

Little Hopes

Written By

Rei Zhang

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EXT. LAKESIDE

The night is silent save for the occasional chirps of crickets and the crackling CAMPFIRE. A small TENT is pitched a little ways from the campfire, a pair of shoes left in front of the entrance flap. We move from the campsite towards the nearby LAKE. Sitting on the edge of the dock at the border of the lake, the little light from the moon illuminating his pale features, a boy closes his eyes as he leans back and savours the last vestiges of summer. A FISHING ROD is propped up beside him, its paint worn and peeling, the hook slightly bent out of shape.

His name is ALEX, and he's just turned 17, or so he thinks. He isn't really keeping track of the days anymore, not since humanity has been nearly wiped out, not since he was separated from his parents. He's lean, but not lanky. He wears a pair of beat up converse, faded jeans, and a threadbare cardigan over a t-shirt with too many holes.

As he relaxes, we hear a distant voice call out to him.

ADRIAN

Alex!

We pan around to see another boy, a little younger than ALEX, jogging towards him with a smile on his freckled face.

This boy's name is ADRIAN. He's wearing a t-shirt a size too large for him, and jeans with pant legs rolled up at least three times. The two have been travelling together for some time now.

ADRIAN comes a stop beside ALEX, flopping down onto the dock in a flail of limbs. The FISHING ROD falls over with a clatter. ALEX opens his eyes and gives ADRIAN a withering look. ADRIAN only smiles wider in return.

ADRIAN

(With a slight French accent)

What is Alex doing?

ALEX reaches over and stands the FISHING ROD back up.

ALEX

(Exasperated)

Reflecting, I guess.

ADRIAN tilts his head, confused. It's evident that he's not a native English speaker.

ALEX  
 (Quickly)  
 Sorry, I just - I'm... I'm thinking.

ADRIAN stares at him. ALEX squirms a little under his unblinking gaze.

ADRIAN  
 (Cheerfully, almost childlike)  
 Okay!

ADRIAN turns away from ALEX to stare at the lake instead, swinging his legs back and forth, toes barely brushing the surface of the water. ALEX frowns.

ALEX  
 Why aren't you wearing your shoes?

ADRIAN turns back to look at ALEX with a furrowed brow.

ALEX  
 (Sighing)  
 Shoes, Adrian.  
 (really slowly:)  
*Shoes.*

ADRIAN scrunches his nose in an expression of disgust. He swings his legs a little more aggressively.

ADRIAN  
 (Petulant)  
 Don't like - Don't like sh- shoose.

ALEX inhales deeply, frustration creeping onto his face.

ALEX  
 (Firmly)  
 You have to wear them. We've been over this - you'll get sick.

ADRIAN  
 Was never sick at- at-

ALEX gets up suddenly. He stares down at ADRIAN, still sitting, like an adult chiding a child.

ALEX  
 (through gritted teeth)  
 You will be! You- you-

ALEX exhales forcefully. ADRIAN looks distraught and

confused. He doesn't understand why ALEX wants him to wear those uncomfortable things - he's never needed them before. The men in white coats just let him run around barefoot. Why would there be a problem now?

ALEX turns around and begins walking towards the campsite. He needs a distraction - he doesn't want to blow up on ADRIAN, doesn't want to make ADRIAN scared of him like he was scared of the scientists. The CAMPFIRE is dying down - may as well keep it going.

ADRIAN scrambles after him.

EXT. CAMPSITE

ADRIAN  
(Whining)  
Alex - Alex sleep?

ALEX pokes at the CAMPFIRE with a large branch, rearranging the logs.

ALEX  
(Quietly grumbling)  
Nah. Not yet.

ADRIAN crouches down next to him, leaning forwards and looking up at him with something akin to concern on his face.

ADRIAN  
Alex need sleep. Too tired.  
(pause)  
Tired Alex is bad Alex.

Despite his initial frustration at the younger boy, ALEX finds himself relaxing a little. ADRIAN doesn't mean to be difficult - he's just not adjusted to the outside world yet.

ALEX  
(Softly, reassuring)  
I'll be fine. You go to bed first.

ADRIAN  
Alex need help. Think too much.  
(Stands up)  
Adrian want to help.

ALEX stares at ADRIAN. ADRIAN fidgets a little, but says nothing. The fire crackles on, the only sound and light in the darkness.

ALEX chuckles.

ALEX

You're really a special one, huh? Why do you think I need help?

ADRIAN

(hums, with childlike pensiveness)  
Lonely. Alex is lonely. Little weak Alex.

The statement catches ALEX off-guard. He can feel the annoyance coming back - he isn't *weak* - just because - just because he *left his parents for dead*, just because he *couldn't leave ADRIAN behind, boxed in miserably by glass walls even though his tormentors were long dead, despite being a total stranger* -

ADRIAN

So is Adrian. Small Adrian.  
(giggles)  
Two small make big!

All the annoyance leaves ALEX in a woosh. ADRIAN is right, in a way. They're both just kids. ALEX may be older both physically and mentally, probably *much* older mentally, but *they're just kids*.

ALEX

(scoffs with a smile, but there's no humour, turns to stare at fire)  
I- yeah. I guess so. Just two small kids in a big world.

ADRIAN

(nods)  
Big world. Wanna see world. Wanna-wanna find...  
(hesitates)  
home?

ALEX whips his head around, confused. ADRIAN's eyes are unfocused, staring at some random spot in the darkness. Did-did just ADRIAN say "home"? But ADRIAN was raised in a *testing facility*-

ADRIAN

Coats said Adrian from, from-  
(frowning in concentration)  
Ca-Calas?

ALEX  
 (With a note of disbelief)  
 Calais?

ADRIAN  
 (excitedly nodding head)  
 Yeah!

ALEX is reeling from this new information. He supposes it makes sense, but that means- that means that ADRIAN isn't a test tube baby or whatever ALEX thought he was before, that means that he was probably *kidnapped from his home when he was a baby-*

Suddenly, ALEX feels a little nauseous.

ADRIAN  
 (with a wistful expression)  
 Wanna go to Calais. See Calais.

ALEX lets out a sudden guffaw. ADRIAN snaps out of his daydream and looks at him, confused.

The world is practically fucking gone, and here he is, with a boy who doesn't even need to *sleep or eat* - that he personally broke out of a Second Plague testing facility because he has a goddamn bleeding heart - standing around a dying campfire, talking about *sightseeing*. He can't help but laugh at the absurdity.

ALEX  
 (runs a hand through his hair,  
 takes a deep breath)  
 Okay. Okay- we- we can do that. We can go to the sea.  
 (turns to ADRIAN)  
 I think there's a couple of settlements along the road we can stop at.

ADRIAN gives him the biggest smile. It's clear he didn't understand all of what ALEX just said, but he gets the gist of it. ALEX offers a shaky smile back.

Maybe they'll be okay; just two lonely boys and what's left of their plague ravaged world.

FADE TO BLACK

THE END