

Scared of Lonely

Katherine Moran

An unlikely friendship is born over a tube intercom.

Character List

ABEO

THE DRIVER

ABEO has not grown up in the UK, and English is not his mother tongue. An extrovert with open childlike energy, he processes his thoughts out loud. He is visiting London while on tour with Beyonce as a backing dancer, and this city & its people still feel foreign to him.

THE DRIVER can be male, female or non-binary, and is a UK native. Projects a tough outer shell, prison warden energy. The Driver is used to being alone, both in and out of work, and keeps a lid on their emotions. There is a sense of humour under the layers.

/ indicates line interjection

For reference, “Kék” is pronounced “Keek” and “Klarika” is pronounced “Kla-reek-ah”.

6am. A tube carriage.

Abeo is the only person on the carriage, listening to Beyonce (perhaps we hear [Scared of Lonely](#)). Small movements as he marks the choreography in his head.

Suddenly, a slow screech, the train brakes, jolts – and the carriage is plunged into darkness.

ABEO. What the –

Ah?

Suddenly over the main intercom –

THE DRIVER. Sorry for the delay here, folks. Looks like something's happening up ahead, we should be on the move shortly.

ABEO. *(under his breath)* “On the move shortly”, ok, ok.

Power cuts. In the Queen's United Kingdom.

No light switch, or...

He is uncomfortable in the dark. Maybe claustrophobic.

He starts trying to will the lights on. Quietly sings ‘This Little Light of Mine’.

And let there be... light.

Suddenly, the carriage is re-lit. Abeo is surprised and slightly creeped out.

ABEO. Ah, you're messing with me. You're messing with me. Ok.

He's not sure. Silence.

He goes back to running the choreography in his head.

After a while, he checks the time. Running late. Agitated.

He spots the clearly marked emergency alarm.

A pause... he decides to press it.

THE DRIVER. Hello?

ABEO. Hello, hello –

THE DRIVER. Everything ok?

ABEO. Oh yes, I just, I know we are stopped and probably – “on the move shortly”, but I’m just wondering what has, you know...

THE DRIVER. Er, not sure if it’s a fallen tree / or a deer or something on the tracks –

ABEO. / tree – ah, no, poor deer –

THE DRIVER. – but we’re just waiting in this tunnel ‘til we get the go ahead.

ABEO. OK.

THE DRIVER. Should only be a few minutes, sir.

ABEO. OK, thank you.

(smiles to himself) Sir.

They disconnect.

Abeo dawdles. Then a new thought.

He pushes the button again.

THE DRIVER. You alright there?

ABEO. Yes, sir, I’m just thinking – may I leave actually?

THE DRIVER. Leave?

ABEO. Leave the train.

THE DRIVER. Sorry, afraid I can’t open the doors while we’re in the tunnel.

ABEO. Aah... I just really have to be somewhere.

THE DRIVER. Yep, so if you just wait another / minute or

ABEO. / You know, to be honest, I think I can fit through the little window at the end.

THE DRIVER. What? Hold it –

ABEO. Really, I do contortion, this is no problem for me, so / if I climb

THE DRIVER. / No, no, not gonna be able to agree to that, I'm afraid.

ABEO. Really? I'll be like a cat.

THE DRIVER. Not fond of cats on the tube, sorry mate.

ABEO. Is that like a rule?

THE DRIVER. Look, I'm not even meant to be on this –

The Driver hangs up.

ABEO. Well, excuse you.

I thought English people were *polite*!

Abeo hit plays on his phone. The opening chords of Beyonce's ["Irreplaceable"](#) ring out. Abeo sings along, comforted.

"To the left, to the left"

Abeo is having this moment to himself, gently dancing and singing, to distract himself.

The Driver hears it all. Amused.

The song slowly builds, becoming a release for Abeo, until he is giving his arena tour performance and directing his frustration at the Driver.

"You must not know bout me, you must not know bout me
I could have another you, in a minute, matter of fact, he'll be here in a minute, babyyy"

He is becoming increasingly claustrophobic.

"You must not know bout me, you must not know bout me

I could have another you, by tomorrow, so don't you ever for a second get to thinkin' –"

He pushes the emergency button again.

