

CORYBANTIC

a little thing by Danielle Gallo

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PRONOUNS: she/her/ hers

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CHARACTERS

LIGHT:

female. finds a penny every day. lately, she cannot stop listening to “don’t speak” by no doubt. (remember that band with gwen stefani? where is gwen today? hopefully quarantined.)

JEREMY:

male. thinks regular fruit is better than chocolate covered fruit.

DOC:

wears earth tones and a vest. knew Moses personally. has a pocket watch and a cane.

SETTING

an enormous, opulent, abandoned theatre,

only recently abandoned

old

they like to perform “american classics” there, whatever that means

the graveyard in the back,

desolate now

how fresh are the flowers on the graves?

about as haunting as you’d expect a graveyard behind a theatre to be

NOTES

// means interrupted dialogue

(...) is a pause, beat, or silence

Total darkness.

LIGHT

Oh fuck.

A crash.

Where are the fucking--

The lights of a grand, abandoned old-timey theatre flicker and then ultimately engulf the space with a blinding gusto.

...lights.

Woah.

JEREMY

Damn. This place is huge.

LIGHT

Yeah.

A moment. JEREMY approaches, but before he can, LIGHT springs into action.

Well, let's get moving. See if you can find something soft, or food, or...whatever. See if you can find whatever you can find.

JEREMY

On it, boss.

Rain patters onto the roof of the theatre. As JEREMY searches for plywood or whatever, his attention drifts to the roof.

Good that it's raining.

LIGHT

It's just a drizzle. That doesn't stop anything.

A moment. Then, harshly:

Stop looking at the ceiling. We need to keep looking.

JEREMY

You okay?

LIGHT

Yea definitely

JEREMY

Talk to me.

LIGHT

We....are talking. (...) (...) okay. Let's talk. Um.

What's a.... What's a childhood memory you have?

JEREMY

Oh! Um. Um.. I remember I used to go outside with the neighbors, and catch lightning bugs. We used to pull the lights off of them, and wrap the lights around our fingers like rings.

LIGHT

Your childhood memory, that you decided to share, is about how you murdered bugs?

JEREMY

I didn't know it was, murdering them at the time//

LIGHT

That's kinda fucked up

JEREMY

Light, what the fuck. Why are you making this so...
You are just clearly not okay

LIGHT

Why are you pushing me
Like it sounds like
Like you Want me to not be okay.
I'm actually handling things pretty well, all things considered

JEREMY

Look, if it's going to be the end of times
Or something
Can you at least be nice to me

LIGHT

You have got to be FUCKING kidding me.// Nice to you, after

JEREMY

//I'm only saying//

LIGHT

So you're only saying that your feelings are more important than// the possible end of the world

JEREMY

//Stop interrupting me

LIGHT

That I'm actually trying to
Do
Something

And you're twiddling your thumbs wondering about the pitter patter pitter patter of fucking rain
and talking about killing bugs when I'm trying to Do Something

JEREMY

If this is about Apple....

LIGHT

Of course it's about Apple

JEREMY

I thought we were over this
You said you agreed

LIGHT

woooooahhhhhhhHHHHHHHH

I actually never said those words
I actually never said i agreed

JEREMY

You wanna go back? You wanna go get Apple?

LIGHT

We're already here.

(...)

(...)

Are you making a serious offer

JEREMY

I mean if you need
Really NEED Apple
To be, like, nice to me,
Then yes let's go get Apple
(...)

But I don't know how we will feed a snake while we can barely feed ourselves and i will reiterate
that it is absolutely a public health risk or something to be carrying around an animal at this time
And border security would never even let us through with an animal and a *snake* is not
something you can simply *hide*
And maybe Apple has been sliding around on its own//

LIGHT

his
he's a boy
boy Apple

JEREMY

On his own feces and fecal, matter, and what have you
and like i said before it's dangerous
but ya know whatever we can go turn around and make a four hour journey back home away
from The Plan even though The Plan was to get here as quickly as possible before anyone else
had the idea, the brilliant idea//

LIGHT

It was my idea

JEREMY

To come to the--
Yes, Light, it was your very brilliant idea--
To come to the only place that survived the Great Fire of 17whatever

LIGHT

1794.

