

A COLLECTION OF SHORT STORIES

STORIES OF THE ROAD

LYCÉE EVARISTE GALOIS

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LYCEE EVARISTE GALOIS 2019-2020

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Together

Mathilde Lohmann

Have you ever felt the need to be free? To be able to live your life as you see fit? Maybe not but it was the case of Aria Holt and Carrie Floyd. They were two young women who lived in a small town near Springfield, Illinois. They have known each other forever and were best friends but time has changed things. They started dating a few months ago. Obviously they started by living hidden: it was not well seen at all at the time. Unfortunately for them, their respective families discovered it. Aria and Carrie suspected they were going to react badly and it was the case. After consulting each other, they left for California via Route 66.

One summer morning, they left their tiny town in Illinois with two bags and a few essentials as luggage. They each left a letter to their families explaining everything: their relationship and the reason for their departure. They omitted the place where they were going so that no one would come to pick them up. Their letters ended with an apology and an "I love you". It was a complicated choice to make but they knew it was for the best.

So they left with Aria's Cadillac. Carrie took care of the music while aria drove. They already felt freer; they had finally gained their independence. No matter what could happen on this road, it would be happy because they were together. They knew the journey would be long and exhausting but they felt happy and free and that was all that mattered to them. They had agreed to stop in Riverton, Kansas. So that's what they did after a long 7-hour drive. They decided to spend the night in a small motel that didn't look like much but was within their budget.

Every day they repeated this pattern, then stopping at Texola, Oklahoma, Albuquerque, New Mexico, and Antares, Arizona. Their trip went off without a hitch and they felt freer and freer as they got closer to their final destination.

They still had 7 hours to go before finally being able to put their luggage in Los Angeles. They were so excited to be able to start their new life, together.

They therefore left their last motel on Route 66. They drove, drove, drove for miles and hours that seemed like days. Their excitement lengthened time. After 7 new hours on the road, they finally arrived at their destination: Los Angeles. Their beginnings in this city were inevitably a little complicated but little matter while they were together.

They ended up finding a job and a house after staying at the hotel. They had new friends who gradually became their new family. They had finally found their freedom and above all, they had what they had always wanted: to be together.

Spark

David Meuriot

Joe was just an ordinary farmer, giving life the best he had as he worked as hard as he possibly could to feed his parents who owned the place. They were very poor, and Joe had never bothered them in any way, he wouldn't ask for anything on his birthday and he was always kind and helpful towards them. So when he turned 18, they decided to spend the money they had been saving up for all these years to get him the gift of his dreams.

Joe's dream had always been to get his own car, and he wanted it as fast and as slick as on those tv shows he used to watch when he was a kid. His other dream was to go adventuring in this dream car, ride it into the sunset to wherever it would take him, and he especially wanted to take the one and only mother of all roads, that sat a few miles north from their farm, the mythical route 66. So when he finally got gifted this car, a flashy, slick black, jewel of a vehicle, he couldn't contain his excitement. It was a masterpiece, yellow and orange flames curling up the sides, the shadowy tinted windows, it even had a sunroof.

But as everyone knows, life is unfair, and so upon getting this wonderful gift, Joe's parents both died in a horrible accident on the farm, something to do with machines and very dangerous herbicide products. After this, Joe would never talk about what had happened to his parents ever again, and the farm he had always lived on now gave him nightmares, so he left, in the last memory he had of his parents, Spark. He gave his treasured car this name because to him it represented the glimmer of hope, the spark that he needed to light the fire of his dream of adventure. And so he set off, leaving everything behind him, engine roaring in the silent barren lands around him as he tore up the road, a spark in the distance.

As he left the outskirts of Chicago on the famous route 66, he couldn't hold back the nostalgia of leaving his home, where he had always lived with his parents. This was the first time he was going outside Chicago in his entire life, so this was a new step, a new life. He was stuck halfway between two things; the sadness of leaving his parents' graves behind and everything he had known, but at the same time excitement was building up inside of him as he put his foot down on the accelerator and shot up the road. He was now on a new quest, a quest of adventure and discovery, he was going to find a new life in Los Angeles, and he only felt that the right way to forget everything he was leaving behind was to go all the way to the end of route 66, as a kind of ceremony. He'd been driving for a few hours now in the hot weather, the brilliant sunshine bouncing off the windows. There was a small breeze and as Joe kept going, he put his sunroof down, switched the radio on and revved the engine. He looked like quite the American stereotype, tearing up the road windows down, music on full blast, sunglasses glimmering in the light. His head bobbed up and down to the rhythm of the music as the car scurried along, almost swinging in time to the music. Joe just couldn't stop thinking about the new places he would discover, the new people he would meet, the new foods he would taste. As he entered Tulsa, Spark was running low on petrol, so he pulled over at a gas station on the side of the road to fill her up and get going again. As he stood there filling the tank up, he just couldn't stop himself from admiring the scenery, the city that stretched all the way into the horizon and thinking about what exciting things there must be to do over there. But as he hopped back into shotgun, he cleared his mind and refocused; his goal was Los Angeles, the end of the road, the Santa Monica Pier. He had heard so many great stories about this place, how wonderful and colourful it was, the many different things there were to do like the ferris wheel and much more. Joe started the engine and the radio up again and shot out of the gas station, back onto the road and into the sunset, because it was nearing the night-time.

As night fell, and the world grew dark, Joe pulled over to the side of the road and prepared to sleep. Route 66 wasn't very busy, so Joe rathered sleeping in his car more than renting a hotel room for the night. He wound his sunroof down and gazed up into the starlit sky overhead, exactly as he used to back on his farm. This sure brought back memories and Joe thought about his parents once more, but this time in a good way, as if they were up there in the stars watching over him. On that note his head rolled over onto the end of the backseat where he was lying, and he slowly dozed off to sleep, dreaming about freedom and his new life once he would reach his destination.

After several more days of driving Los Angeles finally came into view. Joe drove the last few miles and entered the city for the first time in his entire life. It was exactly as he had imagined it, a massive town, beautiful shops, parks, restaurants everywhere. He could even see the beach, and he had decided he would live here somewhere close to the beach. Back in Chicago he had lived on the side where there was no beach, so he didn't see it often. The air smelled of sea salt and cooked food from the little food stalls scattered along the seaside. He drove on until he reached his final destination, still bewildered by the sights. When his parents had died, the money from the farm that had been sold went to Joe, and so he set out to find himself a new house to live in. As he drove past, one of the houses caught his eyes. It was a beautiful little house, not very big, but beautiful. He parked outside and walked in. A beautiful lady was standing there, probably an estate agent, and he asked her if he could have a look around and if she would show him round the house. She answered that she would be delighted to do so, and so she showed him the house from top to bottom. Joe loved it and instantly knew that he had found the place he belonged, and maybe even someone to live with, another spark to light his life.

Diary: Step Into The Unknown

Nivashini Kugaseelan

A young 26-year-old girl called Anastasia just came to accomplish the word dream that she dreamed before. She was a well-known mental therapist and a clever full businesswoman. She decided to start her dream life like what she always wanted.

