TROUT

BY

TAYLOR ALLGOOD

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taylorgallgood@gmail.com

FADE IN:

EXT. STREET -- DAY

The early morning sun casts an orange glow on a quiet suburban street. STEVEY (12), a chipper neighborhood paper boy, sings to himself as he pedals through his route.

STEVEY

(singing)

Some people call me the space cowboy--

He tosses a rolled paper. It plunks right onto the doormat of the intended house. Bullseye. Stevey looks pleased.

STEVEY

Some call me the gangster of love.

PLUNK!

Another perfect shot.

STEVEY

(louder)

Well some people call me Maurrrice! WOOOP WOOOO!

With flawless precision, he tosses off paper after paper. He is glorious at this, and his voice is lovely.

STEVEY

'Cause I speak of the pompatus of love.

He passes a middle-aged man, ABE, watering his lawn in boxers and an undershirt. Stevey waves and tosses the man his paper, continuing to sing. He closes his eyes, reveling in his own melodious aura.

STEVEY

People talk about me baybay, say I'm doin' you wrong, doin' you wrong. Well don't you worr--

CRASH!

Stevey's bike smashes into the back end of a prius. The boy sails through the air. His small figure is angelically framed against the blue sky above him.

THUD!

He hits the pavement, landing on his side.

STEVEY

Ah--ah-OWWWWWW! OOOOOWWWWWWWW!

INT. APARTMENT -- CONTINUOUS

A pair of eyes flutter open. They belong to DARREN (25).

STEVEY (O.S.)

AAAAAAAAHHHH! OWWWWW!

Darren squints into the bars of bright light seeping in through his bedroom window slats. He sits up in bed, looking haggard and confused.

He rises and staggers over to the window. He opens the blinds to see Stevey writhing in pain on the street below. Between the boy and his destroyed bicycle sits a silver prius.

The car looks like it was parked by a blind man with epilepsy. It sits crooked over the curb with one tire on the front lawn and the entire back end jutting out into the street.

DARREN

Oh shit.

Boxer-clad Abe rushes over to Stevey. He kneels down and holds the boy by the shoulders, examining him. He looks up at Darren's window.

ABE

Frederson, get the hell down here you jackass!

DARREN

Oh shit.

Darren spins around and heads for his bedroom door. He stops. Turns slowly. His eyes widen.

A woman sleeps face down in his bed. Her bare back is a rainbow mural of tattoos. It rises and falls in the gentle rhythm of breath.

Darren looks utterly mystified by her presence. He treads quietly toward the bed for a closer look.

ABE (O.S.)

FREDERSON!

He clenches his fists in frustration. After studying the woman for another second, he rushes out of the room.

EXT. STREET -- LATER

A shirtless, shoeless Darren watches as Stevey is loaded into the back of an ambulance. Abe looks on as well, shaking his head. The boy is strapped to a backboard with a precautionary neck brace. A young PARAMEDIC hooks the stretcher in.

PARAMEDIC

He'll be fine. Looks like some stitches are all it's gonna take.

Darren's face is covered in guilt. He approaches the ambulance just as the doors are about to shut.

DARREN

Stevey? Buddy? I'm really, really sorry. We called your mom at work. She's gonna meet you at the hospital okay?

A tiny middle finger is the only response from Stevey.

DARREN

Okay, get better alright? Happy thoughts.

SLAM!

The ambulance doors shut. It speeds off, the siren's wooing eventually fading into the distance.

Abe glares at Darren.

ABE

So?

DARREN

I honestly don't know how my car ended up there Abe.

The man gives Darren a look of disgust followed by a smack on the back of the head. Darren just nods.

DARREN

I deserved that.

Abe shakes his head again and lumbers back in the direction of his house.

DARREN

So I'll see you at the block party tomorrow right?

No response from Abe. Darren rubs his eyes and looks at his car.

DARREN

Fantastic.

INT. CAR -- MOMENTS LATER

Darren plops down in the driver's seat and slams the door. He inserts the key into the ignition. Stops. Sniffs. Grimaces.

He looks into the rear-view mirror. On the backseat lies a wet puddle of vomit. Darren shakes his head and starts the engine.

DARREN

Fan-fuckin-tastic.

EXT. DRIVEWAY -- MOMENTS LATER

The car is repositioned in the driveway. Darren climbs out of the driver's seat. As he lifts a leg to get out, his shorts pull up slightly, revealing the edge of some gauze and plastic wrap.

DARREN

What the...

He pulls the short leg up farther. Six inches of his thigh are wrapped tightly in a bandage and clear plastic .

FLASHBACK

INT. WHITE ROOM -- NIGHT

Darren's memory is blurry and chaotic. Indistinguishable human figures move in and out of sight. Muffled speech and laughing permeates the room.

