

Las Vegas Girl  
By  
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*(The moonlight tower at Eastside Drive and Leland in Austin, TX 78704. Two men stand in the bright artificial moonlight. Both men wear black. Skip is between twenty and twenty five years in age. Ellis is between thirty-five and forty years in age. Ellis rolls a joint, as Skip drinks from a bottle of wine.)*

ELLIS

Where was everybody?

SKIP

She didn't know nobody.

ELLIS

No one from church?

SKIP

She stopped going a few years back. You and me are the only people she knew.

ELLIS

That's a shame. She used to be a real friendly girl.

SKIP

She was a friendly girl. But, she was fading toward the end and got mean. She couldn't fry an egg without help. She would mostly talk about your wedding. She had a chunk of the Berlin Wall the size of a cheeseburger, but had no clue how she got it.

ELLIS

I bought her that piece. From the TV.

SKIP

She kept it in a plastic zip lock bag. She painted the word "Mine" to the bag. She kept asking when you would be coming home from work towards the end.

ELLIS

What did you tell her?

SKIP

About what?

ELLIS

When I was coming home.

SKIP

I told her I didn't know. I told her you were busy. I didn't have the heart to tell her you found another woman.

ELLIS

I didn't find another woman.

SKIP

Then what do you call that girl you ran off with.

ELLIS

Don't make a scene.

SKIP

I'll make a scene when I damn well want to make a scene with you.

ELLIS

You think about your mother.

SKIP

Funny. You never did.

ELLIS

Skip.

SKIP

She tried to shoot herself with a squirrel rifle two years back. Spent two weeks at st. David's pullin' fragments out of her temple. Where you aware of that?

ELLIS

Yeah, I heard.

SKIP

Really? Never saw you come by. Never got no card or flowers or little stuffed animals. You do know that is what you are supposed to do when someone gets hurt, right? You send them stuff.

ELLIS

You knew where I was. It wasn't like I had a chance to visit.

SKIP

I did know where you were. Tampa, was it? With a teenage girl.

ELLIS

Watch your mouth.

SKIP

I'm sorry. I didn't realize I was bothering you.

ELLIS

You ain't botherin me.

SKIP

Clearly I am.

ELLIS

You are not botherin' me.

SKIP

How long are you gonna be in town.

ELLIS

What's it to you? You wanna go to the rodeo?

SKIP

If you're gonna be sleeping on my sofa...

ELLIS

I am not gonna stay on your sofa. I'm not interested in that.

SKIP

Where you gonna sleep? You don't have money, do you?

ELLIS

I'm not staying.

SKIP

How are you getting back to Florida?

ELLIS

I'm takin' a greyhound in a few hours.

SKIP

And that's it.

ELLIS

Yeah. That's it.

SKIP

You're a real piece of work, Dad.

ELLIS

I don't think I've ever heard you call me that before.

SKIP

Dad? How could you? You split before I could walk.

ELLIS

That's not true. I saw you walk from the refrigerator to the sink when you were a kid. That was in our first apartment when we moved out here. When you were born. Didn't think I knew that, did you? I remember all sorts of things. In the fall, when the JC Penny's Christmas catalog would come, your mother would give you a blue ink pen and you'd mark all the toys you wanted. We couldn't afford any of 'em, but your mother loved to watch you look at that catalog.

*(Silence.)*

ELLIS

What do you do?

SKIP

What do you mean?

ELLIS

Work. What do you do?

SKIP

I do coat check at a Hotel.

ELLIS

Which one?

SKIP

The Hiatt.

ELLIS

Don't know that one.

SKIP

It was built after your time.

ELLIS

A lot of stuff was built after I left. When your mother was with you, when we were in high school, in Michigan, I asked her what she wanted for her birthday.

She said she wanted to see Siegfried and Roy. She liked tigers. I stole your grandfather's car, and when we got to Vegas we decided to stay. I like the fact it never rained in the desert. And your grandfather let us keep the car. It all seemed perfect. You're mother wanted to be a Las Vegas girl.

SKIP

That's not how I heard it.

ELLIS

Yeah. I'm sure it's not. Your mother wanted to get a job as a showgirl, but all she could find was work as a waitress at Denny's. You got yourself a girl?

