

THE CIRCLE OF VICE

Written by

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INT. MOUNTAINSIDE APARTMENTS - DAY

DIANA (23), sits on the couch with a million photos sprawled around her. TYPING away on her laptop, her eclectic sense of style and crazy hair gives it away: she's an art student.

THOMAS (23), a big burly man, enters the front door, tired from the day. His greasy work uniform and Volkswagen hat covering a straight-edge haircut also gives it away: he's a mechanic.

DIANA  
Hey, how was work?

THOMAS  
Pretty good. Went to lunch with Joe and Adrian and Scott again- Wednesdays we go to NYPD, right? Of course the moment we get in the car Joe starts on some racist shit about a gas station worker, or something.

DIANA  
(sarcastic)  
Awesome.

THOMAS  
I mean, it was funny, I laughed. The kind of laugh where you're more in shock than anything.

DIANA  
(light-hearted)  
You're terrible.

Diana keeps her eyes on her laptop.

DIANA (CONT'D)  
Sorry, I'm working on my compilation book for the expo. Kinda forgot it's in literally six days, so. I need something to show people who actually have money!

Thomas LAUGHS slightly.

THOMAS  
Show it to me when you're done. I'm gonna shower then go see Jen.

DIANA

Okay. I have work early tomorrow so I'll probably be asleep when you get home.

THOMAS

Oh, okay.

Thomas heads off for his bedroom.

Diana continues to TYPE.

INT. JUNIOR HIGH BAND ROOM - NIGHT

A sea of junior high band students crowds the school band room, running here and there to prepare for the concert. A CACOPHONY of notes and squeaks.

Diana (13), a shy girl holding a trumpet, looks over at Thomas (13) and LIAM (13). Thomas holds Liam's saxophone, peering into it, while a distressed Liam gestures angrily at Thomas.

LIAM

(frantic)

Well, YOU shook it up and now it's all expanded!

THOMAS

Dude! Okay, okay. I'll grab some pliers or something from Mr. Salcido's desk.

LIAM

(voice cracking)

The concert is in five minutes!  
Where did you even get a Pepsi?!

EXT. PUBLIC SWIMMING POOL - DAY

Diana (20) and Thomas (20) double-fist Capri suns and pepperoni pizza. They sit around the community pool, under a banner that says "HAPPY 7TH BIRTHDAY REMINGTON."

DIANA

Having a kid would be so weird. Like, how often would you have to bring your kid to a party like this?

THOMAS

Yeah, that's probably why my mom is so stressed all the time.

DIANA

Poor Maggie. Actually, poor Rem. Now where did she come up with the name Remington?

Thomas LAUGHS a bit in shock, CHOKING on his pizza.

INT. MAZDA SPEED 3 - NIGHT

Thomas (18) and Diana (18) are stopped at a stoplight next to one other car.

THOMAS

Should I peel out next to this guy?

DIANA

No, actually please do not.

The light turns green.

Thomas TAKES OFF immediately, in what seems like the loudest car known to man.

Diana instinctually hides her face.

DIANA (CONT'D)

THOMAS!

Thomas HOLLERS in excitement as the exhaust POPS.

INT. SHOPPING MALL - DAY

Thomas (16) and Diana (16) enter the food court.

DIANA

Okay, and how long does this take to kick-in?

THOMAS

Adderall? Like thirty minutes.

DIANA

And it's gonna make me like, hyper? Or...

THOMAS

Yeah, you'll probably talk to the pretzel girl for like ten minutes.

Diana LAUGHS.

DIANA

Nice.

INT. COLLEGE DORM - NIGHT

Diana (18) sits at her desk on a video call with Thomas (18), headphones in; her dorm room decorated with the predictable décor of an art student.

DIANA

I think she's cool? I don't know I haven't really seen her since I moved in.

Thomas's video moves inaudibly on Diana's computer screen.

DIANA (CONT'D)

I know! I know. Some girl down the hall who sleeps in a hammock offered me some box wine, it was kinda crazy. How's living with Jen?

Thomas moves again.

DIANA (CONT'D)

Okay, no way Tucson is THAT boring.

INT. CHURCH MEETING HALL - NIGHT

Thomas (21) sits in a circular group- Narcotics Anonymous. He drones out the SHARES of the members around him.

He snaps back to the VOICE of the MEETING LEADER (30s):

MEETING LEADER

And how about you, next?

THOMAS

(monotone)

Hi. I'm Thomas, and I'm an addict.

EXT. COURTYARD TREE BENCH - DAY

Diana (14) and Thomas (14) sit at a circular bench that wraps around a tree in the courtyard.

Diana studies the lines of her *Romeo and Juliet* script excerpt, while Thomas frantically scans his.

THOMAS  
Dude, I don't know my lines at all.

DIANA  
Are you kidding me? I told you to  
practice like forty times.

Thomas RIFLES around in his backpack.

THOMAS  
Aha!  
He pulls out an electric razor.

THOMAS (CONT'D)  
I'll be right back.  
Diana stares, mouth slightly agape.

