

TREASURE HUNT

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FADE IN:

INT. CAR - DAY

MAX, an early 20's handsome guy, slips into the driver's seat of a passenger car. HARRY, an attractive, early 20's geeky/nerdy guy with glasses, is already in the passenger seat. Max has a bag of fast food. As he hands the bag to Harry,

MAX

I don't know if we can do this again. I had to dig deep in the couch for this.

Harry, opening the bag and enjoying the smells as they waft up to his face, frowns.

HARRY

Totally, but I need a break from endless ramen.

Max nods as Harry hands him something wrapped in waxed paper (probably Taco Bell).

MAX

You got anything lined up to pay for fall yet?

HARRY

(around a mouthful)
Nothing. You gotta know someone.

MAX

(nodding)
Same here. Even then, howinthehell you supposed to pay for school at minimum wage?

HARRY

According to my spreadsheet, working all summer at fast food will pay for the first three weeks of school.

MAX

(around mouthful)
Right! What's the point?

HARRY

At least you're smart enough to get a major that makes money.

MAX

Eventually. I'm not even in med school yet. At least you enjoy yourself. I rethink my decision
(MORE)

MAX (CONT'D)
 every time I sign up for classes I
 don't give a damn about.

Max heaves a big sigh.

MAX
 My reward for excellent grades and
 all these non-paying internships is
 the privilege to go even deeper in
 debt on medical school, then be dirt
 poor and working a hundred hour
 weeks for another three years.

HARRY
 Yeah, but think of all the bucks
 when you hang out your shingle.

MAX
 Assuming I haven't burnt out and
 become a monk or something. And
 don't even get me started on the
 student loans I'll be buried under.
 (smiling)
 At least then I'll be able to help
 people.

HARRY
 Yeah, well, as a percentage of
 earnings, I bet mine'll be higher
 than yours.

Max nods, then shrugs.

MAX
 Sucks to be us, eh?

INT. KV APARTMENT KITCHEN - DAY

KAYLA, a beautiful early 20's woman, is standing over a
 stove, stirring a pot. She looks over her shoulder when
 VELMA, an attractive glasses-wearing geeky/nerdy woman in
 her early 20's, opens the apartment door. Velma is
 carrying a small bag of groceries.

KAYLA
 Whachaget?

VELMA
 Mmm mmm good chicken thighs, on sale
 for thirty cents a pound.

KAYLA
 What? Are they a hundred years old
 or something?

Velma puts the bag on the counter and takes out the package.

VELMA

Nothing that gross. They were on sale today and I had a coupon.

KAYLA

Sorry. I shouldn't look gift protein in the mouth.

Velma smiles, and starts to cut up the chicken.

KAYLA

Where'd you get the money? I carefully went through the couch cushions last weekend.

VELMA

Wouldja believe I found two quarters when I cleaned the car? And two more when I was walking into the store.

KAYLA

Untold riches!

Kayla dumps her noodles into a strainer in the sink. Velma starts cooking the cut up chicken.

KAYLA

You have any luck with jobs?

Velma shakes her head.

VELMA

I'm beginning to think a history degree was a mistake, though I really can't think of anything else I care about.

KAYLA

Well, it's not like there are huge number of options for physics majors, you know.

VELMA

Yeah, but once you finish your research, getting into graduate school will be a breeze. And at least you'll get paid. No stipends for history masters!

KAYLA

I'm sure you'll start making real money before I will. After my PhD I need to postdoc for a few years
(MORE)

KAYLA (CONT'D)

before I can even start looking for professorships.

(shaking her head)

And assistant professors are barely paid more than postdocs.

VELMA

At least we enjoy what we're doing. I knew I wasn't going to make much money when I started down this path, but it's all that gets me passionate.

KAYLA

Boys get me passionate, but nothing sustains me like exploding stars.

VELMA

(smiling)

Based on my experience, history is better than sex.

KAYLA

(looking at Velma)

Girlfriend, you haven't found the right man if you think reading books is better than sex.

Velma blushes a little and shrugs.

VELMA

Oh, the ways it sucks to be us!

INT. MH DINING ROOM - NIGHT

A typical guys apartment. Not filthy so much, but cluttered and could definitely do with some cleaning. It probably doesn't smell that great. On the sofa, facing the TV, are a couple of BROS who are playing console games. They completely ignore everything going on around them.

Max and Harry are sitting at the dining table, study papers spread all over the table.

MAX

Splain me again how this is an easy A?

Harry looks up and studies Max's face.

HARRY

Seriously? You memorize great chunks of completely unrelated and impersonal science, yet can't remember fascinating, impassioned events of the Civil War?

