

THE ASK

Written by

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1 INT. GARRIDAN'S CAR - DAY - TRAVELING

We hear the sounds of an unpeopled waterway: distant waves rolling in, seagulls squawking, other bird calls, and a flock passing overhead, their wings scissoring the air.

FADE IN:

GARRIDAN, late middle-aged, fit, good-looking but without vanity, is driving to work through rush hour traffic.

GARRIDAN (V.O.)
How're the seagulls doing today?

LEORA (V.O.)
Oh their usual. How about you? Snap any good bird pics?

GARRIDAN (V.O.)
Caught an egret coming in for a landing. Here.

2 INT. GARRIDAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Garridan sits at his desk, sifting through paperwork, scrolling through a computer window, checking the time.

LEORA (V.O.)
Oh. That's a nice one. Ardea alba.

GARRIDAN (V.O.)
Yah.

It's a shared joke.

GARRIDAN (V.O.)
Say, you got a moment? I got something I'd like to ask you.

LEORA (V.O.)
I'm in no rush.

3 EXT. PICNIC TABLE AT OFFICE PARK - DAY

Garridan sits at the table chewing on a sandwich. Checks the time.

GARRIDAN (V.O.)
Okay, so, this is kinda odd, I know.

LEORA (V.O.)
You know me: I like odd.

GARRIDAN (V.O.)
Well. I have a friend who asked me
for a favor.

LEORA (V.O.)
Okay?

4 INT. GARRIDAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Garridan is back at the office again, doing the same old same old. He checks the time.

Closes a folder on his desk, puts it in a drawer. Tidies his desk.

GARRIDAN (V.O.)
Ah, but before I get to what that
favor is, you gotta know a little
about his situation.

He's done for the day.

LEORA (V.O.)
Oh I'm down for some gossip.

5 EXT. SLOUGH - DAY

Garridan squats on the slope above the waterway, snapping photographs of some egrets stalking the far shore. On a bench thirty feet away sits LEORA -- mid twenties, petite, with a quiet, unforced beauty -- using a pair of binoculars.

GARRIDAN (V.O.)
So this guy, I've known him a long
time, about my age, also single,
like me. And where he works, but in
another department, there's this
young woman who he's friends with,
right? A much younger woman.

Garridan glances over at Leora unobtrusively, but curious.

LEORA (V.O.)
Ah.

He snaps another photo.

GARRIDAN (V.O.)
Much, much younger.

LEORA (V.O.)

Ah-hah.

He appears to think a moment. Then think better of it.

GARRIDAN (V.O.)

But truly, they're just friends. A purely platonic, working, friendly relationship.

And he thinks again. On an impulse, he gets up and walks toward Leora.

LEORA (V.O.)

But?

He stops a few feet from her bench. Leora lowers her binoculars, looks up. A small smile, curious but reserved.

GARRIDAN

Excuse me but, this isn't the first time I've seen you out here?

LEORA

No it's not.

GARRIDAN

Sorry for my curiosity but, are you a bird watcher too?

LEORA

Emm. Sure. Lotta bird watching for school.

GARRIDAN

Really. Like for a club or something?

LEORA

Well actually, I'm doing a Master's in Marine Biology, specifically ornithology.

GARRIDAN

Wow. Marine? Ornithology. You mean like, seagulls and stuff?

LEORA

Well.

(Ironic)

Yeah. Like seagulls and stuff. How about yourself?

GARRIDAN
Oh I just take bird pics.

LEORA
Nice. Can I see?

Garridan sits down beside her, slipping the camera strap off from around his neck. He holds the camera in front of Leora while fiddling with a couple of buttons.

LEORA (CONT'D)
Hey, these are really good.

GARRIDAN
Mmm, thanks.

LEORA
No, I mean it. Be nice if academic journals had something, elegant, and good-looking, like these.

GARRIDAN
Well, anytime. I'm at your service.

LEORA
So what's your name?

GARRIDAN
Gar. Or Gary. From Garridan.

LEORA
Well, Gar or Gary from Garridan.
I'm Leora. Just Leora.

They shake hands.

