

HOME AGAIN, HOME AGAIN

2022

Written by

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EXT. STRIP MALL PARKING LOT. LATE AT NIGHT.

The neon lights of the small-town suburban strip mall reflect off of the moisture in the air and the puddles on the ground. It feels almost other-worldly.

A small billboard advertises: "New Years Eve specialty deal! Get before the clock strikes 12"

The parking lot is deserted except for one old yellow Volkswagen bug, parked haphazardly. Suitcases can be seen through the car windows, piled up inside. The warning lights flash. The car has two flat tires.

Two girls stand near the car. NIZANA (20) is eating a bag of gummy bears and pacing slowly, looking at her phone. Her sister, SHIRA (22) is zoned out, arms crossed, looking at the store fronts. They both seem unbothered.

It's silent except for the rhythmic TICK of the warning lights.

NIZANA  
(ironically)  
...14 hour drive and we get a flat  
tire when we're 20 minutes from  
home.

Nizana texts something.

NIZANA (CONT'D)  
Dad said he won't be able to pick  
us up for another hour or so.

Nizana turns off her phone and looks toward Shira.

NIZANA (CONT'D)  
You know what we could do.

Shira shifts, tilting her head but ignoring Nizana, eyes still fixed on the stores.

NIZANA (CONT'D)  
(louder)  
You know what we could do.

Shira is taken out of her trance and looks at her.

SHIRA  
Huh? What.

Nizana eats the last gummy bear and crumples the bag.

NIZANA  
We could go get food.

SHIRA  
Nizana thinks.

We just ate.

NIZANA  
We could go walk around. I mean we haven't been back here since like, well, before college I guess.

SHIRA  
I mean, yeah I'll take a walk.

NIZANA  
Alright let's check it out.

Nizana skips over to where Shira stands. Shira looks out at the few stores and the empty street before them.

SHIRA  
...It's weird to be back. It's like time has stopped completely.

NIZANA  
Like we're in a nostalgic bubble.

The sisters leave the parking lot and head out down the street.

EXT. STREET. CONTINUOUS

They walk in silence for a minute.

SHIRA  
Man it's deserted out here, feels like a ghost town.

NIZANA  
Nothing's changed though. It even smells the same.  
(chuckles)

SHIRA  
Like baby powder kinda.

Nizana scrunches up her nose.

SHIRA (CONT'D)  
I think I've actually missed living here.

NIZANA

Hmm yea, it's weird, I used to hate it here but for some reason being back makes me miss it.

SHIRA

But it feels kinda sad. I feel like I'm intruding on my childhood or something, I don't know. It's strange.

NIZANA

It's kinda like deja vu?

Shira stops abruptly and reaches for a couple pennies on the ground in front of Nizana. Nizana rolls her eyes.

NIZANA (CONT'D)

Shira! Why do you have to stop to pick up every penny. It's not gonna make you any luckier OR any richer.

SHIRA

Shut up!

EXT. DINER. CONTINUOUS

They stop in front of an old diner.

SHIRA

The diner!

NIZANA

This place was our whole childhood oh my god.

They go closer toward the doors and peek into the windows. It's all dark, the tables and chairs are stacked. There's a "FOR LEASE" sign in the window.

SHIRA

Aw, no. Look at this.

NIZANA

They're shut down...damn. End of an era.

EXT. LAUNDROMAT. CONTINUOUS

The girls walk toward a laundromat. It has a warm, sunny glow and is all yellow inside. It stands apart from the dark store fronts surrounding it.

NIZANA  
 Hey remember this old laundromat we  
 went to like every Sunday?

SHIRA  
 YES, iconic!

Nizana opens the door and Shira follows.

NIZANA  
 I need to go in, for old times'  
 sake, c'mon.

They both enter.

INT. LAUNDROMAT. CONTINUOUS

They wander down the row of washing machines almost as if  
 they're entranced. Only one machine is running. There's a  
 meditative hum coming from it.

SHIRA  
 ...do you remember that blind lady  
 who was here literally every single  
 time we went.

NIZANA  
 Yeah, weird lady....  
 (recalls memory, giggles)  
 ...didn't we used to call her Mrs.  
 Wonder or something?

SHIRA  
 Oh my god, you just unlocked that  
 memory...Mrs. Wonder...

NIZANA  
 I wonder what happened to her. She  
 was ancient. You think she's still  
 alive?

Nizana trips on something. It's a few dice and some  
 miscellaneous game pieces. They scatter all over the floor.

NIZANA (CONT'D)  
 Oooh shit I forgot they had games  
 here.

SHIRA  
 Right! This place is like magic, I  
 love it. Why'd we always hate going  
 here so much when we were little?

Nizana looks through the pile of games in the corner. Shira wanders on the other side near the drying machines, and picks up a local tourism magazine. The magazine is faded and dusty, looks old.

NIZANA  
Wanna play one?

SHIRA  
Yeah. What time is it though?

