Untethered

by

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Characters:

Zoe, *28, English woman.*
Claire, *28, English woman.*

Scene 1

Night. A small boutique hotel room with two single beds. There is a table in between the two beds with a lamp on it. There are brochures, documents, a hand lotion and a brush lying around the lamp. Two suitcases lie next to a small writing table. One looks neatly packed while the other has clothes spilling out of it. ***CLAIRE*** *wears a pajama and T-shirt and sits on one of the single beds with a pen and a newspaper trying to solve a crossword puzzle.* ***ZOE*** *wears an expensive looking silk nightie and paces along the room speaking on her mobile phone.*

ZOE Baby do you want to stay on the phone with me till you fall asleep?
(pause)
No, I know honey.
(pause)
Yes. Yes. I'll talk to daddy.
(pause)
Yes, I know. Daddy didn't do it he promised. Why would daddy send Barry in to the forest?
(pause)
Sweetie, Barry will be fine. How about, when I come back you and I can pay a visit to the pet store?
(pause)
No, daddy will not send it away. I promise. Okay bug?
(pause)
I love you.
(Pause)
I'll speak to you soon honey. Bye.

CLAIRE Fourteen across, struck with terror.

ZOE What?

CLAIRE Crossword puzzle. Six letter word.

ZOE I am going to kill Dave when I get back home.

CLAIRE What did he do?

ZOE He has been behaving like a child.
He got rid of Evie's turtle today. He didn't even tell me. Evie called me up crying, I didn't know what to say to her.
Poor baby.
Dave is such a prick. And stupid.
And his stupidity makes him so impulsive.

CLAIRE Is Evie still upset?

ZOE She's angry.

CLAIRE How?
How did he get rid of it?

ZOE Flushed it down the toilet.

CLAIRE Oh no. Why?

ZOE Said that the turtle stunk up the whole house and that it didn't do anything other than eat and poop tons.
I mean I do agree that Barry was a shit of a pet but Evie was so happy.
It's you, so I can tell you that I have been wanting to get rid of that thing for the longest time. I kept hoping it would choke on its own piece of turd or something but I didn't go and kill it.

CLAIRE What did Dave have to say about it?

ZOE He said that he figured the turtle would be better of living in the gutter with all the shit in the world he wanted.
Its not even a water turtle. It's one of those you know, with those red streaks that live on both water and land. The poor thing must have drowned.

CLAIRE Yeah.

ZOE When I said that to Dave he said he didn't care.
And then he added that when he put the turtle in the pot, for a second it looked like the turtle looked like it was scared out of wits.

CLAIRE Where would one leave a turtle though?

ZOE I don't know. Near a pond or a lake. Not in your toilet.

CLAIRE Yeah.

ZOE Anyways can we stop at a toy store tomorrow?

CLAIRE Yeah, yeah sure.

ZOE I have to do something to cheer up Evie.
So, what are we doing tomorrow?

CLAIRE Natural History Museum. They have a Dodo exhibit on loan from the Smithsonian Institute.

ZOE Dodo exhibit?

CLAIRE Did you know that exact appearance of a Dodo is debatable? They existed before cameras so since no complete skeleton had been found no one really knew what it actually looked like?

CLAIRE *pulls a brochure from a stack of them on the bedside table.*

ZOE So what is in this exhibit then?

CLAIRE In June 2007 explorers found a cave with a complete skeleton of a dodo inside. Although now there is a better idea of the bird's physical structure, the colouring, plumage and girth are still in doubt.

ZOE And why do we want to see that?

CLAIRE I just want to.

ZOE Can't we see other exhibits? Victoria and Albert is right opposite Natural History and they always have some good exhibit on every time. Cara was here few months back and she was talking about some brilliant sounding ball gown display. Now that I would love to see. Dodos. That sounds really dull. If I was with Evie maybe then that would interest her but she would want to see the dinosaurs.

CLAIRE Zoe.

ZOE What?

CLAIRE *shrugs and puts the brochure back on the table.*

CLAIRE You know what, lets not go there.You are right we can go somewhere else. It's not that important.

ZOE Oh God I am so sorry. I didn't realise.This is for Zach. It is, isn't it?

