

VAPOR TRAIL
an hour-long narrative podcast
By
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c/o

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CAST LIST

BENNETT (late 30s): nervous and grieving, a feral cat

LESLIE (late 40s): self-sufficient, reinvented her life

1. MUSIC: MAIN THEME.

BENNETT

Summer.

2. MUSIC: MAIN THEME FADES.

SCENE 1. EXT. FARMER'S MARKET - DAY

3. SOUND: OUTDOOR AMBIANCE OF A PUBLIC PARK. SUMMER BREEZE. NO TRAFFIC. CHATTER OF CUSTOMERS AND SELLERS BUT AT A DISTANCE. THE SOUNDS OF TABLES AND MERCHANDISE BEING PACKED AWAY. AGAIN AT A DISTANCE.

4. SOUND: GLASS HONEY JARS MOVED ON A FOLDING TABLE.

5. SOUND: FEET ON GRASS, APPROACHING CLOSER. THEN A GLASS HONEY JAR PICKED UP.

LESLIE

Hi. Can I... [*help you*]?

BENNETT

I was just looking.

LESLIE

Wanna try? I got a few samples.

BENNETT

Is this, um, honey?

LESLIE

(*Chuckles slightly.*) Yeah.

BENNETT

Oh right. It says it right here. On the label.

LESLIE

All of these... bottles. This is all honey.
The one you're holding is raw, unfiltered. My bees, the hive, I mean, it's next to an acre of wildflowers. And with the wet winter, it's been a good year for the flowers, hepatica in particular. Let me get you a taste of that variety.

BENNETT

Oh. Thanks.

6. SOUND: GLASS HONEY JAR UNSCREWED AND OPENED. SLOW POUR INTO A CHILD'S DIXIE CUP.

LESLIE

First time at the Farmers Market?

BENNETT

Yeah. (*Looking around.*) Um. Quaint.

LESLIE

Things are shutting down before it gets too hot. Next week come a little earlier.

BENNETT

OK. Maybe.

7. SOUND: HANDOFF OF DIXIE CUP.

LESLIE

Here you go.

8. SOUND: FINGER DIPPED INTO HONEY IN CUP. HONEY SUCKED FROM FINGER. FINGER RETURNING TO CUP TO SCOOP UP REMNANTS. ANOTHER TASTE.

BENNETT

(*As he tastes the honey*) Erm, yeah, it's really good. Really. Sweet.

LESLIE

Yeah. Honey is usually pretty... ah, sweet.

BENNETT

...

LESLIE

Do you have allergies?

BENNETT

Yeah. And it's been a bad season—

LESLIE

This will help you. A teaspoon a day.

BENNETT

I'm on so many meds right now—

LESLIE

Just eat a spoonful of this—

BENNETT

Are you from California?

LESLIE

(Laughs.) No. Why?

BENNETT

That is such a California thing. Herbs and... bullshit.

LESLIE

No, it's just you are eating pollen from where you live, so your body becomes like, ah, y'know—

BENNETT

Huh? I don't think I under[*stand*]...

LESLIE

Like an allergy shot. Same basic principle. You are ingesting a small amount of pollen from the local flowers.

BENNETT

Oh. OK. I guess... that makes sense. I'll take the large [*one*].

LESLIE

The forty-eight ounce jar? Great.

BENNETT

... I don't have any cash.

LESLIE

I take cards. Venmo too.

BENNETT

...

LESLIE

Let me put this in a bag for you.

9. SOUND: A LARGE GLASS HONEY JAR PLACED INTO A PAPER BAG. THE TOP OF THE BAG FOLDED OVER. HANDOFF OF BAG.

BENNETT

Thanks.

LESLIE

Here you go. That's forty-five dollars.

BENNETT

Card, OK?

LESLIE

Course.

10. SOUND: HAND RUMMAGING IN POCKET, STRUGGLE TO RETRIEVE WALLET OUT OF POCKET. WALLET OPENING. CARD REMOVED FROM POCKET. HANDOFF OF CARD. CARD RUN THROUGH SQUARE READER FOR AN iPhone.

BENNETT

Convenient...

LESLIE

Oh, yeah, you just attach this to your iPhone and you can run a card... [*through*].

BENNETT

It's very... [*nice*]. I imagine it comes in handy when people don't have... [*cash*].

LESLIE

You're all set.

11. SOUND: _____ CARD AND BAG HANDOFF. CARD STUFFED INTO POCKET.
BAG CRUMPLED TO MAKE IT EASIER TO CARRY.

BENNETT

Thanks. Guess I should... [*go*]. Yeah...

LESLIE

What's your name?

BENNETT

What's my, um, [*name*]... ? (*As if he has to remember.*) Ah, Bennett.

LESLIE

Leslie. You bought that place up on Bickle?

BENNETT

How did you know?

LESLIE

Small town, y'know.

BENNETT

Oh.

LESLIE

How you liking it?

BENNETT

It's good. I haven't figured how to sleep here though. The silence. Freaks me out.

LESLIE

Have you hiked any of the trails or-?

BENNETT

I haven't... really. The realtor, she told me I had to come to the farmers market.

LESLIE

Who was your realtor?

BENNETT

Um, I think her name was... Pam.

LESLIE

(Laughs.) Yeah, It was definitely Pam.

BENNETT

Why do you say that?

LESLIE

I assume you're moving from [*New York City*] –

BENNETT

Yeah. New York. I moved here from New York–

LESLIE

Must be a big change.

BENNETT

What are your feelings about Pam?

LESLIE

She's always selling New Yorkers shitty houses for too much money cause they don't know shit about real estate up here. *(Too much?)* No offense.

BENNETT

She told me it was a fixer upper. That should've been my first clue.

LESLIE

That place on Bickle was on the market for... [*a long time*].

BENNETT

...

LESLIE

What... ah... brings you to Hudson? You moved for work?

BENNETT

I'm a music journalist–

LESLIE

Nice–

BENNETT

I think I'm a music journalist.

LESLIE

You think?

BENNETT

It's a weird time for music journalism. In any case, I stopped writing. This winter. I haven't written a word since...

...

...

...

LESLIE

Bennett? You OK?