Her past inside her was a way too rude over her and it wasn't what she wanted. She decided at the age of 18 to take over her life by herself. She placed some goal during her life and forced to achieve them. After accomplishing and settling down she placed another goal. Before getting inside that non stoppable lifestyle she wanted to step inside a wild vibrant adventure. She wanted to feel alive and that her first experience should be on the breath-taking Route 66.

It was a sunny day Anastasia and her best friend Elle arrived at the Chicago airport. They took their baggage and placed it in their hotel. They rented a Ford Mustang GT car for a huge long drive plan. They took their baggage and put it in their Mustang. Anastasia took a big inspiration and said, "It should be the beginning of more adventure like these". Elle responded that this is what we always wanted! Building our proper life without any opinions of families or other persons and enjoying it in our way. Those two girls where in their car ready to celebrate their freedom. "Freedom" was an important word for them as much as the word dream. You are maybe asking that why does those girls wanted to achieve the same goal. You guys have to know that these girls actually met at the age of 12. Some mad coincidence made this meeting happen. Those girls were actually meant to be friends. At the age of 12 to 15 each of them where suffering mentally by the strictness of their parents. They have got a similar culture with deep and strict rules they have to follow. They were no one to talk about those problems they faced.

They met on a tuition and found themselves as deep good friends. They couldn't meet every-time but for them one day in a week was enough to spend time with each other. They both crazily had the same dream but the most powerful one was the wish of freedom.

They never got time during their childhood to teenager to spend time with their friends to dress the way that they felt. Every single move was controlled. One day those girls just wanted to take their life on hands, and this where started theirs goals. On their way to the highway which takes to their Route 66 they felt that unconditional freedom. They knew that this day was meant to be the beginning of their thousands and thousands future adventures. They arrived at that historical road a smell of the hot dessert came throughout with noises coming from the other tourists. What they felt at the moment wasn't a simple feeling as tourists. What they felt at the moment was so precious, after long and stressful studies they got the opportunity to make a pause and live day by day. Even if that long road was abandoned that road was familiar to those girls. For those girls that road have got a magic soul which can appease their wild freedom feeling. And then began the endless trip. Anastasia and Elle were wearing the same outfit with a red bandana. While Elle was driving the car Anastasia was smelling that wild vibrant air through the ray of sunshine passing through her black sunglasses. After two hours of driving Anastasia took the drive and that's gone for another long ride into the unknown. This long unknown road is the representation of their life. They don't know where it will take them into and before getting into it nothing than a fresh test on this symbolic road!

The Crew

Melissa Laraba

“Let’s do some last-minute check”, said Leila, “Food, water and snacks for the first hours?”

“Check!” shouted Jeremy.

“Done with the playlist Rudy?”

“Yep, it’s all good”

“And Kiara, you have the journal and all the cameras?”

“Present and accounted for”, she agreed still lost in her thoughts.

That journal was the road trip’s purpose; without it, there would have been no fun. Six months prior, at their local coffee shop, when the crew was brainstorming activities to do and places to visit, Kiara had the brilliant idea to reproduce pictures she found online, and also pictures that their parents took when they road along Route 66. Therefore, they collected old polaroids, many photographs of diners, gas stations, wild landscapes, beautiful sunsets and so much more to make a sort of mood board, that would become a diary when they would insert their recreated version. Kiara put the journal together, since she was the only one who could magically make things look good and aesthetically pleasing; Leila looked for the locations of all the spots that still existed, and Rudy and Jeremy went on a chase for all sorts of vintage camera devices and one day, they ended up buying a retro yellow van on the way home.

It was their first night on the road, and the crew was having a peaceful and fun hang out. They settled somewhere in the state of Oklahoma, and were gathering around a campfire, singing while Jeremy was playing the ukulele, laughing and remembering little moments they shared since third grade.

“Okay, let’s play truth or dare”, suggested Rudy.

“Oh come on, we literally know everything about each other, so there’s no fun in that game”, said Leila, uninterested, “let’s play would you rather instead!”

“I’m in”, agreed the artsy gal’, “and I have one for you”

“Hit me.”

“Would you rather lose the ability to read or lose the ability to speak?”

“Oh my, I didn’t think you’d hit me that hard”, she said with a shaking tone. “If I had to choose thought, maybe lose the ability to speak, because I would still be able to learn things, and I could turn all my motivational speeches into books so it’s all good for me.”

“Okay, okay, it actually makes sense.”

“Here’s one for Rudy”, announced Jeremy, “would you rather break up with Kiara and never hear her talk about art-”

“Hey, not cool man” she interrupted.

“I mean you do talk about it a lot”, Rudy bounced back with not much confidence.

“Are you trying to tell me something or what?”

“No-”

“At least let me say the other half of the question then finish your lovers’ quarrel”

“Yeah totally, sorry” replied Rudy and Kiara simultaneity while looking at each other.

“I was saying, would you rather break up with Kiara and never hear her talk about art” he purposely paused and looked at Leila, who was trying to hide her chuckle.

He could read on her lips the words I am loving this.

“Dude you trailed off, for God’s sake just spit it out!”

“Right... or have no consequences to your reckless actions for the rest of your life, like forever.”

“That is a fun question, thanks for your input”, said Leila sarcastically. “Small suggestion: you better give an answer quickly.”

“Well”, Rudy began, “not being yelled at, nor getting in trouble for the careless things I do takes all the fun out of it, and I love Kiara no matter what, even if she’s annoying sometimes.”

“I am not going to comment on that last thing you said but I love you too”

“Great save Rudy, you have my respect” said Jeremy proudly.

They kept playing and having a good time, and then they called it a night.

After multiple gas fill ups, changed tiers, unexpected encounters, pictures taken, laughter, drama and countless miles of Route 66, the crew was arriving to their final destination: Los Angeles.

"Here we are everyone, we are entering L.A at last", announced Leila, while they all started screaming of excitement, louder than the blasting music on the radio. "Let our adventure begin".

"Oh Leila, you're such innocent little girl" replied Rudy

"Wait what? Why would you say that?"

"The adventure has begun the second we turn the engine of the van the first time back in Oklahoma. Don't you think we had the craziest time of our lives just on our way here?"

"He have a point there" agreed Jeremy, then added with a tone full of disappointment: "And it's hard for me to not say something cheesy right now about how it's not about the destination but the path you take to get there."

"Jokes on you, because you just did."

"Kiara, what a devastating burn! Who have you become?" commented Rudy looking her proudly.

"So I guess we can just say let our adventure continue then?"

"LET OUR ADVENTURE CONTINUE!" the crew shouted as they entered the city of angels

The Ghost Town of the Ribbon Road

The Ghost Town of the Ribbon Road. That was how we called it until this event. Until all disappeared...

All began in a lost corner of Oklahoma. It was a fabulous night in a preposterous house of a joyous mouse named Cornelious. In reality, Cornelious was not happy. He wanted to live a peculiar adventure. His life was so flat. He wanted more. So he left his house and began to walk. He knew neither where to go, nor where to sleep, but he didn't care.

