

WHITE ELEPHANTS

Written by

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Based on Ernest Hemingway's "Hills Like White Elephants"

EXT. DAYLIGHT-BRIGHT SUN, FLASHBACK

C.U OF BRIGHT SUN, ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO MAKE OUT ANYTHING BUT BRIGHT LIGHT AND WARMTH.

JANE (V.O.)
All things truly wicked start from
innocence.

CUT TO:

EXT. BRIGHT DAYLIGHT

A young girl who is assumed to be a young Jane is running on a hilltop. Faint sounds of laughter. Each shot is from the back of her. Final shot in the sequence is a medium shot that reveals her face.

FADE OUT.
SUNLIGHT.

FADE IN:
SUNLIGHT
MIRRORING THE
OPENING SHOT.

EXT. SPANISH COUNTRYSIDE, PRESENT DAY, AFTERNOON

A present day Jane and Harrison sit outside on a patio over looking the hills at a small cafe both with a meal. Harrison eats with ease and Jane's plate appears untouched. It is a hot day, and the tension is high between the two.

ZOOM OUT FROM THE SUNLIGHT TO A MEDIUM SHOT OF HARRISON AND JANE AT THE TABLE.

CUT TO:

INTERTITLE READS: AUGUST 2018. AERIAL SHOT OF THE CIRCULAR TABLE, JANE'S FOOD UNTOUCHED, HARRISON'S MESSY AND NEARLY GONE. HE REACHES FOR THE LAST SIP OF HIS BEER. CUT TO A MEDIUM SHOT OF THE COUPLE.

WAITRESS
You two still doing alright?
Another beer, maybe?

HARRISON
Two beers, please.

WAITRESS

Big ones?

HARRISON

Yes. Two big ones.
(WAITRESS nods and exits.)

Harrison (CONT'D)

(Harrison points to Jane's
food with a knife and
fork)

You've barely touched anything.

JANE

I'm not really all that hungry.

The sound of Harrison's silverware hitting the plate is extra noticeable.

HARRISON

You have to eat something, I don't
want you getting all light-headed.

JANE

I'll be fine.

Waitress walks over to their table and sets down the two beers.

MEDIUM SHOT OF JANE STARING INTENTLY AT HARRISON'S GLASS OF BEER. THE CAMERA SHIFTS TO A EXTREME CLOSE UP OF THE BEER CAPTURING THE GLASS SWEATING FROM THE HEAT, AND THE TOP SECTION OF GLASS SHOWING THROUGH TO HARRISON.

CUT TO: THE SAME
SHOT OF A GLASS
OF BEER, FILLED
TO THE SAME
HEIGHT, THE
GLASS SWEATING
JUST THE SAME,
BUT THE SCENE
THROUGH THE
GLASS IS
DIFFERENT.

INT. BAR/RESTAURANT. EVENING. MAY 2010.

INTERTITLE READS: MAY 2010

Jane stares at her beer. Her date, Dave is sitting across from her. Dave has nervous energy and is an uncomfortable person. The date is not going well.

DAVE (V.O.)
(Jane is focused on her
beer, does not look up to
see him speak)
Are you listening? Jane?

Jane snaps out of her daze.

JANE
Yes. Yes, I'm listening. Sorry, its
been a long day.

DAVE
No, no you're fine.

JANE
So, you were saying?

DAVE
Oh-yeah, yeah! So essentially what
I was saying is you shouldn't be
freaked out that I'm living with my
ex. Which is not weird. I know
you're probably sitting here
thinking "Oh jeez, get me out of
here this guys crazy" hah, but no.
Not weird at all. We're just like-
really good friends. Its just like-
one of those things you know?

JANE
Ya know, I'm not quite sure that I
do.

DAVE
Well I wanted to tell you. In case
this goes somewhere, which I really
feel like it is...

Jane zones out once more, this time she's focused on the
waiter getting drinks behind the bar.

MEDIUM SHOT OF HARRISON POURING DRINKS.

JANE

Feel like it is what? I'm so sorry.
I drifted again. I'm bad about
that, truly.

DAVE

No, you're fine, I was just saying
how I really feel like we've got
something real here.

