

Anywhere But Here

By

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INT./EXT. RENT-A-CAR SHOP -- PITTSBURGH -- DAY

A smoke stack puffs perfect little clouds into a gray sky. At the counter, JONAS BERKSON, a Manhattanite, which is to say- liberal, meticulous, easily offended and owning a nice watch, stares at the attendant. On a bench next to a gray outdoor ashtray and some baggage sits his son, JACKSON, reading a comic book. The attendant, a feisty Pokemon of a woman, speaks with a heavy Pittsburgh accent. She holds the phone to her chest briefly.

ATTENDANT

I'll be right with yun's.

Jonas turns his head left and right, looking for the implication of her plural. She speaks back into the phone.

ATTENDANT (CONT'D)

Uh huh. Uh huh. Friday. Uh yun's gonna be... Ok. Yup. Bye bye. Oh Jon. Jon-Jon. Oop. Lost 'em.

Jonas grimaces at the attendant. On the bench outside the office Jackson dangles his feet and tries to push a leaf around with one of his untied shoelaces. He picks up his comic book, *Wolverine*. *Wolverine* slashes through the barrel of a shotgun in a furious rage.

JONAS

So, I can return this early if I need to? There's no fee?

ATTENDANT

You can return it up to two weeks early for a refund of the previous weeks rental price, minus the price of the insurance. We can't refund this week, but the two weeks after, as long as you get it in Sunday night or Monday before nine AM. You said don't need insurance?

JONAS

I don't need it.

ATTENDANT

All right then, you should get a full refund for those two weeks. So you're not gonna need the full three weeks?

JONAS

I'm not sure.

ATTENDANT

Well, just give us a call when you think you'll be returning the vehicle and we can deduct the remaining days for ya.

JONAS

Great.

ATTENDANT

Yun's need a GPS?

JONAS

No thanks.

ATTENDANT

Yun's want a map? It's free!

She sings the word "free," waving it in front of her face.

JONAS

No thanks.

ATTENDANT

You from around here?

JONAS

I was raised in Blawnox.

He points briefly towards the front door.

ATTENDANT

Oh get out. I have a cousin in Blawnox. Now I think she lives in Dormont. She got married and moved somewheres. I think it's Dormont. Oh well, I bet it's changed a lot since you were a kid. Don't ya think?

Jonas' smile says, "Oh God, make it stop."

ATTENDANT (CONT'D)

What school did yuns go to?

JONAS

Listen, is there something else I need to sign? Is that it?

## ATTENDANT

Oh! Of course. Here are your keys  
Mr. Berkson. Thank you for renting  
from (rental agency).

She gives Jackson a wave meant only for a small child, jazz fingers included. Jackson smiles and waves back earnestly.

## INT. CAR -- 279 NORTH TUNNEL -- AFTERNOON

The rental car is a mirror for the repeating lights of the tunnel. Jackson try to track each light individually with his eyes before moving onto the next. Through the windshield the city of Pittsburgh opens itself up like a book.

## INT. ALLEGHENY GENERAL HOSPITAL -- EVENING

Golf is on the TV. The room echoes with the sounds of quiet broadcasters whispering the underlying meaning-of-it-all. In the open comic book on the seat next to Jackson, Wolverine cries in rage, unsheathing his claws. JONAS SR., 80-some years of age, sleeps in a hospital bed with his head propped to view the TV. Jackson stares at his face full of wrinkles, liver spots, and a spit bubble on his lip. Oxygen tubes run from his nose to his ears. In the hallway Jonas consults with a doctor who gesticulates only with his right hand.

## INT. ALLEGHENY GENERAL HOSPITAL HALLWAY -- NIGHT

Jonas and Jackson hold hands down a long fluorescent hallway. Jackson looks into each room, a shuffled deck of oldness. People watch TV in the dark. Some people moan. Rooms are filled with balloons and loved ones. Every one of the occupants is dying. He looks into each open door.

## INT. CAR -- NIGHT

JONAS

Do you know who Jacques Cousteau  
is?

JACKSON

Jock?

JONAS

Jacques Cousteau. The great French  
explorer. The underwater Frenchman.

JACKSON

No.

JONAS

Jacques Cousteau was the greatest explorer that ever sailed an ocean. He discovered everything there is to discover in the seas.

JACKSON

Cool.

JONAS

But Jacques died with one huge regret. Despite all the amazing places he had explored, there was one place he never did, and it broke his heart.

JACKSON

Where?

JONAS

The past.

JACKSON

Whoa. So he never got to do the one thing he wanted to do?

JONAS

That's right. He couldn't.

JACKSON

That's really sad.

JONAS

Yes. Yes it is. He was a scientist but his technology wasn't advanced enough. Wanna know a secret?

JACKSON

What?

