Shapeless Time

By

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Five people ride around in a car: ABBY (36) drives; VIVIAN (34) rides shotgun and scrolls through her phone. DANNY (5), HARRY (3), and GEMMA (1) are in the back.

DANNY
Mommy Harry keeps breathing on me.

ABBY
Well everyone has to breathe Danny.

DANNY
No but he’s breathing ON me.
(no response)
Like Mommy I mean like he’s really breathing ON me.

GEMMA
(very softly to herself)
Pah pah pah pah pah pah pah.

VIVIAN
(over-enthusiastic)
Yes! Pah pah pah pah pah!

Gemma is silent.

DANNY
Mommy can you tell him to stop breathing on me?

ABBY
Harry would you please stop breathing on your brother?

HARRY
I’m not Harry!
(no response)
MOMMY I’M NOT HARRY!

ABBY
Oh I’m sorry, who are you?
I’m Phil!  

You’re - Phil?  

He means from Hercules.  

Oh you’re Phil.  

Hi Phil!  

Hi.  

What’s it like being a goat?  

I’m not a goat actually.  

Yeah actually Phil is a satyr.  

VIVIAN
(still scrolling through her phone)
Oh wow. That’s super cool.

Aunt Vivian?  

Yeah.
DANNY
You use your phone a lot.

Abby and Vivian laugh.

DANNY
Don’t laugh mommy!

ABBY
Honey, we’re not laughing at you.

VIVIAN
We’re laughing at me.
Because, sometimes, when something’s very true, it’s funny.

Why?

DANNY
I don’t know.
But it happens. And you’re right, I do use my phone too much. I’m addicted.

VIVIAN
What’s addicted?

DANNY
Vivian looks apologetically at Abby, who shrugs.

VIVIAN
It’s - it means you like something a lot. Like more than you should.

GEMMA
Bah bah bah bah bah bah bah

DANNY
Gemma is addicted to saying bah bah bah.
VIVIAN
Yes, yes, she is.

ABBY
(glancing at Vivian’s phone)
I don’t know how you can stand twitter.

VIVIAN
Oh I love it. I mean - it’s terrible. Sometimes I just think I inherited all the
terribleness and you got all the niceness/ like -

ABBY
No way - / no way -

VIVIAN
I love reading people saying all these awful and mean and crazy things that I would never say and like if I agree with them, it’s so cathartic that someone is finally saying it and if I disagree it’s so fun to judge them and - see - see - this is what I’m talking about I’m mean -

HARRY
Mommy.

Mommy.

MOMMY!

ABBY
Honey you can see I’m talking to Aunt Vivian.

HARRY
Mommy what are we doing after we go to the hardware store?

ABBY
We’re going back home.

VIVIAN
“Same thing we do every day Pinky - go right back and sit around at home.”
Abby laughs.

ABBY
Like are there other things?
I’m hoping maybe this environment where they only see the same 2 lawns and 8 people is like - more like a caveman childhood.
Like maybe this is how it’s *supposed* to be for kids.
I hope.
I don’t think it’s true but I hope.

DANNY
Mommy we’re not *cavemen*.

ABBY
No you’re not cavemen.

DANNY
We would need a cave.

They pull up at the drugstore.

VIVIAN
Oh shoot you’re gonna kill me.
Did you remember a mask?
Can I use your mask? Is that gross?

HARRY
We don’t say gross.

ABBY
I think it’s okay? I don’t know, whatever.
Okay so Aunt Vivian is going to go into the store.

HARRY
Mommy can we go into the store with Aunt Vivian?

ABBY
No.
DANNY
Because of the virus.

VIVIAN
Exactly, because of the virus.
Okay last chance? Who needs hardware?
(no response)
Bye Gemma.
(to Abby)
Her milk is there.
Oh and if she freaks out you can sing “Oh What a Beautiful Morning.”
(to Gemma)
Bye honey.

Vivian gets out of the car.

HARRY
Mommy I’m not Phil actually I’m Olaf.

ABBY
Okay.

DANNY
Mommy what are we doing this afternoon?

ABBY
We’re going to go for a drive.
Maybe to see the lighthouse?
Or we could go drive past that big house you like.
Or we could... drive to... we could drive to that big hill.
You know that one where we saw the bird -

HARRY
Mommy we go for a drive too much!

