

museum keepers
[THIRD DRAFT]

written by

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Music for tone: Ben Howard - Bones, Oats in the Water, Depth Over
Distance, I Will Be Blessed, The Fear, Nica Libres at Dusk &
Follaton Wood

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INT. CHURCH. DAY.

People in black clothes stand around talking to each other, avoiding discussing what they should - why they're all there.

MIA pretends to be listening to someone, offering polite conversation, her mind clearly elsewhere.

MIA

Ah, nothing too special. It's only
a silly part-time waitressing job.

A deep melancholy set in her eyes as she looks around a room full of strangers.

GUEST #1

(To MIA, muffled, almost
inaudible)

You say that but it's always a good
foot in the door that can lead to
more and at the very least gives
you a bit of income for the time
being while you have your eyes set
on breaking into a famously
difficult industry.

MIA's line of sight gets caught on one person, NOAH, who is also stuck in polite meaningless chatter. They look down, not particularly listening or engaged, the day weighing heavy on their mind.

NOAH

Yea, yea, hopefully graduating in
the summer if all goes to plan.

MIA notices NOAH look at the 'In memory of' card in their hands and have to hold back the tears.

MIA

Yea, it won't be easy but I've met
loads of great people who're all
happy to help me get started.

NOAH mimes that they're going off for a smoke to who they're talking to and exits.

GUEST #1

(To MIA, muffled, almost
inaudible)

Exactly! Exactly, it's all who you
know, not what you know.

EXT. CHURCH GROUNDS. DAY.

NOAH takes a deep breath and sits on a small slope by the front of the church, to one side, trying to stay out of view.

They looks out at the landscape, wanting to be anywhere but there.

Hold.

MIA approaches from behind and goes to sit next to them.

MIA
Can I borrow a light?

NOAH
Sorry, I don't smoke.

MIA
Thank God, neither do I.

NOAH
So what would you have done if I handed you one?

MIA
Cross my fingers you weren't very observant.

NOAH smiles for the first time in a long time.

It falls to silence.

Hold.

MIA (CONT'D)
How you holding up?

NOAH looks away and takes a deep breath.

MIA (CONT'D)
Me too.

Beat.

NOAH
We never used to really talk, just us two.

MIA
Always left the chatting to them...

NOAH

Only cos we couldn't get a bloody word in.

NOAH giggles to themselves, MIA stays quiet.

NOAH (CONT'D)

It's just us... and I can't quite wrap my head around it.

MIA

I know it's what everyone always says but it's true... it just doesn't feel real, tangible, like it has actually happened to us, in our lives. More it's a scene in a film and now soon they're gonna call cut and we could just pick up the phone/

NOAH

/And they'd answer.

MIA smiles. Pause.

NOAH (CONT'D)

Everyone in there just wants to avoid it, like why are they asking me about Uni? Today's about *them*.

MIA

Had to tell four or five people about my job today and I think it's just about the dullerest thing about me.

NOAH

Nah, your jokes are up there.

They both smile.

MIA

It feels unfair... That we get this time, we get all these extra days.

She looks away.

MIA (CONT'D)

I feel so guilty about it, why do we deserve them?

Pause.

NOAH

I don't know if we do... I wish I could donate it back to *them* like 'hey, here's some time. I really, really don't need it.'

NOAH catches themselves and deeply inhales.

NOAH (CONT'D)

It's so exhausting.

She angles ever so slightly towards them.

NOAH (CONT'D)

Just breathing and blinking and eating and thinking. Just... life is...

(softly)

I'm so tired.

MIA looks out to the distant trees.

NOAH (CONT'D)

Is there not a part of you that just wants to exhale, peacefully and slowly... to just be done.

MIA

I, erm, I...

NOAH

(Softly)

It's okay.

MIA

(Softly)

Yea... yea it's okay.

She adjusts her position.

MIA (CONT'D)

They're unavoidable, no matter what I do to distract, I seem to be stuck in their shadow. I can't even just tell a story anymore y'know? Cos the memories are the only mark that they have left on the world. And that's so much pressure. I can't reminisce or look over photos because it's like I should be cataloguing and, and preserving it in glass, archiving it, like I work in some museum.

(MORE)

MIA (CONT'D)

It'll come up in conversation and I'll mention something anecdotally, like about that time we were so drunk they tried to put on my jacket without realising I was wearing it, so it just ended up being one big hug and then everybody joined in and and...

She holds back the tears.

