

LUKE AND EMMA AND A GAS STATION ON FRANKLIN AVE

Written by

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[MUSIC CUE: *Talk Dirty to Me* by Poison]

Yes. We're going to start in black with a title card:

LUKE AND EMMA AND A GAS STATION ON FRANKLIN AVE

And then we're literally going to:

FADE IN:

2

EXT. GAS STATION PARKING LOT - DAY

2

It's 1986. Even so, a GREEN 1973 AMC AMBASSADOR (because I've got one) pulls up to the MINI-MART of a GAS STATION. After few seconds of Poison the radio abruptly changes to *Close to You* by the Carpenters.

In the driver seat is a THAI MOTHER, NOI MCKAY (30s, beautiful but frustrated). She's the driver and the adult so she commands the music selection. In the passenger side is her SON, LUKE (11-ish, curmudgeonly) but his mother calls him "GOP," which is a traditional Thai nickname meaning "frog." Luke has no agency in music selection.

LUKE

Mom! I hate this!

Noi sings along with a snarky smile. Luke is actually angry while Noi revels in the fact that Mother is all powerful and all knowing.

As she puts the car into park a YOUNG WHITE COUPLE walks by. The JOCK BOYFRIEND (early 20s, a self-satisfied grin that could only be useful for eating shit) sees Noi and Luke bickering. As he walks by he puts his fingers up to his eyes and pulls them back tight making slanted "Asian" eyes. He makes a dumb bucktoothed grin. His CHEERLEADER GIRLFRIEND (also early 20s and clearly enabling this behavior while feigning offense) laughs but lightly slaps him on the arm.

CHEERLEADER GIRLFRIEND

(Laughing)

Stop it!

Noi just politely smiles at them and tries to act like she's in on the joke. Luke is not so amused. He makes an angry face and flips them off.

The Jock Boyfriend's disposition shifts to something more hostile. Noi is horrified that Luke is escalating things. She shoves Luke's hand down. Noi speaks to her son in a mix of Thai and English that only he can understand.

NOI
 (Thai/English)
 Okay! Okay! That's enough! Let them
 go!

LUKE
 Why? Say something!

Noi shushes Luke and politely laughs and smiles at the couple and tries to wave them off. Jock Boyfriend glares at Luke as Cheerleader Girlfriend drags him off. Noi sighs in relief. She pops the car door open.

LUKE (CONT'D)
 I can't listen to my favorite band,
 that means I can have candy.

NOI
 (Thai/English)
 No, Gop! You can't have any. Then
 you'll get fat!

LUKE
 I won't get fat! Just one box of
 Nerds!

NOI
 (Thai)
 No!

LUKE
 (Thai)
 No!

Noi opens the door and puts a foot on the ground.

LUKE (CONT'D)
 I hate you.

Noi sighs and exits the car leaving Luke to stew. He picks up his NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC MAGAZINE and angrily flips through it. He finds a page with topless indigenous women. His eyes widen.

The front door of the convenience store dings as Noi enters. Another CAR pulls up beside the AMC. It's a much newer car. An expansive 1983 FORD LTD CROWN VICTORIA. A CAUCASIAN MAN, DAVID BARRETT (30s, well-to-do and confident that he lives in a world specifically design for him) exits the vehicle. He's dressed in his Sunday best, a nice double breasted suit and tie. He comes off like a less wholesome Ted Lasso.

His DAUGHTER, EMMA (also 11-ish, earnest and curious) steps out of the passenger side. She's also dressed for church.

Luke recognizes her and immediately ducks. Time slows down as his eyes follow her into the mini-mart.

3 INT. GAS STATION MINI-MART - DAY

3

Over the in-store speakers a RADIO BROADCAST relays news about the recent CHERNOBYL DISASTER.

Noi is already standing in a slow moving line with a NOTEBOOK and LOTTERY PUNCHCARDS.

David looks up and down the aisles. He spots Noi. He grabs a SIX PACK OF ALE-8-ONE and a CARTON OF MILK.

Emma grabs a BAG OF RED VINES and holds it above her head.

EMMA

Dad! I want these!

JERRY the STORE CLERK (50, courteous and observant) rings up LOCALS in line.

DAVID

(To Emma but eyes on Noi)
Alright, Emma. Don't tell your mother.

