

CONTEXT

The truth is that I didn't know what context meant when I started this whole thing
It felt like an appropriate word to use at the time, but I couldn't tell you why
I called my mom
I said, Hi mom
Honey, hi, she said
Hi, I said, I miss you
I miss you too, she said
She said more things, but I couldn't hear them over the sound of my missing her so badly
The telephone crackled because we were half a country away from each other, but that's just
how it is
Was
Is
I don't know
I finally said, Thank you for showing up
To what? she said
To everything, I said
Then we didn't say anything else
We didn't need to
We just listened to the sound of each other's breath, crackling on the telephone
In and out
Just like that
After a while I missed her voice and said, What does context mean?
She said, The circumstances that form the setting of an event or statement or idea
Oh, I said, I see, but I didn't
She said, It's basically how something happened
(*a moment*)
So you get it now, right?
You understand how all of this began?
(*a moment*)
Anyway
The story continues on a cold Tuesday afternoon
in a month like February
in a big van
on a big road
near a big city
somewhere in the middle of These Great United States
It continues with Marie and her father in a beat-up Winnebago that's crossing state lines

The Swindlers

SIDE 4

Kris, Chris, Marie, George, Context, Drunk Santa

AGENT KRIS

We'll arrest you for obstruction of justice

MARIE

You'll what?!

AGENT KRIS

You're looking at up to five years behind bars, Marie

AGENT CHRIS

On top of fifty thousand dollar fine

AGENT KRIS

And why?

AGENT CHRIS

For what?

AGENT KRIS

Because you don't like him?

AGENT CHRIS

Because your daddy hurt your feelings?

AGENT KRIS

Grow up, Marie

AGENT CHRIS

Enough is enough

AGENT KRIS

Get us what we need or you're

AGENTS KRIS & CHRIS

Fucked

(Marie peers at Agent Kris and Chris)

MARIE

That bad cop routine felt too well-rehearsed

(beat)

AGENT CHRIS

We had time to practice on the road

AGENT KRIS

So what's it going to be, Marie?

AGENT CHRIS

What are you going to do?
a moment

MARIE

I just need a little longer

AGENT KRIS

We'll give you fifteen minutes

MARIE

Fifteen?!

AGENT CHRIS

You can do it

AGENT KRIS

You were made for this

(Marie peers at the neon lights of the bar in the distance)

MARIE *(a sigh)*

Fine

CONTEXT

And then Marie is out the door, down the block, past a shop, in the bar

(a drunk man in a Santa suit sits at the bar watching a game on the television George sits in a booth drinking a beer watching the game himself)

MARIE

Dad

GEORGE *(to the screen)*

You call that a zone scheme?!

Looks like fuckin' swiss cheese to me

MARIE

Dad

GEORGE (*distracted*)
You here to yell at me again
?

MARIE
I need the money

GEORGE (*distracted*)
Yeah, I know
You won't shut up about it
Get it out of bounds, you dumbass!

FOOL 2 as DRUNK SANTA (*to the screen*)
He was wide open!

MARIE
I need it now

GEORGE (*distracted*)
Okay, I heard ya
Oh, c'mon, ref!

DRUNK SANTA
Let 'em play!

MARIE
Dad!

DRUNK SANTA (*to Marie*)
Shut up, lady!
The game is on!

GEORGE (*to Drunk Santa*)
Hey!
You don't talk to her like that!

DRUNK SANTA
Fine, I'll talk to you
Tell her to shut the fuck up

GEORGE
Go shove it up your chimney, Mrs. Claus
It's fucking February
Get a new look

(Drunk Santa grumbles to himself turning back to the screen)

MARIE

Dad!

GEORGE

What?!

MARIE

Listen to me!

I need the money you stole

I need to know where all of it is

Now