

HIDE TOWN

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Here we are in the saloon that is also a country store. With the dusty shelves of old oatmeal and bags of charcoal and such. A few random deerheads mounted on the wall. A few round tables covered with the plastic checkered tablecloths (see the cigarette burns?). Also folding chairs, napkin holders and hotsauce set out and ready. A sign over the door, with block letters that say "*Some Day, These Days Will Be Worth Remembering.*" This has been the bar motto for years and years.

Olive and Swimming Otter sit at the bar.

OLIVE

I don't know Swimming Otter, it's like, who the hell knows?

It's like I mean: there you go.

I mean like: No, Yeah, NO.

I mean so you're standing there, right?

You're standing there with your hand on your hip,

hand on your hip and your like,

Sure, well, alright fine,

if you say so,

but even as I stand here as I stand every day,

I say there is something on the horizon.

I always said it just like that: there is something on the horizon.

So when I try to reckon with what happened that day,

I just wind up being like, well, I told you so, whatever,

I didn't know they were Cries for Help,

Everybody figured Sheila was All Talk and anyway

I think I was vacuuming that day, see, I get migranes and you know, Otter,

you know how crazy things were that month

you know.

Olive shifts in her seat.

Anyway she hated me from the beginning that much I know.

She would come into my shop and just SMIRK.

Bud tried to convince me that it was her "thinking face"

But if there's one thing I learned from this broo ha ha

It's that Bud will say anything to keep me locked down

In his own private la la land.

It's like the truth is all around us,

and Bud's built a concrete bunker where he sits in the dark,

eating cold Dinty Moore out the can.
He wants me in there with him too, and some days I think I AM in there,
drooling on the dirt floor.

I'm speaking mesozoically, of course.
Is that what it's called?
Where's Ivah...

A Texas pause, meaning they sit at the bar, and maybe twirl the glass in front of
them, meaning they turn their eyes inward to think about what the farm used to
look like, meaning there is no real hurry to start talking again, meaning someone
could potentially walk in and start something new. But they don't.

It am NOT locked down in La La land.
I know my left hand from my right.
And even after everything, all the fury and helloworldhighwater,
and the TV people dancing in with their cranes full of rain,
I really care about this place, I really do.

We're all good people here.
"A simple people with simple needs."
Let the city people have their cities, I say,
We all say, we all go church except Oswald, but Oswald's different,
He's got his own religion, that olde tyme religion
From the Golden times when brides wore black dresses and men
Tied garlic around their ankles for good luck.

And that's a precious part of our history,
like the camels and the weeping well,
And we are proud of this history,
And we must also "press forward"
Like Texie's always saying.

And we can "Press forward", with open hearts and dignity.
And we can "Press Forward" without getting all Tom Cruise about it.
Remember Tom Cruise? Whoo-ee now THERE was a President.
I mean for those two months, those Two months before
he.....
..... but a body can "press forward" without
being an idiot. Look at me: I'm like totally starting
A fat flush and helping my sister open her Norwegian furniture atelier.
Oh wait, oh wait, oh wait that's not me,
that's somebody else,
Someone I read about in an old newspaper.....No, no, no, no, no, NO.
My name is Olive, and I am sitting in this saloon
with my hand on my hip and I live in oh Jesus fuck

I live in Texas. I live in Texas and I enjoy
Barbecue and going to matinee movies and my family owns a
Ranch over in Waller. Owned that is.
Up the road a piece or maybe is it down?

It's supposed to be really muggy out today.

Pause but not quite a Texas pause. Olive touches her hair.

And to think, I used to be a hairdresser.

Swimming Otter is suddenly loud and panicked and speaks into the air.

SWIMMING OTTER
ELENA! ELENA! WAIT! ELENA DON'T GO PLEASE.

Olive is calm.

OLIVE
Otter?

SWIMMING OTTER
Oh, sorry, that was a flashback.

OLIVE
Right.

SWIMMING OTTER
It's supposed to be really muggy out today.

OLIVE
Right.

The door to the bar opens and snow and wind pour in.

There is a blizzard outside.

An old wrinkled woman enters on roller skates, wearing a wedding dress.

SWIMMING OTTER AND OLIVE
Hey Ivah.

Miss Ivah sounds drunk and tired.

MISS IVAH
Hey.

