

EXCERPT:

*Dylan and Carter in a car, late evening. It's dark and raining. Dylan is driving.*

DYLAN: How was the flight?

CARTER: Fine.

*Beat.*

Why do people always ask that?

DYLAN: Ask what?

CARTER: How was the flight?

DYLAN: Because people like talking to each other.

CARTER: I don't like talking to people.

DYLAN: Just making conversation, Carter.

CARTER: How many ways can a flight be?

DYLAN: Depends.

CARTER: On what.

DYLAN: Well – whether or not you flew Air Canada.

CARTER: I didn't fly Air Canada.

DYLAN: Then it was a good flight.

CARTER: It was a flight.

*Beat.*

How's mom?

DYLAN: Back and forth. In between.

*Beat.*

She said that you and Emmy broke up.

CARTER: Did she?

DYLAN: When was this?

CARTER: Few months back.

DYLAN: A few months?

CARTER: Yeah.

DYLAN: What happened?

CARTER: I don't know...

DYLAN: Do you have a theory?

CARTER: Misalignment of the planets. Mercury's in retrograde.  
*Beat.*  
What did she say?

DYLAN: Who? Mom?

CARTER: When she told you we broke up. What did she say?

DYLAN: She said: Carter and Emmy broke up...probably a sensitive issue...maybe don't bring it up just yet.

CARTER: I admire your tact.

DYLAN: Who dumped who?

CARTER: Nobody *dumped* anyone. We're adults. Adults don't *dump* each other.

DYLAN: Oh. I didn't realize.

CARTER: It was an amicable parting of the ways arrived at through a series of open and honest conversations leading to an inevitable conclusion.

DYLAN: That conclusion being?

CARTER: It wasn't... There wasn't one big thing. Just a bunch of little things.

DYLAN: Little things?

CARTER: You know what, Dylan? It really isn't all that interesting.

DYLAN: (*Pause*) How's work?

CARTER: Fine. You?

DYLAN: Good. What're you working on?

CARTER: *(Beat)* Screenplay.

DYLAN: Since when do you write screenplays?

CARTER: It's just a gig. Just a contract thing that fell in my—

DYLAN: Pretty radical one-eighty for someone who swore he'd never—

CARTER: It's just a gig.

DYLAN: What's it about?

CARTER: Nothing.

DYLAN: Nothing? Like a *Seinfeld* thing?

CARTER: No...like I'm not especially interested in talking about work right now.  
*Pause.*  
It's a biopic.

DYLAN: About who?

CARTER: A musician. A dead musician.

DYLAN: What kind of musician?

CARTER: Uh...I don't know...rock? Is that still a category?

DYLAN: Which dead rock musician?

CARTER: Nobody you've heard of.

DYLAN: The *Nirvana* guy? Cobain?

CARTER: It wasn't a suicide.

DYLAN: Morrison?

CARTER: Or an overdose.

DYLAN: Buddy Holly?

CARTER: Or a plane crash.

DYLAN: You're sure he was a rock musician?

CARTER: He's...obscure.

DYLAN: Carter, music is a big part of my business. I guarantee I've heard of the guy.

CARTER: Scott Gilbert.

DYLAN: *(Beat)* Never heard of him.

CARTER: Another callous attempt to cash in on the morbid fetishization of young artists who die before their time.

DYLAN: Groovy.

CARTER: They're paying me.

DYLAN: That must be strange for you.

CARTER: I do a lot of heavy breathing into paper bags.  
*Pause.*  
You? Work?

DYLAN: A campaign I worked on just went to air. Clothing line for tweens.

CARTER: Ah. The inimitable *tweens*.

DYLAN: '*Sistahs*'.

CARTER: That's the name of the clothes?

DYLAN: Yeah. Sort of an urban, rebellious, girl-power–

CARTER: Is that 'girl-power' spelled with three R's?

DYLAN: They *stare* when you're...*Sistahs*.

CARTER: Wait – I saw it.

DYLAN: Did you?

CARTER: Yeah.

DYLAN: I thought you didn't own a television.

CARTER: I saw it on the plane.

DYLAN: (Pause) And...?

CARTER: It was...fine.

DYLAN: Fine?

CARTER: Yeah.

DYLAN: You're lying.

CARTER: (Pause) I thought it was pornographic.

DYLAN: Pornographic?

CARTER: Yeah.

