

FLOODPLAIN

Written by

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Based on the Short Story

"Floodplain"

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EXT. BUNGALOW - DAY

Old cars lie around the back yard of a panelboard bungalow. A girl, YOUNG VIC (9) in a checkered ball cap runs around the corner of the bungalow, looking back at a YOUNG DUNCAN (9), in overalls, following her.

RIBBIT. A frog. She stops in her tracks.

YOUNG VIC
Do you hear that?

YOUNG DUNCAN
Hear what?

She scans the ground, gets down on her knees and scoops something up in her hands and cups them. Peeks inside.

YOUNG DUNCAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Cool!

He checks out an old Benz. Runs his hand across the hood.

YOUNG VIC
Don't you want to see it?

BEHIND THE BENZ

They sit down, her hands still cupped. She opens her hands to reveal a tiny frog. It jumps away.

YOUNG DUNCAN
You let it go.

She's not listening. He follows her gaze out across--

A MAJESTIC FLOODPLAIN.

The bungalow's yard opens out onto groundwater, reaching across swamp grass far as the eye can see, mountains distant.

YOUNG VIC
I want to sail across that one day.

YOUNG DUNCAN
I could build a raft.

YOUNG VIC
We could.

The floodplain, as before.

YOUNG VIC (O.S.) (CONT'D)
I can't even see where it ends.

EXT. BUNGALOW - DAY - NINE YEARS LATER

The same checkered ball cap keeps purple hair out of the eyes of VIC (18), as she leans against the rusted Benz. A pretty tomboy, she dresses like a logger in denim shorts. Plain old DUNCAN (18), grease-stained hands, sits beside her.

They stare at the horizon, challenged by the floodplain.

VIC
Think it'll float this time?

DUNCAN
It'll float. You ready?

VIC
You bring the whiskey?

He thumps a mickey of whiskey on her chest and gets up.

DUNCAN
Come on.

THE WATER'S EDGE

Duncan regards a beached raft, hand-cobbled from the top of the old Benz, cull-lumber, rain barrel pontoons, complete with futon facing an old headboard astern.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)
Help me with this rat bag.

MOMENTS LATER

Vic and Duncan push the raft with all their might, and slowly force it into the water. It lurches at first, then steadies itself. It floats. Duncan grins and claps his hands together.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)
Yes!

He looks at Vic, who stares at the raft. She smiles back and runs in. Clambers onto the raft.

EXT. FLOODPLAIN - LATER

The raft rests close to shore. Vic sits on the futon, watching Duncan struggle astern with a PVC pipe in the water.

VIC
You gotta punt. Push off like a pole jumper.

DUNCAN
I'm tryin', Vic.

Vic grabs a fistful of knotgrass extending from the water. Drops them on the deck and plays with one. Snaps it in two.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)
This really isn't my thing.

VIC
You have a thing?

DUNCAN
You've seen it.

VIC
Shut up. I'm not your girlfriend.

DUNCAN
You're a girl-friend.

VIC
I'm a fun one. Not a proper one.

DUNCAN
Long as you're a fun one today.

VIC
Maybe if you get us to the middle.

He punts with sudden vigor.

EXT. FLOODPLAIN - DAY

The raft lies in the middle of the floodland, tiny against the mountains. Vic swigs from the mickey. Duncan punts on.

The raft rocks like a water bed.

VIC
You smell like an engine.

DUNCAN
That's what I am. I'm the motorboat.

Vic waves the whiskey at Duncan. He pulls the pipe out of the water and lays it across the stern. He PLOPS onto the futon, rocking the raft. Vic hangs on tight. Duncan grins.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)
Is this middle enough?

She smacks him in the chest with the whiskey.

VIC
Jerk.

DUNCAN
Glad we got this done.

He drinks.

VIC
I wonder what it's like in winter.

DUNCAN
We'll have to come out.

He passes it back.

VIC
Let's not make plans.

DUNCAN
Are you kidding?

She grabs the bottle from him. Slugs the whiskey. A big gulp.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)
We didn't seriously build this to
come out only once, right?

VIC
I'm going away in two weeks.

DUNCAN
Where are you goin'?

VIC
University.

DUNCAN
What do you mean University?

VIC
I'm going to study ecology. I'm
going to learn about how a frog
relates to a floodplain, or a--

DUNCAN
What the hell do you mean, "you're
going to university"?

VIC
It's what I wanna do, Dunc, and
it's already planned.

DUNCAN
You didn't plan it with me.

VIC
Why would I?

This shuts him up.

VIC (CONT'D)
When I visit, we can sail.

She pats the futon like a good dog.

DUNCAN
What if I don't take us back?

VIC
Really? You think that's going to
keep me here?

DUNCAN
I'd tell you I got you an
engagement ring if I thought it'd
keep you here.

She bolts up.

VIC
Did you--

DUNCAN
Aw, Jesus--

VIC
Duncan, you can't just say that.

DUNCAN
Everyone's leaving. First my old
man, now you.

VIC
I'm not leaving you.

Duncan burns a hole through her with his eyes. Looks away.

VIC (CONT'D)
Do you think anywhere on Earth has
more of nothing than here?

A beat.

DUNCAN
What, like a desert or the pit of
my stomach?

VIC
I'm being figurative.

DUNCAN
I never thought you'd dump me in a
marsh.

VIC
It's not a marsh.

DUNCAN
They gonna teach you that in your
fancy college?

VIC
Yeah. In two weeks' I'll be in
marsh class.

DUNCAN
Why didn't you tell me?

VIC
I'm scared. Like if I told you I
wouldn't be able to go. Or of not
seeing you anymore. Of being
lonely, or something.