JANE

Oh. Um. Well, I just met you today
Dave. And not that you aren't-um,
really... something, I'm just not
sure how you can feel that
already...

DAVE

I just know it. There are moments
when you just know. I had the same
feeling with Helen, she's the ex I
was telling you about- the one
who's living with me- actually, I
think the two of you would really
hit it off if you want to come back
to my place...

JANE

Dave, please believe me when I say
I've never been on a date quite
like this.

DAVE

Well thank you I-

JANE

But also believe me when I say I
don't think I could ever see myself
doing this again.

DAVE

Oh. Well-

JANE

I think you should go back home to
Ellen.

DAVE

Helen.

JANE
Right-right. Yes. I think maybe
theres something there you might
want to revisit.

Dave looks surprised, and slowly stands.

DAVE
Well. I guess thats it.

JANE
I guess it is.

Dave takes out his wallet and leaves a few dollars on the
table for his beer. He nods to Jane, and awkwardly exits.
Jane laughs to herself, chugs her beer, and pulls out a
notebook. The waiter, Harrison comes over to the table.

HARRISON
(Pointing to Jane's
finished drink)
Another?

JANE
No, no I'm alright. Thanks.

HARRISON
Rough date?

JANE
You could say that. The guy spent
half of dinner talking about his
professional career as a manual
unsubscribe

HARRISON
A what?

JANE
The man's career was to manually
unsubscribe millions of people from
thousands of email lists

HARRISON
I didn't even know that was enough
of a problem to make a career out
of

JANE
It shouldn't be.

HARRISON
Well you really hung in there.

JANE

And if that wasn't enough, the second half of dinner he talked about his current living situation-sharing a flat with his ex girlfriend.

HARRISON

Wow.

JANE

Yeah.

HARRISON

Are you sure you don't want that second drink? Its on me.

JANE

(Smiling)

Sure. Yeah, why not.

HARRISON

(Holding out his hand)

I'm Harrison by the way.

JANE

(taking his hand)

Jane.

HARRISON

Well Jane, I'm off as soon as I run these dishes to the back if you wouldn't mind some company.

JANE

Fine by me.

Harrison clears the table.

OVER THE SHOULDER SHOT OF JANE DRAFTING OBITUARIES.

Harrison returns with two drinks.

HARRISON

So you're a writer?

JANE

Of sorts.

HARRISON

Blogging? Film reviews? The next great American novel?

JANE
I write for the paper. The Tribune.

HARRISON
No kidding?

Beat

HARRISON (CONT'D) (CONT'D)
Kind of a dying art.

JANE
I'm one of the luckier ones. My
section never really struggles for
material.

HARRISON
Politics?

JANE
Obituaries.

HARRISON
Oh. Thats... unique. Kind of
morbid.

JANE
Its actually more endearing. By the
time I sit down with family
members, or close friends they
usually just want to tell me all
the good things.

HARRISON
I'm just trying to picture anyone
dreaming of one day becoming an
Obituary writer.

JANE
I wanted to write novels.

HARRISON
Why don't you?

JANE
I blame my parents.

HARRISON
Your parents?

JANE
Yeah, I was set up for failure.

HARRISON

Why is that?

JANE

It feels like all the great authors have these vague, interesting names. J.D Salinger, E.L Doctorow, F. Scott Fitzgerald... Truman, Ernest, Harper.

HARRISON

And your parents named you Jane.

JANE

Plain Jane. Jane Green. Its almost like I have the one name in this world that warns others that I have nothing interesting to say. Its strikingly mundane.

HARRISON

Did your parents give you a real middle name at least?

JANE

A real middle name?

HARRISON

You know, not a cop out. Like your mothers maiden name, or some place holder.

JANE

Its Iris.

HARRISON

Iris?

JANE

Jane Iris Green.

HARRISON

Well Jane, if you do ever decide to shatter your childhood obituary aspirations, you could always go the "initials" route.

JANE

J.I Green? That sounds like an action figure.

HARRISON

J-I-G. Jig. They could call you Jig.

JANE
I bet my books would fly off the
shelves.

HARRISON
Guaranteed. Every last one.