The way was arduous. He started to be hungry. His legs didn't want to go further. He began to lose hope... for him the end was close. Then suddenly, his hopeless eyes were attracted by a mysterious billboard. "Do you want a new marvelous life? Follow the road of yellow brick, you'll be not disappointed!" narrates this miraculous billboard. His legs didn't want to even take a little ludicrous step, but his head took the place of them and moved forward on the road of yellow brick... until he found a humorous house. He was curious. But anxious. So, before to go in, he climbed and spied through the narrow window. The mouse discerned obscure furniture. An old and flat bread was rotting on a horrible table. Cornelious was nauseated. When suddenly, a human form with wall eyes arose from the dark. Cornelious brutally jumped of the windowsill. He thought he was going to have a heart attack. When he heard the door opened. The little mouse rapidly hid his eyes with his hands. Steps sounds got louder and louder, closer and closer. His hands, very frightened, ran in the pockets of Cornelious' jacket. Leaving the poor mouse's eyes facing the stranger.

"I can smell it... I can smell your wish... Your wish of a new life...of adventure...", whispered the strange lady. She noticed the scared eyes of our little Cornelious. "Oooh, don't be scared, my dear, come in, come in!". Uncertain Cornelious entered in the tainted house with uncertain steps.

"Sit down, darlin", said the weirdy lady. Cornelious, in awe, sat down on a chair which was about the size of a mouse.

"I will give you a mission, uhh... what did you say your name was?", said the lady.

"I didn't", answered the mouse. "I...I'm Cornelious".

"Good, Cornelious, I'm Gilda Farcy, so I'll give ya a mission, it is the only price to pay...". Cornelious agreed.

"Well... I have had a son, a sweet son, but a day, I didn't know why, I didn't know how, he joined the O.W.L (Oklahoma Wicked League), one of the most atrocious order of dark magic in the USA. And I want you to stop him to do a serious mistake... You know, I had a husband. But unfortunately, he left home when Alastel, my son, was born... And then, every day was the worst, I was so poor, I had nothing, to raise my son was so arduous... So... when he was 10... I abandoned him" told Gilda, tears in her eyes. Cornelious remained mute.

"And, since, he wants to take his revenge... he wants to curse all of my family... he ... he wants to kill us". The last sentence froze the mouse's blood.

"So... you want me to stop him, to protect you and your family..." requested the little mouse.

"When I saw you earlier, I knew you were the Chosen One for this... I saw your power... oh! And, I offer you a town, a town for you, it is your reward ahead of time..."

"What is its name?" asked the mouse.

"The Ghost Town, the Ghost Town of the Ribbon Road. You know where this road is, nah? You live near it. No matter, so it is there that your new life will start!"

When Mrs. Farcy was talking, Cornelious spotted a snake coming slowly. Cornelious was afraid of snakes. So he jumped from his chair and started to tremble.

"Missssss, I finished to... oooh! Who is this delicioussss mouse...?" asked the snake.

"Our Savior", declared Mrs. Farcy.

"Omg... Omg! Stay away from me! He breathed rapidly; who are you?" asked, terrified, Cornelious.

"I'm Azariousss, Azarious the ssssnake".

"And he will accompany you in your adventure, added Gilda, oh! It's getting late! You have no time to lose! Good luck!"

"Mrs. Farcy, I... I'm not sure I will..." but the mouse didn't have the time to finish his sentence that he and the snake were teleported to the promised town of Cornelious.

"Woooow..." said the mouse, amazed, surprised.

"Yes, she's a witch. A fortune teller and a witch, learned Azarius to Cornelious. And his son too, he can know what his mother do... and everything that can harm him".

"So he knows. He knows about us." Wondered the mouse.

"Let's think noooooo, and....".

"You're wrong, idiot". This time, it was Azarius who was interrupted. Our two heroes turned around, sloooowly. They were petrified.

A hooded man in levitation, was standing before them, a negative force was emitting from him.

"Alastel..." thought Cornelious.

"How...?! He's sssso fast!!" thought Azarius.

With a diabolic laugh, he said "You thought, you, vicious animals, that you could get away from it, isn't it? his tone became aggressive, this is MY business, mind your OWN business".

"What you are and what you will do is so cruel!" yelled Cornelious.

Alastel laughed "Hahahaa... I know...".

"I will not let you do that", affirmed the mouse, determined.

"Oh? You play at that? So you'll regret it, my dear..." said Alastel, a snide smile on his face.

The dark man placed himself in the middle of the town. It was the beginning of the end... of the catastrophe... Cornelious smelled that...

"I have no choice, little rat" terminated Alastel.

Obscure forces appeared, they rose from the darkest darknesses. Then suddenly, all became so powerful that Cornelious fainted. At his awakening, he discovered his town, destroyed, annihilated, turned to dust... His new life was destroyed. But all is never finished. He just had to carry on, carry on the road. With the snake who finally became his friend. And they walked, on the Ribbon Road, in search of a new life.

Adventure of a Lifetime

Maylin Tran

It was the story of a young man who was about to realize one of his greatest dreams. That young man's name was Tyler Rode. Tyler had a pretty complicated life and had been living for six years with cancer that was ruining his life. He was eighteen years old and living in the big city of Chicago with his family. One day, on yet another control visit to the city hospital, Tyler learned some horrible news. He had had a very difficult time since he was twelve years old, but what his doctor had just told him was leaving him speechless. Tyler had gone through several remissions but his cancer was still there, he was feeling pretty good physically but his doctor's diagnosis had told him otherwise. Tyler was going to die in a few months, he had about six months to live.

Tyler's mother was the most devastated by this unexpected revelation. She was not ready to accept this fate for her son, but Tyler no longer had the strength to fight the cancer. The disease had already taken a lot of energy from him. He no longer feared death. He was ready to accept what was going to happen to him, but he only had one thought in mind; to live fully these last few months and to make his dreams come true. Tyler had few friends, an overprotective mother, and he had only traveled a few times in his early years. So he had a thirst for freedom, adventure, discovery. He wanted to find out who he really was. His biggest dream was to take the great highway 66 and travel across the United States, admiring the beautiful scenery. Despite his parents' reluctance, his adventure was beginning. Tyler wanted to hit the road to California where he had always dreamed of a vacation. The beautiful city of Los Angeles was his ultimate goal, but he was at a dead end. His mother wouldn't lend him their car and he didn't want to be accompanied. This trip was to be an escape and a release from an invisible weight. Tyler decided to leave alone overnight and hitchhike across the different states lines on Highway 66. He wasn't worried because he knew that many families were using The Mother Road for their vacations. After leaving his family and everything he had known since childhood, Tyler hit the road and began his journey on foot. He was in Illinois and he was trying to find people to go a little way. He ran into various families on the way to the vacation, they were all cheerful and happy.

After a few hours of walking, a bright blue car with sunlight slowed down near Tyler. The driver was a beautiful young girl with long brown hair and a bewitching, piercing look.

