

IMAGINE

by

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Short film (approx. 10 minutes)

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INT. LOUNGE - EVENING

It's a ground floor flat. Let's focus on a small table set for romance; two chairs, one either side, a red tablecloth laden with crockery and cutlery, two wine glasses, both empty, a corkscrew, one red candle, lit, its orange-white flame dancing like there's nobody watching.

An anxious twenty-something ALICE steps into shot; hair overly washed and styled, a sexy (but not slutty) dress and maybe a tad too much make-up. This girl is clearly dressed for a first date.

She eyes the clock on the wall. 8:05pm.

ALICE

He's late. Eight o'clock, that's what we arranged.

Then she checks her mobile phone.

ALICE

No messages.

JOSH

I knew he'd let you down.

Meet JOSH, handsome but all too aware of it, possibly the same age as ALICE, leaning against the far wall. We're not sure of this guy's role. A male best friend perhaps? Whoever he is, he's weirdly dressed in white. Like, totally. White tee-shirt, white trousers, white shoes, yes, you get the picture.

ALICE

It's five minutes, Josh. No big deal.

He clocks the way she's nervously pacing across the room.

JOSH

Yeah, looks like it.

Surrendering, ALICE plonks herself on the nearby sofa. JOSH sails across and joins her.

ALICE

God, look at me, I'm a bag of nerves.

JOSH

Then text the guy. Cancel tonight. Tell him you've got the dreaded lurgy.

ALICE

No. I need to do this. I can't live like a hermit forever.

ALICE stands up. JOSH remains seated.

ALICE
Besides, I've got a good feeling about this one. He seems really nice.

JOSH
You haven't even met the guy. All you've done is swap a few texts.

ALICE
You can tell a lot about somebody by how they express themselves in words.

JOSH
Have you seen his profile photo? You really want to date that?

ALICE
We can't all be oil paintings.

JOSH. Sullen. Glum.

ALICE
What's that face for?

JOSH
I thought I meant something to you.

What's up with this guy? Is he jealous?

ALICE
You do. But it's been two years. I need to get out there and... and...

JOSH
Move on?

ALICE
Yes.

Their eyes meet. Two lost souls, so much pain.

ALICE
I would have stayed with you forever. You know that. But you died, Josh.

Eh? Did we hear her correctly?

ALICE
You died.

Oh. We DID hear her correctly. Time seems to stand still.

And then ding-dong!

ALICE

He's here. Oh, God, how do I look? This dress, it's not too tarty, is it? I don't want to scare him off.

Oh, she realises --

ALICE

I can't believe I'm fishing for first date advice from an imaginary vision of my deceased ex.

Another ding-dong!

JOSH

Um, here's a tip. Maybe you should answer the door.

INT. HALLWAY - EVENING

JOSH follows ALICE towards the front door.

JOSH

If he's brought you flowers, you seriously need to ditch this guy.

ALICE

I'm not listening to you.

ALICE opens the door to a huge bunch of flowers, so humungous she can't see the person behind it.

She backs away a couple of paces, then looks to JOSH who is grinning as if to say "Well? Are you ditching him or what?" In response, she sticks out her tongue.

SPENCER reveals himself from behind the blooms. He's wearing a shirt and tie and smart trousers. He's not bad looking. Quite sweet actually. The kind of guy a mother wishes her daughter would bring home.

SPENCER

Pleased to meet you, Alice. These are for you.

He offers the flowers across, but ALICE backs further away.

ALICE

No, no, no, sorry, Spencer, I can't accept them. Flowers play havoc with my hay fever.

SPENCER

Oh, God, I do apologise.

ALICE

It's fine.

JOSH. Behind her. Not looking too happy.

JOSH

No, it's not fine.

To which she turns to face him, scowl alert.

ALICE

It's fine.

Oops, ALICE checks herself and returns her sights to SPENCER who looks past her and frowns, but doesn't pursue it. Cue the girl's nervous recovery smile.

ALICE

My bad. I should have mentioned it.
Allergy Central, me.

SPENCER

Not to worry, I'll just...

At first, SPENCER doesn't know what to do with the offending flora. Then he places the blooms upon the doorstep.

SPENCER

...put them down here out of harm's way.

He hands over a bottle of wine.

SPENCER

There you go. Bottle of white. Is that okay? I wasn't sure what you were cooking.

ALICE

What does it matter? It all goes down the same way.

They laugh. And then she realises --

ALICE

Oh, what am I like, leaving you hanging on the doorstep? Come in, come in.

He accepts the invitation with a smile and enters the flat. He walks past JOSH, invisible to him.

JOSH
I don't like him.

As she passes her ex, she silently mouths "Stop it."

INT. LOUNGE - EVENING

SPENCER enters the lounge, closely followed by ALICE. Oh, look, JOSH is already present, sitting on the sofa.

