

*forget-me-nots*

by

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FADE IN:

EXT. SEASIDE COTTAGE - MORNING

A white clapboard cottage with a screened-in porch, shaded by poplars ablaze with colorful autumn foliage.

The cottage stands on a ridge overlooking the ocean, glassy calm in the still morning air.

THE SCREENED-IN PORCH

The inner door to the cottage bursts open, and a MAN runs out onto the porch and...

OUT THE PORCH DOOR

he comes, into the sunshine, where we can get a good look at him as he runs along the seaside ridge...

THE MAN

is in pajamas -- fancy, but definitely p.j.'s, not running gear. He is mid-50's, trim, with well-groomed silver-gray hair, such as a lawyer might sport, or a banker...

...except for the wound at his temple, and the dried blood.

HIS EYES are clear, intelligent, betraying nothing...

Along the ridge he runs, swiftly, effortlessly, with preternatural focus...

EXT. A ROCKY ISLAND PROMONTORY - MORNING

A spit of land standing out against the sea. Tall pines poke their crowns above a forest of autumnal oranges and reds.

THE MAN

bursts into view, emerging from a forest trail... Down to the craggy shore he runs, never missing a step...

...out into the water, up to his thighs...forward he dives and swims, powerful strokes...headed beneath the surface...

...and he is gone.

And once again, morning calm returns to sea and forest.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. A ROCKY ISLAND PROMONTORY - SUNSET

That same spit of land, the autumnal foliage LIT UP now in the glow of sunset. Waves roll in to die upon the craggy shoreline.

Offscreen, the VOICE of a precocious 12-year-old girl:

HEATHER (O.S.)  
 The maples turned early this year.  
 Last fall the leaves were pale as  
 rust till almost November...

DEEPER INTO THE ISLAND FOREST

Golden light filters through the trees, setting a fiery maple aglow. A hiking trail littered with fallen leaves.

HEATHER (O.S.)  
 ...this year, they're blood-red.  
 (beat)  
 They lose their grip and pinwheel  
 to earth as if stabbed in the  
 heart.  
 (beat)  
 Duly recorded. C'mon Dudley...

The resonant WOOF WOOF of a large dog, also offscreen.

DEEPER STILL

into forest more shadow than light, dense with groundcover: rotting logs covered in moss and mushroom caps; fairy ferns and weeds of every sort.

HEATHER (O.S.)  
 Dudley, get out of the poison oak!

The SOUND of the WOOF's happy approach, and a dog being patted. The girl's voice is full of cheery exasperation.

HEATHER (O.S.)  
 I know you're immune, mutt-breath,  
 but you'll track it all over the  
 cottage on your big furry clown-  
 feet.

The SOUND of the dog-WOOF running off in hot pursuit.

HEATHER (O.S.)  
 Aggh! Atta'boy, chase the squirrel  
 up the tree, that'll work...

EXT. FOREST COTTAGE, PORCH - CONTINUOUS

A modest, woodsy cottage in a forest clearing.

EVAN GRAY, mid-40's, in worn jeans and a faded work shirt, sits quietly on a porch swing suspended from the eaves. A GOLDEN RETRIEVER lies next to him on a wool blanket, its head in the man's lap.

The dog's eyes are barely open, its breathing labored.

Evan looks out at forest dappled in golden light.

A hockey puck-sized SMART SPEAKER sits next to him on the swing's armrest. The speaker LIGHTS UP as the girl's VOICE and the dog's WOOF emanate.

HEATHER (O.S.)

Dad, did you say this Juniper Weed is invasive? Pretty little thing, though. What is a weed anyway? Sounds like bio-prejudice to me.

(beat)

"A weed is a flower loved but by God."

(beat)

...Ooh, that's good. Dudley, you may quote me.

In Evan's lap, the dog WHINES weakly at the SOUND of the girl's voice. He strokes the dog's head.

From the SPEAKER, the girl's contented SIGH...

HEATHER (O.S.)

Ahh... Autumn is my favorite season... But you knew that.

He presses the speaker's stop button and the LIGHT goes out.

