

**METEOR**

Written by

Alec Whittle

Alec@balladpictures.com  
206 355 2519

EXT. HOSPITAL - DAY

A Subaru spotted with slush and grime rolls slowly to a stop in front of a small-town Emergency Room. The engine idles. Nothing happens.

A gust of wind sweeps through the parking lot, rattling a loose hospital sign against its post. The ORDERLY by the entrance, mid-cigarette, glances at the car before returning to his phone.

INT. SUBARU - CONTINUOUS

Years of conflict have worn ANDREW, 40s, down to something brittle. He stares forward, motionless. Then, finally, he reaches out, touching the wrist of DELLA, 40, in the passenger seat. No pulse.

His hand trembles as he pulls down the scarf from her face. The cold has preserved her stillness. Her lips, slightly parted, holding the last breath she took.

Andrew inhales sharply, as if through a puncture.

His voice sounds like Mr. Cooper in *A Star is Born*.

ANDREW

You had a mission. You always did.

His eyes flick to the windshield. The orderly exhales a long stream of smoke, pushing an ELDERLY PATIENT in a wheelchair toward the doors. Life continues, indifferent.

Andrew touches Della's face, fingertips lingering just below her temple.

A second ORDERLY, exits the hospital and approaches Andrew's car.

She raps on the window.

Andrew looks up and sees her.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

We'll finish it, then. Together.

He shifts the car into drive and pulls away from the hospital.

EXT. RIVERSIDE MOTEL - EVENING

The Subaru crawls into the gravel lot of a riverside motel, parking away from the bright no-vacancy sign. A scattered group of A-frame cabins sits along the water's edge.

EXT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

Andrew steps out, crunching over crusty piles of snow. A banner above the lobby flaps wildly in the wind, its edges curling from wear:

WELCOME FILM FESTIVAL PARTICIPANTS.

Andrew takes a moment, looking up at the towering fir trees.

INT. SUBARU - CONTINUOUS

Andrew gets back in the car, gently sliding the scarf back over Della's face.

EXT. RIVERSIDE MOTEL - CONTINUOUS

Andrew adjusts his coat, exhales into his hands for warmth, and heads toward the lobby.

INT. MOTEL LOBBY - NIGHT

A rustic retreat, river rock fireplace crackling. A table by the entrance is stacked with festival brochures, laminated badges, and tote bags.

Andrew moves past the small crowd gathered around the check-in table, heading straight for the front desk where JONAH, 30, lazy-eyed with thinning hair, waits.

JONAH

Welcome in.

He hands Andrew a fresh chocolate chip cookie in a paper sleeve. Andrew hesitates, then takes it, eyes bouncing between Jonah's misaligned gaze.

ANDREW

Thank you.

JONAH

Are you a filmmaker?

ANDREW

My wife. Ex-wife. It's her film.

JONAH

Is she here?

Andrew's eyes drift to the taxidermized deer head mounted on the wall. Glassy, vacant. He shifts his stance.

ANDREW

She's not feeling a hundred. She asked me to come get the room key and any info I need.

Jonah nods, tapping at the computer.

JONAH

Of course. What's the film's name?

ANDREW

Jesse Burrows.

JONAH

The actor?

ANDREW

Yes.

JONAH

But what's the film name?

ANDREW

Like I said.

JONAH

The film is called Jesse Burrows?

ANDREW  
Yes, sir.

JONAH  
Did you know he's premiering his  
new feature this weekend?

ANDREW  
What a coincidence.

JONAH  
Does he know you've named a film  
after him?

ANDREW  
The keys would be wonderful.

Jonah chuckles, grabbing a key from a row of hooks.

JONAH  
Of course. Here it is. Della  
Winter. You're in Cabin C on the  
ridge.

He slides the key across the counter.

JONAH (CONT'D)  
You can pick up your welcome packet  
and badges over at the check-in  
table.

Andrew nods, pocketing the key. He doesn't take a festival  
badge. He turns toward the door, his reflection briefly  
catching in the frosted glass.

EXT. RIVERSIDE MOTEL - NIGHT

Andrew steps back into the cold, exhaling slowly. The river  
murmurs behind the cabins. A train horn sounds somewhere in  
the distance.

He heads toward Cabin C.