DUNCAN
Everybody likes you.

He watches Vic snap knotgrass in two. She leans in.

VIC
Nobody likes me like you like me.

She kisses him. She kisses him again. He kisses back--

SKIP BACK TO A MOMENT BEFORE

DUNCAN
Everybody likes you.

Duncan watches Vic snap knotgrass in two. He waits a moment.
Vic doesn't look at Duncan.

VIC
(disappointed)
Thanks, Duncan.

DUNCAN
What do you want do?

VIC
I dunno. What do you wanna do?

DUNCAN
We could have sex.

She slugs him. In the shoulder.

VIC
You're such a boy.

He kisses her. She kisses back. He tickles her. She shoves
him, but he pulls her with him and she lands on his chest,
his arms around her. They kiss again.

He reaches under her shirt-- she squirms, laughing, tries to
push him out. He slides up further, which tickles her more.

VIC (CONT'D)
Stop it!

DUNCAN
I'm tryin' to touch your boob.

Vic shrieks from laughter, and she jerks them into rolling
right off the futon into--

THE WATER

Under the muddy water, momentum carries their bodies down.

Head over heels, Duncan blindly reaches out-- finds Vic. Grabs her around the ribs and draws her close to him. They hang in the water, suspended a moment. She pushes him away.

ON THE SURFACE

Duncan surfaces, gasps for air. He can stand.

A moment later, Vic just barely pops up, grabs Duncan's shoulders. Tilts her chin up to get her nose and mouth out of the water. Duncan wipes some moss off her cheek.

VIC
(sober)
Duncan. Duncan, I'm stuck.

DUNCAN
What's stuck?

Vic spits out water.

VIC
Something's got my foot.

DUNCAN
Probably it's grass.

VIC
Duncan?

Duncan heaves-- trying to pull her up. She doesn't budge, but swallows water. Chokes it out.

VIC (CONT'D)
Duncan!

DUNCAN
There's no waves or nothin'.

VIC
You're holding me up.

DUNCAN
You can touch.

VIC
I can't.

DUNCAN
You can.

VIC
Don't let me go.

DUNCAN
I've got my pen knife, okay? Just keep your head up and-- and think about college or somethin'.

VIC
Okay.

Duncan breathes in and submerges. Moments pass. He surfaces.

VIC (CONT'D)
Can you see?

DUNCAN
Not really.

VIC
Duncan... it's gonna be okay.

DUNCAN
It'll just a take a minute.

Duncan takes a deep breath, and submerges--

BENEATH THE SURFACE

Duncan pushes himself past her thrashing arms until his hand touches the vegetation that binds her to the marsh, a tangled mess of thick grass roots.

He saws his pocketknife against the grass. Some of it splits--

INT. UNIVERSITY CLASSROOM - DAY - THE FUTURE

In class, Vic pauses her note-taking and raises her hand.

EXT. UNDERWATER - NIGHT

Duncan squints as he saws more grass. Air escapes his mouth.

INT. BIOLOGY LAB - DAY - THE FUTURE

Vic crushes over a CHISELED NERD (mid-20s) as he looks up from his microscope and offers her the view. She accepts.

EXT. UNDERWATER - DAY - PRESENT

Duncan saws away. Nicks Vic's leg. Blood.

EXT. FLOODPLAIN - DAY - PRESENT

Vic's mouth sputters at mouth level, still tilted up.

EXT. POND - DAY - THE FUTURE

Cupped hands open, revealing a small frog. Vic looks from her hands to her Chiseled Nerd and kisses him.

EXT. UNDERWATER - DAY - PRESENT

Duncan stops sawing. Withdraws his knife. Vic's ankle remains trapped on a root. Duncan shuts his eyes.

EXT. POND - DAY - THE FUTURE

As their kiss grows more passionate, Vic tosses the frog aside and folds herself into the Chiseled Nerd's embrace.

EXT. UNDERWATER - DAY - PRESENT

Duncan opens his eyes. He snaps the root with his pen-knife.

ON THE SURFACE

Vic bobs up, choking on water.

UNDERWATER

Air bubbles out Duncan's mouth. They stop. Duncan hangs in the water. Still.

EXT. FLOODPLAIN - DAY

Vic struggles to hoist herself up. Stops. Looks around.

VIC

Duncan?

Nothing. Then--

Duncan surfaces. Wipes his eyes.

EXT. FLOODPLAIN - DAY

Duncan and Vic face each other on the raft, soaking wet. Slowly, he unbuttons her shirt. Slides it over her shoulders.

MONTAGE

--He slides her denim shorts off over her legs.

--He pulls his shirt over his head.

--He removes his jeans.

--Wet clothes lie out to dry on the raft's deck.

Vic, underwear-clad, lays out on the futon-bed. Duncan lies down beside Vic and spoons with her.

VIC

Thanks for saving me.

DUNCAN
I didn't save you.

She rolls over to face him.

VIC
You're a complex guy.

Vic runs her hand over his thigh. He graces his hand down the center of her chest.

DUNCAN
I just like you a lot.

He gently snaps the centre of her bra. She snaps the elastic of his underwear-- not so gently.

Vic props herself on her elbows, spaces out at the horizon.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)
Do you think that one day we might
be able to do this again?

VIC
Remember when we were kids? I still
can't see where it ends.

DUNCAN
You're looking at it wrong.

This piques her curiosity.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)
It ends at the shore.

She considers this.

VIC
We never thought of that, did we?

DUNCAN
No.

VIC
You wanna float a while longer?

DUNCAN
Yeah.

FADE OUT.

