

A Ride in the Car in the Morning

written by

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RELENTLESS

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Cast of Characters
(in order of appearance)

HANNAH: 30s. A down-on-her-luck writer who picked up a survival gig several months before the strike. Was a straight A student, but hasn't quite figured out how to overachieve in adulthood. The name matching the author of this play is not, in fact, a coincidence in any way.

**Unless otherwise specified, gender, race, and sexuality of the following characters is all open for interpretation.*

WOMAN / IMPOSTER SYNDROME: Female. Kind of an asshole. Very sure of themselves.

DOUBT: The most unsure person you've ever met. Can't decide on anything.

GUILT: A Jewish Mother. Does not actually have to be female, or Jewish. But they sound exactly like my Jewish Mother. Loves the word "should". Never offers solutions.

PERFECTIONISM / ANXIETY: Looks put together. Completely falling apart.

MEMORY: 40s- 60s. Aloof, always thinking about something completely irrelevant to the current conversation. Can be double cast with Lot Coordinator.

CONFIDENCE: If Billy Crudup is really in this, this is for Billy Crudup. Otherwise, it's a white man, with the brash, enviable confidence of a mostly mediocre white man. (Not that Billy Crudup is at all mediocre... but this is absolutely Billy Crudup)

DEFIANCE: A "fuck you" kind of person.

LOT COORDINATOR: Optimistic and kind. Can be double cast with Memory.

Scene

Los Angeles. Inside and outside a car.

Time

May, 2023. Morning.

Two rows of two chairs center on the stage. The second row is directly behind the first row. The chairs that are side by side in each row are pushed together.

They make our CAR.

The chairs are our only set. *Everything else is mimed.*

HANNAH enters. She's flustered, in a hurry as she turns and locks the front door. She has a BACKPACK, hanging open and slung across the front of her body. KEYS in her hand.

She hustles to the car, opens the car door to the driver side, gets in.

She checks her WATCH.

HANNAH

Ok, ok, ok, ok...

A beat.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

Shit.

She gets out of the car, exits the way she came.

Hannah re-enters, COMPUTER CHARGER in hand. Gets back in the car. She checks her watch again.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

(working it all out)

OK. It's 8:52. I have a work meeting at 11. It takes 45, say 50 minutes to get there from Paramount. 25 to get to Paramount from here?

(she types into her PHONE, purses her lips)

Ok, 30. That means I get there at 9:25. Ish? That gives me... well, I wanna get to work 5 minutes early, put my stuff down. Maybe 10 minutes in case I have to pee, so leave at... 10:05.

She presses the button to start the car.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

Shit. Parking. Gaaah. Why didn't I leave at 8:30?!

She puts the car into drive. Picks up her phone to plug in the address. Stops.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

Is this stupid?

(she shakes her head, types into her phone)

Head that way. You can always just drive past, get right on the 10...

A WOMAN ENTERS. She's dressed in a BLUE WGA SHIRT, IMMACULATE HOKAS, A HAT, A FANNY PACK, and CARRIES A PICKET SIGN. The perfect picketer. She beelines it for the car and sits down.

Hannah jumps, startled. They stare at each other.

A beat.

HANNAH
What... what are you doing?

WOMAN
Getting a ride.

HANNAH
Do I know you?

WOMAN
We're late.

HANNAH
Get out of my car.

WOMAN
We were supposed to leave at 8:30.

HANNAH
It... I know.

WOMAN
Picketing starts at 9.

HANNAH
I know.

WOMAN
I would've been there at 8:45.

A beat.

WOMAN (CONT'D)
(less than patient)
Can you drive, please?

Hannah hesitates but... *grabs the steering wheel. Presses the gas. She drives. As she does, she keeps looking over at the woman, who sits quietly, as though this is perfectly normal.*

WOMAN (CONT'D)
You can just drop me off when we get there.

HANNAH
Oh, I'm going to picket too.

WOMAN
Really?

HANNAH
...Yes.

WOMAN
Don't you have a job? Go around the bike; he's slow.

Hannah carefully passes a cyclist.

HANNAH
I promised myself I would picket this morning. I haven't been able to go yet.

WOMAN
Picket for what? 5 minutes?

HANNAH
No, I've got... Wait, how do you know I have a day job? I don't tell people that.

WOMAN
Same way I know you only sold one movie that never got made; and your "staff gig" was only 4 weeks with no distributor and was never gonna get greenlit; and the show you "sold" wasn't really a sale, it was an option and they changed it to a sale for no extra money so they could kick you off and bring it to other writers, which they never did.

Hannah stares at her.