CLAIRE He was fascinated with them. He was a weird little kid.

ZOE No lets do it. Let's go see the dodos.

CLAIRE Thanks.

ZOE Good.
Have you looked for another jobs?

CLAIRE Yes.

ZOE Where? Did you get a pay raise?

CLAIRE(*hesitantly*) Okay, I lied. I haven't started looking for one yet.
I don't think I can start looking for one right now.

ZOE When will you start looking then?

CLAIRE Maybe after this trip?

ZOE Claire its been 3 months.

CLAIRE I know, my bank account reminds me that every day.

ZOE How are you doing? Money wise.

CLAIRE Using my savings. I have a bit left over but I do need to start earning again.

ZOE Will you be going back to the same job?

CLAIRE I guess. There's not much else I know about.

ZOE If you are having money issues you know I can help you with it. We don't need to be staying in this hotel, we could move in somewhere cheaper you know.
I am fine. I really don't care where we stay.
I just want to spend time with you.

CLAIRE I am getting by right now, don't worry.

ZOE Are you sure?

CLAIRE Yes, yes I am.

ZOE And.
Have you spoken to his parents recently?

CLAIRE I don't feel like talking about it any more.

ZOE *looks like she wants to say something more but she just does not know how to say it.*

ZOE Sure.
Sorry.
(pause)
Are you seeing anyone?

CLAIRE I haven't had the time.

ZOE What has been taking up your time?

CLAIRE Lot's of things.

ZOE There's this guy, Peter.

CLAIRE I don't want to be set up.

ZOE He works some times for Dave doing odd jobs.

CLAIRE I don't care.

ZOE He is reliable.

CLAIRE Reliable?

ZOE I mean he has a good job, he seems nice.

CLAIRE Nice.

ZOE I've met him a couple of times and he is nice, there's no other word that I have for him because he is that nice.
Come on Claire, how long has it been since you've had a serious relationship. I was trying not to bring it up but I think now I can.
Peter is good, he'll suit you.

CLAIRE How do you know he'll suit me? You and I haven't really been touch have we?
We are only doing this trip because

ZOE Because we needed it.
So what? I still know what kind of men you are in to.
Fine this guy is charming and quiet fit.

CLAIRE Has he been charming you?

ZOE No.
Dave told me to set you up with him.

CLAIRE So this was Dave's idea. And how well does Dave know me?

ZOE That's not the point.
You will like him.

CLAIRE I don't have to like him just because you do, that's not how it works.

ZOE I am pretty sure you would. I am not going to push this any more. If you fancy it let me know and I'll fix it up. That is all I am saying about it now.
(pause)
So where are we going after the museum.

CLAIRE I was thinking we could head to Covent garden. Or we could look for cheap tickets for a musical in Leicester square. You know one of those booths that we saw while we were on the red bus.

ZOE I wouldn't mind a musical. We could have a pre theatre dinner and then go for one. Which do you fancy?

CLAIRE You choose.

ZOE *takes the brochures and looks at them.*

ZOE There's Woman in black.

CLAIRE Like that Harry Potter guy's movie.

ZOE Yes but it sounds scary.

CLAIRE Yeah.

ZOE There's Lion King, Wicked, We will Rock you. I don't like any of these.

CLAIRE Billy Elliot?

ZOE That might be expensive.

CLAIRE Should we go to the booth and see what tickets they have?

ZOE That'll be a good idea.

ZOE *sits on the bed puts lotion on her hand and neck.*

Good night.

CLAIRE Night.

ZOE Are you okay?

CLAIRE Yeah.

ZOE *switches the bedside table lamp off.*

Scene 2

CLAIRE *and* **ZOE** *are in their own beds. Light from the street lamps outside pour in.*

CLAIRE So he flushed it?

ZOE What?

CLAIRE *switches on the lamp.*

CLAIRE Even though Dave thought the turtle seemed to be scared out of its wits he still flushed it?

ZOE Yeah I guess.

CLAIRE So Evie knows that David flushed her turtle?

ZOE She suspects it was him but I can't tell my six year old that her father is a monster who flushes turtles down the toilet. Dave told her that Barry must have some how escaped the tank.

CLAIRE I doubt she bought that.

