Tell me in the morning
By Olivia Lattanzi

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Cast of Characters

Ellie: Thinks with her head, but has an untapped creative side. Able to match Will’s sarcasm.

Will: Lost soul. Charming. Uses humor to cope with the complications in his life.

Synopsis: Ellie has returned home from college and, getting into her old usual habits, drives around with her best friend in the early hours of the morning. They only have so many chances to talk about everything, and address the things that existed when they didn’t know a world outside their hometown existed.


Note: Any sort of physical car or its features are not required for this scene. Rather, the notes about the car are there for the actors and technicians to give them a sense of the timing. The atmosphere that is created by the actors to resemble that of a car is most important. No fake wheel holding is necessary.

Another note: Swearing can be omitted/replaced if necessary.
Night time sounds. We see a girl, bundled up in winter clothes. She exits her house very quietly, but the squeak from her front door as it shuts is heard in the dark. She freezes, then continues when she sees no movement from inside the house. She walks to her best friend, waiting in the car out front. As she gets closer to the car, we hear his music playing very loudly. It’s muffled, but loud. She nervously looks back from where she came, and quickly opens and closes the door to the car. She sits down in the passenger seat. The man in the car goes to greet her, like an old friend, as she begins yelling at him to turn the music down.

Will: Hey bud! (Goes in for the hug.)

Ellie: (Not having it.) Dude, my parents are asleep!

Will: (He waves his hand, dismissing her worries, and drives away from the house - his eyes are focused forward. Still yelling over the music:) Let me get through all the questions first! How’s college? You enjoying the food there?

Ellie: Will!

Will: Do you like your classes? Gone to any parties yet? Wink wink. (As he obnoxiously does, leaning towards her.)

Ellie: Will!!

Will: You and your roommates get along?

Ellie: Will!!!

He turns down the music.

Will: Better?

Ellie: (She takes off her winter coat and pools it around her in the seat.) I shouldn’t have expected anything else.

Will: Definitely not.

Ellie: (Amused, and trying to avoid any moments of silence.) So anything changed about this place?
Will: Mmmm… *(Matter of factly:)* You didn’t answer any of my dumb questions. Do I have to answer yours?

Ellie: *(Matching his sarcasm.)* Humor me.

Will: Ha, well…I mean - I am still working three jobs. That’s pretty funny. I’m taking classes, but not paying thousands of dollars a year to do so-

Ellie: *(Rolls her eyes, crosses her arms, or both)* Ha, ha…

Will: But seriously, nothing has changed. Nobody’s here anymore, but only I know that because I was dumb enough to stick around-

Ellie: You’re not dumb-

Will: *(Perky.)* I know, I know. It’s just… the same old place. Like, really, dude. You aren’t missing anything.

*She looks out the car window.*

Ellie: Everything feels different? I just… God. I hate how all the cliches are true.

Will: What cliches?

Ellie: Like, every cliche about going to school and how coming home will feel different - they’re all true. I feel like I’m in a different life right now. I know this place. Like, the familiarity of it’s there. But I feel so removed.

Will: Huh.

Ellie: There still that man who walks up Main Street every day with his corgi?

Will: Oh you betcha.

Ellie: *(Fangirling.)* Ah! His lil’ corgi butt! So darn cute.

*Will shakes his head with wide eyes.*

Ellie: Haven’t you ever seen a corgi butt before?
Will: *(Jokingly.)* No I’m not checking out dog butts!

Ellie: *(Very seriously.)* Well, you should. They’re adorable. *(Beat.)* They still do the town day thing in the fields by the high school? With that awful blue slush that you *think* is blue raspberry, but is... *(As if the flavor itself is pretentious;)*... blue van-ill-a.

Will: I mean, that’s just you, but yup.

Ellie: *(In disbelief.)* You enjoy blue vanilla? You know it’s just the kinkier version of regular vanilla, right?

Will: I guess the mystique of it has always kept me coming back.

Ellie: Well, geez… *(Beat. And then, like a realization;)* You just really can’t say much about what home is like when you’re at school. Well, you can, but it’s not nearly enough. You have to be concise, and amusing, if you want anyone to really pay attention.

