

OSCAR

By Jeff Dunne

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CHARACTERS

| | |
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| ALICIA | A woman, ideally in her twenties but could be older, who has been through some pretty awful stuff in her life. |
| EBONY | Alicia's partner, similar age. Understanding, patient, caring. |

SETTING

Alicia's old bedroom.

TIME

Present day.

Note: The bear stuffed animal, along with associated lines, can be altered to accommodate any stuffed animal.

SCENE

(Two women walk into the bedroom of a young girl. The first, Alicia, is hesitant, scared, forcing herself to walk into the room. The second, Ebony, is clearly concerned for the first. They have come in from out of the cold, each with winter coats that have been opened but not removed.)

EBONY

Let's just go. We've seen the house, you've—

ALICIA

No. I want to do this.

EBONY

You don't wanna do this.

ALICIA

Yeah, well, maybe I need to.

EBONY

We shouldn't have come up here. You're not going to find anything in here worth remembering.

ALICIA

Nope. Probably not.

EBONY

Then let's just—

(Ebony stops at a glare from Alicia, then sighs in resignation. Alicia starts to wander around the bedroom, looking at reminders of her childhood, picking up the odd memento.)

Is it like you left it? It seems...

ALICIA

(She laughs an empty laugh.)

No. This is what it looked like when I was a lot younger. They gave that bed to my sister when I was nine. They must have moved it back in here at some point. And I would never hang up a picture that had me in it.

That's you? You look... EBONY

Stupid. ALICIA

I was going to say adorable. EBONY

Right. ALICIA

Look at that smile. EBONY

ALICIA
I remember taking that one. They tried for like ten minutes to get me to smile. Eventually they promised to get me puppy if I did.

EBONY
I didn't know you had a dog.

(Alicia gives her a "have you forgotten who we're talking about" look.)

Oh. *(Pause,)* So is any of this stuff actually yours?

ALICIA
Yeah. Most of it. *(She sees that Ebony is staring at her.)* Stop looking at me like that.

EBONY
I wish I had never told you.

ALICIA
I had to know. If they'd torn the place down before...

EBONY
Then you'd never have to face it again.

ALICIA
And I'd never *get to*, either. It's the only past I have, and this is the only place left that...

EBONY

That you can run away from?

ALICIA

Maybe. It's hard to run from a memory. Once this is gone, there's nothing else to...
face.

EBONY

Would that really be so bad?

ALICIA

Yeah. Yes. Yes it would.

EBONY

Right. You really think you'll believe it if you say it enough?

ALICIA

(Suddenly angry at Ebony...)

You can't understand. *Your* parents... Never mind!

EBONY

Hon—

ALICIA

(Falling into a relapse of a memory...)

Don't 'hon' me! You can't know! Your parents are still alive! You—

EBONY

(Taking her by the shoulders.)

Look at me! Allie! *(Softer...)* Look at me... It's me. It's me.

ALICIA

(Getting ahold of herself...)

I'm sorry. It's just... I'm sorry.

EBONY

I know.

ALICIA

I didn't mean—

EBONY

I know.

ALICIA

You can wait outside if you want. I won't be long.

EBONY

Right. I'll wait outside.

(She stands there staring at Alicia, and after a moment, they simultaneously reach out and clasp hands, holding them for a moment in loving support.)

You know it wasn't your fault—

ALICIA

(Jerking her hand back.)

Don't. Just... don't.

EBONY

Well it wasn't. You weren't there. You didn't—

ALICIA

Yes. I did! *I* told them to go to hell! I told them to get out!

EBONY

You didn't know what would happen. Nobody could.

ALICIA

(She turns away from Ebony.)

What does that matter? If I'd let them stay, even a few minutes, they'd be alive.

EBONY

(Going to Alicia, and embracing her from behind.)

You don't know that. No one knows that.

ALICIA

I know it. *I feel* it.

(She breaks the embrace and takes a step away.)

EBONY

You didn't do anything wrong.

ALICIA
I acted like... like a—

EBONY
You protected yourself.

ALICIA
I could have taken five minutes to listen.

EBONY
And they could have accepted you for who you are. They could have done a million—

ALICIA
(Turning back to Ebony.)
They were trying. That night. That's why they came to the apartment.

EBONY
You can't just drop years of pain like some worn-out sock.

ALICIA
They... I wanted to. I wanted to so much. *(Pause.)* I want to now.

EBONY
I know.

ALICIA
I wanted... I wanted to just tell them everything was okay.

EBONY
I know.

ALICIA
But then when you came in, and I saw the looks on their faces... And I remembered...

EBONY
Let's just go.

ALICIA
No. Not yet. I... I want to...

EBONY
They're gone, Alicia. They're gone. And this is just a room.

(Alicia looks around again, then...)

ALICIA

This is how they wanted to remember me. The little, innocent girl.

EBONY

Allie, you're still innocent. You've always been innocent.

ALICIA

(Saying it, but not really believing it.)

Yeah. *(After a moment she laughs humorlessly...)*

EBONY

What?

