

THE BLUE

by
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Characters

Fiona – F, late 20s to early 30s

Robbie – M, late 20s to early 30s

Robbie and Fiona enter, sit separately and face the audience. They're typing on their laptops.

ROBBIE

'Fiona! It's been a long time! I'm not sure if you remember me, but I was just messing around on Facebook and thought I would look you up. How are you?'

FIONA

'Robbie! OMG! It's been so long! Thanks for friending me! I'm doing great! Where are you living these days?'

ROBBIE

'I'm in Phoenix still. You?'

FIONA

'LA.'

ROBBIE

'Ah man, that's great. You look great too.'

FIONA

'Haha. No...'

ROBBIE

'Is that a gardening hat or—'

FIONA

'Sort of a sun hat, thing. And it looks like— are you in the army now?!'

ROBBIE

'Ha, that. Yeah, that's an old photo.'

FIONA

'Well, you look completely different.'

ROBBIE

'Haha. You look the exact same... Fiona Penn.'

FIONA

'Robbie Turner.'

There's a pause as they seem to have run out of things to say.

FIONA

'Can I ask you something?'

ROBBIE

'Yes.'

FIONA

'Do you remember the Blue?'

ROBBIE

The Blue...

They are suddenly aware of each other in the space. They rise and meet in the middle.

FIONA

Let's make a world.

ROBBIE

Let's make a world.

They begin to tell their story— kind of to each other, kind of to us.

FIONA

I met Robbie Turner in 1991, the summer after fourth grade.

ROBBIE

My family had just moved to Colorado Springs. I didn't know anyone until I ran into a girl named Fiona Penn that lived three doors down.

FIONA

We spent every single day together.

YOUNG ROBBIE

Fiona! Want to go to the mountains?

YOUNG FIONA

Yeah!

They run off...

FIONA

Each afternoon we'd meet on my back porch and sprint up the hiking trail behind my house.

ROBBIE

Colorado amazed me. It's broad hills sprouted with dry, yellow grass and pine trees. The land was cracked and violent, crawling with cactuses and yucca and rattlesnakes.

FIONA

We discovered a dark, cold creek that had no end.

YOUNG ROBBIE

Fiona, over here!

FIONA

Robbie spotted it first— an opening in the brush that lead to the water.

ROBBIE

We squeezed through and emerged on the other side covered with brambles and sticks. That's when we saw it. The Blue.

YOUNG FIONA

What *is* this place?

ROBBIE

The Blue was an enormous, open area along the muddy banks of the creek.

YOUNG FIONA

Robbie, look at that swimming hole!

YOUNG ROBBIE

Whoa!

FIONA

A massive swimming hole dominated the clearing— it was so deep that the water turned black at the bottom, like the mouth of an abyss.

ROBBIE

It was surrounded by birch trees that by some accident of growth met overhead, shielding the entire space from all but flakes of sunlight, their leaves and branches interlacing to form a perfect canopy.

(Young Robbie)

Fiona, check out that rock!

FIONA

Upstream, a rock as tall as we were loomed over the swimming hole and divided the creek into two miniature water falls that purred gently to a rest on the water's surface.

ROBBIE

Every breath felt like shade cascading into your lungs. It was its own world, untouched and unseen since the beginning of earth.

FIONA

It was so cool and clean and fresh that we named it... the Blue.

ROBBIE

The Blue.

They take a big breath and exhale. They laugh and play.

YOUNG ROBBIE

Hey, Fiona! Let's make a world!

YOUNG FIONA

Let's make a world! I'll go first. In the Blue, the leaves aren't actually leaves. They're a thousand little ears, and the trees use them to listen to your thoughts. But you can hear their thoughts too!

YOUNG ROBBIE

How?

YOUNG FIONA

By touching their bark. You hold both of your hands to their bark, like this, and close your eyes. And if you listen carefully, they tell you all their secrets.

YOUNG ROBBIE

Cool.

YOUNG FIONA

Okay. Your turn.

YOUNG ROBBIE

The king of the Blue is that rock. His name is Big Rock and he's a million years old. That's why he looks that way. His job is to protect all humans that visit his kingdom.

(bowing)

Your majesty.

YOUNG FIONA

(curtsying)

Your majesty.

You're not allowed to drink the water in the Blue.