Will: But it’s all the mundane things that make this place what it is.

Ellie: Yeah!

Will: Not nearly enough. Where do you tell people you’re from?

Ellie: Just, upstate.

Will: Pssh. If this is *up*state. What’s Potsdam? Canada?

Ellie: I mean, essentially. What do you say?

Will: I don’t say anything. I go to community college.

Ellie: *(Duh.)* Right.

Will: Yeah. *(Contemplates saying this;)* You meet...wacky...people there...

Ellie: Yeah, Will?

Will: Yeah...
Ellie: *(Excited.)* What!

Will: Ugh, just… *(Takes a moment.)* Okay so I participate in theater stuff there.

Ellie: Yeah…

Will: And so, being around theater people at community college, it’s like - it’s like I’ve hit the double whammy of wackiness.

Ellie: Okay…

Will: So one time at rehearsal, I meet this girl. Phoebe. And I’m my regular friendly self, so I offer to drive her home. And I’m driving her home, and she just starts kissing me while...

*Will gets distracted by something behind him, which he views as if through a car mirror, and trails off. Ellie is watching him in eager anticipation.*

Ellie: Will! You’re telling me a story.

Will: *Shit*…

Ellie: What? Dude. You can’t just stop there-

Will: Dude. There’s been a cop car following us.

Ellie: Oh! *(Turns her head to see, she perches up.)* Shit. He is. Fuck. *(She watches in the mirror as Will drives. Without breaking eye contact with the “mirror”:*:) This is so sad. Now we can’t focus on anything. *(Continues looking.)* Maybe he has to meet some quota.

Will: He’s waiting for me to fuck up. *(Almost overlapping with:)*

Ellie: He’s totally waiting for you to fuck up.

*She settles back in her seat, a sour look on her face.*

Will: *(Fiercely concentrated on the road ahead.)* This is so. Much. Pressure.
Ellie: *(Defeated.)* Why don’t you just get it over with? Run through a shrub or something. Do some significant but totally reversible damage.

_A few more moments of tension. Then, Ellie grabs Will’s arm in relief:_

Ellie: He turned.

Will: *(Sighs.)* Nice. God. Why does that get me every time.

Ellie: Okay. Can we pick up where we left off?

Will: Yeah, sure. From the kissing?

Ellie: Yeah, from the kissing!

Will: Well now that that happened, I don’t even think it’s that good of story. It wasn’t a huge deal. But anyway, she just starts kissing me while I’m driving. And a part of me is like _This is great, this is really great_, but another part of me is like _Wow, I really need to focus on not crashing my car right now._ But it’s freakin’ difficult when a girl’s all up in your neck!

Ellie: Yeah, I can imagine.

Will: And-

Ellie: Oh my god…

Will: No, no! Nothing else crazy happened. Just-

Ellie: Just!

Will: It’s stupid. It’s silly. We… *(Laughs at himself.)* We kept kissing, when I was parked in front of her house. And like… I really _fucking_ had to pee, my God. So I awkwardly cut it kind of short, because I didn’t want to tell her that I literally have the smallest bladder in the universe. But, she stopped talking to me in rehearsal anyway, so…

Ellie: I mean, there’s no way she would’ve known.

Will: No way! She couldn’t have known the size of my bladder-
Ellie: No! Will! *(Laughing, her face in her hands.)* I wasn’t talking about that! There’s no way she would have known you were still interested in her.

Will: Yeah, but I-

Ellie: *(Pokes him.)* You should’ve just told her you had to pee. You know, girls love honesty.

Will: Yeah I’m pretty sure they’re not interested in that sort of honesty, El. Not when you’re making out for the first time.

Ellie: *(Musing.)* Maybe not. Didn’t that happen to you junior year, too?

Will: Yeah! I was just thinking about that. When Morgan Lamanchal started kissing me while I was driving my car. *(He thinks about it, then:)* I should’ve just crashed. She was so… slobbery.

Ellie: Will!

Will: Leave me alone! I’m tired of attracting girls who only wanna do stuff to me while in the car.