THE DRIVER. Look, mate –

ABEO. (*à la Gemma Collins*) “I’m cos-trophobic, Darren!”

THE DRIVER. What?

ABEO. “I’m cos-trophobic! Darren!”

Beat.

THE DRIVER. My name’s not Darren.

ABEO. No, I –

THE DRIVER. – and look, I want to be on the move / just as much as you

ABEO. / it’s an English thing, I wanted to make you laugh!

THE DRIVER. But if you keep mucking around, if you keep being disruptive, I’m going to have to contact the Transport Police. Is that clear?

Beat.

ABEO. Yes. I’m sorry.

THE DRIVER. Apology accepted.

Beat.

And that wasn’t even a good impression.

ABEO. What?

THE DRIVER. (*shouting à la Gemma Collins*) “They don’t get it, I’m *cos-trophobic*!”

ABEO. (*taken aback. Impressed*) Wow.

THE DRIVER. Thank you.

So.

As I said, we'll be on the move shortly, so if you'd please stop calling / me on

ABEO. / Is it quite boring? As the driver?

THE DRIVER. Do you think this is some kind of chatline?

ABEO. No, no, no, I'm just wondering. Cos your talents are clearly wasted.

THE DRIVER. *(sighs)* Not really.

I kinda prefer it. *(pointedly)* Quiet.

ABEO. I don't think I could do a whole day alone.

THE DRIVER. Yeah, somehow, I don't think you could either.

ABEO. I just prefer people. Talking, stories. And I couldn't do the sitting still. I'm a dancer.

THE DRIVER. Great, I've gotta come off here / now –

ABEO. / For *(whispers)* Beyonce.

THE DRIVER. Sorry?

ABEO. *(mumbling)* I'm a dancer, for... Beyonceeee.

THE DRIVER. Can't hear you, mate.

ABEO. OK, I'm a *backing dancer for Beyonce*, ok!

THE DRIVER. I see.

ABEO. On her tour.

THE DRIVER. Really.

ABEO. I'm serious. We are at the, oh what is it – *Hotspur Stadium* tonight.

THE DRIVER. Right.

ABEO. And I need to be at rehearsals in – five minutes ago.

THE DRIVER. At 6 o'clock in the morning?

ABEO. Yes, I know, criminal!

THE DRIVER. Well, as I said, we should be / on the move shortly

ABEO. / “On the move shortly”, I know!

THE DRIVER. Right, so I’ll /

ABEO. You a fan? Of Beyonce?

THE DRIVER. Err... know a few songs.

ABEO. Yeah?

THE DRIVER. Um. *All The Single Ladies*?

ABEO. Of course, a classic.

THE DRIVER. And that um...what is it? *Irreplaceable*?

ABEO. Ok!

THE DRIVER. S’not really my taste, to be honest. More of a Stones fan.

ABEO. Stones..?

THE DRIVER. The Rolling Stones?

ABEO. Ah, I don’t...

THE DRIVER. You haven’t heard of em?

The Driver feebly mimics the opening guitar riff of “[Paint It Black](#)”.

ABEO. *(not recognising it)* Uh...

THE DRIVER. Or um...

The Driver gives their best Mick Jagger with the opening line of “[Angie](#)”.

THE DRIVER. “Aaaangeh... Aaaangeh... when will those clouds all disappear...”

Abeo lets it hang in the air.

ABEO. I actually do know who the Rolling Stones are, I just wanted to hear you sing.

THE DRIVER. Oh, you cheeky...

ABEO. My mother loves the Rolling Stones.

THE DRIVER. Yeah? Your mum has good taste. My daughter's the Beyonce fan though.

ABEO. Yeah?

THE DRIVER. She used to do that dance, that "uh-oh-uh-oh". Proper little... yeah.
So you're performing with Beyonce tonight, then?

ABEO. Yeah.

THE DRIVER. Singing?

ABEO. No, no, dancing.

THE DRIVER. Shame. You've got some pipes on you.

ABEO. ...What do you mean?

Beat.

THE DRIVER. Do you realise that I'm literally on the other side of the wall?

ABEO. What *wall*!?

