Dear Abby

written by

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INT. CHURCH - DAY

EXTREME CLOSE on a framed portrait of Abby (20): smiling, face slicked with sweat, volleyball tucked under her arm.

ZOOM OUT: nearby candles glinting off the photo frame. The blaring organ music, the soft sniffling, everything on this ALTER somber and black.

The URN behind her photograph.

A CRASH echoes from the back of the room. A WOMAN (50s) swivels back on the pew, looks over. The crowd follows. What was that?

Her eyes dash across the room. Maybe it's nothing. She swivels back. The urn is GONE.

WOMAN

Wait, where is-

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - SAME

GINA (20s) sprints down the street with a devilish grin. Several strides behind her:

ELLIOT (O.S.)

GINA! I DIDN'T MEAN LITERALLY!

A bus pulls over. Gina boards, URN tucked under arm, just as ELLIOT (20s) reaches the curb, out of breath. She hesitates.

The girls - still in funeral attire - reach a BUS STOP.

GINA

Come on!

Elliot looks around exasperatedly as traffic blares.

ELLIOT

For god's sake-

She jumps onto the bus just as the door closes behind her.

INT. BUS - CONTINUOUS

Gina sits down, cradling the urn in her lap. Elliot scurries up to her.

ELLIOT

I was joking when I said that. You're gonna get us arrested!

GINA

We're not gonna get arrested.

ELLIOT

People have gone to jail for way less.

GINA

Oh come on, all songwriters have gone to jail at least once. You'll be just like your idols.

ELLIOT

So, jail? That's it? Oh, great plan, Gina. Just great.

GINA

If Abby knew she was gonna sit on that creepy Addams Family mantle for the rest of eternity, she'd kill herself.

Long, awkward beat.

ELLIOT

So that's your plan? Carry her around for the rest of your life?

GINA

No. We're...

(jiggles the urn) going to Newport.

ELLIOT

It's not our place.

GINA

Why don't we ask her then? (To the urn)

Abby, do you wanna sit on your family's evil mantle or go to Newport with your besties one last time?

(to Elliot)

She seems to be a bit shy right now. Let's check in later.

Elliot rolls her eyes. The bus stops at a gas station parking lot. Gina gets up with the urn.

ELLIOT

Where are you going?

Gina ignores her. Elliot follows her off the bus.

EXT. GAS STATION - CONTINUOUS

The bus drives away, leaving the two stranded in the parking lot.

ELLIOT

This isn't Newport...Do you have any semblance of a plan?

Gina doesn't respond. Elliot sighs and pulls out her phone. No service.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

Great. I hope you know the way to Newport without a GPS.

GINA

I'm thirsty.

Gina walks toward the gas station. Elliot follows reluctantly.

INT. GAS STATION - DAY

Gina and Elliot enter. An obscure country song is playing.

ELLIOT

Oh, that's a good melody.

Elliot pulls out a pocketbook and pen and scribbles something. Gina wordlessly walks towards the drink/snack aisle.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

Okay, guess I'll find the next bus myself!

Elliot scowls and walks towards the register, manned by a CASHIER (20s, epically mustached) reading Vogue.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

Hi! When's the next bus downtown?

The cashier jerks a thumb towards a pile of tourist pamphlets.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

Oh, cool. Thanks.

She picks up a couple. The cashier glares at her.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

Um... Which one do I-

He points to the middle pamphlet. Elliot flips through it.

CASHIER

You kids and your fashions.

Elliot looks up, surprised that he's talking.

CASHIER (CONT'D)

Where did you come from? A funeral?

ELLIOT

Yeah.

CASHIER

Oh.

(beat)

Uh. Want a coupon?

INT. GAS STATION - SNACK AISLE - SAME

Gina scans the snack aisle, lights up when she sees a bag of CIRCUS PEANUTS.

GINA

Yoooo!

She grabs several bags and hurries back to the COUNTER, where Elliot has a large bus route map laid out. Gina dumps her snacks on top of the map, places the urn on the counter.

ELLIOT

(annoyed)

Hey!

(off the circus peanuts)

Wow. Haven't seen these in ages.