Ellie: *(Completely melodramatic. Really milking this.)* Actually, as you said that Will, like, I’ve been overcome by this urge. I think I wanna kiss you. *(Thinks to herself for a moment.)* I don’t know if it’s the green exterior of the car, or the beige seating, or the… what’s the word for like… is your engine revving? Is that what it’s called?

Will: *(Very quickly.)* No, that’s like when a dude with a fancy sports car wants to show off and in park makes the car go rrr, rrr, rrrrrrr…

Ellie: *(Breaking her sarcastic persona.)* Okay, so not that.

Will: What word are you looking for?

Ellie: The word for like… *(Laughs.)*… when a really old car engine just starts making noise, like this one… all the time.

Will: *(Defending his car.)* Hey! What are you saying about Green Crayon?

Ellie: That if she was a person, she’d probably have white hair and her name would be like, Linda or Carol or Dotty, or something. So what’s the word I’m thinking of?
Will: Whiring?

Ellie: Eh. Rattling?

Will: I think whiring is your best option.

Ellie: Alright, if you say so. *(Back in the persona. She and Will have a hard time getting through this without laughing.)* Just, the way your car *whirs* as you drive me off in the night, and *that smell*. I bet it’s the Dorito crumbs you keep in between the seats. Ugh, you just know *exactly* how to create ambiance. I admire that about you. And honestly, I do not know how I’ve kept my hands off you.

*Microbeat.*

Will: Are ya done?

Ellie: Yeah. I’m pretty proud of myself. Constantly being seduced by all this stuff and never giving in-

Will: *(Suggesting something that they’ve kept to themselves.)* Yeah, bud?

Ellie: *Okayyy*... *(Long beat, then very suddenly:)* You know, I have been meaning to apologize for when I was horny monster to you over the summer, but yeah... *(Much softer. Embarrassed.)* I was a horny monster...

Will: *(Totally cavalier.)* Dude, nothing even happened. We were high as kites. I wanted to kiss you and you definitely wanted to, too-

Ellie: *(Mouth agape, a playful sort of defensive.)* I never *said* anything!

Will: You definitely wanted to. You kept looking at my lips, and then when I asked you if I could, you just turned away and didn’t answer. *(Pointedly.)* But I could see you were just arguing with yourself inside your head. You wanted to.

Ellie: Ugh… *(Places her hands on her face.)* I was such a horny monster. I’m glad nothing happened.

Will: Pssh, *thanks.*
Ellie: *(Rolls her eyes at him.)* Will, you know what I mean. Like, we work great as friends. We just wanted to use each other for one moment, that would’ve made everything else weird. So, I’m glad nothing… happened.

Will: Yeah, me too.

*Long beat.*

Will: I feel like… I feel comfortable enough now to tell you. Uh, I’m dropping out of college.

Ellie: *(Understanding.)* Really.

Will: Yep. I’m just… not good at school. I can’t focus. I never learned how to study right. So, I’m dropping out.

Ellie: I’m sorry.

Will: Nah, it’s fine. It’s just a waste of time for me. I’m just eating money.

Ellie: So none of that stuff I said was helpful? I’m sorry.

Will: No! Everything you said about being a good student and just committing yourself made sense, and you’re right. But, I just can’t apply that to me. I never learned how to apply that to me.

Ellie: Will, I got very lucky. That’s all. We grew up in very different situations. I had more support. You’re no less capable of anything than I am. And you’re way more talented than me, that’s for sure.

Will: Dude, stop discrediting yourself. I’m honored to be your friend, like all the time.

Ellie: What does that have to do with anything?

Will: *(Genuinely.)* I’m just so honored to be friends with someone who’s gonna change the world.

Ellie: Will…
He smiles.

Ellie: Jesus, how did this become about me?

Will: *(Over the top.)* I’m just speaking my truth! Okay! Goddammit, El! I think you’re freakin’ great! Do you accept my truth?

*She gives him a long stare, uncertain.*

Will: El! Accept my truth!