YOUNG ROBBIE

No?

YOUNG FIONA

No. Because if you do, you forget who you are. And when you sit down to try and remember, mud covers your whole body and you become a river stone. All the stones you see are children that drank the water and forgot who they are...

ROBBIE

We talked about everything in the Blue, but especially the strange creatures outside known as 'adults.'

FIONA

The Land of Adults was as distant and intricate as a city skyline— and just as unfathomable.

YOUNG FIONA (CONT'D)

What's your Dad do?

YOUNG ROBBIE

He works for the army.

YOUNG FIONA

Does he kill people?

YOUNG ROBBIE

Maybe. He's an engineer. I went to his office once. He sits at a metal desk and has a file cabinet with a bunch of papers. What about your Mom?

YOUNG FIONA

She's an artist. Or she used to be. She makes dream catchers and hangs them above her bed. She's sad a lot.

YOUNG ROBBIE

Does she cry?

YOUNG FIONA

No. She just lies in bed all day. She asks me to bring her things. When I do she smiles, but I can tell it's a fake smile.

ROBBIE

We spent four summers practically living in the Blue. For three refreshing months, its power would envelope us completely.

FIONA

The Blue was made out of a distinct substance, not of this earth. The air was so thick with it, you could snap off a piece and carry it in your pocket the rest of the day.

ROBBIE

We *became* the Blue. There was no distinction between the soles of our feet and the mud bank, our bare legs and the birch trees. We drank the water.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)

We forgot who we were and the Blue sculpted us
into river stones.

FIONA

The August of our fourth summer, a month before
middle school started, Robbie told me to meet him
at the Blue.

YOUNG ROBBIE

We have to talk.

FIONA

When I arrived he was sitting in the bank skipping
rocks across the swimming hole.

(Young Fiona)

Robbie? Is something wrong?

YOUNG ROBBIE

I'm moving. My Dad just told me today.

YOUNG FIONA

Where? When?

YOUNG ROBBIE

Next week. We're going to Arizona, a new base. My
Dad says we're going to war with Iraq.

YOUNG FIONA

Will I see you again?

YOUNG ROBBIE

I don't know.

FIONA

And like that, everything changed. I looked around.
The Big Rock King was just another boulder. The
canopy seemed lower, insignificant. The trees felt
like trees. I could even see the bottom of the
swimming hole.

ROBBIE

I could tell what Fiona was thinking. I was thinking the same thing. The Blue is gone forever.

(Young Robbie)

I gotta go.

YOUNG FIONA

Wait.

Fiona approaches him. They look at each other, breathing. She shoves him. Robbie shoves her back. She grabs him around the neck and they fall and wrestle. They roll around, tugging at one another. It's clumsy, sexual. They break apart.

ROBBIE

I ran out of the clearing and never looked back.

FIONA

I never saw him again... Where did you go, Robbie Turner?

ROBBIE

Fiona Penn. Whatever happened to you?

A suspended moment as they think they'll never know the answer.

FIONA

(having an idea)

Let's make a world.

ROBBIE

(smiling)

Let's make a world.

FIONA

After high school I stay close to home and attend Colorado College. I meet a boy the first day of class. Gene. He's a self proclaimed hipster poet. 'Hey, baby, your eyes are like Ruby Tuesday through Friday.'

ROBBIE

I join the army. Just like my Dad and his Dad before him. September 11th happens right after I complete basic. They ship me on the first plane to Iraq.

FIONA

I am completely smitten. I think he's brilliant. I flip him upside down and books of poetry fall off his shoulders and onto the ground.

ROBBIE

We roll into Bagdad like it's the United States' personal parking lot. Mission Accomplished. We go on patrol, flash our guns. We try and keep the peace. That's how it happens.

FIONA

I have no idea who I am. I switch majors every other week. I drop out. Gene and I marry. I start making jewelry. Gene says things like, 'this is such a nice piece, baby. Really good effort.'

ROBBIE

I see a gun pointing out of a window. I fire two shots at the window. The gun disappears.

FIONA

We move a lot. Chicago, Denver, Seattle, Detroit. Gene keeps saying he can't concentrate, that each city is too 'suffocating.' He never writes anything. Just smokes weed.