GARRIDAN
Really nice to meet you, Leora.
Nice to meet a fellow, ah

LEORA
Seagull lover?

As the voiceover conversation begins again, we see Garridan and Leora enjoying a friendly conversation.

GARRIDAN (V.O.)
Yes, but. So they've known each other for going on like a year now?

6 EXT. SLOUGH - DAY

A different day, different clothes. Leora and Garridan walk along the slough. Garridan says something. They laugh.

LEORA (V.O.)

A year's a long time.

GARRIDAN (V.O.)

A year? Yeah. And, well, he thinks there is a possibility from certain things this young woman has done and has said

7 EXT. LAKESIDE BRIDGE - DAY

Yet another day, other clothes. Leora and Garridan stand at the center of a footbridge spanning a small lake. They lean against the railing chatting while overlooking the water.

GARRIDAN (V.O.)

that she might be attracted to him. Beyond just platonic.

LEORA (V.O.)

Mmmm. I think I can see where this is going.

GARRIDAN (V.O.)

Right? So he's totally confused. He doesn't know what to do.

8 EXT. LEORA'S APARTMENT - DAY

And another day: Garridan drops Leora off before her apartment. She gets out of the car, closes the door, leans a moment on the door to say goodbye, then walks off with a wave.

GARRIDAN (V.O.)

He doesn't want to damage the friendship - or create a bunch of drama at work. I mean, what if he acts on it, but he's wrong, right? What if it's all just like projection on his part? I mean, that's what I tell him.

9 EXT. ROSS'S BACKYARD - DAY

Garridan and ROSS, same age as Garridan but exuding a grim, no-nonsense approach to life, are standing by a cooler placed on a side table. Two other men, BO and VERT, are sitting beyond at a patio table, beers in hand -- both the same age as Gar and Ross, Vert's seething jumpiness the opposite of Bo's good-natured placidity.

ROSS

Look, it's ninety-nine point nine nine nine percent certain you're just projecting. You got to own that. You don't want to be that guy.

GARRIDAN

Right. That guy.

ROSS

Some old fart making a fool of himself. Sending flowers, random texts, crap like that. Or God forbid you pull a Weinstein on her.

GARRIDAN

I, but I haven't. I'm pretty damn sure I've been, oh, I'm neutral, totally. Nothing overt at least, I'm sure of that.

LEORA (V.O.)

Just covert, eh?

The two men move toward the table to join Bo and Vert.

GARRIDAN (V.O.)

I don't know? Maybe? Maybe to test the waters? Thing is, my friend has asked around for advice on what he should do.

Garridan and Ross take seats at the table.

GARRIDAN (V.O.)

And like I say, I tell him it's a no go. Just stop. Enjoy the friendship and leave it at that. But he's like--

GARRIDAN

What if she is making moves, even if just tiny ones, but then I'm like Mr. Stonewall, and she feels hurt by my rejection?

During each of the following voiceovers, we see a freeze frame of the character who was talking last.

LEORA (V.O.)

Well that's thoughtful.

ROSS

Yeah well tough, right? School of hard knocks.

LEORA (V.O.)

Humph.

ROSS

You wanna play what if? What if she does find you attractive? But you're too old for her. So it becomes a little game. "Hey, good looking." And you're taking the game way too seriously.

VERT

Right. Next up: a serious game of doctah.

Ross waves off Vert's interruption.

ROSS

Or what if? She's just seeking fatherly affection and you're misreading the cues? What then? You want to do that to her?

LEORA (V.O.)

Mmm. Fatherly affection.

VERT

Pfft. Fatherly affection.

ROSS

Or here's another what if: some people have no sense of their boundaries. They just go along with whatever until they're out in deep water with you. And they can't swim. And you're left wondering, what the hell happened?

LEORA (V.O.)
Like waking up on the wrong bus.

ROSS
And really. Think about it. Are you saying she may not know how to make it obvious she's attracted to you? If that's true, she's a child and why would you even want to start playing there?

GARRIDAN
(Disagreeing)

I...

LEORA (V.O.)
Harsh. But a solid argument. Very rational.

