

HELLS CANYON by Emily Sheehan

Characters

Caitlin. Seventeen. Wears a hoodie, denim skirt and high-tops.

Oscar. Fifteen. Wears a baggy polo shirt with a school logo, cargo shorts and dirty sneakers.

Location

Public park

Motel room

SCENE ONE.

A public park. Red brick wall. Cement. A green wheelie bin. A rusty swing that could give you tetanus.

CAITLIN swings on the swing. OSCAR catches his breath.

CAITLIN: Twelve past three, I'm impressed

OSCAR: Came straight from school

CAITLIN: Musta run.

OSCAR: ...

CAITLIN: ...

OSCAR: You look nice. I like your... hoodie.

CAITLIN: Do I look hot?

OSCAR: Um, you look like Caitlin.

CAITLIN: Wanna go skinny dipping in the river?

OSCAR: You mean without clothes on?

CAITLIN: Dare me?

OSCAR: Is this a prank?

CAITLIN: I will if you will

OSCAR: Naked?

CAITLIN: Yep.

OSCAR: Butt naked?

CAITLIN: Pants off, dick out, naked.

OSCAR: In public?

CAITLIN: No one'll see, no one comes here.

OSCAR: *You'll* see.

CAITLIN: You afraid?

OSCAR: How 'bout top half only?

CAITLIN: That's obviously unfair.

OSCAR: I dunno...

CAITLIN: I'll go anyway. I don't care.

OSCAR: What if there's crocs?

CAITLIN: No way, that's way further downstream.

OSCAR: Better not.

CAITLIN: I'm gonna risk it. You coming?

OSCAR: Why're we even here?

CAITLIN: You wanna make out?

OSCAR: Your text was legit?

CAITLIN: What do you think?

OSCAR takes out his phone.

OSCAR: *[reading the text message]* "Oscar. Full stop. Wanna fuck. Question mark. Maluka Park. Full stop."

CAITLIN: Cryptic huh?

OSCAR: You're messing, right?

CAITLIN: I thought I was pretty straightforward.

OSCAR: Promise this isn't some awful prank where you'll take a photo of me and send it 'round school-

CAITLIN: I literally never even considered that.

OSCAR: -and come up with some whip smart caption that someone turns into a meme and I'm left immortalised online but for all the wrong reasons.

CAITLIN: That does sound like me, doesn't it?

OSCAR: Because yeah, you're not the nicest person of all time, but that would be like on another level.

CAITLIN: It's not a prank.

OSCAR: ...

CAITLIN: I'm game if you are.

OSCAR: For real?

CAITLIN: For real.

OSCAR: Yeah alright.

OSCAR and CAITLIN start to make out. Furious. Sloppy. Uncoordinated.

OSCAR: Wait! Stop. No.

This is the most awkward thing of my life.

I'm just gonna leave.

CAITLIN: What?

OSCAR: Cya 'round.

CAITLIN: You're lucky to even be here, you know that?

OSCAR: Don't be mad, I feel guilty.

CAITLIN: You're such a joke.

OSCAR: I said I'm sorry. I'm just *thrown*.

CAITLIN: You *ran* here.

OSCAR: I didn't run, it was more like a fast walk if you wanna get technical.

CAITLIN: You clearly ran, you're all sweaty.

OSCAR: I'll have you know I'm always sweaty.

CAITLIN: It's called antiperspirant.

OSCAR: It's called anti-what-the-heck-I-don't-wanna-do-it-with-you.

CAITLIN: Then why'd you even come, I coulda texted someone else if you were gonna wimp out.

OSCAR: I was happy you were talkin' t' me for the first time in like six months. I thought you'd have some sorta speech prepared.

CAITLIN: You isolated yourself Oscar. I just went along with it.

OSCAR: Is that your version of an apology?

Silence.

CAITLIN: Let's do something fun.

OSCAR: I should probably go home.

CAITLIN: You're so boring.