ROBBIE

I come back from the war and marry the woman I met before I deployed. We buy a one story in Phoenix. An army buddy gets me a job shuffling papers for his Dad's auto parts manufacturing plant.

FIONA

I file for divorce. I move to LA. I need to create a new life. I know that sounds... Anyway, I want to start a jewelry store. I work for Whole Foods so I can get a discount on their organic produce.

ROBBIE

We have two kids. A son, Rob Jr. and a daughter, Jill. My wife leaves me. She says being married to me is like being married to a rock.

FIONA

I lose weight for mysterious reasons. Five, ten pounds. Twenty. No matter how much I eat.

ROBBIE

I harden. I drink. I eat everything in sight. I gain weight. My belly ossifies. I am a solid. A lead ball.

FIONA

I wake up in the emergency room. My pulse dipped so low that I collapsed at my register.

ROBBIE

Something pierced me over there. It wasn't a bullet. Hot as a bullet, but invisible. Slow.

FIONA

'An auto-immune disease of indeterminate type.'
What the hell does that mean?

ROBBIE

I walk to my bedroom and unlock my gun case. I look at the gun. I just want to look at it.

FIONA

I lose more weight. I'm vanishing. I have panic attacks. I try to work. A customer raises her voice about the price of an avocado and I... I can't go back.

ROBBIE

I pick up the gun. My pupils sharpen into two, infinitesimally small points. I see nothing. Feel nothing. That's when it happens. Jesus Christ, the only begotten son of our Lord, saves my life.

FIONA

Medical marijuana saves my life! I eat pot brownies constantly. Then I watch NOVA. It's great.

ROBBIE

I call my daughter in tears. I start going to church. I join AA. I quit AA.

FIONA

I surround myself with plants. Shade. Soil. I keep the air conditioner on high. My life simplifies. I have a routine. I live off unemployment. I have a few close friends. I read. I look out my window. My apartment is a lone poppy bulb rotting in an endless field of pavement and metal.

ROBBIE

My life is a big white cube. My apartment is poor man's stucco and Arizona heat on the outside and empty pizza boxes and a flat screen within. My white ford truck has tinted windows. I keep it clean. During the evening rush hour, as I idle behind an infinite line of cars, I watch the red dusk drain from space and think of nothing.

FIONA

One morning, I roll over in bed and look at the ceiling.

ROBBIE

I'm at gas station, filling up the truck.

FIONA

I feel sore all over. Every joint. Like the God of pain took over my body and kicked me out on the street.

ROBBIE

I observe my hand as it squeezes the nozzle. It's no longer mine. I'm wearing a glove made from the hand of my father.

FIONA

Then it hits me. This. This is what it feels like to be a grown up. When did it happen?

ROBBIE

Where did I go?

FIONA

Somewhere along the way, I lost me.

Their stories end at the same time and they take each other in.

ROBBIE
(regally)
Welcome to the Land of Adults.

FIONA
Are you their king?

ROBBIE
At your service.

FIONA
(curtsy)
Your majesty.

They laugh.

FIONA
Do you ever think of me?

ROBBIE
Yes. I– uh. My daughter. She runs cross country. I was watching her from the sidelines during a meet and she turned and smiled at me. Something about the way the light hit her face. Do you ever think about me?

FIONA
Sometimes when I’m reading in the late afternoon, a cloud passes overhead and darkens my living room, and a breeze from the air conditioner tickles a drop of sweat that’s just formed on my... And for a moment, just a moment, I’m back in the Blue.

(pause)
Robbie? How is your life?

ROBBIE
If a sandstorm blew down the walls of my apartment and covered me from head to toe, I wouldn’t know the difference. There’s room for improvement. And you?

FIONA

Well... My body is eating me alive. Nom nom nom.

And I fear my mind is too.

(smiles)

I guess in the end the world made *us*.

They share a wry chuckle. Stillness. He raises an open hand. She mirrors him. They touch palms. They stand like that for a moment. They part ways and go back to their computers.

FIONA

‘It was really nice to hear from you.’

ROBBIE

‘You too. Take it easy, Fiona Penn.’

FIONA

‘Bye bye, Robbie Turner.’

ROBBIE

‘Smiley face.’

FIONA

‘*Winking* smiley face.’

They close their laptops and look out.

End of play.