

CRUISE CONTROL

Written by

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INT. THERAPIST OFFICE - DAY

JACOB (late 20's) sits in a chair across from his THERAPIST (40's-50's). She has a PAD OF PAPER in her lap while holding a CUP OF COFFEE and a PEN. CLOSE ON CLOCK: TICKING on the wall behind her.

THERAPIST

So, Jacob, what brings you in today?

JACOB

Well, I have been told that I am a victim of child abuse.

THERAPIST

Are you?

JACOB

That's why I'm here. I figured you would be able to tell me.

THERAPIST

Who told you that you were a victim of child abuse?

JACOB

My wife.

THERAPIST

Why does she think this?

JACOB

Because I told her a story.

THERAPIST

About what?

Jacob looks at the clock. Close on clock.

EXT. CAR - DAY

CLOSE ON WATCH: Jacob (18) helps his Dad TOD (early-50s) put a couple of BAGS OF GROCERIES into the back of the car. Jacob and Tod enter the car. There is silence.

TOD

Thank you for coming with me.

JACOB

No problem.

TOD

You're welcome is a better answer.

JACOB

Sorry, you're welcome.

Silence.

INT. CAR - DAY

Tod starts the car. They make their way onto the main road.  
The car continues onto the highway. Jacob looks confused.

JACOB

That was our turn. Aren't we going  
home?

TOD

Don't worry. Just taking a little  
detour.

JACOB

Oh, OK.

Silence.

TOD

Im going to ask you a question. All  
you have to do is listen and answer.

JACOB

Ok.

TOD

So... I've been honest with you,  
right?

JACOB

Yes.

TOD

So therefor, I should get the same  
honesty in return right?

JACOB

Yeah.

TOD  
Here's the problem... I don't think  
you have been that honest lately.

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JACOB  
What do you mean?

TOD  
I mean, if you don't want to live with  
me, you know you have the right to  
just say so.

JACOB  
I do want to live with you.

TOD  
Really? Because it does not look that  
way.

JACOB  
What do you mean?

TOD  
You are always up in your bedroom. The  
only time I ever see you is when you  
come home from school or when there is  
food on the table. Other than that,  
you might as well not exist.

JACOB  
That's just what I sometimes do. I do  
that at Moms too. That's just how it  
has been since covid.

CLOSE ON EXIT SIGN: Jacob stares at the word exit, hoping the  
conversation will be over soon.

TOD  
Your brother said that to me too.

They pass the exit.

INT. THERAPIST OFFICE - DAY

The Therapist and Jacob are in the same places they were  
before. There are some notes written down on the Therapist's  
pad of paper.

THERAPIST

So why did you seem absent?

JACOB

I was just playing video games in my room a lot. It's not like there was a lot to do at the time.

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THERAPIST

Did you keep in contact with him when you weren't with him?

JACOB

We talked on the phone sometimes.

INT. CAR - DAY

Jacob sits silently in the passenger seat fidgeting with his hands. Todd drives with a straight look.

TOD

You know the phone works both ways?  
I'm always calling you.

Silence.

TOD

I fear that I'm beginning to see a pattern.

JACOB

What pattern?

TOD

Your brother did the exact same things that you are doing right now before he left... Not socializing, staying in your room, and the next thing you know, you will be faking depression so you can leave.

JACOB

That wasn't what it was. Him and his girlfriend broke up at that time.

TOD

Is that why when we went to go get him

tested, the moment we stepped in the doctor's office, he passed all of the mental health tests and felt fine afterward?

JACOB

I didn't know that.

TOD

I bet you also didn't know that he told your mom right before then that he wasn't happy at my house... He told

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her but not me.

JACOB

I'm sure it was because of everything that has been going on.

TOD

It was because of your mother. She has been trying to keep you and your brothers away from me for a long time now. She just finally took the opportunity once the pandemic hit.

Jacob receives a text message. Close on phone. Text from Mom reads, "Hope you're having a good day!" Jacob puts away the phone without responding.

TOD

Was that her?

Jacob is silent.

TOD

She's trying to get to you.

JACOB

No, that's not it.

TOD

What is it then?

JACOB

I don't know. I don't know the inside of moms head.

TOD

Well, I do. I was married to that woman for eighteen years, eighteen miserable years.

JACOB

I know. I've heard.

The car is stopped at a stop light at the next exit. Jacob looks at the timer counting down for the crosswalk. CLOSE ON CROSSWALK TIMER: As the timer counts down, the sound of the clock TICKING fades in.

INT. THERAPIST OFFICE - DAY

The therapist and Jacob are in the same place as they were

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before but Jacob is laid down and the therapist is no longer taking notes and is leaning in, listening.