Ellie: *(Laughs.)* Okay, okay. I accept your truth! *(Beat. The energy of the car resets.)* But really, Will, your situation doesn’t say anything about you. *(He shakes his head, dismissing the idea.)* I appreciate all you said, but I care about you and I’m not gonna let you just keep driving while you think so lowly of yourself.

Will: I didn’t even say anything that low. I just don’t want you to discredit all the work you’ve put in. *(Beat.)* It’s not just luck.

Ellie: Enough of me. Tell me what’s next for you.

Will: Uh, I don’t know. Keep working three jobs here. *(New thought.)* Actually, I have a cousin in New York who could help me out a bit with the acting thing. I mean, you know my mom doesn’t care. So I’m thinking I’ll save some more money and try that out. Just go through the whole audition like it’s my job thing, in addition to whatever other jobs I take on.

Ellie: *(Taken aback a bit.)* Wow, Will. That’s really cool.

Will: Yeah. And my cousin has actually been a part of a lot of stuff. You know that show *Heat Wave*?

Ellie: Wait, yeah, totally. I saw a few episodes and really liked it. Wait… how’s it go… *(She’s searching her brain for something, and then:)* Right! Duh, do ba doot dooo. Do ba doot dooo...

*(She finishes her recollection of the show’s theme.)*

That one?

Will: Yeah.
Ellie: Yeah, I thought it was pretty good. I’ll see if I can catch some reruns sometime.

Will: He was one of the producers on it, before it got cancelled. But yeah, it had a pretty good run. And he’s just working on so many different things all the time. *(Suddenly, it’s like he’s not in the car anymore, or in this town at all.)* Just, throws himself into that profession - like anyone who tries to make it does - and has no idea what things are gonna take off, and what’s gonna fail. I mean, most of it fails. But it’s really crazy to think- to think, all you need is one *thing* to work, and then you’re set.

Ellie: Jesus… you’re so free. *(Really realizing this.)* You know, going to school, and having structure is great, but I promise you there’s always a piece of me that envies what people like you do.

Will: I haven’t really *done* anything yet, to be fair-

Ellie: I know, I know. I just… *(Simply:) am excited to hear what you’re gonna be up to next time I’m home.

Will: *(To nothing really in particular:) In reality, probably just this. It drives me crazy sometimes. Hopefully it’ll motivate me to get out of here. I bet you’re about ready to go back, right?

Ellie: *(Dismissing the idea.) Nah, I’ve become settled here, I think.

Will: Yeah? How’ve you managed that?

*Beat.*

Will: *(Looks at her.) What?* 

*Beat. She’s trying to hold a neutral face, but it’s not working.*


Ellie: *(Reluctant.) You just… settle into old feelings, I guess.

Will: What’s that supposed to mean?
Ellie: Like, I’ve settled into thinking I wouldn’t have regretted kissing you in the summer.

Will: El…

*Beat. She realizes she needs to finish what she started.*

Ellie: Will, this time hanging out has been fine, but sometimes when I’m with you I feel like I’m gonna burst.

Will: Why?

Ellie: *(Slowly, and deliberately.)* How do we just keep going on like this? Pretending the summer before we went off to school didn’t happen? I mean, we *are* doing it right now. And it’s working. But we were just… *together* all the time, and we talked about everything. We’d have these really meaningful, deep conversations - talking about what we wanted in a relationship - and in those brief moments of silence I just wanted to yell out to you, scream at you: *You realize this is me and you, right now, right?* Like, I knew we could’ve been that bigger, greater relationship we talked about wanting. I had this loyalty to you, hoping one day you’d express some sort of sign that you felt the same way.

Will: Well, I thought expressing my desire to kiss you was a fair sign. *(She gives him a look. Long beat.)* You’re right, El. I guess, I felt like once we went off to school, those feelings kind of just, went away.

Ellie: *(Shrugs.)* I think both our feelings diminished as we went our separate ways. *(Beat.)* That’s the thing I have a hard time reconciling with. Like, I get to school, and this world at home feels like a lifetime ago. But now, I’m home, and being *there* is what seems like that far off, distant…thing. *( Aware of the irony: )* And the second you’re in either place long enough to get really, truly comfortable again, you end up having to go back to the other. It’s just… weird…

Will: I’m sure you’ll get used to that over time.

