

WHEN MARY GOES OVER THE MOUNTAIN BY BEN BUTINA

NICK - Former owner of the Starlite Drive-In. Late 70s. Irritable, anxious, and sarcastic.

OLIVIA - College student. Curious and friendly.

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INT. - LIVING ROOM - AFTERNOON

A pigsty. Empty fast food bags and full ashtrays cover every surface. This is an old bachelor's place and no mistake. The TV is on as we hear the DOORBELL ring.

NICK

Hold on a minute.

Nick picks up the remote and turns off the TV. Pulls the lever on the side of smelly old easy chair and the DOORBELL rings again.

NICK

(Irritated)

Hold on, I said!

Nick walks across the room and we hear the door CREAK open.

NICK

Well?

OLIVIA

Hello, Mr. Jasenco. I'm Olivia Russo.
I'm here for the interview.

NICK

(Less irritated now.)

Oh, right. Right. You're Paulie's
girl, right?

OLIVIA

Uh, no, Paul is my uncle. I'm John
and Mary's daughter.

NICK

Yeah, right, okay, I remember now.
Paulie asked me about this and I must
have got confused.

(Sighs)

It's hell gettin' old, kid.

They stand awkwardly at the door for a few beats.

NICK

So come on in. This is something for
school or something?

We hear the door SHUT and STEPS as they walk across the room.

OLIVA

(In a rehearsed voice.)

Yes, Mr. Jasenco. I'm taking a class
on oral history and I'm here to
conduct an interview about your
experiences owning the Starlite
Drive-in.

NICK

Okay, okay, that's fine then. I
remember now. Where should we set up?

OLIVIA

Right here's fine. Anywhere you're
comfortable.

NICK

I'm not comfortable anywhere, so
here's as good a place as any I
guess. You got a tape recorder or
something?

OLIVIA

I'll just use my phone.

NICK

Your phone? Are we calling someone
or...

OLIVIA

Uh, no. I'm just using the phone as a recorder.

NICK

Okay, that's fine. I didn't know they could do that now. They can do anything now, seems like.

The two sit down. Nick in his easy chair and Olivia on the edge of the couch.

NICK

Whenever you're ready then. Do you want anything? A water or...

OLIVIA

No, I'm fine Mr. Jasenco.

NICK

Let's go with Nick.

OLIVIA

(Nervous)

Um, okay. Nick.

We hear a BEEP as the recording begins. From here on out, both voices sound a little distant, as we're hearing the recording.

OLIVIA

(Formal, practiced voice.)

It's Sunday, July 3rd. 3:05pm. I'm interviewing Nicholas Jasenco in his home about his experience owning and operating the Starlite Drive-In, which operated from 1958 until 1997. Mr. Jasenco, can you tell me how you came to own the Starlite Drive-In?

NICK

I bought it from Pat Novak, who probably danced a merry fucking--am I allowed to swear on this thing?

OLIVIA

(Nervous)

Uh, yes. Whatever you're comfortable with...uh, Nick.

NICK

Right, so Pat Novak probably danced a merry fucking jig on the way to the bank the day he unloaded the place on me.

OLIVIA

Okay.

(Pauses. Unsure how to proceed.)

Why do you say that?

NICK

Let me give you some life advice. You want to know what not to do with your money, young lady? Buy a goddamn drive-in. Not that. Anything but that. You're better off investing in those fake potato chips that make you shit all over yourself.

OLIVIA

(Pauses again.)

Okay?

NICK

You probably don't remember those potato chips. Awful idea. What I mean to say is that it was a shit business by the time I got hold of it.

OLIVIA

And when was that?

NICK

Let me think. I took an early retirement from the city and used that lump sum to pay that crook Novak, so it must have been '88 or '89.

OLIVIA

And what made it such a, um, difficult business?

NICK

I barely made any money from the box office, that's the ticket end of the business. The studios ate most of that right up and they'd put all these conditions on what you could show together. So they'd say you couldn't show their picture along with another good picture from another studio. So you had to try to make all your money from concessions, but the fucking cheapskate customers made that impossible.