"Hi, I just wanted to see if you needed any help, you seem a little lost and tired," she said as she watched Tyler.

"I'm looking to go to Los Angeles, could you take me there?" he asked.

"I think this is your lucky day because I'm going to Los Angeles to join my family for the holidays. Come on up..." She insisted that he introduce himself.

"... Oh sorry, my name is Tyler, Tyler Rode" he replied with a slightly intimidated smile.

"And I'm Maia. Nice to meet you, Tyler, but get in before I leave without you," she retorted, laughing.

Tyler got in the car and their journey continued. Maia was the same age as Tyler and was being nice and cheerful. Tyler told her his story, the reason for his trip, and they got to know each other. Maia was used to traveling on Route 66 and had promised Tyler that she would show him the most beautiful places on that road. Tyler watched the endless road and seemed curious and admiring of his surroundings. He also felt vulnerable, but the sense of freedom that was growing inside him erased all his fears. Night was beginning to fall and after several long hours of driving, Maia decided to stop at a motel for the night on the border of the state of Missouri. Tyler was directly surprised by a gigantic statue of a man at the entrance of the motel.

"It's a Muffler Man, you'll see there are several on display at the entrance of motels, restaurants and even gas stations," Maia said.

The statue, several meters high, welcomed the customers in a certain way. So they spent the night in this motel and set off again the next morning at dawn. Tyler then witnessed a magnificent sunrise over the stretch of road and landscape. They drove all over the state without necessarily stopping because Maia didn't want to waste any time but Tyler felt a little lost while observing the different cities because they were actually completely different from Chicago with its tall buildings. In his eyes, he was finally discovering the immensity of the world and he found it splendid.

He admired the scenery, the motels, the people on the road and had fun laughing at everything and anything with Maia. In these moments of escape and discovery, Tyler seemed to forget his illness and he had never felt so alive and free. Maia decided to stop in Oklahoma City to get gas and some food as he was going to spend the night on the road. Oklahoma City was a big city and the atmosphere there was cheerful and lively. Tyler was feeling pretty out of place since leaving Chicago but the trip to Texas was a total change of scenery. The locals seemed proud of their land and their history and culture was fascinating. Crossing the border into New Mexico, two worlds were at odds with each other. On one side the great plains with the cowboys and ranches and on the other side the native populations and the mountains. You went from one culture to another in a split second. Tyler was charmed by New Mexico and especially the capital Santa Fe where art had a great place. The historical monuments and ancient churches gave the city its charm and authenticity. The more advanced the trip, the more Tyler was eager to explore. He had always felt like he was locked in an invisible cage, but now he felt capable of the impossible. Despite his physical fatigue due to cancer, his mental strength was growing as he finally felt fulfilled and full of life.

Before continuing on the road, they stopped at a diner, Roxie's. The sign of the diner was huge and with the neon lights you could see it from far away. Tyler walked in and sat down on a pale blue leather bench. He was struck by the atmosphere that reigned in this place. Many families had also stopped by and the atmosphere was jovial and warm with music in the background.

"...And go take that California trip, Get your kicks on Route 66," Maia sang. She loved that song and all she wanted to do was get up and dance.

After this wonderful meal where they met a nice family, they decided to watch the stars and spend the night in the car. The next morning, the two friends drove back on Route 66 because it was soon in California. Tyler fell in love with Arizona and the vastness of the desert. He felt so small in front of the huge hills and the desert that the road crossed.

"It's breathtaking Maia, I've never seen this before," Tyler said in awe as they drove through the canyon.

"Don't worry, Arizona and its desert always does that the first time," she replied humorously.

After several days of traveling the United States, Tyler had reached her goal. Passing through Needles and Barstow, Tyler and Maia finally arrived on the Pacific Ocean coast. They got out of the car and headed for the Santa Monica Pier. Tyler was facing the Pacific Ocean and was overwhelmed by the beauty of the place. All they had to do was reach Los Angeles, but this was already an achievement for the young man. He had experienced more on this trip than he had in his entire life and he felt an immense joy overwhelming him. Tyler had never wanted a new life and had always accepted his illness and his fate, but because of this unique and rewarding journey, Tyler knew who he was. He had realized one of his greatest dreams and the satisfaction and freedom he felt meant everything to him. He took Maia in his arms to thank her for all she had done for him.

"Thank you Maia, not only for having brought me here but also for having made me discover places that will remain forever engraved in my memory," he said, moved and already nostalgic.

"You want to make me cry or what! Our journey isn't over yet Tyler and I still want to show you Los Angeles. You're gonna love it."

They got back in the car with great enthusiasm.

"Let's gooooo!" they said, by slapping each other's hands.

Jack's New Life

Luc-Van

Hello dear readers, I will let you know the story of my freedom, everything started the day of the new year...

My name is Jack Ellong, I was 21 years old and I lived with my mother and my father, I had a little sister but she died 2 months after her birth from a rare illness. From that day, my father started to be drunk all the time and he was beating my mother sometimes. My life was awful, when my father was angry he beat my mom and she became angry then and she was mad about me, her own son. I couldn't leave the home and my parents were watching me all the time. The relationships about love weren't allowed and I couldn't invite or visit a friend. My parents chose that I would be an engineer later because they said that it's a job which earn a lot of money and I would be able to help them because my mother was a simple nurse and my father a hand worker. They were poorly paid. However, I didn't want to be an engineer and I already explained them that I'm born to be a journalist. They answered me that this job was like a coinflip and it was only based on luck.

So, in the new year of the year 1958 to 1959 I was in the living room saying goodbye to my grandparents which were invited to the party. I was left alone with my parents but just a moment before I went to my bedroom my father punched me and he screamed "you little bastard, you don't speak so much during the night. I want you to be nice in front of my parents, don't smile like a freakin' rat". Then, he dropped on the ground his third bottle of wine of the day. My mother continued, "I hope you'll die like your sister, I hope you'll follow our orders. We're your parents we command you, don't try to disobey your father or me. You're punished, tomorrow you won't be able to get out of your room.

I was astonished, it was so aggressive and I knew that they weren't loving me, I knew that they wanted me to be their puppet. I couldn't endure that again and I chose to flee my home ! I took, while my parents were sleeping, my driving license, a lot of food, a spare tire which was in the cellar, my pillow and a knife because I didn't know what could happen.

I saw my parents sleeping, I cried during a second and I left the house through a window. I was starting a new life, I had the feeling of freedom, I was free, I won't be trapped again. I jumped in my father's car and I started to drive to embrace my new life.