BENNETT

My husband was killed.

LESLIE

Oh My God—

BENNETT

I don't know why I blurted / that out—

LESLIE

I'm really, I'm / really [*sorry*]—

BENNETT

Please don't say that. Understand? Don't ever say that. "You're sorry." That's all anyone ever said to me after it happened. "I'm sorry." Fuck you and all your fucking "I'm sorry"-s.

LESLIE

What happened?

BENNETT

No one ever asks that. People hear, "My husband was killed," and they... they can't run away fast enough.

LESLIE

What happened to him?

BENNETT

Anthony was on his way to work and just before he got... to the subway... an air-conditioner... the supports failed and... it fell and it um... [*crushed him*]...

LESLIE

...
... did you get to say goodbye...?

BENNETT

Why the fuck would I tell you [*that*]-?

LESLIE

Cause I think you want to talk.

BENNETT

I ... um...

LESLIE

Come to my place for dinner.

BENNETT

I don't have room for anyone else's pain right now.

LESLIE

Bennett... I was just... inviting you to dinner. You don't know anyone here—

BENNETT

I just wanna be alone and be fucking miserable. I gotta go.

12. MUSIC: TRANSITION MUSIC.

LESLIE

Fall.

13. MUSIC: TRANSITION MUSIC FADES.

SCENE 2. EXT. FARMERS MARKET - DAY

14. SOUND: OUTDOOR AMBIANCE OF A PUBLIC PARK. FALL BREEZE. CHATTER OF CUSTOMERS AND SELLERS, NOTICEABLY LOUDER THAN PREVIOUS. HANDS RUBBING TOGETHER FOR WARMTH. SOUNDS OF SOMEONE APPROACHING.

BENNETT

Hi. I bought some honey from you—

LESLIE

Bennett...

BENNETT

Oh. Just it's been a few weeks, so I thought—
Leslie, right?

LESLIE

Yeah.

BENNETT

I don't know why I'm acting...

LESLIE

Do you / need something—?

BENNETT

I just didn't know if you'd remember me. Or if—

LESLIE

I remember you. Of course, I remember [you]...

BENNETT

Or if you'd wanna speak... to me. Last time I was here... [*I acted like a jerk*]...
Um, I'm outta honey.

LESLIE

Did it help? With your allergies?

BENNETT

No. I mean. I don't know. Maybe. Probably.

LESLIE

Did you eat a spoonful every day?

BENNETT

Yes. I just think... the house I'm living in is so full of mold. And I'm allergic to
mold, apparently. And I should get it fixed. But with the rain... It's a real problem.

LESLIE

You should really take care of that. Mold can make you really sick.

BENNETT

Yeah, I've been on lots of [*drugs*]... Anyway, I'd love some more of your really sweet honey. That sounded so [*weird*]...

Yeah. Can I buy some more?

LESLIE

Forty-eight ounce?

BENNETT

Yes.

15. SOUND: A LARGE GLASS HONEY JAR PLACED INTO A PAPER BAG. THE TOP OF THE BAG FOLDED OVER. HANDOFF OF BAG.

BENNETT

Also...

LESLIE

Yeah?

BENNETT

Do you still wanna have dinner?

LESLIE

Let's do tonight. At six.

BENNETT

Oh.

LESLIE

You have other plans?

BENNETT

No. I really don't do anything. Ever.

LESLIE

I figured.

BENNETT

Six works. What's the address?

LESLIE

How about I come pick you up? The roads can be tricky, especially at night. Plus I can show you around. There's a lot of beautiful spots. We can take a quick drive then head back to my place for some food. That work?

BENNETT

So you know—

LESLIE

What?

BENNETT

I was married to a man. Not sure if before I made / that clear—

LESLIE

I know.

BENNETT

Just wanted to be clear, I'm [*gay*]—

LESLIE

What the living fuck, Bennett? This isn't a date.

BENNETT

I was just making sure—

LESLIE

Do you always try and ruin things?

BENNETT

No. I hope I don't. At least I didn't used to. Maybe now I do. Maybe I always did and didn't know. Sorry that's a lot.

LESLIE

You're intensely weird.

BENNETT

That's a constant, I think. My weirdness.

LESLIE

Well, just chill.

(Laughs.)

BENNETT

What?

LESLIE

I love how aggro you are.

BENNETT

What?

LESLIE

It's charming.

BENNETT

Um...

LESLIE
(not pleased)

Kidding.

BENNETT

What made you change your mind?

LESLIE

Pretty curious about the bees.

BENNETT

That all?

LESLIE

You asked about him. That really meant... [*something*]...

BENNETT

Moldy house on Bickle. See you at six, OK?

16. SOUND: LOCATION SHIFT MUSIC CUE.

SCENE 3. INT. LESLIE'S HOUSE – EVENING

17. SOUND: FRONT DOOR CLOSING. INDOOR ACOUSTICS. OPEN SPACE WITH TALL CEILINGS. KEYS PLACED ON A WOODEN TABLE.

BENNETT

Your home, it's so nice. Like a photo from a magazine called *Upstate Life*.

18. SOUND: TWO SETS OF FEET WALKING ON HARDWOOD FLOORS.

LESLIE

When I bought it, back in '09, it was basically a shed.

BENNETT

Really?

LESLIE

Take a seat. Yeah, the owners wanted to give it away, housing crisis.

19. SOUND: TWO PEOPLE SITTING DOWN, ONE ON A COUCH, THE OTHER ON A WOOD CHAIR.

BENNETT

And you did this? Like renovated it—

LESLIE

Yeah. By myself. I learned how to do it all. I nearly lost some of my fingers. Hurt myself more times than I wanna remember. But I built it back, bit by bit, into this.

BENNETT

That's... impressive.

LESLIE

My life before... I don't want you to think that my life before was... this.

BENNETT

Leslie, Lady Construction Worker?

LESLIE

Yeah. No. It wasn't that. It was... something else. Picture something more suburban Connecticut. Think coffee dates at Panera with my girlfriends—

BENNETT

That's what you ran away from? That life?

LESLIE

(unconvincing)

I didn't run. What makes you think...?

