

Separating Fragments
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INT. GROCERY STORE - DRINK FRIDGE

PEARL raises his phone's screen. A photograph of a younger woman named Iris pops up. There is a red heart emoji next to her name. Similar to the fog on the fridge before him, the phone's screen is foggy too. He answers it on his earphone without saying a word. His finger glides over the foggy picture as the call log minutes start. He returns the phone to his pocket.

The side of Pearl's face is tense and holds what can be confused with frustration or anger, but the wetness in his eyes says otherwise. His eyes glaze forward as if he is lost in thought, maybe a deep contemplation about the relationship he is about to escape.

IRIS
(subtitled - sub.) Are you there?

Iris's voice elicits a soft plea of curious uncertainty over Pearl's earphones. The subtitles linger at the bottom of the screen as Pearl sighs lightly through his nose. He shrugs to no one in particular. He breathes in again as if about to sigh before responding with an equally soft and steady voice.

PEARL
I'm here.

IRIS
(sub.) *sighs*

A woman sneaks in front of Pearl to grab a drink from the bottom shelf before stepping away with an apologetic smile as if she overheard something she shouldn't have.

CUT: The woman steps back from the fridge as the frosty door slams close. She leaves the aisle. There is a wide, gaping space between Pearl and the drink selection.

IRIS
(sub.) You'll have to move out by
the end of the month.

Iris's voice is exasperated with a familiar softness that continues with Pearl's stillness.

Pearl nods with a slow rise in his shoulders as if lifting his spine has reawakened the realization that he is standing in front of the drink aisle, still trying to make a decision.

Pearl hesitates to step forward.

CUT: Pearl opens the fridge, the suction releasing with minor protest. He grabs a bottle.

PEARL

What do you want me to say to that?

CUT: He walks toward the check out lane. His haggard face, bloated and fatigued, appears normal to the everyday shopper. But up close, the slightly aged look on his face as gravity sinks his skin for an older youthful appearance tells us he is at least thirty.

IRIS

(sub.) Nothing. I just know it needs to happen.

We watch like casual shoppers waiting in the self check-out line, wondering if Pearl's fidgeting around the snacks, dropping and picking some up in disarray, lends an air of aggression or uncomfortable intensity. He gestures about loudly as he moves to the only open register. The worker watches his actions closely from the corner of their eyes.

IRIS

(sub.) I've already started organizing your stuff and my stuff.

Pearl scans his drink and puts dollar bills into the machine.

PEARL

(sub.) He says,

His gestures continues with exasperated shrugs, looking around in circles as eyes draw toward him. His mouth moves as if arguing with Iris, but like the wishes to not remain nosy from respectful shoppers, either out of true respect for un-nosiness or a fear of not wanting to tip him over the edge, Pearls words are redacted aside from a vague subtitle of indication and his movements.

Pearl's mouth continues to move with discussion on his lips as he watches the receipt print. Pearl grabs his drink, picks up his change, then leaves with the receipt still

attached to the machine. His posture shows calmness and emotional rigidity, but his expressions highlight disdain, frustration, and sadness.

EXT. GROCERY STORE PARKING LOT - DUSK

Pearl exits the store, looking both ways to cross the parking lot road. He walks quickly toward his car, parked lopsided but inside the lines.

Pearl unlocks the car door with his keys then opens the car door.

INT. PEARL'S CAR - AFTERNOON

Pearl sits in the car then places the drink in the cup holder. He leaves the car door open, one foot out. The plastic on the drink condenses. The cup holder is sticky with something.

PEARL

I'll look through what you've sorted. Thanks for doing that.

IRIS

(sub.) What did you get at the store?

Pearl leans against the steering wheel with his elbow as if listening to harrowing news about his love life.

PEARL

You don't have the privilege of knowing what I do or where I go anymore.

IRIS

(sub.) I'm just trying to be cordial. We have to live with each other until then.

As Pearl leans against the steering wheel, allows the sun to warm his face. He holds a serious gaze. The door is still open.

IRIS

(sub.) We can still heal from this, you know.

PEARL

I won't. We can't 'move past this.' I will never forget the

steps we took to decide we
shouldn't be together anymore.

He turns on the car with a fatigued sadness. Cars pass by slowly in the front as someone walks slowly toward the store.

Iris's voice comes on the loudspeaker in the car.

CUT: The camera sits behind Pearl's shoulder during this dialog exchange.

PEARL

I've been clear this whole time. I just really need you to understand that it isn't going to work out anymore.

IRIS

sighs All I am saying is it's not too late to repair things. You haven't moved out yet. The moving truck hasn't been rented yet. I'm moving some of your stuff right now, and I think we can fix it if we both agree to want to.

An elderly woman walks near the front of Pearl's car. They stop in the corner, hesitating, waiting Pearl to exit the parking spot. Pearl realizes she is waiting to see if he will pull out and hit her, so he waves her along with kindness in his face. She hobbles across slowly.

IRIS

It's a feeling that's been building up these past few hours. There's no reason. It's just... It feels like we are still in love, but we are not in sync anymore.

The elderly lady crossing in front of the car is on the other side of the window. It is clear to the audience, despite the blurriness of their form, that they turned their head toward the car before continuing just a little more slowly.

PEARL

You shared why you were unhappy.

IRIS

What are you not understanding?

PEARL

Then why are you cutting me out of
your life?

IRIS

(sub.) She says,

Pearl rests his forehead against the steering wheel. He rubs it back and forth before falling back against his seat and closing the car door.

PEARL

(sub.) He says,

Pearl's mouth moves as if he is professing his own feelings of unhappiness. It's the kind of profession someone would expect from a love note poured with all the exciting feelings of a youthful fervor. Instead, it's one of realization where Iris's shared unhappiness reminded him of his own, and he released it.

IRIS

(sub.) She says,

He buckles his seat belt as he listens intently to what Iris says.

Cars cruise by.

The parking lot's murmurs are not as silent as Iris's words through the loudspeakers of the car.

IRIS

I'll be the bad guy for the both
of us.

Pearl puts his car in drive.

CUT: The bottle condensates in the cup holder.

CUT: Pearl's car charm shaking softly as he makes turns out of the parking lot.

CUT: Pearl's key chain dangling against his leg softly as if on another voyage home on a nice afternoon day.

Pearl stops at a stop sign. He lingers.

PEARL

I have never pictured my life
without you in it.

IRIS

Will you please understand that I
just don't want to be with you
anymore?

A car passes by in the front. He turns on the turn signal. He steps on the gas to turn. His mouth moves as if paying close attention to every word he's saying, as if any word out of place she will hold against him.

PEARL

(sub.) He says,

CUT: Pearl drives with tears in his eyes. He wipes them away, breathing with an open mouth so she won't hear him crying.

IRIS

(sub.) She says,

Pearl pulls into the driveway, the bumps causing the keys to dangle against his leg. He puts the car in park then wipes his tears.

IRIS

(sub.) She says,

Pearl turns off the car. Iris's subtitles leave the screen.

CUT: The home's curtains are drawn closed, blocking out the happiness of sunshine or prying eyes that may be wondering what all the noise had come from.

Pearl bumps his head on the steering wheel to wake himself up a bit. He looks toward the home as if wondering if it is safe to go inside.

CUT: Pearl leans back in his seat. He sits in the post-ignition silence.

FADE OUT.