EXT. COURTYARD TREE BENCH - SOME TIME LATER

Diana's nose is back in her lines.

Thomas rushes back up to the bench and turns around swiftly,  
pointing at the bald circular patch on his scalp.

THOMAS  
Get it? For Friar Laurence. Mrs.  
Zentgraf HAS to give me extra  
credit now.

INT. OLD HONDA ACCORD - DAY

Diana (20) sits in the driver seat and Thomas (20) sits in  
the passenger.

Thomas RIFLES through his backpack.

Diana watches inquisitively.

THOMAS  
Here.

He hands her a pride-flag designed alcohol flask.

THOMAS (CONT'D)  
For being gay, or whatever.

Diana snatches it immediately, smiling crazily.

Thomas smiles.

EXT. COLLEGE CAMPUS SIDEWALK - DAY

Diana (18) walks alone around campus with a backpack. Her phone RINGS- she answers on speaker.

DIANA

Hello?

JEN (V.O.)

Hey Diana, it's Jen. I know this is kind of weird. I just wanted to let you know that Thomas is in the hospital. He's fine, the doctor said he's not allowed any visitors but he's okay.

DIANA

O-okay. What happened?

JEN (V.O.)

He- he took a lot of pills.

Diana stops walking.

INT. MOUNTAINSIDE APARTMENTS - DAY

Thomas (21) walks passed Diana's (21) room. He peeks in.

Diana's room is a mess, clothes and papers strewn everywhere, old food bags.

Diana sleeps in bed with a large cat at her feet.

INT. HUMANE SOCIETY - DAY

Diana (20) and Thomas (20) stand at the front desk of the humane society, cardboard kennel at their legs.

Diana fills out paperwork as the WORKER (20s) sits at her computer. The top of the page reads "MILO".

Thomas looks down at the kennel.

THOMAS

Milo. Little Milo. My Grandma had a cat named Little Man when I was a kid. Well really, she had about fifteen stray cats in her backyard at all times, Little Man was one of them I think.

DIANA

He doesn't give me Milo vibes.  
Let's just steal Little Man, that's  
a hilarious name.

THOMAS

I mean yeah, he's a huge cat.

INT. TUCSON APARTMENT - NIGHT

Thomas (20) sits alone at his dining table. He takes out his phone and DIALS a number.

THOMAS

Hey. Jen and I just broke up. And,  
my lease is up on the 30th. Any  
chance you want to live together? I  
want to move back.

EXT. CONCERT VENUE LINE - NIGHT

Thomas (20) and Diana (20) stand in a lengthy concert line.

Thomas passes Diana a capsule and some water.

DIANA

Just one? Like- the whole thing?

THOMAS

Yeah, Chris told me one point  
should be good for our first time.

DIANA

Wait is this like, safe?

THOMAS

He said he tested the purity with a  
kit and everything. I ordered one  
on Amazon so we can just do it.

DIANA

Oh, okay, sweet. Is it called  
rolling, or did I make that up?

THOMAS

(thinking)  
Uh, yes. Rolling.



EXT. MOUNTAINSIDE APARTMENTS LEASING OFFICE - DAY

Diana (20) stands under a large sign that reads "MOUNTAINSIDE APARTMENTS."

Thomas (20) holds his phone camera up.

THOMAS

Wait- move to the side a little bit. Then the mountain's in the background, too.

Diana smiles, holding keys up in one hand and a thumb up with the other.

INT. MOUNTAINSIDE APARTMENTS - DAY

Diana (21) enters the front door in her uniform, exhausted.

Thomas (21) sits on the couch. He notices her appearance, she's skinnier.

THOMAS

Hey.

DIANA

(monotone)

Hi. I'm so fucking tired. And now I've got to finish my thesis proposal before midnight. Haven't even started it.

THOMAS

Oh, okay.

A beat.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

I got the job!

DIANA

(weakly)

Yay! No way!

THOMAS

I talked to my new boss on the phone earlier- April- I'm gonna be making salary and I get full benefits.

DIANA

Dude, that's *really* good.

THOMAS

They also like, cater lunch everyday. They have a little shop dog named Tot.

DIANA

Very cool. Tell me more tomorrow.

THOMAS

Okay, goodnight.

Diana walks off to her room. Thomas's eyes fall.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL ENGLISH CLASSROOM - DAY

Diana (17) and Thomas (17) sit in the very back of the classroom, causing a ruckus.

Thomas takes a baby carrot and throws it in the direction of the T.A. She makes a weird face. The two erupt in stifled LAUGHTER.

INT. TUCSON APARTMENT - NIGHT

Thomas (20) sits alone at his dining table. His phone RINGS.

THOMAS

Hello?

DIANA (V.O.)

(crying)

Hey uhm, sorry I know it's late. I had a bad trip.

THOMAS

What? The shrooms I gave you?

DIANA (V.O.)

Yeah, uhm, I thought I was going to die so I called 911. There's fucking puke and water and shit all over my bathroom.

Thomas sits, in shock.

Diana CRIES softly on the other end.

