

HOLIDAY TRAFFIC

Written by

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FADE IN:

INT. 2012 FORD ESCAPE - NIGHT

ERIN (30-ish, female) waits in the dark inside a messily organized car, twisting her wedding band around and around on her finger. She checks her phone, sighing dramatically as it hits midnight. She looks out the window.

The porch of the modest suburban home is crowded with people, the kind of people who cover their front yard in blow up Christmas decorations 2 months early. MIDGE (30-ish, female) is finishing a final round of hugs with her family, their daughter LIL (2ish, very asleep) balanced on her hip.

Midge finally breaks away from the group, making her way to the car. Erin checks the time again. Midge opens the backdoor, skillfully lowering Lil into her car seat and buckling her in, the toddler totally oblivious. She glances at Erin, who is pointedly looking anywhere else.

MIDGE

(a little annoyed)

Mom was wondering where you disappeared to. I told her you had a headache.

Nothing.

Midge sighs. She finishes with Lil and closes the door as quietly as she can before climbing in the drivers seat. She pauses before turning the key, looking at Erin again.

MIDGE (CONT'D)

So we're just not going to talk about it?

Erin says nothing. She checks the time. Midge rolls her eyes and starts the car. She messes with the temperature controls, switches the radio to her favorite station and turns the volume down enough to keep it from waking up Lil.

MIDGE (CONT'D)

(exasperated)

Oh-kay.

Midge throws the car in reverse and backs them out of the driveway. She waves out the window to her family, still crowded on the front porch, as they pull away. A slightly creepy blow-up snowman sees them off.

TIME CUT:

They pull up to a stop light on an empty backroad. The rhythmic click of the blinker echoes in the silent car. Midge glances at Lil in the rearview mirror.

MIDGE (CONT'D)  
 (amused)  
 She's cuddling with her shoe.

Midge watches Erin. She catches the eye of Erin's reflection in the window.

ERIN  
 You can go right on red here.

Midge frowns. She turns back to the road.

She waits for the light to turn green.

TIME CUT:

They merge onto the highway. Midge quietly mumbles along to the radio, some country song by an artist who's name is probably Luke or Chris.

Only a mile or so later, the car slows to a stop- a traffic jam blocks all four lanes, break lights as far as the eye can see.

MIDGE  
 (drawing out the  
 syllables)  
 Oh, c'mon! Who is doing road work  
 on Thanksgiving?

Midge checks on Lil in the rearview mirror- she is unfazed. When Midge glances towards the passenger side again, Erin is looking right at her.

Midge raises her eyebrows. Erin frowns. She reaches over and turns down the radio, the final verse of Luke/Chris's song fading into oblivion.

The car inches forward with the traffic. Midge waits.

ERIN  
 (carefully)  
 It's just- you know I love your  
 family.

MIDGE  
 But?

ERIN

But- do we really have to do  
Thanksgiving with them every year?

MIDGE

(groans)

Babe, again? You know Thanksgiving  
is important to my mom.

ERIN

No, Christmas is important to your  
mom. Thanksgiving is just your  
homophobic aunts and uncles  
drinking too much wine and forcing  
us to eat their terrible pie.

MIDGE

They're not...

(pauses, thinking)

Well, they're not that homophobic.

ERIN

(snaps)

Just because they've "seen a few  
episodes of Queer Eye" doesn't  
absolve them of their  
accountability.

MIDGE

You're-

She cuts off at a noise from the backseat. They both freeze,  
listening for Lil's deep breath as she settles again.

They continue arguing in whispers.

MIDGE (CONT'D)

You're over-reacting.

ERIN

Oh I'm sorry, I didn't realize it's  
over reacting to be offended when  
good old Aunt Lisa asks if an  
elementary school would really hire  
"someone like me to teach  
children."

MIDGE

She didn't mean it like that.

ERIN

How did she mean it then?  
Someone...with curly hair? Someone  
who has tattoos?

MIDGE

Babe, c'mon.

ERIN

Or exactly as she said it, very specifically directed at the fact I am married to a woman?

MIDGE

Erin-

ERIN

(frustrated)

How does it not bother you!

MIDGE

(louder)

It does! Of course it bothers me, and it bothers me that it bothers you, but they're my family!

