

A WAY FORWARD

by

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JULIE (V.O.)

I'd like to say I never look back,
but that would be a lie. I never
stop looking back. Wondering what
would have happened, how everything
would have turned out. It's
pointless and stupid and it drives
me crazy, but I can't help
wondering. Crossroads I can handle—
I have no problem being impulsive
and making decisions—it's the long
stretches of empty road that I can't
stand. I get to thinking about where
the other paths might have taken me,
and I have to get out and stretch
for a while. Reassure myself.
Sometimes it's so bad that I can't
even get back in the car; I just
look ahead at the path and I can't
see a way forward anymore.

EXT. ROAD

A dusty road is surrounded by miles of scrubland. The sky overhead is bleak and gray. There is a car pulled over by the side of the road. A young woman is sitting on the hood.

A pickup truck slows down as it approaches. The door opens, and the DRIVER sticks his head out. He yells to the woman over the roof of the cab.

DRIVER

Need a lift?

JULIE looks at her car, considering.

JULIE

How far are you going?

DRIVER

I'm headed for Sorrento.

JULIE

Yeah. Thanks.

She climbs into the truck.

INT. TRUCK

There is an awkward silence as he guns the engine and takes off down the road. Julie's hands are twitching nervously. The driver spits out the window.

JULIE

Do you drive this way a lot?

DRIVER

(glances at her)

Not really. You gonna be a talker, then?

JULIE

What?

DRIVER

Some people just sit and stew in their own thoughts. Some people pour out their life story at the slightest invitation.

Julie just looks at him, and he grins.

DRIVER

So what's it gonna be?

JULIE

You want me to open up?

DRIVER

Don't care one way or the other.

Julie considers for a moment. She laughs humorlessly.

JULIE

It's not much of a life story, anyway. I'm nineteen years old and I'm living with my parents. No school, no job, never had a boyfriend in my life.

DRIVER

You must beat them off with a stick.

JULIE

My dad does.

His grin fades.

JULIE

I'm kidding. I guess he's a bit overprotective. He just doesn't want me to get hurt.

He raises his eyebrows.

DRIVER

I could be a serial killer.

JULIE

Oh, I'm not allowed to leave the house. I'm running away.

DRIVER

(beat)

Well don't worry, I'm not a serial killer.

There is a long pause. Neither is sure how to respond.

EXT. ROAD

Julie is still sitting by the side of the road.

DRIVER (O.S.)

So what are you gonna do?

JULIE

(to herself)

Just keep moving. Make it up—

INT. TRUCK

JULIE

—as I go along. I'll think of something.

Her hands are still twitching.

DRIVER

(hesitantly)

Maybe you should talk to the police.

JULIE
(quickly)

No.

DRIVER
You won't even think about?

JULIE
Of course I've thought about it.
What else is there to think about
when you're locked in a room for
days on end? Hell, I've thought
about killing him a thousand
different ways, but I won't. You
know why? 'Cause you can't go back.
When the adrenaline fades, when you
start feeling that regret, there's
nothing you can do. You can only
move forward.

Silence. Her hands are motionless.

EXT. PARKING LOT

Julie gets out of the truck, not watching as it pulls away. She leans against a wall and breathes. Trying to keep her emotions in check. She reaches into her pocket and pulls out a wallet. The photo id belongs to the truck driver. She tosses it on the ground and proceeds to inspect the money.

JULIE (O.S.)
I shouldn't have done that. There's
no pattern to it—I don't know where
it comes from.

EXT. ROAD

Julie's hands. Slowly pan up to her lips, speaking.

JULIE
I feel it in my hands first, they
start twitching, and it's already
too late.

The sound of a door opening, and a bell ringing.

INT. STORE

CLERK
Can I help you?

JULIE (O.S.)
I doubt it.

Julie approaches the counter. A teenage boy, wearing an old stained t-shirt and a baseball cap backwards on his head, is watching her over his magazine.

JULIE
(to herself)
Food. I should have food.

She glances around, grabbing a few items closest to her and throwing them on the counter.

JULIE
How much for these?

He puts down his magazine and starts to add them up. One of her hands, in the foreground, very slightly begins to twitch.

CLERK
Are you in town for a while?

Her other hand begins as well.

JULIE
I don't know yet.

CLERK
Here's your total.

The number comes up on a little display. She hands him a bill, and he opens the register for her change.

CLERK
So where are you staying?

JULIE
Is that an offer?

He holds out her change. She takes his hand, and gently pulls him closer.

CLERK

I was just thinking we could see a
movie or have dinner or someth—

Julie kisses him. He pulls back, surprised. She smiles at him. He goes back for more. As he is doing so, her hand snakes past him and plucks a few bills from the register. She draws it back carefully—and his hand grabs her wrist. She looks up into his eyes.

JULIE

(softly)

What are you gonna do?

He looks scared now.

JULIE

Are you gonna hit me? Are you gonna
make me feel sorry, taste the blood
on my lips? See stars when I hit the
floor?

He reaches for a phone with his other hand.

CLERK

I'm gonna call the police—

She punches him.

JULIE

Hit me! Come on!

She continues to struggle, hitting him with her free hand.

JULIE

Why won't you hit me, you stupid—

He does finally. She goes to the ground. Panting.

The sound of a number being dialed.

JULIE (O.S.)

Dad?

EXT. ROAD

JULIE

(on the phone)
Dad...I'm sorry. I'm coming home
now. Please don't hate me.

Pan down to her hand. It is motionless, and covered in blood.