OSCAR: It's mocks tomorrow. Not that you'd know, you haven't been at school.

CAITLIN: Yeah yeah.

OSCAR: Haven't seen you there in ages.

CAITLIN: What's your point?

OSCAR: You're gonna get so thick you'll have to repeat year ten. Then you'll be in my class.

CAITLIN: You mean the spaz class?

OSCAR: Don't worry, I'll let you copy my homework.

CAITLIN: Then I'll definitely be put in the spaz class if I'm copying off you.

OSCAR: You shouldn't use the word "spaz".

CAITLIN: You shouldn't care so much about mocks, its not like it's the actual exams.

OSCAR: I want to do well.

CAITLIN: You'll be fine, you're like a child genius.

C'mon, Os.

Hey, wanna know a secret?

OSCAR No.

...

Okay yes I obviously do. What? Tell me.

CAITLIN: Wanna see my tattoo?

OSCAR: You don't have a tattoo.

CAITLIN: I do now.

OSCAR: I know that you don't.

CAITLIN: You don't know shit.

OSCAR: I assume that you don't.

CAITLIN: I assume your tighty whities have skid marks fifty percent of the time, give or take.

OSCAR: ... You can't get a tattoo if you're under eighteen.

CAITLIN: Yes you can.

OSCAR: Not without permission, and your mum's way strict.

CAITLIN: You can if you suck off the guy at the parlor.

OSCAR: ... You're a psycho.

...

So can I see your tattoo?

CAITLIN: Nup, missed your chance.

OSCAR: I knew you were lying.

CAITLIN sits next to Oscar, checks no ones looking. Shimmies up her skirt.

OSCAR: [*shielding his eyes*] Ahhhh my eyes!

CAITLIN: Hey.

OSCAR: Just kidding. Show me.

CAITLIN shimmies up her skirt. Above her knee a sheet of plastic is wrapped around her thigh. She peels it back to reveal a large tattoo of a spiny flower with purple

leaves. Below the tattoo, her leg is visibly bruised. Along the length of her knee is a deep gash that has recently been stitched up.

CAITLIN Cool, hey?

OSCAR It's all oozy.

CAITLIN It'll look different in a month. When the swelling and scabs go away.

OSCAR Can I touch it?

CAITLIN Go ahead.

OSCAR traces the tattoo gently, then moves to touch the stitches.

CAITLIN: *[flinching]* Ouch.

OSCAR: Still hurts?

CAITLIN: Colours are more intense than black ink.

OSCAR: What is it?

CAITLIN: Deadly nightshade. One of the most poisonous plants ever. Eating the berries makes you hallucinate... if you're lucky.

OSCAR: What if you're unlucky?

CAITLIN: *[miming slitting her throat]* Kkkkkkkk!

OSCAR: Woah.

CAITLIN: I'm the only girl at school with a tattoo. So that's pretty cool. Bet everyone will copy now. You wanna get one? I can take you.

OSCAR: No way.

CAITLIN: C'mon it'll be fun.

OSCAR: There's nothing fun about terrible, irreversible decisions.

CAITLIN: It wasn't a terrible decision.

OSCAR: You'll regret it tomorrow.

CAITLIN: Shut the fuck up Oscar.

OSCAR: I mean, if going the flower route wasn't a lame cliché, giving gobbies to tattoo artists is probably on your list of Top 5 Trashiest Moments.

CAITLIN: Shut up you dipshit! You don't know fucking anything about why I did it, so don't try to be cool okay!

OSCAR: Hey, are you okay?

CAITLIN: Yes I'm fine.

OSCAR: Are you sad because you're already regretting it?

CAITLIN: I don't need you being a dick head to me right now okay, because I've actually had a really really terrible day.

OSCAR: How bad?

CAITLIN: Really bad.

OSCAR: Worse than Kanye?

CAITLIN: Way worse than Kanye.

OSCAR: Yikes. Wanna talk about it?

