

i'm going to eat you alive

by

Riley Elton McCarthy

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Thank you to the Tank cast + crew.

Thank you Ashley and Al.

Thank you Karl and Rayan.

Thanks NYU Langone. Haha x

I lived in Leavenworth, KS during my teen years and I had a view of the state penitentiary from my bedroom window. Most of my classmates were relatives of the incarcerated or the children of soldiers on base. At the smallest military base in the country, the highest security federal criminals were housed less than a mile away. Outside this fortress of solitude, a beautiful pen enclosure filled with “wild” buffalo roamed as part of a repopulation conservation effort. As I drove past it every morning to high school, I thought of how even the most beautiful of beasts lived in man-made confinement. I was stricken by the dramatic irony regarding how man hunted the buffalo just to cage them: they were now incarcerated too... in front of a prison filled with their hunters.

Leavenworth was beautiful in nature and tragic in humanity. We can all stand to be kind to each other, when we share one earth.

-REM

i'm going to eat you alive was a semi-finalist for the Eugene O'Neill National Playwriting Conference in 2024. it received additional development at CultureLab LIC.

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i'm going to eat you alive was originally developed with Workshop Theater's TGNB2S+ Affinity Intensive, under the loving guidance of Al Parker and Ashley Lauren Rogers.

i'm going to eat you alive premiered for its sold-out workshop production at The Tank in 2023. directed by Alexandra Thomas, this production was lighting designed by Tully Goldrick, projection and sound designed by Riley Elton McCarthy, intimacy directed by Stacy DeGolier, costume designed by Lily Canfield, and stage managed by Caden Cristiano with additional support from Cesario Tirado-Ortiz.

This production starred:

| | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------|
| ROACH... | Charlie B. Foster |
| AUGUST/SOMETHING LURKING... | Nico Galloway |
| EZ/VOICE OF MOM... | Pearle Shannon |

this production was nominated for 13 BroadwayWorld Awards, including Best New Play.

CHARACTERS

ROACH ... soft on the edges, rough inside. they/he.

AUGUST ... rough on the edges, soft inside. he/him.

also: SOMETHING LURKING ... a bug or a tree or
a nightmare.

EZ ... rough and soft all around. they/them.

also: VOICE OF MOM ... a memory maybe.

SETTING

roach's van traveling across the united states moves in flashes across october and november. the bulk of the play is deep in the midwest. small town america. very hilly, lots of trees, close to the missouri river. the leaves are just turning red from orange and are falling onto the ground. crunchy wet leaf season. the petrichor of autumn rain is rich, thick, and suffocating. it feels like maybe it's after halloween. there is a vacancy, a ruralness, but the hit of a nearby suburban influence.

a / denotes lines overlapping

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1. ten years ago. weston, ks.

AUGUST flicks on a lighter.

AUGUST. see. we start like this. like. (*August holds his hand over the flame. he starts to flinch, but holds steady. ROACH abruptly pulls August's hand off the flame.*) what?

ROACH. i don't like when you...

AUGUST. when i what? (*August puts his hand over the flame again.*) now you.

ROACH. i don't want to—

AUGUST. now you. you promised me. roach. you promised. (*August pulls Roach's hand over the flame. Roach screams. August pulls Roach into a bruising kiss. the lighter goes out, pulling them into the dark. the sounds of licking flames devouring the limbs of dying insects, crunching and chewing and spitting and then gravel, gravel, gravel...*)

2. one week ago. yosemite national park.

TV static crackles in a minivan. the light of the TV illuminates the space dimly. this minivan is decked the fuck out. like a camper van. a twin bed (almost comically too small for the space), fake vines and string lights. flowers stuffed into cabinets. the only normal-sized item is the big looming fridge shoved up into the wall. the closet door creaks open. SOMETHING LURKING in the shadows begins to crawl out. they slither to the fridge. they open it, silhouetted by the glow. the glow is bright enough to illustrate now a slumbering Roach in the twin bed. SOMETHING turns its head to stare down the sleeping Roach. after a moment, it closes the fridge and slithers back into the closet. as the closet door clicks closed... the TV changes channels... to a nature documentary. behind Roach, the vastness of Yosemite National Park.

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ROACH. across this vast and foreboding landscape, you will find yosemite national park is a product of glacial erosion. this is from the underlying granite in tectonic shifts millions of years ago. the forces of water, ice, and temperature changes have all sculpted this bedrock to create the stunning highs and lows that we see here today. take for instance, this granite... *(Roach steps out of the nature documentary and returns to his laptop. the sound of Roach's voice continues underneath them moving out of the "frame". Roach turns up the volume and then hesitates by the closet. he reaches towards the door, when... suddenly he stops and turns to the fridge. he opens the fridge. the fridge is filled with rocks of all shapes, sizes, and colors.)*

ROACH. (v.o.). a product of uplift and tilt along the fault line system, this granite is a fine example of the natural indentations of the sierra nevada's crust forming mountains, volcanos, and other shifts in the tectonic plates. *(Roach pulls a chunk of granite out of the fridge. they inspect it thoroughly.)* granite is this beautiful salt-and-pepper rock... mostly composed of quartz, plagioclase, potassium feldspar, biotite, and hornblende.

