

Drowning

Characters:

Isla– 17 year old female

Jonah– 19 year old male

Isla and Jonah are sitting on the shore of the beach, black pebbles all around them. It is almost dark out. Two backpacks sit near them. Light rain falls on them and the sky is a perfect, empty blue.

Isla

I wonder where the rain ends.

Jonah

What do you mean?

Isla

Like is there a spot where to the left it is all speckled and damp and wet and to the other side it's completely dry?

Jonah

I don't think it works that way.

Isla

How do you know? Nobody knows about the rain. And it has to end somewhere.

Jonah

I mean *endings* don't work that way, it's never clear cut like here is where the rain ends and from here on it will be dry. If you think like that you're wrong and you'll be disappointed.

Isla

I think you're pessimistic.

Jonah

Because I just said endings don't exist? That sounds sickeningly *optimistic*.

Isla

Well fine, you're optimistic, but God... in the darkest possible way. *(beat)* I don't think you can call it optimistic. Same way hoping for something bad to happen, or being certain about it doesn't make you optimistic. It makes you sadistic. *(pause)*

Jonah

I think you have a problem with the word, not my particular application of it.

Isla

I just think there should be a word for when you hope something terrible happens– or when you can't shake the premonition that things would be better if something went wrong. If, say, you burnt your eggs and were happy about it, because you were right. If you fell and bled and laughed because you told yourself so.

Jonah

They do have a name for it.

Isla

What is it?

Jonah

Well, I guess it's more of a feeling.

Isla

What does it feel like?

Jonah

Like being stabbed and falling in love with the wounds. *(pause)*

Isla

(quietly) Do you think they'll remember us nicely?

Jonah

Yeah. I know they will. That's my only hang up about this whole thing.

Isla

That you'll be remembered or that you'll be missed?

Jonah

I have a problem with the way people remember. Like everything was good. I don't want to be one of those kids that people light candles for and sit vigils. You know the school shooting the other day?

Isla

Which one?

Jonah

Doesn't matter. There's always a vigil. But this kid, this kid about your age, they made this whole silent parade for him, carrying his school photo around on these big crosses.

Isla

What's wrong with that? It sounds sad, but nice. If I were him, I'd live just to see how many people wished I hadn't died.

Jonah

But the picture, it was posed and fake. And no one was talking about how he used to snap girls' bra straps or how he never walked his dog and how he never once thanked his mother. Even though she's the kind of person who carries a picture of her son on a cross for hours through traffic.

Isla

How do you know all that stuff?

Jonah

Well, I don't. But nobody is good enough for a vigil. I know that in my stomach.

Isla

(softly) They won't give us a vigil.

Jonah

We can make our own.

Isla

How?

Jonah

Right here. In the dark, so nobody has to know. We can just... *(pause)* we can just list all the things we wished we had done.

Isla

(drawn out) sex, probably. Maybe painting.

Jonah

I should have gone to the sea more, while we're here. *(beat)*

Isla

Living thirty minutes away from the water is just like living 30,000 miles from it if you never go.

Jonah

We'll be even farther than that though.

Isla

Sex always scared me. Not the touching, but what it would be like after.

Jonah

You talk, mostly. And everything feels warm and muddled and you're just... happy. In the newest, dullest way.

Isla

You can never go back to the way it was.

Jonah

After sex?

Isla

No. After this. We can never go back.

Jonah

We won't want to. We'll just be... quiet. And white like snow. And peaceful.

Isla

I want a good long rest.

Jonah

This will be just like that. A nice long nap. A place to stretch your spine like a house cat and sleep.

Both lay back. Pause.

Isla

People will think we loved each other. They'll think we loved each other so much, so deep down, we couldn't handle it.

Jonah

That's okay. People think what they want to think.

Isla

It's kind of like Romeo and Juliet.

Jonah

No. They loved each other.

Isla

So do we. Just not like that.

Jonah

They loved each other, and love is selfish. They only wanted the other to live so they wouldn't be lonely. Love is needing the other person more than yourself, which is why people do crazy things.

Isla

So you don't love me?

Jonah

No. *(long pause)* I care about you. Which is different and more rare, because I want you to have the nicest things, even if that means I don't get to be with you. Even if death is just a dark cave and we never see

each other again. I don't love you so I won't try to keep you from where you want to go, even though I know I can't go with you.

Long Pause.