And there's Miss Ivah, standing there, breathing heavy. She goes to the bar and gets a few peanuts out of the peanut bowl. Her hands are shaking. She really wants a chocolate milk. She barely gets the peanuts in her mouth, and chews. She kind of glances over at Swimming Otter and Olive for a moment. Then she rollerskates back out the door. Snow, again. Swimming Otter and Olive share a look like "poor Miss Ivah." Swimming Otter takes a swig of beer, slams his hand down on the bar, and gives a lively motivational speech.

SWIMMING OTTER

It's a fleeting time but we can fleet with it, I say.
If we just stay tuned to the vibration and DON'T FREAK OUT.
Stay calm, eat healthy and like Chekov says WORK.
Plant near the village and organize yer workforce
So then ya got more time to THINK. THINK up new ideas that are
Better than everybody else's ideas.
And not dumbfuck ideas like sailing a ship fulla stinkin', beady-eyed camels
across the ocean to carry guns, water and soldiers across the desert.

OLIVE

Now, Otter –

SWIMMING OTTER

THINK. WORK. LEARN TO STORE YOUR GRAIN.
Muffdive if you want to muffdive but muffdive on your own time, and don't
Spend time worryin about whose muffdiving and whose not muffdiving.
You are you.
And everybody else is everybody else.
Now there's a rule of thumb!
And while we now know the Camel is thoroughly evil,
The Human Being is basically good so
Count yerself lucky and go to sleep sound.
And the good people of...the good people of...the good people of...
Where are we again, Olive?

OLIVE

We are in Hide Town.

SWIMMING OTTER

The good people of Hide Town should feel proud to be in
Hide Town. THAT'S why they put us on TV that time.
We have our rights and we have our wits
And we have this saloon and we have our teeth and
we have our trailers and we wake up each day
and say Howdy Neighbor
we believe deeply In Howdy Neighbor

we say it real natural like, round like, like
It was a beautiful marble rolling out of our mouths
like the phrase belongs to us, because it does belong to us,
it does, and you should just FEEL GOOD.

OLIVE

Thank you, Otter.

That made me feel a mite bit better I think.

SWIMMING OTTER

Sure thing.

Olive moves her hand, slowly at first, till it gently covers Swimming Otter's hand.

SWIMMING OTTER

Olive.

OLIVE

I know, I know.

She pulls her hand away just as Texie and Coonrod enter. The blizzard is still raging. Look at Texie and Coonrad, all dressed to go out, with their cowboy boots and hats, and their shirts with fancy stitching!

TEXIE

Howdy, Neighbor!

SWIMMING OTTER

Howdy Neighbor!

COONRAD

Howdy Neighbor!

OLIVE

Howdy Neighbor!

TEXIE

Howdy Neighbor!

OLIVE

Howdy Neighbor!

COONRAD

Howdy Neighbor!

SWIMMING OTTER

Howdy Neighbor!

They all burst into laughter for a few seconds.

COONRAD

Where's the party! Where's the mechanical bull! The 7 layer dip and the pull tabs! Baby carrots with Ranch Dressing! Corn Dogs with dippin' sauce!

A tired laugh from the group.

SWIMMING OTTER

(Calling to someone off stage)

Mads! Get this man some whiskey!

TEXIE

Oh, Otter.

SWIMMING OTTER

No really! Mads! Mads where is that booger. Hold on I'll just have to get it myself.

Swimming otter goes around the bar and dusts off an old, empty bottle of whiskey. He takes out a dusty glass, spits in it, and cleans it out. He mimes pouring whiskey in the glass and makes glug glug sounds.

Rocks?

Coonrad holds up two fingers. Texie shakes her head. Swimming Otter mimes putting two ice cubes in the whiskey and slides the glass down to Coonrad. He mimes drinking.

SWIMMING OTTER

Texie?

TEXIE

No thank you, Swimming Otter.

COONRAD

It's a fleeting time but I know we can fleet with it.

Ya gotta remember your cattle and your wife and your rope and

Your rifle and your saddle soap and spectacles but you also

must remember to DANCE. DANCE whether it is in the

Morning or the nighttime or the afternoon or the midday

It does not matter the time it is the DANCE that is important.

It is the dance that wriggles the hard work out of our bones

And makes us feel ALIVE. Because we all must work

Yes we all must work just like that guy...Otter's buddy....That uh....
You know that old guy Otter's always talking about that there -

SWIMMING OTTER

Chekov.

COONRAD

Like Chekov said all those many moons ago, yes the work is
Positively important but equally important is the DANCE.