EXT. CABIN C - NIGHT

Andrew surveys the motel grounds, checking for any wandering eyes. The parking lot is still, save for the distant hum of a vending machine light. A curtain shifts in one of the cabins.

INT./EXT. SUBARU - NIGHT

With deliberate care, he maneuvers Della from the passenger seat, her body limp against his. He presses his forehead to hers, lingering there, breathing in the cold air that clings to her skin.

ANDREW

We made it, Del.

His grip tightens around her, as if for a moment he could anchor her back to this world. Then, gently, he walks them both toward the cabin door.

INT. CABIN C - EVENING

Andrew eases Della into a chair near the stone fireplace, adjusting her body. The room is silent.

He pulls a blanket over her shoulders, smoothing it down before setting her suitcase beside her. The zipper hums as he unfastens the top, allowing her access.

Andrew moves to the bathroom, retrieving two glasses from the sink. He sets them on a card table, pulls a bottle of rye from his bag, and pours generously.

He crouches by the hearth, stacking kindling before striking a match. The flames rise. He turns to Della, raising his glass.

ANDREW

I have some questions. But first,  
we toast.

He swirls the amber liquid, watching it catch the firelight.

ANDREW (CONT'D)  
Congratulations on your film. This  
place... you're so fucking  
determined. You always...

His voice catches. He closes his eyes, tipping the glass  
back. The burn trails down his throat, settling into his  
chest. He exhales, refills his drink, then drags a chair  
closer to Della.

ANDREW (CONT'D)  
I know, I know. I'll get the  
itinerary in the morning. Your film  
doesn't play until the prestigious  
4 p.m. slot.

He laughs softly, shaking his head.

ANDREW (CONT'D)  
Fuck me. I'm sorry. It's fantastic  
that we're here.

He rolls the glass against his head.

ANDREW (CONT'D)  
So, can we establish a few things?  
Like, I'd like to think you can  
hear me. But hearing... that's a  
human thing, right? I mean, I know  
you can't hear me in the way I  
think, because you don't have ears  
anymore.

He reaches out, brushing his fingers against her cheek.

ANDREW (CONT'D)  
You know what I mean. They're  
beautiful. I want to believe that  
some part of you is hovering in  
this room, listening to my selfish  
ass. Thinking, 'Gee, I would  
communicate with him, but he's too  
stupid.' Like you're on some higher  
frequency, and I'm just... not  
tuned in.

He lets out a hollow laugh, shaking his head.

ANDREW (CONT'D)  
But thinking. That's the thing,  
isn't it? Humans think. What do you  
do? You don't think. You just...  
radiate? That's it. You're just out  
there, basking in my stupidity.

He throws back another drink, wincing at the heat. The fire  
crackles, filling the silence.

ANDREW (CONT'D)  
Speaking of which—I'm sorry for...  
but we both knew we weren't meant  
for forever.

He tosses another log onto the fire, watching embers leap up.

ANDREW (CONT'D)  
I mean, some people think when we  
die, we just stick around with our  
families forever. Our friends, our  
little cocker spaniels. But what if  
you never liked your family? You  
didn't always have glowing things  
to say about your mother... Oh  
shit, is she listening too?

He smirks, shaking his head.

ANDREW (CONT'D)  
So that's it? You go be with your  
family, messed up or not? I say no.  
What say ye?

He cups a hand to his ear, waiting. Nothing.

ANDREW (CONT'D)  
My little brain needs you to be  
separate from the rest of the dead.  
I need you to be Della. Just... not  
in your body.

ANDREW (CONT'D)  
It was a nice body. I don't mean  
like that. I mean...

He exhales, running a hand through his hair.

ANDREW (CONT'D)  
So if you don't have teeth, or  
eyes, or anything that makes you...  
you, what are you? Just some shadow  
hopping around in the dark?  
And that's another thing, did they  
tell you when you died about Jesus?  
And O.J.? And JFK? Does it all just  
hit you at once, or is there some  
kind of afterlife onboarding  
process?

He pulls his chair even closer to hers.

ANDREW (CONT'D)  
Okay. Okay. Until tomorrow, then.

He waits for anything.

INT. MOTEL LOBBY - MORNING

The motel lobby hums with energy. Festival ATTENDEES linger,  
murmuring in hushed voices, flipping through the day's  
schedule.

