

MISSING PERSON

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RIVER: Any age, gender. Could be strong, deep waters.

Must contrast:

REESE: Any age, gender. Could be fiery and compelling. Anxious.

No matter what, we must see that there is love, respect, and history at the heart of this relationship; could be familial or romantic.

Advisory: Discussion around depression and anxiety. Adult language.

An ellipses (...) indicates a pause, active listening, a non-verbal reaction

A dash (-) indicates an interrupted thought or being cut off

In general, dialogue should be treated like a comedy until it isn't.

MISSING PERSON

“Missing Person” by Rachel Whittington is a play about missing a part of yourself, written as a way out of crisis.

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[INTERIOR. Could be a shared living space, apartment. RIVER is sitting somewhere, occupied by something; could be a book, puzzle, scrolling social media, game control...]

[REESE enters frantic, searching for something -]

REESE

No no no it's got to be here
It was just here, I know it was just here

RIVER

What's that?

REESE

I can't find my -

RIVER

Oh, this again -

REESE

What?

RIVER

You always do this -

REESE

What? No I don't -

RIVER

No you do -

REESE

I do not -

RIVER

Every time this happens you get

*[RIVER moves their hand in a way to suggest "wishy-washy".
REESE stops looking and glares at them.]*

RIVER

Do you even know what you're looking for?

REESE

It was right here -

RIVER

I know it was -

REESE

You've seen it, then?

RIVER

What? No, I haven't seen it. You were supposed to be responsible for it

REESE

I -

RIVER *[not pausing]*

And you had it last -

REESE

When do you remember seeing me with it?

RIVER

God, this again -

REESE

Did you *ever* see me with it?

RIVER

Of course!

REESE

Well ...?

RIVER

I don't know! It's been awhile.

REESE

Why does this always happen -

RIVER

I told you -

REESE

No -

RIVER

I told you to take better care -

REESE

Don't -

RIVER

But you never want to listen to me -

REESE

It's not a fucking pet. You know it doesn't work like that.

RIVER

What *does* it work like then?

REESE

I don't - I don't know.

RIVER

Ok.

REESE

I don't remember.

RIVER

Ok. ...

REESE

Would you stop?

RIVER

I'm literally not doing anything

[A long pause. Then a sharp inhale and exhale.]

REESE

You're an asshole. You know that.

RIVER

I know.

REESE

Fuck.

RIVER

Ok, so what are you going to do?

REESE

I don't know.

RIVER

Did you retrace your steps?

REESE

Are you - yes of course I retraced my steps. That was the first thing I did -

RIVER

And?

REESE

I fucking didn't find it! Obviously! The path changes -

RIVER

The path -?

REESE

Yes, the goddamn path changes.

RIVER

I'd forgotten.

REESE

Oh my god, Mr *[or Ms or Mrs or Mx]* Knowitall doesn't know something!

RIVER

Stop, Jesus -

REESE

What, you can give it, but you can't take it?

RIVER

Are you sure it's not where you left it?

REESE

Yes, oh My GOD.

RIVER

Ok, ok.

REESE

What am I going to do?

RIVER

What *were* you going to do once you found it?

REESE

It's stupid...

RIVER

No, tell me.

REESE

It's - I was going out...

RIVER

Out where?

REESE

It - doesn't matter anymore.

RIVER

Couldn't you go out even if you don't have it? I mean, surely your friends won't care if you have it or not.

REESE

You'd think. And don't call me Shirley.

RIVER [*like 'Airplane!'*]

Roger, Roger.

REESE

I'm just scared they won't like me. I mean, if I don't have it I'm like a different person -

RIVER

You're not a *completely* different person -

REESE

Aren't I? Aren't you?

RIVER

I don't know. I guess!

REESE

Well there you go. See, that's why I have to find it.

RIVER

So you can go out -

REESE

Yes, so I can go out and see my friends.

RIVER

Your friends will understand!

REESE

If you say so.

How come you're so chill about this?

RIVER

Hmm?

REESE

You're like zen. I'm freaking out, and you're -
Why are you so calm?

RIVER *[deflecting, just barely not angry]*
Why should I freak out every time I look for it?

