

For an Ocean

Characters:

RACHEL: sixteen

ALEXIS: sixteen

RACHEL *is sitting down when ALEXIS walks on stage. ALEXIS wasn't trying to look for RACHEL, but she sees her, and sits down next to RACHEL a bit hesitantly.*

RACHEL
I don't want to talk about it.

ALEXIS
Ok.

RACHEL
I don't.

ALEXIS
That's fine.

RACHEL
If I talk about it I'll blame it on someone else.

ALEXIS
There's nothing wrong with that. *(beat)*. What's wrong with that?

RACHEL
I would be lying.

ALEXIS
I always lie.

RACHEL
That's fine. I just wouldn't blame that on someone else, you know, because then you would just be lying to yourself.

ALEXIS
It tastes metallic.

RACHEL
What?

ALEXIS
Lies. They taste like blood.

RACHEL
(laughs). What did you expect?

ALEXIS
I didn't expect anything. Whenever people "expect" something from me, I always want to do the opposite.

RACHEL
(beat). Stop looking at me like that!

ALEXIS
I wasn't looking at you.

RACHEL
I know what you're thinking.

ALEXIS
I bet you don't.

I bet I do.
RACHEL

Yea? What is it?
ALEXIS

I don't want to talk about it.
RACHEL

I saw you leaving Zoe's. You left early.
ALEXIS

(half-jokingly). I want to cut my lip off. I want it all off and naked and clean and new.
RACHEL

No!
ALEXIS

Yes. *(beat)*. The truth is—the truth is that I was upset.
RACHEL

You always seem upset.
ALEXIS

But this time—this time it was weird, it was the stars or the beer or the grass or the lawn chairs. Zoe kissed me—or I kissed her, or it was everything melding together behind my eyes and making everything blurry, and the sky was big and dark and its arms were all open and when she talked her teeth looked like milk, like a shade of white so slight—
RACHEL

Are you sure?
ALEXIS

What? *(beat)*. I know who—what—I like. Jesus, Alexis, I'm not lesbian. I mean I wouldn't have a problem either way but I would *know* if I was.
RACHEL

Did you like it?
ALEXIS

I didn't *like* it. It just felt different, like electricity, or honey.
RACHEL

(half-mockingly). I like caprese salads and thunderstorms. I love when Martin wears that waffle-knit shirt and—
ALEXIS

I love the smell of dictionaries, damp lawn chairs, TV shows about about food—
RACHEL

Why were you upset, then?
ALEXIS

I was confused. But I'm not confused now, definitely not. It's all starting to clear up. *(beat)*. I used to spend July at my aunt's lake house, and every morning it was foggy or whatever. And when I walked my dog sometimes he ran up ahead, and I couldn't see him, so I just sat down and waited for the fog to lift.
RACHEL

So Zoe's the dog?
ALEXIS

No! My—my thoughts are. I guess.
RACHEL

ALEXIS
I had a dog. Then he died. My mom accidentally fed him a cactus.

RACHEL
Is that a joke?

ALEXIS
No, it actually happened. I could imagine doing that too. Eating a cactus.

RACHEL
As a dog?

ALEXIS
No, as a person.

RACHEL
(both laugh. beat). Do you want me to tell you something?

ALEXIS
Sure.

RACHEL
I'm afraid to.

ALEXIS
Just say it. Cut the lip off.

RACHEL
After it happened. I told Zoe I hated her, that she ruined everything for me.

ALEXIS
Ruined what?

RACHEL
I don't know. Sometimes I say things when I mean something else so I just say both things anyway.

ALEXIS
So what did you mean?

RACHEL
I don't know. And sometimes when the fog set in I wished my dog would run away, so I would have something else to talk about and it wouldn't be my fault. I think I just wanted something to feel small and unfair.

ALEXIS
So that's what you're afraid of. Fog.

RACHEL
Yea.

ALEXIS
Soft lips.

RACHEL
No.

ALEXIS
I'm afraid of losing things. It happens to me too much already—notebooks, bags, jackets.

RACHEL
It—loss—doesn't happen to you, you happen to it.

ALEXIS
I lost a city.

RACHEL

A city!

ALEXIS

It's called Tucson. Smooth syllables. Like a river. *(beat)*. Can I tell you something?

RACHEL

Please.

ALEXIS

My mom complained about unfairness a lot. *(beat)*. A few days after her—her miscarriage, she got mad drunk, like this close-eyed husk of a tornado, kept asking me to punch her in the stomach, said she wanted to get rid of everything.

RACHEL

She sounded sad. Maybe she was angry because she was sad.

ALEXIS

I don't think she liked losing things. *(beat)*. Maybe she was floating around in a lake, or something, and the stuff she said kept her tethered to the rocks and sand and stuff.