Andrew pushes through the door, his boots clunking.

LAUREN, perks up from the festival table.

LAUREN  
Can I help you?

ANDREW  
Jesse Burrows.

Lauren studies him for a beat.

LAUREN  
What about him?

ANDREW

That's the name of the film.

LAUREN

Ah. Yes. There's been some chatter about the short selections this year. I'd be lying if I said this one hasn't stirred the pot.

ANDREW

Because of the name?

LAUREN

No. Because it hits hard. The team was floored.

Andrew absorbs that, jaw tightening. Lauren's gaze lingers on him.

LAUREN (CONT'D)

Is Della here with you?

Andrew swallows.

ANDREW

Still not feeling wonderful. I told her I'd get the credentials.

Lauren nods, rifling through a stack of welcome packets.

LAUREN

And you are?

ANDREW

Executive producer.

Lauren hands over the packet.

LAUREN

Interesting name. Executive producer. Almost as interesting as the film's name... You know Jesse Burrows is here.

ANDREW

Della would love to meet him.

LAUREN

Do they have a connection? Seems  
like there has to be a reason...

Andrew nods and walks away.

INT. BUFFET LINE - MORNING

Andrew dishes up two separate plates. Jonah notices him from  
the concierge desk, his eyes lingering on the extra plate.

Jonah approaches Andrew.

JONAH

Can I help? I'll bring some coffee.  
I just have to meet her.

ANDREW

I'm sorry?

JONAH

They let a few hotel employees have  
a screener of the festival films.  
Jesse Burrows is ridiculous. I have  
to meet Della. I'm her biggest fan.

ANDREW

I will definitely let her know.  
It's just... whatever she has might  
be contagious. I'd hate for...

JONAH

Of course. I'll be at the opening  
night screening of The Big Clang.

ANDREW

Right.

Andrew is confused.

JONAH

Jesse Burrows' film is kicking off  
the festival.

ANDREW  
The Big Clang?

JONAH  
They wouldn't let us watch that  
one. Hush hush. Something about an  
agent undercover in the black  
market clock-making game.

ANDREW  
Oh. Of course. Jesus.

Andrew clunks out.

INT. CABIN C - DAY

Andrew carefully sets up Della's plate in front of her.

ANDREW  
Your boy, Jesse Burrows has his  
film premiere tonight.

Andrew drinks his coffee, eyes locked on the unmoving plate.

ANDREW (CONT'D)  
Why him? I never took you for the  
Hollywood type. Maybe a little too  
clean-cut for you? I mean, hell,  
how am I supposed to feel? I  
know... you were just in it for the  
money with me.

He lets out a chuckle.

Andrew pulls out a screenplay from his duffel. Then his  
guitar.

ANDREW (CONT'D)  
The way I see it, you wrote this  
part for me. A nobody who couldn't  
get out of nobody's way. That's not  
a bad elevator pitch.

Andrew starts in on a rough, rambling song in a low gravel.

A string breaks from his aggression. He stops playing, staring down at the guitar as if it betrayed him.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

I know I ain't never offered much.  
So I understand why you left. I  
thought about you every single day.

Andrew stares at the plate across from him.

EXT. CABIN C - DAY

Andrew steps out onto the back deck of the cabin, which overlooks the river. He sets out some pieces of bread on the railing and nods again at the fancy firs.

The river moves slowly, heavy with ice in the shallows. Andrew exhales, watching his breath mix with the crisp air.

EXT. DOWNTOWN - DAY

Andrew runs his hand through the contours of a giant chainsaw carving of an eagle.

He shuffles down Main Street, a western-themed mountain town dressed in twinkling festival lights. Posters of The Big Clang plaster the shop windows.

INT. COUNTRY STORE - DAY

Andrew tries on a pearl snap shirt and a cowboy hat, adjusting it in the mirror.

EXT. DOWNTOWN - DAY

Andrew smokes a cigarette with the chainsaw artist.

ANDREW

You got anything smaller?

The artist moves to his van and opens the door. He pulls out a wooden bat with the handle carved into an ornate shape like a meteor.

ANDREW (CONT'D)  
What is it?

The artist points to the sky with a whoosh.

ANDREW (CONT'D)  
Meteor?

