

# **The Road to the End**

**By: Bella Panciocco**

# THE ROAD TO THE END

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## THE ROAD TO THE END

*For Mom and Dad,  
This is a love letter to you.*

## THE ROAD TO THE END

### THE ROAD TO THE END

*The Road to the End* had its world premiere at George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia featuring the following cast:

Henry.....Aadith Iyer  
Steve.....Sage Munson  
Dabria.....Jessica Nguyen  
Diana.....Kendall Huheey  
Young Steve.....Sanjay Nagar  
Young Henry/Park Ranger...Keaton Lazar  
Tow Truck Driver/Nurse.....Bertem Demitras  
Banks/Stepdad.....Micheal Jarvis

*The Road to the End* performed a shortened version of the script for its Washington, DC premiere at the Capital Fringe Festival, featuring the following cast;

Henry.....Aadith Iyer  
Steve.....Sage Munson  
Dabria.....Jessica Nguyen  
Diana.....Kendall Huheey  
Young Steve.....Hansin Arvid  
Young Henry.....Keaton Lazar  
Tow Truck Driver.....Bertem Demitras  
Banks/Stepdad.....Micheal Jarvis  
Dabria/Diana Understudy....Toni Henry

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## ACT 1

### SCENE 1 - ROAD TRIP

*Over Black: Wheels on pavement. A struggling engine. Wind buffering through a cracked passenger window.*

*Lights up on: A car traverses a quiet highway. HENRY, an uptight and unadventurous man drives, eyes fixed on the asphalt. STEVE, Henry's father, a wanderlust man, sits in the passenger seat, clutching a small wooden box.*

**HENRY.** Dad.

**STEVE.** Hm?

**HENRY.** What are you doing?

**STEVE.** Looking through the box! Look at all these amazing memories!

**HENRY.** When did you get so sentimental?

**STEVE.** I'm nostalgic. There's a difference. *(Henry sets the cruise control.)*

**HENRY.** So... the Canyon.

**STEVE.** The *Canyon*.

**HENRY.** There are easier ways to get there. Planes, trains—

**STEVE.** And automobiles.

**HENRY.** We could have done what mom suggested. Fly to Vegas, rent a car—

**STEVE.** That would take all the joy out of it! She should know better, we drove cross-country together all the time. Long before you were born.

**HENRY.** And after.

**STEVE.** Your mom, she just loved it. I don't know why she didn't want to come with us.

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**HENRY.** She's got a lot of stuff going on. She wanted us to have a boys' trip so she could have some time to unwind.

**STEVE.** I just know she's going to miss out. Oh man, when you were younger, we had a ball! *(Steve peruses the stack of old photos within. He flashes one at Henry.)* The first time you came with us, we stopped at "Dinosaur Park". You ran around those lousy broken-down statues of triceratops and brontosaurus so fast, I couldn't keep up! We should stop there on the way, for old time's sake.

**HENRY.** I've already mapped out our rest stops. I don't have time to edit the plan.

**STEVE.** *Edit the plan?* We have all the time in the world, pull over and edit away!

**HENRY.** You might have unlimited time, but I don't. Sophie's dealing with the kids on her own. I've got a life to get back to. Time is money, Dad.

**STEVE.** What's that up there?

**HENRY.** Open road.

**STEVE.** No, something's up there.

**HENRY.** What?

**STEVE.** I don't know, these old eyes aren't what they used to be. You look, up there on the right!

**HENRY.** Weren't you the one to teach me to keep my eyes on the road? *(Just then, WAZE voices an alert on Henry's phone, which is on the center console.)*

**WAZE.** OBJECT ON ROAD AHEAD!

**STEVE.** What the hell was that?

**HENRY.** Waze. It's a GPS, dad.

**WAZE.** CONTINUE ON I-40 WEST FOR 1,538 MILES.

**STEVE.** You're using GPS? You should remember this drive like the back of your hand!

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**HENRY.** How? I've never driven it myself, I always sat in the back!  
Besides, it'll keep us on the fastest route.