ZOE No, so he tried to sell her the idea of Barry being a crime fighting turtle and when she didn't believe that he decided to go and download Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles.

CLAIRE That is actually smart.

ZOE Evie is smarter she is still convinced that its her father's doing because he always refused to hold Barry.
I really don't get why Dave has to behave so unparenty.
His excuse was that since Evie is six she will get over it.
I really can't understand him at times.

CLAIRE Why didn't he just return it to the toy store?

ZOE I don't know Claire, Dave has been acting crazy lately.

CLAIRE Is everything okay?

ZOE There are days when I do think everything is fine, then there are days when I wonder what went wrong.

ZOE *turns to her side and faces* **CLAIRE**

ZOE You know what my grand mum told me the day I told her I was engaged?

CLAIRE What?

ZOE She said the day I get married I would want to have an affair.

CLAIRE That was something I would expect her to tell me.

ZOE She said that I would because my generation didn't value wedding vows so much.
That it wasn't sacred enough for us.
And now I catch myself thinking whether I do want to have an affair.

CLAIRE Shut up, you don't.

ZOE I do.

CLAIRE Don't take your nana so seriously, if you ask me I always thought she was a cynic.

ZOE You just didn't like her.

CLAIRE Of course I didn't, she always made me cry.
Do you remember the time I had come to your house to spend the band holiday weekend?
We had stolen mint schnapps and spend hours talking about George, the spanish exchange student in class.

ZOE Yes. Yes. What did we call him?

CLAIRE Smexy pants.

ZOE We were a bunch of horny nerds.

CLAIRE Ha ha yeah.

ZOE Wasn't that the weekend when we tried giving each other brazilians?

CLAIRE Oh god yes. That was painful.

ZOE I don't remember which was more painful. That or having Evie.

CLAIRE So anyways I don't remember where you were and your Nana comes to me and tells me that I need to catch a man of my own soon. I instead of ignoring her stupidly asked her why.
She takes my hand in hers and looks at me.
Almost kindly
She then tucks a piece of hair behind my ear.

ZOE Just like the movies?

CLAIRE I actually thought I was in a movie.
So she tucks a piece of hair behind my ear and at the moment I think she is going to say something sweet and un-Nana type to me.
You know what she says?
She said that I just wasn't pretty enough to be on my own.

ZOE Wow.

CLAIRE Yeah.

ZOE There has been times.

CLAIRE What? When I haven't been pretty enough?

ZOE No, of course not.
Times when I had a chance to have an affair.

CLAIRE Tell me you didn't do anything about it.

ZOE Claire!

CLAIRE Well you seem to be really in to this.

ZOE Do I?

CLAIRE Yes. It really sounds like you want to have an affair.
And if you don't, then why do you keep bringing it up?

ZOE I am just being silly.

CLAIRE David loves you and Evie is amazing.

ZOE Yeah I know.

ZOE *switches the light off.*

CLAIRE By the way your Nana also told me that I was an experiment from my mum and dad's hippie days.

ZOE Oh Claire, you really didn't get on with Nana did you?

CLAIRE Actually,
There are days when I miss her. I don't why would I miss someone who was so mean, but I do. I was convinced that the reason she always wore shoes around the house was because she had hooves instead of feet. I wore a cross for a whole month to see whether she would keep away.

ZOE Was that why you wore it? I thought you had suddenly become a devout Christian or something.

CLAIRE For a month?

ZOE She wasn't that bad.

CLAIRE Yeah, there was a good day.

ZOE Just the one?

CLAIRE Yes.
She was just,
understanding.
It was right after I had broken up with Jack. In sixth form.

ZOE I remember him. He always had a boner whenever you were around.

CLAIRE He had a boner whenever any girl was around. Why do you think he always carried that folder around.
Well, I was waiting in your house for you, you were with your mum and dad.
I was being mopey and your nana walked in to your room and asked whether I was feeling low.
I said that she would be happy to know that I had been just dumped by my one true love.

ZOE Oh god. You just had a thing with him.

CLAIRE A thing?
I did no just have a thing with him Zoe. I did absolutely love him. It must sound stupid now but that was the time when you were having issues with your mum and dad and Jack was the only one around.
I had boys around who just wanted to behind the school building and wanted me to jerk them off or feel me up.
They all thought I would be up for it and said that I had a reputation.