OLIVIA

How did they do that?

NICK

(Irritated)

They'd bring in their own food from home. Fill their cars up with it. And they'd sneak people in the trunk, too. People drive fucking clown cars to the drive in. Sneak in their extended families and bring a five-course meal if you let 'em.

OLIVIA

So you're saying it was difficult to make money because the studios weren't fair and customers would sneak in extra guests and food. Is that right?

NICK

Yeah. That's what I just said.

OLIVIA

Um. Anything else?

NICK

(Pauses a few beats.)

There was the weather to worry about, too. In Pennsylvania, we get about three months to be open. Four if you're lucky. And if Mary went over the mountain, forget about it.

OLIVIA

If Mary went what?

NICK

Yeah, you probably never heard of that. It was a church thing. Well, not really a church thing. More like a superstition. So Mary. You know about Mary?

OLIVIA

Mary from the Bible?

NICK

Yeah, Mary from the Bible. Jesus' mother. She goes to visit her cousin, right? Cause she's pregnant with Jesus and she wants to see her cousin, who's pregnant with John the Baptist. So she's going over the mountain to see her cousin, and that's supposed to be July 3rd, and if it rains on July 3rd, that means it's going to keep raining for six weeks. If it doesn't rain, you get six weeks of dry weather. And if Mary goes over the mountain and you get the six weeks of rain, your summer is

just about shot to hell if you're trying to run a drive-in.

OLIVIA

It's like Groundhog Day.

NICK

A little like Groundhog Day, yeah.

OLIVIA

Were there any good things about the drive-in?

NICK

Sure. Sometimes the weather would cooperate and you wouldn't have too many freeloaders or people that needed their goddamn cars jumped at 2 in the morning. And then it wasn't too bad.

OLIVIA

What do you remember about the people who worked for you?

Distant rumbling of THUNDER, which we hear gradually getting closer for the remainder.

NICK

Mostly high school kids. Most of them wouldn't know a day's work if it bit 'em on the ass, but some of them were okay. I remember this one girl, Amy. Can't remember her last name. She worked for me just about every summer we were open. Real nice girl. Hard worker, too. Did everything that needed doin'. She liked smoking pot and sneaking off with the boys now and then, but I pretended not to notice.

OLIVIA

(Irritated)

So Amy. Anyone else that you remember well?

NICK

Sure, there was Carl Stafford.

(Pauses a few beats.)

Carl was the projectionist. Weird guy. Wore a suit every night, if you can believe that. Wore a suit just like he had the most important job in the world. Took that job very seriously, Carl did. Never missed a night. Never came in late. He was a professional.

(Pauses)

Everyone said Carl...well, I don't know the right word nowadays, but everyone said he liked men instead of girls. Maybe he did, but I went fishin' with 'im a few times and he never tried anything on me.

(Pauses)

He died at the Starlite, actually.

OLIVIA

Wait. He died at the drive-in?

NICK

Yup. Right there in the booth.

OLIVIA

(Less formal now.)

Oh my god! How did it, I mean when?

NICK

(A long pause.)

I wasn't going to tell this story. I don't really know how to tell this story. I can't remember much about it.

OLIVIA

Can you tell me what you do remember?

NICK

(Another long pause.)

It was the last night of the Starlite. Of course, I didn't know it was gonna be the last night at the time. But after Carl...it just seemed like a good time to give up.

OLIVIA

How did Carl, I mean Mr. Stafford, how did he die?

NICK

That's what I have a hard time remembering. There's like a...blank space before it happened. I sound like a crazy old man. I probably am a crazy old man.

(Chuckles)

But I have this feeling it had something to do with this strange guy in a white van.

OLIVIA

Okay?