Nizana looks up at the big wall clock. The sound of the ticking clock becomes apparent from here on out. Shira is paging through the magazine still.

NIZANA  
Uhh, 11:50 ish. We have like an hour till dad will be here.

SHIRA  
Damn. Looks like we're gonna miss the ball drop.

Shira is only bothered by this thought for a mere second and then brushes it off, looking back down at the magazine.

SHIRA (CONT'D)  
What do ya wanna play?

NIZANA  
Hm...how about a round of Yahtzee? We always used to play that.

SHIRA  
Alright I'm down.

Nizana gathers some dice. Shira walks over toward her, still looking at the magazine. She shows Nizana a page.

SHIRA (CONT'D)  
Remember this carnival?

NIZANA  
oh my god we went like every winter! And then we'd go to that candy shop after and get gummy bears.

SHIRA  
I wonder if it's still a thing? We should go...we could relive our peak childhood memories.

NIZANA

Ugh I wish we could go back...good times—

THUD. The door to the laundromat opens and promptly slams closed, startling Nizana and Shira. Nizana drops the dice which then disappear under the washing machines. They both look toward the door.

An old blind woman, MRS. WONDER (80s), walks in slowly, sweeping her cane in front of her.

The girls go silent, their eyes wide. They look at each other, then back at Mrs. Wonder. They watch her.

Mrs. Wonder goes to the washing machine and takes out her things. She then goes and puts them in the dryer, minding her business and going about her night normally. Nizana and Shira look stunned.

NIZANA (CONT'D)

(mouths to Shira)

Mrs. Wonder!

Shira nods and gives Nizana a threatening look, meaning: shut up.

Mrs. Wonder is about to leave when she turns toward the girls. Her voice is crackly and quiet, almost robotic, like these are the first words she's said in years.

MRS. WONDER

Welcome back, girls...If you wish to return: two pennies...in the second machine...yield the leap toward youth...by the moons of yester...

She disappears out the door. The girls stare at the door for a second, struck and confused. Then they look at each other and burst out laughing.

NIZANA

HUH??

SHIRA

I'm scared, what was that! How did she even know we were there!

NIZANA

Should we do it.

SHIRA

What...

NIZANA

Should we crack the riddle! C'mon let's try it.

SHIRA

Zana, no way am I doing that. It's all bullshit anyway.

NIZANA

1. We have nothing else to do, 2. you have pennies for us, and 3. wouldn't it be kinda sick if we could go back in time?

SHIRA

I already feel like we've gone back in time just being here. I don't wanna...mess with anything.

NIZANA

Yeah but aren't you just a lil curious?

Shira rolls her eyes, giving in. The girls go to washing machine #2. Nizana puts her hand out and Shira reluctantly drops in two pennies. Nizana starts up the machine.

WASHING MACHINE'S POV - NIZANA AND SHIRA

The machine starts whirling. Through the soapy bubbles, Shira and Nizana become hypnotized by the cyclical movement. The swirling soap accumulates until their faces blur and disappear into the bubbles.

EXT. FIELD. GOLDEN HOUR

Nizana and Shira stand in the middle of a field, they look around curiously. The colors are saturated. Some KIDS nearby play with a rainbow parachute. Another GROUP OF KIDS play yahtzee.

SHIRA

Hey do you hear that...

Birds are chirping and there's a faint sound of CARNIVAL MUSIC.

NIZANA

The carnival!

Nizana starts walking toward the sound. Shira follows closely behind.



NIZANA (CONT'D)  
Yeah that's it, c'mon!

They run and skip down the field and the music gets louder and louder. They're full of energy.

EXT. SHOPPING AREA. CONTINUOUS

The field leads them towards a street with some shops. They walk and see an old candy shop. The carnival music starts to fade out. Nizana leads.

NIZANA  
OOH my god look what I found.

Shira runs to catch up.

SHIRA  
Shiiiiit, the candy shop! We need to go in.

NIZANA  
Um YES, I'm gonna get some gummy bears.

Nizana opens the door and they both enter.

INT. CANDY SHOP. CONTINUOUS

It's colorful and a golden light illuminates the space. An OLD MAN (70s) wearing a chefs uniform greets them warmly.

OLD MAN  
Oh! Hello! Welcome back girls!

Nizana and Shira smile and wave back at him. They walk around the shop slowly until they reach the gummy bear section. Nizana picks up a bag and walks over to the counter where the Old Man stands.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)  
Oh don't even worry, it's on me this time. Enjoy!

Nizana gives him a heartfelt nod and a smile. Shira follows Nizana out the doors.

EXT. STREET. CONTINUOUS

They walk down the street together. Nizana opens the packet of gummy bears and they both take a few to eat as they walk. There's a faint sound of a clock TICKING.

SHIRA

You know it's weird, everything feels too familiar...

NIZANA

Yeah, like I said: the deja vu is strong.

SHIRA

It's all too specific.

The ticking of the clock gets louder. Nizana is focused on the gummy bear packet. Shira looks ahead as she walks.

