

# Lightning Rocks

by

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FADE IN:

INT. CAR - OVERCAST DAY

Classical music plays on a shitty radio. A man broods at the steering wheel; this is ADAM - 35, hiking attire, bloated for his frame. A box on the passenger seat is filled with office supplies.

He grabs a backpack from the backseat, throws himself out of the car, and strides toward the diner. The car's headlights are on.

INT. DINER - CONTINUOUS

A woman fidgets in a booth, eyeballs her cell phone on the table, chews ice. She's 32, hair in a bun, wearing scrubs; this is JENNIE. The waitress, BRENDA, arrives.

BRENDA

Are you still waiting, Hon?

Jennie nods.

BRENDA (CONT'D)

I'll get you another, sweetie.

Jennie checks cell-phone texts, and sighs. She makes a call as a backpack lands into the opposite seat.

ADAM

Don't use that thing around me.

JENNIE

Well. If it isn't "Mister lunch-at-his-desk". I thought you had that school 'thing' today.

ADAM

(pointing at her cell phone)  
That thing will give you a brain tumor.

JENNIE

It's for emergencies.

ADAM

What's the emergency?

JENNIE

I'm hungry. Frank is late.

ADAM  
Frank? Time doesn't exist in his  
dimension.

Adam recedes into a menu. Jennie fidgets.

ADAM (CONT'D)  
(acting)  
I herd once that a guy jammed a fire-  
cracker in his penis.

JENNIE  
You always start with that one.

ADAM  
That's all I have. [BEAT] The sooner we  
start, the sooner we eat.

JENNIE  
(animated)  
OK. The "ER" was a mess last night.  
Storms, blackouts, full moons. Everything  
gets crazy...

ADAM  
I can't believe you have to deal with all  
those messed-up people.

JENNIE  
... So, this pregnant woman comes in, all  
bloody and wet... [LONG BEAT]

ADAM  
Go on.

JENNIE  
... All by herself. And she's got car  
keys in her hand. So we get her on the  
cart, and the baby's crowning, but won't  
come out. The doctor's twisting and  
pulling at it...

ADAM  
That's messed-up.

JENNIE  
... Then, he finally gets the kid's head  
out. It's face is purple. The cord is  
wrapped around the neck...

Adam sinks behind the menu.

JENNIE (CONT'D)

... So I check on the mother, and I think she's flat-lined, but I'm not sure. So I go to the doctor, and he's got this slimy, wrinkled, purple baby in his hands and starts mouth-to-mouth...

ADAM

(squinting)

Thanks for the visual.

JENNIE

... Or mouth-to-nose-and-mouth. Whatever. So, the kid starts coughing and spitting-up all this phlegm and crap...

ADAM

Ok. Stop.

JENNIE

... He made it Adam. The kid made it.

ADAM

Like the smell of ass and band-aids isn't enough to turn your stomach. No wonder you can't eat alone.

Brenda arrives with two iced teas.

BRENDA

I hope yinz are hungry. We got a special on everything in the fridge, because of the blackout yesterday.

ADAM

(reads her name tag)

I have some questions... Brenda. Is your chicken organic?

BRENDA

Organic?

ADAM

Was it raised with antibiotics, hormones?

BRENDA

You want something with antibiotics and hormones?

ADAM

No. I only eat organically-raised livestock. Is your chicken organically-raised?

She just eyeballs him, chewing her gum.

ADAM (CONT'D)  
 Never mind. I'll have a salad. No  
 croutons. Oil and vinegar on the side.

BRENDA  
 (to Jennie)  
 And you, hon?

JENNIE  
 I'll have the usual, Brenda.

BRENDA  
 You got it, Jennie.

Adam sulks into his journal as Jennie studies him.

JENNIE  
 What are you wearing? Where's your tie?  
 Oh yeah. You were auditing that class  
 today. Did you see Frank?

ADAM  
 It didn't work out, and I don't think  
 Frank actually goes to school; he just  
 pays for it. Maybe maybe he thinks it's a  
 karma thing.

JENNIE  
 What didn't work out?

He doodles in his journal.

JENNIE (CONT'D)  
 When was the last time you were in a bar?  
 Or on a date? You're a strange monk.  
 (leans into his journal)  
 Okay. What's that? What are you doing  
 there? What is it?

He looks intensely at her.

ADAM  
 Have you ever had something change your  
 perspective on life? Something so...  
 compelling, it stopped you in your day,  
 asked you to listen?

JENNIE  
 A spiritual epiphany?

ADAM

Even if the communication is so subtle,  
so esoteric, you can barely perceive it?  
Even if the messenger is an unlikely one.

JENNIE

(fingers his journal)  
Is that a bird?

ADAM

That's the messenger.

She spins his journal toward her.

JENNIE

Its like a pigeon, looking for a place to  
poop.

ADAM

Its a mockingbird. You don't see them in  
the city.