JEREMY

but yeah no sure we can go back and make the four hour journey, actually eight hours up and
back, and we can grab your snake and then actually never make it past border control and then
if we do, even if we do, we can arrive here to people who have already camped out, or even if it
all works perfectly, Apple will die because we cannot feed it
(...)

LIGHT

him
(...)

JEREMY

But yeah no sure Light let's get the snake.

LIGHT

I'm hungry. I'm going to have some canned tuna.

JEREMY

I'm sorry, Light.
(...)

I'm sorry. I didn't mean to snap. This has been insanely stressful. I'm still, I'm still grieving the loss of everything. I'm sure you are too. And this isn't easy, being The End of Times and all,

LIGHT

*Distantly, through bites of canned tuna,
and now wandering the theatre:*

Can you please stop calling it that

JEREMY

I will stop calling it that.

I'm only saying, with the fires coming, things are stressful, but I am proud of us for doing something about it instead of just sitting and waiting for it to, like, consume us or whatever. We are Doing Something. And I am grateful for you. To be together on this.

LIGHT

HOLY SHIT! Look what I found!

*LIGHT attempts to drag a Christmas tree out from behind an old backdrop.
It is actually fucking gigantic. Like, a colossal Christmas tree.
Was this in the running for the Rockefeller Christmas tree or some shit? Damn.*

JEREMY

Oh!!! My God!!!!

A childish joy overwhelms both of them. They both drag it out.

A Christmas miracle!!!

LIGHT

We needed this, Jeremy.
We really needed this Christmas tree.
I feel God in this Christmas tree.

JEREMY

(kindly)
Do you even believe in God?

LIGHT

I should check the news.

JEREMY

Must we?

LIGHT

I said / should.

JEREMY

Okay.

LIGHT

Okay, you're right. Let's have a moment with this Christmas tree.

They settle on the floor. Cozy. Together.

The room feels like fresh baked bread for a moment.

Should we light a candle? It feels right to light a candle.

JEREMY

A candle? With a plague-level fire threatening to destroy the planet? How did you even get that past border security?

LIGHT

(pulling a tiny candle out of her bra)

It's snickerdoodle scented.

(...)

Oh come on, what is this tiny candle gonna hurt? Won't it feel powerful? We can't control the fires outside but we can control this.

JEREMY

Fine. Light it. For a moment.

I'm going to check the news.

LIGHT lights the candle.

For a moment,

it is the only thing in the room that matters.

LIGHT

I could watch fire dance all day

JEREMY has a livestream of the news on his phone.

He oscillates between watching and looking at LIGHT.

She is entranced by the flame. Maybe swirls her finger around it.

JEREMY

Fires spread to our town.

LIGHT stops. Looks at him.

LIGHT

Apple

JEREMY

I hope everyone evacuated in time.

They're telling people that if you're safe indoors, you shouldn't let anyone in. Doesn't that seem cold?

LIGHT

Why? What is the danger of letting someone into safety?

JEREMY

Reading an article now. They say that anyone still outdoors carries tiny little ~particles~ of flammable ash material? I don't really get it, this is really technical. But they say that if you let someone indoors who has been outdoors during a fire then you put everyone indoors at serious risk.

LIGHT

I don't believe that.

JEREMY

I don't know what to tell you. These are the experts.

LIGHT

How long till the fires reach here?

JEREMY

Checking.

(..)

Soon.

LIGHT

How soon is soon

JEREMY

It just says soon

LIGHT

But how soon is soon

JEREMY

That's all it says

Can you put out the candle now

LIGHT

Well maybe look at another forecast because that means nothing

And no i don't want to put it out

I am having a Moment with the Tree

JEREMY

I think it is really unwise to have a lit candle right now
Or any candle in fact
When fires are coming here soon

LIGHT

We are inside so we are safe

JEREMY

Maybe. Maybe safe.

LIGHT

And soon could mean like a month you never know

JEREMY

Give me the candle

LIGHT

No

JEREMY

Give me the fucking candle

LIGHT

Absolutely not no never never

This is not a fucking joke this is
our lives at stake

You don't control me and it is my
candle and my snake is dead

A sudden BANG BANG BANG on the door.