ALICE takes note of SPENCER'S puzzled frown as he looks around.

ALICE
What's up?

SPENCER
Is there a... a third party here this evening?

JOSH
You could say that.

But of course, SPENCER can't see or hear him.

ALICE
No, it's... just me.

JOSH makes an "oh, really?" face.

SPENCER
Oh. Right. How strange. When I was waiting at the front door, I thought I heard you talking to somebody.

JOSH throws across a grin.

JOSH
Get out of that one, Alice.

ALICE scowls at JOSH.

ALICE
Stop it.

Oops, once again, she checks herself and says to SPENCER --

ALICE
I mean... I talk to myself. My worst habit. I can't help it, I do it all the time. I did it just then when I... told myself to stop it.

JOSH

Wow. Good recovery.

ALICE

Spencer. Why would I invite anybody else here tonight?

SPENCER

I don't know. A chaperone perhaps?

ALICE

A chaperone? This isn't the 1800s. Look.

She points to the romantic set-up, the table, the candle.

ALICE

Table for two.

SPENCER

Sorry, I... don't know why I thought you had company.

SPENCER is then drawn to a framed photo taking pride of place upon a curiously bookless bookcase. It's a shot of JOSH and ALICE during living times, smiling faces, arms around each other.

SPENCER

You look happy.

Wow, zero hint of jealousy from the guy.

ALICE

That's Josh. Was Josh. He died.

SPENCER

Ouch. I'm so sorry, I keep putting my foot in it.

ALICE

It's okay, don't worry about it. It happened two years ago. Car crash. The other driver was totally off his nut on drugs. Can you believe the tosser survived? Practically walked away from the accident unscathed. And that was the end of that. Our relationship down the proverbial plughole.

ALICE, remembering her pain, stares blankly into space.

#uncomfortable. SPENCER'S not sure what to do.

SPENCER

Um. Would you... rather I left?

JOSH

Yes.

ALICE

No!

Oops, she realises she said it way too loud. She grabs the corkscrew from the table and offers it across.

ALICE

No. What I'd love you to do is crack open this bottle of wine. I am so parched.

SPENCER smiles as he takes the bottle and the corkscrew. He struggles with the task, but manages it eventually. He pours the girl a glass, ladies first, then fills his own. Next, they raise their glasses.

SPENCER

To first dates.

ALICE

First dates.

Chink!

An alarm, coming from the kitchen, shrieks for its supper.

SPENCER

What's that?

ALICE

Smoke alarm! Oh, my God, our chicken chasseur!

And she dashes out of the room.

INT. LOUNGE - EVENING (A LITTLE LATER)

ALICE and SPENCER at the table, demolishing a huge takeaway pizza. They look at each other and trade grins.

ALICE

I'm sorry about dinner. You must think I'm a totally pants cook.

SPENCER

That's not what I'm thinking at all. It doesn't matter what's on offer on the table. It's good company that counts.

ALICE

Awww.

JOSH. Still on the sofa.

JOSH

Oh, somebody please pass the sick bucket. That was so cliché.

ALICE catches JOSH'S eye, making sure SPENCER doesn't notice.

ALICE

I thought it was sweet.

SPENCER clearly thinks she's talking to him.

SPENCER

Oh, did you now? Well, there are plenty more where that came from.

JOSH

Oh, please don't encourage him. The last headache we need is a rendition of his entire back catalogue of cheesy quotes.

ALICE tries her best to ignore her ex. Her eyes are fixed on her date for this evening. Time for a change of subject.

ALICE

So. Spencer. What exactly are you looking for?

SPENCER

What, in a relationship?

ALICE

No. In a field of smelly cowpats. Of course I mean in a relationship.

SPENCER

Well, that's easy. I want nothing less than the best.

ALICE

Wow. You're aiming high.

JOSH

I'll say. Best to stick with your own kind, mate. The Cheese Brigade.

ALICE forgets herself and says to JOSH --

ALICE

You're not helping.

Oops, she realises when SPENCER thinks she means him.

SPENCER

What makes you say that? Is it a crime to want to be 100% happy? To fall in love with a girl who truly connects with me on a higher level?

ALICE

You mean like a soulmate?

SPENCER

Exactly. A soulmate. Why, don't you think they exist?

ALICE

Well, yes, of course I do, but --

JOSH

She had a soulmate. Me. I think you'll find this is a classic case of been there, done that, bought the tee-shirt.

By the look on her face, ALICE is getting really pissed off with JOSH'S constant interruptions.

JOSH

Alice, please. Come to your senses. Give that loser his marching orders. He's not the man for you, and you know it.

ALICE has had enough. She accidentally on purpose knocks over SPENCER'S glass of wine. Splosh, all over the groin of his trousers. SPENCER yelps and stands bolt upright. Cue Oscar-worthy acting from ALICE as she too rises from her chair.