**STEVE.** Henry! It's a hitchhiker!

**HENRY.** I know what you're thinking, and the answer is no. They'll find another vehicle.

**STEVE.** What?

**HENRY.** I'm not picking up a hitchhiker!

**STEVE.** She was just a kid.

**HENRY.** That naïveté is how horror movies begin.

**STEVE.** What if she was in trouble? She could be wandering the desert without water.

**HENRY.** It's not our fault she was unprepared.

**STEVE.** I'm just saying, she looked harmless.

**HENRY.** Enough! We can't just pick up a stranger because she looks nice.

**STEVE.** She's a kid, Henry! You want her getting into the wrong man's car? What if it were your daughter?

**HENRY.** Don't pull that good-parent card on me, Dad! She's a stranger, and it's dangerous for *us*. I protect *my* family. End of story.

**STEVE.** If it were me... I'd want to make sure she was ok.

**HENRY.** *(Henry shrinks, ashamed. Then, he slams on the brakes.)* If this good Samaritan act kills us... Let the record show I told you so. *(Henry does a U-turn, then stops by DABRIA, an edgy teenage girl, who sprints to the car.)*

**HENRY.** Hey. Are you ok?

**DABRIA.** Better if I can get a ride...

**HENRY.** Hop in.

**DABRIA.** Thank you! If you don't mind, I'm gonna stretch out my legs.  
*(She climbs in the backseat and does just that.)*

**HENRY.** What's your name?

**DABRIA.** Dabria. I know, it's weird. You can call me Bri.

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**HENRY.** Bri, I'm Henry.

**STEVE.** And I'm Steve!

**DABRIA.** Nice to meet you.

**HENRY.** So, am I driving you home?

**DABRIA.** Farthest place from it. Wherever you're going is great.

**HENRY.** Are you running away?

**DABRIA.** No... driving.

**HENRY.** (*Whispering to Steve*) We are *not* helping this kid run away!

**STEVE.** I'm sure she's doing it for a good reason.

**HENRY.** I don't care what the reason is!

**DABRIA.** Neglect. That's the reason.

**HENRY.** I don't want to get arrested for child abduction. Did someone call in an Amber Alert?

**DABRIA.** No one checks those anyways. Please, take me! I've been hiking out here for 2 days, and I won't last much longer. I ran out of water.

**STEVE.** See, I told you!

**HENRY.** Alright... let's go. We are already behind schedule.

**DABRIA.** Schedule?

**STEVE.** He's got it all planned out, this trip.

**HENRY.** I just have a *simple* schedule to make sure we get where we need to be on *time*. Time's listed for every rest stop, hotel, and restaurant.

**DABRIA.** Wow.

**STEVE.** He's a control freak.

**HENRY.** I am NOT a control freak.

**DABRIA.** It kinda sounds like you are. But don't worry, you do you. I'm not a backseat driver.

**HENRY.** (*Under his breath.*) Good. I've already got one of those.

**STEVE.** I'm just trying to get you to relax. You're such an anxious driver, Henry.

**HENRY.** I wonder why?!



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**STEVE.** You'll miss me when I'm gone. Oh, and watch out, you're drifting a few inches into the breakout lane.

**HENRY.** I certainly won't miss *that*.

**STEVE.** It's all out of love, son.

**DABRIA.** So, where are we heading?

**HENRY.** West.

**DABRIA.** Okay...

**STEVE.** Give her a little more information than that!

**HENRY.** The Grand Canyon.

**DABRIA.** I've always wanted to see that!

**STEVE.** It's the most beautiful place on earth. We're going cross-country to see the great outdoors, a father and son adventure!

**HENRY.** I've been there a million times, but I agreed to do this road trip. It's my dad's favorite place.

**STEVE.** You bet your life it is!

**DABRIA.** Fun. I've never actually been on a road trip. (*Dabria puts on her headphones. Henry turns up the radio. The conflicting music drowns the tension.*)

**STEVE.** You should talk to the kid.

**HENRY.** I don't know if you know anything about social cues. But when someone puts headphones on, they clearly don't want to speak to you.

**STEVE.** Really? I see the opposite.

**HENRY.** Oh my God.

**STEVE.** Just get to know her. Aren't you curious?

**HENRY.** Not in the slightest.

**STEVE.** Or maybe you can be a nice human being.

**HENRY.** I think being a nice human being is leaving the poor girl alone.

**DABRIA.** Hey. Just wanted to let you know I can hear you.

**HENRY.** Oh. Uh. Sorry.

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**DABRIA.** It's fine. (*Awkward. Dabria looks around the car.*) Do you have any snacks?