Silence.

Silence.

BANG BANG BANG BANG BANG.

JEREMY and LIGHT have a conversation with their eyes.

LIGHT

...who is it

*If JEREMY wasn't silent, he would say
"why the fuck did you just do that." LIGHT shrugs.*

DOC

Hey I thought I heard someone in there

JEREMY

Except that you can't come in. Because Homeland Security strongly strongly strongly advised against it, and I can't put myself or Light at risk. I'm very sorry.

LIGHT

Jeremy. That is a human being outside.

JEREMY

A stranger. Who we don't know, who could be//

LIGHT

//that's redundant to say// because stranger and person you don't know all mean the same thing

JEREMY

//who could be carrying all sorts of debris, flammable materials and ~particles//

DOC

//I aint carrying nothin' but some flowers in my hand//

JEREMY

//Who could put us, and the whole plan, in total and complete danger
Homeland is saying that's the number two risk right now
First is not evacuating
Second is not following their instructions about who goes in and who comes out//

DOC

//Lilacs. Found 'em on a grave.

JEREMY

I'm very sorry, sir. Until Homeland suggests something different, we can't let you in.
(.....)

JEREMY turns on the news again.

We hear a female news anchor say:

"A message from Homeland Security advisor David Macrone: This is a moment of mass panic for the United States, and for the world. We understand your fears and doubts. But please know that our safety measures are put in place to keep you, and all of this country protected. If you haven't yet evacuated, please do so with immediacy. Remember that once you are indoors, no one should come in or go out. Please remember to dispose of all flammable items in our designated collection bins. Try to use as little electricity as possible...."

The sound drones out. JEREMY silently defends his position. LIGHT hides the candle, still lit.

DOC

Well. I'll be outside here if you change your minds.

LIGHT

Is it still raining out there, Doc?

DOC

Stopped raining days ago.

LIGHT

We heard a little drizzle.

DOC

No drizzle. You mighta heard ash falling onto the roof.

JEREMY

(whispered)

Fires should be reaching this area around 4am.

LIGHT

4am.

What time is it now?

JEREMY

Past midnight.

Did we ever find anything for a bed?

LIGHT

No. Found this Christmas tree though.

JEREMY

Well let's keep looking.

*Outside, DOC begins to sing an old song. The kind that sailors sing.
Or people in ancient churches sing. It isn't in English. And he's got a terrible voice.
A moment, as they both listen. Maybe try to distract themselves from it. It is impossible.*

JEREMY

What are you doing?

LIGHT

(dousing her hands with hand sanitizer)
thought I saw some blood

JEREMY

Blood? Are you bleeding?

*He takes her hands in his. There is no blood.
LIGHT continues to rub her hands together furiously.*

Come on, stop it, Light. There's nothing on them.

(...)

Light, stop. STOP IT.

*Across the room, JEREMY's phone suddenly
begins playing a livestream on the news.
He goes to his phone.*

LIGHT

(re: the hands)

Sorry.

(re: the news)

Leave it on.

JEREMY

You want to hear?

LIGHT

No use in hiding from it. It'll happen whether I listen or not.

JEREMY

Connection's bad.

LIGHT

Liar.

What's it saying.

JEREMY

(...)

It might come earlier now.

LIGHT

The fires? Here?

(JEREMY nods)

How much earlier is earlier?

JEREMY

I don't know.

LIGHT

Well then your information is fucking useless//

JEREMY

Can we not get into this again? If I knew, I would tell you.

LIGHT

Why don't I believe that's true?

JEREMY

what?

LIGHT

.....Do you have no regard for human life?

JEREMY

What could you possibly mean by--

Ya know what, Light. I'm done arguing with you. It's late and I want a bed to sleep on.

JEREMY drifts backstage, in some closets, throughout the space, searching for a makeshift bed. Meanwhile, LIGHT draws nearer to her candle. She watches it. She glances at the door. The news drones in the background, quietly. There is the clutter of JEREMY's search.

There is stillness. There is frenzy. There is a buzzing.

LIGHT rushes for the door.

