

Excerpt from
Postcard from Scotland

by

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EXT. ROAD IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE - MIDDAY

The back of a young woman standing on the roadside, in light summer clothes. She is looking in the distance where the road disappears -it doesn't seem to have an end. She makes a few steps forward along the road, then stops. She seems rather lost and out of place.

She turns around. MARIA is in her early 20ies, with all the freshness and spontaneity of her years. She stares at something. It is revealed that she is looking at the same old car, abandoned, its doors and bonnet wide open.

Actually, it's not abandoned. A TAPPING sound on metal, then JONATHAN, 30ies, lifts his head from behind the bonnet. They look at each other for a short moment, then he goes into the car and attempts to start it up. On the third attempt, the engine starts running.

She walks slowly up to the car. He lifts his eyes from a map on his lap.

JONATHAN

See? Sorted. I know what I'm doing. Hop in.

INT./EXT. CAR, ROAD TO NOWHERE - CONTINUOUS

Maria does as she's told. She sits neatly in the passenger seat, making sure her shorts don't reveal too much of her legs.

JONATHAN

There's a small town nearby.
We'll get some fuel there, and then we'll be on our way.

Out of habit, she makes a move to put her seat belt on. But it's stuck. She pulls discretely.

MARIA

Is it far?

She pulls the belt forcefully, then finally she gives up.

MARIA (cont'd)

I mean, will we make it? Will we be at the hotel on time?

They relate in the casual and slightly indifferent way of a couple that's past the first infatuation. Their age difference is obvious in their interaction -Maria rather shy and submissive, while Jonathan has the confident, controlled, controlling manner of a big brother.

JONATHAN

Relax, Kiddo. Anytime is 'on time'. It's called holiday, remember?

He pats the top of her head, messing up her hair. Then he has an idea. He takes out a mobile phone and holds it as a camera.

JONATHAN (cont'd)

Give us a smile.

She fakes one.

He leans over and gives her a peck on the lips.

The car drives off. On the road behind it, an oily patch, and a trail of liquid.

INT./EXT. CAR, OPEN ROAD - CONTINUOUS

TWO WOMEN are walking their DOGS along the road. As the car approaches, they move aside and look at the couple inquisitively. Jonathan makes a double-take -they don't look half bad.

Maria is still studying the map. Yet she notices, and blushes, in embarrassment and secret envy. She wipes her flushed face.

JONATHAN

I know, it's really hot today.
Well, we're almost there. We'll get something to cool us down.

EXT. OUTSKIRTS OF SMALL TOWN - CONTINUOUS

PUFFING and GASPING, the car enters a quiet village on its last drops of fuel. Making a lot of noise in the stillness of the afternoon.

EXT. SMALL FUEL STATION - CONTINUOUS

It just about makes it to the fuel station. Maria gets out first, uncomfortable and embarrassed. She walks off, towards a sign for toilets.

Jonathan gets out too, to greet the DOZY FUEL STATION ATTENDANT who is making his way in no hurry.

INT. FUEL STATION TOILET - CONTINUOUS

Maria's face is really dirty. Actually, it's her double in the small grubby mirror.

She has a long, intense look at herself, assessing her image. Repeats the half-hearted smile she gave for the photo. She tries different things with her hair. With her sleeves. Tries out different expressions -vanity, seduction, innocence, laughter, a kiss, winking of an eye.

EXT. SMALL FUEL STATION - CONTINUOUS

Jonathan, holding a bottle of water, is paying the attendant. He gets into the car and tries to start the engine. Again. And again.

Puzzled, he watches Maria walk past the car and into the road. Again, he tries the ignition.

Finally, the car starts. He drives off.

INT./EXT. CAR, OFF THE FUEL STATION - CONTINUOUS

He catches up with her on the small road. He stops.

She leans on the window. Fresher now, playful, slightly flirtatious. Bright red lipstick. Shorts and sleeves rolled up.

MARIA

Hello there... Are you going... north?

He pauses for a moment, taken by surprise.

Then, he plays along. He replies with the same cheek.

JONATHAN

No, I'm going east.

MARIA

East is good. Will you give me a lift?

Boldly she opens the door and hops inside. She doesn't take care to cover her thighs this time.

MARIA (cont'd)

Well, what do you say?

JONATHAN

Why don't you hop in?

He drives off.

INT./EXT. CAR, OPEN ROAD - CONTINUOUS

For a little while, they drive in silence. Sideways glances from Jonathan, who is trying to evaluate her new persona. Maria pretends she doesn't notice.