DIANA (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
I also got fucking evicted. The RA  
and community director said it was  
pretty serious and that I  
"disrupted the community." Sorry,  
not to make this your problem.

A beat.

THOMAS  
I'll be there in an hour and a  
half.

INT. COLLEGE CAMPUS APARTMENT BEDROOM - NIGHT

Thomas (20) slips quietly into Diana's (20) bedroom. Diana  
sleeps soundly, while Thomas makes his way towards the  
bathroom door just next to her, cleaning supplies in hand.

INT. MOUNTAINSIDE APARTMENTS - LATE NIGHT

Diana (21) sits alone at the dining table, on her laptop.

Thomas (21) BARGES through the front door, a crazed look.

THOMAS  
The power plant.

DIANA  
The what now?

THOMAS  
The power plant. I heard them  
talking on the radio with my  
antenna. I was listening for quite  
awhile. I've gotta grab some stuff  
but I'm gonna drive out there so I  
can listen better.

DIANA  
...Okay!

Thomas runs to his room.

Diana watches him go, absolutely confused.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL BAND ROOM - NIGHT

Thomas (15) and Diana (15) congregate in the band room with  
many other friends- all wearing shirts that say "MESQUITE  
HIGH MARCHING BAND"

Thomas grabs a box of pizza from a stack of strewn boxes and chucks it like a frisbee across the great room. The hours-old pizza flies over instruments and cases like a discus.

Diana and everyone else in the room erupt in LAUGHTER.

INT. OLD HONDA ACCORD - DAY

Diana (21) gets into the driver seat of her car. Her phone, connected to the aux, RINGS. She answers.

DIANA

Hello?

THOMAS (V.O.)

Hey, I don't want to alarm you or anything, but uh, I'm at an AirBnB right now doing the last of the meth I have before I quit for good. I'm safe, I have some stuff to tinker with. I did already rearrange all the furniture and take apart the heat pump, all the wires are in organized piles on the ground. Kinda losing it, kinda fucking losing it.

Diana just listens.

INT. AIRBNB - CONTINUOUS

Thomas (21) holds his phone to his ear in the destroyed AirBnB, pupils huge.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Not that you have to come, but I ordered a lot of food, a bunch of pizzas. I'm kinda scared, I thought you could maybe be here with me. I'm not hungry but you could come eat it. Actually you'd have to pick it up, but.

No response from Diana.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

My head was cold so I put my beanie on earlier- nothing felt so good as putting my beanie on. Everything's interconnected. Physicists love circles.

A beat.

THOMAS (CONT'D)  
 (choking up)  
 Should've gone to college, man. I'm  
 gonna be a great physicist someday.  
 Even if I'm an asshole and nobody  
 likes me and I have no friends  
 anymore.

A beat.

INT. OLD HONDA ACCORD - CONTINUOUS

Diana (21) still sits in her car. She WEEPS softly.

THOMAS (O.C.)  
 Okay so no pressure but I hope you  
 come. I'm sorry.

Diana sits for a moment.

DIANA  
 Okay, send me the address.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL FIELD - NIGHT

Thomas (18) and Diana (18) sit in their respective seats  
 amongst their graduating senior class. Adorned in royal blue  
 caps and gowns, the class flips their tassels.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD CANAL - NIGHT

Diana (21) and Thomas (21) walk alongside a large canal.  
 Diana's pupils huge, she's struggling to remain sane.

Thomas's pupils are less dilated, he's sober.

Diana looks up at the trees around them.

THOMAS  
 I'm so, so sorry.

DIANA  
 For what?

THOMAS  
 (choking up)  
 For everything. Losing my fucking  
 perfect job.

(MORE)

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Worrying you with the rent. I never meant to make any of this your problem.

DIANA

I know.

THOMAS

(crying)

My life's a fucking mess, dude. My family's falling apart. My grandma drove her car into the fucking house. The doctor said I have about fifteen percent of my liver left. I'm in so much debt. I was so depressed in Tucson I tried to-

DIANA

I'm sorry, too.

THOMAS

What could you be sorry for?

DIANA

I barely talked to you while you were in Tucson.

THOMAS

That's not your fault, you're busy with school and work and shit. I know you have your own things.

DIANA

I could've been there for you.

THOMAS

I'm a bit amazed you're still here now.

DIANA

Yeah, me too.

A beat.

DIANA (CONT'D)

The trees are talking to me.

She smiles.

INT. JUNIOR HIGH AUDITORIUM - DAY

Diana (13) sits on the risers with the jazz band, holding her trumpet in the back row. A shy, reserved kid.

Thomas (13), a round and obnoxious kid, BARGES through the stage door with his baritone saxophone. Mr. Salcido and the rest of the band turn in shock.

THOMAS

(panting)

Sorry teacher! My Grandma forgot to pick me up again. I really didn't mean to mess up on the first day-

MR. SALCIDO

That's alright, just take a seat-

Thomas plops himself down in the school chair with a CRASH- the chair completely collapses from under him.

The entire band, including Thomas, LAUGHS.

Diana cracks a smile from the back row.