

Ride or Die

By

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INT. APARTMENT - MORNING

EMILY (late 20's, put together and organized but far off, lost look in her eyes) adjusts the pillows on her couch and straightens a loving photo of her and a man. This apartment looks immaculately clean and tidied with little else besides the essentials.

She goes to her kitchen counter and scribbles a note:

NOTE

To whomever may find this letter...

She finishes writing the letter, sets the pen down and takes a deep breath. She grabs only a \$20 bill as she heads out the door.

EXT. STREET - LATE MORNING

Emily tries to wave down several cabs with no luck. One finally pulls over.

INT. TAXI - LATE MORNING

PETER (taxi cab driver, early 40's, wide smile plastered on his face) pulls up to Emily. Emily gets in.

PETER

How's it going! Good morning.

EMILY

Hi, uh, you can drop me off a block from the Brooklyn Bridge. Thanks.

Peter drives off.

PETER

Oh, are you going for a nice walk over the bridge? Such a nice day to be outside.

EMILY

Um...

(pause)

I'm going to meet someone there.

PETER

Me and my wife love taking walks over the bridge. That view... wow. Don't you just love New York?

Emily politely smiles. She looks out the window at a row of worn down, crumbling, dull brick apartment buildings.

(CONTINUED)

PETER

My wife's not from around here. She's a small town girl from Nebraska. So you can imagine when she came here... Boy. It was a funny thing taking her around the city for the first few times. She just couldn't get over all the skyscrapers and bustle. Funny thing, because this is all I've ever known! Are you from around here?

EMILY

Yes.

(another thoughtful pause)

Born and raised.

(silence)

You're very friendly for being a New York City local...

PETER

Life is too short to be crabby all the time.

Emily stares emotionless at a couple walking their newborn in its stroller as they drive by. Peter comments.

PETER

Don't you just love to see that?

(beat)

So you know everything there is to know about the city too, huh? You still got all your family out here then?

EMILY

Well, no, actually.

Emily touches the space on her empty ring finger where you can see a tan where a ring once was.

PETER

Oh. Well I guess that's what friends are for! Where's all your family located then? I always wonder how anyone could find a better place to live than here.

The cab passes a small park where a murder of crows suddenly disperses in front of the cab. Emily's face is cold and distant.

(CONTINUED)

EMILY
They've passed.

PETER
Aw, well I'm sorry Miss.

There is a silence while Peter and Emily are thinking.

PETER
So spring is coming up soon. You
have, uh, any spring cleaning
plans?

EMILY
Um, no, I don't think so.

PETER
Spring is a great season,
especially for New York. Get some
color in this city. Sometimes the
monotonous colors of grey and dull
red everywhere can get to ya. The
weather is already getting warmer!

A lone tear rolls down Emily's cheek. Peter notices through
his rear view mirror.

PETER
You know what Miss, I know how you
feel -- about losing someone. It's
the worst feeling in the world
losing people. A piece of you just
goes missing.

EMILY
You've lost someone close too?

PETER
(nods)
Certainly a hard experience to go
through.

Now the cab passes looming grey and black skyscrapers.

PETER(CONT.)
I lost all my family when I was
real young. Dad left, mom overdosed
years later.
(pauses to think a while and
then mumbles)
Hell, it's just a matter of time
before my wife goes too.

(CONTINUED)

EMILY

Huh?

PETER

Oh, sorry. I didn't mean to say that out loud.

Roles switch and Emily starts asking the questions.

EMILY

What do you mean, "a matter of time before she goes too?"

PETER

She's sick. Stage 3 breast cancer.

EMILY

I'm so sorry.

PETER

Yeah. It's a real shame. But you know... I still feel very grateful and happy. The fact that I got to spend even one day with her in my own shabby life - well that means the world to me.

EMILY

You're not scared?

PETER

Scared of what?

EMILY

Losing her.

Emily starts fidgeting with her hands then her clothes; anything to distract her from breaking down.