An object comes into sight, moving closer until it looms over Darren. It's an electric tattooing needle.

Darren, eyes half-closed, stares at the nefarious-looking device. He grins like the drunken fool that he is.

DARREN

Dooooo it.

EXT. DRIVEWAY -- DAY

The fabric of Darren's shorts drops back over the shameful reminder. Darren rubs his temples.

DARREN

I am such a goddamn cliche.

He turns and heads for the building's street door. He stops when something catches his eye.

The tattooed WOMAN stands on the second-floor balcony outside his apartment. Panties and one of Darren's t-shirts are all that covers her. She leans on the railing, smoking a cigarette. Darren makes eye contact. She looks beautiful. He looks mortified.

The woman smiles and gives him a nonchalant wave. Darren forces a response, awkwardly returning the gesture. The woman giggles, amused at his expense.

INT. APARTMENT -- MOMENTS LATER

The door is eased shut. Darren leans against it. He looks up, as if pleading for a directive from heaven.

WOMAN

Morning.

The woman leans against the door-frame of Darren's bedroom. She looks to be in her mid thirties. Tattoos peek out from the collar of the t-shirt she has procured. Her knowing smile remains.

DARREN

Uh...hi.

MAMOW

That kid gonna make it?

DARREN

Yeah, yeah nothing serious. Probably gonna slash my tires or egg me though.

Silence. Darren ventures a little closer.

DARREN

So, look I...I uh...

WOMAN

You don't remember last night do you?

DARREN

I...yeah. I think that's an
understatement.

Another brilliant smile from the woman, the kind that would make any twenty-something stammer.

WOMAN

Can't say I'm surprised. You were way too much fun for someone who might have to reflect on his actions.

DARREN

This is really embarrassing, and believe me, I'm not the kind of guy who asks this question a lot, but uh...

Two raised eyebrows from the gorgeous woman coax it out.

DARREN

What's your name?

She erupts into a fit of laughter. Darren looks like he wants to die.

WOMAN

I'm Cadence.

DARREN

Cadence, right. I'm Darren.

WOMAN/CADENCE

I know.

DARREN

Right, of course you know. Damn it.

CADENCE

No need to get your panties in a twist. To be honest I'm surprised you're even coherent right now.

DARREN

Yeah, sending a kid to the hospital will kind of do that to ya.

CADENCE

Actually, that was kind of my fault.

DARREN

What do you mean?

CADENCE

Well, you were obviously in no condition to drive. Your asshole bros ditched you at the shop with me.

DARREN

The shop?

Cadence tugs at her shirt collar, revealing more of her body art.

CADENCE

Stinky Pinky Ink. I own it.

DARREN

Oh, right. Actually I've been meaning to ask you about that.

She laughs.

CADENCE

So you stumbled upon the abomination?

Darren lifts his pant leg to show off the bandage.

DARREN

What did I do to myself exactly?

CADENCE

Oh come on. I don't want to spoil the big reveal.

DARREN

Is it something I'm going to regret getting?

Cadence evaluates the exasperated Darren. Her bemused grin softens into something more contemplative.

CADENCE

I sure hope not. Otherwise everything I found appealing about you might go up in smoke.

Darren stares at her, once again mystified.

INT. KITCHEN -- LATER

Steam billows from from a mug of coffee as Darren pours it. Cadence, now fully clothed, sits at the kitchen table watching him as he fills two cups.

Darren finishes and sits across from her. Cadence takes the mug with both hands. She blows on the coffee, her eyes never leaving Darren.

CADENCE

Thank you.

DARREN

Okay, so you drove me home. I appreciate it and all but, why did you park the car like that?

CADENCE

Like what?

DARREN

Were you drunk too?

CADENCE

Sober as a nun. Truth is, I've never parked a car actually.

Really?

CADENCE

Yep. I get around on a segway.

Darren nods, acting like this is a normal piece of information.

DARREN

Oh, okay. That's...that's cool.

CADENCE

Darren?

DARREN

Hm?

CADENCE

I'm fucking with you.

He fakes a smile and a half-assed laugh.

DARREN

Hah, right, good one.

CADENCE

Not about the parking thing. I never got a license. But a segway? I mean come on right?

DARREN

Totally.

A painful silence enters the room as the two sip their coffee. Darren clears his throat.

DARREN

So uh, did we?

CADENCE

Did we what exactly?

Cadence is clearly enjoying this.

DARREN

Did you and I...

CADENCE

Fuck?

He nods.

CADENCE

Like two jack rabbits on the night before the apocalypse.

DARREN

Ah.

CADENCE

That's all you got to say about it?

DARREN

Well, yeah. I mean I wish I remembered it.

(motioning at her

body)

You're very...well you know.

CADENCE

Thank you. I do pilates.

DARREN

So, really you sort of took advantage of me.

