

Lightweight

by

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WGAW Registration # 1401608

INT. RENTAL CAR - EVENING

Through the windshield a tunnel speeds by, its tiles reflecting the lights of the cars.

ELIZABETH (O.S.)
Oh, one more thing. My family
calls me -

A cell phone RINGS.

ELIZABETH (O.S.)
You're driving. Should I answer it?

RICH
No!... It's probably Denny.
I'll call him back later.

They drive in silence for a moment.

ELIZABETH (O.S.)
So...my family still calls me -

RICH (O.S.)
What? Liz? Lizzie?...Dizzy Lizzie?

ELIZABETH (V.O.)
No. They call me -

RICH (O.S.)
Beth?...Betty? Betsy?

ELIZABETH (O.S.)
No. Bitsy.

The tiles rush past.

RICH (O.S.)
(laughing)
Bitsy? Cute!

ELIZABETH
Exactly.

RICH
I think it's kind of hot.

ELIZABETH (O.S.)
Be nice. This is hard enough.

Suddenly, a spectacular view of downtown Pittsburgh fills the windshield, lights sparkling from bridges and buildings.

RICH (O.S.)
Wow!

ELIZABETH (O.S.)
Welcome to Pittsburgh. That was
the highlight.

The car passes over the Fort Pitt Bridge and into the city as the river shimmers below.

EXT. STREET - LATER

The car climbs a steep hill, past neat but modest houses. It pulls up in front of a two-story row house. A chair with a balloon attached sits in an empty parking space in front of the house. A sign reads WELCOME HOME BITSY.

ELIZABETH gets out of the car. Chic, dressed in black, she is 26, slender and pretty. As she moves the chair, the balloon comes loose and floats away.

While Rich parks the car, Elizabeth looks at the house. Religious statuettes glow in the windows. Steelers banners decorate the door. She shakes her head and sighs.

RICH (O.S.)
So can I call you Bitsy?

RICH, 28, model-handsome, cocky and New York-hip, sidles up to her. He holds a small suitcase.

ELIZABETH
Rich, please. Are you ready?

Rich's phone BEEPS. He looks at the screen and starts to type.

RICH
(as he texts)
Absolutely. Lead the way.

ELIZABETH
And nothing about the job, okay?
Where's your suitcase? Rich?

RICH
(still texting)
It's in the car...I'm coming!

Elizabeth stares at him for a moment, takes the suitcase from him, then walks in. Rich follows, still texting.

After a moment a chorus of voices is heard from inside.

VOICES (O.S.)
Bitsy!

INT. FAMILY HOME - CONTINUOUS

Elizabeth stands with Rich at the door. She is in the arms of her mother SHIRLEY, 50's, who is crushing her with joy.

SHIRLEY
Bitsy, baby!

ELIZABETH
Hi mom. This is...

Shirley bursts into tears.

SHIRLEY
Oh Bitsy! Stan would be so happy
you made it.

STAN JR., 30's, approaches Rich with two plastic cups.
He thrusts a beer at him.

STAN JR.
Welcome to the family! I'm Bitsy's
cousin, Stan Jr. Dad really wanted
to meet you.

Rich, phone and beer in hand, looks around. The living room
is old-school: Shelves filled with knickknacks, doilies and
pictures covering every wall.

The crowd is dressed in black. Many sport Steelers jerseys.
They are drinking beer, boisterous and red-faced. Next to
a table covered with platters of food sits a keg on ice.

In front of the fireplace, a black and gold coffin rests on a
stand. STAN'S CORPSE is in full Pittsburgh Steelers regalia:
jacket, hat, scarf, gloves, sweatpants, sneakers. Clutched
in one hand is a "Terrible Towel." In the other, a remote
control points to a TV at the foot of the coffin, playing
a loop of the "immaculate reception."

DOLLY, a big-boned cousin, TONY, her husband, ANGELA and
PETE stand around the coffin, beers in hand, mesmerized by
the TV screen.

PETE
This is so great. When's
the funeral?

DOLLY
Stan didn't want one.

Pete looks at Dolly.

TONY
I got a buddy down'ere at Heinz
field. We're buryin' his ashes in
the end zone.

ANGELA
He'll love that.

Rich looks incredulously at Elizabeth. She shrugs.

ELIZABETH
Welcome to Pittsburgh.
(turning)
Mom, this is Rich.

Shirley hugs him warmly. Rich looks at Elizabeth.

SHIRLEY
Hi Rich. Or is it Richard?

RICH
It doesn't mat...

RICH
Don't worry, I'll sublet. You'll
find something. We're paid till
the end of the month.

Elizabeth stares at him.

RICH
If I leave now I can still get a
flight back to New York. They've
booked me to Heathrow tomorrow.
This is really hard for me, but...

ELIZABETH
You already have flights?

Rich looks at his watch, then kisses Elizabeth lightly.

RICH
You'll be fine. I'll call you.

He goes to the car.

ELIZABETH
Your suitcase -

RICH
Got it. In the trunk.

He gets in and drives off, leaving Elizabeth on the curb.