EXT. CEMETERY - SUNSET

A tiny graveyard. Shaded by pines and overgrown with weeds, bounded by a knee-high stone wall. A dozen or so headstones, mostly ancient.

A SHOVEL breaks ground next to a headstone.

Evan digs a hole. The bundled wool blanket lies nearby. He picks up the sagging bundle. Sets it in the hole.

Gently, he tucks in the dog's golden tail.

He fills in the hole. Sets the shovel aside.

He crouches in front of the headstones and speaks with a weary tenderness.

EVAN

I don't suppose at this point  
anyone will make an issue of  
burying a dog in a people cemetery.

He plucks absently at a weed on the dog's grave. Studies the tiny sprig briefly. Huh, something different.

He stuffs the sprig away in a breast pocket. Looks off at the dying light.

EXT. FOREST COTTAGE - POST-SUNSET

Evan returns to the cottage, sets the shovel by the door and goes inside. The forest has gone gray.

INT. FOREST COTTAGE, KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

The kitchen is homey and rustic. Dated appliances. Aging furniture. Time has stood still in this house.

Entering, Evan picks a dog dish off the floor. About to dump the contents into the trash, he hesitates...

...and glumly sets the dish back down. Maybe tomorrow.

He opens a cabinet above the counter.

INSIDE THE CABINET

is nothing but cans of SpaghettiO's and cartons of Lucky Strikes.

He stuffs a pack of Luckys in his breast pocket.

He grabs a can of O's and opens the pop-top. Grabs a spoon from a drawer.

He steps to the fridge. A dozen or so FAMILY SNAPSHOTS are taped to the door. His eye lingers on

A PHOTO

of a 12-YEAR-OLD GIRL with Dudley the dog. The girl stands athwart a trail in sun-dappled forest, poised on the precipice of young womanhood.

To one side of the photos is

A CALENDAR

The month of October. The first few days have been crossed off. "Wednesday, October 31" is circled in red.

Evan grabs a pencil hanging on a string. Crosses off today, October 4th.

He opens the fridge and grabs an Old Style from a six-pack on a near-naked shelf. Closes the fridge door and exits...

INT. LIVINGROOM - CONTINUOUS

He sits down at a worn wooden table by a picture window.

He spoons from the can. Chases it down with a slug of beer.

Pulls the Luckys from his pocket. Lights one and takes a drag.

ON THE FLOOR

A MOUSE appears from a hole in the baseboard. Scurries along the floor...

The mouse makes its way atop the table and marches boldly up to the can of SpaghettiO's. The mouse climbs on the rim and helps itself.

Evan takes a luxuriant, sinful drag on his cigarette.

EVAN

I'm tellin' ya, Mickey, that  
stuff'll kill ya.

A thought. From his pocket he pulls the tiny sprig from the grave. Looks it over. Curious.

An ashtray on the windowsill. He blows away the ashes. Pours in a slug of beer.

Sets the little sprig afloat in the beer.

Stares out at the gloaming.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

The porchlight stands out against the night. Overhead, the Milky Way is visible through gathering clouds.

INT. LIVINGROOM - NIGHT

A smart speaker on an endtable SOFTLY plays a BIG BAND TUNE, ancient and melancholy.

In a reading chair, Evan pages through a FAT BINDER by the light of a single lamp.

IN THE BINDER

a sketch, skillfully drawn, of two tiny spotted fawns curled up in underbrush.

Evan speaks, as if to the room.

EVAN

Audrey, play Heather's journal,  
entry date ten-seven-sixteen.

The smart speaker LIGHTS UP and the music cuts out, replaced by a pleasant, slightly mechanical FEMININE VOICE:

"AUDREY"

Playing Heather's journal, entry  
date ten-seven-sixteen.

...and the GIRL'S VOICE starts up:

HEATHER (O.S.)

We saw the fawns today, Dad...  
They've lost all their spots.  
They're bigger than Dudley!

Slowly, Evan turns the pages of the journal...