THERAPIST

What was going on in your head?

JACOB

I wanted to get out of the conversation.

THERAPIST

So why didn't you?

JACOB

I don't know. I guess I felt trapped.

INT. CAR - DAY

Tod and Jacob are silent. Jacob is looking out the window. Tod still has a straight face.

TOD

You should realize what she's doing to you.

JACOB

What do you think she is doing to me?

TOD

You're a pawn in your mother's game... You and your brothers... She acts like she is giving you all the options, but

when you give her an answer that she doesn't like, it's her way or the highway. She took them from me... and now she's coming for you... You certainly spend more time with her than me.

JACOB

That's because of the pandemic. We were on lockdown.

TOD

That's odd, considering you have been able to hang out with your girlfriend quite often!

JACOB

She is the only person inside our bubble.

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TOD

Your bubble?

JACOB

Yea.

TOD

What's the bubble?

JACOB

It's people we are allowed to be in contact with.

TOD

Who is in the bubble?

JACOB

Mom's house, and the girlfriend's.

TOD

So the girlfriends have precedence over your own father. In what universe does that make sense? What do they have that I can't give you?

JACOB

She's my emotional support system.



CLOSE ON STOPLIGHT: Jacob looks at the timer counting down for the crosswalk again. CLOSE ON CROSSWALK TIMER: Jacob begins reaching his hand toward the lock on the door as his father continues.

TOD

I can be your emotional support system. And I have done way more than that. I am your father. I worked my ass off for you to have a roof over your head and food in your stomach. What do I get for that? I got jack shit. I did half the work, so I should get at least half the credit.

Tod sighs. The crosswalk signal hits zero. Jacob moves his hand away from the lock having lost his chance to leave. Silence.

INT. THERAPIST OFFICE - DAY

The therapist has filled out a few pages of paper with notes and her coffee is completely gone. Jacob is now standing up

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looking out of a window.

JACOB

I was a group project.

THERAPIST

And your parents?

JACOB

They went to different schools.

INT. CAR - DAY

The conversation between Tod and Jacob picks up where it left off.

TOD

I just wish that one day, you can become your own man.

JACOB

I am my own man.

TOD

Really? Cause you are doing a very poor job of showing it. If you were your own man, you wouldn't let your mother control every single decision you make. She has her hand up your ass and is playing you like a puppet. When I ask you to spend some time with me, what do you do?

JACOB

I ask Mom.

TOD

And when I wanted to see you on Christmas, what happened?

JACOB

I couldn't go.

TOD

Why?

JACOB

Because Mom said no.

TOD

Exactly. So, when you become your own

man, you can make your own decisions instead of being a puppet. I just hope that is sooner rather than later.

The car is silent.

TOD

So, are we going home or are you going to your mother's?

The car stops at a third red light. Jacob goes to unlock the car door once more. He hesitates. He unlocks and opens his car door and finally exits.

TOD

What are you doing?

JACOB

Becoming my own man.

Jacob SLAMS the door and walks away from the  
car. INT. THERAPIST OFFICE - DAY

Jacob sits on the edge of the couch fidgeting with his hands.

THERAPIST  
Did you become your own man?

JACOB  
Maybe not to him but I've always felt  
that I did.

THERAPIST  
You came here because you wanted to  
know if you were a victim of child  
abuse. How do you feel about it?

JACOB  
Well, I was never beaten or physically  
harmed.

THERAPIST  
Child neglect or abuse doesn't have to  
be physical. We all have mental scars,  
some are just bigger than others.

JACOB  
But I only told you one story. Is it  
really that bad?

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THERAPIST  
Are there more?

JACOB  
Yes.

THERAPIST  
Then I think it's safe to say that you  
very well could be.

Silence.

Jacob chokes up. Jacob's therapist embraces him in their  
arms.

THERAPIST

I know this is hard, but acceptance is the first step to getting better. Please consider coming back so we can talk more. Does the same time next week work ok?

Jacob nods his head and heads to the door. Jacob opens the door.

THERAPIST

Jacob.

Jacob turns his head and there is a slight moment of silence.

THERAPIST

You're going to be ok.

Jacob smiles with slight tears in his eyes and closes the door on his way out.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

Jacob enters his house and quickly takes off his shoes. Jacob scurries all throughout the house in search of his wife. He finds her in the kitchen and runs to embrace her.

WIFE

Hey, how did it go?

She is tackled by a hug from Jacob.

WIFE

What is this for?

JACOB

Thank you.

WIFE

For what?

JACOB

Telling me the truth.