ALICE

Oh, Spencer, I am so, so sorry.

JOSH looks on, impressed.

JOSH

Did you knock his glass over on purpose? You did, didn't you?

ALICE ignores JOSH and continues to talk to SPENCER.

ALICE

You'll find a towel in the bathroom, through there, second door on the right. Go dry yourself off, okay?

SPENCER nods and leaves the room in a hurry, looking and walking like he's just pissed himself.

A livid ALICE marches over to a now-standing JOSH. There follows a heated exchange of harsh whispering.

ALICE

Why are you doing this?

JOSH

Doing what?

ALICE

Spouting out all those sarky comments. Trying your best to trash this date. This isn't you.

JOSH

Like, duh of duhs. Of course this isn't me. This is a representation of me from your imagination. And quite frankly, I'm not a fan of how you're currently depicting me.

ALICE

What's that supposed to mean?

JOSH

You've turned me into an asshole.

ALICE

I have not turned you into an asshole.

JOSH

Oh, really? I've been slagging off Spencer ever since he arrived. That is definitely asshole territory. Admit it, Alice, you've transformed the memory of Josh into something... unrecognisable.

ALICE looks visibly upset. Her harsh whispers now morph into quivering whimpers.

ALICE

All I want to do is move on. Get my life back.

JOSH

Yes. I know. But you're terrified of letting go.

ALICE

You're all I've got left of you.

JOSH

That's not true. A piece of me will always be in your heart.

ALICE

Josh, I know I need to say goodbye. But I don't know how.

SPENCER

So you were talking to somebody.

Uh oh, it's SPENCER. He's back, looking deadly serious, towel in hand, the wet patch still gracing his groin.

ALICE. Mortified.

ALICE

Oh, God. Spencer. How long have you been standing there?

SPENCER

Long enough to work out what's going on.

ALICE

What do you think is going on?

SPENCER

He's here, isn't he? Josh. In this room. Talking to you.

ALICE delivers a weak and nervous yet definite nod.

JOSH

Nice work, Columbo.

SPENCER

You imagine him being here because you're scared of letting go.

ALICE

As crazy as it sounds, you're totally right.

A bright beam of excitement then bursts upon SPENCER'S face.

SPENCER

That's great! We have something amazing in common.

ALICE

What?

SPENCER

My deceased sister, Daisy. She's standing over there.

He points. Sure enough, we spot DAISY, a couple of years younger than her brother, standing across the room, unseen by ALICE and JOSH. Just like JOSH, she too is dressed all in white.

SPENCER

She died in a fire three years ago. Me and my parents got out alive, but... well... I've been wracked with pain and guilt ever since. So I imagine her by my side. To keep her close.

By the look on ALICE'S face, she can't believe she has been blessed with somebody who truly understands.

SPENCER

Just like you, I know I need to move on. And just like you, I don't know how.

They hold unsure stares. Time passes. And then comes a sudden flurry of inspiration from ALICE.

ALICE

Oh, I think there might be a way to fix this. We need to close our eyes and use our imagination.

ALICE closes her eyes. SPENCER regards her with curiosity.

ALICE

Right now, I'm imagining Josh casting his eyes upon Daisy.

SPENCER

Oh. Wow. You really think this could work?

ALICE

We won't know unless we try.

SPENCER closes his eyes.

SPENCER

Okay. I'm imagining the same, vice-versa.

An astounded JOSH and DAISY look across at each other.

JOSH

Oh, my God. I can see you.

DAISY

And I can see you.

ALICE smiles, her eyes still tightly shut.

ALICE

It's working. Josh just said he can see Daisy.

SPENCER

And Daisy just said she can see Josh.

ALICE

God, this is... mindblowing. Okay, next step. I'm imagining Josh falling in head over heels in love with Daisy.

SPENCER

I've also got that covered.

And as a lovestruck JOSH and DAISY approach each other --

JOSH

You're so beautiful.

DAISY

You're so handsome.

JOSH/DAISY

I love you.

They embrace, they kiss, they're made for each other. A white light engulfs the lovebirds. And then it clears to reveal --

-- ALICE and SPENCER standing alone in the room, more than a little staggered by proceedings. They open their eyes to find that JOSH and DAISY have disappeared.

ALICE

It worked. It actually worked. I feel so... liberated. Oh, Spencer, I'm free to move on.

SPENCER

Oh, Alice, it feels so good to finally let go.

They seat themselves on the sofa.

ALICE

I can't believe we just played Cupid with our imaginary visions. How is that even possible?

SPENCER

Maybe we have a connection on a higher level.

ALICE

Does that mean... we could be soulmates?

SPENCER

I hope so.

ALICE

So do I.

Warm smiles are exchanged.

SPENCER

Question is... where do we go from here?

ALICE

Oh, come on Spencer, where do you think? Use your imagination.

And they cuddle up together, a new romance in the making.

THE END