BENNETT

... Thanks for the drive again. Those hikes look [*nice*]... um... I'm not much of a hiker but good to know [*they exist*]...

LESLIE

Why do you assume that? That I ran away from [*something*]?

BENNETT

I look at this place, and I think, this is... this is a person who started over. And you asked about him. Did you go through something too? Did you lose... [*someone*]? You don't have to tell me all the [*details*]... but you got to the other side. And I don't know how I'm gonna get—

LESLIE

Let's eat.

20. SOUND: LOCATION SHIFT MUSIC CUE.

SCENE 4. INT. LESLIE'S HOUSE – EVENING

21. SOUND : SILVERWARE AND DISHWARE BEING COLLECTED. THE STACKING OF PLATES AND WATER GLASSES.

BENNETT

It was really delicious. No, no, let me do that. Let me clean up...

LESLIE

Don't worry. I'm just putting these in the sink. I wanna show you the hives before it gets dark. In the mud room, over there, you'll find a bee suit. Put the suit on over your clothes. There's a veil. Gloves.

BENNETT

OK.

22. SOUND: FOOTSTEPS ON HARDWOOD FLOORS, MOVING AWAY. DISHES PLACES IN THE SINK. WATER TURNED ON. DISHES BEING RINSED.

BENNETT

(from other room)

How many times have you gotten stung?

LESLIE

What?

23. SOUND: FAUCET IS TURNED OFF.

BENNETT

(from other room)

I just asked... How many times have you / gotten [*stung*]?

LESLIE

Everyone always asks [*that*]. Ah, hundreds. But these aren't wasps. A bee's sting is a prick at worst, and if you get stung, you just move on.

BENNETT

(from other room)

I'm allergic. I think.

LESLIE

Look, you aren't gonna get stung. I promise.

24. SOUND: FOOTSTEPS ON THE HARDWOOD FLOOR, APPROACHING.

BENNETT

Did I put this on correctly?

25. SOUND: BEE SUIT CHECKED FOR FIT. GLOVES PULLED UP FURTHER.

LESLIE

Perfect.

BENNETT

You don't... wear...? Is there another [*suit*]?

LESLIE

They know me. Gloves are enough. Ready?

26. SOUND: LOCATION SHIFT MUSIC CUE.

SCENE 5. EXT. FIELDS BEHIND LESLIE'S HOUSE - EVENING

27. SOUND: OUTDOOR AMBIANCE. QUIET NIGHT BREEZE. DISTANT SOUND OF AN ACTIVE BEE HIVE. EVEN AT THIS DISTANCE, IT IS AUDIBLE.

BENNETT

Is that it... those wooden boxes over there?

LESLIE

Yeah.

28. SOUND: FOOTSTEPS IN A FIELD. THE VOLUME OF THE HIVES GROWS LOUDER UNTIL IT IS CLEAR THAT THEY ARE VERY NEAR THE HIVES.

LESLIE

Don't be scared.

BENNETT

(lying)

I'm not.

29. SOUND: FOOTSTEPS STOP. THE FULL VOLUME OF THE HIVES.

BENNETT

The sound...

LESLIE

Yes.

BENNETT

What a sound...

LESLIE

I find it... soothing. I'm gonna pull out one of the frames so you can see...

30. SOUND: THE FRAME BEING REMOVED FROM THE HIVE. ACTIVE FRAME OF HONEY BEES.

LESLIE

You OK?

BENNETT

(way louder than he needs to be)

Yes. It's Glorious! Am I shouting? Why am / I shouting?

LESLIE

I can hear you—

BENNETT

(even louder)

What?!?

LESLIE

Bennett, Hold Out Your Arm—

BENNETT

My Arm?

LESLIE

Yes!

BENNETT

I Don't Know If I Should—

LESLIE

You Can Do This. Hold Out—

BENNETT

OK OK OK.

LESLIE

Now Take The Frame From My Hand.

31. SOUND: HANDOFF OF THE FRAME. THE BUZZING NOW VIBRATING IN A MORE SUSTAINED AND INTENSE WAY, AS IF TRAVELING INTO A BODY'S NERVOUS SYSTEM.

BENNETT

I Can Feel...

LESLIE

Yeah. Amazing, Right?

BENNETT

I Can Feel It... Buzzing... Through My Whole Arm.

LESLIE

You're Doing Great!

BENNETT

What A World, Huh? What A Fucking World.

LESLIE

I Know, Right?

BENNETT

What A World...

32. SOUND: FRAME BEING RETURNED TO THE HIVE. THE SOUND OF THE HIVES LESS INTENSE.

BENNETT

(fighting the urge to cry)

Ah... how did this all... [*start*]? How did it, um...?

LESLIE

When I bought the house, there was this abandoned garage out here... And there was this huge hive. I couldn't stomach the idea of destroying it... I needed something to take care of.

BENNETT

It's beautiful. Thanks for showing... [*me*].

LESLIE

Yeah. Let's head back inside.

33. SOUND: LESLIE AND BENNETT WALKING AWAY FROM THE HIVES BACK TO HOUSE (THEIR CONVERSATION GETS MUFFLED).

LESLIE

I bought one of Miss Lee's Sweet Sweet Pumpkin Pies today at the market.

BENNETT

(Laughs.) Jesus.

What?
LESLIE

BENNETT
Miss Lee's Sweet Sweet Pumpkin Pie?

LESLIE
What? You not into pie?

BENNETT
I love pie. Pumpkin is in my top three.

LESLIE
Let me guess the others. Key lime? Is key lime one of your--?

BENNETT
Lemon meringue is also in there.

LESLIE
Surprising.

BENNETT
Why? Cause it's a little trashy? That's fair. It's a little trashy.

LESLIE
What's trashy about lemon meringue?

BENNETT
I'll definitely take a piece of pumpkin pie. And another glass of wine.

SCENE 6. INT. LESLIE'S HOUSE – EVENING

34. SOUND: INTERIOR. HANDOFF OF A WINE GLASS.

LESLIE
Cheers.

35. SOUND: WINE GLASSES CLINK. WINE SIPPED, HEARTILY.

BENNETT
You own a cassette deck.