SKIP

Maybe.

ELLIS

Yeah, I bet. What does she do? Dance?

SKIP

She makes drinks at Expose.

ELLIS

She "makes drinks." You bein' honest with me?

SKIP

Sure. You still married to that wife of yours?

ELLIS

Sort of. She's with a shoe salesman now.

SKIP

Why did she leave you?

ELLIS

She didn't leave me. I let her go.

SKIP

Right.

ELLIS

Your mother still have that bird I bought her?

SKIP

Bird? No that finch died years ago. But she's had about a dozen since. She liked birds they'd sing to her, and listen to her, and she'd put them in a cage she always knew where

they were. There was only one left when she died. I gave that one to a girl at Wal-Mart. She works the photo lab. Are you embarrassed?

ELLIS

About what.

SKIP

Mom's birds?

ELLIS

Why?

SKIP

Because, you should be. An old woman, dying alone. With nothing but shit covered birds around her. It's humiliating.

ELLIS

Your mother wasn't that old. Why wasn't your girl at the funeral?

SKIP

She had to work.

ELLIS

She couldn't get off?

SKIP

She works paycheck to paycheck.

ELLIS

Your girl ever meet your mother?

SKIP

Why do you care?

ELLIS

I asked you a question?

SKIP

No. She didn't know mom.

ELLIS

Why is that? Where you embarrassed by your crazy old mother? All alone with a bunch of shit covered birds?

SKIP

Don't call mother crazy.

*(Silence.)*

ELLIS

When we first moved to Austin, we lived just up the road in that old green motel behind the gas station. Your mother and I would walk down here and under the fake moon. It killed her when we left Vegas, but she sure did love this fake moon. Maybe we can see your girl after this. Get some tacos. There used to be a place just south of town where you could get oysters, as good as they get out here. We could get some oyster tacos.

SKIP

I really don't want that. Dad.

ELLIS

Don't call me that.

SKIP

What should I call you?

ELLIS

Ellis. Call me Ellis.

SKIP

Ellis. When was the first time you knew you didn't love mom anymore?

ELLIS

I never stopped lovin' you mother. She was a fine specimen. She just asked too many questions. "Where you going? Where you been? Who you talkin' too on the phone?" She used to have the timing worked out between our apartment and my old job. So if I was five minutes late getting home from work, she'd ask trash like "Who is she?" There never was no "she."

SKIP

Yes, there was.

ELLIS

No. Not back then. There was never another girl, until I left.

SKIP

When did you stop caring about me?

ELLIS

What makes you say that, Skip?

SKIP

Because you haven't looked at me once.

ELLIS

What do you want from me? Huh? Kid? Son. You want money? You want me to tell you I'm sorry about your mommy? I just got tired of listening to your mother. I'm sorry I wasn't around, but if I had stayed, I would've hung myself.

SKIP

All I ever wanted from you was a phone a call.

ELLIS

I sent letters. I sent letters on your birthday and Christmas and Easter.

SKIP

Yeah, but all I wanted was a phone call. All I wanted to do was hear you.

ELLIS

Well, your hearin' me, ain't you?

SKIP

Yeah. Ellis. Smoke?

*(Ellis gives his son a joint. Skip gives his father the wine. They medicate in unison.)*

ELLIS

Why don't you say somethin' about your mother?

SKIP

Mom would lay in bed, and watch TV in the dark. She used to say it would relax her. She liked cartoons.

ELLIS

I didn't know that.

SKIP

Yeah. I bet you didn't. She used to say the birds were her best friends. 'Cause they would eat anything she cooked for them.

ELLIS

I can believe that. When you were four, and I guess that made your mother and me around twenty, your mother would make Kraft macaroni and cheese damn near every

night for dinner 'cause that was the only thing you'd put in your mouth. And she'd mix in slices of cubed ham and that would be a real special thing for us.

SKIP

Us? I hate you.

ELLIS

You'd always pick out the ham with a spoon. And your mother would give the ham to me. We should buy some flowers for her.

SKIP

Fuck you.

*(Silence.)*

SKIP

It's hot. We should get going. And I've got a bus to catch.

ELLIS

No. Not yet. Please.

*(The two men stand under the fake light and smoke and drink in unison.)*

THE END