The artist nods.

ANDREW (CONT'D)  
What's it mean?

The artist shrugs.

Andrew holds the bat, testing its weight in his hands. The wood is smooth, well-worn.

ANDREW (CONT'D)  
I'll take it.

The artist nods again, accepting the folded bills Andrew hands him.

Andrew walks away, gripping the bat tightly.

INT. THEATER LOBBY - EVENING

Andrew gets a drink from the bar, dressed in his new shirt and hat. He catches a few stares from the crowd. Then another drink. A few flashes pop as photographers capture moments of the festival.

Jesse Burrows, 60, Hugh Grant lookalike, enters the room, his presence drawing immediate attention. Andrew watches, slowly moving closer, eavesdropping on Jesse's conversation with his assistant, CASSIE, 25.

Jesse has a thick British accent.

JESSE  
Whose idea was it again to enter  
this backwater bush festival?

CASSIE

A lot of people are saying this place will be the next Telluride.

JESSE

Whoever thought we should all pretend that we like the bloody outdoors for this rubbish?

CASSIE

I happen to think...

JESSE

Is the plane fueled up and ready?

CASSIE

Yes, but there's a brief Q&A after.

JESSE

I answer two questions. Then we're a memory. Now get me a fucking drink.

Cassie leaves.

Andrew approaches Jesse with a drink, smiling faintly.

ANDREW

Here you are, sir. Your assistant asked that I bring this to you.

Jesse sizes up Andrew, his brow furrowing slightly.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

Bulleit rye with a splash of ginger ale.

Jesse looks around for his Cassie, then back at Andrew.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

One cube. Slightly shaved.

Jesse takes the drink and guzzles it in one long pull.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

I heard there's a film called Jesse Burrows playing in the short program tomorrow night.

JESSE

Who are you?

ANDREW

I'm with the Bellingham Herald.

JESSE

I should sue the tits off that woman for naming her little experimental load of tosh after me.

ANDREW

Can I quote you on that?

JESSE

Get bent.

ANDREW

It would be quite a gesture if you came to the screening. My cohorts at The Times would eat that shit up. Might help with the image problem.

JESSE

Who the fuck are you again? Where is Cassie?

ANDREW

She said she wasn't feeling well.

Jesse scans the room and sees Cassie approaching with a drink. He wheels around, and Andrew is gone.

Just then, a camera crew steps in.

REPORTER

We heard a little bird tell us that you will be going to see a film named after you tomorrow night.

JESSE  
Uh. How could I pass up the  
opportunity?

Andrew slides into the theater.

EXT. CABIN C - EVENING

Jonah walks past Cabin C and notices the plates from earlier sitting outside the door. He frowns.

JONAH  
What a savage. Doesn't he know this  
will attract...

Jonah reaches down to pick up the plates and realizes one of them hasn't been touched. He peers into the window but can't see much inside. After a moment, he continues on.

INT. THEATER - NIGHT

Andrew sits alone in the back of a mostly full theater. He removes his hat, slugs down a whiskey. He raises an eyebrow at a woman seated next to him.

ANDREW  
This is amazing.

The lights go dark. Frames flicker.

Jesse Burrows walks into the shot, dressed as a clockmaker. He greets a customer in his store with a nod.

JESSE  
Top of the clock to you.

CUSTOMER  
Do you have any cuckoo clocks?

JESSE  
Well, what did one cuckoo clock say  
to the other?

CUSTOMER

I...

JESSE

Looks like it's HOUR time to shine.

CUSTOMER

Wow. Okay. I'm looking for a very special cuckoo clock... made in Germany.

JESSE

That ought to narrow it down.

The customer winks at Jesse.

CUSTOMER

The kind of CLOCK made in Germany.

JESSE

Oh. Of course. Of course.

Jesse pulls out a display of colorful Swatch watches and places them on the counter.

CUSTOMER

Jesus. This is the motherload.

Andrew stands, causing a bit of a commotion as he blocks people's view while leaving the theater.

EXT. THEATER - NIGHT

Andrew exits, staring up at the sky. Snow begins to fall softly.

INT. CABIN C - NIGHT

Andrew staggers in, shivering from the cold, his breath visible in the dim light. He stokes the fire.