CADENCE

Pretty much. Full on sexual assault. The only thing missing was a pinball machine.

Darren gives his first genuine smile of the morning.

DARREN

Look, would you like to go to breakfast with me?

CADENCE

Wish I could. One of my employees is on the way to pick me up. Have to get to work.

DARREN

Oh.

CADENCE

So what do you do for work?

DARREN

I'm a legal intern at Collins-Dinkle-Shrub-McKlanick-Fink. I start my second year of law school in the fall.

CADENCE

Wow, bagged me a lawyer. My mom would be so proud. Do you like it?

Hm?

CADENCE

Do you like what you do?

He looks up for an answer.

DARREN

Well, it's a good career path. You know, the legal system is fundamental to what makes this country-

CADENCE

You hate it.

Another silence. Then Darren nods.

DARREN

I hate it so goddamn much.

CADENCE

So why do it?

DARREN

How else am I gonna pay off my student loans?

CADENCE

Street-walking maybe? I'd cough up some serious cash for another run at your hang-low.

They both laugh. Darren looks around.

DARREN

I'm going to make some toast. You want some?

CADENCE

Sure.

Darren gets up and opens a cupboard producing a loaf of bread. He turns to stick a couple slices in the toaster. He stops.

One slot of the toaster is occupied by a paperback book. Mystified, Darren pulls it out.

INSERT: SLAUGHTERHOUSE FIVE

KURT VONNEGUT

CADENCE

You said it would be safer there.

What?

CADENCE

You kept going on and on about how that book had changed your life and how Vonnegut was the only person who could evaluate the world in a way that was truthful. Then for some reason you put it in the toaster. I think you were afraid someone would steal it.

DARREN

Weird.

He returns to the table and studies the cover as if trying to piece together a mystery.

CADENCE

So who's Kilgore Trout?

DARREN

Kilgore Trout?

CADENCE

Yeah, you kept mentioning Kilgore Trout and how he was your hero.

Darren smiles at this piece of the puzzle.

DARREN

He was sort of Vonnegut's alter-ego. This loony science fiction writer who showed up in a bunch of his books. In this one

(taps on the book)

The main character, Billy Pilgrim, is obsessed with Trout's writing. He starts to believe that he's a part of one of Trout's stories. One with aliens and a crazy zoo on another planet.

CADENCE

And why would Trout be your hero?

DARREN

I don't know really. He's just this made-up character who was sort of an extension for the crazy side of Vonnegut. He kind of used Trout as away of putting himself into the worlds that he'd dreamed up.

Cadence studies Darren intently. Another heart-melting smile appears on her face.

DARREN

What?

BZZZZ!

BZZZZ!

Cadence pulls out her phone and checks the screen.

CADENCE

Ride's here. I gotta go.

DARREN

Oh, okay.

He can't hide his disappointment.

EXT. APARTMENT -- MOMENTS LATER

Darren walks Cadence outside. A rusty Chevy sputters in the driveway. Her ride.

CADENCE

Well Darren, it was a ball meeting you.

DARREN

Yeah. Yeah you too.

CADENCE

Call me?

He grins.

DARREN

Absolutely.

She leaves him with a kiss on the cheek and makes for the car.

DARREN

Cadence?

CADENCE

Yeah?

DARREN

Why me? I mean why would you...

Cadence tilts her head as she looks back at him.

CADENCE

I don't know. I guess it had something to do with what you had me put on your leg. I didn't know what it meant, but something about it, and you, just fascinated me.

DARREN

What is it?

CADENCE

Check your leg.

With that, she climbs into the car. Darren watches as she pulls away. He looks back down at his leg.

INT. BEDROOM -- LATER

Darren sits at the edge of his bed contemplating the bandage over his thigh. He glares at it. He's clearly nervous.

Tentatively he begins to pry off the plastic wrapping. He winces as leg hairs are massacred.

The fluffy gauze now rests alone on his leg. Deep breath.

He lifts it of to reveal pink skin. At the center of the blotch is a series of letters. Tiny red pools of blood outline the beautiful cursive characters.

ON THE LEG:

KILGORE TROUT WAS HERE

He studies the mysterious phrase now etched permanently on his body. He mouths the words to himself over and over.

BZZZZ!

His phone vibrates on the nightstand. He snatches it up. The screen reads INCOMING CALL, BEN.

DARREN

Hello?

BEN (O.S.)

Buddy! You made it home!

DARREN

Yeah, no thanks to you.

BEN (O.S.)

Aw c'mon bro. You and that tattoo chick were getting along so nice. You close the deal?

It certainly would seem that way.

BEN (O.S.)

Niiice. Listen, a bunch of us are heading to Finnigan's for bloody marys. You in?

Darren looks back down at his leg.

DARREN

I don't think so. I have some reading to do.

FADE OUT