PAGE AFTER PAGE

of colorful sketches, photos, hand-written entries, doodled marginalia, wildflowers pressed flat and insects taped in place -- the record of a precocious child's life spent in nature, probing and embracing...

HEATHER (O.S.)

Hello, Mizz Millipede, don't let us  
impede your progress.

(beat)

Note to self, I need new boots  
before we go back to Boston!

Evan touches at a fanciful SKETCH of a millipede decked out in a line of hiking boots.

He turns the pages...

HEATHER (O.S.)

I found a new plant, Dad! It looks kind of like a pfistoria, only shinier. It was growing on a log in the cemetery -- have you seen it?

(a laugh)

Is it something new? Or did Dudley and I discover the dandelion again?

Evan closes the binder: on the cover, beneath the title "HEATHER'S NATURE JOURNAL," is

A PHOTO

of a beaming FOUR-YEAR-OLD brandishing a dandelion. Dudley, barely more than a pup, stands at her side.

HEATHER (O.S.)

...I'll show it to you next time we go on a walk together.

(beat)

Get your head out of the stars, Dad!

He looks off, not so much stoic as hollowed out.

The VOICE of "Audrey" breaks in:

"AUDREY"

Update on Balthazaar.

The VOICE of a NEWSCASTER follows:

NEWSCASTER (O.S.)

In the latest on Balthazaar, astronomers at Hawaii's Mauna Kea Observatory report that the star continues to decay at a constant rate, placing implosion at twenty-seven days.

(beat)

Gravity waves forewarning of the supernova explosion were first detected eight months ago by Harvard Astrobiologist Evan Gray.

(beat)

Speculation that Earth might somehow be spared from the distant star's deadly tidal wave of gamma radiation have proven futile.

(beat)

Delivery of food goods to Boston-area grocers continues for now, though shortages of meat and --

EVAN  
Audrey, play Big Band.

The newscast cuts out and "Audrey" intones:

"AUDREY"  
Here's "Slidin' Over The Moon" by  
The Fremont Trio...

As Evan stares out at the darkness, a NOSTALGIC OLD MELODY starts up.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Evan enters the kitchen. Opens the fridge, grabs the six-pack and heads out the door.

EXT. COTTAGE - CONTINUOUS

He walks to the side of the cottage, where a ladder leans against the eaves. He climbs the ladder...

He walks across the length of the roof, stepping over an untidy pile of shingles. At the other end of the roof

A RICKETY SUSPENSION BRIDGE

runs from the roof to a TREEHOUSE in a nearby tree. Evan crosses the bridge...

THE TREEHOUSE

is a kid's dream: a ramshackle, open design, with railings festooned with strings of colorful FAIRY CHRISTMAS LIGHTS.

A CHUBBY TELESCOPE

stands on a tripod, studded with tracking gizmos.

Evan plunks into a lawnchair beside the telescope and sets down his beers.

EVAN  
Audrey, kill the lights.

A smart speaker resting atop an upturned barrel LIGHTS UP, and the strings of FAIRY LIGHTS go out.

Evan leans in, looks through the telescope's eyepiece.

## THE IMAGE OF A SINGLE STAR

as seen through the telescope -- a faint, distant SPECK enveloped by an ominous HALO of light. The star peeks in and out of view through darkening clouds.

Evan sits back. Pops a beer, settles into his chair.

It begins to rain...

## EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

RAIN, coming down in buckets.

MAURA, a woman in her mid-30's, and DAVID, a scrawny, under-sized boy of 12, tromp through the underbrush, weighed down with backpacks and camping gear, soaked despite their slickers.

They stop to catch their breath. Clearly, neither has done any serious hiking in a while.

MAURA

You okay?

David, sucking wind, manages to nod emphatically. He starts off again and she follows.

MAURA

You sure you know where the campground is?

DAVID

Totally...

More tromping, under low-hanging branches, over fallen tree limbs...

MAURA

Because I'm beginning to think you've never been to this alleged campground... Or this island...

DAVID

Well that would be pretty stupid.

MAURA

Yes, it would...

They come to a fork in the trail. The rain pours down.