ROACH. salt and pepper... mhmm. *(Roach shuts the fridge and starts eating the granite like popcorn. returns to his computer.)*

ROACH (v.o.). did you know that granite, granodiorite, diorite, and tonalite are all forms of plutonic rock that exist in yosemite? they're all called granitic rocks, all due to the differing compositions in magma that intruded the earth's crust. when that magma separates... they become crystal-rich or crystal-poor. this rock, for example, would be crystal-rich.

ROACH. crystal-rich... mhmm... *(Roach looks at the crystal-rich rock he's eating. takes another bite.)*

ROACH (v.o.). the granites of yosemite are particularly related to the sierra nevada batholith—

ROACH. ah, shit, fuck, god, fuck— *(RING RING RING! Roach turns the volume down. his phone is ringing. he throws the rock back in the fridge. he searches high and low for his phone. it's in the closet. he opens the closet. SOMETHING LURKING is hanging in the closet on a hanger, like as if it was a coat or something for Roach to put on.)*

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ROACH strings the coats along the racks, checking the pockets, and then inevitably covering up SOMETHING LURKING in the closet. Roach looks down at his feet and finally finds his phone sitting on the floor. he scoops it up. he lifts his phone to his ear.) y-ello. (EZ, in another part of the country, appears, on the phone, in another time and space.)

EZ. i've called four times /today, roach, you really need to trade in your phone with its shit signal there's really no excuse can you let me talk can you let me talk can you let me—

ROACH. /look i get it i'm a bad texter it's not my fault i have a nokia the service is bad it's on purpose i don't like to be reachable you understand? i'm off the grid— fine talk.

EZ. THANK you, okay, yes, so, like i said, i've been trying to reach you all day. i hear something in the background. are you working /on your documentary—

ROACH. /i'm working on my documentary yes i'd really like to get back to it ez—

EZ. you can't even spare me five minutes of your day?

ROACH. five minutes. counting.

EZ. okay. it's almost the anniversary.

ROACH. okay. it's almost the anniversary. so bye—

EZ. don't try to avoid the conversation.

ROACH. you haven't called on my birthday for years. why should i care about one day.

you don't exactly *check in*, sib.

EZ. congrats you are 26 years closer to death. you promised me you'd—

ROACH. i'm still planning on. okay? jeez.

EZ. okay.

ROACH. my travel plan takes me along every stop *around* the destination so by the end of the week i should be right there. right in town that's where the end of the road is for me and i'll be right there. no excuse. is that it? did you need verbal confirmation?

EZ. yes and...

ROACH. ...okay? ez, what's up.

EZ. nothing.

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ROACH. ...you could've texted me this if that was it.

EZ. i can't text your nokia. it's a nokia. you'd get the text in two months maybe. granted you wouldn't even read it.

ROACH. i have a laptop!

EZ. what's your email count?

ROACH. ...10,345 unread emails... /look i collect them like pokemon cards... how many unread emails can i capture in my inbox?

EZ. /do you check the news? or do you have service out there?

ROACH. come on, what's up?

EZ. they let him out. (*long silence.*)

ROACH. ...who?

EZ. they let him out.

ROACH. look, just because you're afraid of a specific *him* doesn't mean it is *him* and it doesn't mean—

EZ. he is out there somewhere, okay? he's on parole. they let him out. i just don't want /you to get hurt.

ROACH. /why would he come looking for me. ez, come on. you really called me for this?

EZ. is it so bad to think i care? /that in one week i want my sib to come back to visit—

ROACH. /yeah, when you kinda ghost someone for five years i tend to think that means you don't care.

EZ. ...i don't know what soul searching shit you think you're gonna find *off the grid* out there, but people die *off the grid*. /sorry for worrying about my brother, i guess.

ROACH. /i won't end up in some ditch, ez, i'm fine.

EZ. do you even care?

ROACH. ...i'll call you later.

EZ. sure. right. talk to you in two weeks.

ROACH. less. promise. (*they hang up. Ez disappears. Roach turns his focus back to his nature documentary. turns back up the volume.*)

ROACH (v.o.). this particular rock is an older rock. the younger rocks tend to be volcanic, which forms when the magma erupts as lava flows and spreads over the countryside— (*Roach opens the fridge and finds the granite again. after a moment, he starts engorging himself on the*

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rock voraciously. the swallowing sounds are horrible. he seems as though for a moment he may choke. and then it all goes down. this is almost a sadistically pleasurable experience for Roach, the relief is palpable. SOMETHING LURKING crawls out of the closet. they slither up behind Roach, looming in their shadow, like a puppet, or a mirror. Roach notices a caterpillar sitting on the sink faucet. they lift the caterpillar up on their fingers, lost in a thought... ROACH moves the bug towards the windowsill. for a moment, he raises his hand as though he'll crash it down upon it... and he stops. Roach opens the window and scoots the caterpillar out. he closes the window behind it, watching it through the glass. the sounds of the documentary fade them away into...)

3. eleven years ago. weston, ks.

(wet autumn leaves crunch under August and Roach's feet. the sounds of autumn birds crowing and squawking. fields of golden corn and wheat silhouette the tall red and orange trees.)