LESLIE

Yeah, I picked it up at a garage sale. The cassettes are down, see those shelves—

36. SOUND: A BOX OF CASSETTE TAPES PULLED FROM A SHELF. HAND GOING THROUGH THE CASSETTES. PICKING UP CASSETTES AND PUTTING THEM BACK.

BENNETT

I have this annoying habit—

LESLIE

Huh?

BENNETT

A habit of going through people's music collections. It's harder to do now. Which sucks. You can't just turn on someone's computer, scan their iTunes, open their phones and look at their Spotify libraries. I love searching peoples' collections, their CDs, vinyl albums, their cassettes—

LESLIE

And judging what they listen to?

BENNETT

Evaluating. That's less negative sounding than—

LESLIE

Judging? Basically the same thing though, right?

BENNETT

Don't worry, I'll be gentle.

LESLIE

I'm not a music critic. I like what I like. What can I say?

37. SOUND: CASSETTE PULLED FROM BOX.

BENNETT

Pet Shop Boys.

LESLIE

You approve?

BENNETT

Culturally significant pop act. Their run of albums in the '80s and '90s are impeccable. I approve.

38. SOUND: CASSETTE RETURNED TO BOX. CASSETTES MOVED AROUND IN A BOX.

LESLIE

Oh shit. I definitely own a Bon Jovi cassette. Or two.

BENNETT

Ugh. I approve only if you are listening ironically. Though even then: dubious.

LESLIE

No, I think I might actually just like Bon Jovi.

39. SOUND: CASSETTE PULLED FROM BOX.

BENNETT

Ooof. Sarah McLachlan.

LESLIE

Now you're judging.

BENNETT

Maybe.

40. SOUND: CASSETTE PULLED FROM BOX.

BENNETT

Wait. You own this?

LESLIE

I got most of these cassettes at an estate sale. I didn't really go through the box, I just took all of them.

BENNETT

You ever listen to this one?

LESLIE

I like the cover. That picture of the wave. The title of the album isn't even on the front. What's the name of that band again?

BENNETT

Ride. Definitive '90s shoegaze. Have you listened to this album?

LESLIE

I definitely listened to this one. I remember. Yeah. There's, um, a song on the second side—

BENNETT

The third song on Side B?

LESLIE

Yeah. Let me see. That one. I love that one.

BENNETT

“Vapour Trail,” on the original British release, it's the last song on the album—

LESLIE

Oh, you approve of this one, huh? Put it on. Just turn on the receiver and—

BENNETT

Yeah. No. It's OK.

LESLIE

You sure? It's no problem.

BENNETT

The day we disconnected the machines. I brought a small speaker. Played songs he... [*loved*]. That was one of them. That song. Just ... afterwards... I thought music would get me through it. I thought it would carry me, get me through to some kind of... [*peace*]. But I can't listen to anything. Every song, everything's noise now.

LESLIE

We don't have to listen to anything.

BENNETT

Ever gonna tell me what happened to you?

LESLIE

Let's not dig up ancient history.

BENNETT

You don't trust me.

LESLIE

No... [*that's not it*]. What happened to me is different.

BENNETT

How did you get over it?

LESLIE

You don't. It's just that with time, there's distance. It doesn't hurt as bad, or as often. An occasional dull thud that flares up instead of a persistent agonizing ache. You just have to live with that.

...

BENNETT

...

LESLIE

Wanna play Yahtzee?

BENNETT

For real? You wanna play Yahtzee? That's what you wanna do right now?

LESLIE

I bought it at that same estate sale, never had anyone to play it with.

BENNETT

Honestly...

LESLIE

What?

BENNETT

I fucking love Yahtzee.

SCENE 7. INT. LESLIE'S HOUSE – HALF HOUR LATER

41. **SOUND: DICE SHAKEN IN A PLASTIC CUP. SPILLED INTO A CARBOARD GAME BOX.**

BENNETT

Oh my God!

I can't believe it.

LESLIE

BENNETT

(Laughs.)

LESLIE

You bastard. Rematch?

BENNETT

Can we take a break? I've had too much to drink. Haven't had alcohol in months. Don't even know what time it is.

LESLIE

It's late. We polished off / both bottles...?

BENNETT

Yes. Yes, we polished off two more bottles of red. That makes a total of—

LESLIE

I probably shouldn't drive.

BENNETT

If it's easier... I could just... stay over.

LESLIE

If you wanna [*stay*]—

BENNETT

Wait, sorry, I didn't mean to presume—

LESLIE

You're staying over. Of course. I gotta couch, spare sheets, blankets—

BENNETT

I don't want to be alone tonight.

LESLIE

Then don't be alone. Stay here. Besides, I still gotta beat you at Yahtzee.

BENNETT

I want more to drink.

LESLIE

There are beers in the fridge.

BENNETT

I'll get it.

42. SOUND: FOOTSTEPS ON HARDWOOD FLOORS. IN THE OTHER ROOM, THE REFRIGERATOR DOOR OPENS.

BENNETT

(from kitchen)

Want one?

LESLIE

Sure.

43. SOUND: GLASS BEER BOTTLES TAKEN FROM SHELF. REFRIGERATOR DOOR CLOSED. BEER BOTTLES PLACED ON COUNTER. BOTTLE OPENER OPENS ONE BEER, THEN NEXT. BOTTLE OPENER PLACED ON COUNTER. FOOTSTEPS ON HARDWOOD FLOOR, COMING CLOSER.

LESLIE

Thanks.

44. SOUND: DRINKING OF BEER. A BODY COLLAPSING INTO A COUCH.

BENNETT

This editor from a website I sometimes wrote for, he asked... he asked if I'd be interested in writing about Anthony. I said yes. On one condition: I wouldn't write about the accident. Not about his death. But about him. Ended up just being, um, this crazy list of all these things I remembered about him. But the idea I'd share this with strangers. Well, After the fifth deadline passed, the editor just gave up.

LESLIE

I'd like to hear it.

BENNETT

I don't...

LESLIE

It would just be nice to hear about him.

BENNETT

Yeah. Don't think I can. ... [*I'm*] Too scared.

LESLIE

Only if you want to.

BENNETT

...

45. SOUND: DRINKING OF BEER.

BENNETT

...

...