BACK TO: PRESENT
DAY

EXT. SPANISH COUNTRYSIDE, PRESENT DAY, AFTERNOON

HARRISON
Jig. Jig?

Jane has drifted. She looks up at Harrison.

HARRISON (CONT'D)
Where is your head today?

JANE
I'm sorry. I'm just distracted is
all.

Harrison takes a sip of his drink and makes a face.

JANE (CONT'D)
What did you get?

HARRISON
An Anis del Toro. It tastes like
licorice.

JANE
Everything tastes of licorice.
Especially all the things you've
waited so long for, like absinthe.

CUT TO:

INT. JULY 2011 ENGAGEMENT PARTY. JANE AND HARRISON'S HOUSE.
NIGHT.

INTERTITLE READS: JULY 2011

A voice calls out for Jane to come into the dining room.
People are all around celebrating.

TRACKING SHOT FOLLOWING JANE FROM THE LIVING ROOM THROUGH THE KITCHEN TO THE DINING ROOM. MEDIUM SHOT FROM THE BACK OF HER HEAD.

The room is filled with people smiling, talking and celebrating. Jane sits next to Harrison who hands her a glass of champagne.

HARRISON

Well not that we've found Jane I think its time for a toast.

HARRISON (CONT'D)

To a lifetime of surprises.

JANE

To a lifetime of surprises.

HARRISON

Cheers.

Harrison kisses Jane's cheek. Family members crowd around.

JANE'S AUNT

Now let me see that ring, dear.

Jane smiles and talks with her family while showing off her ring. Harrison's uncle clears the table next to Jane and Harrison.

HARRISON'S UNCLE

Alright now, put down your champagne, we don't have time for all that.

HARRISON

Oh no.

HARRISON'S UNCLE

Oh yes.

Harrison's uncle pours two shots of absinthe into two shot glasses. He balances a small spoon with sugar on top of each and prepares water to be poured over them, a tradition of Swiss origin.

HARRISON'S UNCLE (CONT'D)

Now Harrison, grab your glass. And Jane, you too.

JANE

(laughing)

You're making me nervous!

HARRISON'S UNCLE

No need darling. As long as you can hold your liquor you'll be fine. This is an old Swiss tradition, a right of passage. Every single young kid with a ring on their finger finds themselves facing the bottom of that shot glass.

JANE

Well, we can't break tradition now can we?

HARRISON

(whispers to Jane)

Good luck on this one, Jig.

HARRISON'S UNCLE

Alright, grab your glasses. And in 3,2,1

Harrison and Jane "cheer" their glasses together, hit them against the dining room table, and each throw back their shot. Jane immediately starts coughing.

JANE

Oh my god, thats awful!

HARRISON

Oh its terrible.

JANE

It tastes just like black licorice.

HARRISON

An acquired taste for sure.

Harrison hugs Jane.

HARRISON (CONT'D)

You're a trooper.

Jane smiles.

MULTIPLE MONTAGE SHOTS SHOW THE PROGRESSION OF THE NIGHT, PARTY GAMES, FAMILIES BONDING, LAUGHING LATE INTO THE NIGHT.

All the guests have left. Jane sits in the dark on the edge of her and Harrison's bed. Both are obviously drunk.

LONG SHOT OF JANE THROUGH THE DOOR FRAME INTO THE BEDROOM.

REVERSE SHOT OF HARRISON IN THE DOOR FRAME.

Harrison pulls down a streamer from above his head. Harrison and Jane make eyes at each other. Harrison steps forward into the room.

WIDE SHOT C.U. OF THE BACK OF HARRISON WITH JANE IN THE LEFT OF THE FRAME LOOKING UP AT HIM. HARRISON SHUTS THE DOOR.

CUT TO BLACK.

BACK TO: PRESENT
DAY

EXT. PRESENT DAY. SPANISH HILLSIDE.

Jane pushes her beer towards Harrison across the table.

HARRISON
One sip won't hurt. Regardless of
whats decided.

JANE
I can't stomach it.

Jane looks out in the distance at the hills.

HARRISON
(light hearted, jokingly)
You can't stomach beer? Sure. But
you used to eat troughs of...what
was it? Eggplant casserole?

