

And what if we did it

Phong Dylhan

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INT. LIVING ROOM – EVENING

A group of ten friends sit scattered around a cozy living room, drinks and dj controllers playing nothing. The mood is a mix of exhaustion and possibility.

Characters :

Arno ; Billie; Clem; Dan; Matt; Paloma; Odile; Riyadh; Nico; Kori

ARNO

It really feels like a wildfire these days...

BILLIE

You extinguish one and three more start up.

CLEM

Yeah...

I think I'm going to quit Eurosoft.

It's a good job, and I know I'm lucky to have it, but...

DAN

Hey, don't apologize.

Just because we're struggling to find work doesn't mean what you're going through isn't valid.

CLEM

Thank you, Dan.

Honestly, I feel like an NPC, like I'm not really living my life, or even a life.

I wake up, commute for over an hour, work, then spend another hour getting back home.

That's it.

MATT

You know what we should do?

Finally start a collective!

PALOMA

Here we go again...

I really love the idea and you know it, but we always talk about it and never do it.

MATT

But but but, this time there's a twist!

ODILE

Okayyyy...

Are you on a reality TV show or something?

MATT

No, seriously!

My uncle has this big house in the middle of nowhere—like, *really* nowhere.
He doesn't use it, and since he doesn't have kids, he said I could have it.

MATT (*continuing*)

We could totally start working there altogether!
I mean, it would be crazy fun, no?

RIYADH

The house we stayed at for New Year's two years ago?

MATT

Exactly!
That one.

NICO

I remember that kitchen, it's perfect for preserving jars.
We could totally plant fruits and vegetables there...
What do you think, Dan?

DAN

Well, I admit it would be amazing, but is it really feasible?
I know the house is big, but we are ten—living all together could be tough.

BILLIE

I love you all and I know that you love me, but I can be difficult sometimes—
I mean, do you remember Berlin?

KORI

It wasn't *that* bad, you're just imagining it worse in your mind.
But I agree, won't we get on each other's nerves at some point?

MATT

Okay, okay, what if we don't think of it as, like, permanently moving there?

CLEM

You mean like... a playtest?

MATT

Exactly!
Just treat it like a long holiday.
A reset.
We go, we work on our projects, we hang out, and see how it goes.

ODILE

So basically...
Creative retreat meets reality TV.

NICO

Honestly?

Sign me up for *that* show.

DAN

I'm in, but only if we do it right:

A full-on road trip to get there—playlists, snacks, the works.

RIYADH

Yes!

We make a whole thing of it.

Pack up, hit the road, and see where it takes us.

BILLIE

Okay, but only if we use electric cars.

EXT. CAR– DAY – ON THE ROAD

The car cruises along a winding countryside road. Half the group is dozing, the other half is chatting quietly. Sunlight pours in through the windows. Dan, in the passenger seat, turns to Odile in the back.

DAN

Hey Odile, do you think we should have, like, a whole social media thing for the collective?

ODILE

Well... why wouldn't we?

DAN

I don't know. It just feels a bit weird.

BILLIE *(leaning forward from the back row)*

Weird or real?

PALOMA

Unfortunately, if you want to reach people or have a bit of success, you kinda need to do some of it.

DAN

I'm just not a social media kind of person, you know?

PALOMA

You say that, but we literally went to, like, four game events last year. It's not *that* different.

DAN

Yeah, but that's in-person. That's not... a whole online persona.

ARNO *(from behind the wheel)*

You already have an online presence, though.

Uploading your games, commenting, exchanging with followers—
It's still a persona.

DAN

I know. It just feels fake sometimes. I don't feel like it's me.

BILLIE

Okay but... everything's kind of fake.

You don't act the same with your grandma as you do with us, right?

DAN

Sure, but that's different. Online feels performative.

ODILE

But performative doesn't mean dishonest.

I don't post everything about my life, and that doesn't mean I'm lying.

BILLIE

Yeah, no one's saying "be raw 24/7."
You just pick the version of yourself you want to put forward.
That's still you.