MAURA

Okay "Magellan," which way?

DAVID  
 (hesitates only a moment)  
 This way.

MAURA  
 Uh huh.

And off they go...

FURTHER DOWN THE TRAIL

The boy sees it first -- a LIGHT, in a clearing ahead...

DAVID  
 Hey look...

He runs ahead to the edge of the clearing. She catches up,  
 stands alongside as they eye

THE FOREST COTTAGE

its porchlight warm and inviting in the rainy gloom.

DAVID  
 Maybe this guy knows where there's  
 a campground.

MAURA  
 "This guy"? David --

He runs ahead before she can stop him.

ON THE PORCH

David runs up and knocks on the door. He girds himself.

The door opens. Evan stands in the doorway, wary.

EVAN  
 Yes?

The boy looks at the man and goes mute, as if suddenly  
 spellbound.

The woman runs up, catches her breath.

MAURA  
 David!  
 (to Evan)  
 I'm sorry. We were looking for the  
 campground.

EVAN  
 Campground...?

MAURA

Yeah, with the showers and the running water, and the...

(to David)

Right David? ...David?

DAVID

(as if)

Doesn't every island have a campground?

MAURA

(to Evan)

I'm sorry, we --

DAVID

You're Professor Gray, right?

Evan looks at them, resigned.

Maura looks to David, then to Evan.

MAURA

Professor Evan Gray? The Evan Gray who discovered the signal?

Comes the dawn -- she's been played.

MAURA

I am sorry. We'll just --

DAVID

(thinks fast)

Okay if I use your bathroom?

EVAN

Well, I --

David takes that as a yes and shoots through the door.

Maura gives Evan an apologetic smile. With perfunctory gallantry, he gestures for her to enter.

INT. LIVINGROOM - NIGHT

They stand awkwardly as they wait for David.

MAURA

Thanks. He'll just be a minute...

Evan is unrelievedly taciturn, but civility is a hard habit to break.

EVAN

Can I get you anything? A towel?  
Water wings?

MAURA

No...thanks.  
(beat)  
I'm dripping all over your floor.

EVAN

Doesn't matter.

More awkward silence.

MAURA

Nice night for a hike.  
(beat)  
He said he'd been to the island  
before.

EVAN

He's not your son?

MAURA

David is a foster kid.

EVAN

Oh.

MAURA

Not my foster kid.  
(on his look)  
It's...complicated.

David reappears from the hallway.

DAVID

We're on the lam.

MAURA

(rolls her eyes)  
We're not 'on the lam'.  
(a beat)  
More like...'awol.'

David picks up the can of leftover SpaghettiO's on the table.

DAVID

Okay if I finish this?

Evan eyes the pair. It's gonna be a long night.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Evan cranks the lid off a fresh can of SpaghettiO's and dumps the contents into a pan on the stove.

Maura, now shed of her slicker and gear, looks on awkwardly. The tension is palpable.

MAURA

Nice cottage. Homey.

He lets it go.

EVAN

Sorry I don't have anything better to offer. Been a while since I did a grocery run.

MAURA

Yeah. Kind of weird out there.

EVAN

Kind of.

She takes a beat, then wades into it.

MAURA

David was being treated for acute lymphocytic leukemia at Saint Mary Children's Hospital in Bayside. When the news broke about the star, David's foster parents abandoned him -- just took off for Pheonix to be with family.

EVAN

And the hospital...?

MAURA

No, the hospital is great. I'm a nurse there, pediatric oncology.

(beat)

David's been in and out of hospitals since he was six years old. He didn't want any more treatment. He wanted to get out, to experience life. Have...an adventure.

(a shrug)

I thought he should be allowed to do that. The hospital administration felt otherwise. Fortunately security had fled the building to be with *their* families.

EVAN

A lot of responsibility.

MAURA

It's just for the weekend. The water taxi's picking us up on Monday.

(ironic shrug)

I had no other plans.

Evan gets out bowls and spoons. Politeness forces engagement.

EVAN

No family of your own somewhere?

MAURA

An ex-husband I acquired in my misspent youth... My parents are gone.