I lived in America in the city of San Bernardino but I didn't thought about where I would go. I just wanted to be free and to live a normal life alone or with a friend. I didn't know where I was going but I knew how. I wanted to take the road 66, a lot of friends told me that it was an amazing road and that everyone should have at least travelled it once. The car was already full of gas so I decided to take this road and finish it, I wanted to take my time and I believed I would meet people which would like to help me. At first, I started the trip and I entered the road. It was really great, my car was a Chevrolet offered to my parents from my dead aunt. I opened the windows to feel the wind, it was dark because we were in night time but I had the fog lights to see in front of me. It was weird to understand that I was alone and that I left the people which wanted to keep me forever. Nonetheless, I felt myself free to go and free to move. It hadn't sleep since yesterday morning but I was feeling energetic and happier than never before. The tires were making a happy sound, the music of the road the one of a new life. I chose to not reveal my identity and to be an other guy from now. I was Mike Taylor, a 23 years old man and an itinerant worker who was looking for a job, my father and my mother died in a fire two years ago and now I'm on this road to make some friends and have a job.

I stopped my car in a gas station which was looking great and I went to a shop exceptionally open for the new year. They were some people which were making a party together. I joined them and I met a police officer named Roy which was stuck here since 10 hours but nobody came for him because everyone was celebrating the new year. He said to me that luckily he had any family but he wanted to make a party with his friends. None of the people here was going to the road again and they wanted to sleep at the motel after being totally drunk or exhausted. He told me that he chose to stay here until tomorrow because he needed someone, one of his tyres burst.

It was maybe not a great idea but I presented my false identity to the policeman and I proposed him to come in my car and to make the trip together but he refused because he was really tired and he asked me if I wanted to sleep at the motel with him, he had two bed in his room. I accepted and I followed him 15 minutes later to his room. We spoke together, he asked me a lot of questions to know my personality, he took a shower and he easily fell asleep. On the other side, I was thinking about this day, I left my whole family, I had a new friend which was a police officer, I have a fake life and I'm sleeping in a motel of the road 66. It was a dream but I needed more feelings to really appreciate this trip.

The next day, I washed myself and Roy asked me if he could join me in my car and went to Chicago with him. Of course I accepted and he put a kit in my trunk in case of an accident and we continued to drive on the mythical road 66. We made some breaks and I took a nap after eating at noon. During the afternoon I heard that my parents were looking for me in the radio and I faked that I wanted to sleep to cut off the sound. Mike, the police officer was very nice with me, he bought me the newspaper of the day and the food, at 4 P.M. we made the third break of the day to fill the gas of the car, this time it was my turn to be nice and I spent my money in it. I had some economies, so I wasn't worrying about it but I didn't know how many time I needed to spend on the road. Then, I left my car stopped near a shop to go to the toilets and I came to the seller of the shop to buy some cookies. The trader was strange, he told me "little kids like you, always got trouble, funny, really funny hey" then he made the transaction with my food and the money. When I get out of the shop, a girl of my age whispered me "Watch out on the road !" and she went to her car. I was upset and dizzy, I didn't know what to think about them and I kept questioning myself I didn't know what happened. I came to my car and I saw that the trunk was nearly open like if someone have touched it and I remembered that I didn't close my car with the keys. When I looked inside, nothing had disappeared, it was strange, I knew something happened but I didn't know what. Next, I waited for Mike in the car because he stayed in the shop to call his friends to explain them the situation. He came back with some cookies and he said "Hi buddy, I knew you liked it so here we go I have some" and he continued " I found the seller weird, he said me that I can be a police officer but I still can get trapped".

I explained him that I had a strange feeling about him and his sentence and I didn't know why but I thought that we would have a problem soon. I just finished my thoughts and I heard a big noise, the car became uncontrollable, the steering wheel was almost useless, I made a big move on it to the right and our car stopped next to the barrier of the road, we didn't crashed but when we get out of our vehicle to see what happened we saw that our left tire was holed, I thought that a rock could've make that but I had a strange feeling at that moment. Mike asked me if I could take my spare wheel and his kit, I was surprised when I took the kit because I saw that the wheel disappeared. It wasn't there, someone stole us. I knew that something wrong happened and I was stupid to not have checked if the car was alright before we went on the road again. Mike said "I think we're 2 kilometers from our old break, the man of the shop was weird, he maybe did something can you check out please or I can do it if you want but one of us should keep the car and the other should buy another wheel.

Then, a Mustang stopped next to us and a girl went from it. She was the strange women who whispered me at the gas station. She said that she can help, she proposed me if I wanted to go to the gas station with her and Mike said that it's maybe the best idea. I accepted and I came in her car. She was strange, she asked me who I was and I presented my false identity and she answered "You think it's smart to hide your identity, I don't think so, I think you're lying because I know that you're lying to me ? Don't worry you can trust me". It was maybe a mistake but she had a special aura and I magically trusted her, I declined my true identity, I explained that I left my home, my mother and my father and now I'm fleeing but they are also looking for me in the radio and she said "Hoooo I understand everything now". I was wondering what does she was speaking about and I noticed that we missed a gas station and I asked her why she didn't stop and she said this : "You got trapped, I'm helping you to flee. You're not safe from your parents now. Your burst wheel was not a coincidence. The man with you did that, he dropped the spare wheel and called his friend at the police, he recognized you and wanted to catch you. We will flee together, here we go to Chicago men YOUHOU !".

"My name is Lily" said the strange girl. She expected me to don't be dirty in her car because she didn't like to wash something but I wasn't listening to her, I could only remember that Mike trapped me and that I was fool enough to have been caught by him. My new life wasn't like I wanted and it was a bad start. Lily told me to forget everything and that if I wanted to make a new happy life I needed to stop thinking about the bad moments and to forget my whole family and all of my old memories. However, I was surprised and I felt sick after thinking too much about everything that happened since the new year but Lily became very nice to me. She took an hat and she put it in my head, she said "Hey, I thought that I could enjoy this trip with you, we're on the road 66, it's a dream for everyone to cross this path. So, I understand that it's a bad day for you and I was stupid to not have understand this. Nonetheless, we have our entire life in front of us we're young. It can be a grandmother sentence but we can make everything and this means that we're the masters of our choice, we control what we do and we trick the other who wants our liberty. The hat that I gave you is the hat of my grandmother you know. She was an excellent lady and she loved speaking like I just do to encourage people. One day, she got shot by a policeman when she was helping an innocent beggar. You can say that the reality always catches us but I will say that today's life is not real, we're in our imagination. We're making what we want, it can be a dream or a nightmare it's your choice. Screw the reality !".

I was so sorry for her past and I understood everything of what she said. I took the hat and I put it in her head and I answered "Okay, this hat also means kindness and this is your personality so you must keep it. Me, I will continue this trip with you we'll make amazing things until Chicago, you know I'm selfish and I always say "I" because I can always think about me. I'm doing that because I'm looking for a new life and for a new spirit, I don't know which way of life I must choose but I want to be like you, someone who know what he wants to do and who can be enjoyed by the others and not a sheep who admires the stronger." Those sentences went quickly out of my mouth and I felt freedom. I accepted what I was, someone looking for something and I couldn't die before I found the right personality. I saw in her face a smile and I knew she was proud and I felt strange, I was really happy so I smiled too.