ROACH. why are we walking so far

AUGUST. you gotta learn to appreciate the outdoors

ROACH. i do appreciate the outdoors

AUGUST. the science museum doesn't count

ROACH. it's a *discovery center*

AUGUST. i'm just saying. you could enjoy the little beasties. in their natural habitat. instead of behind glass

ROACH. bugs bite

AUGUST. i bite

ROACH. you don't bite

AUGUST. there's a lot of different kind of bites. not just physical. it can be like. an emotional bite. it's like being ...bitten. you just...chomp

ROACH. okay

AUGUST. like. i feel *bitten*. by you not trusting the path

ROACH. where are we going

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AUGUST. smell the bark (*August gets right up against a tree to smell the bark.*)

ROACH. that's disgusting

AUGUST. it's like a wet earthy smell. the smell after the first rain. i wanna hug a tree

ROACH. maybe you should bite it

AUGUST. i'll take a real good chomp out of the tree. smooch it up.

ROACH. you're so gross

AUGUST. the tree isn't giving me the cold shoulder

ROACH. i have homework i need to get done
don't you have that girl or something

AUGUST. what girl

ROACH. that girl from your class

AUGUST. oh. her. she's okay i guess

ROACH. weren't you supposed to go out with her tonight

AUGUST. oh maybe

ROACH. you really seemed like you wanted to fuck her so bad

AUGUST. i kind of already did

ROACH. what. you didn't tell me that

AUGUST. i had hickeys all over my neck /last week

ROACH. /you had what

AUGUST. we gave each other bruises that's a thing that happens /when you're kissing someone

ROACH. /oh shit. that's. when i thought you'd been choked right /last week? you fucked her last week?

AUGUST. /in the van. /god *choking* is suuuuch a hot word i kinda like doing the choking not gonna lie.

ROACH. /you fucked her in the van? the old fucking van? the van i fucking drive? god gross can we hurry up

AUGUST. you need to live a little, prude. and that van got some action it wasn't getting on the road. good for the van.

ROACH. no i am not a prude you are traumatizing my van she's my baby.

AUGUST. she's not a baby if i fucked in her. /oh, that sounds horrible? oh i'm so sorry for that.

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ROACH. /oh my god????? oh my god.

AUGUST. you know you're such a virgin your cheeks are all red

ROACH. *my cheeks are not red i would describe them as pallid*

AUGUST. so red

ROACH. stoop it i really hate it i really really hate it.

AUGUST. sometimes hurt can be a little sexy sometimes hurt can feel really really fucking good you'd probably like it you're probably turned on right now to the idea of someone choking you

ROACH. oh and who's gonna choke me out huh? you?

AUGUST. hey look caterpillar (*August lifts a caterpillar off of a tree. it dangles and droops in his hands.*)

ROACH. gross

AUGUST. you think *everything* is gross

ROACH. come on. can we get wherever you're going. put the bug down

AUGUST. it's like a little limp guy. look at him (*August dangles the bug around. Roach flinches.*) i mean this little guy's gonna live a whole lifetime right. chrysalis to butterfly. it's gonna live a whole lifetime. transformational. but as of right now... (*August flings it back towards the tree.*)

ROACH. /be careful it's a little bug

AUGUST. /oh come on you only care about bugs when they're behind a cage right? like the museum

ROACH. discovery center

AUGUST. *discovery center.* you'd rather watch things transform on the sidelines behind glass than actually experience them out in the world

ROACH. what do you know of what i want to experience

AUGUST. i know you wanna experience your homework so the further we go the closer we get to that... look. as of right now that caterpillar's whole world is the tree just like right now the whole world for you is. me. right

ROACH. i want to see the whole world you know. and i'll see it one day. you don't know everything. just watch me

AUGUST. c'mere. (*August offers his hand. ROACH hesitantly takes it. they continue walking. eventually, August stops them and points. a magnificent house comes into view. in the distance.*)

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ROACH. woah /what is that

AUGUST. /your future home... she bought it. /i'm positive. has to be this one

ROACH. /mom didn't say anything about

AUGUST. i'm sure susan didn't but i'm sure that's it

ROACH. i really don't think she'd

AUGUST. i think she would. i think she'd want this house. the divorce house

ROACH. hah. yeah maybe

AUGUST. it kinda looks like a bird cage

ROACH. maybe a bug cage

AUGUST. what are you. a bug?

ROACH. maybe i bite. maybe i could. maybe i could bite (*August grabs ROACH's wrists hard. Roach whimpers beneath the grasp. August observes his grip on Roach's wrists. the bruises it will inevitably leave. the intensity of this hold. and then... he lets him go.*)

AUGUST. you're gonna have to show me that sometime. won't you, bug? (*Roach and August get closer. and closer. inches apart. August opens his mouth to speak or kiss or something. this is like a hollow void. the sounds of crackling bones and fire come out of his mouth. Roach just stares. stares. like he should be screaming or something or scared. instead he leans in. maybe to kiss him or kill him or bite him. when...*)

4. six days ago. yellowstone national park.

ROACH is speaking right into a tripod camera outside his van.