(beat)

I know it sounds harebrained, helping a twelve-year-old escape from a hospital bed to go pitch a tent in the forest.

Evan looks at her, his voice flat and matter-of-fact.

EVAN

No. It doesn't. It sounds like an adventure.

MAURA

Yeah... Lots of things that were harebrained eight months ago don't seem so harebrained anymore.

EVAN

Maybe they never were.

He hands her a bowl. She stirs the spoon absently.

MAURA

Sounds like he had you in his sights.

EVAN

Sounds like.

MAURA

David is fixated on all things outer space. Rocket ships, bug-eyed aliens... I imagine he just wanted to meet the man who told the world about the star.

Evan hands her a second bowl and fixes one for himself.

EVAN  
I argued against going public.

MAURA  
Really?

He pulls a beer from the fridge, pops the top.

EVAN  
I knew there'd be a run on  
Old Style.

And out he goes, into the livingroom, as she looks on.

INT. LIVINGROOM - NIGHT

Evan walks in.

The boy, now in an oversized 'Harvard' sweatshirt, is seated at the head of the table -- Evan's chair.

Evan stands there, bowl and beer in hand, waiting for the kid to get a clue.

Finally he gives up, takes a seat on a side bench.

DAVID  
(a hopeful smile)  
Thanks for the sweatshirt.

Evan struggles with his impulse not to engage with the kid.

EVAN  
Welcome.

Maura enters, sets a bowl in front of David.

She sits down at the bench opposite Evan and slides away from a LEAK that is PLUNKING into a sauce pan at table-center.

Evan loads up his spoon -- and pauses awkwardly when he sees Maura make the sign of the cross.

David waits, hands in lap. Apparently the kid knows the drill.

MAURA  
(head bowed)  
"Bless us O Lord, and these Thy  
gifts, which we are about to  
receive from Thy bounty. Through  
Christ our Lord. Amen."

She looks up with a smile and starts in.

MAURA  
(a polite fib)  
Mmm, good...

Again Evan raises his spoon to his mouth, as --

David grabs a book from his backpack and opens to a dog-eared page.

DAVID  
I read your book, "Extremophiles  
and the Search for Other Worlds."

Evan's spoon hovers in weary anticipation. Here we go.

DAVID  
In the introduction you say,  
(reads)  
"We don't know what life is.  
Biologists can't even agree on a  
definition. But one thing is sure:  
Life is endlessly ingenious -- if  
there is a strategy for survival,  
life will find it."

EVAN  
Don't believe everything you read.

David shuts the book, frustrated. He starts in on his bowl, in a pout.

The three eat in silence, as the leak PLUNK-PLUNKS down...

Maura can't resist. Gives a none-of-my-business smile.

MAURA  
That is one impressive leak.

EVAN  
Can't really take credit for it.

MAURA  
Any thought of...patching the roof?

EVAN  
It's raining.

MAURA  
When it stops?

DAVID  
(in a funk)  
The roof doesn't leak when it's  
not raining.

Ah, got it.

MAURA  
Old joke.

A FLASH OF LIGHTNING

followed closely by claps of THUNDER. The rain begins PELTING the picture window like buckshot.

ANOTHER LEAK

springs from the ceiling, SPLATTERING down on the table.

Evan looks to Maura and David, staring anxiously out at the downpour.

Evan sighs, slides his bowl forward to catch the new leak.

INT. DAUGHTER'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Evan leads David and Maura into a bedroom decorated with the sort of wallpaper that would appeal to a 12-year-old girl.

The room is bright and tidy, as if the occupant had left only briefly and would soon return.

EVAN  
(to David)  
You can sleep in here.

Evan removes a STUFFED ORANGUTAN from the bed, sets it carefully on a bookshelf.

The fat binder sits open on a writing desk. Evan puts it away in a drawer.

An awkward beat, and he exits.

David sits on the bed and digs p.j.'s out of his backpack.

Maura takes a small digital thermometer from her pocket.

MAURA  
Open up, Tarzan.

DAVID  
 (frowns)  
 I'm fine.