... he made sure his bedroom drawers were always incredibly tidy...

... he never showed the same love to the kitchen cabinets...

... he wasn't discerning in his music taste, complimenting songs by Katy Perry and Broken Social Scene...

... When it came to movies, he refused to watch Pixar films, calling them cartoons...

... he worried about how I spent money...

... he sometimes forgot to pay his student loans...

... he remembered – I never did – all our neighbors' names...

... he never remembered – without me prodding – his own parents' birthdays...

... he never admitted how much it bothered him that people thought I was the younger of the two...

... he was so kind to the students who worked with him in the Admissions Office at that school...

... he was merciless to the adults who worked with him in the Admissions Office calling them fools...

... he would go into the bags of stuff I planned to donate and select my old clothes to wear...

... he'd hate when I'd publicly point out he was wearing my old clothes...

... shaved in the shower and blood never scared him...

... couldn't stand the sight of feet on TV...

BENNETT*(continued)*

... He lost things – always – that were just in his pocket where he'd left them...

... He could tell me – always – where my headphones or my keys were at...

... he believed secretly, I think, in a god, never telling me for fear I'd make fun of him...

... he thought I was a better lover than I was...

... when he was a better lover than he ever knew...

He warned me when I was too close to the subway tracks
While he bicycled the city, with no helmet, like a fool

He told me, more often than I told him, how attractive I was
He told me, mercilessly, when I had food in my teeth
He told me, carefully, when the haircut was bad
He told me, silently, when I was being rude

He didn't want to know when I was with other men
He didn't like telling me when he was too

He wasn't always there when I needed him
But he was always clear when I wasn't there for him
He worried I'd leave him
And still acted like we had all the time in the world

He wouldn't go to bed until the fight was resolved
He couldn't understand how I could
He wanted me to tell him when he was [*wrong*]...
He reminded me always about the time I got [*cold feet*]...
He never mentioned that time, during a fight, that I [*hit him*]...
That's what I think
When I think of [*him*]
And I worry
I never knew
Him
I never knew
Anthony
Anthony
Anthony
Anthony
Anthony

BENNETT*(continued)*

Anthony	<i>[eventually his name</i>
Anthony	<i>becomes just</i>
Anthony	<i>a cry</i>
Anthony	<i>a howl of pain</i>
Anthony	<i>however long it takes]</i>
Anthony	
Anthony	
Antho[ny]	
Antho[ny]	
Ant[hony]	
Ant[hony]	
[Anthony]	
...	
...	
...	
...	

LESLIE

...

SCENE 8. INNER THOUGHTS OF BENNETT AND LESLIE – CONTINUOUS46. MUSIC: UNDERScore BEGINS.**LESLIE**

When you go quiet, I...

BENNETT

You lean down to cover me with a blanket.

LESLIE

I worry you confuse me for him.

BENNETT

At first, I worry you confuse me for someone from your past—

LESLIE

No—

BENNETT

It's a more likely explanation than me confusing you for—

LESLIE

I don't see him... Curtis is like a [*distant memory*]... I see you—

BENNETT

I know it's you—

LESLIE

I simply lean down to cover you with a blanket, my face close to yours—

BENNETT

And I kiss you. Delicate. On the lips.

LESLIE

I recoil, gently—

BENNETT

I regret, instantly—

LESLIE

But we don't say anything.

BENNETT

Frozen under the blanket you place on my chest. Until you—

LESLIE

Return with a second kiss.

BENNETT

Seconds later—

LESLIE

Before I freeze—

BENNETT

Less delicate. Our lips part.

LESLIE

Helpless. Had I really not [*had sex*]... since I left Curtis? Had I really not be touched?

BENNETT

The flesh aching, needing, wanting. It feels so good. You hope you can shut the brain off. To stop it from asking the questions that logic dictates be asked. Hope you can just be present for the next—

LESLIE

Kiss. This time, not initiated by one of us. But occurring, out of the second one, becoming a third one.

BENNETT

My hand on your breasts. Not since high school had my hands touched—

LESLIE

I pull my top off.

BENNETT

We aren't going to stop.

LESLIE

Every part of this—

BENNETT

Every part of you so sensitive to the touch—

LESLIE

Confirmation this pleasure is mutual—

BENNETT

The stiffening of your nipples—

LESLIE

The hardness of your cock—

BENNETT

The wetness of your—

LESLIE

You blush—

BENNETT

Your eyes fixed—

Neither of us close our eyes—
LESLIE

To see—
BENNETT

To be seen—
LESLIE

My mouth open—
BENNETT

Me inside you—
LESLIE

You take me inside—
BENNETT

More than your tongue—
LESLIE

A thrust, an ache—
BENNETT

A moment of pleasure—
LESLIE

Moving inside—
BENNETT

Did we know this was how the night would end?
LESLIE

No. Premeditation would soil what still, in my memory, feels effortless.
BENNETT

No moment when the mind asserts—
LESLIE

Taken out of—
BENNETT

Questions— **LESLIE**

Refutes— **BENNETT**

Thinks of the consequences— **LESLIE**

No, just there— **BENNETT**

Unflinching— **LESLIE**

Our bodies— **BENNETT**

Pressed, ready— **LESLIE**

Hold you close— **BENNETT**

And then— **LESLIE**

Release. **BENNETT**

LESLIE
The body knows – sometimes – what the body needs.

BENNETT
We fuck on that couch. We fall asleep in those sheets.

47. MUSIC: THEME ENDS.

48. SOUND: SILENCE.

SCENE 9. INT. LESLIE'S HOUSE – NEXT MORNING

49. SOUND: MORNING QUIET. HOUSE STILLNESS. CENTRAL HEAT TURNING ON.

50. SOUND: A BODY ROLLING SOFTLY OFF THE COUCH.

51. SOUND: THE JANGLE OF A BELT. JEANS PULLED UP. QUIETLY. BUT STILL AUDIBLE.

LESLIE

(Yawn.)

52. SOUND: BODY ROLLING OVER ON COUCH.

LESLIE

... hey...

BENNETT

Morning.

LESLIE

Going somewhere?

BENNETT

No, ah, no. Was cold.

LESLIE

Coffee first. Then I'll drive you home.