ROACH. for my dissertation on the geology of national american landmarks, today's trip brings us into yellowstone national park, home of the buffalo. go buffs.

here, you will see that our earliest recorded rocks would be metamorphic rocks. the two most common would be these two here: a gneiss, a coarsely banded rock, and a schist, a finely banded rock. the gneiss were likely granite to start, and the schist was a shale or sandstone— (*a sound*

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in the thicket. Roach watches something in the distance.) it appears that I am being interrupted by the ritualistic appearance of two deer. a mated pair. *(Roach turns the camera towards the distance.)* see here the glory of mother nature in her almighty— *oh no.* now they're fighting. oh. oh, they're bucks, that's why. they're. they're not mated. they're. well, actually now they're kissing. looks like they're... yeah, okay, yeah now they're fucking. mother nature is a lesbian. back to the... *(Roach drifts off, staring. there's something malevolent suddenly behind his eyes. like a yearning. a longing. a twisting, deep dark feeling. then, as quickly as it's there, it's gone.)* back to— back to the rocks... fuck I gotta cut. cut! *(Roach stops the camera and turns it back on themself. he picks up a rock.)* schist and gneiss... schist and gneiss... shit and shit and shit and shit and FUCK! i need to exfoliate my fucking brain. *(Roach slaps himself. shakes it off.)* The gneiss were likely granite to start. This schist rock was likely shale or a sandstone. See for instance its sharper shape and finer edges, only occurring in the northern half of the park— *(Roach accidentally cuts his hand on the rock. he drops the rock.)* ah! fuck! *(Roach wipes his hand on his pant leg. his hand keeps bleeding. after a moment he hesitantly licks his hand. then, he kisses it like he's never been kissed before. like a disgusting vampire virgin. this is incredibly pathetic. maybe it's the taste of iron. maybe it's the starvation of touch. whatever it is, it's fucking gross. after a moment, he notices the rock he'd tossed aside. he looks around, ashamed. now he's no longer ashamed. he scrambles to get the rock. Roach raises the bloody rock to his lips. he gently takes in the scent of the rock. then, as he parts his lips to get a taste... RING RING RING! Ez appears. Roach answers the phone.)* y-ellow. stone.

EZ. ha, ha lame. i wanted to catch you before i went to the store. i'm living off of disposable vapes, lexapro, and my will to live and only one of those things i can get at the gas station for ten bucks. you're awfully hard to reach.

ROACH. hey, said it wouldn't be two weeks, here i am! what's up?

EZ. it's getting closer to the day.

ROACH. i know.

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EZ. i wanted to check that you can bring flowers or something. just so that it doesn't feel so

ROACH. yeah i guess. should i bring... /wildflowers?

EZ. /daffodils for sure, if you can find them.

i've been bringing them to her lately but she'd like them from you i think

ROACH. right. she always kept a vase in the window.

EZ. until the day the house burned down. i remember standing outside and they were still sitting in the window. haloed by the flames. it was an odd image. those flowers. standing upright and tall. smoke billowing out the windows. and just. daffodils. so i leave them out for her as much as i can.

ROACH. hard to erase an image like that, i can imagine.

EZ. you didn't exactly stick around to *watch*, so.

ROACH. ...that wasn't really my choice, was it?I

EZ. i just want the occasion to be nice. i haven't seen you in forever—

ROACH. will your girlfriend be joining us?

EZ. we broke up two months ago (*Roach's hand starts bleeding again. they try to wipe it on their pants. their pants are now stained with blood.*)

ROACH. oh. fuck.

EZ. you forgot, didn't you

ROACH. i didn't forget. you were together for so long i just. thought you'd never uhhh /never break up

EZ. /vivi was the one who didn't like you much. didn't want me to talk to you so. she thought you /were too—

ROACH. /right yeah uhhh how's therapy going?

EZ. they switched my antidepressants. they put me in group therapy again. i used to resent it but there's... a lot of people like us out there. what does yours have you on?

ROACH. oh, nothing. i am on an all natural diet right now.

EZ. do you talk to someone about... what happened to us?

ROACH. i just take a lot of MINERALS! i'm getting so much iron and calcium i'm practically a tank. well. no. i'm a little guy. but inside, i am rock-solid yes yes yes (*Roach sucks on the wound again.*)

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EZ. this is exactly why next week matters.

ROACH. six days now.

EZ. have you heard from—

ROACH. no and i'm not going to

EZ. okay. good. i'm looking forward to spending time with you. we don't get to do that often.

ROACH. no we don't

EZ. feels. weird huh? five years since i last saw you in our apartment. before you went off in the van and i went off with vivi. before it all went to shit again... why didn't we talk more? *(Roach sucks on the wound again.)*

EZ. roach?

ROACH. ...mmyea what? *(Roach sucks on the wound again.)*

EZ. ...are you... maybe... do you think um... oh, hey, what's that sound?

ROACH. AHHHH i was outside and now i'm inside i am *inside* the van i am inside yes

EZ. okay. *(Roach reenters the van with their tripod. they start running water over their wound.)* it is a good thing he won't be there though. don't know how she'd /feel about it—

ROACH. /mom would be unhappy if he was there.

EZ. yeah. don't wanna upset mom. do you think she—

ROACH. she's proud.

EZ. how's the dissertation coming along? *(Roach messily grabs a wad of paper towels and bunches it in his hands. the wound keeps bleeding.)*

ROACH. it's coming. coming good. coming *hard*.

EZ. it's what?

ROACH. it's COMING ALONG i mean.

EZ. are you okay? i know the news is probably distracting and the like, but i'm here for you, you know.

ROACH. i know, ez. sometimes i think. i dunno. sometimes i feel like. it's like

EZ. yeah?