Isla

Do you think it will hurt very much?

Jonah

I don't think it will matter how much it hurts.

Isla

Because it will be over quickly?

Jonah

Because it will be too late to change our minds.

Long Pause

Isla

You know that song, the sad one at your sister's going away party?

She picks up his hand and traces it with her finger.

The one that goes (*hums Joni Mitchell's Blue*).

Beat. Jonah sings the words almost in a whisper.

Jonah

You know I've been to sea before

Crown and anchor me

Or let me sail away

Isla (*whispering*)

You have such a beautiful voice. You've always had such a beautiful voice.

Jonah

Anyone can sing if you mean the words.

Isla (*sniffling*)

Your sister loved you so much. She loved you so much.

Jonah

Isla. I-S-L-A. I've always loved your name.

Isla

She would hate this.

Jonah

Sounds like a hand with a hole in it, like falling blue clouds.

Isla

She probably won't forgive me. I hate that she will live her whole life and never forgive me.

Jonah

I think she's still mad at me. For being the little brother she had to take of.

Isla

Your mother is not your fault.

Jonah

Mother sounds like an empty, golden word.

Isla

Your sister took care of you. And she really loved you.

Jonah

She left the second she could. *(pause.)* I don't blame her. She was always too pretty and smart for this place anyway.

Long Pause

Isla

It means island.

Jonah

What?

Isla

My name means island.

Jonah

Like clear blue waves.

Isla

No. Like a held breath. Like a silly dream all covered in water.

(Pause)

I just feel so much lonelier than I used to, and I know that lonely is part of the deal, and I used to think that if I just waited another day, it would break. Like fevers break.

Jonah *(whispering)*

You don't have to do it. You still have a family.

Isla

Sometimes that's worse. I know you don't believe me, but sometimes it's worse.

Jonah

I just feel... guilty.

Isla

It is both of our idea.

Jonah

But I'm two years older. Maybe you should have those two years. Maybe it would get better for you.

Long Pause.

Isla

Did you know Virginia Woolf put stones in her pockets and walked into a river? Sounds so poetic.

Jonah

Isla, I mean it. I'm not going to fill your hands with stones.

Isla (*snaps*)

Do you know what my dad does to me, Jonah? Do you know what he does to my little sister? (*beat*) It's almost as bad as what my mom does (*pause*) nothing. So even if you put a stone in my hand, even if you give me the gun, it won't be the first one I've been given.

Long Pause. Isla stand up and laughs.

I don't want to be sad when I do it though. So, I'm going to put on the most fantastic dress, and do my makeup. And you're going to set it all up.

Jonah (*quietly*)

Okay. Okay. Okay.

Isla turns her back and undresses, pulling a wedding dress out of her backpack. Jonah pulls out two guns from his backpack and loads her gun, while leaving the other empty. He looks over at Isla's naked back, and is nervous, is guilty. Isla turns back around, dressed.

Isla

So what do you think? For a last outfit?

Jonah

Almost as beautiful as you.

Isla

I just thought it would be so sad if I never got to wear a wedding dress. It would be so sad if I never looked the prettiest I could have looked just once in my life.

Jonah

Beautiful, Beautiful, Beautiful.

Isla

I am so glad I met you. I am so, so glad we know each other.

Jonah

So. Now?

Isla

Now you kiss me like it's your last kiss ever and your first kiss ever all at the same time. And then you sing that song again. And then you point your gun at me, and I'll point mine at you.

Jonah (*scared*)

I point my gun at you?

Isla

I just could never do it myself. I'm not as brave as you. You've always been so brave.

Jonah (*slowly*)

Okay. Okay. Okay.

Jonah kisses Isla, grabbing her head and holding her face. They point their guns at each other and hold each other's eyes. Jonah puts an errant strand of her hair behind her ear.

Jonah

I love you. I loved you. I loved you, I loved you, I loved you.

She nods, and smiles, tears down her face.

Isla

One...

Jonah

A beautiful, silly dream...

Isla

Two...

Jonah

All covered in water...

Isla

Three...

Jonah

Drowning.

Two clicks. Jonah's gun is empty. Jonah falls to the ground and Isla looks down at her hands, and at the wedding dress covered in his blood. She begins to sob and holds his head, rocking back and forth, singing the last lines of Blue hysterically, "Inside you'll hear a sigh/ A foggy lullaby/There is your song from me."