ERIN

(also louder)

That doesn't mean you just have to sit back and take all their bullshit! You can stand up for yourself, for me every once and a while!

MIDGE

(even louder than that)

What am I supposed to do, just never speak to them again? Like you? Not all of us are that cold.

Midge immediately claps a hand over her mouth, eyes wide, realizing what line she just crossed. Erin just stares at her.

MIDGE (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, babe I'm sorry, I know-

Midge trails off at a shake of Erin's head. Erin's face is emotionless, totally closed off. She reaches over and turns the radio back up. A female voice fills the car, crooning about heartbreak.

TIME CUT:

The traffic jam inches along slowly. When the lane moves again, a sports car (probably a tesla) cuts in front of them with no warning. Midge slams on the breaks and lays on the horn.

Lil startles awake and starts to cry.

MIDGE (CONT'D)

Shit-

Erin unbuckles and climbs into the back seat. She settles next to Lil, shushing her softly and running a hand through her hair.

ERIN

(softly, to Lil)

Shhh, it's okay. It's okay. Go back to sleep, love.

Midge watches them in the rearview mirror. Lil falls back asleep quickly.

MIDGE

I'm sorry.

Erin meets her eyes in the mirror. She clambers back into the front seat. Midge lets her get settled, then turns the radio down again.

MIDGE (CONT'D)

What would you do instead? Make your case.

ERIN

(annoyed)

Am I on trial?

MIDGE

I'm just trying to understand.

ERIN

Isn't it enough that your family makes me uncomfortable?

MIDGE

Yes. No. I don't know.

ERIN

(incredulous)

You "don't know" if you can support your wife?

MIDGE

That's not- why does this always have to be an argument?

ERIN

Because you still think like an "I" and this is a "we" now! **Our** family!

MIDGE

Our family can have traditions.

Erin throws her hands up and makes a noise of frustration. All pretense of trying to be quiet is forgotten.

ERIN

Our family can have it's own traditions- we don't just have to fold neatly in your pre-existing life! Gods, Midge, Lil and I aren't just here to check a box!

MIDGE

(defensive)

So I'm the bad guy? Because I like to actually celebrate holidays?

ERIN

That is not even remotely what I said.

MIDGE

(mumbling)

That's what it sounds like.

ERIN

I love celebrating Christmas with your parents! I know they are trying so hard. But for like the last seven years Thanksgiving has been a toxic environment, and you know it. It's not healthy. It's not what's best for-

Sirens interrupt. An ambulance races by on the shoulder, a second ambulance following not far behind.

Erin opens her mouth to continue her rant. Midge stops her.

MIDGE

No. I can't talk to you when you're like this.

ERIN

Babe-

MIDGE

Nope.

Erin huffs out a dramatic sigh and turns back towards the window.

ERIN  
(under her breath)  
Typical.

Midge's hands tighten on the steering wheel, knuckles white.

TIME CUT:

Inside the car is dead silent, tense. Erin twists her ring around and around, every now and then glancing at Midge in the reflection in the window.

Midge stares straight ahead. A tear slips down her cheek and she wipes it away quickly.

TIME CUT:

They near the source of the traffic back up, flashing emergency lights painting the car's interior in shades of red and blue. Erin sits at attention, craning her head to try and catch a glimpse past a firetruck. A grim police officer directs them to change lanes.

The accident comes into view as they maneuver around the blockage. Three cars are angled awkwardly in the road, smashed up, airbags deployed. One of the cars is flipped over. The road is littered with glass and metal.

Both ambulances are open. A group of people wrapped in shock blankets is crowded around one, being questioned by several police officers. EMT's attend to a smaller body on a stretcher, loading it into the second ambulance.

A distraught woman sits on the ground next to a body bag.

Erin and Midge's gazes make their way across the scene, landing on the woman at the same time. Erin freezes, eyes going wide.

Midge gasps. Her hand is shaking as it moves to find Erin's, holding on tight.

Erin squeezes her hand. Midge turns to face her. Erin carefully reaches to wipe the tear tracks off of Midge's cheeks. She softly kisses the back of Midge's hand.

Midge threads their fingers together and squeezes back.

**END**