

Tread Lightly

written by

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**INT. CAR - DAY**

A small disco ball swings from the rearview mirror as the car hurtles down the road. It's a small car, with a worn interior as if it's been passed down multiple times. 'Andante, Andante' by ABBA blasts through the speakers.

JULES (26) is at the wheel, with a red pixie cut and a single eyebrow piercing, wearing a black fitted suit. In the passenger seat, ERIN (28) is wearing a modest black parka with her hair up in a neat ponytail. They sing along loudly, and badly, to the song's chorus.

The second chorus ends.

ERIN

Jules, come on it's your solo.

JULES

Oh!

Keeping one hand on the wheel, JULES takes up her imaginary guitar in the other hand and begins to sing the soaring guitar interlude with gusto.

ERIN

Yeah!

JULES breaks out of her performance and into laughter. The car swerves.

ERIN

Fuck! Be careful!

JULES steers with both hands back into a straight line. They both laugh excitedly.

JULES

I got it, I got it.

ERIN beams at JULES with total adoration.

**EXT. GAS STATION - DAY**

JULES gets out of the car and lights a cigarette, putting it in her mouth whilst inspecting the gas pumps.

**INT. CAR - DAY**

ERIN puts her phone to her ear.

ERIN

Hey...hey Dad...We're fine, just stopping for gas. We should be at the Church for around 2?...

She checks her watch

ERIN (CONT'D)

...Cool...listen I just wanted to check something with you...do the the family know Jules is coming? It's just...yeah...like I don't want it to be weird with them, especially since mum and Jules never really saw eye to eye. It's just...it's really important to me that she's part of this, she's my wife, you know...

ERIN looks out of the car window, watching JULES at the paying counter. She smiles.

ERIN (CONT'D)

...Well...I don't know if it's quite what she would have wanted...

She forces a slight laugh.

ERIN (CONT'D)

...Yeah I know...I miss her too...just please make sure everyone is nice to Jules...ok...love you too Dad.

She hangs up, staring at her phone.

JULES enters the car, eating a Snickers bar. She tosses ERIN a Twix.

JULES

All ok?

ERIN

Yeah...just wanted to check on my Dad.

JULES

How's he doing?

ERIN sighs.

ERIN

He misses mum.

ERIN goes to start the car. JULES catches her hand. They look at each other.

JULES

I love you.

ERIN smiles. She looks down at the chocolate bar in her lap. She holds it up.

ERIN

I know.

They both smile. ERIN starts the car.

**INT. CAR - DAY**

Radio pop plays quietly in the background, as the car heads down a quiet country road.

JULES

Do you remember the last time we did a trip like this?

ERIN nods enthusiastically.

ERIN

Our anniversary.

JULES

When we rented that Airbnb in the middle of nowhere.

ERIN

That was so good, we should get out of the city more often.

JULES

I think the city's just fine.

ERIN

Yeah, but I wanna show you the types of places where I grew up. We could go on a little trip after the service?

JULES

Not sure you're mum would approve of that. Aren't we supposed to respect the dead?

ERIN

Why do you say that?

JULES

You know. The big G word and all.

ERIN

Huh?

JULES

Erin. It's no secret that she didn't like me.

ERIN

Oh, come on, you know she was very traditional, and besides, that's all in the past now.

JULES

Well it is now.

ERIN's smile fades.

JULES (CONT'D)  
Didn't mean it like that.

ERIN  
I know.

Silence.

ERIN (CONT'D)  
I'm sorry your art show got  
cancelled by the way.

JULES  
What? Oh, yeah that thing.

ERIN  
Did you find out why?

JULES hesitates.

JULES  
Umm...I think it was something to  
do with the venue, some safety  
issue.

ERIN looks at her, frowning. JULES is too focused on the road  
to notice.

ERIN  
So they're going to reschedule?

She hesitates again.