**HENRY.** Snacks?

**DABRIA.** Yeah. You know. Things to consume? Yummy particles? Party in your tummy?

**STEVE.** We have something better than snacks: sammies!

**HENRY.** Sandwiches?

**DABRIA.** Oooo... you have sandwiches?

**STEVE.** Yep! We always pack them for our road trips. In the mornings we'd always wake up early and make sammies. I'd make salami, cheese and mustard for me, but Henry always wanted bologna and ketchup.

**DABRIA.** I love a good sandwich.

**HENRY.** I forgot to pack them.

**STEVE.** What? But we always make sammies.

**HENRY.** I just didn't have the time.

**DABRIA.** It's whatever. We can just starve. Oh, dear stomach! Sorry, but we must suffer. No yummy snacks. No party in our tummy.

**HENRY.** We'll be fine.

**DABRIA.** Goodbye, cruel world! If only I could consume something, anything at all. I think I can see the light!

**STEVE.** Oh, she's good.

**DABRIA.** (*Dabria sees something out the window.*) Huzzah! It's a Wawa!

**HENRY.** What?

**DABRIA.** There's a glorious, beautiful Wawa up ahead! Henry, can we stop?

**HENRY.** Who's buying?

**DABRIA.** Pleeeeeeeeeeeeassssse?

**STEVE.** C'mon, get the kid some food. You're running low on gas anyways.

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**HENRY.** Fine. *(He slows down, turning the wheel)* You're pretty demanding for a hitchhiker.

### SCENE 2 - WAWA

*Henry parks in front of the pump. Dabria grabs her backpack, jumps out and runs inside. Henry turns to Steve.*

**HENRY.** Stay here, Dad.

**STEVE.** What am I? A dog?

**HENRY.** Just watch the car. Please.

**STEVE.** If I get kidnapped, I'm blaming you!

**HENRY.** If you get kidnapped, I have no doubt they'd bring you right back. *(Henry leaves Steve. Behold, the Wawa. It's not the cleanest store in the franchise. In fact, it's a cockroach speakeasy. The bell on the door dings. Henry walks over to Dabria, who's pouring over the snacks as though doing important medical research.)*

**HENRY.** It's not a life or death decision, kid. Pick one and move on.

**DABRIA.** You don't get it.

**HENRY.** What's not to get? It's chocolate pretzels or Sour Patch kids?

**DABRIA.** It's more than that.

**HENRY.** We don't have all day. Pick the pretzels or the candy and let's go. I don't trust this place.

**DABRIA.** Give me a minute...

**HENRY.** I'll give you exactly one minute, then we're leaving. *(Tense whisper.)* I heard a guy throwing up in the bathroom. Fifty-seven, fifty-six, *(Something catches his eye: Steve has abandoned his post outside and has wandered in the store.)* I'll be right back. *(He walks over to Steve.)*

**STEVE.** Where are the good snacks?

**HENRY.** Do you ever listen?

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**STEVE.** I'm old. The time for listening is over.

**HENRY.** *(Henry points to the peanuts.)* Look. Some nuts for the nut.

**STEVE.** No, I'm very particular about my snacks. You think they have Klondike Bars?

**HENRY.** I don't know, Dad. This isn't some huge grocery store. And it's certainly not sanitary. *(Ding! An INTIMIDATING MAN in a leather jacket enters.)* Or safe. Come on, let's go. *(He walks to where Dabria was— but she's gone.)* Shit!

**STEVE.** Where is she?

**HENRY.** I don't know! Does no one listen to me?

**DABRIA.** Psssssst! *(Steve and Henry turn to see Dabria, hiding behind a snack shelf.)* Come here!

**STEVE.** What is she doing?

**DABRIA.** Get down!

**HENRY.** Bri, we don't have time for hide and seek. *(Dabria pulls Henry down. Steve crouches behind them.)* What the hell is going on?

**DABRIA.** See that guy over there?

**STEVE.** The big scary guy?

**HENRY.** The guy who looks like he'd slash my tires if I looked at him funny?

**DABRIA.** That's my stepdad.

**HENRY.** Well, he's obviously very worried about you, he's out here looking for you, so maybe—

**DABRIA.** That's the problem.

**STEVE.** Don't worry sweetheart. He won't get past me. *(He brandishes his fists like a prizefighter.)*

**HENRY.** No one here is Rocky. Maybe we should just talk to him, very politely, and— *(Dabria grabs the snacks and bolts for the door.)*

**STEVE.** Geeze, Louise, she's quick!

**HENRY.** BRI, WAIT! *(Dabria stops at the door. Everyone stares.)*

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**STEPPAD.** Dabria?

