

A young man with brown hair and blue eyes is shown from the chest up. A vertical lightning bolt strikes down the center of his face, splitting it into two halves. The left half of his face is in shadow, while the right half is brightly lit. He is wearing a dark jacket over a light-colored shirt and a dark bow tie. The background is a dark, stormy sky with white clouds.

Between Realities

FISSO

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Prologue

The morning sun streamed in through the kitchen window, illuminating the coffee table with a welcoming warmth. The smell of freshly baked bread and freshly brewed coffee hung in the air, creating a typical scene of an ordinary day in Lucas's family home. It was a middle-class home in Minas Gerais, with walls adorned with photos of the family in happy moments: birthdays, June festivals, and a few short trips to the state's historic cities. The house was modest but vibrant, full of life and love.

At the table, sitting together, were the family members. **Lucas**, at 17 years old, was quiet as usual, focused on his cell phone, scrolling through the screen without paying much attention

to what was happening around him. He was the typical introspective teenager, with a passion for technology and games. His disheveled brown hair and carefree expression contrasted with the growing excitement that his parents and younger sister displayed. Beside him, **Clara** , his 8-year-old sister, chattered nonstop about the vacation trip they would take that day. His enthusiasm was contagious.

"I can't wait to see the animals in the Pantanal!" Clara exclaimed, swinging her little legs in the chair.

Daniel , the father, laughed as he leafed through a travel magazine. He was a simple man who loved to drive and had always dreamed of taking a long family trip, crossing the roads of Minas Gerais towards Mato Grosso. **"You're going to love the road,"** he said enthusiastically, looking

at Lucas. **"You're going to see so many beautiful things along the way."**

Lucas just nodded, still absorbed in his cell phone, feigning interest. He didn't share his father's enthusiasm for the road, but he understood how important that moment was for the family. The trip was something Daniel had been planning for months, and the idea of everyone being together for a few days, away from their routine, seemed to bring a special sparkle to his parents' eyes.

Ana , the mother, was standing, organizing the final preparations. She was the heart of the family, always attentive to details, making sure everything was in order for the trip. **"Lucas, turn off that cell phone for a while and come help us with the bags,"** she said, half laughing, but with a touch of seriousness. He knew that his mother's

gentle tone hid an order that could not be ignored for long.

Lucas let out a sigh, standing up to help. Even with his initial reluctance, he knew that these family trips always brought something unexpected, some memorable moment that, in one way or another, would stay with them forever.

As he helped load the bags into the trunk of the car, Clara continued to chatter excitedly about the things she wanted to see and do. Her energy was boundless. **“I want to see an alligator up close! Can we make it there today?”** she asked incessantly, her eyes shining with curiosity.

“We'll see, Clara,” Daniel replied with an indulgent smile as he strapped the last suitcase into the car.

With the car packed and everyone ready, the family gathered outside their home for one

last check. The day was perfect—the sky was clear blue and cloudless, and the morning breeze brought with it a sense of renewal, a beginning of something new and special.

Before they got into the car, Ana looked at the horizon with a slight smile. **"We're finally going to take a few days off for ourselves,"** she said, as if she were talking to herself, but also to Daniel. The two exchanged a knowing look, sharing the joy of seeing the plan finally come to fruition. It was an opportunity to reconnect, something that the last few months, with work and studies, had made difficult.

"It's good to get out of the routine for a bit," Daniel commented, starting the car. **"It's been a while since we spent this much time together."**

As the car began to move, Lucas looked out the window, watching the house fade into the distance. He could feel the change in the air, an anticipation he couldn't quite define. There was something about the road that always brought a sense of freedom, even if he wouldn't admit it to himself.

As they drove along the winding roads of Minas Gerais, the sounds of nature and the noise of tires against the asphalt filled the air. Clara was leaning against the window, pointing to each mountain, each farm they passed. **"Look, Mommy, look! What a beautiful place!"** she shouted at each new landscape.

Lucas, still unable to completely let go of his cell phone, began to get distracted by the views that passed by. Green hills, vast pastures, small villages. He realized how beautiful and diverse the

state was, something he rarely paid attention to in his day-to-day life.

The conversations in the car flowed naturally, mixing plans for the next few days with the family's inside jokes. It was one of those moments when happiness was in the air, a bubble of harmony that seemed unbreakable. But, like all bubbles, this one was about to burst, although none of them knew it yet.

The sun began to slowly set, painting the sky a warm orange. As night approached, Daniel suggested they stop at a roadside motel to rest. **"We still have a long way to go,"** he said, parking the car. They all agreed, already tired from the journey.

They entered the simple and cozy hotel, where tiredness quickly overtook them. Their suitcases were left in the corners of the rooms, and

soon the silence of the night took over the place.
The world seemed at peace.

Little did they know that this would be the last moment of tranquility before everything changed. The next day would bring a new reality, where the line between what was real and what was illusion would become impossible to distinguish.

Act 1: The Deconstruction of Reality (Chapters 1-10)

Chapter 1: The Beginning of the Journey

The car engine roared softly, filling the silence of the early morning hours as the family continued their journey along the winding roads of Minas Gerais. The sky still had that clear tone of dawn, and the fresh mountain air seemed invigorating, even with the windows closed. Lucas, sitting in the back seat, absently watched the landscape change as they got further and further away from home. The trip, despite being long, began on a calm note.

