok now I'm done. Seriously. That really hurt.

REILLY

Really?

CORT

Yes.

REILLY

No. We're not stopping. We should keep talking. They could've just let the house burn.

CORT

With all the corn like this, just wild and dry, if they let the house burn, the whole field would go up in smoke.

REILLY

Is a block of corn worth someone dying?

CORT

Why not, no one forced him to go in.

REILLY

He didn't go in. He died from a heart attack. Aortic valve calcification I think, and he just never knew.

CORT

Ok so he died of a milk heart.



REILLY

A calcified heart.

CORT

Old Judy's sister goes missing after trying to burn down the house with Old Judy in it, we kiss and you break my skull open. Then ten years later, it brings us together, I get hit in the eye with a rock, the house burns down, Steven Duong has a heart attack in the field thanks to his calcified milk dud heart and now it's this.

REILLY

There isn't much else it could possibly do.

CORT

I think he was using. Again. He started not one week after we talked about who was most likely, it's like we prophesied it.

REILLY

Like the corn field grants us further sight. Give it up for the urge.

*(They applaud, like this is a normal thing to do.)*

CORT

Could've also been just that obvious that he would, no future vision needed.

REILLY

What fourteen year old high schooler gets their hands on enough pills to jump start an addiction that badly?

CORT

What twenty four year old firefighter gets enough to relapse?

REILLY

Relapse is a hard term. He didn't go to therapy or anything, one day he just decided to go cold turkey and it was awful. Withdrawal symptoms are like someone is dying in front of you. The shivering, the muscle spazzing, the sweat, the smell. That stench of... just a body. Sickly sweet and all too clean at the same time. He ended up better on the other side.

CORT

And then he...

REILLY

Relapsed, I suppose. I see what you mean.

CORT

What causes calcification anyway?

REILLY

Not opioids.

CORT

That sounded very concrete. Like newly granted sidewalks on the side streets type of concrete.

REILLY

I looked it up when I saw the news.

CORT

How'd you know he was on opioids to even consider that connect the dots scenario.

REILLY

It's Steltson. It's here, it's us. Who doesn't, who isn't.

CORT

I'm not.

*(Moment.)*

You watched him go through withdrawal in high school, you knew something might happen again. Didn't you.

REILLY

He had no one to call. I found him wandering out here one night, maybe a month after we happened. He just texted me out of the blue, and told me to meet him here. We would come out here every weekend with our hauls, either we stole them or I split my painkillers with him or we managed to find someone from New Brunswick to sell to us. It wasn't you, but it was someone. And it was terrible and nice and kind of fun when he wasn't just looking at the stars rambling about opossums and fire and his mom. I know he hated me. But I think... I think he felt that if something did happen, he'd know someone would be able to report his body.

CORT

He could've told me.

REILLY

I'm not him, I don't know why he didn't. Eventually he quit, cold turkey like I said. He tried to help me quit too, even if we hadn't talked in nearly a decade, he still knew I was using.

CORT

Which I don't blame you for, it's kind of hard to avoid that track in general with how deeply it's rooted in New Jersey and in our age demographic specifically. How did you get to stop? Did you stop?

*(Moment.)*

REILLY

Painkillers and broken hearts only get you to opioids and dead firemen.

CORT

I didn't break your heart, that's excessive.

REILLY

Breaking my skull isn't excessive, right? Technically the whole start of this isn't even the field, or Old Judy or her sister or me or Steven, it's you.

CORT

I have had nothing to do in the big picture. If you want a mess, just start looking and you'll find it, it is literally that easy. I could throw a rock in any direction in this town and I'd hit at least four extremely confusing problems. Do you know what it was like growing up in the Trump House? Oh yeah, wow, I know what you and Lucero called it when we were kids. I've got some breaking news for you buddy, if you keep calling a house terrible, all the people inside it turn terrible. I didn't keep doing pills, I turned out fine!

REILLY

Keep doing pills! So you admit you were on them. You're anything but fine, you quite literally put a dent in my skull, why do we keep glossing over that!

CORT

Because you possibly indirectly killed a man! If you hadn't come out here with him in the first place, maybe he wouldn't have gone back to them as adults!

REILLY

Opioids don't cause calcification!!! I didn't do anything wrong, I did nothing wrong.

CORT

He was halfway off the wagon when he stuck his foot in the grave, whether he slipped in because you pushed him or not, you were there. It's on everyone, even me.