DYLAN: As in 'pornography' pornographic?

CARTER: As in exploitative.

DYLAN: As in 'exploited' exploitative?

CARTER: They're *girls*, Dylan. You're exploiting their sexuality, anxiety over body image; you emphasize the importance of the peer group, of being a hip, trendy, cosmopolitan ten-year-old. It's classic fetishization of—

DYLAN: That's the second time it two minutes you've used the word *fetishization*.

CARTER: If they don't adhere to what the industry dictates is quote-unquote 'cool', if they don't look the right way or act the right way or buy the right clothes, then they're not normal, and kids who aren't normal are outcasts.

DYLAN: So...you didn't like it?

CARTER: The point of your ads is to make regular kids feel insecure about—

DYLAN: The point of the ads is to sell clothes.

CARTER: You know that's not the whole truth, so don't—

DYLAN: I'm dealing with a demographic that places a premium on subjective experience, is cynical and distrustful of media, government, religion, and business; they're reluctant to commit, aggressively unsentimental, and believe in destiny, instant gratification, and the fundamental randomness and uncertainty of the universe. They're better educated, more numerous, affluent, and ethnically diverse than any generation that has come before.

CARTER: Tweens.

DYLAN: So when the guy who makes his money parsing that shit comes to me and says: 'Twelve-to-fourteen year-old females are into bare midriffs and low-cut jeans,' I say 'cool'. But I, personally, did not make teenage girls materialistic or susceptible to body image anxiety. I'm not Barbie.

CARTER: You know what, we shouldn't talk about it. We know we shouldn't talk about it.

DYLAN: I'm sorry. I was baiting you. I won't bait you anymore.

CARTER: I know where you stand and you know where I stand and we're not standing in the same place.

DYLAN: Hey, whatever happened to your book?

*Lights shift, revealing Avi, drinking a glass of scotch.*

DYLAN: You were publishing some sort of leftist anti-corporate agit-prop, weren't you?

CARTER: There's been a delay.

AVI: Hey Carter, thanks for waiting.

DYLAN: A delay?

CARTER: It's fine. They pushed back the release date because of the...because there's been a delay.

AVI: Can I get you a drink?

DYLAN: Oh. Okay.

*Carter is now in Avi's office. Lights out on Dylan.*

CARTER: No thanks.

AVI: I'm drinking scotch now.

CARTER: It suits you.

AVI: You think?

CARTER: Sure. It makes you seem more sophisticated than you actually are.

AVI: You sure you don't want anything?

CARTER: I'm good.  
*Pause.*  
Look, I'm sorry I dug in my heels about the tour. I'm still iffy on these big-box chain stores. I know everything's essentially owned by the same empire anyway, so if the publisher wants me tour the chains then I'll tour the chains. But I still say it sends the wrong message to our base to promote a book about deregulation and corporate consolidation at—

AVI: They're pulping the book.

CARTER: (*Still rambling*) —I've never been one of those people who appreciates irony—

AVI: Carter, they're pulping the book.

CARTER: Pulping the book? What does that mean, 'Pulping the book'?

AVI: They're taking all printed copies of the book, soaking them in acid, and then a big machine will reduce them to pulp. Then the pulp will be...I don't know...maybe they make other books with it.

CARTER: 'Pulping the book' isn't industry lingo for—

AVI: No.

CARTER: They're *pulping* the book?

AVI: Yes.

CARTER: *All* the books?

AVI: Yes.

CARTER: All of them?  
*Beat.*  
Oh my god.

AVI: I'm sorry.

CARTER: Oh my god.

AVI: Carter—

CARTER: Has this ever happened before? I mean, does this happen regularly or—

AVI: Absolutely.

CARTER: Before the books have been released?

AVI: Not so much before they've been released as after they haven't sold. But technically it's the same process.

CARTER: So...this is...what? Unprecedented?

AVI: It's... Yes. But it's not... Don't take it personally.

CARTER: I've been working on this book for three years.

AVI: I know.

CARTER: The book is an expansion of my graduate thesis.

AVI: I know.

CARTER: My thesis was a consolidation of several undergraduate essays.

AVI: Carter—

CARTER: I've been writing about this shit since high school!  
*Pause.*  
Well...what the fuck?

AVI: *(Deep breath)* Times have changed.

CARTER: *(Pause)* Times have changed?

AVI: Yes. They have.