

THE LOST CITY OF ATLANTIS, TOGETHER

Written by

Kai Perrignon

INT/EXT. SUV - DAY

Big SUV. Chrome plated rims. Blacked out windows. The customized number plate: DCTRSWIFE. The back left tyre is under pumped. Whole thing leans a little. One door panel is clearly covered in poorly camouflaged spray paint. The back bumper tilts.

Driving down a beautiful, greenish black coastal road, the sea one driver's twitch away. Sky the sweetest robin egg blue, surrounding a singular, puffy cloud.

Inside, driving, is LAYLA. 40s. Giant tortoiseshell glasses. Tight face, skin pulled back like an ill fitting latex mask. Painted on eyebrows. Pouty and droopy lips of a retired porn star. Fur over her shoulders.

An iPhone lies on the passenger seat. Whenever it buzzes, Layla picks it up and replies with her free hand.

In the back, playing with a superhero action figure, is LILY, 8 years old. Curly, bouncing, hazel hair. Eyes sparkling inside her round and full face. Making wooshing noises as she flies the toy around.

Layla glances at Lily through the rear view mirror, ears perking up at the sound. She brings up her hand and snaps her fingers.

Lily pretends that her toy is using heat vision and makes the sounds to match. *Bzzzzz, POWW*

In a quick, practiced motion, Layla snatches the toy from Lily's hands and tosses it in the passenger seat. Lily doesn't get upset. Instead, she sighs like a bored trophy wife watching her husband flirt with the baby sitter again, rolling the eyes with such practiced perfection, you'd swear she'd seen it somewhere before.

Layla glances in the rear view again. Lily notices, beams a fake smile. Layla sighs and rolls her eyes just like Lily had a moment ago.

Layla's eyes back to the road. Swerves into an exit off the highway.

EXT. BEACH - DAY

Dark, wet sand suggests a recent rain. Expansive, filled with no one and nothing despite the clear sky. Bamboo barriers separate the beach from the parking lot.

The ocean is gentle, the sound of it exactly like that of the inside of a seashell.

The girls are both wearing jeans and jumpers. Layla in stilettos. Their breath is visible in the cold.

Lily runs onto to the sand, surveying her kingdom with hands on hips. Her mother walks onto the beach behind her, invisible cigarette in hand. Lily squints, looking for just the perfect spot . . . There it is.

She runs farther down the beach to a spot brushed clean by wind. Perfectly flat. Lily pops down on her knees and gets to work.

Layla lackadaisically wanders over from behind, getting only a vague sense of the mad rush of Lily's hands. Sand flies to the side. Forward. Backward. The closer Layla gets, the faster Lily goes, turning and spinning, patting and clawing.

Layla arrives, standing over the child apathetically. Lily has made an impressive tower with an empty moat around. Four bridges cross the ditch from the tower at equal intervals.

Lily looks up to her mother, seeking approval. Layla manages a smile. Something buzzes, and Layla reaches into her bag, grabbing her phone. Lily's heart beats fast as she smiles expectantly, beaming for the photo . . .

That doesn't come. Layla squints at her phone, waving it around, searching for a signal. The bars on its display flicker. Lily cracks a bit inside, but keeps it together by sighing and rolling her eyes. Back to the castle.

EXT. BEACH - DAY - LATER

A few more clouds in the sky. The tide has risen a bit, now about 5 metres from the girls. Layla is frantically pecking away at her phone, facing away from Lily, who has expanded her kingdom.

The original tower is decorated by parapets and tiny, lion-like statues. The dome at the top begs for a flag pole. Beyond the tower is a swirling system of office buildings, eerily accurate McMansions, and Gothic churches. A city built by the twin minds of God and Donald Trump.

Lily has built a 3 by 3 metre metropolis, smartly organized into grids that highlight the startlingly organic nature of the whole thing. It's stunning, an achievement for a master artist.

Layla types away, chewing her nails in between texts. Tears form at the corner of her poached eyes. She swipes through the recent calls: BANK, DAD, BANK, REAL ESTATE OFFICE, MARTY (HONEY), BANK, DAD, REAL ESTATE OFFICE - it goes on.

