

"CHRYSALIS"

Screenplay by

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1. INT PHONE CALL - DAY

NESS

Hey

MYRIAM

Hey, what's new?

NESS

New... I miss new things. I'm fed up. I don't want to work.

MYRIAM

2020 is the longest three years of my life.

NESS

Did you hear about Alice?

MYRIAM

Who's Alice?

NESS

She was in our class. Kind of tall, darkish hair, italian.

MYRIAM

Was she the one who talked really fast?

NESS

You're thinking of Melissa. Alice always wore the same green sweater.

MYRIAM

Ew.

NESS

It was a good sweater and clean, but she stopped wearing it in the last year, after everyone would bug her about it.

MYRIAM

You can't wear the same sweater every day.

NESS

It was clean. Do you know who I'm talking about?

MYRIAM

Not a clue.

NESS

She was friends with Javier.

MYRIAM

Who's Javier?

NESS

You were friends with Javier, from El Salvador, he lives in Texas now.

MYRIAM

New Mexico. Oh man, I ran into him the other day. He's the same but dialed to 11.

NESS

Don't you hate it when people comment: "Oh my god, you haven't changed a bit"?

MYRIAM

Do people really say that?

NESS

All the time.

MYRIAM

but I know what you mean. Like when you wrote "Be yourself, never change." in their yearbook they took it as instructions to follow and remained stuck in high school mentality.

NESS

but we do change regardless. I remember getting low-key shamed for wearing the same belt I did throughout high school. I change, it's just not necessarily visible in my fashion choice.

MYRIAM

I guess.

NESS

I still have the belt, because it's a cool belt, but that doesn't mean I haven't changed.

MYRIAM

But I know what he's like and he doesn't know me any more.

NESS

He might be thinking exactly the same thing

MYRIAM

Yeah, but it's like he changed to be, he doubled down on his coping mechanisms, digging in his heels. Don't you think it's weirdly worse with people who claim to be spiritual?

NESS

In what way?

MYRIAM

They get stuck and go around telling you how you need to try breathwork or switching to almond milk.

NESS

Almond milk has nothing to do with spirituality.

MYRIAM

Exactly. I've seen too many people go on a meditation retreat and come back telling every supermarket cashier how if they just read Eckar Tolle...

NESS

No.

MYRIAM

...or Deepak Chopra it would fix that cashier's very real financial struggles or casual racism.

NESS

Have you read either?

MYRIAM

Who?

NESS

Toole or the other one.

MYRIAM

No.

NESS

So how do you... look there are no silver bullets to solve casual racism, so how do you know if you're feeding a delusion or finding something helpful?

MYRIAM

I guess we are all delusional to some degree. At best we shouldn't pay money for the delusions. Get your copy of "Awaken Now" free from the library.

NESS

I don't think that's... Did he really tell you to switch to almond milk?

MYRIAM

No, we talked about aliens and uranium in New Mexico.

NESS

What about aliens and uranium?

MYRIAM

It was just one of those moments when you look back on the good ol' day and realize you were kind of a jerk. I felt like I owed him an apology for some of my behaviour, but then I was talking to him and there's this gulf between us. He was a bit of a jerk too that 'today me' wouldn't tolerate.

NESS

You were such good friends.

MYRIAM

We didn't know how to be good friends. Maybe he's cool now. But it's the undoing of nostalgia. Like watching a movie from the 80's you loved and they keep calling each other gay as an insult, and it's not the same.

NESS

Isn't it amazing how we thought the future would be like the Jetsons, flying cars and robot nannies, but if you watch the Jetsons they're aged by their attitudes and values. And we still do the science fiction films about space travel, but we can't project how attitudes will change.

MYRIAM

I think it would be too controversial to put some communist genderless racially diverse pansexual vegans... you wouldn't even put ugly people in space. No one wants to see a pudgy space captain with acne, back issues and social anxiety.

NESS

Yes. Everyone must be hot. Hot slim scientists without any pores in their skin.

MYRIAM

Even a few months ago we were all hoping that the environment would be helped by things slowing down, everyone was getting fired and I had no idea the big change would be people quitting their jobs.

NESS

We're still waiting for "back to normal" or is this the "new normal" we've heard so much about?