ROACH. i've got all these limbs right. all these little parts of me. and all of them are reaching for different things. i was built to reach for

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things just out of reach. when i was designed i was built with so many parts that can't possibly hold onto everything. so i'm being torn apart from the center sometimes. a gravitational pull or a tug or something. and the center of me feels this

tectonic shift. like two plates rubbing up against each other in friction to create mountains. mountains being problems. a dissertation. a friendship. a... *(the closet shudders. Roach turns. the closet doesn't move.)*

EZ. i think i know what you mean. you know. sometimes i think i'm alone. but then i remember you and i. we share that moment. i mean we share many, we're related. but that moment. i think

ROACH. we share that moment with him too *(Roach suddenly looks sick.)*

EZ. this isn't too far away from us all. isn't that crazy. ten years ago we were just kids. childhood was ten years ago—

ROACH. we got ours. he lost his.

EZ. well then he shouldn't have abducted my brother.

ROACH. i think i need to go actually /i'm getting tired

EZ. /sometimes i swear you have the wrong idea about him. like some part of you feels bad /for him and i don't understand it. yes, even now, roach. why can't you give it a rest.

ROACH. /even now? ez, i don't want to talk about this. i don't want to. *i'm going to rest now. (Roach opens the fridge. looks for a rock.)*

EZ. are you sure

ROACH. yes i'm positive i just need some. i need some sleep

EZ. ...it's 3PM. you sure you need to sleep right now?

ROACH. i'll talk to you later ez promise we can catch up tomorrow. *(EZ slowly, but hesitantly, disappears. Roach chows down on a large rock, swallowing it voraciously, shamelessly. they cough a bit, before putting the rock back. as they turn, August is behind them.*

in the shadows, like a demon. like a manifestation of heaven and hell.)

august. *(August pulls out his axe from the closet. he smiles.)* welcome home. *(the paper towels fall to the ground. August takes Roach's hand. cradles his palm. He pulls Roach's bleeding hand to his lips. August kisses Roach's wound. Roach takes in a deep breath... this is*

RIVETING... *and then all of a sudden, August is sucked away, sucked*

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away into the dark, sucked back into the closet, like a void, like a hole... and ROACH vomits. VOMITS rocks, bits and pieces of rocks and his own blood and he coughs it all up, a horrible guttural sound all over the floor. his mouth is stained with blood. their hands. his pants. he is down on his hands and knees and he opens his mouth to scream, but all the sound is sucked out.)

5. nine years ago. leavenworth, ks.

(behind glass. a cage of sorts. August paces by the phone behind the plexiglass wall. this is the state penitentiary. August is an inmate. finally, Roach appears. thin. gaunt. probably threw up on the way here. he definitely is the type to anxiety vomit. August plasters himself up against the glass, immediately drawn to Roach like a hypnotic moth to a lamp. Roach shivers. Roach pulls back his chair. Roach sits. away from the glass.)

AUGUST. roach i've missed you. you have no idea what i've been through *(Roach reaches for the phone. August reaches for his. Roach hesitantly raises it to his ear.)*

ROACH. /hello—

AUGUST. /i've missed you so much. i thought you wouldn't come. you have no idea how happy i am to see you. you came for me right. why are you looking at me like that

ROACH. hello august.

AUGUST. you haven't lost your sense of humor. it's been three months
roach. three

ROACH. i know

AUGUST. why haven't you visited me yet

ROACH. i haven't been able to. school

AUGUST. right. right. you started that right? what stupid thing are you studying

ROACH. geology

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AUGUST. and how's that going for you

ROACH. it's going fine august—

AUGUST. i still think trade school's better than college. but you'll do good of course. i would've gone off and become like. what's the modern name for lumberjack

ROACH. please—

AUGUST. how's ez. hopefully not ungrateful

ROACH. they're... alive

AUGUST. but ungrateful. i mean they were spared. are you grateful

ROACH. i am grateful

AUGUST. doesn't sound like you're grateful

ROACH. i. i am. i am grateful august

AUGUST: i don't believe you

ROACH: i am grateful august

AUGUST: say thank you august

ROACH: i *appreciate* that—

AUGUST: that's not what i asked

ROACH: ...thank you august

AUGUST: good. i thought you'd agree

ROACH: do you feel bad

AUGUST: what

ROACH: about anything. do you even feel bad

AUGUST: hm

ROACH: come on

AUGUST: ez asked you to say this didn't they

ROACH: they're hurting

AUGUST: what about you. are you hurting?

ROACH: i am very hurt

AUGUST: do *you* feel bad?

ROACH: what for

AUGUST: what for!? now you're fucking ungrateful

ROACH: stop saying that

AUGUST: i suppose you were a tree before a bug right. before you decided you hate trees. or hate names rather. so you had to be a rock. no.

i'm going to eat you alive

a bug. with a thick shell around you. rocky exterior all soft on the inside.
right rowan

ROACH: shut up (*Roach starts to get up.*)

AUGUST: hey. stop that. roach. sit back down. i'm not done yet. you know you want to be closer to me. right. if there was no glass here. you'd be all over me like a moth to a lamp. right roach

ROACH. stop it

AUGUST: rowan and ezra. maybe i oughta think you're loving up on them

ROACH: that's disgusting

AUGUST: sweet on them like you're sweet on me

ROACH: stop it

AUGUST: you could've said something done *something*. you fucking stood there you fucking pussy. why the fuck didn't you fight for me

ROACH: why the fuck would i fight the fucking cops. do i look like i'd fight a cop

AUGUST: would've been better than being a little pussy, rowan (*Roach punches the plexiglass. this does nothing. but August grins from ear to ear.*)

ROACH. you're a little bitch. you're such a little bitch. FUCK (*Roach hits the plexiglass again. there are sounds of footsteps. they both turn and look in that direction. then, with resign... Roach slumps back in his chair. raises the phone back to his ear.*)

AUGUST. i know why you're here roach. i know what you really want. and you know. you know that here... i can't give you that.