She opens it.

A gust of wind, blowing debris in. She searches for DOC.

LIGHT

Doc?

DOC?

JEREMY

WHAT THE **FUCK ARE YOU DOING**

DO YOU HAVE NO REGARD FOR OUR HUMAN LIVES? YOU FUCKING...

ARE YOU

YOU'RE GONNA GET US KILLED

JEREMY bolts for the door.

LIGHT runs outside. She searches for Doc.

He is nowhere.

LIGHT

(from outside, through gusts of wind)

He's a person too.

JEREMY

YEAH. AND NOW HE'S NOT EVEN OUT HERE. SO YOU HAVE RISKED OUR LIVES FOR NOTHING. YOU ARE SO SELFISH.

LIGHT

(backing further away from him)

You are the selfish one

JEREMY

I can't even hear you.

LIGHT

I said---

All of their words are swallowed by the cacophony of the outdoors. Everything feels like one of those zero gravity rides in amusement parks that you pretended to enjoy because you thought it would make you feel like an astronaut. Why did we all like to push ourselves to the brink of vomiting and passing out for no reason? To feel a little closer to space?

JEREMY shuts the door.

LIGHT runs through the graveyard, scooping dirt into her hands.

Can we even hear what she is about to say over the wind? The debris is encircling her like a vortex. Who is she even talking to?

The sun is covered with ash. Everything looks like a William Turner painting. Look up the word "corybantic" on thesaurus.com. Click on "as in: ireful." The world outside is everything there. The debris performs a wild dance. LIGHT continues digging the soil around her.

LIGHT

somewhere high above her, i write poems about her

theyre velvet poems

flavored like vanilla

laced with melancholy and nostalgia.

i write poems that sit by fireplaces and try to warm cold hands that never quite heat up.

she is buried somewhere deep beneath me in a cardboard coffin

i hope shes just resting but im worried if i leave her too long the dirt will press onto her chest

and her breathing will skip and she'll choke on the weight of it all

my hands are nothing but fog and behind my eyes are little lanterns lit with candles by people who love me

i dont stomp anymore

i float?

i drift?

and i glide across this makeshift graveyard and i use my grey fingers to dig and dig

and the dirt gets beneath my fingernails and makes me feel a little more human
and the dirt gets in my hair and makes me feel a little more human
and the dirt falls down inside my blouse and rubs against my breast in a way that feels like
rugburn but it makes me feel a little more human
and the more furiously i dig the more it feels endless

she could be anywhere, i think.
theres a weeping willow in the distance but there are no flowers. No lilacs like Doc told me
about.
i hope she is holding sunflowers when i find her.

i dont have a map.
i dont have a radar.
all i have left to find her are old memories of joy and color and light that i keep in my pockets
and as my fingers rifle through the deep black pockets of my coat, i pull one out.

i look at it. hold it between my fingers.
its small and delicate and tastes like nectarines and oranges.
i hope this memory knows how loved it is
and i hope this little memory knows how much i wish i had more than a ghost's soul to give to it.
i hope this little memory can feel me digging and i hope it knows how hard im trying and how i
wish on my fallen eyelashes for things to be better.

i place my little memories on the dirt in a big circle around me. it makes me smile for a moment
to see them all lined up, dancing or skipping or yelling or playing. all lined up like little glass
animals.

im hoping that if i line them all up she will come out of the ground. i hope she finds color in her
life outside of the color coded calendar she takes with her everywhere she goes.
i hope i find her soon. i miss her and i just want her to breathe a little easier.
for now ill keep digging i suppose.

*Inside, JEREMY sits by the Christmas tree. He blows out the candle. Carefully.
He listens to the news. They are airing two celebrities, sitting in the studio with their acoustic
guitars, singing "hey jude" by the Beatles. JEREMY feels like Jude today.
He moves for the door.*

*Outside, LIGHT is laying down, making snow angels out of graveyard dirt and debris.
She dreams of snakes. She doesn't weep for DOC.*

*JEREMY opens the door. Is that fire on the horizon?
He calls for LIGHT. The play ends before we know if she answers.
The play ends before we know if that is indeed fire on the horizon.*