(To the Jerry)
I got those, Jerry.

He indicates Emma.

JERRY

Anything you say, Mr. Barrett.

The girl pulls open the bag and pulls out a REDVINE LICORICE STICK. David gets in line behind Noi. He leans over to Noi but is interrupted by a LOCAL as he leaves the store.

LOCAL 1

Hell of a sermon today, wasn't it, David?

DAVID

Sure was!

The Local exits. David and Noi step closer to the counter.

DAVID (CONT'D)

First time in the states?

Noi doesn't respond. David tries out his foreign language skills by raising the volume of his voice.

DAVID (CONT'D)
I said is it the first time in the
states?

Noi turns, confused, and then realizes David is talking to
her.

NOI
Ah, no.

DAVID
No? How long you been here?

NOI
I'm live here 15 years.

DAVID
15 years? Well, ain't that
interesting.

David finds Emma wandering the aisles.

DAVID (CONT'D)
Hey, honey. Why don't you go wait
in the car.

Emma nods and leaves taking her Red Vines with her.

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EXT. GAS STATION PARKING LOT - DAY

4

The door to the convenience dings. Luke looks up to see Emma
step out with a Red Vine sticking out of her mouth. He slowly
sinks down so only his eyes and the top of his head peak over
the car door.

His attention is completely transfixed. His entire body goes
stiff as he swallows hard.

Emma walks to her car and leans on the grill. She settles in
happily eating her Red Vine.

Luke stares forward. He eyes dart over and catches a glimpse
of Emma. Emma shifts her weight, spooking Luke. He eyes dart
away. He dares not stare for too long.

He throws caution to the wind and slowly turns again and
takes a long look, drinking it all in. His gaze burns a hole
through the back of Emma's head. She can sense Luke's stare.
She turns reflexively and her eyes look directly into his for
a terrifying eternity.

Luke panics and throws himself to the floorboard. He stays there for a long while. Maybe she didn't notice him staring creepily at her for an inappropriately long amount of time!

EMMA (O.S.)

Why are you staring at me?

He says nothing. Maybe if he doesn't answer the moment will pass. Girl's are like T-Rex. Their vision is movement based! Just. Don't. Move. A car door opens and closes.

EMMA (CONT'D)

Why were you staring at me?

She's standing at the car door looking down at the boy laying ridiculously on the floorboard.

LUKE

I wasn't. I was... I...

Emma stares awaiting an explanation.

LUKE (CONT'D)

Uh. Because... I was just...

EMMA

Luke, right? Mrs. Merchant's class?

LUKE

Yeah. Your dad's the principal, right?

EMMA

Uh huh.

She picks up the National Geographic Magazine still on the passenger seat and flips through it.

EMMA (CONT'D)

Is this what you're reading?

Panicked, the boy climbs off the floorboard and snatches the magazine out of her hands and throws it in the back seat.

EMMA (CONT'D)

God!

LUKE

Don't!

EMMA

Why? Cause there's boobies in it?

LUKE

No!

EMMA

I know what boobies look like.

He desperately climbs into the back seat.

LUKE

I'm reading about the rain forest!
Go away!

Emma rolls her eyes and goes back to her car.

Luke hunkers down, his head below the windows, arms folded. He's flustered, frustrated, angry, but not exactly sure why. Being eleven is confusing.

He looks up to see Emma standing next to the window. She has an uneaten Red Vine which she taps against the glass. She raises her eyebrows and tilts her head in a question. Luke stares forward at the back of the seat.

5 INT. GAS STATION MINI-MART - DAY

5

Noi and David are closer to the register now.

DAVID

You have really beautiful hair.

David is trying to play it off as an innocent comment which causes him to overdo it. Noi doesn't say anything. She keeps looking forward.

DAVID (CONT'D)

I love that about Oriental women.
Lemme guess.

Noi is more uncomfortable now. She peaks at the front of the line.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Vietnamese.

NOI

I'm Thai.

DAVID

Taiwan is a beautiful country.

NOI

(Smiles politely)
Okay.

After a moment.

DAVID
(Forced chuckle)
It'd be funny if I got your phone
number.

NOI
You want me give you telephone?

David looks up quickly and catches Jerry's eye. Jerry raises an eyebrow. The register opens with a ka-ching.