BENNETT

Coffee be great.

LESLIE

You OK?

BENNETT

(unconvincing)

Yeah.

SCENE 10. INT. LESLIE'S 2009 TOYOTA HIGHLANDER – MORNING

53. SOUND: CAR IGNITION. AN OLD-FASHIONED KEY TURN. THE CAR BACKS DOWN A GRAVEL DRIVEWAY INTO THE STREET. THEN BACKING INTO A PAVEMENT ROAD. CAR PICKING UP SPEED ON A CURVY STREET.

Cold? Want the heat [*on*]?

LESLIE

I'm good. Thank you.

BENNETT

OK...

LESLIE

54. SOUND: CAR RADIO TURNED ON. "MESSIAH LONGING" COMING FROM CAR SPEAKERS.

...

BENNETT

Shit, sorry, I'll turn it off.

LESLIE

No, wait.

BENNETT

AS MONTHS WENT BY
AS YEARS FLEW BY
NEITHER YOU NOR I
COULD EVER FIND
IT SEEMED TO ME
THAT IT WAS ME
WHO SHOULD DEFY

SINGER

AND SO / I
SHUT YOU OUT
WHILE KNOWING
THAT DEEP DOWN
I WAS JUST
LOOKING
FOR A SIGN

AS LIFE WENT ON
AND YOU WERE GONE
I HEARD THEM LAUGH
AND THOUGHT I'M FINE

SINGER*(continued)*

I'LL TAKE THEM HOME
 I'LL FIND MY SIGN
 HEAR THEM LAUGH
 THERE IS TIME

SO WE'RE FINE
 SO WE'RE FINE

The following conversation begins as the song plays:

BENNETT

Do you know this song?

LESLIE

No never heard it, I told you I can shut the radio off I know / music bothers—

BENNETT

No no no, leave it, leave it.

LESLIE

That college station, they're always playing weird stuff.

BENNETT

Sounds like... Beach Boys, maybe. Sounds old, but production is contemporary.

LESLIE

Yeah... I like it too.

BENNETT

Funny... I hear *[it]*... I really hear... *[it]*.

55. SOUND: CAR PULLS UP THE GRAVEL DRIVEWAY. CAR TURNED OFF. MUSIC STOPS. THE ONLY SOUND IS THE SOUND OF NATURE FROM OUTSIDE [BIRDS].

LESLIE

We're here.

BENNETT

Sorry I tried to run out this morning. I worried... you'd regret... *[what happened]*.

I don't.

LESLIE

I, ah, don't either.

BENNETT

LESLIE

A few months ago, before we met...
Curtis found me. The article about me in the *Hudson Valley News*, I think, is how
[*he found me*]...

BENNETT

Your ex?

LESLIE

I got in this car, ten years ago, got into this car, the one I bought with my own
money, and I drove away from my life and ran away here.
I left him. Curtis. We were together for... [*seven years*]. We had this life...
[*together*]. Didn't even tell him to his face. Left a note. I know that's... beyond
cruel. I left him ten years ago and never looked back.
Seeing him only confirmed... [*it was right thing to do*].
But since then, meeting you, I've been thinking about... [*them*].

BENNETT

(*that unfinished thought leads Bennett to think Leslie is
talking about him and her*)

That's why you and me...

LESLIE

You and me, what?

BENNETT

That's why last night—

LESLIE

I really enjoyed... But...

BENNETT

I know it feels kinda crazy, I just think—

LESLIE

It can't happen again.

BENNETT

We can't have dinner again?

LESLIE

No, Bennett, you know what I mean—

BENNETT

Why can't that happen again? We both enjoyed it—

LESLIE

I just don't think it's gonna be what you think it is.

BENNETT

Why would we choose to stay in this loneliness when we could have—?

LESLIE

Could have, what?

BENNETT

I don't know... Something...

LESLIE

You're gay. Do I need to remind you of that [*fact*]?

BENNETT

Don't belittle this—

LESLIE

Belittle? There are facts, things that need to be acknowledged—

BENNETT

What is it? Why are you so afraid?

LESLIE

There are so many thing we should be afraid of—

BENNETT

I think I [*love*]...

LESLIE

...
Fuck, you can't say that—

BENNETT

I do, I think I might [*love*]—

LESLIE

There are consequences to saying that—

BENNETT

And there are consequences of not saying—

LESLIE

You don't. You just think you might—

BENNETT

You don't know what I'm feeling—

LESLIE

Bennett, what do you think will happen if you say that? The start of some great adventure? Do you think this will be a happy end to all this... [*misery*]?

BENNETT

I don't know.

LESLIE

I'm not saying there aren't feelings... I feel very... [*close*] to you... But you and I, we're not in the same place. We just aren't. I'm not going anywhere. OK?

BENNETT

What am I supposed to do with that?

LESLIE

Again, what do you think this could really be?

BENNETT

I love you.

LESLIE

You don't.

BENNETT

Stop fucking saying that. You don't know what I feel.

LESLIE

You can't love me—

BENNETT

You give me hope. Do you understand that? You give me a reason to live.

LESLIE

That's not love—

BENNETT

That's exactly what love is. Love is the person who gives you hope. Love is knowing the future is better with them in your life. Love is exactly that. Love is nothing but hope. You wouldn't be sitting here, telling me about your ex, about all of this, you wouldn't, you wouldn't if you didn't think this couldn't be something.

LESLIE

...
...

BENNETT

Please, Leslie, look at me... Don't treat me like some fool for / thinking we could—

LESLIE

I thought this would help, obviously I ... [*was wrong*]... I'm so...

BENNETT

What? Sorry? Is that all this was? Our dinner, our night together. All of it. Just one long drawn-out "I'm fucking sorry"?

LESLIE

...

You gotta fix that roof. It's a mess. You'll get hurt if you leave it [*like that*]—

56. SOUND: SEATBELT UNBUCKLED. PASSENGER CAR DOOR OPENED. THEN SLAMMED SHUT.

LESLIE

Jesus, Bennett, don't just... [*run out*]... (*Sighs*) ... Fuck it.