SHIRA (CONT'D)

Hey look! The diner! I think it's actually open.

NIZANA

AH oh my god let's go in!

They both run up to the doors and enter.

INT. DINER. CONTINUOUS

Sun pours through the diner windows. Everything is bright and colorful. The sound of a clock continues to tick loudly in the background.

Shira and Nizana walk in slowly. A WAITER is carrying a stack of waffles, pancakes, and bacon over to them.

WAITER

This way, you two! Your favorites!

He sits them down in a booth, serves the food, and twirls away.

Nizana smiles big and she looks around, then down at the food. Shira tries to contain her smile as she looks around the diner.

NIZANA

Shira LOOK AT IT around here. I remember this perfectly. I've been in this moment before...I know it.

Nizana and Shira look around the restaurant. Everyone is young and they're eating and talking happily.

Shira locks eyes with TWO YOUNG GIRLS (Young Nizana and Young Shira). The girls look just like them, except they're many years younger.

Nizana's picking at her food. Shira taps Nizana on the arm and motions for her to look.

All four of them stare at each other now: they freeze, shocked and confused at who they're looking at.

The Two Young Girls' eyes are wide and their eyebrows are drawn together. They look scared, concerned.

The ticking sound becomes louder and dominant, the ambient diner sounds die down.

Nizana nervously breaks eye contact and looks back down and at the food in front of her. It's suddenly rotten. This startles her and she scrunches up her face in disgust.

Shira continues to stare back at the girls, squinting at them, trying to figure out what they're communicating. Nizana looks at Shira and then back at the girls.

The clock's ticking sound is obtrusive now. The Two Young Girls look left, then right, then back at Nizana and Shira.

Nizana and Shira look at the others around them again. This time, everyone appears old and crusty, reminiscent of Mrs. Wonder. They're like shells of people. The lighting outside is dim now, no longer golden.

Nizana looks back at the Two Young Girls who appear even more concerned now. Young Shira blurts out to them:

YOUNG SHIRA

Go! ...GO! Don't get stuck in the memory!

The DINING PATRONS get up from their tables and gather in the middle of the restaurant. They walk slowly, looking almost zombie-like. As they gather and mingle, they obstruct the view of Shira and Nizana from the Two Young Girls across the restaurant.

Through a slight gap in the crowd, young Nizana is able to make eye contact with Nizana and Shira.

YOUNG NIZANA

You can't stay here, we'll be stuck forever, we'll all turn into—

The Dining Patrons start to count down together from 10, like it's a New Years Eve party.

DINING PATRONS

10...!!

The Dining Patrons shift and again block the girls' view of Young Nizana, while also drowning her out with their loud chatting and counting.

DINING PATRONS (CONT'D)

9...!!

Nizana and Shira look at each other, eyes wide. They're speechless. Shira gets up and grabs Nizana's arm and pushes through the crowd of the crusty Dining Patrons.

DINING PATRONS (CONT'D)

8...!!

They struggle to get out of the diner, but finally get through the crowd and out the door.

EXT. STREET. CONTINUOUS

Nizana and Shira hurry down the street, their eyes darting all around.

SHIRA

I think we should try to get back to the laundromat...I mean, that must be the only way back?

DINING PATRONS

(muted)

7...!!

Nizana slows a bit, hesitating.

SHIRA

Zana! ...That must be the only way back, right?

From afar we can still hear the countdown, but increasingly more muted each time.

DINING PATRONS

6...!!

NIZANA

Shira, I don't know, it's just so happy and light here. Would it be so bad to stay?

Shira stops walking and looks at Nizana.

SHIRA

WHAT! We'll turn out like fuckin  
Mrs. Wonder if we stay! We'll be  
stuck eternally in the past. God!  
Come on!

DINING PATRONS

5...!!

Nizana shakes off her hesitation. Shira takes Nizana's arm  
and resumes her hurried walk toward the laundromat.

SHIRA

I told you we shouldn't do this!!

NIZANA

Alright alright, you're right let's  
just go.

DINING PATRONS

4...!!

They enter the laundromat and frantically run to the second  
washing machine.

NIZANA

Pennies! We need pennies!

DINING PATRONS

3...!!

Shira digs through her pockets, finds one. Faintly:

DINING PATRONS (CONT'D)

2...!!

Shira throws the one penny to Nizana who clumsily catches it.  
And puts it in to the coin slot. Shira fumbles around and  
finds another, running up to the slot and putting it in.

WASHING MACHINE'S POV - NIZANA AND SHIRA

The washer starts going and soapy bubbles accumulate.

The distant sound of the Dining Patrons' final countdown  
echoes and fades into the hum of the washing machine.

FADE TO BLACK

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NIZANA (CONT'D)  
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EXT. STREET. CONTINUOUS

Mrs. Wonder walks down the street across from the strip mall parking lot where Nizana and Shira stand.

She hobbles along and hums the tune of the carnival song.

**THE END.**