

We spent so many hours together in the car it became our house. We covered miles of Eastern Seaboard, listening to entire albums on repeat, watching the land pass by through your windshield, a movie screen on wheels, eating hot meals in the front, only stopping for a tank of gas. The longest drive we took was the one from Virginia to Florida. You slept in the passenger seat nearly the entire way. It was the first time I got to drive. Sometimes, between dreams, you ventured to ask about my research but each time I spoke you'd drift back to sleep like a child lulled to rest by its mother's voice.

In 1996 the conceptual artist known for her stint as a maid in a Paris hotel, during which she photographed clients' personal belongings, took a road trip not much unlike ours. Sophie Calle was joined by director Gregory Shepard on an arduous journey across the American heartland. Leaving New York City in January, the pair drove South toward Miami until a change of heart led them West toward Las Vegas. The first time I watched *Double Blind/No Sex Last Night* I was alone in my London flat. This was four months ago. At that point, we hadn't spoken in six. Now we're coming up on the full year.

I had a drink with David last night. He broke up with his girlfriend in May and told me the last time he saw her they agreed that separating was for the best, but that each would always look for the other in someone else—making do with the alternate version that came their way. He was certain she'd find a guy just like him, only lacking his political interest, and he'd make do with a girl, probably just like me. I told David that was how I felt about you six months ago. While David spoke I wondered for a long while if maybe I still do.

Rarely in Calle's film do you hear their dialogue in real time. Rather, in an interview-style manner, their innermost thoughts and opinions of one another have been taped over the documentary — a confession to the viewer they share their most personal, intimate, opinions about each other after the fact. Before the road trip, Calle and Shepard had been living together for over a year but in that time the relationship worsened. Calle, despite the cracks in the paint, still dreamt of marrying Shepard, leading her to suggest they get hitched in Las Vegas during the trip.

Early on, Shepard's car breaks down (despite Calle's request that he take it to the shop before leaving New York). Calle claims he treats the car better than her. "He looks at the car like his wife giving birth." Throughout the entire film, the two performed a choreography between car, motel, mechanic, restaurant, and bed. Each shot in the motel room filmed with Calle's camera and narrated by her takes a tally of how many nights they've gone without sex, "No sex last night." Shepard tells viewers as they drive over a bridge outside of Charleston. "I feel safe in the car, I want to stop only when we have to."

One night after dinner, during which Shepard orders a burger, his first taste of meat in 11 years, he makes his most poignant confession. "I wish I was more in love with her." A few nights later at 3:35 AM while searching for a motel to rest somewhere between Alabama and Texas, he admits he is jealous of Calle because he is not as real as she is. "You keep forcing her to act like your mother. Women can't save you." He wishes he could talk to her about things but is afraid of her judgment.

By the time they get to Santa Fe, Calle's shots of motel-tangled bed sheets emanate something akin to Nan Goldin's *Empty Beds, Boston* (1979). She doesn't even bother to finish the sentence, just a simple "No" tells the viewer all they need to know. As they get closer and closer to Las Vegas it begins to dawn upon Shepard that he will have to make up his mind. Calle, although hesitant at times, seems to want nothing more than to be made his wife. As they drive down the strip, a dystopian landscape through the lens of their 90s camcorder, Calle makes her final plea for his hand. Shepherd asks us "How do I get out of this one, could be a real nightmare..." After pulling into The Mirage Hotel to discuss their future together, Shepard convinces Calle that they will be better off unwed.

As the sun rises in their Las Vegas motel room the next day, Shepard wakes with a refreshed mindset asking Calle to marry him as soon as she opens her eyes. The person the couple tells first about their pending nuptials is the mechanic at the car wash. The two have settled on a drive-thru wedding chapel on the strip. Calle tells us, "It would've been nice to have a wedding dress," but she didn't want to push. To ease Shepard's nerves they agree on a three-month trial with the option to renew.

There is something poetic about their marriage occurring in the car that carried them across the country. Calle even goes so far as to suggest they spend their first night as newlyweds in the Cadillac. Three months after their drive-thru kiss, they go to France where Calle fulfills her fantasy of wearing a white dress, marrying Shepard again in front of her family. In September, they return to California. One day, Calle finds a black plastic bag full of letters written throughout the year to another woman under the driver seat of the Cadillac. To Calle, Shepard has destroyed the memories of their journey and marriage. When she confronts him about his infidelity, Shepard fails to respond truthfully. The film ends with two versions of the same story. Shepard tells us he has never tried so hard to both make a relationship work and fail at the same time. He admits to us he has written the letters and loves another woman. He finally wants to try and tell an honest story. Calle wants a divorce.

I can't help but think back on that drive South. I can picture the 4x4s that passed up by with the license plate from neighboring states so clearly in my mind. The sun set just as we reached Jacksonville. Unlike Calle and Shepard, we didn't have it in our hearts to turn West. There was no marriage awaiting us if only we drove just a few miles more. I dropped you off at your mom's house when we finally made it to Miami and retreated to my bed, sleeping until dusk the next day. When I awoke, you called, asking what time to come pick me up.