JANE
(somber)
Look at those hills.

HARRISON
The hills?

JANE
Yes. Way out there.

HARRISON
What about them?

JANE
They look like white elephants.

HARRISON
I've never seen one.

JANE

No.

CUT TO C.U. OF A HILL FILLING THE FRAME.

JANE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

No, you wouldn't have.

FADE OUT OF THE
IMAGE OF THE
SPANISH HILLSIDE
AND INTO THE
IMAGE OF JANE'S
PREGNANT STOMACH
OVER THE EDGE OF
A BATHTUB. THESE
IMAGES ARE
EXACTLY IN LINE
WITH ONE
ANOTHER.

CUT TO LONG SHOT LOOKING INTO A BATHROOM FROM THE DOOR FRAME.
HARRISON IS SEEN TO THE RIGHT SHAVING IN FRONT OF THE MIRROR,
JANE IS LAYING IN THE BATHTUB. LIGHT BLUE, PASTEL, BRIGHT
TONES.

INT: FLASHBACK TO 2012. BATHROOM. JANE AND HARRISON'S HOUSE.
NIGHT.

INTERTITLE READS: MARCH 2012.

C.U Of Jane running water over her stomach.

JANE

I miss being able to tie my own
shoes.

HARRISON

Out of all the things, thats what
you come up with to miss the most?

JANE

This morning I had to do this weird little tilt move just to slip on one shoe- theres something incredibly self conscious about not being able to do the simplest things.

HARRISON

You're always wishing for the next thing.

JANE

Things get old fast.

HARRISON

Always, always wishing for the passing of time. But I bet you anything a month from now you're going to find yourself missing all of this.

JANE

Not as much as I miss wine. Or laying on my stomach to sleep. Or not craving eggplant casserole.

HARRISON

I can't wait to meet the little bugger that insists on eggplant casserole.

JANE

At least we know she's unique.

HARRISON

That I've never doubted.

Harrison finishes up shaving and goes to kiss Jane on the forehead. He kisses her stomach as well. When he kisses Jane's stomach, his chin dips in the water, and a spot where he shaved and nicked his skin allows for a small droplet of blood to enter the water.

HARRISON (CONT'D)

Love you, Jig.

JANE

Have a good day. I'll have save you a slice of casserole later.

Harrison exits.

HARRISON
(laughs from another room)
Spare me.

C.U OF THE BLOOD DROPLET IN THE WATER, VERY SUBTLE AND SMALL,
FOR A SPLIT SECOND BEFORE JANE CUPS THE WATER IN HER HAND AND
LETS IT ALL CONTINUOUSLY OVER HER STOMACH.

JANE (V.O.)
Time always felt like a friend I
would keep at a distance.

Jane aligns three rubber ducklings on the edge of the tub.
An image of a perfect family.

JANE (V.O.)
One I would laugh with, enjoy the
company of, but in one way or
another I found there was something
I couldn't quite trust about it.
It was unpredictable.

CUT TO BLACK.

JANE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Funny that the passing of time
itself would show me how right I
was to avoid its embrace.

THE SHOT TAKES PLACE INSIDE AN OVEN LOOKING OUT. THE PITCH
BLACK TRANSITIONS TO BRIGHT LIGHT AS JANE OPENS THE OVEN.

Jane opens the oven to pull out a dish.

INT. MAY 2014. KITCHEN. JANE AND HARRISON'S HOUSE. BRIGHT
PASTEL YELLOW TONES.

INTERTITLE READS: MAY 2014.

JANE
(Shouting to next room
over)
Dinner!

Jane slices up pieces of eggplant casserole onto plates. She
sets all the plates at the table, one smaller portion at a
high chair.

JANE (CONT'D)
 (Shouting to next room
 over)
 I know you hate it when its cold
 Harrison.

Harrison enters with Jane and Harrison's 2 year old daughter
 Annie in his arms. He tickles her and sets her down in her
 high chair.

HARRISON
 I don't really like it when its hot
 either.

Jane feeds a bite to Annie.

ANNIE
 (while saying "more" in
 sign language)
 More

JANE
 Annie likes it.

HARRISON
 Well Annie is the only critic that
 matters. Right bug?