CAITLIN: No I don't wanna talk to you about it. I have way WAY better friends I would talk to before you.

OSCAR: When I'm feeling down, it's usually because-

CAITLIN: I said shut up Oscar. This is why you don't have any friends.

Pause. They sit in an awkward silence.

OSCAR slowly takes a sandwich wrapped in aluminum foil out of his backpack. He unwraps it slowly. It's extremely noisy and irritates Caitlin.

OSCAR: *[chewing]* Wanna bite? Ham and cheese.

CAITLIN: Fat chicks and five year olds eat ham and cheese.

OSCAR: I like ham and cheese-

CAITLIN: So what does that make you?

OSCAR: That's a bit reductive-

CAITLIN: Your brain's a bit reductive-

OSCAR: Your brain's a bit destructive-

CAITLIN: That doesn't even make sense-

OSCAR: You don't even make sense-

CAITLIN: Alright stop-

OSCAR: *"Collaborate and listen / Ice is back with my brand new invention"* (Vanilla Ice - Ice Ice Baby)

CAITLIN: Seriously stop that; you're not funny.

OSCAR takes another bite of his sandwich.

CAITLIN: [*snatching his sandwich*] From now on, you can't eat. I can't eat; you can't eat.

OSCAR: Why can't I eat?

CAITLIN throws it as far as she can.

OSCAR: What if I get hungry?

CAITLIN: Tough.

OSCAR: Are you anorexic?

CAITLIN: What planet are you on?

OSCAR: Hunger-world. Where normal people visit three times a day.

CAITLIN: You can't just ask girls if they're anorexic.

OSCAR: No judgement.

CAITLIN: I'm not anorexic.

OSCAR: Is that why you haven't been at school the past three weeks? Coz you're anorexic.

CAITLIN: I'm having an operation tomorrow, alright? And I'm not allowed to eat or drink anything before surgery.

OSCAR: What kind of operation?

CAITLIN: A boob job.

OSCAR: Oh.

CAITLIN: Oh my god I'm not getting a boob job that was a joke!

OSCAR: Hey Caitlin?

CAITLIN: What?

OSCAR: Did you cut yourself?

CAITLIN: ...

OSCAR: The gash on your leg.

CAITLIN: What do you think?

OSCAR: Doesn't it hurt?

CAITLIN: Nah it feels nice.

OSCAR: I don't get it.

CAITLIN: It's from Mike's party.

OSCAR: Oh. Yeah I heard you fell over.

CAITLIN: Yeah.

OSCAR: I heard you got so drunk you were crawling round on all fours.

CAITLIN: Well that's not what happened.

OSCAR: So what happened?

CAITLIN: Shut up, dick cheese.

OSCAR: Looks pretty nasty.

CAITLIN: My knee just buckled when I was dancing. I wasn't drunk. I mean I was drunk, but that's not why I was on the floor.

OSCAR: Wouldn't know; wasn't invited.

CAITLIN: Have you talked to literally anyone this term? If you wanna get invited to things you have to actually talk to people.

OSCAR: I'm talking to you.

CAITLIN: Well it was totally shit okay, no one freaking helped me, even though I was clearly in pain, they were just laughing and thought it was funny but it actually effing killed. So thanks for bringing it up.

OSCAR: ...

You know what'll cheer you up?

CAITLIN: LOL cats?

OSCAR: Mum gave me fifteen bucks for lunch today. Which I didn't spend. Coz I made a sandwich. I'm thrifty like that. So you wanna go get Maccas for dinner? My shout. So long as it's under fifteen dollars.

CAITLIN: I have Mum's credit card, so it's cool.

OSCAR: Well, you wanna get Maccas together anyway?

CAITLIN: Nah, let's do something crazy.

OSCAR: KFC?

CAITLIN: No something totally mental. Something big. Something way beyond what anyone ever reckoned we could.

OSCAR: And waste a perfectly good TV watching afternoon?