The DANCE reminds us of the golden times, when the
Old Tymers wore skirts made of raw garlic to boost fertility.

KAPOW!

The DANCE cuts straight to the root of the good in us.

Because the evil of the camel's hoof can be countered only

By the good of the human heart, a heart that has been known to grow

Four sizes when that heart is allowed to DANCE.

Coonrad ends in his dance- y pose. Everyone is half-smiling. They don't want
him to feel bad but they are also a little embarrassed. Olive tries to be cheerful.

OLIVE

Swimming Otter said the same thing just a few minutes ago.

COONRAD

He did?

OLIVE

More or less yes.

SWIMMING OTTER

Ever since you and Texie got back from that couples retreat in Taos -

OLIVE

Thank you, Coonrad.

TEXIE

Yes, thanks, Coonrad.

COONRAD

Anytime, Olive, of course anytime, Texie.

Olive, how's there Bud?

OLIVE

Bud's fine.

COONRAD

He still trying to sleep standing up?

OLIVE

Oh, yes.

COONAD

Ha! That Bud's always been on his own lone star.

TEXIE

He should come around more!

OLIVE

He's busy. He's always been busy.

TEXIE

I know but if we're going to "press forward" we gotta come together. Nine heads are better than one.

SWIMMING OTTER

Eight. We got eight heads left.

A pause that could almost turn into a Texas pause.

COONRAD

Any sign of Choices?

ALL

(Groaning)

No.

COONRAD

Ha! Remember that time when we all went on his show? On TV? And then the cameras...

TEXIE, OLIVE, SWIMMING OTTER

Yes.

Then Coonrad remembers what a disaster that was.

COONRAD

Oh right, right.

Coonrad turns in a circle. Then, he lies down flat on the floor.

SWIMMING OTTER

What are you doing?

COONRAD
I'm taking a rest.

SWIMMING OTTER
(Shaking his head.)
In the middle of the floor.

TEXIE
They call that a "Mexican Nap."

The door opens and Miss Ivah skates in. She speaks to Olive.

MISS IVAH
Hey Sheila?

Olive's face turns ghost white. The wind is knocked out of her.

TEXIE
(Harsh whisper.)
Ivah!

MISS IVAH
Oh. Oh. Sorry. I mean. Hey Olive?

OLIVE
I'm going to freshen up.

Olive leaves.

MISS IVAH
(Small voice.)
Olive wait. I have to ask you....

But Olive is gone. Miss Ivah kind of looks around. She sees Coonrad.

What's he doing?

TEXIE
Coonrad is taking a Mexican Nap.

SWIMMING OTTER
You're surrounded by the strangest people. Fakes, all of them, you live among them
Two or three years, and before you know it, you become a fake yourself.

And so begins a Texas pause. Texie fans herself, pulls her shirt out like it's humid. Swimming Otter looks inward, remembering a song he used to play on the guitar. Do we hear this song? Echoing through the space? Like it is being amplified out of his dream time? Coonrad stares at the ceiling. Miss Ivah rolls slowly slowly across the bar on her skates, talking to herself with her hands, but we can't hear what her hands are saying. Texie lies down on the floor, near-ish to Coonrad. She looks at him.

TEXIE

Better is better.

COONRAD

That'd be a good tattoo.

Texie and Coonrad share a little laugh.

NOTE: in the next section, ** Marks the spot of Coonrad's first personality "slip". At the **, he begins speaking in a slightly more feminine voice, and using slightly different mannerisms. When this begins, the others in the room sigh under their breath and shift in their seats. ** will mark the beginning of subsequent slips as well.

Coonrad hops up with some pep in his step.

COONRAD

How's your trailer, Swimming Otter.

SWIMMING OTTER

First rate, Swimming Otter, First rate.

COONRAD

You're Swimming Otter.

SWIMMING OTTER

Yep.

COONRAD

Generators generating?

SWIMMING OTTER

Sure is. Lights light right up. Even my electric razor still buzzes. A smooth finish, every time.

COONRAD

Ha ha! Our Fighting Ram! Our Smooth Operator! And see? The trailers came from the TV people! Maybe this is all a blessing in disguise! ** Then things started coming back to me, the evil things my boyfriend taught me, like dowsing and sacred geometry. I clearly remember

being held down on a table and while my body was being pulled apart. This was after I jumped into the swimming pool and dislocated my jaw.