CASHIER

You eat this shit?

GINA

I'm sorry?

CASHIER

I thought only old people liked these.

GINA AND ELLIOT

(defensive)

WHAT?

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

Circus Peanuts are for everyone.

GINA

They made candy history! This guy chopped them up in his Cheerio bowl and invented Lucky Charms!

ELLIOT

We've had these at every birthday, every sleepover, since we were thirteen!

CASHIER

The two of you like these?

GINA

The three of us.

Gina pats the urn affectionately. Elliot swats her hand away.

ELLIOT

Look, could you just ring these up and tell us which route to take?

CASHIER

Where are you going?

ELLIOT

GINA

Downtown.

Newport.

They look at each other. Elliot pulls Gina aside.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

Gina, be serious.

GINA

We didn't steal an urn for nothing.

ELLIOT

(looking around)

Keep your voice down!

GINA

You're such a goody-goody.

ELLIOT

Goody-goody? What the hell is this, the Hardy Boys?
(MORE)

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

You know, I didn't want to come here, you're the one who flipped out!

Gina scoops up the bags of CIRCUS PEANUTS and huffs out.

CASHIER

She gonna pay for those?

Elliot shoves a few bucks at the cashier and follows Gina.

EXT. GAS STATION CURB - DAY

Elliot catches up with Gina. Gina won't look at her.

ELLIOT

Abby was always better at this stuff.

GINA

Why are you so against this? I just wanna do one last thing for her.

ELLIOT

I do too, but this is crazy-

GINA

I couldn't leave her there. She wouldn't want that.

(beat)

El. Don't make me do this alone.

A bus pulls up ahead. Elliot stares at the number, lets out a big sigh.

ELLIOT

We'll have to switch lines in a few stops, but we should be able to make it to Newport by lunchtime.

Gina cheers and tackles Elliot with a hug, dropping the circus peanuts. Elliot can't help a tiny smile.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

Alright, alright. Don't have a cow.

CUT TO:

INT. BUS - CONTINUOUS

The girls sit on a bus. Elliot's arms are full of circus peanuts. Gina plucks a bag and opens it. Elliot looks out the window and hums to herself.

ELLIOT

Does anything rhyme with volleyball?

Gina offers a piece to Elliot. She nods. Gina feeds it to her. Elliot gestures towards the bags in her arms.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

Trade you for the urn?

GINA

I thought you had it?

The two girls stare at each other. Beat. Then:

ELLIOT

YOU'RE FUCKING KIDDING ME-

HARD CUT TO:

INT. GAS STATION - DAY

CELIA (20s) walks up to the cashier with the urn.

CELIA

Excuse me, is my coupon valid for this?

END OF EPISODE 1.

EXT. GAS STATION CURB - DAY

They stop at the door of the gas station. Elliot sighs.

ELLIOT

Isn't it great to be back? And so soon?

GINA

You left the gas station last!

ELLIOT

I was a little busy paying for your colossal stash of Circus Peanuts.
If you hadn't left me-

GTNA

I told you, we'll get it back. Just chill.

INT. GAS STATION - CONTINUOUS

Gina and Elliot stand at the gas station counter.

CASHIER

Some kooky girl bought it.

ELLIOT GINA

Can you tell us what she looks like? Which direction

We were gone like 20

minutes-!

she went?

CASHIER

I think she works at the pawn shop.

Gina grabs the counter like it's an interrogation table.

GINA

What pawn shop?

The cashier points across the street and to the right.

Gina takes off, door swinging. Elliot hurries after her.

ELLIOT

Thanks!

EXT. PAWN SHOP - DAY

Elliot and Gina look up at the pawn shop sign reading "Pennies Saved Pawn Shop". The second 'E' and 'N' fall. Now it reads "Pen i s Saved".

INT. PAWN SHOP - CONTINUOUS

Doorbell RINGS as the girls enter the shop.

They look through the shelves — full of bizarre trinkets — with faux casualness.

Gina knocks an OLD STATUE over, a loud clatter. Elliot shoots her a look. Gina puts her hands up innocently.