ROACH: this is disgusting

AUGUST: your therapist tell you that or ez (*long silence. Roach opens his palm, revealing he and August's twin scars from the lighter. he holds his hand up to the glass. August puts his identical wound up to mirror Roach's.*)

AUGUST: where do you think you'll be when this is all over

ROACH: the grand canyon. i've always wanted to see it

AUGUST: when this is all over. when i'm out

ROACH: in like a decade (*a gust of wind. the sound of a rock dropping far, far into a ravine.*)

i'm going to eat you alive

AUGUST: when i'm out (*the PLUNK of the rock hitting the bottom echoes up, loud at first and then fading out...*) when i'm out..... (*Roach and August line up their hands across the glass. Roach starts to mouth something, like there's something more he wants to say. but then he looks sick. the sound is sucked out, like the howl of wind in a deep ravine. a sucking, a howling, a swirling, swirl swirl swirl swirl. the scream of a distant hawk. Roach is left all alone again.*)

6. three days ago. the grand canyon.

(the vastness and greatness of the grand canyon, one of the wonders of america, in the middle of the night. SOMETHING LURKING is standing over Roach, watching him. it tilts its head, observing him like a lost puppy, or maybe like a hornet contemplating a new nest. the glow of something outside casts a light over SOMETHING LURKING, creating a long shadow over Roach. a hawk screams again. Roach sits up in bed, jolted awake. they rub the sleep from their eyes. they turn and notice SOMETHING LURKING. except they don't seem to surprised to see it. they stare. SOMETHING LURKING stares back.)

ROACH. someone cut down all the trees out there, did you see that? (*SOMETHING LURKING stares.*) i dreamed about it. or maybe i didn't. you come here often? haha. (*SOMETHING LURKING stares.*) of course you do. i know what you are. (*Roach waves. SOMETHING LURKING waves in sync with Roach, almost a perfect mirror. Roach lowers his hand. so does SOMETHING LURKING. Roach opens his palm, revealing the burn scar. SOMETHING LURKING, mirroring Roach, reveals the same. ROACH reaches out their hand, as though to link their palms together, but not touching quite yet—*) the whole grand canyon. all those trees. all those trees filled with bugs in 'em. all of them cut down. had the grooves not been precise. had the marks not been those of a craftsman. i woulda said wind blew them down into the pit of the beast. but no. no, i'm not afraid of you. i'm not afraid of you. i'm *not* afraid of you (*Roach touches their hands together. SOMETHING LURKING*

i'm going to eat you alive

RECOILS and opens its mouth, but the SCREAM OF A HAWK comes out. suddenly the wind is so strong, so powerful, so terrible. Roach stands, hugging SOMETHING LURKING, holding on for dear life, fighting the gusts of a tornado or a terrible storm.) i dream about you. i dream about what would happen if i. if i gave up. or if i just. gave in (the FRIDGE swings open, the door swaying on its hinges, the terrible sound of crackling, licking flames coming out of its mouth. Roach holds on, still.) I KNOW. I'M NOT AFRAID. (Roach pushes SOMETHING LURKING into the open closet. the door clicks shut. all the howling wind and screeches stops. the sound of a boiling coffee pot. suddenly it is daylight. birds chirp. Roach pulls a rock out of the fridge and shuts it. he starts pouring himself a cup of coffee and clicks on his laptop. the sounds of his nature documentary begin to click through.)

ROACH (v.o.). the grand canyon. the grandest canyon that ever. ah, fuck, that sucks, start again.. the grand canyon. the vastness of the. fuck. jesus

ROACH: where the fuck is the creamer. *(Roach on video adjusts his camera, this is a horrible fumbling sound. kind of embarrassing. Roach opens the fridge again to get creamer, then realizes he only has rocks. Roach pulls out a tiny rock. Roach drops the clay in his coffee.)* hm. that'll do. *(he drinks the coffee. their phone rings. Ez appears.)* isn't life grand. canyon. i'm at the. i'm at the grand canyon.

EZ. no i really couldn't tell

ROACH. i fucking made it!!! i've waited years to see this bad boy and she's. well she's grand the grandest bad boy girl that ever. i called a bad boy she. that feels like a double negative

EZ: sounds like the grand canyon's the trans canyon. god what the fuck's your little video on again?

ROACH: the grand mineral compositions of america's greatest national landmarks. a rock-umentary. get it?

EZ: jesus all the rock jokes *enough* is that geology

ROACH. yes. it's my excuse to go look at rocks all over the country. i can send you some. they're pretty neat.

EZ. i'll never understand why you collect rocks... such a dude thing

i'm going to eat you alive

ROACH. it's called being mentally ill and liking shiny things. i mean you save weird things things all the time ez. i still don't understand why you saved *it*

EZ. saved what?

ROACH. ahhh never mind.

