

DON'T EXIT YOUR CAR

Written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. EMPTY HIGHWAY - NIGHT

The night is abyss dark with a barely visible moon. The highway runs through a small town that's fast asleep.

The highway continues through the mountains in the distance. A single car drives down it.

INT. STEPHANIE'S CAR - NIGHT

The small, rundown car is crammed with tons of camping gear, backpacks, and three people:

STEPHANIE MCLEAN (20s) drives. She's focused on the road and belts out the lyrics to the POP MUSIC BLASTING through the car.

JASPER JACKSON (20s) a jock-type with glasses, sits besides her as he mouths the lyrics.

ALLY JACKSON (20s) Jasper's slightly younger sister, SCREAMS the lyrics from the backseat. Piles of camping gear surround her uncomfortably.

The song finally ends. The group takes a breather as Stephanie turns down the music.

ALLY

How much farther until the camp site?

STEPHANIE

It's past these mountains. There's no traffic... so maybe another two hours?

ALLY

In that case--

JASPER

(mimicking Ally's voice)
--Can we take a bathroom break?

Stephanie CACKLES as Ally glares at her brother.

JASPER (CONT'D)

Sorry, Ally. But you know it's true. How many road trips we been on together?

ALLY

Too many.

STEPHANIE

Oh, don't pout.

Stephanie peers to her right and spots a gas station with its lights still on.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

We'll stop there. I have to fill up on gas anyway.

ALLY

Are you kidding? I'm not using a gas station bathroom.

Stephanie and Jasper exchange a look, but don't say anything.

EXT. GAS STATION - NIGHT

Stephanie pulls into the gas station and stops at one of the pumps. Everyone files out, with Ally being the most hesitant.

Stephanie inserts her credit card and begins filling up her tank. Jasper heads inside the gas station shop.

Ally reluctantly shuffles off to the side of the building in search of a restroom.

As she hovers around the pump, Stephanie peers around the dark, quiet ghosttown.

Besides the ATTENDANT (70s) inside the station, no one else roams or drives down the street.

A shiver runs through her body as the wind picks up ever so slightly. Her eyes follow Jasper as he enters the shop.

THUNK! The pump stops as Stephanie reinserts it into the holder. She starts walking towards the shop.

INT. GAS STATION - NIGHT

The door DINGS as Stephanie enters. The shop is eerily quiet. No music plays.

She looks over at the Attendant, who stares her down. She quickly spots Jasper and strides over to him.

STEPHANIE
(whispers)
We're good to go.

JASPER
Where's Ally?

Stephanie and Jasper look out the window to see Ally scurrying over to the car, peering back in the direction she came from.

Jasper rolls his eyes.

JASPER (CONT'D)
She probably saw a spider or something.

The pair walks over to the door. The Attendant CLEARS HIS THROAT.

ATTENDANT
Be careful of the mountains. Don't exit your car.

The two stop as Jasper looks back at the Attendant.

JASPER
Excuse me?

STEPHANIE
(hisses)
Jasper. Don't.

Stephanie tries to pull him to the door, but Jasper shrugs her off.

JASPER
What's your problem man?

The Attendant clears his throat again.

ATTENDANT
No problem... I've been here a long, long time. Things happen out there. Terrible things. If you want to make it to the other end, don't exit your car.

Stephanie yanks Jasper hard as he stumbles towards the door. She shoves him outside as the door DINGS.

EXT. GAS STATION - CONTINUOUS

Stephanie continues to push him towards the car.

JASPER

What the hell was that Steph? That dude was creepy.

STEPHANIE

And you think that antagonizing him was the best call?

Jasper shrugs. He looks to the side of the car where Ally paces back and forth, peering around the darkness.

JASPER

What's going on with you?

Ally jumps, startled, as she looks back at the two.

ALLY

(shaking)

There's... there's something really messed up here. You should have read some of the stuff in the bathroom. I don't... I can't...

STEPHANIE

Alright, Drama Queen, let's go.

Stephanie unlocks the car.

The kids pile in, Ally takes her time. She looks back at the shop, the Attendant stares out the window, waving.

Stephanie starts the car and drives off.

INT. STEPHANIE'S CAR - NIGHT - TRAVELING

The music is off. Nobody utters a word.

Ally glares out the window to her left and right, trying to see everything surrounding them. She shies behind their camping gear as protection.

Stephanie stares straight ahead, glaring into the rear view mirror every few seconds.

Jasper sits, slumped and crossed armed in the passenger seat.

Several beats pass in complete silence.

Ally SNIFFS the air as she looks around at her belongings. She gags and her face scrunches from the foul smell.

ALLY

Do you guys smell that?

JASPER

No. Can I turn the radio on? You guys are creeping me out.

ALLY

It smells like something died in here.

JASPER

You used the restroom. You're probably just smelling your shit.

ALLY

Very funny. I'm serious, guys. Did we run over something?

JASPER

If we did, there's nothing we can do about the smell. It'll disappear after a while.

The car falls silent once again as everyone stares unnervingly out the window.

CUT TO:

EXT. STEPHANIE'S CAR - NIGHT - LATER

The car moves cautiously down the highway, which now runs through the heavily forested mountains.

INT. STEPHANIE'S CAR - NIGHT

Stephanie's hands grip the steering wheel tight as she stares through the windshield, scanning the road from side to side.

Ally and Jasper cover their mouths against the growing stench as Stephanie struggles to control her gag reflexes.

The stress mounts. Ally struggles in her seat. She frantically reaches for the door handle.