MIA (CONT'D)

I brought it up cos it fitted into a conversation and everybody went from chatting away to just quiet... Painful silence. Like I was talking about something upsetting and sad when, when no, no that that's when it was good and simpler. Why does it now have to be all viewed through that lens. Like that is the only window to peer in through. There's all this good stuff the, the good years. And just because of... that, that small bit at the end... the fact that there is an end, it taints it all.

Pause.

NOAH

(A faint smile)

It was a great hug.

MIA chuckles.

MIA

(Under her breath)

Yea... yea it was.

They both smile. Pause.

MIA (CONT'D)

I think I'll see them again. I really do.

NOAH

I envy that... so much. I wish I thought it... It's comforting.

MIA

It's more than that, it's...

NOAH

Scary to think of the alternative. Because I can't imagine or picture or comprehend anything other than this. There is just nothing. Nothing to look forward to, no gates in the sky or happy reunions, just... 'That's all folks! The End'. And what am I supposed to do with that? How do I wrap my head around the fact that someone is gone and that's immovable, that's unchangeable. I feel guilty about it as well, I don't just want to come and rain on everyone's parade; normally I'd just sit and nod along saying yes, I'll see them down the road but I just... I can't, they are... gone. You don't grieve the past, you can miss it, but it's, it's the yearning for... for more. If someone stops mid-sentence it's not the things they've said that you need, it's all the things unexpressed and the feelings left unspoken... that's, that's the stuff that stays with you like the words are still stuck in your throat. And, and we think that nobody else's pain compares. Ours is the worst that there is. 'Oh, your dog died? You don't get it, you don't'. But... but they do, it's one of the most basic and universal things out there, up there with blinking and breathing. We've all done it before... and we'll all do it again, and again, and again.

MIA

I like the idea of finality. I'm so tired now... after twenty years, I don't know what I'd do with an eternity. And yet, I can't face that. There, there can't be an end, there has to be more. You have all this life in you and it can't just go nowhere.

NOAH

If the afterparty's so incredible, why do we bother with this?

Silence.

MIA holds back the tears.

The leaves blow in the wind.

Gradually, they find themselves holding each others hand.

MIA

There, there has to be a barrier,
doesn't there. You're not going to
jump off a cliff just because you
know the water below is lovely and
warm. I don't know if I'll ever get
over *this*, it may just be something
that I carry with me, y'know? But
that doesn't have to make it sad, I
think it's beautiful that we'll
both always love them. So much. And
even if we never said that anywhere
near as much as we should have;
they knew it.

NOAH's eyes fill with tears.

MIA (CONT'D)

They had to. It's okay to be this
exhausted, just give yourself the
proper time and that won't be one
solid block of doing nothing for
however many weeks. Just working on
it, and we can do that together. I
know we haven't really spoken too
much before today but it'd be nice
to change that. Fuck knows what
happens when we die, I don't know
where I stand with faith or
spirituality or any of it... I
liked what the Priest said during
the service, I might see if I can
speak to him before he goes. But
Noah, there is absolutely no shame
or guilt in thinking that death is
the end. It's fucking scary, but
it's okay.

NOAH rests their head on MIA's shoulder.

Pause.

NOAH

I really liked how you said it
earlier, something about working in
a museum dedicated to them.

(MORE)

NOAH (CONT'D)

It's fun dusting off some of the exhibits. But we don't need to archive it all, it's nice that we'll always have some for just us though, right?

MIA

Yea, staff only.

They both chuckle.

Pause.

NOAH

D'you remember the time they tried to dye their hair but didn't read the instructions so it literally all fell out?

They both laugh.

MIA

They suited baldness annoyingly well.

NOAH

(Smiling)

The Bastard.

FADE TO:

INT. CHURCH. DAY.

People in black clothes stand around talking to each other, avoiding discussing what they should - why they're all there.

GUEST #2

What was it Julie said you were doing? Working down the shop?

MIA

Ah I'm actually waitressing down at that little café by the clocktower.

GUEST #2

Oh and how are you finding it?

NOAH stands opposite GUEST #3.

NOAH

So yea, if all goes to plan will hopefully be graduating this summer.

GUEST #3

Oh, that's marvellous! Where were
you studying to?

The voices muffled out as we see MIA and NOAH are stood back
to back, still in their own separate conversations.

Subtly, almost out of view at first, without looking at each
other NOAH's fingers reach out to MIA's.

They both smile, hand in hand, while continuing the chatter.
Happier and confident knowing they're no longer going through
all of this alone.

FADE TO BLACK.