REILLY

That doesn't mean we're below criticizing other people! You were awful growing up. Steve was terrible growing up. Just because I slipped up in the present doesn't make you better than me. So shut the fuck up. Terrible house? Forget what we called it, your house was a two story with nice vinyl siding. It just so happened to have a terrible human being on the inside, hanging opossums on the gutter and making sure his son knew how to cut the perfect amount of twine.

CORT

I'm so sorry you got a wonderful youth of Pepsi and pop rocks and kisses--

REILLY

You better regret saying those words.

CORT

I'm sorry you're right, I shouldn't even consider that, it's-- I'm just-- this is frustrating and I feel like my mind knows exactly what I mean and what I'm feeling and I can't get my mouth to keep up because all it tastes right now is the smell of burnt houses and you and the stench of too much stupid corn.

*(Silence.)*

REILLY

What's in the bag?

CORT

It's kind of in bad taste now.

REILLY

Things in bad taste are kind of your speciality.

*(Moment.)*

CORT

So everything that's happened here... the field's been orchestrating it. Or just nudging things in the right direction, right?

REILLY

Refusing to let a fire happen to save a woman's life. Somehow let me return to consciousness long enough to get to nine one one. It's all subject to change depending on what the field wants the outcome to be.

*(REILLY stands and pulls a lighter out of his pocket. He flicks it, but the lighter does not light. He sits.)*

CORT

How'd you know it wouldn't light?

REILLY

I didn't know for sure, but it was worth a shot just to see if it would let us or not.

CORT

And if it did?

REILLY

We could out run the burn.

CORT

No we couldn't.

REILLY

No, we couldn't.

*(CORT stands. He wants to hug REILLY. Instead, he opens the trunk.)*

CORT

There's absolutely no way this is happening right now. Stupid living corn field.

REILLY

What is it?

*(CORT pulls two mannequin arms out of the trunk.)*

You're joking. You're joking.

*(Childlike hollering. This is the funniest thing they've ever experienced.)*

CORT

This is ridiculous, this is live TV levels of intrigue.

REILLY

They were in there the whole time!

CORT

Months, years, a whole decade and they were locked in a trunk literally right under our noses. How many times did we even talk about it, wondering where they were, they could've been absolutely anywhere, the mannequins reach could have been infinite and they were just locked in a trunk in the middle of a stupid corn field in a stupid town. Gosh I sound stupid.

*(REILLY takes the arms and slots the fingers together and sets it on the ground. A torso-less sculpture holding its own hands.)*

REILLY

Infinite reach or not, it can hold itself. I've found that to be the most important thing a living thing can do.

CORT

I keep doing the wrong thing or telling you the wrong thing. I just think I'm really stupid and if I was a different type of dumber I could've ended up like Steven Duong or like you or there could've been an us.

REILLY

That was never a problem to me. You were never a problem I would've been stuck on until you made yourself an unsolvable one.

CORT

I should come with you. Or I should go. I'm not sure. Which one do you want?

REILLY

Lucero's house is on the edge of the corn field.

CORT

She still lives in Steltson?

REILLY

Old Judith left her some of the property and she built a little lodge there. It's cute, it's very Lucero. I think it makes her happy. I'm going to be staying there a while.

CORT

You didn't tell me that.

REILLY

I don't tell you a lot of things.

CORT

How in the world did Lucero get the property?

REILLY

Uh well she didn't, she got a section of the property when Judith died. It's a long story. Lots of corn syrup, possums, and confusion.

CORT

We've got nothing but time.

REILLY

It might snow.

CORT

It's September.

REILLY

September snow does exist.

CORT

When's the last time you got caught out in the snow?

REILLY

Now I just want a Blizzard, thanks.

CORT

That's the only thing they have on their menu.

REILLY

Not true, they've got fries.

CORT

Oh I know, they're terrible.

REILLY

What's in the bag?

*(CORT pulls Milk Duds out of the bag. Moment.)*

CORT

Tell me about how Lucero got her little piece of heaven.

*(REILLY opens the Milk Duds deftly.)*

REILLY

I guess I should tell you all about the blood drive, which feels like a really weird sentence to say, but it's also a weird place for this story to start.

CORT

Before you start, could I say something? I want to be here for each other. I think we should try.

REILLY

This is never going to lead to wedding bells and white suits. We know this.

CORT

Oh I know. I wouldn't want that to be our ending. I just think... I just think we would be good for each other's lives. Even if it's not forever. Even if it's just tonight.

*(Moment. Long. Silent.)*

REILLY

You know how I feel.

*(They sit on the trunk, sharing the Milk Duds. The wind blows, the coming of snow eventually, but for now there are no clouds in the sky. REILLY is looking up. CORT is looking at REILLY. A single star fades back into view.)*

**END**