He sinks onto the couch next to Della, exhaustion weighing him down. He studies her still face.

ANDREW

Well. You got your wish. He said  
he's coming to see the show.

Andrew lets out a deep, guttural laugh, shaking his head. He  
leans back, running a hand through his hair.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

Just like you said. His favorite  
drink and all. You would have been  
proud. The thing is, you could have  
just smiled at him, and that would  
have been that.

He pulls off his hat, setting it on the table.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

You want me to call your sister? I  
mean, she should know. She probably  
knows what kind of arrangements  
should be made.

He stares at the miniature Ouija board on the table, running  
his fingers over the worn surface. He smirks, placing his  
fingertips on the planchette, moving it slowly.

The piece shifts: H.E.L.L. N.O.

Andrew chuckles, shaking his head.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

Okay, okay. Just a thought. I mean,  
I wasn't going to call until after  
he sees the picture. I mean, what  
happens if he likes it? Even if he  
wanted to fund the feature  
version... who would make it?

His fingers rest on the planchette again, but he doesn't move  
it. He sighs, staring into the fire.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

So what if I'm listening, but you  
don't use language anymore. I mean,  
that's all pretty new, right? Maybe  
the subconscious...

He gently props Della's head up straight, smoothing a stray strand of hair away from her face.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

I'm sorry about me. But you got me... I don't know. I looked at the dark part of me for a long time, and I'm okay with it. I mean, you called... I don't think you call me unless I'm right with myself. Hillbilly and all. Hey, tell your mother I liked her baked spaghetti. Good shit. Simple but good. I know she never liked me. She could see my bones. I just wanted to play music. Wasn't great at keepin' a job. I'm sorry for that.

Andrew reaches for his guitar, settling it onto his lap. He strums softly, the melody raw, unfinished.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

I'm sorry for not knowing the difference between emotion and feeling and mood or whatever. I'm sorry.

His fingers slow on the strings. He reaches for Della's hand, clasping it gently, his thumb brushing against her knuckles.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

So what if he watches it and says thank you or whatever and buggers off? I guess I pretty much already know what I'm gonna do without knowing it, if you know what I mean. Of course, you know. There I go again with human characteristics.

He exhales, setting the guitar down and grabbing the fire poker.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

Let me ask you this. Is there violence around you?

(MORE)

ANDREW (CONT'D)

Not you per se, I just mean, we're always told that people who die feel this warm embrace by God or whatever and it's nothing but glory. I'm just saying that we know there's violence in nature and in the stars and in our cells. Fuck. Do you experience that now?

His grip tightens around the empty glass in his hand. He breathes heavily, eyes locked on the fire, then suddenly hurls the glass into the flames. The embers burst, a shower of tiny sparks rising toward the ceiling before fading.

Andrew leans forward, rubbing his hands together, then rests his forehead in his palms.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

Goddamn. You could have given me a little more...

The fire continues to crackle.

INT. MOTEL LOBBY - MORNING

Andrew approaches the buffet, scanning the trays of steaming food. Jonah, wiping his hands on a dishtowel, spots him from behind the counter.

JONAH

How is Della feeling today?

Andrew pauses for a beat, then shrugs.

ANDREW

Trying to conserve her energy for tonight. It's a shame because she loves networking and socializing and all that.

JONAH

Has she been able to get any food down?

Andrew tilts his head, hesitating.

JONAH (CONT'D)  
Well, it's just that I noticed only  
one plate of food had been eaten.

ANDREW  
Just keeping her hydrated at this  
point.

Jonah nods.

JONAH  
Well, I'm looking forward to seeing  
her film tonight.

Andrew nods and moves on, sits at a table. Before he can take  
a bite of his food, Cassie approaches him with urgency.

CASSIE  
How did you do it?

ANDREW  
I'm sorry?

CASSIE  
He won't listen to anything I  
say... and you... are you some kind  
of stalker?

ANDREW  
Just trying to get some breakfast.

CASSIE  
I watched a screener of your  
film... your wife's film.

ANDREW  
Ex.

CASSIE  
It's brilliant.

ANDREW  
You don't have to tell me.

CASSIE  
He'll hate it, you know. He'll  
threaten to have her blackballed.

ANDREW  
It's not really about him.

CASSIE  
It doesn't matter. He'll think it  
is. I mean, you did name it after  
him.