JENNIE

Oops. I think she did poop. Right there.

ADAM

It could have come from any of nature's  
creatures.

JENNIE

Looks like bird poop to me.

ADAM

Forget it. Never mind.

He grabs the journal; slaps it shut. She's startled.  
Brenda brings soup with Adam's salad.

ADAM (CONT'D)

I didn't order any soup.

BRENDA

It's on the house, sweetie. We're giving  
away stuff before it spoils.

He squirms as she delivers Jennie's food.

BRENDA (CONT'D)

Hey Jenny. Where's that friend of yours  
been. What's his name... Fred?

JENNIE

Frank? Actually, he's supposed to be here  
too.

BRENDA

Next time you see him, tell him Brenda says "hi".

(eyeballs Adam)

Enjoy.

Adam slides his soup aside. Jennie plays with her food.

JENNIE

What happened to you? You used to be fun.

Adam stabs at his salad.

JENNIE (CONT'D)

What you need is a nice meal, a hot shower, and a good lay.

ADAM

I suppose this is my meal?

She spritzes him with a straw.

ADAM (CONT'D)

I suppose that's my shower.

OUTSIDE THE WINDOW: A bicycle bell chimes. A lanky man rides an orange bicycle, care-free in a circular pattern; this is FRANK, and his bicycle ORANGE.

Jennie gets acquainted with her lunch.

ADAM (CONT'D)

Do you realize that the genitalia serve to both propagate and eliminate? To copulate and urinate. Or, if one's into firecrackers, mutilate and....

Jennie sticks a french-fry into his mouth.

JENNIE

Thanks for that observation. You're in dire need of some romance.

ADAM

(sarcastically)

Right. Love is all we need.

JENNIE

Deep down inside, you dig the Beatles. Everybody does.

ADAM

First of all, it's hippy propaganda bullshit.

JENNIE

It's nice music. It makes people happy...

ADAM

It's bull-shit...

JENNIE

What's wrong with a little mindless bliss...

ADAM

Bull-shit bliss...

JENNIE

You'd rather pigeon-shit bliss?

ADAM

[BEAT] Happiness is overrated. There's no security in it.

OUTSIDE THE WINDOW: Frank grins at them. They slowly look out at him. He pantomimes "eating," then a "full belly," then escapes to the entrance. Orange is tied to a pole.

ADAM (CONT'D)

See what I mean?

INSIDE: At the doorway, Frank is greeted by Brenda. He presents her with a dandelion, and whisper's in her ear. She chuckles and slaps his arm.

JENNIE

Frank is Frank.

ADAM

He's a god-damn vagabond.

JENNIE

Don't be mean. You guys used to be good friends.

ADAM

Maybe he's a gigolo now.

JENNIE

(to Frank)

Franklin! I'm glad you finally made it. I nearly drowned myself in iced-tea.

Frank arrives at the table, gives Adam's shoulder a firm squeeze, then sits beside Jennie.

FRANK

My train was delayed. Those fries look good.

ADAM

That's why most adults have a car.

FRANK

I don't need a car to get good-looking fries.

Jennie snorts, then starts eating.

ADAM

That's not what I meant.

FRANK

Did you guys see that glorious light-show last night?

Frank places three dark, shiny pebbles on the table.

ADAM

You mean the storm that left everyone in the dark.

FRANK

It shut down the light rail, and I'm way up in Langhorn. So I had to ride Orange ten-whole-miles back to Aunt Betty's house... in that torrent.

ADAM

Maybe you should get a car. Although you'd probably need a job first.

FRANK

(to Adam)

Is that soup still hot?

Adam covets the soup. Jennie slides it to Frank; it becomes a cauldron at his fingertips.

FRANK (CONT'D)

The rain fell like balls of gelatin. The wind-whistled trees swayed and groaned as I rode beneath their terrible canopy. The sky was relentless, flickering glory. Then, a righteous shrill. A wood-splitting crack! Nearly felled-me from Orange.

They look outside at Orange.

FRANK (CONT'D)

The elements spoke loud-and-clear,  
bearing gifts of wondrous intrigue. The  
herald of their arrival... hotter than  
the sun.

Adam tucks his journal away, in spite of himself.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Down the road, not more than 200 yards, a  
tree, split down the middle, and a  
telephone pole, showering sparks over my  
nascent path. My heart-thrum deepened.

ADAM

(sarcastic whisper)  
Nascent path.

FRANK

As I passed through the fiery-shower, I  
spied a hole, smouldering at the impact  
sight.

(throws arms into air)  
My legs screamed. "GO! GO! GO!"

Frank pants as they stare at him. He starts eating soup.

JENNIE

Well? What happened?

FRANK

It was phenomenal. Aunt Betty had hot  
stew and a comfy bed waiting for me.

ADAM

Nascent path.

JENNIE

Lightning struck the tree, didn't it?

FRANK

The next morning, after a big-stack of  
flapjacks, on my way back to the station,  
I stopped at the fated smouldering-hole.