TEXIE

Coonrad, Coonrad honey...

COONRAD

(Getting himself back on track.)

I got it. I got it.

SWIMMING OTTER

Coonrad how's your trailer?

COONRAD

(Back in "his" voice)

Awesome. Amazing. Fantabulous. You know we got the Double Dip Dap.

SWIMMING OTTER, MISS IVAH

We know that, Coonrad.

TEXIE

They know that Coonrad

COONRAD

And Miss Texie's fixed it up so nice. She's got the –

He makes a curly cue motion in the air with his finger.

TEXIE

Scallops.

COONRAD

Going around the top of each wall. And then little puffy curtains on the –

He makes a motion like he is passing something to someone.

TEXIE

Pass-through –

Coonrad makes a little pass-through motion every time he says the word.

COONRAD

The pass-through! It's a precious thing, that pass-through. It's like, sure, it would be just as easy to walk around through the door And drop the dishes off near the sink, but the pass-through Makes things a little nicer. The pass-through implies that there is another person in the trailer with you, to receive the things you pass to them. Dishes. Empty bottles. The newspaper. A sponge. The salt shaker.

TEXIE

A fork.

SWIMMING OTTER
Maybe a pint of milk.

MISS IVAH
Or cereal.

COONRAD
Right, cereal, in the morning. ** The other night my boyfriend and I were canning tomatoes when I caught something moving out of the corner of my eye. We looked at each other and he said “Did you see that?” It was a tiny green being crossing the living room. and then he he he he he oh goshdarned now hold it hold it hold it hold it hold it hold it that’s not that’s not that’s not hold it hold it hold it hold I was –

TEXIE
The pass-through, honey. In the Double DD.

COONRAD
(Back in “his” voice.)
EXACTLY, so the pass through can seem like extra, you know, an add-on, but really It’s the thing that assures you that you are not alone.

MISS IVAH
Unless there’s nobody on the other side of the pass through.

TEXIE
Now Miss Ivah.

MISS IVAH
I ain’t shittin’ you.

COONRAD
Miss Ivah, how’s your trailer?

MISS IVAH
I live in a cave.

Olive comes back from the bathroom. She’s wearing a big ole bonnet from the olden days.

SWIMMING OTTER
Olive how’s your trailer?

OLIVE
I mean it’s fine...

COONRAD

Aw now what's wrong, Olive?

OLIVE

Nothing, nothing.

COONRAD

Olive. You gotta communicate like human beings do. Reach down deep and lay it all out on the countertop like a beautiful casserole.

Olive poses: she's on her little soap box.

OLIVE

Even before everything, I had an inkling. That there is something on the horizon. I would read those magazines, remember? And you all didn't even know about the secret meetings I attended over by Wharton. It was a feeling, see? Like this impending thing on my life, like an invisible knapsack on my back. Like I was completely and hopelessly ALONE. Except for them.

And it is still that way now, even after. Every little noise I hear in my trailer is them. Every little spontaneous thing I hear is them. When I rest my eyes, the creaks in my trailer seem to have screams in them. I am like a radiohead. Last night I felt hands on my back, like doing something to my skin - this was in bed. And there were hands reaching out of the wall. And then the clock on my night table turned into a slithering snake with time in its eyes. I know we can't "see" them anymore. There's barely hoofprint left in the snow. But they are here. Right now. Ethereally clawing at me or something.

She grabs Texie's face and looks into her eyes, moving her head around, as though trying to see something.

It is as if they are in their "spaceship", already, and the same time in this room.

America is gone. They have America. And I am in it. And you are in it and you are in it and you are too, Miss Ivah, even though you think you're not. And they are here and not here, watching us fake it. I put my hand on my hip and they're like "Poor thing we can see right up her skirt." I reach for the doorknob and they are like "Ooh. She's not going to like what is on the other side of that door."

Now I know some of you think that I sparked these trials: the cameras, my baby and of course poor Sheila.....in the.....but it wasn't me, Swimming Otter, it was THEM. Shut up, Coonrad. You feel them, too. Location matters much. This is the ultimate battle. And I do believe, Texie, I really do believe there is a way to press forward, to push through THEM, to rise up -

COONRAD

Rise up!

OLIVE

Freshly scrubbed and weak in the knees. There is a way. But its nothing you can fake, and there is nowhere to hide.

Why does everybody look a little bit guilty? Like they've all been looking at dirty pictures or something? Miss Ivah looks out the window.