57. SOUND: CAR STARTING. FAST REVERSE DOWN DRIVEWAY.

58. MUSIC: TRANSITION MUSIC

LESLIE

Spring.

59. MUSIC: TRANSITION MUSIC FADES

SCENE 11. INT. BENNETT'S NYC APARTMENT – EARLY MORNING

60. SOUND: TOSSING AND TURNING IN SLEEP. QUIET URBAN NIGHTTIME PUNCTUATED BY THE DISTANT SOUND OF AN AMBULANCE FROM DOWN THE BLOCK.

61. SOUND: iPHONE TEXT MESSAGE ALERT.

62. SOUND: SHEETS PUSHED DOWN. ANOTHER AMBULANCE, CLOSER, GRABS iPHONE

63. SOUND [IMAGINE THE MICROPHONE FOLLOWING BENNETT DURING THIS SEQUENCE AS ONE EXTENDED MOMENT]: GETTING OUT OF BED. FOOTSTEPS ON CREAKY NEW YORK FLOORS. FOOTSTEPS ON COLD KITCHEN TILES. TEA KETTLE GRABBED OFF THE STOVE. TEA KETTLE LID TAKEN OFF. FAUCET TURNED ON. TEA KETTLE FILLED. GAS STOVE TURNED ON: THE “TICK TICK” OF LIGHTING STOVE, THEN SOUND OF HIGHEST FLAME.

64. SOUND: iPHONE TEXT COMPOSING (“CLICK, CLICK).

65. SOUND: KITCHEN CUPBOARD OPENED. TEA MUG PLACED ON COUNTER. ANOTHER KITCHEN CUPBOARD OPENED. BOX OF “SLEEPYTIME” TEA OPENED AND ONE BAG REMOVED. BOX RETURNED. CUPBOARD CLOSED. TEA BAG RIPPED OPENED. TEA BAG DOPPED IN MUG. ANOTHER CABINET OPENED AND TEA BAG WRAPPER THROWN INTO TRASH. WAITING FOR KETTLE TO BOIL.

66. SOUND: iPHONE RING FOR AN AUDIO CALL. CALL ANSWERED

[NOTE: WE HEAR LESLIE AS BENNETT WOULD – THROUGH THE PHONE]

BENNETT

Hi. Can't sleep either, huh?

LESLIE

(on phone)

Nah.

BENNETT

I guess no one's sleeping these days.

LESLIE

(on phone)

You OK? You staying safe?

BENNETT

It's really good to hear your voice, Leslie. I imagine you think I'm a jerk for just leaving and not saying goodbye. I acted pretty... crazy that day in the car—

LESLIE

(on phone)

I figured when I didn't hear from you...

67. SOUND: TEA KETTLE WHISTLES. POURING OF WATER INTO CUP.

BENNETT

You were right about the roof.

LESLIE

(on phone)

What happened?

BENNETT

Middle of the night, heard this loud crash upstairs. I crawl into the attic, and I can see straight – this is no lie – straight into the night sky. A quarter of the roof, gone, it just caved in. I liked it at first. Convinced myself I'm camping. Turns out a huge hole in the roof is an open invitation to critters of all sizes. Squirrels in the kitchen, snake in the bathroom. It quickly started to feel like a metaphor for... [*my life*]. Couldn't just rot away in that place. But I sure picked quite a time to move back to New York.

LESLIE

(on phone)

The news is pretty... [*grim*]. How is it there?

BENNETT

Awful silence, everywhere. Except for the ambulances. My place isn't far from New York Presbyterian. And so I hear... The entire city's grieving now, and that's... weirdly comforting. Plus being back here has forced me to deal with... [*everything*]. I'm trying to write again.

LESLIE

(on phone)

I worried I hurt you—

BENNETT

I should've stopped by the farmers market and told you I was going.

LESLIE

(on phone)

I wanna tell you something.

...

...

BENNETT

Leslie, you still there?

SCENE 12. INT. LESLIE'S HOUSE (BEDROOM) – CONTINUOUS

68. SOUND: QUIET ROOM, SPRING RAIN FALLING OUTSIDE.

[NOTE: WE HEAR BENNETT AS LESLIE WOULD – THROUGH THE PHONE]

BENNETT

(on phone)

Leslie, you still there?

LESLIE

... yeah, I'm here... I'm not sure why I... [*need to*] but...

...

BENNETT

(on phone)

Whenever you're ready. That's a favor I can return.

LESLIE

...

I lost a baby. I mean, I had miscarriages. The first happened early. The second and third, later and later, when it seemed like it would [*happen*]... Then, after the third, after meetings with the specialists, they told me... I would never... [*conceive*].

LESLIE

(continued)

Curtis and I... Curtis, my ex, we weren't married. We wanted a different kind of [*relationship*] ... When I found out, the first time, I was pregnant, I half expected us to [*terminate*]... but Curtis got excited and so we decided: this is what we wanted.

But when we lost it, I think I thought – this is a hard thing to say – I thought it might be for the best. But Curtis, he decided that's what we need. To try again. My friends, all think the same. And then I got pregnant again, it all changed: We had to do this. I had to... [*do this*].

After I lose the second child... After the third...

BENNETT

(on phone)

I'm so... [*sorry*]. Shit. Shit. I almost–

LESLIE

You almost said it.

BENNETT

(on phone)

Yeah, I did. I almost said I'm... [*sorry*]. But I am. I can't imagine how hard that was... how hard it is.

LESLIE

Friends when they asked, when I tried to explain to Curtis. Remember the computer language we learned in middle school, in computer class–?

BENNETT

(on phone)

BASIC. That weird orange type–

LESLIE

The command GOTO.

Line 100: PRINT THE NUMBER TEN.

Line 200: GOTO 100.

Ten, ten, ten, ten, ten, ten, over and over and over and over again, scrolling down the screen. That's what it felt like: Ten, ten, ten, ten, ten, ten, ten. That loss. That pain. Over and over....

I'm not a spiritual person. Can't say I've ever prayed, really, to a God, ever before. Life is enough, I tell myself. All this is enough.

But that morning, after you got out of the car, this question starts nagging at me: Had I ever really let myself, really, feel what had happened, any of it?