MAURA  
 Hey, remember our deal? You let  
 me play nurse, and I let you play  
 explorer.

He relents, opens his mouth.

She inserts the thermometer. They wait a few seconds, and it  
 BEEPS. She takes it out and checks it.

MAURA  
 Ninety-eight point five. Good to go.  
 (beat)  
 Nice island, huh? Professor Gray  
 seems like an interesting sort.

David puts on his p.j. tops, rolls his eyes.

DAVID  
 I guess.

She gets up, about to head out. David climbs under covers.

DAVID  
 Thanks, Maura. For everything.

MAURA  
 Sleep tight.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Evan is digging around in a linen closet when Maura comes out  
 of the bedroom.

EVAN  
 He okay?

MAURA  
 He's good. He just has to pace  
 himself.  
 (beat)  
 Thanks for tonight. Tomorrow we'll  
 find a spot to pitch our tents and  
 we'll be out of your hair.

Evan pulls a pillow and blanket from the closet and sticks  
 them under his arm. Nods toward his bedroom.

EVAN

You can sleep in there. I'll take  
the couch.

MAURA

Nonsense. The couch will be  
perfectly...great.

She can hear herself trying a little too hard.

EVAN

Perfectly great, huh? You always  
this chipper when the world ends?

He hands her the blanket and pillow, exits into his bedroom.

A weary sigh, and she heads for the livingroom.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - MORNING

Evan wakes up, grimaces at the goddamn morning sunshine. Lays  
there, listless.

A sniff... Is something burning?

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Evan enters the kitchen, still dressed in his bedclothes,  
a ratty T-shirt and gym shorts.

Maura stands at the sink, washing a pan. A container of  
oatmeal sits on the counter.

MAURA

Morning.

EVAN

Something burning?

MAURA

David likes it when I put his  
oatmeal under the broiler for a few  
minutes. Puts a crust on it.

(beat)

Thought I'd treat him to a hot meal  
before we head off into the woods.  
Hope that's okay.

EVAN

Sure.

Maura indicates a photo on the fridge door.

MAURA  
Is this your daughter?

EVAN  
Heather.

She takes a long look at the photo.

MAURA  
She looks like a ball of fire.  
(beat)  
Where is she now?

EVAN  
With her mother.

MAURA  
Must be hard, not being with her.

Evan nods, clearly uncomfortable. She looks about for a fresh topic, notes the dog dish.

MAURA  
You have a dog?

EVAN  
Died. Old age... It was Heather's  
dog, really.

Evan puts the dish away in a cabinet under the sink.

MAURA  
Shitty timing.

She opens the oven and takes out a bowl of well-broiled oatmeal.

MAURA  
Here. Least I can do after barging  
in on you the way we did.  
(on his reluctance)  
What, you're not allowed to enjoy  
anything between now and doomsday?

He accepts the bowl.

EXT. PORCH - MORNING

David sits on the porch swing, backpack at his side, working at a drawing in a sketchbook.

## THE DRAWING

depicts an alien landscape abloom with fantastical flora and fauna. Three moons loom overhead.

Evan steps out on the porch, bowl in hand. Tries, dutifully, to re-break the ice.

EVAN

Morning.

DAVID

(grudging)

Morning.

EVAN

Good oatmeal.

(beat)

Nice crunch.

DAVID

She puts it under the broiler for seven minutes.

EVAN

Seven, huh?

DAVID

Two would be plenty.

Evan nods. Can't argue with that.

Maura steps out on the porch, backpack in hand.

MAURA

(to David)

Ready to roll?

David nods, resigned. He stands, stuffs his sketchbook into his backpack and straps it on.

Maura turns to Evan.

MAURA

Well...Thanks again.

She puts a hand on David's shoulder and the pair step down from the porch and start off.

EVAN

There's a spot by the point...

They stop, look at him.

EVAN

The breeze should keep the  
mosquitoes down.

MAURA

Thanks.

They head off, into the woods.

Evan watches them go. He pokes at the crust on his oatmeal,  
then heads into the cottage.