INT. FAMILY HOME - LATER

The wake continues. Elizabeth stands near a window,
staring out. Dolly and Tony approach.

DOLLY
There she goes again,
driftin' in the ionosphere.

TONY
(imitating NASA static)
Earth to Bitsy. Come in
ditsy Bitsy.

They laugh. Elizabeth looks around, startled. The room looks
like it's under water. SOUNDS are muffled. Though it's not
obvious to others, Elizabeth's feet are HOVERING a few inches
off the floor. Alarmed and mystified, she grabs the window
sill and pulls herself down. Tony hands her a beer.

TONY
Where's your underwear model?

Elizabeth looks at him like a deer in headlights.

INT. KITCHEN - THE NEXT MORNING

ELIZABETH
He left. He's moving to London.

Elizabeth is at the door, dressed New York casual - black
jeans and lipstick, laptop case over her shoulder.

Shirley, dressed in a robe and slippers, fries eggs and sausages. The local morning news PLAYS LOW on a small TV.

SHIRLEY

Oh, Bitsy, that's too bad. He was so handsome.

ELIZABETH

And...I lost my job. Two weeks ago.

SHIRLEY

Oh, honey, don't worry. You can stay in your old room.

ELIZABETH

I can't stay here. All the design jobs are in New York.

SHIRLEY

I'll move the sewing machine. Now eat something.

Shirley piles sausage and eggs on a huge plate.

ELIZABETH

I'm not hungry, mom.

Elizabeth leaves.

SHIRLEY

You need to eat something!

T.V. ANCHOR (O.S.)

When we come back: Two men were arrested early this morning while trying to bury an urn of ashes in the end zone at Heinz Field.

Shirley looks after her. She eats a piece of sausage.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - LATER

Elizabeth sits at a small table in a bohemian coffee shop. A specials chalkboard advertises: VEGAN PIEROGIES. Elizabeth works on her laptop.

The screen reads: NEWYORKDESIGNJOBS.COM

BYRON (O.S.)

Coffee and a chocolate-raspberry cupcake?

BYRON, 27, thin, tattooed, laid back and colorfully dressed in thrift store finery, sets down the food. Elizabeth answers without looking up.

ELIZABETH

Thanks.

Byron stands there. Finally, Elizabeth looks at him.

ELIZABETH
Byron!

BYRON
Live and in person.

ELIZABETH
Wow... how are you?

BYRON
I'm good. The Burgh's good. Been
back two years. Got some paintings
in a show next month. How are you?
Still doing art?

ELIZABETH
Not much. I work in design now.

BYRON
Awesome. My studio partner works
for a designer downtown. Hey, great
to see you. Glad you're back.

Elizabeth watches him walk away, pauses, then types.

On the screen: GOOGLE SEARCH: PITTSBURGH GRAPHIC DESIGN

EXT. BUS STOP - NEXT DAY

Elizabeth, dressed for an interview, looks around as if
seeing the place for the first time. She notices a mural
of clouds, takes her phone out and snaps a photo of
herself in front of it.

INT. OFFICE - LATER

GEORGE, cheerful, boyish, middle-aged, in a Hawaiian shirt
and Kangol cap worn backwards, sits at his desk studying
his computer screen.

Elizabeth is at the door, waiting for him to finish.
He snorts at the screen, then looks up.

ELIZABETH
Hi. I'm Elizabeth.

GEORGE
Right. Lizzie! Come on in.
Hey, check this out...

He swivels his screen around, chuckling.

GEORGE
I didn't know midgets were that
limber.

ELIZABETH
I think they prefer to be called
little people.

He swivels the screen back and navigates to another web site. Elizabeth sits down.

GEORGE
So, chelseadesign.com, huh?

ELIZABETH
Yes. I was with them for three -

GEORGE
I lived in New York in the eighties. Still have a place there. That's what we offer the local market, that New York Edge...

Elizabeth's eyes glaze over. George drones on enthusiastically. The SOUND becomes muffled.

GEORGE
...see, we don't do design, we do anti-design. We do un-design. We hate design. Design is a waste of time. We think that...

Elizabeth starts to FLOAT out of her chair. She holds the edge of the seat to anchor herself. The room is swimming.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

The specials board advertises: VEGAN WEDDING SOUP. Elizabeth web surfs. Byron delivers her coffee. They exchange smiles.

INT. ANOTHER OFFICE - ANOTHER DAY

Elizabeth sits next to LISA, late thirties, jeans, heels, pearls and a pink blazer. They look at a laptop screen.

ELIZABETH
...so I solved that problem with -

LISA
Sweetie, there are no problems. Just look at what you're putting out there when you say that. We use the term "issues."

ELIZABETH
Uh, okay...with these pop-up windows.

Lisa's voice continues, sweetly condescending, increasingly muffled and distorted.

LISA
Ah, pop-ups. Yes. I was really into them, back in the day. I'm just so over them now. What else do you have, hon?

As Lisa speaks, Elizabeth begins to FLOAT out of the chair. She wraps her feet around the chair legs.