ELLIOT

Who's running this place?

They turn around to see:

INT. PAWN SHOP, COUNTER - CONTINUOUS

CELIA meditates criss-cross on the counter, encircled by a splay of gemstones and incense burners, humming:

CELIA

OMMMMMMMMMMMM.

Elliot and Gina approach the counter.

ELLIOT

Excuse me? Sorry to bother you-

Celia peeks through one eye. She oms louder.

GINA

Have you seen an ur-

Elliot jabs Gina in the ribs. Elliot eyes her.

GINA (CONT'D)

Sorry, have you seen a...black vase?

CELIA

A black vase?

GINA

Yeah.

Celia considers this. She gets off the counter.

CELIA

You could try checking the back. It's where the new inventory is.

ELLIOT

Perfect! Thank you!

The two turn towards the closet.

CELIA

-But it's a bit cramped for two people.

Gina and Elliot share a look.

ELLIOT

Okay, you stay here.

GINA

Fine. I'll babysit Loopy Lucy then.

ELLIOT

Don't touch anything.

Gina pokes a stack of CDs over. Celia is unfazed. Elliot sighs and goes into the closet.

INT. PAWN SHOP BACK ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Elliot rustles around in the dark.

ELLIOT

Jesus, where's the-

She finds the light switch and yelps. REVEAL: a ghoulish, blank-eyed nutcracker doll at eye-level.

INT. PAWN SHOP, COUNTER - DAY

Gina loiters near the counter.

CELIA

I'm sensing a lot of...
 (wafts the air)
spiritual tension. Have you ever
turned to the cards for guidance?

GINA

Cards?

Celia heaves a GIANT BOX out from underneath the counter. She rummages to find a pack of TAROT CARDS.

GINA (CONT'D)

Oh, I don't believe in that stuff.

CELIA

But I can do a reading for you! First one's on the house.

Gina hesitates and considers this.

CELIA (CONT'D)

Whaddya got to lose?

Should she?

GINA

Fine.

CELIA

(grinning, whispers)

Excellent...

Celia pulls out a vial of "FLORIDA WATER" from her pocket. She splashes it on herself and Gina like holy water.

Celia makes a show of shuffling the cards and fans them out.

CELIA (CONT'D)

Pick three cards that speak to you.

Gina brushes over the cards. She finally decides on three.

Celia charts them out in a neat line. She flips the leftmost card. "THE EMPRESS."

CELIA (CONT'D)

This is your past. The Empress respresents motherhood and fertility... Maybe a time when you brought new life into the world...

Celia looks pointedly at Gina's stomach.

GINA

And I thought I beat teen pregnancy.

CUT TO:

INT. PAWN SHOP BACK ROOM - SAME TIME

Elliot hums the Nutcracker suite and mutters potential song lyrics about Abby.

She pulls open an antique cabinet. Inside: skulls, bongs, more dolls. She rummages around and pulls out a weighty paper sack. In sharpie: HOLEY GRAIL.

CUT TO:

INT. PAWN SHOP, COUNTER - SAME TIME

Celia flips the center card. "SEVEN OF SWORDS."

CELIA

The Seven of Swords is your present. You're being deceived... Someone's lying to your face.

GINA

Yeah, no duh.

INT. PAWN SHOP BACK ROOM - SAME TIME

Elliot still mutters lyrics, now to the tune of the *Indiana* Jones theme.

She removes antique BOOKS off another shelf to reveal: a man's face grinning. It is a life-size cardboard cutout of Jeff Probst, the host of *Survivor*, lying horizontally across the shelf.

Blinks. She plucks him off the shelf, turns him to face the wall.

INT. PAWN SHOP, COUNTER - SAME TIME

Celia flips over the rightmost card. "ACE OF CUPS" REVERSED.

CELIA

This one's your future. The Ace of Cups reversed. You're facing emotional blockages. Suppressing your feelings, bottling them up. Let me ask you: when did you decide feeling nothing was easier than feeling everything?

GINA

Are you supposed to ask questions during this?

Celia narrows her eyes at Gina.