EZ. i haven't saved much. unless... oh. do you mean... the dress?

ROACH. mom's wedding dress yeah let's just move on from that

EZ. i mean. i thought about donating it a few times. it's kind of a ratty poofy thing. that thing. that thing in my closet.

ROACH. don't we all have things in our closets... not much was saved and probably within good reason /wanna hear about my rocks instead—

EZ. /kind of a miracle the thing wasn't even touched right... the flames kissed all those clothes in the house and singed them with ash... molten fabric. god that smell will stay with me. what a waste, and then! mom's dress was completely intact.

ROACH. ez i don't understand why you've saved such an ugly /reminder of the day—

EZ. /i thought maybe one day you'd want it.

ROACH. oh.

EZ. you're very wife-able with the van life thing going on.

ROACH. sure. sure. ez, if i'm honest... i really want to move on from it all. i don't want any mementos of her. or that day.

EZ. well, that's one of us. i can't stop thinking about it. and... i won't. it's the last part of her we have. and— it was the damning evidence, the thing that sent august away. the proof of what he'd done. and... you save rocks, so this isn't any different.

ROACH. a dress being burnt means the dress was meant to perish. some things are just meant to be disposed.

EZ. mom was *burnt*. burnt to a crisp. that dress survived but she didn't so to you was she—?

ROACH. no! don't twist my words. the dress was meant to go it wasn't meant to survive but it did right. rocks get weathered down but rocks always come back. nature recycles them because it put them there for a purpose. and the longer they last the deeper their beauty is remarked upon. they'll be here until the end of time. and by holding onto them. by

i'm going to eat you alive

cherishing them by honoring them by loving them. we become part of their history. because they can't go anywhere. they'll always stay with us. stay here.

EZ. so will the cockroaches

ROACH. sure

EZ. i will admit i... hoped maybe one day you'd change your mind. and... it's cause i love you, sib. (*Roach takes a bite of granite.*) you probably need to go. i'll let you go now. wait. what's that crunching sound (*Roach swallows.*)

ROACH. actually do you ever wonder what like

EZ. what

ROACH. ever wonder. if

EZ. oh my god what?

ROACH. you'll think it's stupid never mind why don't you /hang up and go about your day—

EZ. /say it no tell me what is it roach come on

ROACH. it's... i want to be clear i'd never ACTUALLY

EZ. what is it!?

ROACH. bones. like. what bones taste like or.

EZ. what BONES taste like!?

ROACH. i dunno

EZ. jesus christ why the fuck is that a thought in your head

ROACH. forget it forget it

EZ. what the fuck do we need to bring you back to civilization like ground control to roach or

ROACH. no it's like what's that word for intrusive thoughts that you'd never act upon but like it's intrusive it just pops in there and maybe like say you're eating like ribs

EZ. ...ARE YOU EATING SOMEONE'S FUCKING RIB?

ROACH. THERE IS A FOOD GROUP CALLED RIBS YOU CAN GET THEM AT CHILI'S

EZ. OKAY SORRY. applebees also has perfectly nice ribs

ROACH. ez. oh god no. no. not with the bathroom situation. fuck. SO SAY I AM EATING /RIBS/ at CHILI'S. and say like i'm staring at the rib bone like. this is... the bone is hard. i am not supposed to eat this but

i'm going to eat you alive

i wonder if i could. like that guy who ate a whole plane. like bit by bit he ate every part of a plane just like in little pieces. you remember that story

EZ. no i do not remember the story of a guy who ate a plane what the fuck roach

ROACH. i remember the story about the guy who ate a plane. i really like to imagine they wheeled out a dining table with a gingham cloth for him. tucked a napkin into the collar of his shirt and gave him cutlery. that with his butter knife and fork he piece by piece ate little bits of plane. i dunno off topic either way. if i was there eating ribs what would the rib bone taste like

if i crackled open the bone. what would i find inside. besides the marrow of the bone would it be hollow. what stories were carved in this bone what life did this bone live. and do i, by tasting it, absorb that story. does that story become a part of me. sorry did i lose you

EZ. i just don't have the impulse to eat... bones.

ROACH. imagine that the bone contains a cure for cancer. then you'd eat the bone

EZ. i remember when you like ate a rock as a kid

ROACH. that's not that

EZ. thank god you grew out of it. (*Roach eyes the granite in his hands. slowly lowers the rock.*)

ROACH. yes. thank god.

EZ. do you remember that time you got lead poisoning

ROACH. no why

EZ. you had like no memory for days

ROACH. no why

EZ. don't make jokes

ROACH. i'm not joking. i've never had lead poisoning.

EZ. you were like convulsing and vomiting. you threw up all over our apartment. it was like after august was— (*Roach stumbles.*) it was so gross— you'd eaten a rock the doctors said— said because of *august*—

ROACH. aw, fuck. not this (*Roach convulses.*)

EZ. like you could hardly stand

ROACH. ooooookay we're going down we're going down cool cool (*ROACH sinks to the floor.*)

i'm going to eat you alive

EZ. did we ever figure out why you got lead poisoning or how or

ROACH. ez can you pause for a ... for a second (*Roach forces themself back up, but it's like being stuck on a swaying ship. he rolls and falls right back down. the whole world is crumbling at his hands. the van is getting further and further away.*) ohhhh no

EZ. either way i'm really excited for

ROACH. make it stop make it stop (*Roach is dissociating entirely. Ez's words begin to fade as Ez themselves fades.*)

EZ. it was august's dream right... the grand canyon. i mean what could you possibly be looking for—

ROACH. make it STOP (*the world bends and crackles. crunchy world.*) okay, so maybe i've had lead poisoning a couple times.