WOMAN (CONT'D)
Sorry, I'm your imposter syndrome.

**She reaches out her hand, introducing herself.
Henceforth, she shall be known as IMPOSTER
SYNDROME.
Hannah doesn't take her hand.**

IMPOSTER SYNDROME (CONT'D)
We've met many times before.

HANNAH
Why are you dressed in a WGA shirt?

IMPOSTER SYNDROME
Oh, because I'm everything you could've been. But aren't.

HANNAH
But I'm in the WGA.

IMPOSTER SYNDROME
Eh.

HANNAH
What does "eh" mean?

IMPOSTER SYNDROME
Eeh.

HANNAH
Stop that.

IMPOSTER SYNDROME
I mean, I guess you're kind of in the WGA.

HANNAH
I'm not "kind of" in the union. There is no kind of. You either are, or aren't. I am in the union.

IMPOSTER SYNDROME
Yeah, but you, like, snuck in.

HANNAH
How did I "sneak" in?

IMPOSTER SYNDROME
Nepotism.

HANNAH
I'm not related to him!

IMPOSTER SYNDROME
You basically are.

HANNAH
I was his assistant. That's how we met. That's literally the definition of... not nepotism.

IMPOSTER SYNDROME
Eh.

HANNAH
No, no, not "eh." I am *in* the union!

IMPOSTER SYNDROME
Cause of one weird stroke of luck, and nepotism.

HANNAH
I have four qualifying pension years!

IMPOSTER SYNDROME

Congratulations. You need 5.

A beat.

IMPOSTER SYNDROME (CONT'D)

Also that one guy is the only one who's ever bought anything from you.

HANNAH

That's not true.

IMPOSTER SYNDROME

You wouldn't have gotten any of the other jobs without him.

HANNAH

That's how it works! And what about the movie I almost sold? And the deal fell apart? That wasn't related to him at all!

IMPOSTER SYNDROME

Almost sold isn't sold, is it?

HANNAH

I'm a real writer!

IMPOSTER SYNDROME

What do you put on forms when they ask for "occupation?"

Hannah has no response.

IMPOSTER SYNDROME (CONT'D)

Exactly.

DOUBT enters, slumps into the backseat.

DOUBT

(with the utmost levels of depression)

Hi.

HANNAH

(To Imposter Syndrome)

Friend of yours?

DOUBT

Sorry I'm late. I wasn't sure what to wear. Where are we going?

IMPOSTER SYNDROME

To work.

HANNAH

(overlapping)

To the picket line.

DOUBT
(looking out the window)

I donno about this traffic...

**Hannah slows down as she hits the
aforementioned traffic.**

HANNAH

Damnit.

IMPOSTER SYNDROME

Traffic on Highland.
(sarcastic)
How unpredictable.

HANNAH

It didn't say there was any.

GUILT enters, slides into the car.

GUILT

You should've left 30 minutes earlier.

HANNAH

Let me guess...

GUILT

Everyone else is already there. Everyone else has been there for 5 days already, and where have you been? At home? In your nice air conditioned office, making money while the rest of them go broke?

HANNAH

Guilt.

GUILT
(To Imposter Syndrome)

Hey.

IMPOSTER SYNDROME
(To Guilt)

Whattup?

They bump fists.

GUILT

So, picket line?

IMPOSTER SYNDROME

She's only gonna have 15 minutes there.

HANNAH

I'll have 30. Ish. Maybe 20.

IMPOSTER SYNDROME

She has a meeting to get to. For her real job.

HANNAH

Writing is my real job!

IMPOSTER SYNDROME

Is it?

GUILT

Should've left at 8:15... Everybody else did.

HANNAH

You don't know that.

DOUBT

I think that light is turning red.

It is. In fact it *turned red*. Hannah slams on the brakes as the car SCREECHES -- they all jerk forward, then back from the abrupt stop. A beat. The light isn't changing.

GUILT

Shoulda taken a different route. 20 minutes just isn't enough.

Hannah audibly sighs.

HANNAH

Is it really not worth it?

PERFECTIONISM enters, slides in next to Doubt, squishing Doubt against Guilt, who pushes back.

PERFECTIONISM

We have to go to the picket line.

(reciting)

Wake up. Drink a glass of water. Brush our teeth, wash our face, get dressed, do a little movement, which we skipped, and we shouldn't have. Eat breakfast. Morning pages. Set intentions. Meditate.

Skipped that too. Not good. Write for 1 hour. Walk the dog for 30 minutes, though we only did 24, go to picket, go to the 11 o'clock meeting. That was the plan we made. We have to stick to it.

(re: the light)

It's green. Drive.