MAX

Passion for you, maybe, but a long series of General A did this and General B responded with that.

HARRY

(passionate)

History isn't memorized, history is lived, experienced. These were real people, with emotions. People who made irrevocable decisions, sometimes on the spur of the moment.

MAX

What's passionate about Sheridan's Shenandoah Valley Campaign?

Harry stares at Max.

HARRY

How many of those people simply wanted to be left alone by both sides? Who changed allegiances? Think of all the intrigue.

Max stares off into distance.

MAX

Yeah, I guess. But I don't get that excitement from the books or lecture, I only get it from you.

HARRY

Then you're not using your imagination. We got a good teacher, which is why I encouraged you to take this class. Stop being so literal and listen to the cannon and musket shot when the teacher describes the battles.

Max shrugs.

MAX

I guess that's what makes you the history major.

INT. KV DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Kayla and Velma are eating the dinner they prepared. The table is covered with history books and they study while they eat.

VELMA

I don't see how you struggle with this stuff. It's fascinating to find out how our ancestors did things.

KAYLA

So much seems mundane, though.
Reading diaries seems pointless.
They're all long dead. Plus, it's
depressing to read how many people
died young.

VELMA

Yeah, I don't think I'd want to live
back then, not unless I can bring a
big bag of medicines with me.

KAYLA

I wonder what people in a hundred
and fifty years will think of how we
do things. Maybe they'll be able to
do surgery without cutting people.
Remember that line in the Star Trek
movie, where Bones talks about the
surgical butchery of the twentieth
century?

VELMA

(rolling her eyes)
Right, because I have all the Star
Trek movies memorized.

Velma reaches out to a book on the table and pulls it
toward her so she and Kayla can read it.

VELMA

Take this, for instance. The Union
had all the official maps and the
Confederates had to make do with
whatever they could scrounge up. Did
you know that the Confederates
basically invented photographic map
reproduction?

Kayla looks at the book and reads while she eats.

KAYLA

What, no online maps and GPS back
then?

VELMA

(staring)
Hmph.
(pause)
Oh, right. Sarcasm.

Kayla rolls her eyes.

KAYLA

We gotta get you out of your books
if you can't recognise something
that blatant.

INT. MH APPT. LIVING AREA - DAY

Max and Harry, shirtless, are wearing exercise shorts. They're stretching in preparation for a run.

HARRY

We should go over the information for the lecture.

Max sighs.

MAX

I guess. At least it's a lot more interesting when I get it from you.

As Harry leans forward to stretch,

HARRY

Last week the teacher started to discuss Sheridan's burning of the Valley. Remember?

Max nods.

HARRY

While he and his men left the citizens alone, they destroyed most crops, mills and barns.

Max nods, a slight look of interest on his face.

INT. KV APPT. LIVING AREA - DAY

Kayla and Velma are wearing exercise shorts and sports bras. They're doing some yoga in preparation for a run.

VELMA

There were some interesting exceptions, though. The Zirkle Mill, off Holeman's Creek, just East of Forestville, was spared due to the inspiration of the operator at the time, Samuel Hockman.

KAYLA

(mild look of interest)
Right. Didn't he see the action coming?

Kayla is effortlessly stretching. Velma tries to mimic what Kayla is doing and has to suppress grunts when she struggles.

VELMA

(nodding)
After climbing a nearby hill, he
(MORE)

VELMA (CONT'D)

could see the mills at nearby Moore's Store, Harpinetown and the Myers farm being set ablaze. He got a Union Flag, climbed onto the roof of the mill and hung it there.

KAYLA

I like this. The guy's clever and quick thinking.

VELMA

(smiling)

He ran to meet the Union Cavalry officers in the road. The flag and his pleadings convinced them and the troops were ordered to leave the mill alone. It was the only mill on Holman's creek to survive that day. The General in charge of the Union Cavalry in this area was none other than George Armstrong Custer.

KAYLA

I remember seeing a picture of him. Quite a dandy, wasn't he?

Velma nods.

EXT. JOGGING PATH - DAY

Harry and Max are jogging. In the background are Velma and Kayla. They're unaware of each other.

At an intersection in the path, Max and Harry turn. As Velma and Kayla approach,

KAYLA

Did you see the back and butt on that guy?

Velma rolls her eyes.

VELMA

Of course. And the beefy guy looks hot too.

EXT. FITNESS STATION MH ALONG PATH - DAY

A typical exercise station placed along the trail. Harry and Max are making use of the equipment.