Annie laughs in agreement, Harrison laughs back.

ZOOM OUT, SHOT SHOWS ANNIE AND HARRISON'S PROFILES ON EITHER
 SIDE OF THE TABLE, AND JANE'S BACK FACING AWAY FROM THE
 CAMERA.

FADE OUT.

EXT. JUNE 2015. DAYLIGHT-BRIGHT SUN

C.U OF BRIGHT SUN, ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO MAKE OUT ANYTHING BUT
 BRIGHT LIGHT AND WARMTH.

Annie is running on a hilltop. This scene is identical to the
 opening scene. Each shot is from the back of Annie.

Medium shot of annie's face

Harrison runs up to grab Annie.

HARRISON
 Tag! I got you!

ANNIE
(laughs)
No!

HARRISON
Yes! Yes. You're it. No tag backs.

Harrison runs and hides behind Jane who is sitting down.

HARRISON (CONT'D)
I heard mom wants to be it.

JANE
Oh no! You're gonna get me!

Annie laughs and tags Jane, Jane runs after her and swings her up and kisses her all over.

ANNIE
You're it! You're it!

JANE
You're right. You got me. Fair and square.

ANNIE
Fair and square.

JANE
Thats right.

Jane sets Annie down.

JANE (CONT'D)
(out of breath)
Phew. Its pretty hot out today. You know what I think we need?

ANNIE
What?

JANE
I think we need some ice cream.

Annie cheers.

JANE (CONT'D)
Oh but you don't want ice cream, do you? You don't like ice cream.

ANNIE
No-no, ice cream! I want ice cream!

JANE
No I don't think you do.

ANNIE
I do! I do!

JANE
I'm just teasing. Run and ask your
dad, we'll go get you some ice
cream.

Annie runs off to Harrison.

ZOOM OUT TO REVEAL THE HILLSIDE THEY ARE STANDING ON.

CUT TO: JANE
STARING OUT AT
THE HILLSIDE.
THE CHARACTERS
OF THEIR PAST
FADE OUT.

EXT. PRESENT DAY. SPANISH HILLSIDE.

JANE
They're lovely hills.

HARRISON
The beer's nice and cool.

JANE
I'm sure its lovely.

HARRISON
Its really a simple operation, Jig.
Its not really an operation at all.

Jane shakes her head and smiles in response.

HARRISON (CONT'D)
It's really not anything. They just
let the air in and it's all
perfectly natural.

JANE
(Scoffs, states under her
breath)
Hah! Natural. It will be natural.
Do you hear yourself?

HARRISON

Jane-

JANE

No-honestly, Harrison. Do you believe what you're saying?

HARRISON

I understand its upsetting.

JANE

What will we do afterward?

HARRISON

We'll be fine afterward. Just like we were before.

JANE

Just like we were before?

HARRISON

Yes.

JANE

You can't be serious.

HARRISON

We found a way to be fine.

JANE

We most certainly did not find a way to be fine. Fine is the response you give when you don't want to commit to a full conversation. Fine is-is what you say when you get a scrape or a bruise-fine is not, it can not be the place you get to when you lose your child.

HARRISON

I didn't mean it that way.

JANE

You never mean it that way. You're just so far in denial, because thats what it is, right? Fine is just a face for denial. A front for anyone who doesn't want to admit how much it hurts. So yes-maybe you were fine. But don't tell me how I was. Don't tell me.

HARRISON
You know I'm not fine.

JANE
Well then what are you?

HARRISON
I just can't.

JANE
Just can't what?

HARRISON
(Breaking)
I just can't go through it all
again, okay?

JANE
But it won't be the same, Harrison!
It can't be the same. We have
another chance-

HARRISON
Now there you go.

JANE
There I go what?

HARRISON
There you go saying we. I can't say
we're fine, but you-you get to say
we have another chance.

JANE
Because we do!

Jane holds her stomach.

JANE (CONT'D)
This is our chance!

HARRISON
Its not our. Its not we. I don't
get another chance. Because I
ruined the last one. Not we. I. I
did it. It was my fault. Not ours.
My fault.

CUT TO:

AERIAL SHOT. POOL WITH SWIRLS OF BLOOD.