He slides two rocks on the table, one each to Adam and  
Jennie, then nods enthusiastically. They take them.

JENNIE

It's bubbly.

ADAM

What the hell is this?

JENNIE  
It feels like glass.

ADAM  
It's not glass.

JENNIE  
I said it feels like glass.

ADAM  
Well, it's not glass.

JENNIE  
How do you know?

FRANK  
They are Lightning Rocks.

ADAM  
What the hell is that?

JENNIE  
Lightning rocks, man.

Jennie's hair slides out of it's bun.

FRANK  
Forged from common earth: mud, grass,  
sand. Fused by primal forces hotter than  
the sun, right here on earth.

Adam puts his rock down. Frank puts it back in his hand.

FRANK (CONT'D)  
This one is totally you, man. See: smooth  
and heavy on the top, pointy in the  
middle, and a porous, spongy spot right  
here, underneath.

Adam rolls his eyes.

FRANK (CONT'D)  
This one's you, Jen: slightly smooth and  
hardened on one side, brewing and bubbly  
everywhere else.

She blushes. Adam gazes out the window. Frank ponders his  
own rock.

FRANK (CONT'D)  
We're all made of this stuff, man. It's a  
good reminder...

ADAM  
Shit, Frank. Some kid just took-off with  
your bike!

FRANK  
(slow to respond)  
Orange?

Adam leaps into an action pose. Frank resumes eating.

ADAM  
Come on, man! He's getting away!

FRANK  
Kids are curious.

ADAM  
What? Are you crazy? That's your bike.  
Your faithful-piece-of-shit Orange that  
no one else likes but you.

JENNIE  
Apparently, someone else does.

ADAM  
How can you just sit there?

FRANK  
It's just a bike. Sometimes people...

ADAM  
Just a bike? The way you talk about it,  
it's your god-damn best friend. What are  
you going to do now, buy another one? No.  
You'd have to have a job to do that. But  
you, you're just a freeloader.

JENNIE  
Adam. Settle-down.

ADAM  
God-damn bike. Some people have their  
jobs stolen from them, Frank; their  
livelihood. Some company swoops in and  
crushes ten years of devotion, or some so-  
called expert deems you superfluous.

Frank lowers his head.

JENNIE  
Oh, Adam. Why didn't you just say  
something?

ADAM

People who earn their way through life  
can't afford to tolerate anyone who tries  
to take it away from them. Even when all  
they have are gifts... like Orange.

FRANK

Yeah, but... Orange isn't my life.  
Nothing rhymes with Orange.

Adam opens his clenched fist: bloody rock-fragments spill  
onto the table. Jennie gapes as he stomps out of the  
diner. Jennie places the rock-fragments onto a napkin.

EXT. DINER - MINUTES LATER

We hear a car engine, failing to turn over. Adam's car  
shakes with fury. The engine finally dies. ADAM throws  
himself out of it, and shuffles to the diner.

JENNIE and FRANK stand by a pole. She picks up a length  
of rope from the ground.

JENNIE

(to Frank)

Nice security system.

Frank shrugs.

JENNIE (CONT'D)

Are you sure you don't want a ride?

FRANK

No thanks.

ADAM

My car won't start.

JENNIE

We noticed.

ADAM

I left my lights on.

JENNIE

You can ride with me. I'm off for the  
rest of the day, anyway.

ADAM

Yeah. Me too.

Frank hands Adam his backpack. [BEAT] Adam slaps Frank's  
chest.

Frank offers a "hi-five", "low-five", "medium-five". Adam reluctantly accepts, then declines. Jennie takes Adam by the arm toward her car.

JENNIE

Let's catch a movie.

ADAM

I'll buy.

JENNIE

Can you afford it?

ADAM

What do you mean 'can I afford it?'

JENNIE

I'm just saying, in light of recent discovery...

ADAM

If I couldn't afford it, I wouldn't have offered.

JENNIE

We'll go Dutch, then.

ADAM

Dutch? Did you just say Dutch.

JENNIE

It means we each pay our own way.

ADAM

I know what Dutch means.

JENNIE

Oh, shut up already.

At her car, she kisses him hard, quick. He's shut up now.

BRENDA comes out and hands Frank a doggie bag. As she leaves, a bicycle bell chimes. A KID rides Orange up to Frank. Frank folds his arms behind his back.

SERIES OF SHOTS:

- 1) Kid points to Frank's left arm.
- 2) Frank reveals an empty left hand.
- 3) Kid points to Frank's right arm.

- 4) Frank reveals an empty right hand.
- 5) Kid squints up at Frank.
- 6) Frank pulls a Lightning Rock from Kid's ear.
- 7) Kid rolls his eyes.

BACK TO SCENE:

The Kid is ready to ride off, but Frank holds out the doggie bag. They trade, and saunter-off in opposite directions.

FADE OUT:

THE END