

Deleted Scene: *More of James and Bethany's relationship*

James hadn't asked her to do anything that Friday night. None of her friends had really said anything either. After school Bethany sat and watched MTV, hating every minute of the conformist nonconformity. She couldn't stand looking at the vast blankness of her room. It reminded her too much of her lack of inspiration.

Too often she thought about the gun in her father's night stand drawer. Not in a violently suicidal way. It was more of a sexual way. She imagined how cool and smooth the black gun metal would feel against her fingers. She imagined running the end of the barrel against her lips. It scared her how badly she wanted to touch that gun.

All afternoon she hoped the phone would ring. She knew how it would be if it didn't. She would end up going to bed after dinner, hating herself for her laziness and lack of motivation.

Yet she feared the phone ringing. She didn't think she could take another weekend full of being around other people, pretending to be happy. An ad for Paxil came on TV. She wondered if she had social anxiety disorder. But she really didn't want to take drugs, like her mother did. It seemed horrible to think of a future where pills made her feel things she ordinarily would not.

Her mother's Scottish terrier was barking in the mudroom. Part of her knew she should let the dog out. It was locked in that room for at least eight hours during the day and overnight. Bethany couldn't imagine being in one room, looking at the same four walls, for fourteen hours a day. She wondered if it was possible for a dog to be depressed. She would be if she were her mother's Scottish terrier.

She was probably depressed. Clinically. Depressed described her mood most of the time, except when she got angry. But the only way she could know if she was clinically depressed was if she went to a psychiatrist and got diagnosed. Her mother was depressed; wouldn't she notice if her daughter had the same symptoms and send her to counseling? Bethany wondered if maybe

her mother's medication made her blissfully unaware of reality. Maybe she should try a few.

She had just popped four of the pink Prozac pills into her mouth when Darlene showed up in the bathroom doorway. Bethany jumped and slammed the door to the medicine cabinet shut. She had completely forgotten that Darlene was still home for winter break.

Darlene looked angry. "You want to go for a ride?" Darlene asked.

"Okay," Bethany said. She hurried to her room to get her coat, hoping Darlene hadn't seen her take the pills.

In the car Darlene started talking and never made room for Bethany to say anything. "I can't believe Mom and Dad. They're making me double major, English and Pre-law. They don't even realize how hard it is to double major. I mean, I said I wouldn't go to college unless I could major in English, but it's gonna suck now if I have to do Pre-law, too. Why can't they just let me be a teacher? What's wrong with being a teacher? Just because I won't make as much money as they do. They think if I don't make at least fifty thousand a year I won't be able to support myself. I wish I didn't have to depend on them at all. But I'm completely broke. I can't get a regular job because of school, and they've already decided I'm doing an internship at Dad's law firm this summer, even though I won't get paid. How am I supposed to become independent if they won't let me take care of myself and make my own decisions? Dad's practically got me on the waiting list at Harvard Law for grad school..."

Bethany waited for the pills to take effect. She didn't understand what was wrong when everything remained clear and bleak. She was still trapped in a life where no one understood her just like Darlene was tripped in other people's expectations. Hell, Bethany couldn't even live up to her own expectations. She sank lower in the seat and let Darlene's voice lull her to sleep.

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Emily was having a party, and for some reason James had agreed to give Genn a ride. Bethany supposed it was just like all those times he had given Bethany a ride when he had been dating Genn, but she still wasn't happy about it.

"Why do you have to give her a ride? Can't she find someone else with a car?" Bethany complained. They were on their way to pick up Genn now. "Her house is completely out of the way."

"I wanted to be nice," James said.

It was still early evening and Bethany watched out the window as the houses got seedier and seedier. She realized that in the year she and Genn were friends she had never once seen Genn's house. They had always hung out at Bethany's house or met at other places in town. James turned down Sorrel Hill Road and pulled up beside a trailer.

"This is where she lives?" Bethany said, noticing too late how snobby she sounded. James shot her a look and got out of the car. She watched out the window like it was a movie. James fit in with the house. She wished James wasn't mad at her over her comment. But for the first time, she realized Genn and James had things in common. Genn's parents were also divorced, and Genn lived with her mom and stepfather too.

And Genn always seemed so happy. James said he was depressed but he seemed to have no problems with any of his friendships. James and Genn floated through all the crappy events of their lives, while Bethany's mood festered in a sea of "everything's fine." Thinking about how unhappy she was despite her fortuitous life made her sink deeper into her depressing thoughts.

James waited at the door for a while, then Genn finally came out. Her hair was streaked with purple now, and she was wearing jeans, a flannel shirt, and a corduroy jacket. She looked happy. James looked happy to be with her. Bethany watched the shadows behind the trailer's windows as they got into the car.

"Hey, Bethany," Genn said, getting into the Oldsmobile's back seat. "What's up?"

“Not much,” Bethany said, her voice tired of answering the same question repeatedly.

“Sorry it took so long for me to get out of the house,” Genn said, addressing both James and Bethany. “My mom and Dick were having a fight.” Dick was Genn’s stepdad. People actually did refer to him as Dick, as a nickname for Richard, but Genn meant it in a different way. “Sometimes I wonder how she could ever think he was a better choice than my dad.”

“Same with mine,” James said. “But my dad left when I was two, so I guess I can’t really judge.”

Bethany stared out the window at the trees passing by. James and Genn made a few more complaints about their respective stepparents, then Bethany said, “It’s really not any better when your parents are happily married.”

“How’s that?” asked Genn, sharing a conspiratorial snicker with James.

“They constantly remind you how you can never live up to their expectations. At least if your parents are divorced you know they fucked up once.”

Under her breath Genn said, “Ooh, it’s so hard to live up to expectations.”

“Shut the fuck up,” Bethany said. And they did.

She would bet a hundred dollars James agreed with Genn. They looked at her and thought she had nothing to complain about, that she was some snotty spoiled suburban brat. They would never be able to understand.

How hard was it to be hopeful for the future when all you have to do to be successful is get a high school diploma? A college degree, an associate’s degree, in anything? Maybe one day own a house or an apartment that doesn’t look like a public dump? It must be so easy for them, Bethany thought. They didn’t have to worry about what college to get into or what majors would lead to a six-figure income on the other end. They didn’t have to worry about what careers were socially acceptable or not. Genn’s mother worked at a supermarket. She didn’t have to worry about disappointing her mother if she didn’t end up married by twenty-three and living in a \$400,000 house with an

SUV and a BMW parked in the driveway. All of Bethany's options would disappoint her parents. Even if she became a well-known artist and sold her paintings for \$30,000 each, her parents would disapprove. But she would die in that suburban wasteland they wanted for her. She would end up with her head in an oven and her 2.1 children crying in their playroom.

James pulled his car up beside the curb in front of Emily's house. Bethany was suddenly snapped back to the gray world of high school. And she thought, if the future is depressing now, I don't want to be alive to live it.

She got out of the car and followed James and Genn inside.