She wipes the water from her eyes and resets her face into her usual Botox enhanced still life. She turns -

And her mouth curls at one corner into an apparition of a prideful smile. Lily doesn't notice her. Layla crouches next to the city, her heels sinking deep into the sand. Her hands move around each building from afar, taking in their shapes through the feeling of the wind. She reaches out towards the tower and Lily slaps her hand away without thinking.

Lily regrets her decision immediately, looking at her mother fearfully. Layla is surprised, looking at her slapped hand in confusion, but the city's spell seems to have taken her. She looks at Lily and gently smiles to ease her.

Layla gingerly moves her hand towards the tower, asking permission of Lily with her eyes. Lily takes her hand gently, a smile threatening to overcome her suspicious face. She brings Layla's hand to a balcony, rests it there, brings it down along the side, brushing some sand onto Layla's fingers. Finally, she pulls her mother's hand away.

Beach House's "On the Sea," dreamy, swelling, keyboard focused, plays on the soundtrack.

Layla and Lily stare at each other, still holding hands. They just stare.

EXT. BEACH PARKING LOT - DAY

The SUV's back bumper clunks to the ground. The back left tire is already completely air free.

EXT. BEACH - DAY

Gradually, they shed their skins. Layla's forced detachment, Lily's guarded optimism, both slide away. Layla lets that smile form fully and that tear fall. Lily actually smiles like a real happy 8 year old, sharing joy with her mother.

Layla picks up a pile of sand.

MONTAGE/QUICK CUTS

-Layla and Lily add to the city. Lily hands Layla a pile of sand.

-Layla molds a small pile into the vague shape of her SUV and places it in the driveway of a crude Parthenon.

-The tide rises, 2 metres from the girls.

-Lily fixes a collapsed dome.

-Layla's phone goes off in her bag: MARTY (HONEY)

-Lily helps her mother build an expressway past the original tower.

-Layla's phone: BANK

-Lily's hand places a startlingly detailed mini sand man on a sidewalk.

-Layla brushes a fur texture into an impeccable dog.

-The tide rises, 1 metre from the girls.

-Layla's phone: REAL ESTATE OFFICE

-The tower's lion stonework has improved to the point of photorealism

-Layla's phone: MARTY (HONEY), then BANK, then DAD

-Layla's crude sand SUV could be mistaken for the real thing.

BACK TO SCENE

Everything moves in fast motion. The city has expanded, tens of metres in all directions, the architecture perfect and the sculptures lifelike. The girls work perfectly in sync. Layla's phone goes off nonstop.

The tide rises continuously. Within seconds, it has invaded the city, filling in the moats and the space beneath the highways. Layla and Lily don't seem to notice.

The tide is up to their waists now. Layla's bag floats, her ever buzzing phone just out of water's reach.

Rising. Drowning citizens. 7 stories up the tower. Lily is in to her neck. Layla beckons her over, and Lily climbs upon her mother's shoulders. Both build as one 4 armed beast.

Layla stands, the water at her hips now. They build upwards, ignoring the buildings collapsing under the sea. Layla's bag sinks, finally shutting off her phone. The tower, impossibly, still stands, getting taller with each moment.

The pair shift, raising a cathedral to match the tower. Then an office building. The water hits Layla's shoulders as they try to build it all above the ocean line.

Building, trying, reaching - until it all disintegrates in their hands - even that tower.

The water goes over Layla's head. Then Lily's. They don't care. Uncertain smiles wash over them. Lily's hands have wrinkled. Layla's face has softened, returning some of her baby fat. The girls seemed to have met in the middle of age.

The water pressure hits Layla, pushes her stilettos down deeper, and she follows until she has sunk to her knees, becoming the same height as Lily. Their hands float over the sand gently.

EXT. BEACH - THE MAGIC HOUR

Music cuts out. The beach is no longer under water. The tide is back to where it was a while ago. The sunset wraps everything in red.

In the water, Layla lifts Lily into the air, the little girl giggling. Layla tosses her into the waves, and they laugh. They're both soaked. They swim together.

The sand city no longer looks impossible. Just vague bunches of organized dirt. Hearts are drawn into the side of the buildings.

The wind continuously pulls sand from the castles.

Beyond, in the water, Layla actually squeals like a young girl.

CUT TO BLACK: