

**THE DESERT**

by

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The wind howls softly, the trees gently rustle, distantly the motorway sighs...

1 INT. LIVING ROOM - DAWN 1

The room is tinted by blue dawn light; the door to the hallway hangs open, swaying minutely...

*A breath passes through the room -*

*And the door whips shut with a bone-shaking SLAM, vibrating sharply through the air...*

The door opens. There appears a young man, about eighteen, with a blue jumper and a soft face. CLAUDE.

He walks forward, over to the window...

The sky is a deep, flat and fleeting blue. The window is wide open. Beside it a fern moves, restless in the wind, as do the treetops in the distance.

Claude brings a finger to the fern - patches of brown mar its thin leaves.

He reaches his hands to the top of the window frame -

*And slides it down, shut, the sounds of the city falling away-*

## THE DESERT

2 INT. KITCHEN - DAY 2

Outside, the sky is blue and perfect, with sparse patches of wispy white clouds. Crickets chirp, the wind blows in great gusts, and the city distantly roars with bass, sirens and the screams of children playing.

WILL (about eighteen, wearing a white vest) sits in the doorway to the garden, his legs outstretched, sweat glistening on his brow; all painted with a shine by the bright daylight. Out in the garden the tangled branches rock back and forth in the breeze.

In his lap is a guitar - he's holding a phone to his ear.

WILL

Yeah. Okay. Bye. Mwah.

He looks down at his phone, almost grimacing - he hangs up.

WILL (CONT'D)  
...I... I really... I think I'm  
ready for a loveless marriage.

On the other side of the room sits Seb, at the table, wearing a knit jumper; he's leaning back, his eyes down at the table, a playing card in his hand: solitaire.

SEB  
(looking up)  
Hm?

WILL  
I really think I'm ready for a  
loveless marriage.

SEB  
What, really that bad?

WILL  
I don't even like him. He's  
confusing and un-peaceful.

SEB  
Yeah, God, sounds vague.

WILL  
It is. A nuisance.

SEB  
So are you 'n' him gonna break up?

WILL  
Could you call Claude?

SEB  
Why don't you call Claude?

WILL  
Cos, I dunno, I'm over here.

Seb stares at Will for a second, then twists around on his chair, to face the door to the hallway.

SEB  
*Claude!!*

Beat... Seb turns back around.

WILL  
Could you pass me an ice cube?

SEB  
Why don't you *get* an ice cube?

WILL  
Cos I'm *right* over here!

Seb looks over - and looks back.

SEB  
They *melted*.

WILL  
Seriously?

SEB  
Yeah, I guess you shoulda got one yourself.

WILL  
(re: the knit jumper)  
Also how are you wearing that? How are you not dying?

SEB  
Too chill. And the ice is actually water now, if you want that.

Will stares at the sideboard for a moment - then wobbles to his feet, clutching his guitar by the neck. He walks over.

He picks up the little white ice-tray, and brings it to his mouth, tipping his head back. He pulls it away, taking a refreshed breath out.

WILL  
Mm. Fuckin' delicious.

He pauses for a moment... then turns to look to his right. He gently puts down the ice-tray, steps over, and picks up a big glass jug.

He goes over to the door, balances his guitar against the wall, twists the handle, the door opens...

3 EXT. GARDEN - CONTINUOUS

3

A stone patio is scattered with plant-pots, some green, some dead, some dying...

Out leans Will's hand - he sets the jug down, and reels back in.

4 INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

4

Will breathes out through his nose, staring down at the jug as he leans back in against the door. He pulls his guitar towards him.

WILL  
God, I'm sweatin'.

SEB  
Relax. What word rhymes with doorway?

WILL  
...café?

SEB  
No.

WILL  
Sashay?

SEB  
No.

WILL  
What, is it like for a poem?

SEB  
Yeah, they want me to do four lines, first two seven syllables and the other two six.

WILL  
Does that - is that even a thing?

SEB  
No, it's bullshit.

Will stares off...

WILL  
...Hm...

Seb's phone buzzes - he turns away from his cards, taps the screen.

SEB  
*Claude!*

- 5 INT. BATHROOM - SAME TIME 5
- Claude's just wriggling a pale blue shirt on over his back, standing in front of the shower, phone to his ear.
- CLAUDE  
(turning around)  
Yeah, I was just gonna ask... if  
the water is uh working down there.  
At all.
- 6 INT. KITCHEN - INTERCUT 6
- Will's turned to look at Seb.
- SEB  
No, no it's not... coming down?
- CLAUDE  
*Comin' down.*
- 7 INT. BATHROOM - INTERCUT 7
- Claude hangs up.
- As he does up the buttons on his shirt, he stops over in front of the mirror, the sink beneath full of water...
- He dunks his head in, hand on the basin. He leans back up with a small splash.
- He scoops up a handful of water, awkwardly pours it onto a little potted plant on the shelf, and slides out the door.
- 8 INT. KITCHEN - DUSK 8
- Lazy guitar notes, humming...
- The lamp casts down warm orange light through the shadows. Crickets chirp, the wind whispers softly, and the hum of the city is far away.
- Claude leans back in a chair by the table, his head hanging, his eyes lazily looking forward. Behind him is Seb, same place, same cards.
- The garden is a swaying shadow, the sky above a thick and pale orange, fading into the blue night-time clouds.
- Will sits by the door, cross-legged, guitar in his lap, painted a faint purple by the dying light.