ANDREW  
Della was a fan.

CASSIE  
Was?

ANDREW  
Dare I say... a superfan. Which, if  
you met her, doesn't exactly  
square.

CASSIE  
Can I meet her? Will she be there  
tonight? She has to be, why would  
she come all this way if she...

ANDREW  
Is this Jesse talking?

CASSIE  
Fuck no. As soon as I can afford to  
move on...

ANDREW  
What will you do?

Before Cassie can answer, Jesse Burrows enters the room, an electric buzz following him. Conversations hush as heads turn in his direction.

Andrew takes the moment to disappear, slipping out of the lobby unnoticed.

EXT. CABIN C DECK - MORNING

Andrew notices the empty railing and sets some more pieces of biscuit on it. He looks up and sees no sign of birds. Only a snowfall is beginning.

INT. CABIN C - EVENING

Andrew carefully lays out a dress for Della, smoothing the fabric with his hands. He lifts her gently, slipping it onto her with reverence. When she's fully dressed, he takes a step back, marveling at her.

ANDREW

Stunning.

He pours two glasses of champagne, watching the bubbles rise to the surface. He swirls his glass before taking a slow sip.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

Do you remember when Robin Williams died in that movie, and he goes to the afterlife, and everything is beautiful? Like anything he can imagine. Again, I don't think we imagine when we die, but anyway, his wife commits suicide. She's sent to hell.

Andrew takes a deeper sip, his gaze distant.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

Would you come after me?

He wipes a tear away before it can fully form, glancing over at her.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

Against Cuba Gooding's orders and all? Don't answer that. I don't believe in hell anyway. I believe in love, and that's about it. And I knew it once.

Andrew kneels, slipping her shoes on, adjusting them so they sit just right. He carefully sets her up in the chair by the fire, arranging her hands neatly in her lap.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

I'd go after you. I'd give up every last shot I had at eternal peace. Fuck. There I go again, pretending I'd still be doing human things in the afterlife. Well, maybe I am. Maybe human things are godly. Like an heirloom tomato. Fucked up and perfect at the same time. Maybe we keep singing showtunes forever. Forever forever. Fuck.

He fastens a tie in the mirror, studying himself. Adjusts. Breathes in, breathes out.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

I'll give you the full report tonight.

INT. MOVIE THEATER - NIGHT

Andrew shifts back and forth in his seat. The tension in his shoulders is palpable. Lauren walks out on stage.

LAUREN

Thank you for attending the 10th annual Methow Valley Film Festival. I want to thank everybody for coming out to our short film selections this evening. We believe we have curated some powerful pieces of cinema that span the breadth of emotion and also just really capture the best in various genre filmmaking. We will have a brief Q&A after the screenings, and please join us at the Lodge tonight for some music and celebration.

The lights go dark. Andrew swirls the ice in his glass, a rhythmic clink filling the silence. He cranes around to see if Jesse Burrows is in the theater.

The title card for the first film appears: BELIEF.

Jesse is ushered in with Cassie, slipping into a row near the back.

Montage begins:

- Andrew is reacting genuinely to moments of humor and sadness as well as shock and surprise. Close on his face the whole time.

- Andrew is drinking three drinks, his composure shifting subtly.

Montage ends.

The opening credits roll for JESSE BURROWS.

Close on Andrew's face as tears stream down. He doesn't wipe them away. The audio from the film becomes muffled, distant.

After a few moments, the crowd applauds. Lauren returns to the stage.

Jesse Burrows stands abruptly and exits the theater. Cassie scrambles after him.

LAUREN (CONT'D)

Well, we had a very special guest in the audience tonight. In fact, we'd like to bring him up on stage to get his thoughts about short films and their role in cinema.

A restless energy ripples through the room.

LAUREN (CONT'D)

No pressure, of course, but I'm told that due to various reasons, it seems that none of our filmmakers were able to attend tonight's screenings.

Jesse and Cassie exchange hushed words. Finally, Jesse raises his hand, offering a small, reluctant wave to the audience. He walks toward and then steps up on stage. Lauren hands him a microphone, gesturing to the stool nearby.

JESSE

Just a few questions. I have a plane to catch.

He scans the crowd and calls on a woman in the front row.