REESE
Every time - how many times have you had to go looking?

RIVER
More than you.

REESE
I'm being serious.

RIVER *[stalling]*
Ok, I think for me, I just - It's like - Ok, so you know how in baking you can sometimes substitute applesauce for eggs?

REESE *[genuinely surprised]*
What?

RIVER
Did you not know that?

REESE
What - no! Do you do that?

RIVER
Haven't had any complaints.

REESE *[doubtful]*
I guess...

RIVER
Anyway, it's like that. When you're missing something, sometimes there's another option. Maybe it doesn't come out the same, but it's not automatically bad.

REESE
Ok.

RIVER *[Like, are we done?]*
Ok?

REESE
Are you sure the applesauce doesn't ruin the cookies or whatever? I mean you couldn't use that for everything.

RIVER
No you're right, it's better for batter-based desserts.

[Another pause. For a moment. Stillness.]

REESE

Where does happiness come from?

RIVER

Oh, sweetie.

REESE

I can never find it.

I can't even remember the last time I had it!

It's just gone.

It wrecks your life just enough to make you think about it, but you're still left with the pieces.

The path is never the same. And I get lost every fucking time.

When was the last time I had it?

I can't even -

I can't remember.

And I can't remember what it felt like.

I just remember the gist of it - Like an echo.

Or a printer that needs new ink.

A shadow of a shadow of a feeling.

Where can I look? Where can I find this thing that so many people get so easily?

I just - I can't pretend like I'm fine.

I'm not. Fine.

RIVER

...

REESE

Aren't you going to say something

RIVER *[quoting every unhelpful person]*

What do you want me to say? "You're just like everyone else", "We're all pretending some days", "You're not special"? Does that help? Does that make you feel better?

REESE *[wounded]*

Thanks. Yeah, I feel GREAT.

RIVER *[still not exactly helpful]*

The only way to move forward is to keep moving.
Millimeter by millimeter.

REESE *[trying to recover]*

I know, I know -

RIVER *[can't let it go]*

The hardest thing to do in this world is to live in it.

REESE *[exasperated]*

God, you're a fucking Hallmark card.

RIVER

I ...

REESE

WHAT.

RIVER

I - I don't know. No, I do.

Sometimes I feel like a bottomless pit. Like, no amount of love could fill me up? It sounds almost psychopathic, but I have craved love since infancy. Gasping for it like air.

And my parents love me! I have friends!

But the darkness always finds me. Every time. I am suffocated by it, and it pushes the love I want to feel out of my reach.

How can you miss a version of you that never existed?

Do you resent your past for everything that led you here?

I try to make sense of it, think scientifically - maybe if one thing changed here or there, maybe I would be better, maybe life would be easier - or *feel* easier, anyway.

Some people make life look so easy, no matter their circumstance.

No, instead I've thrown myself into purpose - Something I can control.

But then I've set myself up for failure, because I try to make a strong first impression, and then I build on that, but all it means is that when I inevitably let anyone down *even a little bit*, it's treated like a betrayal.

So I'm back thinking, what if I wasn't a lily planted in a desert? If I wasn't set up to fail from the beginning?

If I wasn't a bottomless pit...

No, I stopped looking for happiness a while ago.

Now I look for peace. And anything purple.

REESE

You stopped looking for happiness?

Well, that's kind of sad.

RIVER

It's easier, is what it is. I can get something purple delivered TODAY. And isn't that almost like something sort-of-adjacent to happiness?

REESE

I don't...

RIVER

And that's the point.

So sure, I'll be a Hallmark card.

And enjoy what peace I can.

REESE

I don't think I want that to be my life

RIVER

What do you want?

REESE

Comfort? With myself?

And other people?

RIVER *[and what else]*

Ok...

REESE

And the beach?

Somewhere sunny?

RIVER *[and what else]*

Ok...

REESE

And I don't want to be afraid.

RIVER

Well...I don't know if I can fix the last thing, but why don't we start with the other stuff? Text your friends to meet us at the beach - There's this perfect spot with -

REESE

Margaritas?

RIVER

And purple umbrellas!

[REESE follows RIVER out of the scene. Could be somewhere with hope - and sure, happiness.]