CAITLIN: That is the saddest thing I've ever heard.

OSCAR: Don't fix it if it ain't broke.

CAITLIN: Well everything *is* broken, alright? Mum's being totally mental. My friends suck. You're boring. And life is totally completely unfair.

OSCAR: Well if everything's so awful and you're so angry about it why don't you just leave.

CAITLIN: Maybe I will.

OSCAR: Good luck with that.

CAITLIN: Good luck with learning to wipe your own ass hole.

OSCAR: Not one of your bests.

Pause

CAITLIN: Maybe I *should* just run away. Mess everything up and see if anything changes. If I make enough of a mess.

OSCAR: Don't be thick.

CAITLIN: We could though. Think about it. No one knows we're here. We could just totally run away. Go full on missing.

OSCAR: I don't wanna go missing.

CAITLIN: Because your life is *so* great?

OSCAR: What's wrong with my life?

CAITLIN: It's a nightmare. It's worse than mine.

OSCAR: It's not that bad.

CAITLIN Oscar, you sit by yourself every single day looking totally miserable and sorry for yourself. You slink around corridors. You eat lunch in the teachers' staff room! You're so weird. You don't even try to be normal.

OSCAR: Because no one likes me okay, its shit! Why would I *push* myself on people that don't even like me.

CAITLIN: You don't even *try*. I can't make people be friends with you, if you don't even try to act normal.

OSCAR: Well I'm not normal anymore, Caitlin. Nothing about my life feels normal. Hunter topped himself, and now I'm like suicide boy, and I don't think anything will ever be normal for me again.

CAITLIN: So lets run away. Just us. We could actually have the most hectic adventure of our lives.

OSCAR: Just outta nowhere?

CAITLIN: Look. I'm sorry. We're clearly incapable of being friends at the moment. But something happened today, and now if I go home I'm in really really deep trouble.

OSCAR: What did you do?

CAITLIN: I don't wanna talk about it. Please Oscar? Don't you miss hanging out?

OSCAR: Okay. But I need to get permission first-

CAITLIN: No! You have to swear, Oscar, that no matter what, you won't tell anyone where we go.

OSCAR: Why not?

CAITLIN: I mean it.

OSCAR: ...

CAITLIN: Swear.

OSCAR: I swear.

CAITLIN: Let's make a blood pact.

OSCAR: You don't believe me?

CAITLIN: Swear on our blood that you won't tell anyone where we go.

OSCAR: We're gonna hav'ta go home eventually.

CAITLIN: Do it.

OSCAR: Well then, then, you hav'ta swear that we really will be friends again.

CAITLIN: What?

OSCAR: And you're not gonna back out.

CAITLIN: I won't.

OSCAR: For real. You have to swear you aren't gonna ditch me. And I don't mean now, I mean like, when things go back to normal you won't disappear again.

CAITLIN: I promise.

OSCAR: Swear.

CAITLIN takes a broken coke bottle from the ground. Cuts her palm.

CAITLIN: Cross my heart.

OSCAR takes it from her.

OSCAR: *[cutting his palm]* Ouch.

They hold their hands palm to palm.

OSCAR: Caitlin Dickens, I swear on the life of Kanye West, that I will never, no matter what, ever, do us in.

CAITLIN: Oscar Jackson, I swear to you, on my most treasured collection of Taylor Swift paraphernalia, that when we go back to normal, we'll be friends again.

OSCAR: Okay, let's do it. Let's go missing.

CAITLIN: You mean it?

OSCAR: Can you drive a manual?

CAITLIN: I got my Ls.

OSCAR: Alright. See that truck over there?

CAITLIN: Yeah.

OSCAR: Your chariot awaits.

CAITLIN: Are you serious?

OSCAR: Dead serious.

CAITLIN: Oscar Jackson, you kleptomaniac.

OSCAR: We're running.

CAITLIN: Yep.

OSCAR: Deal.

End Scene.