**DABRIA.** Oh... I didn't see you there.

**STEPPAD.** You made it all the way *here*?

**DABRIA.** Yep.

**STEPPAD.** On foot?

**DABRIA.** No.

**STEPPAD.** Then how'd you get here?

**DABRIA.** Meet my personal chauffeur.

**HENRY.** Uh, it's... nice to meet you?

**STEPPAD.** Jury's still out.

**DABRIA.** We just met.

**STEPPAD.** Well, say goodbye, we're going home.

**DABRIA.** No. We're going on a road trip.

**STEPPAD.** Okay. Have fun.

**DABRIA.** Don't you care? That I'm getting a ride with a stranger in this bumfuck town?

**STEPPAD.** Dabria, I stopped trying to control you a long time ago. Do what you want. I don't care.

**DABRIA.** You *should*!

**STEVE.** (*Steve steps between them.*) I know everyone's a little heated at the moment, but I think we should all just take a breath, and—

**STEPPAD.** Why?

**DABRIA.** Why? You really have to ask me that?

**STEPPAD.** Look, kid. I don't know what you want from me.

**DABRIA.** I thought I've been crystal- fucking- clear!

**HENRY.** It's okay, Bri, let's just go—

**DABRIA.** No! I need to let him have it!

**STEPPAD.** Say whatever you want. I. Don't. Care.

**DABRIA.** You cared when she was alive.

**STEPPAD.** Well, she isn't. You're on your own now, kid.

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**STEVE.** Alright, I think now's a good time for— (*Steve nods at Henry to check out at the register.*)

**HENRY.** Right. Let me pay for these. (*Henry takes the snacks in his arms, then taps his card, Dabria starts for the door. She stops and stands in the doorway.*)

**DABRIA.** You know what? I don't care either. (*A ding as she exits. Henry chases after her. Steve turns to her stepdad.*)

**STEVE.** Speaking from personal experience, you're going to regret this. (*Steve leaves. He gets in the car then yells at the Wawa.*) Next time, we're going to Sheetz!

### **SCENE 3 - REROUTING**

*They're on the road again. Dabria's in the passenger's seat now. Steve's in the back, staring out the window like a little kid. Henry steps on the gas, as though driving faster will erase the memory of what just transpired.*

**STEVE.** So...

**HENRY.** So...

**DABRIA.** So, what?

**HENRY.** Look, I'm not going to ask if you're okay.

**DABRIA.** Gee, thanks.

**HENRY.** Because that guy's an asshole.

**DABRIA.** Very astute observation.

**HENRY.** I get the absent father thing... more than you know.

**STEVE.** Sitting right here!

**HENRY.** My dad definitely isn't as bad but... he wasn't always there for me. And I just wanted to tell you... you're not alone.

**STEVE.** WOW!

**DABRIA.** Thanks.

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**HENRY.** I mean, I'm not perfect, either.

**STEVE.** That's more like it!

**HENRY.** If you ever want to talk about it... I'm here.

**STEVE.** *We're* here.

**DABRIA.** Thank you. I appreciate it.

**STEVE.** Of course, sweetheart.

**HENRY.** No problem.

**DABRIA.** There's a reason I couldn't pick between the stupid pretzels and Sour Patch Kids.

**STEVE.** That's understandable. It's a difficult choice.

**DABRIA.** My mom picked me up after school every Friday to have a "car-picnic." We'd stop at our local sandwich joint, and she'd always get turkey and cheese—

**STEVE.** What a coincidence! That's my wife's favorite, too!

**DABRIA.** We would get our sandwiches then head to the Wawa to get a treat for dessert. I would always get Sour Patch Kids, and my mom would get the chocolate pretzels. She loved chocolate pretzels...

**STEVE.** Oh, sweetheart...

**HENRY.** Bri, it'll be okay.

**DABRIA.** I don't think my stepdad knew that. He used to care so I thought... maybe this time but... he just *doesn't* care. Maybe he never did...

**STEVE.** We're so sorry...

**DABRIA.** Didn't mean to toss my dirty laundry in front of you.

**STEVE.** It's okay, kiddo.

**HENRY.** I was the one who asked about it.

**DABRIA.** Well, thanks for asking. (*Dabria opens the chocolate-covered pretzels. She eats two, then hands the bag to Henry*) You want a pretzel?