CUT TO:

C.U. OF JANE.

JANE
You know, I never saw my mother
cry.

CUT TO:

INT. FLASHBACK. AUGUST 2015. BATHROOM.

INTERTITLE READS: AUGUST 2015

C.U. SHOT OF A SHOWER HEAD TURNING ON, WATER SPRAYING OUT.

CUT TO:

EXT. POOLSIDE IN BACKYARD. LATE AFTERNOON. SAME DAY.

C.U. Annie running and playing in the backyard, smiling.
Annie laughs. Harrison plays with the child.

CANTED ANGLE SHOT OF ANNIE RUNNING BY THE POOL.

HARRISON
Slow down bud.

Harrison gets preoccupied with something else, his attention
is away. More close up shots of the Annie-happy.

CUT TO:

Close up of the back of Jane's head walking into the backyard
towards the pool, dropping a popsicle and collapsing to her
knees.

CUT TO:

INT. SHOWER.

Jane is stripping off blood patched clothes, close up of
feet/calves and clothes falling to the floor.

JANE (V.O.)
Not even when my father died.

CUT TO:

EXT. POOLSIDE IN BACKYARD.

Harrison runs to Jane. Urgency in movements.

JANE (V.O.)
The only time she would ever cry
was in the shower.

Jane kneels on the ground holding and cradling her child.

C.U. OF THE POPSICLE MELTING.

JANE (V.O.)
She argues that way; it was as if
she never cried at all.

CUT TO:

INT. SHOWER

C.U. OF POOLS OF WATER CIRCLING THE DRAIN IN THE SHOWER.

CUT TO:

EXT. POOLSIDE IN BACKYARD.

AERIAL C.U. OF STILL WATER IN THE POOL/POOL OF MELTED
POPSICLE.

JANE (V.O.)
That every drop bled in with every
pellet of water.

CUT TO:

INT. SHOWER

C.U. OF SMALL WATER STREAMS MIXED WITH BLOOD CIRCLING THE
DRAIN.

CUT TO:

EXT. POOLSIDE IN A BACKYARD.

C.U. OF DROPLETS OF BLOOD HITTING THE POOL WATER'S SURFACE.
MELTED POPSICLE MIXING WITH THE BLOOD.

JANE (V.O.)
So she could fool even herself into
believing that all things were
inevitably good.

Wide angle medium shot of Jane crying in the shower wishing
blood off of herself.

BACK TO:

EXT. PRESENT DAY. SPANISH HILLSIDE.

JANE
But all things aren't inevitably
good. Because they can't be.
Because things happen. And this?
This happened. And we aren't good,
or fine, or anything in between but
we could at least give ourselves a
chance to be, and this, this is our
chance. I know it. I know it, I
feel it.

HARRISON
I can't do it again. Any of it. If
you think this is our chance, then
that's all you. Because I can't go
through any part of that again.

JANE
Doesn't it mean anything to you?

HARRISON
Of course it does. But I just
can't, Jane. I just can't.

Beat.

HARRISON (CONT'D)
I know the operation is perfectly
simple.

JANE
Yes, you know its perfectly simple.
Would you do something for me now?

HARRISON
I'd do anything for you.

JANE
 Would you please please please
 pleasep please please please stop
 talking?

Jane and Harrison sit in silence. The waitress re-enters.

WAITRESS
 All finished up?

HARRISON
 Yeah.

HARRISON (CONT'D)
 (Looking up at Jane)
 Yeah we're done here.

WAITRESS
 Alright. Just to let you know, the
 train comes in five minutes.

JANE
 Thank you.

HARRISON
 I'm sorry, Jig. I really am.

Jane is unresponsive.

HARRISON (CONT'D)
 Would you please talk to me?

JANE
 I feel fine.

WIDE SHOT OF JANE AND HARRISON WITH THE HILLS IN THE FRAME.

JANE (CONT'D)
 There's nothing wrong with me. I
 feel fine.

ZOOM IN TO EXCLUDE THE HILLS FROM THE FRAME. FOCUS ON JANE
 AND HARRISON SITTING IN SILENCE.

CUT TO BLACK.

End.