It was those short moments which make you enjoy life and which help you to stay alive and to not let the bad feelings taking your body. It was those short moments which don't last a lot of time because less than 10 seconds after my smile, we heard at the radio an announcement of the police. They were looking for two young adults who had escaped them. They said that we were on the road 66 and that they asked everybody to not take the road, they will cut it to make a blockade.

I didn't know what to do and I saw that Lily was thinking about something but I knew she didn't find a plan. I proposed to stop at the next gas station, if they stop us at the end of the road we won't have time to go there before the police of Chicago we were too far away. It was maybe the end of the trip... or... maybe.... we can try something. It had a crazy idea but it was the road 66 and if the police closed it we didn't know how they were controlling the circulation with the big amount of cars on the road. I thought that they were just watching the number plates and people inside. It was a big bet but we could try, I talked about my idea to Lily but she became a little bit sad she explained me that she couldn't be separated to her Mustang, it was everything for her, it was a gift, furthermore we couldn't steal someone's car because it was bad but she finally agreed. She said that we needed some new clothes and also that she will pay someone for his car so I gave her all of my money to not be thieves. We hadn't to take a lot of time in this gas station but the negotiations were long, a lot of people disagreed but finally someone did, he was strange like everyone that I encountered in this trip I think. He looked behind his car and he said "Ok pay me and I give you the keys", the deal was done and I jumped in the car but Lily said that she had to do something before. I saw the man of the deal, he was old for sure, he had white hair, a dirty shirt and I couldn't forget his big elbows. He was looking at me for a long time, then he laughed. I was astonished, definitely everyone was strange on the road 66, or maybe it was me, maybe I wasn't living my real life.

Lily came back and she started to drive faster than never before, we were chased by the police, we didn't see them but if they cut the road at the end they will try to follow us to catch us. Now we had a new car and new clothes, we both had sunglasses and a new hat for me with another costume. We drove during a lot of time and we saw a lot of police's cars on the road but we were smart enough to not be trapped. Then, Lily asked me if the old man was strange, I answered that they were all strange but him, he was looking at me straight in my face during a long minute. She just said "Alright I knew it, we have to stop and prey". I asked her what she wanted to do but she didn't answer, she stopped the car on the right side of the road, she got a drill and she took off the number plate to put an other one, she put the plate of her Mustang. She did it very fast but when she put the drill in the car trunk, we heard the police. She jumped in the trunk and she screamed me to drive as fast as I could. She ran to the passenger's seat and she placed her seatbelt. We didn't know if they saw us or not, we didn't see them so maybe we could make something with the roadblock at the end of the road. 20 minutes later, the radio announced why I was sought. My parents said that I was a murderer and that I could do anything to make what I wanted, my mother said that she tried to contain my bad side but she failed. Of course it was a lie and Lily didn't ask me anything she just smiled after the message and she changed to a music channel.

It was the night and we arrived at Chicago. But first we had to pass the roadblock. I tried to hide my face as much as I could because Lily explained that the old man denounced us to the police and he knew the number plate of his car, this is the reason why she had to change our plate. I had to take off my sunglasses because it was strange to have them during the night. When we got to the last obstacle I had some bad goosebumps because I saw Mike. He exceeded us while we were dealing at the gas station. They were looking for the people inside the cars and their number plate, I hoped that he didn't look at the Mustang plate when Lily came to help me fleeing. Lily advised me to hide myself behind her seat but it was too late and they could have seen me because of the windows.

When it was our turn, I saw Mike approaching and he looked directly at my face, then he analyzed every detail of Lily's face, finally he looked at our number plate. He came back to us and he said "Hello Mike it has been a while !". I panicked and I took an accent of London and I said "My dear Mister we're only two rich people in vacation can you look more precisely at my face please ". So, I put my head out of the left window of our car because I was still driving and when he was closed enough.... I punched him and I drove immediately, he screamed to his partner to not let us go but I didn't care, I went directly into the police cars and the other cars on the right. They were a gap between them, I took it and we were still on the road and we weren't caught but the cars began to move and to chase us. I chose to be lost I drove very fast and I took a lot of intersections and mysterious roads. At the end I didn't know where we were. Lily didn't say nothing during the end of the trip but when she saw that I was lost she took the driver seat and she drove during an hour. Finally she said "I'm happy that you're not caught you know but this policeman didn't deserve your fist in his face. I don't know if it was the only way to not be arrested but you'll need to apologize. However, I think that you acted great, I know Chicago a lot so don't worry I know where we are. We're coming to the house of my parents.

The danger was still there I knew it but we went out of the road 66 and now it would be hard to find us. I think that they would easily find the car of Lily, then the house where she lived which was where we were going. Nevertheless, my heart was free, I had those new feelings inside me. I made something that saved my life and maybe the one of Lily and I had to find a solution to be far from danger. Before, Lily saved me a lot but now I had to not be an obstacle for her. I had this idea which was to make a postcard to my old family, I started writing and while the minutes were going my hand was writing alone, I had not one idea but a lot, I made a plan going on only one letter. I wrote that I would marry one of the richest woman of the country, that her family got her own castle. I made a long paragraph on everything that I could give if they let me alone and I promised that if I marry this imaginary woman I'll give at least 10 thousand dollars per month.

Then, I wrote that they could have a lot of money if they sell everything about me in their house, that they won't have to pay for my studies and that it'll be worth it. In exchange of those letters I wanted them to say at the police station that they made a lie, I persuaded them that there were a lot of people lying in this world and that the police officers won't do anything but just telling them to not do it again. I showed my letter to Lily and she laughed, it was again, a really good night on the car. During the path going to Lily's house. We stopped to post the letter, Lily read it and agreed to send it. We arrived at the house of Lily's parents and we felt asleep without waking up her mother and her father. The next day we met each other, they were very friendly and nice with me, I lived in the guest room of their house during a week before another letter from the police station of Chicago. After reading this piece of paper I was so happy, they explained that my mother went to the police station of Los Angeles to say that they lied and that they had no son, it was stupid to say that because she finished in jail with my father for having perturbate the circulation and lying to the police. I got the confirmation that I was free now and with the letter they were a lot of money from my parents after selling the things that I had in their house, I would soon be able to buy a house. When I said it to Lily she proposed me to live together so I accepted. After that, she smiled and she kissed me. She said "You were already free before the letter".

(The Unbelievable but true story of how she, escaped from rehab, Twice! (or the quest for liberty in the scent of a new life))

Emmanouil Logiadis

The sun was setting upon the small town of Little Rock, Indiana. Its golden aura was enchanting this dull void of a town, erasing all traces of its unique nothingness. It was a small boring town where nothing ever happened nor will ever, a town waiting to be swollen by nature.

But just just over the city limits was a rehab center for the narcotic addicted, the lost souls, those who were sent there to obtain a second chance and restart their lives. The center, called "flowering gardens" or "lowering gar ens" as was written in the entrance, was a beautiful white 18th century building with a big garden full of ex-users trying to canalise their "destructive" urges into something creative like gardening or painting.

