

FROM “DAYTRIPPERS”

“WHAT THE HELL IS going on?” Roxanne screamed.

They were dropped off at a carriage house, and David, Bart, Perry, and Roxanne rushed inside.

“Rox, calm down.”

“Don’t tell me to calm down, David. Don’t tell me!”

The horses inside neighed at her screams.

“And why are we all dressed like this? Where are we? Why does everything look the way it does? What the...what the hell is going on?”

Bart, Perry, and David were silent, they looked at her with haunted eyes.

“We don’t know what’s happening,” David said. There were tears in his eyes.

“What do you mean you don’t know what’s happening?”

“I...I fell asleep in the school library...and I woke up here. Dressed like this. I didn’t know where I was or what was going on, until Perry found me.”

Roxanne looked at Perry with disbelief in her eyes.

“What kind of game is this that you’re playing?” she screamed.

“This is not a game, Rox,” Bart said from behind her. “I woke up here too—”

“Okay, you know what? You all don’t want to tell me what’s going on? Fuck you all.”

Roxanne stormed to the carriage house entrance and swung open the door. She walked to the cobblestoned street and screamed at the top of her lungs.

“What the hell is going on here?”

David ran outside and picked her up. He carried her back inside the carriage house and Bart slammed shut the huge door.

“What are you doing?” Roxanne screamed.

“Stop it! Stop screaming!”

“Don’t tell me to stop screaming!”

“STOP IT NOW!” David bellowed.

She broke down, slowly at first, then all at once. Her hands flew to her face and the tears came suddenly. She crumpled to the hay on the floor.

David looked at Perry and then to Bart.

“Rox...”

“Leave me alone! This isn’t funny!”

David sighed. “I know, baby. But it’s real.”

“Those men beat me! They hit me! They called me names!”

“I know, baby,” David said kneeling and taking Roxanne in his arms. “And I’m sorry I yelled at you. It’s just been a rough couple of days.”

Roxanne snatched back from David, looked into his eyes. Her mouth trembled. “Days...?”

David closed his eyes, let his head fall. “Days.”

Roxanne looked to Perry, who nodded, then to Bart, who also nodded. She could hardly find the words to speak.

“What do you mean days?”

Perry spoke first. “I’ve been here three days.”

Roxanne looked at Perry. He was sitting on a bale of hay.

“I fell asleep in Conway’s Spanish cram session. I woke up here, in a park. I ran around like a crazy man. I

couldn't believe my eyes. Everything was changed, was different...was quiet. No cars, no electricity, no people hardly. Nothing I knew. I cried. I hid. I realized something crazy was happening. I thought *I* was crazy. That maybe I was dreaming. I actually tried to go to sleep to wake up in Conway's class. But I only woke up back here. I was going to kill myself because...I thought I had gone crazy."

"Then I saw Perry," Bart said. "I woke up in the cemetery at Christ Church, but it looked different. I was talking to Pat Papadopolous one minute, after we had pizza, and the next I was so tired and sleepy that I had to sit down on the front steps of the school. When I woke up, I was in the cemetery. Everything had changed. The people, the buildings. I thought I'd gone crazy too. There were so many rats. I tried to talk to people, but they only looked at me strangely. I thought that if I kept talking, they would figure out that I didn't belong here. So I stayed on the run. Stayed near the church. Hid out there. The nights are so dark here. There's hardly any light. No electricity. And the food..."

"Where the hell are we?" Roxanne asked quietly.

David turned her face to his. His eyes were still banked with tears. Still haunted.

"We're in Philadelphia, baby."

"In Philadelphia?"

"Yeah."

"But why does it look like this?"

David was quiet a long time. "Because it's 1879."

Roxanne's eyes widened, and she started to scream again, started to get angry, started to ask what type of joke this was, started to claim that this game had gone too far. But then she looked at Bart, and saw a tear slip from his eye. She turned to Perry, and saw his head buried in his hands. She looked at David and saw that he was crying fully now. But before she could say anything, before she could cry out her own anguish, the carriage house door opened loudly. There was a man there, dressed in a fine suit. He was young and handsome. His eyes searched them.

"Which one of you is Bartholomew Tennison?"

Bart frowned, looked at Perry, Roxanne, and David. He turned to the man and raised his hand.

"I am."

The man looked Bart up and down.

"Are these your friends?"

Bart looked back at Perry, Roxanne and David. They all stood.

"They are my friends," Bart said defensively.

"Come with me, then," the man said. "Jane Hightower sent me to get you. I am her husband."

THEY RODE IN A large but beautiful horse-drawn carriage, mostly in silence.

"Stop here," David said.

The man who claimed to be Janey Hightower's husband looked at David. He called to the driver.

"Coachman, kindly stop here please."

The carriage slowed and came to a halt and David turned to Roxanne.

"I want to show you something. So that you know I'm not lying to you."

They stepped from the carriage, and suddenly Roxanne knew where she was, although everything was different. They stood at Penn's Landing, but there was no mall, no Benjamin Franklin bridge connecting Philadelphia to Camden, New Jersey, no Campbell's Soup factory, no elevated train, no entry onto the Interstate 95 Expressway, no tarred streets with painted medians, no Old City shops, or restaurants, or boutiques, or cafés, or wine shops, or art galleries. Only dirt roads, only horses and carriages, only tall wooden ships and wooden docks, and rats, and a wide dirt road that was in her time Market Street.

Roxanne turned slowly, and looked toward downtown, where there should have been Franklin Charter Academy, where there should have been LOVE park, where there should have been skyscrapers. Instead she saw horses, carriages, sheep in the middle of the road, and one thing that made her sick to her stomach. City Hall, home of Philadelphia's courts and the mayor's office, which should have been constructed, which should have had a statue of William Penn, the founder of the state of Pennsylvania, was not there at all. There was nothing there but a pile of bricks. The only building she could see in the distance, that she recognized, was Independence Hall, where the Declaration of Independence had been signed a little over a hundred years ago. Which meant that the Civil War had not long been over. Not even fifteen years since the Emancipation Proclamation had been signed. And then it hit her all at once. They were in 1879. This was not a dream. This was not a joke.

Roxanne vomited right in the middle of the road. She could not stop shaking until she and David were with the others again in the safety of the carriage.