GUILT

Where are we at for time?

IMPOSTER SYNDROME

NOW she only has 15 minutes.

GUILT

Should've left 40 minutes earlier.

PERFECTIONISM

Did we unplug the curling iron?

HANNAH

Aren't you Perfectionism?

PERFECTIONISM

Oh, I double for Anxiety.

IMPOSTER SYNDROME
(singsongy)

Better drive fasterrrr.

GUILT

Don't get into an accident.

PERFECTIONISM

Does anyone have a plan for dinner tomorrow night?

MEMORY enters, does not get in the car.

MEMORY

Do you remember that time I came in second for that fellowship, and the people who ran it pulled me aside and told me they *wanted* me to win, but I came in second cause the main guy wanted a story about racism, but the guy who told the story about racism was white and he was writing it about a white guy, but he won, and if I had won, I would've written for a month in a castle in Switzerland?

Everyone looks at Memory.

MEMORY (CONT'D)

I just wonder if it would've made anything different.

A beat. Then... a cacophony of noise, everyone in the car overlapping one another --

PERFECTIONISM

What if there's no parking?

DOUBT

Guys, wait, did we unplug the curling iron?

PERFECTIONISM

There's not enough time.

IMPOSTER SYNDROME

You're going to be late to your meeting...

HANNAH
(re: Imposter Syndrome)

I can be a little late to the meeting.

PERFECTIONISM

Absolutely not.

GUILT

You shouldn't do that. They're paying you.

DOUBT
(spiraling)

Memory, do you know if we unplugged the curling iron?

MEMORY

No idea.

**Memory exits.
Imposter Syndrome grabs the phone, starts
typing.**

HANNAH
(re: Imposter Syndrome)

What are you doing?

IMPOSTER SYNDROME

Typing in your work address.

DOUBT

I feel like we moved past the curling iron really fast and I'm starting to panic!

HANNAH
(re: Imposter Syndrome)

But what about the picket line...

IMPOSTER SYNDROME

You were late this morning; traffic is predictably bad. By the time you park and get out of the car, you're only gonna have 15 minutes. You'll eat their free food, you'll take their free drinks. And everyone else will walk around with the friends they have, from the careers they've earned, and you'll walk alone.

**CONFIDENCE storms in. *Opens the front
passenger door.***

CONFIDENCE
(To Imposter Syndrome)

Get out of the fucking car.

IMPOSTER SYNDROME

Fuck you.

CONFIDENCE

Fuck you! Get out.

Imposter Syndrome slumps out, then climbs in the back seat as Guilt gets out, exits.

CONFIDENCE

Go to the picket line.

HANNAH

Confidence?

CONFIDENCE

Good guess.

HANNAH

You're a white dude.

CONFIDENCE

Yes.

HANNAH

Feels on the nose.

CONFIDENCE

Go to the picket line.

HANNAH

Really?

CONFIDENCE

15 minutes, 20 minutes. It doesn't matter. You're a writer. You belong on the picket line.

He types into the phone. Re-directing her.

DOUBT

But her meeting...

DEFIANCE enters, opens the car door on Doubt's side.

DEFIANCE

Shut up, Doubt.

Doubt, defeated, gets out, starts to exit one way, then thinks better of it, goes the other way. Then stops, turns around, goes the other way again. It takes Doubt awhile to decide how to leave.

Meanwhile, Defiance slides in, squeezing Perfectionism against Imposter Syndrome.

PERFECTIONISM

Ouch.

Perfectionism and Imposter Syndrome are trying hard not to touch each other, but it's impossible. They're very uncomfortable.

DEFIANCE

Who gives a fuck about that meeting. Honestly. Is that your career?

CONFIDENCE

No.

DEFIANCE

Do you give a shit if they fire you?

CONFIDENCE

No.

PERFECTIONISM

We give a bit of a shit.

HANNAH

Am I going to the picket line or not?!

CONFIDENCE

Yes.

DEFIANCE

You are.

PERFECTIONISM

Maybe.

HANNAH

I thought Doubt left.

DOUBT (O.S.)

I'm still hanging around!

IMPOSTER SYNDROME

It's not gonna change anything!

Everyone goes quiet.

IMPOSTER SYNDROME (CONT'D)

You're one person. It's not gonna change the negotiations. It's not gonna convince management to come back to the table. It's not gonna change the fact that you haven't worked as a writer in over a year.

DEFIANCE

Don't listen to her.

