

‘A Trip to the Stars’ by Jerry Weng

“Get in the car! We are going to see the world!”

“Wha-”

Bob was so confused.

He had just come back from the shops to buy a drink, only to see a red Toyota parked at his front doorstep. It was near midnight for God’s sake!

The person in the car was Grace, his childhood friend. Of course, Bob was confused at the sudden proposition she was offering.

“Now hold your horses, where is this trip heading to? And why at midnight?”

Grace laughed. “Who cares! Let’s just drive and see where the road takes us! Who knows, maybe we’ll end up discovering the meaning of life!”

Bob opened his mouth to retort, but then he noticed a few things: Red, puffy eyes.

Slightly shaky voice. Lots of used tissues. Had she... been crying? Bob sighed.

“Give me 30 minutes, let me grab a few things.”

Fifteen minutes later, they were on the road. Once in the car, Grace wouldn’t stop talking, desperately trying to avoid silence.

“So like, did ya hear about the murder down in Abby street? So barbaric!”

“Uh huh.”

“Did ya watch the tennis match yesterday? It was so awesome and down to the wire!”

“Uh huh.”

“War has started in Europe again! 76 years of peace in Europe broken, just like that!”

“Uh huh.”

Bob just nodded to whatever Grace said and let her ramble on.

If she wanted to put up a front, he wouldn't interfere. It would be a long trip after all depending on how things went, so why rush things?

And so Grace drove and rambled on and on, with no purpose. Randomly, she would turn onto another road and head in a new direction.

After a while, silence had fallen in the car as Grace finally ran out of things to say. Bob thought that it was time for him to pry into the situation at hand.

“Grace-”

Grace threw up her hands and turned to Bob.

“Ah, come on Bob! Is that any way to address me?”

Bob rolled his eyes.

“*Your* Grace-”

“Hehe.”

She smiled and went back to driving-.

Wait a minute. Had she taken her hands off the wheel and not looked at the road? And had the car drifted to the wrong side of the road? And was that a truck about to crash into them.

Both of them looked at each other, and screamed.

“AAAAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!”

“AAAAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!”

Grace spun the wheel as hard as possible. The truck rushed past, just barely missing the car. The car spun and very neatly parked itself onto the side of the road.

The two sat there in shock, their brief encounter with death dazing them. Both Bob and Grace could feel their hearts racing.

Eventually, Bob exploded.

“What the hell was that?!?!? Why did you drift into the other lane???”

Grace looked down.

“I... was distracted.”

“Distracted? Distracted by the stupid pun you forced me to make?!?!? We almost died because of a stupid pun???”

Bob started to massage his temples.

“Look, clearly it wasn’t just that dumb joke that distracted you. I’ve seen you playing a game on your phone while calling someone on another phone while driving perfectly. So tell me, what’s wrong? Why did you suddenly want to go on a trip?”

Silence.

The chatterbox, the blabbermouth, the gossiper, was silent.

Bob sighed.

“I won’t dig any deeper. But you are not fit to drive. I’m going to take the wheel.”

They swapped seats, and Bob decided to take control of this meaningless trip. They would head to his favourite place to relax. He checked the GPS, and coincidentally it was actually nearby!

Did fate guide them?

Bob was amused at that thought. He didn't believe in all that baloney. He believed that everyone controls our own fate and destiny.

As Bob fell into a deep train of thought, Grace finally began speaking.

"My... my boyfriend broke up with me."

Huh. So it was this again. The usual, Bob thought.

"So this makes it, what? Six boyfriends in six months? I think that's a new record!"

"...It's different this time Bob."

"How is it different from your 27 other break-ups?"

Silence.

Gah, he took the joke too far.

Grace turned her head and watched the outside world from her seat.

"Well, you are right. It's not really different from any other time."

Bob nodded. "You always rush into a relationship, ignoring any red flags and it always ends up in a disaster. But what's stopping you from trying again?"

Grace smiled sadly. "You can only fail so many times Bob, before you just don't want to try again. And now... I doubt my purpose. I wanted to build a family, but it seems like I'm doomed to fail."

Bob raised an eyebrow.

“You built your whole life and purpose around having a family? What is this, the 18th century?”

“Well no, but families look so happy together whenever I see them. I never had that. Plus, don’t you want to have a family too? Fall in love, get married, have kids? Doesn’t it sound perfect?”

“That sounds dumb.”

Graced chuckled.

“It probably sounds stupid.”

“It is stupid.”

Grace pouted. “Hey! That’s mean!”

Bob laughed.

“Anyway, I still don’t really understand. Are you just simply tired of failing?”

“...Well in a nutshell, yes. It just feels like my life is just me constantly falling on my face.”

“Well then, I’ve got the perfect thing for you!”

Grace looked at him quizzically.

“What?”

“Sit back, we’ll be there in a few minutes.”

Bob took a left turn off the main road into darkness, with the only light coming from the headlights.

“Hey, Bob?”

“Yes, your Grace?”

They chuckled, and then Grace continued.

“What is your dream?”

“To be happy till the day I die.”

An instant answer.

“The heck? That’s so simple and general!”

Bob smiled.

“But that’s the best part. I’m not forced into one path by my dream. All roads are open. I’m not Robert Frost, I will take both roads in that yellow wood.”

“But that’s not possible, you have to take one road-”

“I can just come back to the yellow wood another day and take the other path. And on that note, we are here.”

He pulled over and got out of the car.

“Here we are.”

“Where are we?”

“A random field. Look up.”

Grace looked up-
and was amazed.

The clear night sky was dotted with an unimaginable count of stars of different colours, all twinkling in the sky.

“Beautiful, isn’t it?”

“...yeah.”

There were thousands and thousands of them sprinkled all around, of all sizes and shapes. Bob started to point them out.

“See that one? That is Sirius, the brightest star in the night sky. And see those three bright stars? They are Vega, Deneb, and Altair, and they form the summer triangle.”

Grace could not describe the feelings she had at the moment, staring into the infinite dark blue.

Bob continued with his monologue.

“These stars’ light take anywhere from 100,000 to 400,000 years to reach us. Can you imagine that? When the light left the star, humanity as we know it didn’t exist at that time!”

“Wow...”

“We are, in the end just a mere speck of dust in the universe. Contrary to what people may think, we do not have a real purpose. I mean, who’ll remember us in a few hundred years? And as such, we make our own purpose. We take control of our own fate. We carve our own destiny.”

And so, Bob turned to Grace.

“So if a family is truly your dream, then don’t just give up because you failed!”

He pointed to the stars.

“They didn’t give up trying to shine, did they?”

“...I guess you’re right. I failed 27 times, but who’s to say I don’t succeed on my 28th try?”

“That’s the spirit!”

A cold breeze blew through the air.

Grace shivered. She hadn’t brought anything to keep herself warm.

She looked at Bob, who was all cosy with at least three layers.

“Jeez, it’s really cold.”

“Should have brought a coat then.”

“...This is why you are single?”

“Am I wrong though?”

Both of them burst out laughing. Bob then went to the car, took a coat from his bag and threw it to her.

“Thanks Bob.”

“No problem, your Grace.”

Silence descended upon the duo, until Grace broke the silence.

“Bob?”

“Yeah?”

“Thanks.”

Bob smiled once more.

“No problem. That’s what friends are for, right?”

And so, they watched the stars until the sun started to rise.