ZOE You never told me that.

CLAIRE You were never around then to ask me.
But Jack was.
I told your Nana that. I told her how Jack would stay back after school and walk me home every day. He actually listened and he never once asked me for anything.
We even wanted to go to the same university together Zoe. I really think we had fallen for each other. There was a point where I thought that he would be the person I would want to be, I don't know, tethered to.

ZOE How romantic.
Then why did you break up?

CLAIRE Honestly?
I don't know.
He said he just couldn't be around me anymore.
I think he might have been put off by me and my drama.
Nana told me that if I was feeling sad then I should scream. I should scream as loud as I want for as long as I wanted and it would be out.
That I would purging my emotions.

Suddenly a muffled scream fills the room. **CLAIRE** *switches on the light.* **ZOE** *is lying face down and is screaming in to a pillow.* **CLAIRE** *removes the duvet quickly and stands beside* **ZOE** *shaking her.*

CLAIRE Zoe!
Zoe!
Zoe, what's wrong. Stop screaming. Shut up you will wake up the hotel. Shut up.

ZOE *stops. She turns around.*

ZOE Catharsis.

CLAIRE Are you mad? You gave me such a fright. What is wrong with you?

ZOE I am sorry.

CLAIRE Jesus.

ZOE Aghast.

CLAIRE Have you suffered a stroke?

ZOE The answer to your crossword puzzle. Six letter word for struck with terror. Aghast.

CLAIRE Okay.

ZOE *sits up and picks up the hair brush lying beside the lamp. She brushes her hair while* **CLAIRE** *stares at her shocked.*

CLAIRE You are scaring me Zoe, what is wrong.

ZOE Can we order some room service?

CLAIRE Sure.

ZOE *looks at the alarm clock next to the bed and walks to the writing desk and opens a drawer. She pulls out the room service menu.*

ZOE I feel like chinese.

ZOE *flips through the menu.*

ZOE I think I am going to order Kung Pao Chicken with some rice. Do you want something?

CLAIRE *shakes her head.* **ZOE** *picks up the phone and dials.*

ZOE Hello room service?
Yeah hi, I am calling from room no 212 and would like to place an order please. Could I get a portion of rice and Kung Pao chicken?

Yes.
And no onions please.
No none at all.
Thank you. How long will it be?
Half an hour? Just a second.

ZOE *turns around to* **CLAIRE**.

ZOE Are you sure you don't want anything?

CLAIRE Yes.

ZOE I am buying.

CLAIRE I am fine, thanks.

ZOE *(speaking in to the phone)* Okay, that's fine thank you.
No that'll be all. Thanks.

CLAIRE Are you seriously not going to tell me what is wrong. You have food on your mind right now?

ZOE I am hungry.

CLAIRE Listen Zoe, I know we are not that close any more but you can still tell me what is on your mind.
We are here on this trip so that we can bond again. I have had an amazing time reminiscing about the past with you since this trip started but we haven't had a real conversation yet.
Can you please, please tell me what is bothering you.
You haven't said two words about you and your life to me other than the shit about the turtle.

ZOE I went to this children's designer boutique last week and saw these shoes for Evie. For £65.
I didn't understand why Evie had to have those kind of expensive shoes but I also didn't know why she didn't have to, you know.
On one hand, I was thinking that her feet are growing so she wouldn't be able to wear these for long but then I was thinking why should I be buying Mother care or M and S crap for £15.
Since her feet are growing she needs good shoes. Shoes with good support and balance and since these were for £65 they must most definitely have those.

CLAIRE Zoe I am tired.

ZOE You really want to know what is going on in my life, Claire?
Nothing! Absolutely nothing.
I am bored. David is bored and we find each other boring. I have this restlessness growing in me.
Its making me a little mad I think.

I want to jump in to a lake, sky dive or something. I want to get away from it. I want to get away from my house, my husband
and my daughter. I am such a disgusting mother. But the fact is that my daughter bores me to tears Claire. I think I am going to pieces.
I am just so disappointed.
I just,
I just wanted it to be different.
I wanted another life.
And I am scared, scared that i'll do something stupid and drastic to change things.