JASPER

What are you doing?

ALLY

I can't take it anymore. I need to get out.

STEPHANIE

We can't stop yet.

ALLY

I need to get out!

STEPHANIE

Ally--

ALLY

NOW!

STEPHANIE

Okay, okay. Hang on.

Stephanie pulls over and stops. Ally immediately shoves the door opens and crawls out.

The two watch as Ally stumbles a few paces in front of the car to catch some clean air.

She leans over and rests her hands on her knees, GASPING, her hunched over figure illuminated by the headlights.

JASPER

(heavy sigh)

C'mon. We can't leave her out there.

STEPHANIE

Ah shit.

Jasper and Stephanie exit the car.

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

They walk over to Ally, who has calmed down a bit.

STEPHANIE

You okay?

ALLY

I... I just... It just smelled like death in there. I couldn't take it.

Jasper walks back to the car and inspects all four wheels. He returns, shaking his head.

JASPER

We didn't run over anything, Ally.

Something CACKLES in the distance. It sounds like a cross between a bird and a human.

The group whirls around, frantically trying to find the source of the noise.

STEPHANIE

(whispers)

What was that?

Jasper shakes his head slowly as he stares into the darkness.

JASPER

Do you think it was that man? From the gas station.

STEPHANIE

We would have seen him.

The group falls silent, listening to the eerie noises of the forest.

Animals HOWL. Owls HOOT. Branches SNAP! Branches SNAP very close by.

The group peers to their right, staring at the darkness.

The CACKLE again.

JASPER

Get back in the car.

The CACKLE grows louder.

JASPER (CONT'D)

Now!

The group bolts back to the car. Ally stumbles and falls to the floor.

She scrambles to her feet, the CACKLING seemingly coming from all sides.

She retreats from the car, frantically scanning the dark forest by the highway.

Stephanie and Jasper scramble with their doors. As soon as Stephanie opens hers, she jumps inside.

Jasper opens his, but notices Ally backing away from the car. She stares at something moving between the tree.

A shadow amongst darkness. It's impossible to identify.
 Jasper follows her gaze but doesn't spot anything.

JASPER (CONT'D)
 (loud whisper)
 Ally! Get in the car!

Ally shakes her head as she takes another step backwards.
 She takes more and more steps back then, without warning,
 SCREAMS as she disappears into the darkness below her feet.

JASPER (CONT'D)
 ALLY!

Branches SNAP as Ally's SCREAM fades.

Jasper bolts to the edge of the highway and peers down.
 Searching the mountainside for his sister.

Stephanie steps out of the car, but remains close to the
 door.

STEPHANIE
 Do you see her?

JASPER
 No. ALLY! ALLY!?

Stephanie reluctantly heads over to Jasper to help with the
 search.

JASPER (CONT'D)
 Call the police, Steph.

Stephanie scrambles back to the car and rummages around the
 front seat in search of her phone.

Meanwhile, Jasper continues searching for Ally. His breathing
 becomes FRANTIC.

JASPER (CONT'D)
 ALLY! WHERE ARE YOU!? SAY
 SOMETHING!

A branch SNAPS to his right.

JASPER (CONT'D)
 Ally? Is that--

The branch SNAPS again.

INT. STEPHANIE'S CAR - SAME

Stephanie searches for her phone. She peers up just in time to see Jasper running away.

STEPHANIE
Jasper! Where are you going!?

He runs ahead. But suddenly something appears to yank him forwards as he disappears into the darkness. He SCREAMS out, but it subsides within seconds.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)
JASPER!!!

Overcome with panic, Stephanie SLAMS her door shut and frantically scans the darkness and foliage around her.

The forest noises sound less like forest and more like a torture chamber.

She covers her ears and closes her eyes as she tries calming herself, taking slow, deep breaths. She opens her eyes and spots her cell phone by her feet.

She snatches it up and opens it. No bars.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)
Fuck. Fuck. Fuck.

Stephanie re-enters the car.

INT. STEPHANIE'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Takes one more deep breath, then grabs the wheel. She makes a U-turn and starts driving the other way.

Her hands clench the steering wheel as her knuckles turn white.

Something HOWLS nearby as she picks up speed. Another HOWL. Stephanie starts driving faster. She increases her speed with every HOWL.

She frantically peers out all the windows. A shadow passes over the car. Stephanie panics and slams on the accelerator as a turn comes up.

She loses control of the car and SMASHES into the side of the mountain.

Stephanie flies out of the front shield.

CUT TO:

BLACK.

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

The shadow that distracted Stephanie was just a shriveled tree. Nothing more.

EXT. MOUNTAIN FOREST - NIGHT

The eerie CACKLE echoes through the forest again. Sitting on a tree branch close to the highway sits an OWL.

It opens its mouth and HOOTS.

INT. ATTENDANT'S HOME - NIGHT

The Attendant watches the nightly news.

TV REPORTER (O.S.)

A brother and sister were found dead tonight in a terrible accident. It appeared they had both fallen off the side off a cliff. The circumstances for why they were walking on the highway are still unclear.

The Attendant sighs.

EXT. MOUNTAIN FOREST - NIGHT

Far down the mountain side rests Ally's contorted body. Her skin scratched and bleeding as she lies dead.

Not too far away is Jasper, who's in similar condition.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. MOUNTAIN FOREST - THE BEND - NIGHT

Stephanie's car is smashed into a tree.

Underneath the car, a DEAD SKUNK is wedged in between the underbody shield.

The owl CACKLES one more time.

FADE TO BLACK.

T H E E N D