LESLIE

(continued)

Next thing I know, I'm, walking, into the fields behind my house. Walking and walking, deeper into the woods. Until I stop. And there I decide. I will have a funeral, for each of them. With these hands, I dug three holes. On my knees. I said their names. What I thought they'd be called if they had lived.

I put them in the earth and covered them deep. And when I looked up, they were watching me. Three of them. Three deer. Three does. What are the chances? Each one, watching me, me watching them. They go on their way, and I walk home.

Feeling...

I can't lie and say it never returns: the weight of all that. But now when it does, it feels like a friend coming back to remind me. I say their names. And they return to their graves. I think of Curtis. And I wish him well in his new life.

I think... the night we had... I think... you gave that to me. And I never got to tell you... what it meant... now with all this death... I wanted...

I wanted you to know...

...

You don't have to say... [*anything*]...

BENNETT

(on phone)

What if I...? What if I hadn't left, what if I had come back to the Farmers Market instead of... [*leaving*]?

LESLIE

You'd probably come up to my table and say something stupid like:

BENNETT

(on phone)

"Hi. I'm Bennett. I bought some honey from you--"

LESLIE

Oh are we... [*pretending*]? OK, OK...

"Need a refill? Raw organic forty-eight ounce?"

BENNETT

(on phone)

I'd tell you about the roof caving in--

LESLIE

Stay at my place.

BENNETT

(on phone)

You would've done that? Invited me to, um, [*live with you*]-

LESLIE

We could ride out this pandemic together.

BENNETT

(on phone)

Nights listening to music-

LESLIE

Daytimes taking care of the hives-

BENNETT

(on phone)

That sound...

LESLIE

Listen.

BENNETT

(on phone)

...

LESLIE

...

BENNETT

(on phone)

What a world, huh? What a... fucking world.

LESLIE

Yes.

BENNETT

(on phone)

Would we... um... would we-?

LESLIE

Fuck-?

BENNETT

(on phone)

Ah, make love? Or would we find other kinds of... intimacy?

LESLIE

I don't know. But it does sound... weirdly amazing.

BENNETT

(on phone)

Hey, hey, I need to play you something—

LESLIE

What?

BENNETT

(on phone)

Hold on. ... Found it. Hey. Listen to this.

69. SOUND: “MESSIAH LONGING” BY OCCURRENCE, SOUNDING AS IF COMING FROM A LAPTOP SPEAKER NEAR THE PHONE.

SINGER

AS LIFE WENT ON
AND YOU WERE GONE
I HEARD / THEM LAUGH
AND THOUGHT I'M FINE
I'LL TAKE THEM HOME
I'LL FIND MY SIGN
HEAR THEM LAUGH
THERE IS TIME

The following conversation begins as the song plays:

BENNETT

(on phone)

You remember it? I ended up calling the DJ at that college station. Couldn't find the album anywhere. I had to order a cassette from Bandcamp.

LESLIE

I don't—

BENNETT

(on phone)

Wait – Wait – Listen.

70. SOUND: “MESSIAH LONGING” GETS LOUDER.

SINGER

SO WE’RE FINE

SO WE’RE FINE

71. SOUND: “MESSIAH LONGING” ENDS.

LESLIE

What is that [*song*]?

BENNETT

(on phone)

That day in the car, you put the radio on and that song came on. We listened to it in front of the house, and it wasn’t [*noise*]... I [*heard it*]...

LESLIE

Sorry. I don’t remember it.

BENNETT

(on phone)

Oh... I thought... you’d... [*remember*]

LESLIE

God, the sun will be up soon–

BENNETT

(on phone)

Yeah. We should try and get some... [*sleep*]–

LESLIE

I’m really glad I called.

BENNETT

(on phone)

Me too. Next time, you’re in New York, you should–

LESLIE

Yeah. Or if you’re ever upstate again–?

BENNETT

(on phone)

Of course.

SCENE 13. INNER THOUGHTS OF BENNETT AND LESLIE – CONTINUOUS

LESLIE

We both know—

BENNETT

But we can't say.

LESLIE

We would never—

BENNETT

No, we would never—

LESLIE

When he hangs up—

BENNETT

When she hangs up—

LESLIE

We will never speak to each other again.

72. MUSIC: UNDERSCORE BEGINS.

BENNETT

Life's orbit, I guess, has a way pulling and pushing people in and out, sometimes, not by choice or design.

LESLIE

What we say now—

BENNETT

These will be the final words we say to one another—

LESLIE

Our final words could be:

BENNETT

I love you, Leslie.
I could say that–
Love
A caring
A kindness
A hope
A feeling
An admission
A truth

LESLIE

I could say it too:
I love you, Bennett.

BENNETT

There's nothing to risk, we'll never see each other–

LESLIE

We could just say it–

BENNETT

But we don't–

LESLIE

No, we don't.

73. MUSIC: UNDERScore ENDS.

SCENE 14. INTERCUT INT. BENNETT'S NYC APARTMENT AND INT. LESLIE'S HOME (BEDROOM) – CONTINUOUS

[NOTE: WE HEAR BENNETT AS LESLIE WOULD AND LESLIE AS BENNETT WOULD – BOTH THROUGH THE PHONE]

LESLIE

(on phone)

Good night, Bennett.

BENNETT

(on phone)

Good night, Leslie.

74. MUSIC: _____ CLOSING MUSIC

75. MUSIC: _____ CLOSING MUSIC FADES

END OF AUDIO PLAY.

SONG CREDIT:**MESSIAH LONGING**

Performed by Occurrence

Written by Ken Urban, Johnny Hager and Cat Hollyer

Recorded and Produced by Ken Urban

Mixed and Additional Production by Daniel Kluger

AS MONTHS WENT BY
AS YEARS FLEW BY
NEITHER YOU NOR I
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AND YOU WERE GONE
I HEARD THEM LAUGH
AND THOUGHT I'M FINE
I'LL TAKE THEM HOME
I'LL FIND MY SIGN
HEAR THEM LAUGH
THERE IS TIME

[BREAK]

SO WE'RE FINE
SO WE'RE FINE

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The song can be heard at this link:

<https://soundcloud.com/occurrence/messiah-longing/s-hcZOtQL7u18>