NICK

He had a white van, like I said. A big panel job. Came about five nights in a row. Parked clear in the back, even though the place wasn't half-filled up. Just parked in the back and sat in his van. Amy went back to check on him a few times. That last night, I went to the box office to check on the ticket receipts. And then, maybe, I don't know, a half hour later, I'm in the concession stand. Just me and some high school kid who was working the

concession stand. And in walks this
guy--the guy from the van, I'm
presumin', and he's holding this
...thing.

OLIVIA

What kind of thing?

The thunder RUMBLES much closer now.

NICK

It was like a candle. And it was in
this weird holder. It looked like a
hand.

OLIVIA

He was holding the candle in his
hand?

NICK

No. No, it was like he was holding a
hand in his hand, and that hand he
was holding was holding the candle.

OLIVIA

And then what happened?

NICK

He said something.

OLIVIA

What did he say?

NICK

I don't know. It sounded like...do
you know what a record player is?

OLIVIA

(Laughs)

Yes. I have a record player.

NICK

No kidding? In this day and age?
Well, have you ever played a record
at the wrong speed?

OLIVIA

Like too fast or too slow, you mean?

NICK

Yeah. This was like something that
sounded too slow. And I couldn't make
out what it was he was saying in that
weird, slow voice, or maybe I just
don't remember.

OLIVIA

And then what happened?

NICK

Then I remember kinda wakin' up, like
I just took a nap on the floor of the
concession stand. And I look down,
and Eric is laying there on the
floor, like he was sleeping, too. And
then Eric wakes up and he was
confused as I was.

(Pause)

So, we hear the cars honking and I
look up at the screen and the reel
had run out. And that had never
happened before because Carl, like I
said, he was a real professional. So
I walk into the booth and there's
Carl. Just laying on the floor in
that suit of his. But he, uh, he
never woke up.

OLIVA

(Long pause.)

So you just never opened the drive-in
again?

NICK

No, no I didn't. Shut her down. Ended up selling the land to some developer that winter. They built a drugstore there.

OLIVA

(Irritated)

Mr. Jasenco, what happened to Amy Whatever-her-name-was? Did you keep up with her?

NICK

Um, no. Not really. I'd see her around now and then. She got pregnant, I think, but I don't think the father stayed in the picture.

OLIVA

Do you think, do you think there's any chance the man in the white van could've been the father?

NICK

(Confused)

What? No. No, I mean, I guess he might have been, but. Why would you, why would think that?

OLIVA

Because my mother left me something. Something she said my father gave her.

NICK

Mary left you something of John's? What does that have to do with...

OLIVA

(Casually)

Mary and John Russo never had a daughter. And Paul Russo has been

dead for more than a year. That email
you got was from me.

Thunder CRASHES and rain starts to PATTERN on the roof.

NICK

You wrote me the email? Then, who...

OLIVA

I'm Amy's daughter. Her name was Amy
Kowalski, by the way. Her last name
was Kowalski. And she left me this
when she died.

**We hear another BEEP as Amy turns off the recorder. A ZIP of a bag and
RUSTLING sounds of Amy reaching into her purse.**

OLIVA

So, Nick, thank you for telling me
your story. My story, too, when you
think about it. It helped me figure
some things out.

NICK

What...what is that?

OLIVA

(Calmy)

I'm not completely sure myself. To
me, it looks like the hand of a dead
man holding a candle. And this
candle, smells very bad. Can you
smell it, Nick?

NICK

(Terrified)

Y-y-yes.

The click of a lighter.

OLIVA

I think this is called a Hand of
Glory, Nick. I wonder if it still
works?

NICK

Who are you?

OLIVA

(Very irritated)

My name is Olivia Kowalski. Kowalski,
just like my mother.

(Casual again)

Do you hear the rain?

NICK

W-What?

OLIVA

It's raining, Nick. And it's July
3rd. Guess we're in for a rainy
summer, huh?

NICK

What?

OLIVA

(Voice is unhumanly slow)

Ma-ry has gooone overr the
mountainnn.

**A thump as Nick's body hits the floor followed by the short PUFF as
of Olivia extinguishes the candle.**