Will's playing a song, humming along to the guitar; soft, sweet, melancholy, the notes are simple and sparse...

Claude's face is buried in his arm, leaning down awkwardly on the table.

A moment more passes in stillness.

There's a shimmer, a tapping sound...

Will's guitar stops.

*The sound hardens, multiplies-*

Claude looks up. *The sound of the rain is now close and clear.*

...

CLAUDE  
(quietly)  
*Help me get the plants.*

He rises out of his chair, the legs screeching against the floor. He paces out of the room, Seb and Will rising in tow...

9 INT. LANDING - MOMENTS LATER

9

*The three pace up the stairs, wood groaning under their footsteps.*

Claude and Seb charge forward, curving up the stairs at the banister, Will turns the corner and disappears into the living room...

10 INT. BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

10

A view out into the hallway - Seb and Claude jump up the stairs, Claude slips into a doorway; Seb paces into the bathroom, grabs a large plant off the cistern, paces back, grabs the little plant off of the shelf -

Claude comes out of the door, holding a single little plant - he stretches out his hand, Seb passes him the large plant. They thump back down the stairs, leaving the hall still and empty...

11 INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

11

*Claude, Seb, and then Will (holding the big ferns) bustle in, and disappear out the front door...*

The rain sizzles softly...

And in they come, their faces glistening with rain - Will's wrapped his arms around himself; Seb's grimacing, his shoulders locked tight and high; Claude's wiping his brow.

Will collapses in his seat, as does Seb, back in front of his cards. He looks up as a kitchen towel flies toward him-

As does one towards Will, draping his face.

WILL

*Oh - thank you!*

Claude's leaning against the countertop...

CLAUDE

You're welcome.

He stares outside for a moment... and steps over to the middle chair, lowering himself into it with a quiet sigh.

His eyes watch as Will moves-

And steps over-

And offers up to Claude - the *clear glass jug*, half-full with glistening water. Claude smiles.

CLAUDE (CONT'D)

(mouthing)

*Thanks.*

He takes a big, long sip. He turns around.

CLAUDE (CONT'D)

Seb?

SEB

(taking it)

Oh. Cheers.

Seb takes a quick sip, turning his eyes back down to his cards...

He picks up a card, and holds it up near his forehead, his face locked in concentration...

He puts it down.



Big luminous drops of water hang from the top of the doorframe...

Will's looking up at them - outside in front of him the rain is a silvery mist.

He tilts his head down, slightly turned to look behind him...

WILL

I spend time - in the doorways  
Now... the morning brings the days  
My guitar - sings a song  
Beautifully, for me.

SEB

Hm?  
(re: the water)  
You want some of this?

Will turns to look blankly at the jug. He stretches out his hand, pulling it over the table towards him. He lifts it to his mouth, eyes wide and elsewhere...

He turns back, to face the door...

CUT TO BLACK.

*The sound of a faint breath, a creaking, faint whispers...*

12

INT. KITCHEN - DAWN

12

The kitchen is tinted with blue dawn light.

Claude's head lifts up a little off the table, away from his arm-pillow.

He leans up. He looks out, the outside's weak glow softly stroking his face.

He turns around...

On the table behind him is a completed game of solitaire.

Seconds later: he's shuffling on a blue jumper, stepping up and over to the sink.

He reaches his hand forward, pulls the tap-handle - water pours out, smacking the bottom of the basin; he lets it splash on his hands, then he rubs his face...

He pauses, looking down at the running tap...

He turns it off.

*Upstairs - a door SLAMS, vibrating sharply through the air.*

Claude steps out into the hallway, soundlessly he ascends the stairs...

And is gone.

A guitar begins to play, calm yet strong...

CLAUDE (V.O.)  
The wind pulls me through myself  
Stretching out across the blue  
Breathing, I look up at  
Dunes, behind the curtain.

13

EXT. GARDEN - DAWN (LATER)

13

Orange light is beginning to paint the air...

The fern wobbles in the wind, its leaves still brown...

On the ground glistens a crowd of glasses, surrounding the big jug, all full and flat with water, wobbling and shimmering in the breeze.

On the bench sits Will. His guitar is in his hands, which pick gently at the strings. Seb's head is nestled, asleep, on his shoulder. The light is golden.

Will looks up - and with a smile and sideways nod, beckons.

Claude steps over and around to his other side, sits down on the bench - and slowly leans down onto Will's leg. Claude stares off into the dawn light-

Which is breaking through the trees, making the sky glow.

The wind is starting to blow -

It crosses over a patch of sky, clear and flat and just about blue,

Another patch of sky, awash with white clouds,

And another - clear and orange, deep and blue, indistinct and endless.

Below on earth can be heard: The trees starting to rustle,  
and the motorway starting to breathe.

CUT TO BLACK.