JULES  
Yeah...I guess so. We'll see-

The car engine interrupts her, making a SPUTTERING sound and  
shaking the whole car

JULES  
What the hell.

She adjusts the gears.

ERIN  
You've got to get better control  
of your vehicles, my love.

JULES  
That wasn't me.

The car shakes again. ERIN sits upright.

ERIN  
Wait what's happening

JULES  
Probably nothing, just my shit  
car.

ERIN rests back in her seat. The car SPUTTERS again.

ERIN  
Are you sure? Maybe you should  
pull over and check.

JULES  
Yeah babes it's fine I'll sort  
it.

ERIN  
Did you get your MOT?

JULES  
Not yet.

ERIN  
Why not?

JULES  
Will you stop bugging me for one  
second! You're making me nervous.

ERIN  
Well maybe you should be nervous.

The car makes a deep GROANING sound, sputtering as it begins  
to slow down.

ERIN  
Pull over! Pull over!

JULES  
Shit shit shit.

JULES jerks the steering wheel and pulls slowly to the side  
of the road. The car rolls to a stop, shuddering.

ERIN  
I thought we just filled it up!

JULES  
Yeah I did!

ERIN  
Then what the fuck happened?

JULES  
Babe I don't know! Probably a  
breakdown.

ERIN's jaw drops. She clasps her hands to her face.

ERIN

This is not happening. This is  
NOT happening!

JULES

Erin it's fine, we'll call  
someone, they'll sort us out.

ERIN

My mother's funeral is in 3 hours  
Jules. It's not fucking fine.

JULES

If we call someone now, within an  
hour we might get it sorted, then  
there's 2 hours left to get  
there, we'll be just on time.

JULES pulls out her phone.

ERIN

We'll be late! I said I'd be  
there an hour early. I wanted to  
be there early to see her-

JULES

Just be quiet for a second, will  
you?

JULES puts the phone to her ear. ERIN swings open the car  
door and storms out, SLAMMING the door behind her. JULES  
watches her, frowning.

**EXT. ROADSIDE - DAY**

Moments later. The road is quiet, with birdsong ringing from  
nearby trees. ERIN stands outside the car, right between the  
road and the grassy field beside it, her hands in her  
pockets, bouncing up and down on her heels.

JULES climbs out of the car and closes the door. She walks  
around the car towards ERIN, leaning back on the passenger  
side.

JULES

They're on their way.

ERIN

How long?

JULES shrugs

JULES

Dunno, no more than an hour I'd  
say.

ERIN sighs.

ERIN  
I should call my Dad. He wanted  
me to see her before the  
service.

JULES  
(under her breath)  
Bitch will have to wait.

ERIN looks at JULES, frowning.

ERIN  
He's gonna be so upset.

JULES  
Do you wanna jam to some tunes?  
It might help.

ERIN shakes her head.

ERIN  
It doesn't feel right.

JULES  
Ok well if you wanna just stand  
in silence be my guest.

ERIN scowls at JULES.

ERIN  
What is that supposed to mean?

JULES  
Nothing...I just wish you'd be a  
little more positive sometimes,  
that's all.

ERIN  
You're telling me to be positive?  
Right now?

JULES sighs.

JULES  
Sorry, I'm just trying to help.

ERIN hesitates.

ERIN  
I know...I just need you to be  
gentle today. I'm not in a fun  
mood.

JULES  
Understood.

They stand in silence.

ERIN  
Well if we're stuck here, I might  
as well eat.

ERIN opens the boot of the car. She rummages around through a  
pile of bags. She stops.

ERIN  
Jules?

JULES  
Yes babe?

ERIN  
You didn't pack an overnight bag.

Pause.

JULES  
Oh. That's...weird.

ERIN  
I don't think I even saw you make  
one up.

JULES  
I guess I didn't know we were  
staying over.

ERIN sighs.

ERIN  
I told you MULTIPLE times, we're  
staying at my Dad's house.

JULES stares at her.

