

A CHARCUTERIE BOARD OF HARD CHEESE

Written By
Gabby Zemaitis

EXT. HOTEL - SIDEWALK - DAY

A family of four walks down a sidewalk that runs against a six lane, busy intersection. They carry their belongings; pulling along their suitcases, backpacks over their shoulders, and a single box fan, the electrical cord drags behind them.

They look tired, their initial annoyance of the events of the week having worn off. They're only barely functioning now.

They approach a worn down hotel.

EXT. CAR DEALERSHIP - PARKING LOT - DAY

The family of four stands alone in a parking lot with their BROKEN DOWN VAN.

TRISH, the elder daughter, around fifteen years old, looks annoyed.

ANN, her mother, puts an arm on her shoulder and leads her to the their broken down van. The trunk is open.

ANN

Come on. Let's grab what we can.

They approach the trunk and JOHN, the father, who masks his worry for the sake of his family, goes to hand off a guitar case to Trish.

TRISH

Don't want it.

JOHN

You sure? Might be bored without it.

A small car pulls next to them. The family pauses their rummaging. This is their shuttle to the hotel.

It seems like it'll just fit the four of them and trunk space seems minimal.

DRIVER

Y'all the ones that needs the ride?

Trish raises an eyebrow at her father. He purses his lips, nods, and returns the guitar to the trunk of their van. Instead, he hands her her single backpack of belongings.

The family approaches their ride. ELISE, the younger daughter wheels a giant suitcase behind her. She's eleven and seems completely unbothered by their situation, much to the added annoyance of her older sister.

The driver doesn't get out of the car to help with their bags, just pops the trunk for them. Ann hands the box fan she was hugging over to John for him to pack into the trunk.

She shoots him a look. He hesitates.

The family of four squeezes into the car. John, the father, takes the passenger seat. The driver looks at him expectantly.

JOHN

Just go ahead and drop us at the
closest hotel, I guess.

ANN

(pointedly aimed at her
husband)

Preferably a nice one.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

We cut to the night before to a run down motel room where the family was forced to stay at after just having broken down.

The furniture is way outdated and the walls are permanently stained yellow from cigarette smoke, a crooked picture frame shows off the obvious discoloration.

The lock clicks and the door swings open. It hits the wall and reveals the family of four, their mouths agape as they take in the room they'll be staying in.

Elise is visibly uncomfortable. She pulls the hood of her sweatshirt up over her hair, tying the strings as tight as they go. She begins to pace, scratching at her arms.

Ann makes a beeline for the beds and rips the comforter and sheets off. She manically skims for bed bugs.

Meanwhile, John places one of their bags on the ground next to him. He notices something has caught Trish's eye, who points at the curtain next to her.

TRISH

Is that... Blood?

John meets eyes with his daughter and some sort of an understanding passes between them.

JOHN

Don't show your mother.

END FLASHBACK

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY

The family enters a hotel room.

Ann places a hand on her chest as she looks around.

ANN
(relieved)
Oh, thank God.

Still, Ann stops them before anyone can move away from the door. She repeats her bed bug check from the night before. She's much more calm this time around.

She ignores the looks her family gives her when she finishes tucking the sheets back under the mattresses.

ANN
Better to be safe than sorry. It's
always the nicest ones, you know.

The family begins settle. Elise, somehow still stuck with the heavy suitcase, drags it across the carpeted floor and leaves it at the end of one of the beds.

Trish drops her own bag on the bed she'll be sharing with her sister. She sits down next to it and pulls out her phone.

John motions out the window.

JOHN
I'm going to go see if I can grab
us something to eat.

There's a GROCERY STORE across the street that they can see from their room.

JOHN (CONT.)
Seems like a close enough walk,
yeah?

ANN
Seems like it.

JOHN
(to Elise)
Want to come with me, kid?

ELISE
Sure.

JOHN
We'll be back in a bit.

Trish barely looks up from her phone as she waves goodbye.

Ann picks up the television remote and begins to flip through channels.

ANN
Be careful.

ELISE
We will!

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Hours have passed when the hotel room door finally swings open. John and Elise enter. They're covered in sweat.

ANN
(concerned)
Where have you been?

John tosses two grocery bags on one of the beds and Trish immediately dives for it.

Elise clutches a loaf of bread when she sits down on the bed next to her sister.

TRISH
Seriously. We're starving!

John points back out to the window to the grocery store that they had just returned from.

JOHN
It's way farther than it looks.
Didn't take into account the six
lane intersection we had to cross.

ELISE
Or the five miles of parking lot.

They are traumatized.

Trish holds up the contents of the grocery bags. Other than the loaf of bread there's two family sized bags of chips and lunch meat.

TRISH
This is it? What about breakfast?

She and her mother make eye contact. Ann rubs at her temples.