**HENRY.** Sure. I love these things.

**DABRIA.** All the cool kids do.

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**HENRY.** You think I'm cool?

**STEVE.** Woah! If anyone's cool, it's me.

**DABRIA.** Don't get too cocky. *(They all laugh. Dabria yawns, placing the pretzels securely in her lap. She closes her eyes, leaning against the window.)*

**STEVE.** You look tired, sweetheart.

**DABRIA.** I think I'll sleep for a few minutes, if that's okay? It's been a long day.

**HENRY.** I'll wake you at the next stop. *(She slips on her headphones, then conks out.)*

**STEVE.** I love you. You know that, right?

**HENRY.** Sure.

**STEVE.** And I care about you. I care what you do. What happens to you.

**HENRY.** Whatever you say.

**STEVE.** Henry, I'm not like that asshole!

**HENRY.** I know. But you left me, just like that, all the time.

**STEVE.** Those were extenuating circumstances, and—

**HENRY.** Stop! This isn't about us. Let it go.

**STEVE.** Fine. But this conversation isn't over.

**HENRY.** Duly noted. *(Henry yawns, rubbing his bleary eyes.)*

**STEVE.** Are you okay? It's not safe to drive if you're too tired. We can switch for a while. I'm awake and alert!

**HENRY.** I'm fine. And you can't drive, anyways. They took your license away, remember?

**STEVE.** Damn bastards shouldn't have done it. I'm a great driver.

**HENRY.** You used to disappear for hours. No one knew where you were. Don't you remember?

**STEVE.** Of course I do. I was just hoping you didn't.

**HENRY.** Just be the co-pilot. Keep me awake. Don't tell any boring stories.



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**STEVE.** I'll be the Chewy to your Solo! *(Steve does the Chewy Wookie noise. Henry can't help but laugh. Then, he yawns. Steve does too.)*

**HENRY.** You said you weren't tired.

**STEVE.** I can't help it, yawning's contagious!

**HENRY.** Alright, Chewy, how long 'til we get to the hotel?

**STEVE.** *(Steve looks around the backseat.)* Where's your map?

**HENRY.** GPS, remember Dad? Maps aren't a thing anymore.

**STEVE.** That's a shame. Do you remember when you were younger, on every road trip, you'd help me map the route? You took a Radical Red crayon and drew all over the map. One road trip, you scribbled randomly, and your mother and I decided that was the route we'd take. It was one of the best trips ever! Spontaneous—

**HENRY.** Combustion. There was always a downside to those trips.

**STEVE.** What? You're not remembering correctly. They were lovely.

**HENRY.** Obviously, we're not going to settle this tonight.

**STEVE.** What's there to settle?

**HENRY.** *(Henry grips the steering wheel, hard.)* What time are we going to get there?

**STEVE.** Right...uh...it says we'll be there at 3am.

**HENRY.** THREE AM? *(He slams the steering wheel, frustrated.)*

**STEVE.** Anger and exhaustion don't mix. Why don't we just find a closer place?

**HENRY.** Because I already paid for this hotel. And it isn't cheap.

**STEVE.** Why would you pay for an expensive hotel?

**HENRY.** Because I wanted to treat myself. And I didn't want to stay at one of those fleabag motels we used to stay at on the road trips I didn't want to be on. *(Henry looks down at his phone. He fumbles to pick it up.)*

**STEVE.** Eyes on the road, Henry!

**HENRY.** I got this!

**STEVE.** You need to focus on driving, I'm the co-pilot!

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**HENRY.** While you wax poetic about paper maps, I'm going to see if there's a faster route.

**STEVE.** Henry, you aren't going to make it there being this tired. There's an exit right up there... See, there's a motel? Please let's just get off and get a good night's sleep.

**HENRY.** I don't know how many times I have to tell you... NO!

**STEVE.** I don't know why you're getting so angry with me. You should know better.

**HENRY.** *(Henry steps on the gas, revs the engine, then purposefully speeds past the exit.)* I do know better! These motels in the middle of nowhere aren't safe— that's why we're not staying there. *(Henry drives faster.)*

**STEVE.** Slow down.

**HENRY.** No!

**STEVE.** Henry, your mother and I have stayed in motels hundreds of times. Even with you as a baby. Nothing ever happened to us. We never got scared...