DAVID
Well, no. It's just a... like, it'd
be funny--

MOM
I'm marry.

DAVID
Oh. Well, that's wonderful. I'm
married, too. That was my daughter,
Emma. Apple of my eye. I didn't
mean anything, of course. Just a
what if...

They scoot a little closer to Jerry. David bounces back and forth on his heels.

Noi laughs nervously.

Then:

NOI
Emma? My son talk about Emma.

DAVID
Your son talks about my Emma? He
goes to my school?

Noi and David both look through the window to see:

6

EXT. GAS STATION - DAY

6

There's a knock on the window of the car. Luke looks up. Emma is standing outside. She makes a circular motion with a closed upside down fist.

In response, he rolls the window down.

EMMA
You wanna Red Vine?

Luke reaches out his opened hand and she slaps the Red Vine against his palm. He grabs it and takes a bite. Emma leans against the car. They don't look at each other.

EMMA (CONT'D)
Do you go to church around here?

LUKE
Not really. My mom is just playing lotto.

EMMA
She buys lotto tickets after church?

LUKE
We don't go to church.

EMMA
Oh.

Emma processes this.

Then:

EMMA (CONT'D)
I saw you.

LUKE
What.

EMMA
You were going to shove a note in my locker. But then you didn't.

Luke stiffens but tries to play it off.

LUKE
Oh.

EMMA
What did it say?

LUKE
Nothing.

Luke takes a quick bite and chews nervously.

EMMA
Do you like me?

LUKE
No!

Emma's feelings are hurt by this but she tries not to let it show. She chews a bit on her Red Vine as she regroups.

EMMA

That's fine. It's not like we can get married.

LUKE

Wait. How come?

EMMA

Well, my dad says you shouldn't have kids with someone from another race. Cause they won't know who they are.

LUKE

They won't?

EMMA

I guess.

Luke thinks for a moment.

LUKE

Why not?

EMMA

I don't know.

LUKE

My dad is white.

EMMA

Oh.

LUKE

I know who I am. Do you know who you are?

EMMA

I know. I think. I'm me.

LUKE

Me too.

They chew on their Red Vines.

7

INT. GAS STATION MINI-MART - DAY

7

Noi and David reach the front of the line. David impulsively reaches around Noi and puts his items on the counter.

DAVID
 Hey, Jerry, she's gonna take a
 while and I just got these things.

JERRY
 Oh, well, sure.

DAVID
 She don't mind. Do you? You know
 what. Just, I'll get hers too.

JERRY
 That's very gentlemanly.

He nervously slaps some cash on the counter.

DAVID
 (At Jerry)
 Look, it's just, we're just joking
 around, the language barrier.
 (At Noi)
 You should... Anyway.

NOI
 Oh. Okay. Thank you.

JERRY
 Alright, then.

DAVID
 Pump five, too.

He puts some more cash down.

DAVID (CONT'D)
 Keep the change.

JERRY
 Appreciate it, Mr. Barrett.

And David is off.

8 EXT. GAS STATION PARKING LOT - DAY

8

Luke and Emma chew on their Red Vines.

EMMA
 Do you want another one?

LUKE
 Yes.

She hands him another one. The door of the mini-mart dings. David rushes out.

DAVID

Hey, come on, Emma. What are you doing? We gotta go.

EMMA

That's my dad. I have to go. Are you going to talk to me tomorrow?

LUKE

Maybe.

EMMA

Okay. I'll see you then. Say hi, okay?

LUKE

Okay.

Emma walks off to the car. Luke listens to her talk with her father as the door of the convenience dings open again.

DAVID (O.S.)

Who was that you were talking to?

EMMA (O.S.)

A boy from school.

Luke smiles a little and takes another bite from the Red Vine. Luke watches as David and Emma pull away.

Noi open the drive side door, gets in the car, frustrated. She has a stack of lottery purchase receipts that she slaps down on the passenger seat.

NOI

Why you sit in the back?

LUKE

I don't know.

NOI

Who that you talk to?

LUKE

Emma.

NOI

Emma?! You don't talk to her any more.

She looks in rearview mirror and sees Luke taking another bite of his Red Vine.

NOI (CONT'D)

Where you get candy? No more candy!
Get fat! When we get home you brush
your teeth!

Luke rolls his eyes as Noi backs the car out of their spot.

END