Few minutes after the town's church's bells rang 6 'o clock a red convertible car roared across town and stopped in front of the rehab center. A tall man in his mid-twenties wearing a colorful flower shirt, a yellow bucket hat and golden shaded sunglasses came out of the car, lit up a cigarette and waited. He stood there for a little over 3 minutes when a young woman in her late tens came out of the building holding a little round medallion with the number 30 engraved on it. The woman left the center almost dancing with joy for leaving hell behind her and finally being able to relive life.

She walked up to the man and upon his sight she started laughing
"S'up Raoul Duke, seen my brother?" she said not being able to hide her laugh. The man, irritated, removed his hat and threw it on the ground.

"That's the thanks I get for driving down here to get your ass? Now, give your old brother a hug, who missed you so much" he added. She hugged him and when she saw a nurse getting out she rushed into the car and whispered loudly

"Get in the fucking car and go, NOW, GET IN". He got in and drove off as fast as he could.

Once far away from the center he asked her angrily: "What happened back there? Why did we leave in such a hurry, Mia?"

She didn't know how to answer the question, she couldn't tell him the truth but couldn't lie to him either. She opted for silence, a silence that would say it all yet nothing, a silence that would tell him the truth while lying.

He didn't accept silence as an answer, he hated these "says nothing but all silences", he asked again, "You mind telling me what happened back there, or should I drive back to find out?" The threat was too big for Mia, months of elaborate planning would go down the drain in an illegal U turn. She tried to think of a lie to maskarate it as the truth, she hated the nurse or she was framed or she was messing with him. She couldn't find one. So she had to tell the truth. She knew that there was not a single possibility that his reaction would be positive or somewhat understanding. But she had to, it was the least she could do for the last peace of her escape puzzle.

So she began telling "The Unbelievable but true story of how she, escaped from rehab, Twice!"

"It all began two years and a few overdoses ago". The "s" at the end of that word made his heart skip a beat and almost crush the vehicle on the multitude of cactuses surrounding them.

"OVERDOSES? PLURAL?" he screamed, scared of an event that could have happened in the past but didn't, scared of something that he couldn't even make into words in his own mind.

"Yes plural, my dear Paul, plural, now shall I continue or would you like to discuss in more detail how I could have died far far away from you, so far that you would learn about my early demise years later by a stranger on a foreign land?" she said calmly with a hint of mockery, completely unbothered by the morbid subject of her own death.

"So as I was saying", she continued, "It was a long time ago that I was brought in that fine brainwashing establishment against my own will or at least the one that was left untouched by the heav-diabolical substances I was tricked into taking".

Paul brutally interrupted her, "Oh please, cut the crap with me, I know you are not that innocent victim you try to make me think you are". She glared at him and went on telling her story.

"So I was sent there after a few tiny tincy accidental, totally involuntary and definitely not my fault overdoses. Now, as you can guess your rebellious little sister wasn't thrilled about the idea of a dull sejour in this blood thirsty institute. So I tried to leave, but I forgot that I didn't have in my possession a tiny but essential metallic object called a key and since I'm incapable of ripping a hydrotherapy foundation out of the floor to throw it at the cage window I couldn't simply escape, it had to be more elaborate."

"You seem proud of your little plan" said Paul with a disapproving condescending tone.

"Of course I am" quickly responded Mia proudly of her accomplishment. "Why wouldn't I be? I escaped from Shawshank, TWICE! not a lot of people can say that. You know, you should be proud of your little sister, she might be the first and only person to do so."

Paul kept looking at the road as they joined Route 66, his disapproval was so big, he couldn't look at her. Mia didn't care, she was free and proud of her achievement. Unbothered, she continued telling him her masterplan.

"So, as I was saying, it had to be something more elaborate. I observed during my first days as a prisoner that there were two ways of getting out of there dead or sober, and neither were an option. For the next few days I was rehearsing my "I'm so sober" role until I saw it, I saw the way to heaven and out of this purgatory. It was the night guard, he was the most corrupt son of a-I've ever seen. But I was broke, so I had to find different ways to seduce him".

"LALALALALALAAAAA I don't want to hear this" he interrupted her knowing what she was going to say and definitely not wanting to hear it.

"I didn't sleep with him! What do you think I am? I made him an offer he couldn't refuse, I made him think that I was and when he was near me, I knocked him out with a frying pan. I stole his keys and because I couldn't simply walk out of there I broke in the nurse's room. He didn't have the key so I had to break the door."

"Please tell me that by hearing this I am not going to be an accessory to a crime." said Paul.

"You are the worst audience ever, when I told this story to normal people they applauded me and called me an American hero. You should do the same."

Paul started applauding ironically and added "Bravo, bravo, what a plan, you should make a movie out of it" he turned his head to the road and stared at the road with intense fury.

" I know you're being ironic but I'm too proud of myself to stop talking about it. So, as I was saying, I broke in the nurse's office. From there I had three more obstacles to face. The guards at the gate, the gate itself and one lousy, annoying, stupid, hateful, plan-wrecking dog. In order to bypass these obstacles I had to be smart. And given my intelligence it wasn't difficult. So I dressed as a nurse which would get through the guards. But the gate doesn't open with just a key, you also need a card, which as you can imagine I didn't have. So I had to improvise, and the super-talented person I am, did so in an oscar-worthy performance."

"Let me guess, you cried so that they would feel awkward and let you through" said Paul.

Mia went on telling her story as if she didn't hear him. "I approached the gate and acted as if I was looking for something in my purse and when they approached me starting to doubt my identity I sniveled. Upon the sight of my tears they asked me what's wrong and in a mesmerising performance I told them that I can't find my card- " Paul smiled a bit when he heard what she did, it reminded him of the little girl who grew up with and made him forget of the drug-addicted evil mastermind she had become.

"-and they let me through. I was almost free, I only had to face the final obstacle, the dog. See this dog wasn't big but it was annoying, it barked at everything that moved that wasn't a nurse or a guard. So it had to be put down or it would blow my cover."

"You killed it ?!" said Paul, worried.

"I wish! But I didn't take enough sedatives from the nurse' s office. So it fell asleep, or in a coma, I don't know the right dose, I just stabbed it with a needle full of drugs. Once this son of a bitch was down I was free. Free to escape this dull world and find freedom in the comfort of narcotics."

"I thought you were broke. Where did you find the money to buy drugs? " asked suspiciously Paul.

"Let's say that I have some good friends who were there to help me in my time of need."

A long silence followed for dozens of miles until something stopped making sense in Paul's mind.

" Wait a second, it's a rehab center, not a mental institution for the criminally insane, why would you be so heavily guarded?"

"I see you are interested in my story" said Mia

" Well I mean the radio is broken and I don't have any cassettes in here so there is nothing else to listen to." said Paul not wanting to admit that he was taking an interest in her story.

"Well lets say that I wasn't with the other patients or at least the ones who were in there for the same reasons as I was due to a minor incident."

"Minor?" asked Paul knowing she was hiding something big.

"I may, may, have not been super happy to wake up in there and may, may, have bitten an ear off someone all while trying to set myself free." said Mia with an innocent smile.