DAN

I get that.
It's just... sometimes I feel like I should say more. Be more visible.
Like, I'm a queer person of color making games. That means something, right?

DAN (*cont'd*)

But I also don't want that to be my *whole* thing. I'm tired.

ARNO

Who isn't?

DAN

And when I don't speak up, I feel like I'm letting someone else down.
Like maybe the spotlight should go to someone who's more... invested.

PALOMA

You sound invested to me.

DAN

Maybe.
But I don't want you guys—or anyone—to think I'm pretending.

BILLIE

Pretending to what? Care? Be a good role model?
No one's got it figured out, Dan. That's the trap.

DAN

I just wish it didn't feel like it always had to mean something.

PALOMA

Maybe it doesn't.
Maybe you can just... exist.

DAN

That would be nice.
I just don't want you guys—or anyone who knows me—to think I'm being fake online.

ODILE

We're your friends. We know who you are.
I post on LinkedIn too. I don't love it, it's not really me,
but it helps me get freelance work.
And sometimes that's just what you have to do.

DAN

Yeah... LinkedIn's a hard no for me. I just can't do it.

BILLIE

Honestly, it's the most cursed platform.
Feels like posting into a void made of spreadsheets.

ARNO

One day I'll snap and start doing troll posts.
"Feeling blessed to hit burnout twice this quarter."

ODILE (*laughs, half-serious*)

Joke all you want, but it gets you work.
And we all need to eat. That's the part I can't joke about.

EXT. VAN – DAY– STILL ON THE ROAD

The atmosphere is warm, cozy. Paloma stretches, blinking slowly.

PALOMA

Okay, so who wants to keep me from dozing off?

ARNO & BILLIE

I will.

PALOMA

Two for one—let's go.

PALOMA

Feels great to see you guys again, by the way.

We live so far apart now...

I swear, you both go through three fashion eras between each time we meet.

BILLIE

Well, you're either a trendsetter or you're not.

ARNO

Yeah.

You went back to the capital... but where we are, it's so small that if we wanna do something—we just do it.

BILLIE

Remember a few years ago when we helped organize the city's first Pride?

It wasn't huge. We wanted it to be more like a protest than a party.

And it mattered.

It was important, I think.

ARNO

And Billie actually does drag shows there now.

It's still recent—but every time I've gone, it's been amazing.

BILLIE

Thanks, Arno.

You should come one day, Paloma. You'd stay at mine.

We could do skincare and gossip over tea.

PALOMA

I definitely will.

Honestly... since I got laid off, I haven't been doing much.

Seeing you all would do me good.

ARNO

Yeah...

Resting is important.

They really made you hustle—two internships just to get a short contract.
Made you believe they'd keep you...

PALOMA

...Only to bring in another intern after me.
That I had to train, by the way.

BILLIE

Screw them.

ARNO

Now that you're free, Palo...
What do you wanna do?

PALOMA

I wanna take risks.
I spent two years doing things that were done and redone and redone.
Always the same formula.
I'm over it.

ARNO

Do you remember that time we built that interactive installation in, like... a week?
Honestly, I kinda wanna go towards that again.

BILLIE

Even an alternative controller would be a bit of a slay.

PALOMA

I really miss that freedom.
Doing whatever we want—whatever we feel.
Not expecting recognition or money... or even for it to work by the deadline.
I just wanna spend time creating with my friends.
And have fun doing that.

BILLIE

Well.
I think we're going to do just that—as a collective.
We don't always have to do everything as one big group.
We didn't talk about it much yet but...
I wanna create with everyone.
And also alone. Or in small groups.
And not feel stuck.

ARNO

Yeah. I agree.

PALOMA

Me too.
I think they'll get it.

BILLIE

Okay, group hug, but emotionally.

ARNO

Just emotionally? Coward.

PALOMA

Try me!

EXT. WOODS – NIGHT – AROUND THE CAMPFIRE

The group sits in a loose circle, faces lit by the flickering firelight.

PALOMA

Hmmm, I know we said we make it a whole roadtrip but I didn't remember camping in the woods to be part of the plan

KORI

You gotta read the discord sometimes you know.