PETER

Oh, I'm scared shitless. But I have everything in this city to remind me of her. Even though she's bedridden right now, every time I drive through this city giving rides to people I try and see everything through her eyes. I always pretend she's sitting next to me in the passenger seat pointing out every little thing in the city. That way I'm never lonely. I guess that's why I hate silent car rides too.

(CONTINUED)

Peter fixes his gaze on an old couple holding hands, sipping on coffee. The car behind him honks as the light in front has changed to green.

EMILY

I lost my husband about a year ago.
And I've been so damn lonely. I
hardly know what to do with myself.

PETER

It's bad?

EMILY

Worse than I could have ever
imagined. I lost a part of myself.
A piece just went missing. Nothing
ever feels right.

PETER

You know... even when they're not
physically here, they're still with
us.

EMILY

How? All I feel is emptiness.

The loud, pounding sounds of a jackhammer drilling into the ground ring in Emily's ear as they pass some construction on the street. She winces.

PETER

It's hard when someone is such a
huge part of your life. But what I
realized is that on Earth we're
selfish. We want the people we love
right next to us whenever we need
them. When they move on after life
to wherever they go, it's a little
harder for us. But they're fine up
there. They get to be with us, all
happy - free of all their worries.
On Earth we make ourselves hurt
without them. But they're doing
just fine. I would just imagine
that the spirits of those I've lost
go on doing stuff along side me
whether or not I can physically see
them. That's what I do now and my
wife is still alive! I don't know,
that's what gives me peace of mind.

They both sit there in silence for a few moments.

(CONTINUED)

EMILY

So you think my husband could be sitting next to me in this very cab?

PETER

Oh I think your husband is with you wherever you go. He's your guardian angel now. I'm sure he just wants you to be all right. He'd hate to see you suffering.

EMILY

Do you think you'll get to walk the bridge with your wife one more time?

PETER

Only if there was a miracle. We have to take things day by day. The key is to never completely lose hope. Tomorrow is always a chance for a better day.

EMILY

But what if I've been having shitty days for the last 340 days... You just lose hope by that point.

PETER

There is always hope. You have to hang in there for the sake of yourself and your husband. You can't let him down. Every day will start getting a little better. Maybe you'll forget your sadness for a moment tomorrow and that already means progress.

The Brooklyn Bridge appears about two blocks away.

PETER

Well, it looks like we're almost to the bridge. You sure you want me to stop here? Kind of a chilly day to be meeting a friend outside!

Emily looks longingly at the bridge contemplating whether this is really her final stop. She looks back at her ringless finger and looks back up at Peter.

(CONTINUED)

EMILY

Yeah, this is the only place I can meet this friend.

Peter smiles and nods.

PETER

Well, it was a pleasure talking to you Emily.

Emily hands him the twenty.

EMILY

Thanks. Thanks for your advice. And keep the change.

PETER

Hey, one more thing. A final piece of parting advice. When your thoughts and emotions get to be too much sometimes focusing on the simplest things help. Do yourself a favor. Go out onto that bridge and wait for the clouds to part and when you feel that littlest ray of sunshine and warmth think of that as your guardian angel. The smallest pleasures in life are the most comforting.

Emily nods and leaves the cab.

EXT. BROOKLYN BRIDGE - DAY

Emily goes to the railing of the bridge and looks out. The sky is overcast and only a few others populate the bridge.

A strong breeze blows and Emily's hair goes wild and covers her face. She grips the railing of the bridge. When the breeze stops she uses one hand to clear her face. She pauses midway and looks at her left hand which remains gripping the railing. A single ray of sunshine is now glowing on her hand.

She looks up and smiles. Her eyes well up with tears. She turns as she hears the happy shrieks of two young children chasing each other down the bridge.

She looks back at the water, takes a deep breath, and walks away. She heads back towards the street and hails a new cab. One pulls over.

INT. TAXI CAB - DAY

EMILY

Hi. Can you take me to the flower shop on the corner of Franklin and Lafayette? I owe someone some flowers.

The cab driver takes off away from the bridge. Emily looks forward at the hustle and bustle of people walking to their next destination. She smiles, a small glimmer of hope in her eyes.