Ellie: Oh yeah! I love the people here. I love the people there. It’s just that little time adjusting that I think too much about. I guess, you just learn to adjust to the adjustment? I don’t know. I was really unhappy going off to school, and a lot of that had to do with the fact that I knew things between me and you would change. I thought maybe my feelings for you would change just a little bit. But, I found a group of friends, and my feelings changed a lot. And way faster than I anticipated. Like I got over you, in some way. *(Beat.)* Sometimes I think that’s the scariest thing about it all. I feel like I’ve betrayed my past self by not having that loyalty to you anymore.
Just, the Ellie that existed in the summer would’ve been heartbroken if this happened. But now, I’m just okay with it.

Silence.

Ellie: *(Embarrassed.)* I’m so sorry. I just rambled so much-

Will: *(Not bothered at all.)* Dude. I pick you up this early in the morning just to drive around. I only get to see you like, every three months now. Ramble to me. It’s what I want to hear.

Ellie: Has everything I said made sense, at least?

Will: Yeah, it has. I mean, I’d be lying if I said it wasn’t all true. I loved - *love* - spending time with you. It’s not like that’s changed. Not at all. I did hope we’d evolve into something more. But, it’s like you said, we work great as friends. And going to college allowed both of us to let our feelings… simmer down a bit.

Ellie: Don’t you ever feel bad for your past self?

Will: Nah. Maybe it wouldn’t have worked out.

Ellie: Maybe.

Will: *(He jokes.)* And this way, there’s no chance of you getting rid of me. *(Beat. She smiles.)* You’ll always be a constant in my life.

*The atmosphere of the car is elevated. Both of them smile to themselves.*

Ellie: In the summer, I thought we’d get like, our Jim and Pam Casino night moment. Where one of us would reveal our feelings in some grand gesture. Just put it all on the line.

Will: *(Jokingly.)* I think we just cancelled the whole show.

Ellie: *(Looking forward with him, as he continues driving.)* Yeah, I think we did. *(Beat.)* Scary stuff.

Will: I know.

*Ellie contemplates a moment, then reaches over and hugs his shoulders.*
Will: Hey! You’re just like all those other girls who do stuff to me while I’m driving.

_She smiles up at him, then returns to her seat, and yawns. As the conversation continues, Ellie gets more and more sleepy._

Ellie: Time check?

Will: Uh… _Checks his watch._ 3:27 in the morning.

Ellie: Oof. _She stretches._ Let’s wrap this party up.

Will: The only thing open at this hour is that 7-Eleven. We could swing by there.

Ellie: _Feigned desire._ Mmm, gas station ice cream. You know me so well.

Will: Only the best. I’m trying to keep you humble, you _crazy college kid (He tries to noogie her, but she doesn’t have any of it.)_

Ellie: You’re ridiculous. _Beat._ Man, I’m really excited to see what you’re up to next time I’m home.

_He smiles._

Will: So, ice cream?

Ellie: _Mulls it over._ Eh, I’m not really in the mood. And it’s really late - early - whatever. I think college has made me an old woman. I need my sleep.

Will: I thought you weren’t supposed to get sleep in college.

Ellie: Huh. Yeah, I guess you don’t.

Will: Treat this break like your hibernation.

Ellie: _Almost a little too seriously:_ Honestly, I still don’t get why humans don’t hibernate.

Will: Because, uh, that’d be a colossal waste of time.
Ellie: Nah… I envy those freakin’ squirrels and beavers. They’re onto something...

Will: They’ve been on it… for a bit. You know that, right?

Ellie: Yeah, I do… *(She starts dozing.)*

Will: Are you gonna make it? We’re like ten minutes out.

Ellie: I’ll make it. I’ll make it…

*She sinks down further in the seat.*

Will: I didn’t realize it was bedtime.

*She doesn’t respond, rather sinks deeper into the seat, and rests her head on Will’s shoulder. He takes a moment to look at her, and smiles to himself while shaking his head. We hear the music from the car play. Fade to black.*