JONATHAN

So, where is it that you're going?

MARIA

Anywhere, really. As long as it's somewhere interesting.

JONATHAN

A girl like you, out here on your own?

MARIA

Well, you know, I'm getting to know the world. There's nothing wrong with that.

JONATHAN

Are you not afraid? I could be anybody.

MARIA

And so could I.

JONATHAN

Ha ha. Yes, maybe I should be scared of you... Well, I'll take my chances.

A pause.

MARIA

I'm Maria, by the way.

JONATHAN

Jonathan.

She leans unnecessarily low to turn the radio on. She fiddles with bad reception for a bit, revealing more and more cleavage. Then she gives up.

MARIA

It's really hot today, don't you think?

JONATHAN

Is it? I hadn't noticed.

MARIA

You got anything to cool us down?

She turns around and reaches to the back seat. More sideways glances from Jonathan at her stretched body. When she sits back properly, she is holding the bottle of water he bought at the fuel station.

MARIA (cont'd)
(disappointed, dismissive)
Water...

She fiddles with the bottle for a while, then opens it and pours water on her face, which runs down her t-shirt.

MARIA (cont'd)
This is a nice car you got here.
Love the air-co. And the music is
fab.

JONATHAN
I'm not complaining.

MARIA
I bet you get a lot of
hitch-hikers with a car like
this.

JONATHAN
Oh yes.

A pause. Then, with a risque smile...

JONATHAN (cont'd)
But today is a bit special. So
tell me, where is it you'd like
to go? I'll take you anywhere you
want, anywhere at all.

MARIA
Alright then...

She takes the map that's lying on the floor, covers her eyes with one hand and, with the index finger of the other, draws circles above the map.

MARIA (cont'd)
Let's go...

She lands her finger pointing somewhere at random.

MARIA (cont'd)
...here!

INT./EXT. CAR, CROSSROADS - A LITTLE LATER

They're approaching a crossroads. The moment they're going past it, she points at one of the roads at random.

MARIA

Here!!

There's lots of SCREAMING, and the car makes an abrupt turn.

INT./EXT. CAR, SMALL VILLAGE - LATER

As the car moves slowly through the quiet village, Maria is looking into the side-streets for any locals.

MARIA

Here.

Jonathan turns. Maria leans out of the window seductively, asking for directions. The FEW LOCALS in the street, in their cars, at their windows, give her bored looks, and get on with their business. Jonathan observes.

MARIA (cont'd)

Excuse me! Excuse me, we're looking for the B52. Hello? Could you tell me what way is the B52? The road up north -you know? Hello-o! Does no one speak English here? What is this place?

Finally a GROUP OF LOCALS stops. They have a small conference in the local vernacular, then start gesturing at her and give her an obscure, long-winded reply.

Jonathan leans towards her window, to have a better look at them.

JONATHAN

(to the locals, with a broad fake smile)

Thank you. That's awfully helpful.

MARIA

What did they say?

JONATHAN

No idea.

He drives on.

EXT. SMALL ROADSIDE CAFE - A LITTLE LATER

They are sitting at the opposite sides of a naff plastic table, covered with empty cans and bottles, bags of crisps and wrappers of sweeties.

He has sunglasses on and 'looks' straight ahead. She is leaning on one elbow, holding her head. They are not speaking or looking at each other -motionless, as if it was a still photograph.

It isn't. A car BEEPS, a shop's door opens setting off a CHIMING sound, a baby BABBLES, a mobile phone RINGS, a dog BARKS. A WOMAN'S SILHOUETTE walks by -Jonathan's eyes follow her. As if coming out of a trance, Maria speaks.

MARIA

Have you ever cheated on me?

JONATHAN

But I just met you.

MARIA

(remembering the game)

Oh yeah.

She sits up, suddenly self-conscious.

Slowly the bigger picture is revealed. The couple is sitting at a makeshift cafe next to a fuel station.

They both assume a self-important pose and address each other as if they are speaking of the most serious matters.

MARIA (cont'd)

So, what do you do, eh...
Jonathan?

JONATHAN

I ponder.

MARIA

I mean, for a living?

JONATHAN

I ponder.

MARIA

Is that your job? A ponderer?

JONATHAN

Uhuh. A pondering fellow.

A pause. Both pondering the heavens.

MARIA

As a matter of interest, I am a
ponderer myself. Only, I do it as
a kind of hobby.

JONATHAN

An expensive hobby.

MARIA

Oh yes! It's my little luxury,
you see.

JONATHAN

(looking upwards, sunglasses
always on)

I see.