MYRIAM

You know how they don't make films about the middle of World War 2. It's the beginning or the end. Not the day-to-day, trying to find eggs, getting in a fight with your neighbor.

NESS

I wouldn't pay to watch a film about fights between neighbors.

MYRIAM

I remember learning how Londoners habituated to Nazi bombings. Now I have a better idea how they felt.

NESS

Yeah, I can easily imagine them dragging their feet to the bomb shelter. Playing candy crush or whatever because it's Wednesday.

MYRIAM

Shit, I can't find my mask...

NESS

Did you have it when you left the house?

MYRIAM

Nevermind, I found it. Ew it's the gooey sticky stuff.

NESS

I have my own hand sanitizer.

MYRIAM

So do I, but it's too late, the damage is done.

NESS

Which reminds me, do you remember Alice now?

MYRIAM

Why do we care about this Alice?

NESS

She's sick.

MYRIAM

Yeah, well..

Her skin fell off.

MYRIAM

What do you mean, like excema?

N

No, like molting.

MYRIAM

melting?

MYRIAM

Like snakes.

MYRIAM

I heard that snakes might be in pain, itching or irritated when they molt. Like that's why they rub against trees and stuff to get the skin off.

MYRIAM

But that's not all, under her skin was another thin hard skin wrapper.

MYRIAM

What colour?

MYRIAM

What "what colour"?

MYRIAM

The wrapper skin.

MYRIAM

I don't know. I should ask Jo. Anyhow, she changed shape and now she's a Chrysalis. It's a pretty big deal.

MYRIAM

Why would she turn into a car?

MYRIAM

What! No, chrysalis, like a cocoon, like pupa, pupating.

MYRIAM

Man, I heard Chrysler! So, something to do with bugs?

MYRIAM

Yeah, the chrysalis is the stage between the caterpillar and the butterfly. Well, actually pupa is what the caterpillar becomes, pupating is becoming a pupa and chrysalis is just the skin wrapper that holds the pupa.

MYRIAM

and the cocoon?

MYRIAM

Cocoons are what moths do.

MYRIAM

But it's the same?

They don't shed a thin skin wrapper,
they envelop themselves in layers of
silk.

Lucky bastards. I want to cocoon from
all this too. Can I join Alicia?

MYRIAM

Alice. No man. It does not sound like
fun.

MYRIAM

Do you ever read the news? I'd also
want to hide in a wrapper for a while.

MYRIAM

Yeah, but that's not what's happening
in there.

MYRIAM

Wake me up when Mars is habitable.

MYRIAM

You'll still be too poor to go to space

MYRIAM

Ow. Do you think they'll bring staff?
Or will it just be rich people and
they'll finally have to learn how to
use a plunger on the toilet?

MYRIAM

I don't know. I don't think Bezos and
Musk really thought it all through.

MYRIAM

I'm pretty sure Musk spends a lot of
time thinking about how he'll colonize
Mars.

MYRIAM

Yeah, but I think he's looked at it from the point of view of an engineer and businessman. He's stuck in that way of thinking, but Mars isn't a business, it's a planet. Being business smart helped Steve Jobs make a cool phone, but he thought he could use alternative medicine for his pancreatic cancer.

MYRIAM

Imagine sending a new colony to space with some tea tree oil: "Here, take this, you'll be fine."

MYRIAM

Yeah, I don't think he thought through the type of people to be in space. Like NASA is very picky about the type of people in the space station, they have to be charismatic, but what happens if the people you send can afford it?

That's what I want to know. What's money when it only means something to nations that are months away?

A year.

Exactly, they could do a trial where they send out a cruise ship and never let the ship dock just to see what Lord of the Flies scenario unfolds.

Or the opposite, without any option, the place becomes a commune.

My uncle once pointed out that one of the things that makes the rich of New York different from the rich of LA, is that the homeless walk 5th Avenue, but in LA it's easier to

avoid poor neighborhoods. Inequality requires the separation from rich to poor.

New York rich are pretty rich.

Sometimes I think the mega rich profit from understanding us too well, but then Mark Zuckerberg is also a robot.

MYRIAM

I keep thinking about the moment Shatner got off the spaceship and he was crushed.