CELIA

You've lost something, something valuable. But pretending like it didn't happen won't help anyone.

GINA

(scoffs)

You're not my therapist-

A CRASH from the back room. Gina and Celia turn around.

ELLIOT (O.S.)

I'm okay!

Elliot stumbles out, a billow of dust behind her. Jeff Probst topples at her feet. She kicks it back into the room.

CELIA

What a shame. I organized that room so well this morning.

Elliot looks back in disbelief. That's organized? Elliot notices the tarot cards on the counter.

ELLIOT

Since when were you into tarot?

Before Elliot glimpses, Celia returns the cards to the pile, gives the deck a quick shuffle.

CELIA

You were looking for a vase, right? Like, for flowers?

ELLIOT

...Sure. Like for flowers. But it's got a lid on it. And when you shake it, it sounds like... sand.

CELIA

Oh, yeah! I just sold that.

GINA AND ELLIOT

WHAT?

CELIA

To that dreamy cowboy, Brad!

ELLIOT

GINA

Cowboy?

Brad?

CELIA

Yeah! He looks like a... stoned Chris Evans.

GINA

Ooookay.

ELLIOT

Where can we find him?

CELIA

He's always at the diner down the street.

ELLIOT

Okay. I can work with that. Thank you so much. Gina, let's go.

Elliot bolts out the door. Gina turns to follow — when Celia grabs her hand and presses something into her palm. It's the ACE OF CUPS.

CELIA

A memento.

Celia grins maniacally. Gina recoils and hurries out.

EXT. PAWN SHOP - CONTINUOUS

Celia ducks her head out the doorframe.

CELIA

And if you see Brad! Tell him Celia says...

(breathy)

Hi.

EXT. STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Gina catches up to Elliot, who's looking down the street at the DINER. She points at it and they start walking.

ELLIOT

That back room was weird. I can never look at Jeff Probst the same.

Gina looks preoccupied.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

Okay. What's going on?

GINA

Nothing.

ELLIOT

You sure?

Gina tucks the card into her back pocket.

GINA Don't worry about it.

END OF EPISODE 2.

INT. DINER - DAY

PAN ACROSS: Nearly empty diner, walls papered over with flyers. A couple guys leering at the waitress. Some shitty day-old pies. A busker, JOEY (20) playing "Boy Named Sue". A BACK DOOR. The girls stand at the FRONT DOOR.

GINA

I'm waiting for Sam Jackson to pop out with a gun and start Bible quoting.

ELLIOT

Is that... Guy Fieri on the dartboard?

It is.

GINA

Okay. Let's each stake out an entrance. I'll take that table(points to table near front door)

-and you get the counter near the back door.

Elliot notices Joey. She hums along.

GINA (CONT'D)

Kay?

ELLIOT

(distracted)

Yeah, yeah, sure.

Gina and Elliot walk up to the counter. Gina looks around - no sign of Brad. Elliot's still watching Joey.

GINA

Can I get a virgin mimosa?

WAITRESS

Isn't that just orange juice?

ELLIOT

And water for me, thanks.

The waitress walks away. Joey finishes his song. Elliot is the only one who claps.

GINA

Don't tell me you think he's cute.

ELLIOT

It's a good song!

Joey comes to the counter to refill his water glass.

JOEY

Are you smiling because you like Johnny Cash or because you like me?

Elliot giggles. Gina rolls her eyes.

ELLIOT

You play really well... I don't think I could perform for a bunch of strangers. Mostly I write songs. Well, try to write them.

JOEY

Trying's half of it.

Elliot laughs, hollower this time. Their drinks arrive.

JOEY (CONT'D)

Are you writing something right now?

ELLIOT

You could say that...

GINA

(unamused, to Elliot)
Just keep an eye on the door, okay?

ELLIOT

Yeah, I will.

Gina takes her drink and leaves for her post.

JOEY

Stuck on something? You know, I could be a good sounding board. (the pun is bad)

One Johnny Cash lover to another.

ELLIOT

It's for a friend.

JOEY

Aw, that's sweet.

ELLIOT

But it's not really working.

JOEY

Hm?