JULES  
I don't remember that.

ERIN  
How do you not remember, did you  
think we were gonna just drive  
back after the service?

JULES  
I...I guess so.

ERIN slams the car boot.

JULES (CONT'D)  
I'm sorry, Ok!

ERIN  
It's fine, it's fine, we can't go  
back and get things now. You'll  
just have to sleep in your  
clothes.

JULES

Whatever.

ERIN puts her head in her hands.

ERIN

I can't believe all this is happening.

JULES

It'll be alright.

JULES opens her arms.

JULES (CONT'D)

Come here.

ERIN

How did you not know something like this was going to happen.

JULES lowers her arms.

JULES

What do you mean? The overnight bag? I'm not a fortune teller.

ERIN

Not that, the car!

JULES

Oh...I don't know I just assumed it would be ok.

ERIN

For a 3 hour drive?

JULES

For fucks sake, can you please stop bugging me about this!

ERIN

No, because I think something is going on.

JULES laughs.

JULES

You are insane. We'll be alright.

ERIN

No, I think something is going on that I don't know about that's stopping me from seeing my mum.

JULES

I think you need to sit down, lets get in the car.

ERIN (CONT'D)  
Did you even fill it up?

JULES  
What?

ERIN  
The car. Did you actually fill it  
up at the station?

JULES lets out an exasperated laugh.

ERIN (CONT'D)  
No, Jules. This isn't a joke. I'm  
being serious. I need you to tell  
me if you did or not.

JULES  
I...

JULES' mouth hangs open, but nothing else comes out.

ERIN  
Did you?

They stare at each other. The silence hangs, for too long.

ERIN scrunches up her face.

ERIN  
(Half-whisper)  
Jules?

Tears well up in ERIN's eyes.

JULES  
Erin, I-

ERIN  
Why would you do this?

JULES  
I'm sorry, I didn't think-

ERIN  
You didn't think what? That I'd  
notice?

JULES  
No...I just didn't think it  
through.

ERIN shakes her head and turns away, her palms to her face.  
She turns back around.

ERIN  
You didn't even call anyone, did  
you?

JULES just stares at her, mouth downturned.

ERIN (CONT'D)  
Is this about her?

Silence. ERIN exhales sharply, holding back a sob.

ERIN (CONT'D)  
You have to make everything about  
you, don't you.

JULES  
That's not...that's not what it  
is.

ERIN  
It all makes sense. You've been  
acting weird about it ever since  
she died. You've always been a  
terrible liar, I KNEW you were  
lying when you said you had that  
art show today.

JULES  
And I told you it was cancelled  
because I saw how upset you were  
that I couldn't come to the  
funeral!

ERIN  
See! You never wanted to come!  
You've been trying to find ways  
to avoid it for months!

JULES opens her mouth, exasperated.

JULES  
Of course I've been hesitant  
about it! Let's not ignore the  
fucking elephant in the room that  
is ME being around YOUR family. I  
came because you needed me to  
drive and I wanted to support  
you.

ERIN  
Well you're doing a great job of  
supporting me, aren't you.

JULES  
Didn't you ever consider how I'd  
feel?

ERIN  
Oh, FUCK you.

JULES  
I'm serious, you haven't once  
seen my point of view in this.

ERIN

What point of view? She's MY mother!

JULES

She didn't come to our wedding!

Pause. They stare at each other.

JULES

She wouldn't even let me inside her house. She wouldn't touch me. She wouldn't call me by my name. She sent me an email telling me that I was a disease on your family just for being in love with you. Did you ever consider how that hurt me? I spent YEARS feeling guilty about coming into your life and changing her relationship with you. I even considered breaking up with you just so you wouldn't have to deal with that, and I'm SO glad I didn't.

Pause.

JULES (CONT'D)

Look at the life we have now! We live in the city, we have money, we have everything we've ever wanted. And the best part is that I get to wake up next to you, every single day. So forgive me for not mourning the woman who almost took that away from me.