RACHEL

She could've just been drunk.

ALEXIS

You could've just been drunk, too, but then you told Zoe that you hated her.

RACHEL

Tucson. *(slowly, contemplating and sounding the word out)*. Tuc-son. Tu-cson. Tusc-on. You're right.

ALEXIS

I'm afraid of knowing people too well. We didn't even talk about it. We had a little box so thin I thought it was made out of cardboard. Dug a spot in the backyard. That was it.

RACHEL

It's like—it's like this stuff should *matter* more, but it doesn't. *(beat)*. Alexis?

ALEXIS

Yea?

RACHEL

I don't feel like a girl. I feel like an animal, like I'm sweating and I'm part of the air around me.

ALEXIS

Can I say something? About you and Zoe?

RACHEL

Maybe.

ALEXIS

(hesitantly, searching for the words). I think you kissed her because you could.

RACHEL

That's dumb. What does that even mean? I can cut down all the cactuses in the desert. I can ride a dirtbike. I can cut off my own lip. That doesn't mean I *should*, or that it—it reflects what I *want* to do.

ALEXIS

I don't even know what I want. *(beat)*. I want to talk about everything. I want to move those things around like pebbles by a river.

RACHEL

I think you're afraid.

ALEXIS
Of course I'm afraid. You're afraid too.

RACHEL
Fine.

ALEXIS
Fine, what?

RACHEL
Fine, I wanted to. Case closed.

ALEXIS
Don't be pissy.

RACHEL
Don't try to dissect what I say. I'm just spilling my thoughts out, and it's all messy and jumbled.

ALEXIS
But you're not. Spilling your thoughts.

RACHEL
Yes I am.

ALEXIS
There's a gap between us and it feels weird, like static.

RACHEL
(beat). Once when I was, like, ten, I got in a fight with my parents. It was whatever, like dumb, and I wanted to run away from home. But I thought of a better idea. I tried to dig a hole so I could hide there as long as I wanted. (beat). What's the most important thing you've ever learned?

ALEXIS
I was watching Ru Paul's Drag Race, and someone said, *you don't need to throw someone under the bus. You can just be the bus.*

RACHEL
That's good. That's really good.

ALEXIS
What about you? What's your most important thing?

RACHEL
I already told you. The hole. It's nice and quiet down there but then when I want to leave my legs are tired from squatting.

ALEXIS
That's like Plato, you know? Staying in the cave. Seeing shadows on a cave but not the stuff the shadows belong to. I think the world is ugly like that. I don't even think the world is round. I think it's shaped like a squash.

RACHEL
What do you want to be when you grow up?

ALEXIS
I don't know. I don't believe in the future.

RACHEL
That's really dumb. Everyone thinks of the future when they're sad. I read this article that was like, *daydreaming is escapism!* but like, so what, you know? I don't want to soak in the present. If I wanted to be pleasant and mellow all the time I'd be a television anchor.

But I don't. I want to design houses.

ALEXIS

I want to be pretty, but I'm too sad to be pretty.

RACHEL

You can't just be *pretty*. That's not the point.

ALEXIS

I don't think my brother would've been pretty, either. I think his head would've been shaped like a squash instead of round, with a bump in the back or something, because he was made from unfairness.

RACHEL

And made of unfairness?

ALEXIS

(beat, as if considering). I changed my mind. I don't want to be pretty. I want to be a cactus.

RACHEL

Caught in the fog.

ALEXIS

There's no fog in the desert.

RACHEL

If you can be a cactus there can be fog in the desert.

ALEXIS

But I wasn't being, like, hypothetical. I was being figurative.

RACHEL

So was I.

ALEXIS

(beat). Hypothetically, if everything were normal, I think me and my brother would've fought a lot.

RACHEL

What even is *normal*? This isn't normal. It's weird, but it's happening anyway, like who decides *normal*?

ALEXIS

Normal is when things happen the way they're supposed to, like expected and everything.

RACHEL

(half-mockingly). Realistically, I'm not sure if I want to talk to Zoe or I don't. Figuratively, I don't know.

ALEXIS

You can't be *pressured* for something else to happen to you.

RACHEL

I never said that.

ALEXIS

Yes you did.

RACHEL

I thought we were trying to be honest.

ALEXIS

We are.

RACHEL

(beat). What do you think your brother is doing right now?

ALEXIS

Floating in an ocean.

RACHEL

(looks up, squints). The sky kind of looks like an upside down ocean.

ALEXIS

Like the sides of a nice shallow hole in the ground.

ALEXIS *and* RACHEL *still sitting together, comfortably quiet.*