ELLIOT

I don't know. I just can't find the right words.

JOEY

Pfft.

ELLIOT

What?

JOEY

"Right" words. No such thing. If it's what you have to say, then that's what makes it right.

ELLIOT

Yeah... maybe.

INT. DINER, GINA'S TABLE - CONTINUOUS

Gina scans the room like a hawk and accidentally makes eye contact with a BUTCHER...? IN BLOODY APRON.

The doorbell RINGS. Before Gina can look over, the waitress interrupts her view.

WAITRESS

Can I get you anything?

GINA

Oh, no. I'm good.

WAITRESS

Sorry, miss, can't let you sit here without ordering something.

GINA

I ordered a virgin mimosa!

WAITRESS

That's just orange juice!

BRAD (O.S.)

(strong western twang)

Thanks, doll!

Doorbell RINGS again. Gina looks over: it's Brad in a cowboy hat, urn tucked under arm, coffee in hand, walking out the back door.

Gina looks at Elliot: she's too busy chatting with Joey to notice Brad. Gina storms over.

GINA

(pointing)

EL! THE COWBOY!

Gina pulls Elliot by the arm out of the diner.

EXT. DINER ENTRANCE - DAY

The girls look around for Brad, panicked.

GINA (CONT'D)

I swear I saw him!

ELLIOT

Did you see which way he went?

GINA

No, I didn't. You were the one by the back door.

ELLIOT

He can't be far.

GINA

If you weren't so busy flirting with that guy-

ELLIOT

Hey! It wasn't like that.

GINA

How are we supposed to find the urn now?

(O.S.) Hear Joey softly start playing "COUNTRY ROADS."

ELLIOT

We'll figure it out. We've figured it out before.

GINA

That was our one chance.

ELLIOT

Our one chance? You're the reason we're in this mess in the first place!

GINA

You were the one who was supposed to be watching the urn-

ELLIOT

You were the one who stole it! I messed up once, god. It's always "Elliot, do this," "Elliot, do that," "Elliot, help me steal our friend's urn and magically undo every mess I make!"

GINA

Then why did you come with me?

ELLIOT

BECAUSE YOU FORCED ME TO!

GINA

I never forced you to do anything!

ELLIOT

Why can't you act like an adult for once?

GINA

Adults stay in contact with their best friends.

ELLIOT

What's that supposed to mean?

GINA

You know what it means.

ELLIOT

We're in college! We're busy, it's normal to grow apart-

GINA

Abby and I FaceTimed every week.

ELLIOT

And I texted Abby all the time!

GINA

Just not me.

ELLIOT

You didn't text me either!

GINA

Well, maybe we just aren't meant to be friends then! Maybe Abby was the only thing keeping us together, and nowBRAD (O.S.)

'Scuse me, ladies?

Gina and Elliot freeze and turn around. REVEAL: Cowboy Brad with the URN tucked under his arm.

BRAD (CONT'D)

Sorry to interrupt, but I left my wallet in the diner and you're blocking the entrance.

Elliot and Gina look to each other.

CUT TO BLACK:

Joey's "COUNTRY ROADS" in the background.

END OF EPISODE 3.

EXT. COASTAL CLIFF - SUNSET (FLASHBACK)

Gina (18) scrambles up a rocky cliff path.

ELLIOT (O.S.)

Gina, be careful!

Gina nears the end of the path, marveling at the gorgeous landscape before her. Elliot (18) appears.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

(out of breath)

What happened to walking as a group?

Gina shrugs.

GINA

Where's Abby?

ABBY (18) appears from behind Elliot holding a FAT SLUG.

ABBY

Meet Ozzy.

Gina and Elliot recoil.

ELLIOT

Ew.

ABBY

He's cute!

GINA

He's a slug.

Abby gives Gina a playful shove as she lets Ozzy onto the ground. Abby moves near the cliff edge to get a better look. Elliot turns to Gina.

ELLIOT

You shouldn't run here. You could've fallen!

GINA

Well, I didn't.

ELLIOT

There's no service here. If you-

ABBY

HEY! You two.