**HENRY.** I'm not scared.

**STEVE.** Yes, you are.

**HENRY.** Stop it! You and mom were crazy to make me stay in those motels. One time, there was blood on the walls!

**STEVE.** No there wasn't! I foolishly let you watch *Psycho* the week before. Hitchcock inspired your already active imagination.

**HENRY.** Stop lying! I know what I saw! And I'm not putting us— or Bri— in one of those places.

**STEVE.** A responsible driver would rest.

**HENRY.** And a RESPONSIBLE PARENT wouldn't have taken his son to a death trap. *(Suddenly, the car slows down. Henry presses the gas... then looks at the fuel gauge.)*

**HENRY.** Shit!

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**STEVE.** Oh no...in all the commotion, I forgot to fill 'er up.

**HENRY.** So, we're stranded, in the desert, with no gas?

**DABRIA.** (*Waking up.*) Are we there yet?

### **SCENE 4 - RUNNING ON EMPTY**

*Dabria stands at the edge of the highway, arm extended, thumb out.*

**DABRIA.** Déjà vu. (*She leaps back as a car flies by at 100mph.*)

**HENRY.** Let me do it. (*He ushers her away from the highway. They wait for another car.*)

**DABRIA.** I'm sorry about my family drama.

**HENRY.** I'm sorry about the gas.

**STEVE.** I think they cancel each other out.

**HENRY.** Let's just call it even.

**DABRIA.** Now your schedule's totally messed up.

**HENRY.** We won't be that far off if we can just get— (*A car zooms towards them. Henry sticks his arm out. They don't even slow down.*) help.

**DABRIA.** (*Pushes him back, then sticks her own thumb.*) It's okay. I'm a pro hitchhiker. I got this.

**HENRY.** Just because we picked you up doesn't make you a pro. It makes you lucky.

**DABRIA.** You think you were my first ride?

**HENRY.** What?

**STEVE.** You've hitchhiked before?

**DABRIA.** When you have unreliable transportation, you gotta do what you gotta do. Plus, my first time was surprisingly successful.

**STEVE.** This I gotta hear.

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**DABRIA.** Good old stepdad was supposed to pick me up from gymnastics and of course he forgot. I was too young to have a phone and everyone else had left. So... I stuck my thumb out and hoped for the best!

**HENRY/STEVE.** Jesus Christ!

**DABRIA.** So, I waited and waited until finally a car pulled over. It was my mom.

**HENRY.** Thank God.

**STEVE.** I bet she was super pissed.

**DABRIA.** She didn't say a word the whole way home. When we pulled up in the driveway, she told me to wait in the car. She slammed the door. I heard screaming and shouting. I don't know what they said, but it must've been pretty serious, because when she got back in the car, she said... "let's get ice cream."

**STEVE.** Lucky stiff!

**DABRIA.** Which was definitely a win-win. And I didn't really think I'd have to hitchhike again, but... here we are.

**HENRY.** You're lucky you didn't get picked up by psychopaths, you know.

**DABRIA.** Every now and then, I get lucky. *(She hears the crescendo of a car in the distance, approaching them at speed. She holds her thumb out. Then, a tow truck slows to a halt.)* I TOLD YOU! I AM THE BEST HITCHHIKER IN THE WORLD! *(A TOW TRUCK DRIVER steps out, waving.)*

**STEVE.** Thank the Lord!

**HENRY.** Hello, sir!

**TOW TRUCK DRIVER.** Y'all having car troubles?

**HENRY.** Got any gas?

**TOW TRUCK DRIVER.** Gas? In this economy? That was a joke. Of course I got gas. *(He pulls out a red gas can, fills up their car, then puts it back in the truck.)*

## THE ROAD TO THE END

**STEVE.** Thank you very much, sir.

**HENRY.** What do we owe you?

**TOW TRUCK DRIVER.** Nothing. Just pay it forward. *(He drives off into the distance. The three get back in the car. Henry starts the engine.)*

**HENRY.** Pay it forward.

### **SCENE 5 - A MEMORY- SECOND CHANCES**

*DIANA, the love of Steve's life, and mother to Henry, is driving. YOUNG STEVE is in the passenger seat, and YOUNG HENRY, in the back.*