“See that mountain, Lucas? Remember when we went up there last year?” Daniel asked, a hint of nostalgia in his voice. He kept a steady hand on the steering wheel as he pointed toward the hills in the distance. He loved every stretch of road, every curve and bump, as if he knew each one by heart. Traveling by car was his form of freedom, a way to connect with the vastness of the world around him.

Lucas, still drowsy, just nodded, but his memories were vague. A teenager’s mind was more focused on his phone than on family adventures, although he knew that this moment—his father driving, his mother organizing the trip, Clara excitedly in the front seat—was part of a family ritual that he somehow cherished.

Clara, as always, talked nonstop, excited about each new curve or little town they saw. Her curious eyes examined every little bit of the

landscape, and every few minutes she pointed out something new. **"Mommy, look! A little cow! I wonder if there are more up ahead?"**

Ana, at her side, laughed sweetly. **"Of course there are, daughter. Lots of farms around here."** With one hand, she stroked Clara's hair, while the other leafed through the travel map. **"We're almost at Itaobim. We can stop there for a coffee and stretch our legs."**

The car passed through small, quiet villages, each with its own peculiarities. Adobe houses with clay roofs lined the narrow streets, where locals seemed unimpressed by the passing cars. Lucas watched people sitting on porches, chatting among themselves, while the modern world glided by, oblivious to the serene rhythm of rural life.

The sun began to rise, bringing a comfortable warmth that filtered through the windows. Lucas, now more awake, began to participate more in the conversations, commenting on the landscapes and even joking with Clara. **"I doubt you'll be able to count all the cows you see until the next town."**

Clara, always up for a challenge, began counting excitedly, her finger pointing frantically at the fields next to her. **"One, two, three... Oh, I've lost count!"** Everyone laughed, the sound of a family in harmony, unaware that they were on the verge of drastic change.

The day wore on slowly, and the initial excitement of the journey began to give way to tiredness. The road seemed endless, winding through mountains and valleys. Lucas, who had initially tried to stay engaged, was now reclining in the seat, listening to music on his headphones.

Clara, after hours of excitement, had finally fallen asleep in the front seat, her head resting against the window.

Daniel kept his eyes on the road, aware of every curve and change in terrain. **"We'll stop soon,"** he said, noticing the silence that was beginning to take over the car. **"Just a few more minutes until the next gas station. We need a break."**

Ana, ever the organizer, agreed. **"We're all getting tired. Maybe we should consider staying in a hotel, Daniel. Stretch our legs and get back to work early tomorrow."**

He nodded, his eyes focused on the road, but his mind already thinking about the rest that was to come. **"That might be a good idea. I don't want to push the pace. The important thing is that we get there safely."**

With every kilometer they drove, the landscape around them changed subtly. Open fields and green hills gave way to imposing mountains, surrounded by rocks ranging in color from dark brown to reddish orange. The sun, now at its highest point, cast long, wavy shadows over the roads, giving the journey an almost cinematic atmosphere.

Despite the mounting fatigue, there was a peace in the monotony of the journey. The long stretches of silence were punctuated by sporadic conversations and soft laughter, creating a sense of security and togetherness. Lucas, who had initially seen the journey as boring and obligatory, began to appreciate the moments of connection with his family, even if it came in small, fleeting doses.

"I love these mountains," Ana commented, breaking the silence. **"I remember my parents**

taking us here when I was a child. This part of Minas always brings back good memories for me."

Daniel smiled, his eyes focused on the road, but his mind wandering to the same memories. **"The road is part of the journey, right? More than just the destination."**

The sentence hung in the air, resonating more deeply than either of them realized at the time. To Lucas, it was just a meaningless statement, but to his parents, it carried a truth that would soon become painfully clear: sometimes, the journey is more important than where you end up.

With the midday heat becoming oppressive, they finally spotted a small roadside hotel. It was simple, with a faded facade and a small sign that

swayed in the wind, but it promised comfort to weary travelers.

Daniel parked the car with a sigh of relief. **"I think this will be perfect for us to spend the night. Tomorrow we'll hit the road again well rested."**

The hotel had a rustic charm, with exposed brick walls and wooden balconies that overlooked a small garden. Clara, just waking from her nap, ran ahead, enchanted by the simplicity of the place. **"Look, there are swings! Mommy, can I play for a little while?"**

Ana laughed tiredly, but gave in to her daughter's request. **"Just a little, dear. We'll go to the bedroom soon ."**

As Clara ran through the garden and Daniel made the hotel reservation, Lucas stretched, feeling the muscles tense from the journey relax. He looked up at the sky, now tinged with the warm

colors of late afternoon, and for the first time that day, he felt truly at peace. The journey, with all its moments of monotony and tiredness, had something comforting about it. It was as if time had slowed down, allowing him to reconnect with the simplicity of family life.

Unbeknownst to them, that stop would be their last breath of peace before everything changed. They were one step away from a destination they hadn't planned, but for now, they were together, in a state of harmony that would soon be just a memory. The darkness of the night was beginning to set in, bringing with it the first shadows of a reality that Lucas wasn't yet ready to face.