Gina and Elliot turn to Abby.

ABBY (CONT'D)

Come on, guys. Look at this view!

Gina and Elliot take a seat on each side of Abby. She's right - the view is gorgeous. They watch the waves. Then:

ABBY (CONT'D)

I've got a question-

GINA

ELLIOT

Here we go.

Oh my god not another one-

ABBY

What? A girl can't ask questions?

ELLIOT

Yeah, except you ask stuff like "what vegetable is your soul today?"

GINA

Or "which STD does your star sign most resonate with?"

Abby rolls her eyes. The girls are all laughing now.

ABBY

Okay. Maybe they've been a bit weird. But this is actually a good question. Promise.

GINA

Shoot.

ABBY

What do you want to happen to you when you die?

ELLIOT

Jesus.

GINA

Viking funeral.

ABBY

Elliot?

ELLIOT

Fine. I read somewhere that you could press your ashes into a vinyl record.

GINA

Of course you would say that.

ABBY

I'd want my ashes scattered in the ocean.

GINA

Yeah?

ABBY

'Cause then you're kind of the sea and the sea is kind of you. And then you get to exist, like, forever.

(beat)

I would want it right here.

Beat.

ELLIOT

Wow. That's morbid.

ABBY

Hey!

ELLIOT

And on that note,

(stands)

we should head back. I need to finish packing.

Abby follows Elliot.

ABBY

Ugh. I'm not looking forward to dorm life.

ELLIOT

At least you're in a city. I'm gonna be in the middle of a cornfield.

GINA

Can we stay, like, five more minutes?

ELLIOT

Gina, you haven't packed either-

ABBY

Okay, we can stay a bit longer. Who knows when we'll all be together again, right?

She's right. Elliot obliges.

Elliot, Abby, Gina sit in comfortable silence.

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. COASTAL CLIFF - SUNSET (PRESENT)

Gina, Elliot, and the urn sits heavy between them.

ELLIOT

You're gonna have to talk to me at some point.

Gina sulks.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

Gina...

Gina sulks some more.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

(insincere)

Fine. I'll start. I'm sorry I yelled at you back at the gas station. I'm sorry I missed Brad. I'm sorry I...

Sorry I...

(beat, sincere)

I'm sorry I didn't reach out. I didn't know how to.

Gina doesn't respond. Elliot examines the urn.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

So... how does this work? Do we just... sprinkle? Or do you, like, dump it?

GINA

Dump it?

ELLIOT

do? Scoop it / with my hands?

What else am I supposed to

What if it gets under my

nails-?

GINA (CONT'D)

I don't know, sprinkle it
like a normal person- / Scoop
it? No, Elliot, don't scoop
it-

A loud wave crashes against rocks, interrupting the girls. Beat.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

Maybe that's Abby telling us to shut up.

Beat. Gina giggles. Elliot cracks a smile.

GINA

Have we ever been here without her? Ashes non-withstanding.

ELLIOT

I don't think so.

GINA

I miss her.

ELLIOT

I know.

Beat.

GINA

I made such a mess.

ELLIOT

Gina-

GINA

I shouldn't have forced you to come. I'm sorry.

ELLIOT

You didn't force me. I chose to.

Beat.

GINA

(off the urn)

We should probably scatter this. How do you do this? We should probably say something, right?

ELLIOT

Probably.

(beat)

I wrote a song.

GINA

Yeah, I know. You're always-

ELLIOT

No, a new one. For Abby... but it's for us too. It's not totally done though.

GINA

Oh. Well.

Beat. Smiles.

GINA (CONT'D)

Close enough. Go for it, maestro.

Elliot pulls out a crinkled piece of paper, lyrics scrawled all over it.

Elliot sings the song "DEAR ABBY." It is unabashedly goofy, imperfect, and bittersweet. Think "Little Brother" from Phineas and Ferb, or Rebecca Sugar.

Gina lays her head on Elliot's shoulder. They watch the waves. Elliot looks down. She taps Gina.

ELLIOT

Gina, look.

A slug crawls onto Abby's urn.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

Ozzy came back.

END OF EPISODE 4.