

[Your name]

[Prof name]

[Course name and number]

[Date]

Catcher in the Rye – Alternative Ending

It was Tuesday afternoon, like any other Tuesday afternoon, and I needed to go. The city had abandoned me and left me with nothing. I knew at once that the chances of finding companionship were slim if they existed at all. At any rate, I needed to tell Phoebe my plan. I needed to say goodbye to her before I set out into the sunset to try life in the West. Maybe I would be successful. Maybe I would come up empty. It mattered only that I let her know where I was going. It seemed like the right thing to do.

The first thing I did when I got to the school, I went to find Phoebe. I wanted to see her face again and really to see her reaction when I told her the news. I finally found her lurking around the school.

“I’m leaving,” I said. “I’m getting out of this city and heading West. I’m going to be a gas station attendant. At least then I will be happy.”

“You can’t leave,” Phoebe said. “You can’t leave unless you take me.”

I thought about it for a while. I had come to the school to tell her the news, and I knew it might be possible that she would want to go with me. I knew she might beg and kick and cry. It wasn’t so much her habit, but this was a trying time. I had taken with me a plan to be strong and tell her that she had to stay in school. I even planned that if she wouldn’t let me go, I would stay right there with her. Then I saw the look in her eyes and it hit me. She was the right person to come with me. Maybe getting away from the city meant getting out of town with her.

“Pack your backs,” I said. “Let’s get in the car.”

She looked scared but we drove back to her house where she collected her things. She threw them in a small bag and jumped in my car. We headed West on the Interstate. She looked up after we had drive probably an hour.

“Where will we stop?” she asked.

“I’m not quite sure,” I said. “I’m not stopping until I’m clear of that city and we’re out of trouble.”

I kept driving and driving until the landscapes finally looked like what I thought the West should be. Part of what I had been looking for was companionship, and she had given it to me. At any rate, I knew there were some practical concerns we had to take care of. I turned up the radio trying not to think about the decision I had just made and how hard it was going to be. I imagined it would be easier just to leave the past behind. It ended up being much harder.

“Are you really going to be a gas station attendant?” Phoebe asked.

“Maybe I will,” I said, still unsure whether this had been a real dream or just some kind of pipe dream. “It’s honest work and I think I’m going to do it.”

As we kept driving, it dawned on me that the cities ahead were probably a lot like the city we had left behind. I did what I could to block that thought from my mind. As I looked out at the horizon, I saw a gas station. We pulled in because we needed more fuel. The sign on the door said in big, bold letters: HELP WANTED. I left her in the car and walked through the front door.