**YOUNG HENRY.** Mommy, where are we going again?

**DIANA.** Well, honey, we're going to—

**YOUNG STEVE.** The Grand Canyon!

**YOUNG HENRY.** That's so cool!

**DIANA.** Henry, honey, why don't you play with your dinosaurs?

**YOUNG STEVE.** What's wrong?

**DIANA.** Are you kidding me?

**YOUNG STEVE.** Don't be mad, love!

**DIANA.** You lied to our kid, Steve! We're not going to the Grand Canyon.

**YOUNG STEVE.** We could stop there.

**DIANA.** No.

**YOUNG STEVE.** Spend a couple hours exploring.

**DIANA.** *No.*

**YOUNG STEVE.** Come on! It'd be fun for Henry. For *us*. We had so many great times there. Remember?

**DIANA.** I do remember Steve. But this isn't a vacation.

**YOUNG STEVE.** Maybe if we do something fun, it'll make it easier to explain to Henry what's going on.

**DIANA.** Honesty goes a long way with him.

## THE ROAD TO THE END

**YOUNG STEVE.** Look, Diana, let's just have an adventure. I don't know how much longer I'll be—

**DIANA.** Don't say that. *(A beat.)* To the Grand Canyon!

**YOUNG STEVE.** Really?

**DIANA.** Really. But shouldn't we plan this out? I should be focusing on the road.

**YOUNG STEVE.** Then let's stop somewhere.

**DIANA.** Okay. Check the map.

**YOUNG STEVE.** *(He grabs a travel guide from the glove compartment.)*  
The closest thing is a motel, just up the road.

**DIANA.** Guess we're making a pit stop. *(She pulls into the motel. It's dingy. Possibly dangerous.)* I don't know about this place.

**YOUNG STEVE.** Don't worry, your big strong husband will protect you!

**DIANA.** No offense, but that doesn't make me feel any better. You can't even kill a spider.

**YOUNG STEVE.** I like giving second chances!

**DIANA.** *(Diana smiles, then looks back at Young Henry, now snoozing in the backseat.)* He'll sleep through anything.

**YOUNG STEVE.** He's a trooper. *(They get out of the car and enter the motel.)*

**DIANA.** I'm going to grab some brochures from the front office so we can plan the route. You got him?

**YOUNG STEVE.** I sure do.

**DIANA.** Okay! Be right back.

**YOUNG HENRY.** Daddy, are we there yet?

**YOUNG STEVE.** Are we where, little guy?

**YOUNG HENRY.** At the Canyon?

**YOUNG STEVE.** No, bud. We've got a long way to go. Your mom just needed a little break from driving.

**YOUNG HENRY.** I wish I could drive.

## THE ROAD TO THE END

**YOUNG STEVE.** You can't reach the pedals yet, kiddo.

**YOUNG HENRY.** Well, when I can, I'm going to drive us all the way to the moon!

**YOUNG STEVE.** One small step-on-the-gas for man, one long drive for mankind. *(Young Steve's laughter provokes a fit of coughing.)*

**YOUNG HENRY.** Daddy? Are you ok? *(The coughing crescendos. Diana reenters.)*

**DIANA.** They had Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico, but not Ariz— Steve, are you okay? *(She runs to his side as he fights to breathe.)*

### **SCENE 6 - MAD LIBS**

*Dabria tries to break the silence with travel games.*

**DABRIA.** I spy something green.

**STEVE.** A dinosaur!

**HENRY.** A dinosaur?

**DABRIA.** I wish!

**STEVE.** That's what Henry used to say when he was a kid.

**DABRIA.** *(Slumping in her seat.)* It used to be a lot more fun.

**HENRY.** Yeah... times have changed.

**DABRIA.** I miss calling out bumper stickers and laughing at kids picking their noses and waving to dogs with their heads out the window, lapping up the wind. Don't you miss being a kid?