JONAS

Jacques Cousteau was your great great great grandfather.

JACKSON

Nah aw.

JACKSON

It's true. You know what this means? This means that his dream

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JACKSON (cont'd)  
isn't totally lost. I mean, if you were able to complete his quest for him it would almost be like he did it himself. Especially since I've discovered something very unique about your grandfather's house that would really excite Jacques.

JACKSON  
What?

JONAS  
It's trapped in time. In 1958. When we step foot in your Grandfathers house we will actually be traveling to 1958.

JACKSON  
What's gonna happen?

JONAS  
Oh nothing much happens, it seems like time moves normally but only because my technology can tear open the fabric of space-time. But everything in it, the TV, the clocks, the refrigerator, all trapped in 1958, forever.

JACKSON  
Cool.

JONAS  
I think Jacques would be very happy to know that his great great grandson completed this amazing exploration. It was his last wish.

JACKSON  
Ok. I can do it.

INT. ALLEGHENY GENERAL HOSPITAL -- DAY

Golf is on the TV. Jackson reads comics. Jonas pockets a cell phone in the hallway and walks in.

JONAS  
So how you feeling, Dad?

JONAS SR.

How does it look like I'm feeling?  
I crap in a bowl. Ask me next time  
I crap on a toilet. I'll be jolly  
as hell.

JONAS

Yup. That's great dad.

JONAS SR.

You know I've been in the same  
goddamn spot for 60 years and you  
haven't come to visit me once.

JONAS

You just make it so enticing, Dad.  
There's nothing like the  
soul-crushing grayness of the  
Pittsburgh suburbs, huh?

JONAS SR.

The weather my ass. New York is no  
better. At least Pittsburghers  
aren't candy asses who complain  
about the weather.

JONAS

Why would I need to come here dad,  
I fly you to us. There's three of  
us, there's one of you.

JONAS SR.

My flying days are over. Watcha  
reading, boy?

JACKSON

Wolverine.

JONAS SR.

He's a hairy som' bitch isn't he.

Jackson giggles.

JONAS

That's great, Dad.

JONAS SR.

Oh shit, I'm sorry. Are you also 85  
and shitting in a bowl? Want to  
trade bowls to shit in cause mine's  
full. No? In that case, shit piss  
balls crap crapper candy-ass  
fuck-a-duck.

Jackson is giggling hysterically, Jonas is furious.

JONAS

Buddy, come here. Go get a soda.

Jonas gives Jackson a dollar.

JACKSON

I don't want a soda.

JONAS

Get me one.

JACKSON

What do you want?

JONAS

I don't care. Come on.

Jackson leaves.

JONAS SR.

Ah, Jesus Christ. You think your life was such tough shit? You had gifts in your Christmas stocking you little shit. You know what I had in my stockings when I was a whiny-ass kid? A fist full of shit with a candle on it.

JONAS

I'm not gonna do this with you. If you don't behave in front of Jackson we're gonna go. Do you want me to go?

JONAS SR.

You and I both know I'm not leaving this hospital. I'll be a perfect gentleman when I'm dead.

JONAS

Yeah, that remains to be seen.

JONAS SR.

Jonas, How can you hate me so much?

JONAS

Dad. Jesus. I don't hate you.

Jonas sighs and shakes his head.

JONAS SR.  
You look at me like I'm a bum who  
crapped himself.

JONAS  
Great, that's just great.

Jonas Sr. looks away. The two sit in silence and Jackson  
comes back with a Dr. Pepper.

JONAS (CONT'D)  
Thanks, buddy.

JONAS SR.  
Why didn't you name him Jonas, huh?  
We coulda had three generations of  
Jonas's in this room, instead you  
gotta name him after some dancing  
Sambo.

JONAS  
Wow. Sambo, really?

JACKSON  
I like the name Jonas.

JONAS SR.  
See? He likes it. Let's have a  
vote. Everyone who isn't a pussy  
raise their hand.

He motions to Jackson to raise his hand, and he does.

JONAS  
Not everyone is megalomaniacal  
enough to brand their prodigy with  
their own name, dad.

Jonas Sr. turns to Jackson with a comical frown.

JONAS SR.  
Do you know what the hell he's  
saying? Those lips keep flapping  
and I don't understand a word of  
it. Flap flap flap flap.

JONAS  
I'm saying, I don't want my son to  
be like me. I want him to be like  
him. I'm sure you will never  
understand that. I think this is  
enough for one day, huh? Jackson  
get your stuff.

JACKSON  
Can we stay?

JONAS  
We're going.

JONAS SR.  
Awe come on. Let the kid stay.

They gather their things and close the door behind them, leaving Jonas Sr. alone, looking very old.