IMPOSTER SYNDROME

It's not gonna change that you couldn't make a decent living. It's not gonna change that all your friends seem to have figured out careers and yet you had to go get a day job. You are one person, on a crowded line of people who have actually done something, who the studios actually care to lose. So why don't you plug the address in of the only job you actually have, the one that pays your bills and keeps a roof over your head, and go to work.

A beat. Everyone stares at their shoes.

CONFIDENCE

You know... You've been riding shotgun for so many fucking years you don't even remember what it's like to sit in the back seat, do you? Do you know what this strike is about?

IMPOSTER SYNDROME

It doesn't matter.

CONFIDENCE

Yes it does.

(To the whole car)

What's it about? If we go to the picket line and we ask any random person, 'what is this strike about,' what are they gonna say?

A beat.

PERFECTIONISM

It's about survival.

Confidence looks at Hannah.

CONFIDENCE

Yeah. It's about making a living. They don't miss you because they don't know you, yet. *Yet*. And if they did, you have any idea how stupid they would feel? You are brilliant.

HANNAH

That's just something people said.

CONFIDENCE

It's something everyone said. Your parents...

HANNAH

They don't count.

CONFIDENCE

Your teachers.

PERFECTIONISM

Your first boss.

DEFIANCE

Your second boss.

PERFECTIONISM

Your showrunner.

CONFIDENCE

Your friends. Everyone. You think they're *all* wrong, and she's right?

He points to Imposter Syndrome.

CONFIDENCE (CONT'D)

You know the only person I've ever met who isn't sure? You. Now, I'm gonna ask you again, what is this strike about?

PERFECTIONISM

(with the 'correct' answer, again)

Survi-

CONFIDENCE

(interrupting)

I want her to answer.

HANNAH

It's about me.

CONFIDENCE

Yeah. It's about all the people who deserve to be here, who we *need* here, who we're gonna lose if we don't find a way to make sure this career lives on. It's about the fact that if we don't do this, we're going to lose brilliant talents. And to incredible consequence, we're gonna lose stories. Stories that need to be told. Not just yours but hundreds, thousands of stories. Because people have to pay rent. And bills. And buy houses and have families and go on vacation every once in awhile and live their lives. You didn't fail. They failed you. And everyone out there on that line knows that. And they're trying to fix it. Look, you can go this morning or not; either one is ok, truly. But never doubt for one second that that's where you belong. And until you can get there, they're all gonna keep fighting for you. Because that's what a union is.

PERFECTIONISM

This is it. You have to choose now. Left or right?

IMPOSTER SYNDROME

Left, you go to the picket line.

CONFIDENCE

Right, you go straight to work.

Hannah takes a deep breath in. She holds it for a moment, then breathes it out slowly.

Imposter Syndrome gets out of the car, and exits.

Hannah's still breathing out.

Defiance gets out of the car, and exits.

Perfectionism follows.

Hannah closes her eyes. She's almost out of breath.

Confidence puts a hand on her shoulder, and climbs out of the car. He takes one last look at her before he exits.

The light turns green.

CUE: HONNNNNNNNNNK

She turns left. She drives in silence for a moment.

Pulls up to a parking spot. Stops.

The LOT COORDINATOR enters, carrying a box. Goes to the driver side.

LOT COORDINATOR

Hello!

HANNAH

Who the fuck are you?!

LOT COORDINATOR

The... lot coordinator.

HANNAH

Oh. Sorry. I thought... Sorry. Long drive.

LOT COORDINATOR

It's no problem. Are you here to picket? You can't park here, but there's a few spots just ahead.

HANNAH

I don't have a lot of time.

LOT COORDINATOR

That's ok.

HANNAH

I was supposed to be here at 9:00.

LOT COORDINATOR

That's fine.

HANNAH

I have to leave at 10:05. I have a day job.

LOT COORDINATOR

Which union are you with?

HANNAH

WGA.

LOT COORDINATOR

Shirt size?

HANNAH

I can only stay 15 minutes.

Lot Coordinator hands Hannah a BLUE WGA SHIRT from the box.

LOT COORDINATOR

Only have large anyway. Park up ahead. Check in's over there. Grab a sign on your way.

Hannah stares at the shirt. **Lot Coordinator exits.**

HANNAH

Signs are where...?

She looks up, but Lot Coordinator's gone.

HANNAH

Thank you.

Hannah pulls up. Gets out of the car. She pulls the blue shirt over her head. Puts her backpack on. Imposter Syndrome enters. She has TWO SIGNS this time. WGA ON STRIKE.

She hands one to Hannah. Smiles at her.

CUE: Honking in the distance. Union chants over megaphones. Captains directing people off the streets and onto sidewalks.

Together, they walk.

Lights Down.

END OF PLAY.