GARRIDAN (V.O.)
Right? I mean, I tell him--

ROSS
Get a hobby. Learn crochet. Buy a goddam skateboard for Christ's sake.

VERT
Crochet!

LEORA (V.O.)
Gotta love an old skater.

ROSS
Whatever. And you'll be doing yourself a favor: protecting that creaky old heart of yours from inevitable disappointment.

LEORA (V.O.)
Gee. What a spoil sport.

ROSS
Gar, you got to face it: you're old. We all are. We're all fucking old and out of the game.

VERT
Not me.

LEORA (V.O.)
A girl can dream.

Bo clears his throat, puts down his beer -- makes it clear he is about to speak.

BO

Well Ross, I don't know. 'Cause I know a fella whose twenty-year-old cousin fell in love with a guy, was fifty years older than her. True love too, 'cause he didn't have a dime. My friend was all like, what the? She can't be for real. My love-struck cousin with her head in the clouds doesn't know what's good for her. But then he's like, you know, but when I tell my lady friends about it, they're all, is she happy? Well, it seems so. Well then, what's the problem? They made it out like it was his problem, not the December-May goings-on between his young cousin and this "senior citizen".

ROSS

Bo, lay off it. That was whatever it was and it just doesn't happen like that in real life, okay?

LEORA (V.O.)

Okay.

GARRIDAN (V.O.)

So but then this other friend, I've got to admit he's kind of a, well.

VERT

Dude. Dude, dude, dude. Just go for it. You gotta just clutch 'em
(Makes a gesture of
clutching his balls)
And make the dive into that--

GARRIDAN (V.O.)

I won't repeat his exact words.

LEORA (V.O.)

I get the idea.

We pull back and see the men continue to argue, while we hear only the voiceovers.

GARRIDAN (V.O.)

He did mention this one time when he saw, or says he saw, the young woman do something he swears was pretty dang seductive.

LEORA (V.O.)

Oh? What was that?

10 EXT. PARK/RUNNING PATH - DAY

Garridan and Vert are jogging along a trail.

GARRIDAN (V.O.)

He talks a lotta crap. Something to do with how she dressed or something.

Coming around a bend, they see Leora walking towards them.

LEORA (V.O.)

As in, she was asking for it?

The three stop to talk, switching off the fitness tracking on their watches.

LEORA

Well look who's here. Birdman and his boy Robin.

VERT

(Out of breath)

I know you.

LEORA

(Ironic)

Hello Vert.

(To Garridan)

What trouble are you boys planning for this beautiful day?

GARRIDAN

Vert's got some game or another.

VERT

Some game? The Lakers?

GARRIDAN

I'm going to a movie at five.

LEORA

Lemme guess: the Green Knight?

GARRIDAN
Yeah. Over at the Redmund.

LEORA
Seriously? I so want to see that.
Dev Patel is such a doll.

Garridan takes a moment to process that.

GARRIDAN
Well, then.

Another brief moment, during which a cold glance at Vert,
willing him to keep his mouth shut. Vert, for once, is trying
his best not to leer.

GARRIDAN (CONT'D)
So you want to go with me?

He glances at his watch.

GARRIDAN (CONT'D)
Ah, but there's still a couple
hours before the show starts.

LEORA
Sure. That sounds fun. Lemme just
run home and change. Pick me up at,
what, 4:30?

GARRIDAN
Oh, sure. Okay.

LEORA
(To Garridan)
See you later.
(To Vert)
Vert.

VERT
Bye Leora.

She jogs off, Vert's eyes following her. He leans toward
Garridan.

VERT (CONT'D)
You totally got this, dude.

GARRIDAN
Got what?

They eye each other.

GARRIDAN (CONT'D)

Come on.

As Garridan restarts his watch, Vert claps him on the shoulder.

VERT

It must be good to be you.

And they set off running again.

11 EXT. ROSS'S BACKYARD - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

The four friends are sitting as before.

VERT

Tell them what happened next.

GARRIDAN

Aw, shit, it's nothing. I should've never mentioned it.

VERT

Nothing my ass. Get this: she shows up, like, pfft, half necked.

GARRIDAN

That is totally not what I said. I'll tell it, for Christ's sake.