HARRY

After the war, so the story generally goes, the local people branded Hockman as a Union

(MORE)

HARRY (CONT'D)
 sympathizer and refused to patronize
 the mill.

Max is doing pushups with his feet elevated. Harry tries this, but can't lift himself while keeping his back straight. Max ignores this and looks up to see Kayla and Velma from behind as they jog past. He follows them with such intensity that Harry looks up from his struggles.

HARRY
 Nice!

EXT. FITNESS STATION KV ALONG PATH - DAY

At another fitness station where Kayla and Velma are using different equipment.

VELMA
 Soon, the owner, Peter Myers, was forced to sell. However, it's just as likely they ignored him because Myers wouldn't extend credit during the war years and was rumored to say "let them eat cake."

Kayla smiles.

INTERCUT BETWEEN TWO PAIRS

HARRY
 The Confederates were pushed out of Richmond. As they withdrew, they removed what hard currency they still had from the various banks.

Max looks on with acute interest as he does his workout.

VELMA
 Rumors, then and even now, are that substantial portions of the gold and silver were buried along the route, most famous in Danville, Virginia.

Kayla, alert to what Velma is saying, nods as she does leg lifts. Velma is doing inclined pushups and starts to struggle, so moves to a higher angle.

HARRY
 Quite a bit of silver is rumored to have been left in Danville, which was briefly the Confederate Capital in the last few days of the war.

Max pauses his workout, his eyes going unfocused.

VELMA

Efforts to find the silver have so far been unsuccessful, possibly because it was buried in the cemetery, where the government refuses to allow any exploration.

Kayla stops her workout and is staring intently at Velma.

HARRY

There've been occasional rumors that some Confederate treasure has been buried in the Shenandoah Valley, though never substantiated in any documents discovered from the period.

MAX

That's what we need. Find some treasure and all our problems are behind us.

Harry snorts and shakes his head.

HARRY

Might as well buy lotto tickets.

KAYLA

You know, if that treasure was real, and we found it, we could pay for the rest of school.

Velma frowns.

VELMA

No one's found any of it in a hundred and fifty years. No one's ever going to find it.

INT. MH APPT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

The sort of kitchen you'd expect for several guys living in an apartment together. Not filthy, per se, but certainly in the need of a serious scrubbing. Max is preparing some ramen noodles while Harry leans against the counter watching.

MAX

You're actually related to some of these people and have history that goes back to before the war. What do you mean you can't offer any insight?

HARRY

Dude, you gotta understand.
(MORE)

HARRY (CONT'D)

People've been looking for this stuff since the very end of the war. There's no way I know anything that wasn't known by every treasure hunter of the day, let alone the hundred and fifty years since.

Max cracks a couple of eggs into the noodles, then stirs them in.

MAX

We got any other protein?

Harry opens the fridge and looks in. He bends down and looks in the back, pulling open the crisper drawers, etc.

Standing up, he looks at Max and shakes his head. Max sighs.

MAX

Surely your family has personal diaries and notes. Something no one else has?

Harry leans back against the counter, contemplating.

Max splits the noodles into two bowls and carries them to the dining table.

INT. MH DINING - DAY

He pushes their books and notes out of the way. BROS play computer games in the background.

They sit at the table and start to eat.

HARRY

When I was younger, I remember spending many happy hours digging through a big chest we have of stuff like that.

MAX

There you go! Let's take a look and see if we can't find something.

HARRY

(shrugging)
Yeah, I guess.

MAX

Road trip!

INT. KV APPT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A neat, if spare, living room, decorated with a woman's touch. The ladies are sitting on opposite ends of the recycled couch, eating salads.

KAYLA

Come on, man. You're steeped in this stuff. You eat and drink it. Probably even sleep it.

Velma's eyes narrow as she looks at Kayla over her bowl.

KAYLA

Sorry.

(pause)

Seriously, though. Surely your family has material from the era that no one else has.

VELMA

Of course. I imagine a lot of families have. As far as generations go, it wasn't that long ago, you know. But I don't see how our family's stuff is any different from what's publicly available.

KAYLA

(around a mouthful)

Can we look? Maybe, since we're looking for it, we'll find something.

Velma shrugs, then focuses on eating. As Kayla stares at her,

VELMA

(heavy sigh)

I'm guessing I'll get no peace until you've seen there's no "there" there.

KAYLA

(smiling with triumph)

Just a few hours, that's all I'm asking.

Velma frowns.

KAYLA

Look at it this way. I'm excited about the topic for the first time. You don't want to squash that enthusiasm, do you?

Velma gives Kayla a dark look, then shrugs.

VELMA

Total BS, but if it'll get you off
my back, it'll be worth it.