ALICIA

Just thinking how ironic it is that they did it up like this.

EBONY

Like when you were so little? Probably trying to hold on to some happy memory, some happy version of their little girl.

ALICIA

If they thought I was happy then...

EBONY

Who knows what they thought.

(Alicia walks over and looks at the pillow, then picks it up.)

ALICIA

Nope.

EBONY

What?

ALICIA

Just wondering if they were the same sheets and stuff. They're not.

EBONY

How can you tell?

ALICIA

Are you kidding? I held this pillow over my face so much, I knew every thread. But it's the same print. Must have taken a long time for them to find the exact same one.

EBONY

Probably.

ALICIA

Do you think...

EBONY

What?

ALICIA

Nothing.

EBONY

Not nothing. What?

ALICIA

I was just wondering when they redid the room. I always figured that after I ran away they'd turn it into a library or something. Probably the next day.

EBONY

Who knows? Maybe they did.

ALICIA

(Sarcastically...)

Thanks.

EBONY

Would it be better if they did?

ALICIA

I don't know. I want to believe that I mattered to them, but... it's easier to let go if...

EBONY

It's not easy to let go no matter what.

ALICIA

Yeah, well it should be.

EBONY

Yeah. That would be nice. But then, the world's filled with the vacancies of things that should be.

ALICIA

You should work for Hallmark.

EBONY

Thanks.

(Alicia suddenly notices something, and rushes over to pick up a stuffed animal from a shelf. She holds it out in front of her, unable to believe that she is seeing it.)

ALICIA

Oh my god. I... I don't believe it. I thought they threw him away!

EBONY

What is that? A bear?

ALICIA

Oscar.

EBONY

An Oscar?

ALICIA

Not *an* Oscar. Oscar. That was his name.

EBONY

Those are pretty long eyelashes for a boy.

ALICIA

Yeah. *(She laughs just a little, remembering.)* My uncle said the same thing when I told him I was going to name him Oscar. He didn't care though. Uncle Gary was like that. Whatever I wanted was okay with him.

EBONY

I didn't know you had an uncle. Why didn't you ever mention him before?

ALICIA

I try not to think about him. After he died, well....

EBONY

I'm sorry.

ALICIA

He gave me Oscar just before he deployed to Iraq. Uncle Gary was... he was kind of an oasis for me.

EBONY

What do you mean?

ALICIA

He was the one person I could talk to. About anything. Problems at school, or... or when dad would beat me. But good things too. I used to show him the stories I'd write. He, uh... he used to ask me to read them to him. I remember how... how he'd sit there, eyes wide, listening, like... like every word was perfect. He always made me feel like I was so talented. Special.

EBONY

You are.

ALICIA

Then when he got sent overseas... I got letters for a little while... until he... you know, until he was... uh...

EBONY

Yeah.

ALICIA

Then it was just me and Oscar.

EBONY

He looks pretty, uh, well-loved.

ALICIA

(She laughs a little, remembering.)

Yeah. I'd hold him pretty tight at night when the screaming started. And I took him everywhere with me. School, trips, sleepovers. To the park.

EBONY

That one on fourth?

ALICIA

Yeah. There was a little thicket, and we'd scramble into the middle where there was just enough room. When I was a lot younger we'd have tea parties and play games. And I'd read my stories to him and... and pretend that my uncle could hear me. I could close my eyes, and it was almost like him being there. And then when I was in high school, I'd... I'd tell Oscar... other things. The things I couldn't tell anyone else.

EBONY

Oh, babe...

ALICIA

Then one day... I was fifteen... mom found me there. I don't know how, 'cause the thicket was pretty far away from away from the playground and everything. Anyway, she heard me talking to Oscar about... you know. She was so angry. She screamed at me, and dragged me home. And she just kept screaming the whole time, even when there were people around. The woman who would never say two words in public, screaming at the top of her lungs. Calling me sick, telling the world how awful I was. I can remember everyone staring at us... see their faces, the wide eyes, how they'd awkwardly look away and then look back. But nobody did anything. They just stared. Then... then she took him. Said I was too old for toys and that she was going to throw him in the trash. I was sure she did.

(Ebony walks over to Alicia, puts an arm around her and regards Oscar with her. Alicia wipes a tear from her eye, and then holds Oscar tightly as she says...)

I can't believe it.

(After a moment...)

EBONY

I think he's happy to see you.

ALICIA

(Sincerely)

You think?

EBONY

Yeah. And you look a little happy to see him too.

ALICIA

(In a "duh, of course" way...)

You think?

EBONY

I guess you were right.

ALICIA

I keep telling you. I'm always right. *(Beat.)* About what?

EBONY

Coming here.

ALICIA

(She looks at Oscar again, shaking her head...)

I can't believe it.

EBONY

I'd love to hear more about your uncle sometime. If you want to.

ALICIA

(She considers it for a moment...)

Yeah. I'd like that.

EBONY

Come on. Let's go home.

ALICIA

Yeah.

(They walk off. Lights out.)