12 EXT. LEORA'S APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Garridan drives to a stop in front of Leora waiting at the curb. She's dressed in tight jeans and a blazer with a lace camisole beneath.

She gets into the car.

13 INT. GARRIDAN'S CAR - DAY

LEORA

Right on time.

GARRIDAN

Well. You're looking, stunning.

LEORA

(Buckling in)

Thank you.

GARRIDAN
Okay, then. Let's go.

He sets the car in motion.

14 EXT. ROSS'S BACKYARD - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

Vert holds up his beer in salute.

VERT
But get this, boys. Afterwards he
just ditches her. Let s her flutter
away.

GARRIDAN
Oh, for. She was meeting somebody
afterwards already. I dropped her
off at the Rouge.

VERT
And he didn't escort her in.

GARRIDAN
She wasn't dressed up like that for
me, for crying out. Can't you get
it?

VERT
All I get is you dropping the ball.
Every. Single. Time.
(MORE)

VERT (CONT'D)

As they continue talking, their voices drop out and we hear the voiceovers.

LEORA (V.O.)

(Ironic)

Your friends sound like real great guys.

GARRIDAN (V.O.)

Oh yeah. I don't know.

The four friends, obviously arguing, laughing at the same time, gesticulating, draining their beers.

15 INT. GARRIDAN'S CAR - DAY - TRAVELING

Garridan is driving in heavy traffic.

GARRIDAN (V.O)

It all just seems over our heads.
Like we're plowing along through
life with no

16 INT. GARRIDAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Garridan sits at his desk. But he's not working. He's twiddling a pen, lost in thought.

GARRIDAN (V.O)

Plowing ahead with no idea what to
plant, not even what there is to
plant, what's worthwhile planting.
In over our heads in weeds. Of our
own planting. So to speak.

Something occurs to him. Pursed lips, with a touch of a smile.

17 EXT. SLOUGH - DAY

Garridan and Leora sit on the bench, Leora angled toward Garridan, comfortable, Garridan looking out over the slough. We hear the sounds of the seashore: waves rolling in, seagulls and other birds, a hint of breeze.

Leora regards Garridan for a long moment, waiting.

LEORA

So. About that favor?

Garridan takes a moment to gather his thoughts, to reach down for the right impulse.

GARRIDAN

Yes, well, my friend, he asks me if I know a young woman who might be able to give some perspective on all this.

He glances over to Leora, who sits quietly, waiting for more.

GARRIDAN (CONT'D)

And. That's all.

LEORA

So you want my perspective?

GARRIDAN

Right.

LEORA

As a "young woman".

GARRIDAN

Right.

LEORA

As to what? Whether or not she likes him? How should I know?

GARRIDAN

Well, no, but I guess whether or not such a thing is possible. Or not.

LEORA

Just about anything is possible, right?

Desperate not to be checked, Garridan plows ahead.

GARRIDAN

Well then, as to whether it's worth pursuing. I mean, whether he should bring it up, ask her point blank. I mean. Just ask.

LEORA

Ask what, exactly?

GARRIDAN

Whether she's attracted to him.

LEORA
So that what?

GARRIDAN
So that if she is, then the
attraction is mutual.

LEORA
So that what?

She's clearly toying with him.

GARRIDAN
So that. Things could proceed.
Mutually.

LEORA
And you want my answer to that?

GARRIDAN
Right.

Into the silence, her watch buzzes. Leora glances at it, taps it.

LEORA
Ooo. I actually have to go now. But
She prepares to stand. And then as she's standing, she adds

LEORA (CONT'D)
I'll tell you what I think.

Contemplating her next words, she circles behind the bench.

LEORA (CONT'D)
I think he should just

She places her hands on the back of the bench and leans there a moment.

LEORA (CONT'D)
That he should just

She leans close to GARRIDAN'S ear and whispers something, then straightens up.

LEORA (CONT'D)
And you tell him I told you to tell
him that.

And she walks off into the background while we are left with Garridan's reaction -- a reaction which is just ambiguous enough we can read whatever we want to into it.

FADE OUT.