ANN
There's a diner across the street.
We'll check it out in the
morning... For now, hand me those
sour cream and onion chips.

The family settles around their hotel room: Trish and Elise sit cross-legged on their bed, Ann on hers, while John sits in the chair he pulled up from the corner of the room.

While spirits were previously low, now that the family enjoys their dinner together they seem relaxed.

Elise and Trish compete to see who can catch the most chips in their mouth. Eventually John joins in, while Ann laughs at her family's antics.

At some point this is interrupted when Ann's phone begins to ring.

ANN
It's the mechanic.

This catches John's attention, but the kids continue to eat and goof off among themselves.

ANN (CONT.)
(into the phone)
Hello?... Yes... The torque
converter? Never heard of it but
okay... A recall? But, we never got
a letter...
(voice raising)
No, sir I can assure you we never
got the letter... Oh, you don't
BELIEVE me...? What do you mean you
won't give us a rental car?!

The volume of Ann's voice catches Trish and Elise's attention.

With her mother still yelling over the phone, Trish stands after she pushes the crumbs off her pants.

TRISH
I'm gonna go shower. Does anyone
need the bathroom?

Her family is too engaged in the argument they're only able to hear one side of. When no one responds, Trish slinks off to the bathroom.

ANN
(still arguing over the
phone)
How long until you can get the
part?... FIVE DAYS! What are we
supposed do WITHOUT A RENTAL CAR
for FIVE DAYS?

EXT. DINER - SIDEWALK - DAY

The next morning, the family is on their way to the DINER that sits across the street from the hotel they're staying at.

John wasn't exaggerating when he said that they had to cross six lanes of traffic.

We see the family as they run across the intersection, landing on the side of their destination. They catch their breath before they enter the diner. John holds the door open for his family. He follows.

Rather than follow them in, we cut to the next scene:

INT. HOTEL - POOL - DAY

After breakfast we see the family as they hang out at the indoor pool. Somehow they're the only four people there.

Elise is in the water with her father. Trish sits on the edge of the pool with her feet in, while her mother sits in one of the lounge chairs and reads a book.

Ann puts the book down when she notices her phone ring once again. The noise catches the attention of Trish, who looks over her shoulder. At her mother's sigh, she has a feeling that this conversation is going to be similar to the one from the night before.

ANN

No sir, I still haven't received the recall letter. I'm stuck in a different state, can I ask how you think I would have gotten a hold-

Trish notices that her hunch was correct and pushes off of the edge of the pool. She submerges herself under the water.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Ann sits on the hotel bed. She eats another lame sandwich while Elise and Trish lay in their bed. They share the bag of chips that sits between them, their attention on the television.

John exits the bathroom. His hair is wet from the shower he just took and he's in his sleep clothes.

JOHN

At least we get to shower in an ACTUAL shower, huh?

ANN

Ugh, don't remind me. I still can't believe we rented that nice house, just for the plumbing not to work the whole time we were there.

TRISH

(shrugging)

I think I'm more excited about actually being able to flush a toilet.

ELISE

"If it's brown flush it down, if it's yellow let it mellow". I hope I never have to do THAT again.

The family shares a laugh.

EXT. DINER - SIDEWALK - DAY

This is the next morning.

Again, we see them run across the street to avoid the on coming traffic as the light turns green, though they start to slow down before they make in to the sidewalk. John holds the door open once again and his family enters.

The repetition of their time stuck in the town should be obvious.

INT. HOTEL - POOL - DAY

This time Trish and Elise are in the water together. They're still the only people in the pool, so they use the opportunity to race back and forth from one end to the other.

Ann dries off with a towel as she approaches her husband who is sat at one of the tables.

There's a silence between the two of them as they watch their kids swim.

JOHN

I don't now how much longer we can stay here.

ANN

Hmm.

JOHN

I think we might only be able to afford one more night here. If I had known...

ANN

We couldn't have. We'll figure it out. Maybe find a cheaper hotel.

JOHN

(nodding)

Yeah... That's probably for the best.

They turn back to watch Trish and Elise.

JOHN (CONT.)

They're handling this well though, huh?

ANN

Yeah they are.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Everyone settles into bed for the night.

John enters the hotel room and the door shuts quietly behind him.

JOHN

I talked to the front desk. There's a hotel down the street we're going to move to tomorrow morning. So, you guys gotta pack up when you wake up, okay? We gotta be out of here by noon.

TRISH

Okay. We'll be ready.

She turns over, ready for bed.

EXT. HOTEL - SIDEWALK - DAY

Now, we're back at the start of the screenplay, but this time with context.

The family of four walks down a sidewalk that runs against a six lane, busy intersection. They carry their belongings; pulling along their suitcases, backpacks over their shoulders, and a single box fan, the electrical cord dragging behind them.

They look tired, their initial annoyance of the events of the week having worn off. They're only barely functioning now.