NICO

Well good for you, I've planned everything and go an extra on everything.

PALOMA

Thanks Nico, you really are the best

NICO

Do you remember that the fantasy goal would be to be self sustainable right ?

DAN

We're still working with computers so it's not the best but I believe we can strive towards that.

PALOMA

Yeah, I remember the world needs it.

RIYADH

I would love that too but sometimes it just feels useless when you see giant companies wasting resources like they cost nothing.

NICO

Like Katy Perry and all those people who went to space for 10min ?

RIYADH

Yeah, like a lot of people are making an effort to recycle, reduce their consumption of water. and energy. Not waste food and energy but big companies are doing things like that just for publicity.

CLEM

That's because they got money. They really can do whatever they want.

NICO

They'll be able to pay any amount of taxes or fines.

ODILE

It's just like during Covid, people couldn't get out or they would get fines. But for rich people the amount was so ridiculous, that they were still seen doing huge events and privatizing restaurants and such.

DAN

It's like they're not feeling the urgency of the situation.

PALOMA

They even want us to make more kids. Like that's gonna fix everything.

NICO

I think it's 'cause they're scared. Of the future. Of war, probably.

PALOMA

Yeah, well... who'd want to bring a kid into this?
What kind of future are we even raising them for?

DAN

Is there even a future for them ?

MATT

I wonder how our grandparents did it—having kids in the middle of a war.

PALOMA

Honestly? Probably lack of contraception.
And also... back then, having kids and sending them off to fight was just normal. Part of the narrative.

ODILE

Also having an abortion was complicated and dangerous.

PALOMA

I really hope we're not heading back there.
Where contraception and abortion become hard to access again.

BILLIE

They won't be for the rich.
They'll just fly somewhere it's legal.

DAN

Okay. Depressing talk quota reached.
Let's go see what Nico's planning to plant in the garden.

MATT

He's insane. He brought a mini blood orange tree—held it on his lap the whole drive.

NICO

You'll see. You're all gonna love them. I'm sure.

MATT

Did it went well on your side ? I know we were a bit ahead so we didn't see you quite early on.

PALOMA

Oh yeah, it went smoothly. I think Odile was awake at the beginning and then went to sleep so fast.

RIYADH

Well she wasn't driving at least

DAN

And you all ?

MATT

Actually, we talked about what we wanted to do with the collective

CLEM

We thought it would be interesting to talk about it together

ODILE

Yep let's go

But shouldn't we have a name for it first ?

BILLIE

It does feel like we are talking about an unborn baby sometimes haha

ARNO

And like all baby it'll be pretty.

ODILE

At first at least

DAN

I think a name would erupt when our first project big or small comes out.

We will know from the energy we all feel.

NICO

Energy is a good name

ALL

No !

NICO

Oh okay, you don't like my naming sense.

PALOMA

I agree with the both of you but sometimes I worry that we often have big intentions but then it fizzles out.

RIYADH

Yeah like the time we wanted to do some streaming as a group.

MATT

It won't be the same, I mean we are already doing more than the time we tried streaming no ?

KORI

I have an idea !

We should do a game jam once we get to the house

BILLIE

Only if it's not one that only last a weekend !

CLEM

I'm too old to work non stop for 2 days for a video game

PALOMA

Same my bones would be hurting

KORI

No worries, it wasn't my plan either. But I saw some that were a a week or two long and sometimes even a month.

ARNO

I think a week or two would be a good middle.

NICO

And crunch is forbidden and we eat well during the whole jam. We need rotation for cooking, groceries and so on.

RIYADH

If we are all adding a condition, can I add one too ?

MATT

Yeah go ahead Riyadh.

RIYADH

If the theme is divisive or we have ideas that are too different, we are okay to be split in multiple small groups.

MATT

Yes of course !

BILLIE

I was thinking the same Riyadh. Glad to know I'm not alone in that case.

DAN

And most importantly, if there's any tension or any issues. We act like adults and settle it. You all are important to me and I want it to go well. Not only for that jam but also for our friendship.