Pause. JULES rubs her face with her hands.

JULES (CONT'D)

I don't want to fight with you any more on this.

ERIN stares at her.

JULES (CONT'D)

I need to make a call.

She walks to her side of the car and climbs in. ERIN watches.

**EXT. ROADSIDE - DAY**

Some time later. ERIN is sat on the edge of the road, hugging her knees. She fiddles with her wedding ring, repeatedly twisting it round her finger.

She takes out her phone, dials a number and holds it to her ear, hands shaking.

ERIN

Hey Dad, it's me. How are you?...Good. Listen...I don't know if I'm gonna make it...I...I know...we had a breakdown...I don't think we'll be able to get a ride there...I know Dad...I'm sorry...I'm so sorry, I wish I could do something...please...please don't get upset, I...Dad?...Dad, are you there?

She takes her phone from her ear, leaning her face into her palm.

An engine hums in the distance. A small van appears, driving towards JULES' car.

ERIN stands, just as JULES gets out of the car. The truck parks on the other side of the road and LUIS (26) steps out to talk to JULES. ERIN watches.

LUIS takes a jerrycan out of the van and walks towards the car.

After a few moments JULES walks towards ERIN.

JULES

This is Luis, guy from my old uni who I've told you about.

ERIN

I thought you didn't call anyone.

JULES

I didn't. But I just called him because he lives nearby. He's filling up the car.

ERIN

OK.

JULES

And he's offered to give you a lift to the funeral.

ERIN

Me?

Pause.

JULES

I'm just gonna drive home.

ERIN opens her mouth to speak. Then she closes it.

JULES (CONT'D)  
I don't think I'm what you need  
right now.

JULES puts her hand on ERIN's arm.

JULES (CONT'D)  
I'm sorry.

They look at each other for a few moments, lips quavering slightly as if finding the right words.

LUIS  
You're good to go.

JULES  
Just go, you're wasting time.

She lowers her arm. ERIN hesitates, before going over to the van. JULES watches, tears beginning to fall. Before ERIN can notice, JULES gets back into the car.

**INT. CAR - DAY**

JULES settles into the drivers seat, sniffing. She wipes her eyes with her sleeve and checks her face in the rearview mirror. Her eyes divert to the little disco ball hanging from the mirror, and she pauses. She takes it between her finger and thumb, twirling it around.

The van engine starts. JULES switches the car on, turning on the radio, and begins to turn the car around as a bouncing pop song comes to an end.

RADIO DJ (V.O.)  
That was Carly Rae Jepsen setting  
the mood for this bright sunny  
Tuesday afternoon, just what you  
need to keep yourself moving.  
Now, if that's not the thing you  
need right now, next up is an  
absolute classic to remind all of  
you out there to take it slow.  
Take a break from all the bad  
stuff in the world, and tell  
someone you love them today. It  
might just be what they need to  
hear.

'Andante, Andante' begins to play again. JULES huffs sarcastically. As the vocals begin, she mournfully looks down at the radio.

She looks at herself in the rearview mirror, blinking back more tears.

**INT. VAN - DAY**

ERIN looks at herself in the van's rearview mirror as they drive down the road, the same song playing on the radio.

**INT. CAR - DAY**

JULES continues driving, her eyes wide, lost in thought. A look of confusion flashes across her face.

Just as the verse transitions into the soaring chorus, JULES takes a deep breath, breaks, and turns the car around.

She speeds back up the road, her foot pressing the accelerator lower and lower. The countryside on either side of the road whips past her.

**INT. VAN - DAY**

ERIN stares emptily at the road ahead. In the rearview mirror, JULES' car appears in the distance. She stares into the mirror.

ERIN  
(To LUIS)  
Hey, slow down!

She breaks into a smile.

**INT. CAR - DAY**

JULES gets closer and closer to the van. It begins to slow down. She smiles.