NESS

I like Captain Kirk, but I also loved Captain Picard.

MYRIAM

He had this transcending experience in space and he's crying everywhere, and he tries to communicate with Bezos, and like Bezos wants to get it. Like he really wants to feel something. In interviews, Bezos is on record saying he wants to see how space would transform him, but the insensitivity that made him rich enough to build a space-penis, means he can't connect. He has to live vicariously through the actor, someone whose job description is feeling for others view, while Bezos stares and offers Shatner history's stiffest hug.

Maybe Besos is transformed and we just can't see it. Like Javier.

I hope so.

And maybe the rich people will go, or maybe the it'll just be the poor and the criminals, like Autralia.

MYRIAM

Has it always been like this?

MYRIAM

like what?

MYRIAM

That the super-powerful are quasi robots. Like I can't imagine Bill Gates as Ghengis Khan, displaying pie-charts at meetings with his army of cut throat generals.

MYRIAM

Well, I don't think Ghengis Khan was a highly sensitive empath either.

MYRIAM

Yeah, but I think for thousands of years the world was ruled by pharaohs and conquerors. They ruled with religion and wars, and now it's ruled by software engineers.

I wonder if there's high overlap between military strategizing and programming.

But is it just technology that's changed? or have the people being ruled also changed? and that's what changes the rulers?

You can always see history as something that's repeating if you want to, but it's also always different. Like we're living through a plague that's nothing like the plague.

Yeah, this time the end of world has science to back it up, and if it's not the virus it'll be climate change, or the downfall of democracy, or the internet will spread disinformation until the country splits between a bunch of Q-Anon flat earthers with guns and a bunch of disorganized lefties who will hold multiple meetings where they will agree to disagree and do nothing in between.

its like climate change

I think my brain is a leftist meeting where I never take any decisions, while climate change rages on in my life.

And she's not sleeping or hibernating.
It's a chrysalis.

NESS

She's becoming a butterfly !

MYRIAM

Maybe, who knows. That's not right now.
In the Chrysalis, she's self digesting.
Like her stomach acids have come out
and eat away at her flesh and bones.
She'd been turned into a fluid.

NESS

Alice is self-digesting herself into
Alice-liquid.

MYRIAM

Yes, exactly.

NESS

So she is melting.

MYRIAM

Butterflies are Chrysalis for a third
of their life. Like one third
caterpillars, one third Chrysalis and
one third Butterfly.

NESS

So she's going to self-digest for a
third of her life and turn into a
butterfly?

MYRIAM

She was never a caterpillar.

NESS

So, she turns into...

MYRIAM

They don't know.

NESS

She'll be okay?

MYRIAM

They don't know what it is.

NESS

Did she get tested?

MYRIAM

Negative. but it seems to be related.
Like the chaos, and ongoing stress and
uncertainty, but also the distance
created, the time of reflection just
increases the likelihood of chrysalis.

Do you think there's a genetic
predisposition?

I mean, probably, but it's happening a
lot more now.

NESS

And flip your intestines inside-out and
self-digest?

MYRIAM

Exactly.

NESS

And she could become anything?

MYRIAM

Yes. I don't know.

NESS

If you could become anything, what
would you become?

INT CHYSALIS - DAY

CATERPILLAR

(In farsi - subtitled)

Who are you?

ALICE

I—I hardly know sir, just at present—at least I know who I was when I got up this morning but I think I must have changed several times since that.

CATERPILLAR

(In farsi - subtitled)

What do you mean by that? Explain yourself.

ALICE

I can't explain myself I'm afraid, because I'm not myself you see.

CATERPILLAR

(In farsi - subtitled)

I don't see.

ALICE

I'm afraid I can't put it more clearly, for I can't understand it myself, and really to be so many different sizes in one day is very confusing.

CATERPILLAR

(In farsi - subtitled)

It isn't.

ALICE

Well perhaps you haven't found it so yet, but when you have to turn into a chrysalis, you know, and then after that into a butterfly, I think it'll feel a little queer, don't you think so?

CATERPILLAR

(In farsi - subtitled)

Not a bit.

ALICE

All I know is it would feel queer to me.

CATERPILLAR

(In farsi - subtitled
identical recording as
first question)

You. Who are you?