ABBY
Olaf are you flurrying?
HARRY

Um... yeah.

Gemma bursts into tears.

ABBY

Oh, Danny, can you give her some of her puffs?

Danny hands Gemma a small tupperware of puffs. She stops crying.

DANNY

BA BA BA

GEMMA

Ba ba ba

DANNY

BA BA BA BA

GEMMA

BA BA BA BA ABA DA DA DA BA!

Beat.

DANNY

Mommy can we go to the petting zoo?

ABBY

No, we can’t honey. It’s closed.

DANNY

Because of the virus.

ABBY

That’s right, because of the virus.
HARRY
NO MOMMY DON’T SAY THAT!
(no response)
NO MOMMY I’M TIRED OF YOU SAYING THAT!

Okay.

HARRY
Mommy don’t say that.

Okay.

Harry starts to quietly hum “This Will All Make Sense When I am Older” from Frozen 2. He occasionally knows a word or two and sings those but most of the time he hums.

DANNY
Mommy you’re addicted to saying “okay.”

ABBY
Well, that’s not quite - let’s not use that word actually.

Why?
Mommy why?

DANNY
That’s a grownup word.

ABBY

HARRY
Mommy why?

It just is.
DANNY
Do you think Daddy will be able to come up this weekend?

ABBY
No, he can’t.

DANNY
Mommy that’s not nice, for you to say that.

ABBY
Well, it’s the truth, and it’s nice to tell people the truth.

Harry has reached the point in the song where Olaf says “being watched by something with a creepy creepy face” and then Olaf starts screaming -

HARRY
Aaaaaaaaaaahhh! Aaaaaaaaaaahhhh!

GEMMA
Aaaa! Aaa!

DANNY
Mommy it’s still not nice.

ABBY
He’ll be up next weekend.

Harry keeps humming.

HARRY
This will all make sense when I am older... Doop dee doop dee doop dee doop dee doo.

Vivian returns.
How was it?

80% masks?

Not bad. I guess.

Home again home again jiggity jig!

Jiggity jig! Jiggity jig!

Right back home.

Gemma, who has been fighting with her small tupperware, bursts into tears.

I feel you, Gemma, I feel you.

Gemma just cries.

Do you want your milk? Here’s your milk.

Gemma throws her milk on the ground.

Mommy I don’t like her crying when I’m singing.
ABBY
Well I’m sorry honey I’m powerless to stop it.

VIVIAN
We’ll be home soon honey. This’ll be over soon.

HARRY
Mommy we go home too much!

VIVIAN
I saw - haha, I actually saw this thing on twitter about like, gender and Covid and storytelling? And like, all stories ever being predicated on people leaving home, like Luke Skywalker leaves home, Elsa and Anna leave home, Odysseus leaves home, but like, we don’t have paradigms for a meaningful life in which you stay at home, and basically, that’s why everyone is losing their shit, is because if you can’t leave home your story never begins, so there’s no progression, and your life loses all meaning. Like the consequence of undifferentiated time is you go crazy.

While she talks, Vivian dangles a mask over Gemma’s face. This distracts Gemma and she begins to calm down a little bit.

DANNY
We don’t say crazy.

VIVIAN
Except, moms have always faced shapeless time.

ABBY
Oh my God totally.

VIVIAN
Which is also like, the patriarchy - breastfeeding women can’t leave home, therefore mothers can’t go on heroic journeys, therefore we don’t tell stories about mothers. But even after breastfeeding -
ABBY
It’s like, get up every morning and do the exact same thing and nothing exciting happens, that’s always been life for moms.

VIVIAN
Exactly.
And now - everyone in the world is becoming like a mom.
And they can’t take it.
They’re going crazy.

DANNY
Mommy I don’t understand what you guys are talking about.

ABBY
That’s okay honey.

DANNY
No but I don’t like when I don’t understand what you guys are talking about.

ABBY
Well we won’t talk about it anymore.
What do you want to talk about?

Beat. Danny isn’t sure.

HARRY
Mommy! Mommy I’m not Olaf actually.

ABBY
Really?

HARRY
Yeah. I’m Tigger.

ABBY
That’s great honey.
HARRY
Yeah.

GEMMA
MAH! MAH! MAH! MAH! MAH! MAH! MAH!

End of play.