VOICE OF MOM (v.o.). welcome to the trans canyon. population: lead poisoning. google: what are four effects of lead poisoning? let's list all the effects of lead poisoning. for funsies.

ROACH. mom?

VOICE OF MOM (v.o.). the common side effects are headaches, stomach cramps, constipation, muscle and joint pain, trouble sleeping, fatigue, irritability, and loss of sex drive. at least the last one won't affect you much, will it, rowan?

ROACH. oh this is new. i haven't been *talked at* during these before. maybe i'm fucking crazy okay okay okay. find the exit. there's always an exit... (*Roach looks around. there's no exit.*)

VOICE OF MOM (v.o.). most people with lead poisoning don't look or feel sick. baby, are you sure you're sick? did you forget your vitamin c?

ROACH. usually when i go on trips with my rocks i fill a bathtub up with boiling hot fucking water. sensation of my cold skin hitting burning water. turns me pink. wakes me the fuck up. numbs me. cleansing process. clean *outside rocks*. dawn dish soap. abrasive toothbrush. dental pick. hot water hitting me. a brass brush on calcite. it hurts so good. removing the crystallization. quartz. trip. out of body. *rubber band snap jog the memory* bring me back to earth i'm in a fucking van i could sit in the sink right where's the faucet (*Roach tries to climb up into the sink. the sink disappears. FLASH. the world changes. he slips and falls down*

i'm going to eat you alive

to his feet. he's at the bottom of the grand canyon. all the decayed carcasses of those trees from his dream lay at the ravine.)

AUGUST (v.o.). roach remember this (*the glow of a lighter in the dark.*)
thought you would i have a fun idea

ROACH. where are you

AUGUST (v.o.). i'm over here (*another lighter glows. Roach moves towards it. Roach reaches for the light but it goes out. he turns towards the other one still lit and starts approaching.*)

ROACH. where's the exit august

AUGUST (v.o.). riddle me this... in a burning house who gets out first

ROACH. where's the exit

AUGUST (v.o.). i'll give you a hint... it's the one who lit the match (*ROACH reaches for the flame and burns his hand. he screams. the sound of chopping wood. FLASH. he's on the ground. broad daylight. AUGUST is chopping down a tree. he steps out of the way as it pummels to the ground. wipes the sweat from his brow. turns. sees Roach leaned up against a tree. he walks over. slowly. slowly. he raises his axe up high. Roach doesn't flinch. AUGUST swings. lodges it into the tree above Roach head. offers him a hand.*)

AUGUST. you look like shit

ROACH. i feel like shit

AUGUST. how long have you been sitting here

ROACH. i don't remember getting here

AUGUST. to the grand canyon or to the tree

ROACH. both honestly but mostly the tree. i'm finishing my dissertation

AUGUST. you don't get a dissertation in undergrad.

ROACH. i'm onto my phd dude

AUGUST. ah shit look at you. need water?

ROACH. not thirsty hungry what the fuck

AUGUST. huh

ROACH. how'd you get here

AUGUST. to the grand canyon or the tree

ROACH. both honestly but mostly the grand canyon

i'm going to eat you alive

AUGUST. i'm kinda breaking my parole terms figured i dunno. figured maybe i'd see a familiar face. was this your last stop on your little quest

ROACH. they let you out

AUGUST. i've waited around here a coupla' days. look i just figured you'd stop here eventually

ROACH. what's uh what's *hangin'* god that sounds fucking stupid sorry

AUGUST. stripping some trees. shocked a park ranger hasn't stopped me yet. i'm peeling back the bark. been eating it like fucking jerky. i like the smell of burning wood. wanna try some. i promise its not charcoal. though knowing you you'd probably eat the. eat the. eat the charcoal god that sounds fucking stupid

ROACH. am i tripping right now

AUGUST. you look high as fuck so i dunno

ROACH. you look

AUGUST. what

ROACH. i'll show ya. c'mere (*Roach holds out his hand, the flame bitten one. August holds out his matching scar. they fit perfectly together, hand in hand. August kisses his wound. Roach leans in and kisses August.*)

AUGUST. ah. i see... you talkin to ez or

ROACH. oh shut up. (*Roach kisses August again. the world seems to slow into place. like they were meant to make contact in this exact moment in this exact space in this exact time. the rest of the world fades away. something like "the bug collector" by haley heynderickx begins to play, the haunting voice giving way to a dream ballet of sorts. this is not a literal dream ballet. think like carousel or oklahoma but movement-heavy instead of dance. we are now seeing Roach and August's entire story, all the way back from the beginning and out of context. the world falls apart and comes back together, but at the end of it all, it's always just August and Roach. they fight, they fuck, they fight, they kiss, they fight, they dance, they fight... they're like two moths fluttering around a lamp, a gravitational pull that only the two of them understand. August and Roach kiss again, a little more forceful, a little more violent... then, the sound of an engine revving. Roach is snapped back into reality.*)

i'm going to eat you alive

seated next to August in the van. except it's not Roach driving. it's August.)

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