THE DRIVER. See the end of the carriage? That wall? Yeah, I'm sat on the other side.

ABEO. You can hear me singing?

THE DRIVER. I can hear everything.

ABEO. That is... sneaky.

THE DRIVER. I hear all sorts.

ABEO. I feel violated.

THE DRIVER. Heard a fella finding out he'd got his best mate's girlfriend pregnant yesterday. That was a bit rough. But it's nice, sometimes. Just hearing life. The good bits. The... normal bits.

ABEO. Wait, wait, wait – do you control the lights too?

THE DRIVER. ... Weeell –

ABEO. *No!*

THE DRIVER. Well, I don't make 'em go *off*... but we do have controls for turning them back on –

ABEO. I was terrified, you know I

THE DRIVER. I'm sure you still do.

ABEO. You are a very sneaky cheeky driver.

THE DRIVER. S'no good, is it. English people are meant to be *polite*.

ABEO. Ah.

You *can* hear everything.

What are you doing tonight? How about you and your daughter come to the show? Peace offering.

THE DRIVER. Ah, don't be a wind up.

ABEO. I'm serious, I can get tickets.

THE DRIVER. Na, that show sold out in minutes.

ABEO. How do you know that?

THE DRIVER. ...I actually did look for / tickets –

ABEO. / Hey now! Then that is it, you're coming tonight!

THE DRIVER. No, no –

ABEO. What is your daughter's name?

THE DRIVER. No, she... Kék.

ABEO. You have a Kiki?

THE DRIVER. No, Kék, it's – her name's Klarika, family name, Hungarian – but she shortened it to Kék.

ABEO. Kék.

THE DRIVER. Yeah I know, it's – cos it means 'blue'. In Hungarian.

ABEO. *Blue*. You're joking! / Same as Beyonce's little girl, ok! Hello Beyhive!

THE DRIVER. Nope. Same as – yep. Told you she's a fan.

ABEO. Alright, well now she *has* to come tonight, you both do! Yes?

THE DRIVER. Yeah, um, thank you, mate, she'd... ah she'd love that but she – look, we, we lost Klarika last year.

ABEO. Oh.

THE DRIVER. I was sort of trying to say but...

ABEO. I'm so sorry.

THE DRIVER. No, no, it's... actually, it was funny hearing you sing *Irreplaceable*. We've got a video of her singing that one too.

ABEO. Ah. Probably better than me.

THE DRIVER. Oh I dunno. You both had interesting technique.

ABEO. That's called the "full of life" technique.

THE DRIVER. *(this makes The Driver smile)* Oh yeah? Well, she was full of it. I think it just got a bit much for her.

ABEO. *(pause)* I'm so sorry.

THE DRIVER. No, sorry, yeah, thanks, sorry, don't mean to... be a downer. When you're being nice and everything.

ABEO. *(kindly)* You're not a... "downer".

THE DRIVER. Right. Still feels weird to... I'm normally the one doing the listening, not...

Anyway.

Maybe I could come tonight.

ABEO. I think you'd love it.

Beat.

Any sign of moving?

THE DRIVER. Oh, I actually got the go-ahead, like, two minutes ago / but then you started talking about tickets and / y'know...

ABEO. / Ah, yes! / Right.

THE DRIVER. I better do the announcement. But gimme a knock at the next station, and I'll pass you my number.

ABEO. OK. Knock, where?

THE DRIVER. On the door in the wall.

ABEO. There's a door in the wall?!

THE DRIVER. All smoke and mirrors, mate.

ABEO. Mirrors!? Oh – right, right. English sayings. Nice to chat to you. Driver.

THE DRIVER. And you, mate.

They disconnect. Taking it all in for a moment.

THE DRIVER. *(after a deep breath. Over main intercom)* Hello folks, thanks for your patience here. Apparently last night's storm caused some trouble on the line, but fortunately, we've just been given the green signal.

The train gently jolts. They're back on the move.

So onwards and upwards. S'looking like a sunny one today.

And, if you're listening – this is my chance to remind you...

TUBE VO. The next station is – White Hart Lane.

A Beyonce track (perhaps [Halo](#)) plays as we fade to black.