INT. YET ANOTHER OFFICE - YET ANOTHER DAY

Elizabeth sits across from PHIL, buttoned down, tightly wound with a mid-Atlantic lilt. He holds a mini Pirate's baseball bat and distractedly slaps his palm as he speaks.

PHIL
We're the best agency in town. What makes you good enough to work here?

ELIZABETH
Well, I've -

Phil looks her up and down and nods to a trophy shelf.

PHIL
We clean up at awards - every year. I don't see any on your resume.

ELIZABETH
Actually, I got...

PHIL
You're a lightweight!
You've done north -

The phone RINGS. Phil answers and swivels his chair, turning his back to her. Elizabeth, fighting tears, stands.

PHIL
Yeah?

ELIZABETH
(getting up)
I'm sorry if I wasted your time.

PHIL
Fuck that! The guy's an idiot.

The room swims. Elizabeth HOVERS, mid-air, like a Macy's Thanksgiving-day parade balloon. She gently flails.

INT. CONVENIENCE STORE - LATER

Elizabeth FLOATS in front of an over-lit bank of glass-fronted refrigerators filled with a dizzying array of brightly colored soft drinks. She stares blankly.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - MOMENTS LATER

The specials sign reads: VEGAN KIELBASA. The shop is empty. Byron reads behind the counter. He looks up to see Elizabeth coming in. She stands there, staring a bit too long.

BYRON
You okay?

Elizabeth shakes her head. Byron goes to her, puts an arm over her shoulder and calls into the kitchen.

BYRON
Benny! I'm outta here!
(to Elizabeth)
Come on.

They leave.

INT. PUB - LATER

Byron and Elizabeth sit at a table. A salad topped with fries is set down in front of them. Elizabeth stares at it.

WAITRESS
Anything else, hon?

Elizabeth shakes her head "no." The waitress leaves.

ELIZABETH
I forgot.

BYRON
Hey, all the major food groups on one plate: The green group, the starch group, the grease group and the salt group.

Elizabeth laughs. She looks at his plate.

ELIZABETH
Aren't you a vegan?

BYRON
Nah, not me. Coffee shop hype.

Byron picks up his cheeseburger and takes a big bite.

ELIZABETH
I've got to tell you something. Since I've been back, I've been, like, floating.

BYRON
(with his mouth full)
I know what you mean. Me, too. Job to job, school to school, women to men...women again...

Elizabeth looks at him.

BYRON
...I'm just sayin'...

Elizabeth giggles.

LATER

Byron and Elizabeth pick at the remaining fries and drink beer. Several empties sit on the table. Byron listens intently..

ELIZABETH
...and then he took a call while I was right there. I felt so... invisible. I was totally floating. I seriously felt my head hit the ceiling.

BYRON
But hey, you put another crack in that glass, right?

Elizabeth sighs with frustration.

ELIZABETH
I just felt so stupid. Empty. Like my whole life is just empty.

BYRON
Awesome! That's the whole point. You gotta embrace the emptiness. Let emptiness be your guide.

He drains his beer and looks at the bottle.

BYRON
Speaking of emptiness...

Byron signals to the waitress for more beers.

BYRON
Why fight it? It makes you special.

The waitress delivers two beers.

WAITRESS
Here you go, hon.

Byron lifts his beer in a toast.

BYRON
To emptiness.

The waitress rolls her eyes and leaves.

ELIZABETH
I don't know what to do. I'm living out of a suitcase. My career is a disaster. I'm just drifting.

Elizabeth's cell phone BEEPS. She looks at the text:
INTERVIEW 2MORROW 2 PM JANE DESIGN

Elizabeth sighs miserably.

BYRON
Hey, it's okay to drift sometimes.

Elizabeth looks at Byron, not convinced. She sips her beer.

INT. DESIGN OFFICE - THE NEXT DAY

JANE, comfortably hip, arty glasses, sits with Elizabeth in an airy conference room. A large painting of clouds and blue sky hangs on the wall. She looks at a laptop screen and nods.

JANE

When George called about you, he said you were my kind of designer. I think he meant it as an insult, actually. Did he give you the "I hate design" speech?

ELIZABETH

He talked about that a little.

She closes the laptop.

JANE

So, Elizabeth, what are you looking for?

Elizabeth takes a deep breath and sinks back into the chair.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

Shirley cooks happily at the stove, her back to Elizabeth, who sits on the counter in a well-worn Steelers sweatshirt.

SHIRLEY

Bits, can you reach that big bowl up there?

ELIZABETH

Sure mom.

Elizabeth looks at the bowl, gets down and reaches for a stool. She pauses, takes a deep breath, closes her eyes exhales, and DRIFTS upward. She takes the bowl, descends and sets it on the counter next to her mother.

Shirley turns to her just as she lands.

SHIRLEY

Thanks sweetheart.

ELIZABETH

No problem.

Shirley goes back to work. There is a KNOCK at the kitchen door. Elizabeth turns to the door, smiles and beckons. Byron comes in, smiling.

FADE OUT.

THE END