Paul braked so hard that the car derailed off the road.

They had to push the car back onto the road, luckily for them the car had taken no serious damage. Once the car back on the road Paul started yelling at her.

"YOU BIT SOMEONE'S EAR OFF? WHEN DID YOU BECOME THIS MESS OF A DRUG ADDICT SELF-DESTRUCTIVE PURE EVIL?"

None of the words pleased Mia so she responded in the exact same way.

"WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY DRUG ADDICT? WHAT, YOU THINK THAT I SPEND THE ENTIRE DAY RIDING HIGH TO THE SKY? JUST BECAUSE I FIND HAPPINESS IN THE FREEDOM THAT THESE SUBSTANCES PROVIDE, IT DOESN'T MEAN IT IS ANY DIFFERENT THAN THE SENTIMENT YOU GET WHEN YOU TAKE ROAD TRIPS WITH YOUR FRIENDS OR WHEN YOU SMOKE YOUR STUPID CIGARETTES. THE ONLY DIFFERENCE IS THE SOURCE OF THIS THRILL." screamed Mia tearing her voice.

"What happened to you? You were this sweet little kid so smart that she could have been everything she ever wanted." said Paul filled with sadness watching the depth of his sister's fall into the abyss of drugness.

" You really think it's a mystery how I became who I am today? Don't you remember mother's little helper? the little yellow pill, where do you think it all started? It wasn't at school, it wasn't in Vegas, it was right in our house. I was three the first time I saw her pop a pill for the first time, she made me think it was normal. Don't blame me for being what I was made into." said Mia mad.

" Oh please, I saw the same things as you did, stop blaming others for the addict you became." Paul responded.

"I-AM-NOT-AN-ADDICT. I don't get high because I need to, I get high because I want to. I can stop if I want, but I don't. I feel free when those drugs hit my system, I feel liberated from the dullness of regular life, I feel happy I feel pretty, I feel good I feel free. You are so biased, you have been smoking cigarettes non-stop during this ride. You talk to me about addiction when you are Joe Camel himself. Don't act like you aren't like me. We were both fucked up in our own different way. I do drugs, for fun!, you, you have your own issues." said Mia.

" You almost died, multiple times, I didn't" responded Paul.

" IT WASN'T MY FAULT" yelled Mia.

"Not only it doesn't make any difference, how can it not be your fault?" countersaid Paul.

" Well if you want to know I have a friend who isn't the smartest branch there is and he has a history of confusing drugs. So when I thought I was eating normal highly processed food while being high I ate acid and when I thought I was doing cocaine I was sniffing heroin. Not my fault." said Mia in her usual innocent tone. But naturally it didn't calm Paul. On the contrary the word heroin triggered him.

"You did heroin? What's next in your junkie life, move in a heroin house and spend the rest of your life stabbing yourself until your entire body is rotten?" said Paul crossing one too many lines.

"Fuck you" cried Mia, "This is what you think of me?" a short pause followed.

"If you want to know, I have been clean for over a month. Go on tell me how bad my situation is, how I am an addict all while smoking your way to chemo. Don't act like you are better than me when you are in fact worse. Do you know why I called you to come and get me and not a friend? I called you because I am going to LA to start over. I got a few auditions and I will try to restart what is left of my life. I called you because you were the only one I know who wasn't going to push me back to square one. Back where I was actually an addict, something that I overcame months ago. Boy was I wrong. Who knew you would be the one to do so." said Mia holding back tears. Paul didn't know what to say, he was so ashamed and disappointed by himself he couldn't speak. This long awkward silence followed them all day long. As it was getting darker and darker they stopped to rest at a motel. The motel had only one room available so they had to share. The tension was so uncomfortable that Paul ended up spending the night in the car. He couldn't bear the thought that he could push her to do such a thing.

The following morning they left early hoping to reach LA that night. As they reached Arizona the radio started working again, probably fixed upon impact with the cactuses. The tension filled silence went on until Paul had an idea on how to put an end to this unpleasant situation and maybe make her feel better.

"Want to tell your second escape?" asked Paul with a little smile on his face.

"No" said Mia, still mad.

"Please, how will I be able to brag about my little genius sister, who escaped Shawshank

twice, if I can't tell the story?" asked Paul, teasing her a bit.

"Quit it I won't tell you." said Mia smiling. She couldn't stay mad at him, he was her brother and the only person she had left. She had a little secret that she didn't tell anyone. She may not have been the only victim of these mix-ups but she was the only survivor. She had already lost a lot because of her past mistakes and she couldn't afford to lose more.

"Come on I want to know." said Paul.

"Ok Ok I'll tell you." said Mia hiding her smile by acting as if she was doing him a favor. "So the second time I was sent there I was a bit more cooperative but not too much, well I was a hint more cooperative, actually scrap what I just said I wasn't cooperative at all. The only thing that would make me seem more cooperative is that I didn't mutilate a part of the staff, which is an improvement. Again only two options of getting out dead or sober but only this time there was no corrupt guard, no way of breaking in the nurse's office and no way of getting out. I think it might have something to do with my previous escape but I am not quite sure. So I decided to play it sober. But it is a bit difficult, even for a person as talented as I am, to do so in a clinic armed to the teeth with drug tests, surveillance cameras and guards who will not let you out of their sight. Upon realisation of the impossibility of such escape I realised that I had to sober up."

"Wait if you were actually sober why did you escape and again why did you hide from the nurse?" interrupted Paul in a way that made things somewhat normal again.

"No questions from the audience please, I'll get there when I get there. So as I was saying I had to sober up. But as easy it may be I had no intention to do so but I didn't have a choice. So I sobered up. And I did well, started painting and playing music, but the feeling wasn't the same. The bars were always there, nothing could make them go away. I tried planning my future, hence the auditions, but it wasn't enough, I felt trapped. I had to get out. So I speeded up the process. During the night I changed a few files and found myself in the list of patients who were ready to get out. Two days ago was the final ceremony where they give us these little totems to congratulate us for killing a part of our soul. I went there, did the whole "I am sober and remorseful" act, took the token and left. But once I was out the nurse saw me and chased me knowing that I wasn't supposed to get out. And well you know the rest." Said Mia ending her story.

The rest of the ride was very pleasant, they chitchatted for hours, talking about what they have been up to all those years they had been apart. Mia felt for the first time in a while truly happy.

She was sober, or not addicted at least, she had a clear future ahead of her and was surrounded by people she truly cared about. She was feeling free, there was nothing but the world in front of her, nothing dragging her down, nothing there to destroy what she achieved. For the first time in years that freedom was not only not produced by chemicals but it was also accompanied with a future, a future she could only have in a new life, 2,732.9 miles away from home, where everything started. For the first time in her life she had hope, hope that this feeling wasn't temporary and that it would last more than what drugs provide. It was Hope for Freedom in her new life.

She carried that feeling up until the very last moment, when a few miles away from LA, just outside of San Bernandino a dark car with broken headlights driven by a drunk driver crashed into their car killing them both instantly.