**HENRY.** I wouldn't really be able to tell you what it's like.

**STEVE.** What?

**DABRIA.** Well, I can teach you. Welcome to being a kid 101! *(Dabria rolls down the window.)*

**HENRY.** What are you doing? We have AC going.

**DABRIA.** Being free! *(She sticks her head out the window.)*

## THE ROAD TO THE END

**HENRY.** Hey! That's dangerous!

**STEVE.** She's got the right idea! *(He rolls down his window and sticks his head out.)*

**HENRY.** You do realize you can get decapitated right?

**DABRIA.** Sounds cool to me.

**HENRY.** No. That means you'll be dead.

**STEVE.** Or you'll end up like the headless horseman. OOOOOOOOOO!

**DABRIA.** Just try it! What are you scared of?

**HENRY.** No.

**DABRIA.** Sounds like you're chicken.

**STEVE/DABRIA.** Bak! Bak! Bak! Bak! Bak! Bak!

**HENRY.** Fine, fine! I'll do it. *(Henry rolls down the window. He sticks his hand out slowly. At first, he looks like he's in pain; then, he lightens up. Henry starts moving his hand around in the wind, as though it's flying. Dabria howls out the window. Steve joins her. Finally, Henry gives in. Everyone is one with the wind until Dabria starts coughing. Hypervigilant at the sound, like a war vet and a helicopter, Henry panics.)*

**HENRY.** What is it? What happened? Are you okay?

**STEVE.** Slow, deep breaths, honey!

**DABRIA.** *(Coughing.)* Yeah... just swallowed a bug.

**HENRY.** Jesus. *(They laugh uncontrollably. Then, a peaceful lull. Dabria yawns again.)*

**STEVE.** Man, those yawns of yours are contagious.

**HENRY.** You can sleep more, Bri. I'll wake you when we get there.

**DABRIA.** Yeah. I think I will. Thanks. *(Dabria falls asleep. And father and son are left in silence.)*

**STEVE.** I hope that bug was a tasty one.

**HENRY.** What?

**STEVE.** Yeah, you know. Tasty bugs? They make them into lollipops. Do you remember? I got you one at the Grand Canyon gift shop.



## THE ROAD TO THE END

**HENRY.** Ew.

**STEVE.** I thought they were pretty tasty. Especially Cherry Cricket.

**HENRY.** That's disgusting!

**STEVE.** So...

**HENRY.** So?

**STEVE.** Are we going to talk about what you said?

**HENRY.** What I said?

**STEVE.** About the "not getting to be a kid" thing? What are you talking about?

**HENRY.** You know what I mean.

**STEVE.** No Henry. I don't. That's why I'm asking.

**HENRY.** It's pretty obvious.

**STEVE.** Not to me.

**HENRY.** Not surprised.

**STEVE.** Look Henry... I'm trying here.

**HENRY.** Are you, now? Finally.

**STEVE.** Henry, come on.

**HENRY.** Let's just say you weren't exactly father of the year.

**STEVE.** At least I brought my kid places. Where are yours?

**HENRY.** At home, where they belong!

**STEVE.** You should've brought them along.

**HENRY.** Why would I do that?

**STEVE.** Because you never bring them anywhere!

**HENRY.** Don't you dare tell me how to raise my kids!

**STEVE.** Explain to me why I was such a terrible father. Why your childhood was so terrible?

**HENRY.** I'd still be counting the ways by the time we got to the Canyon.

**STEVE.** I tried my best, Henry. Everything I did was for you. (*He opens the memory box.*) See, here's us on old Route 66. There's the Cadillac

## THE ROAD TO THE END

Ranch, and the World's Largest Frying Pan, and that Dinosaur Park you loved so much!

**HENRY.** I didn't want to go on any of your little "adventures." Staying in shitty motels, eating crappy gas station food, seeing the Biggest Ball of Yarn— that was all you. It was always about you.

**STEVE.** I put my heart and soul into those trips, into showing you the world. You should be thankful you got to go anywhere. I bet Dabria didn't!

**HENRY.** Jesus, don't bring Bri into this!

**DABRIA.** I heard my name— what's wrong?

**HENRY.** Nothing.

**STEVE.** Everything!

**DABRIA.** Okay...

**STEVE.** I'm disappointed in you.

**HENRY.** Why? Because I hated being in those gross motels alone with mom while you went out doing *God knows what?* Why should I be grateful that you towed us around like luggage then ditched us the second we got there? Did you even love us?

**STEVE.** You don't know what you're talking about, Henry! YOU HAVE NO CLUE—

**DABRIA.** Why are you screaming? What's going on?

**HENRY.** BECAUSE I'M A GROWN ASS MAN TAKING A FUCKING ROAD TRIP FOR A FATHER I BARELY KNEW. (*The animosity causes Henry to jerk the wheel.*)

**DABRIA.** HENRY, LOOK OUT! (*Headlights flash. A horn blares. Henry swerves. Crash. Blackout.*)

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