INT. GRANDFATHERS HOUSE BASEMENT -- NIGHT

Jackson handles a bottle of Coke from the 70's, covered in dust. Around him is the detritus of 60 years. Jackson searches under blankets and flips through old *Time* magazines. He picks up *Time* issue March 28th, 1960, and studies it briefly. He inspects a picture of Jonas Sr. as a young man, happily holding a baby. He digs deeper and pulls out a rusty shotgun.

JACKSON  
Whoa.

Spinning the shotgun around the room slowly he centers on a deer's head.

INT. GRANDFATHERS HOUSE -- NIGHT

Jonas flips on the light of a bedroom. On the wall is a painting of Teddy Roosevelt. Jonas snorts.

JONAS  
Unbelievable.

He flips on the light in a kid's room. Awards for mediocre athletic feats dress a mantel. He sits down on the bed, reaches over to the nightstand drawer and pulls out a penny stamped with the figure of a buffalo. He smiles. He picks up a framed picture of a woman at the park. He stops smiling, and rubs his thumb across the picture. He flips off the light in the doorway and stands there in the dark.

INT. ALLEGHENY GENERAL HOSPITAL -- DAY

Jonas fixes plates of pizza as Jonas Sr. watches golf.

INT. ALLEGHENY GENERAL HOSPITAL -- NIGHT

The three watch *Top Gun* on TNT, Jackson and Jonas sharing a hospital bed/chair. Jonas Sr. snores.

INT. ALLEGHENY GENERAL HOSPITAL -- DAY

Jackson watches his grandfather sleep as Jonas converses angrily with a doctor in the hallway.

INT. GRANDFATHERS HOUSE BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Jonas and Jackson are asleep in bed, Jackson in the fetal position pressed up against his dad. Jonas stares at the ceiling. The lights from a passing car briefly light up the room.

JONAS

Jackson. Jackson, you awake?

Jackson moans.

JACKSON

What?

JONAS

How's the exploration coming? You find anything good?

JACKSON

1958 has a lot of magazines.

Jonas laughs.

JONAS

Go to sleep.

JACKSON

You go to sleep.

INT. ALLEGHENY GENERAL HOSPITAL -- HALLWAY -- DAY

Jackson roams the hallways, touching everything he comes across. He stops at a quiet room. Inside a middle-aged couple is silent, sitting next to a bed. On the bed is an older woman, slack jawed and still. A nurse is removing tubes from her nose and pulls a crash cart out of the room quietly. The woman cries in short breaths while the man holds her hand. Jackson is not scared.

INT. ALLEGHENY GENERAL HOSPITAL -- DAY

Jackson is propped on a chair next to Jonas Sr. He is awake and studies the boy. Jonas Sr. looks extremely ill and has a hard time breathing. Jackson smiles. Past Jackson, Jonas can be seen in the hallway inspecting the pair. He walks away.

JONAS SR.

Listen, I want to tell you some stuff, OK? C'mere, I can barely see you. OK. That's good. Let's see... now don't do too many drugs but don't do too few either. And don't get any girls pregnant, unless they're rich. If she's rich might as well do it to it while she's still interested. When you have money you can get someone else to change the diapers. A man shouldn't have to change a diaper.

JACKSON

Ok.

JONAS SR.

Hey, c'mere. I gotta tell you a secret.

Jackson leans in.

JONAS SR. (CONT'D)

(whispering)

I farted.

The two laugh.

JONAS SR.

Listen, I know things aren't always so great between your father and me, and it may look like we can't stand each other, which is true. But he and I, we love each other very much. We just don't say it like normal people.

JACKSON

Why not?

JONAS SR.

Oh, it's complicated. Growing up is hard. Growing old is hard. You'll understand someday.

JACKSON  
It's like Jacques Cousteau.

JONAS SR.  
Who?

JACKSON  
Jacques Cousteau. He wanted to travel in time but he couldn't and then he died. So I'm doing it for him.

Jonas Sr. inspects him quizzically.

JONAS SR.  
That's good. I'm sure he would like that. Listen, I want you to know that I love you very much. OK?

JACKSON  
I love you too, grandpa.

Jonas Sr. admires his grandchild.

JONAS SR. (CONT'D)  
Just promise me something. When you're old, and you have a kid of your own just like you, and your dad is in the same spot I'm in now, know that whatever is left between the two of you that still hurts, he did the best that he could. Ok? Promise me.

JACKSON  
I promise.

Jonas Sr. fights back tears. He pats Jackson's arm.

JONAS SR. (CONT'D)  
Ok. Good. That's good.

INT. RENTAL CAR, 279 SOUTH BEFORE THE TUNNEL -- DAY

Jonas and Jackson silently cross the bridge. Jackson watches his dad, red eyed and staring into the distance. At the end of the bridge Jackson turns around in his seat and looks out of the rear window as the tunnels swallow up the city whole.