They approach a worn down hotel.

Ann tugs at the cord of the box string and pulls it up so it's no longer dragging.

ANN

(annoyed)

I CANNOT BELIEVE they didn't give us a rental car. We have GOT to look ridiculous.

Trish turns her attention to the cars that pass.

TRISH

Oh, we definitely do.

ELISE

(suddenly)

OW!

Trish looks down at the ground at her sister's outburst. She's stepped on the back of Elise's flip flop, hard enough to have torn it. Elise is left with half of a broken flip flop.

TRISH

Oops. Sorry.

Elise shoots her the stink eye, but continues on her way. She tries her best to hop as to not let her nearly bare foot touch the ground.

Not long after, we see them approach the new hotel.

INT. NEW HOTEL ROOM - DAY

The family enters their new room. It's not as modern as the last one and the tacky flower comforters are back.

Ann doesn't have to warn her family to not get comfortable when she checks for bed bugs this time -- they just know.

Just as she gives them the okay, her phone rings once again. She closes her eyes and takes a deep breath.

ANN

(to her family)

No yelling this time.

(into the phone)

Hello?... We're doing fine, thank you for asking... Oh. What was that? You want to give us a rental car?... How thoughtful of you. Would have been nice for you to have felt that was days ago but sure...

Trish plops down onto her bed as her mother finishes her conversation. John rubs his face before he places his hands on his hips with a sigh.

Ann hangs up.

ANN (CONT.)

They're dropping the rental car off tomorrow.

There's a beat as the news settles over the family.

JOHN

Who's up for more diner breakfast?

INT. NEW HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Trish wakes up from a nap the next afternoon to an empty hotel room. At this point, she understands that there isn't much to do other than sleep. She rolls onto her back and opens her phone just as she hears the lock beep and the door open.

Elise enters. She's wearing her swimsuit, her goggles set on her forehead. The goggles keep her wet hair out of her face. Elise waddles into the room and sits down on the other bed and faces her sister. She holds two muffins in her hands.

She holds one out to Trish.

ELISE
Muffin? They're blueberry.

TRISH
Uh... Thanks? Where are mom and dad?

ELISE
In the lobby waiting for the rental car to get here. That's where I got the muffins.

They eat their muffins in comfortable silence.

Soon after, their parents enter the room.

ANN (CONT.)
Come on girls! Elise, get dressed!
We're going on a drive. Your father is already in the car.

Trish kicks off the comforter as Elise runs to the bathroom to get changed out of her suit.

INT. NEW HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

The family returns from the drive they had gone on.

John drops the rental car keys onto the nightstand.

JOHN
-said the car will be done tomorrow afternoon and we gotta be out of here by noon tomorrow, so make sure you guys pack before bed. We'll be heading straight to the dealership.

ELISE
What about breakfast?

JOHN
I'm sure our car won't take too long. We'll stop for food once we're finally on the road again.

TRISH
(as she packs her clothes)
I'm just happy to be finally going home.

ANN
Me too.

INT. CAR DEALERSHIP - DAY

Cut to the next day. The family sits in the waiting room of the dealership. They take up both couches and the room is filled with their luggage. Hours have past since the

mechanic said their car would be done and breakfast ends up being chips from the vending machine.

No one talks. John and Elise watch the small television that hangs from the wall. Ann reads her book and Trish scrolls through her phone.

As time passes we see this change. At some point Ann falls asleep, her hand props her head up. Elise is in a different position at some point as she tries to get comfortable. Trish steals her mother's book.

Eventually, the mechanic enters the waiting room.

MECHANIC

Y'all are good to go.

TRISH

(under her breath)

Oh, thank God.

MECHANIC

We'll take care of payment up front desk, since you know, it was a recall.

ANN

(raising an eyebrow)

A recall we never got the letter for.

MECHANIC

Well, I'm sure it'll be in your mailbox once you get home, ma'am.

ANN

Hmm. You better hope so.

JOHN

Okay! I'll handle the payment. Why don't you guys head to the van and pack what you can.

He hands off the heavy suitcase to Elise, who sighs before leading the way to the van. It's parked out in front of the dealership. They open the trunk. It's still filled with the stuff they had to leave behind. With Trish's help, they get the suitcase into the trunk. Trish's bag follows and she and Elise pull their respective doors open and climb into the back seat.

Just as Ann gets into the passenger seat, John arrives and puts the duffel bag he had over his shoulder into the trunk as well. He closes it and then hops into the driver's side.

John puts the key in the ignition and the car rumbles and then starts. He places his hands on the steering wheel and sighs, before he turns to the kids with a tired smile.

JOHN
Ready to go home?

Both of the girls nod quickly.

With that, John puts the van in drive and the family pulls out of the dealership and onto the road, not quite noticing the dark storm clouds in the distance hot on their tail.

FADE OUT