WOMAN

How does it feel to have a movie named after you?

Jesse looks out at the crowd, pausing, calculating his words.

JESSE

If I'm honest. It feels a bit cheap to me.

WOMAN

The film or the name?

JESSE

Both.

Andrew stiffens in his seat, his fingers clenching the armrest.

Jesse calls on another woman.

ANOTHER WOMAN

Could you see yourself playing the part of Jesse Burrows?

JESSE

I could see myself calling my lawyer.

The crowd erupts in laughter.

Andrew raises his hand. Jesse squints, shielding his eyes from the lights as he focuses on him.

JESSE (CONT'D)

Hey... I...

LAUREN

How about one more question? Let's make it about Jesse's career.

Jesse nods, clearly eager to move on. He calls on a third woman.

THIRD WOMAN

Are you single?

JESSE

Currently no. I wish I could stay longer for this riveting discussion.

He sets the mic on the stool and rushes off stage, Cassie trailing behind him.

Andrew leans back in his seat, watching him go, swirling the last of his drink before downing it.

EXT. THEATER - NIGHT

Jesse and Cassie rush outside. A substantial snowfall is coming down, covering the sidewalks and the tops of parked cars in a thin white layer. Jesse clenches his jaw, breath puffing in the cold air.

JESSE

What the fuck was that? I need my agent on the phone, now! And get the plane ready to take off in 30 minutes.

Cassie fumbles with two phones, one in each hand, pressing call on one and handing it to Jesse. She takes out another phone, walking a few paces away to dial another number. Jesse paces, grinding his teeth as he listens.

JESSE (CONT'D)

What kind of cunt shit is this?  
You send us to a podunk shit show  
like this. Then I have to attend  
some degenerate short film  
selection? What kind of amateur  
hour are you fucking running over  
there? My name is Jesse fucking  
Burrows! Oh, the studio... tell  
them to fuck off. I'm tired of this  
low-rent circuit of gay films. Get  
me back into some big motherfucking  
budget shit, you cock-sucking  
wanker! What do you mean you  
haven't been able to find the right  
piece? We're not looking for Chekov  
over here. Just get the shit done.  
I'm not promoting this... what are  
you talking about, Oscar buzz? For  
The Big Clang?

Jesse hangs up with a grunt, nearly tossing the phone at  
Cassie.

CASSIE

Bad news. The plane can't take off  
in this weather.

JESSE

Oh fuck me!

Jesse whirls around, rubbing his hands together, looking at  
his surroundings like a caged animal.

JESSE (CONT'D)

Well, I'm going to the cowboy bar  
and getting pissed. Keep the car  
warm for me to take me back to the  
chateau.

CASSIE

Wouldn't you like to make an  
appearance at the Pine Motel? The  
awards. It would be good PR.

JESSE  
Bugger off.

Jesse stomps off toward the bar.

Under the marquee, Andrew steps out of the shadows, watching Jesse disappear inside the bar. He pulls his coat tighter around him, exhales a long breath, then turns back toward the street.

EXT. CABIN C - NIGHT

Andrew trudges toward his cabin. He shoves his hands into his pockets, shoulders hunched against the cold. Jonah sees him from the porch of the lodge.

JONAH  
Hello, Andrew. Back from your screening so soon?

ANDREW  
I'm not much for socializing.

Jonah takes a slow sip, studying him.

JONAH  
Was your wife, sorry, ex-wife, able to make it?

Andrew stiffens slightly, then shakes his head.

ANDREW  
Unfortunately, no. I should get into...

Jonah steps down from the porch, closing some of the distance between them.

JONAH  
Is there anything I can get you? We have a few over-the-counter medications in the lodge.

Andrew pauses, his hand on the doorknob.

ANDREW

We'll be fine. I picked up a few things earlier today. And we're gonna head out tomorrow to get her home.

Jonah nods slowly.

JONAH

Well, please call the front desk if anything changes for the worse. We do have a small hospital here.

ANDREW

Copy that. Now, good night.

Jonah watches him for a moment longer before offering a small, knowing smile. He turns and heads back inside, leaving Andrew standing in the cold.

Andrew exhales sharply, then disappears into the cabin, locking the door behind him.

INT. CABIN C - NIGHT

Andrew takes Della's hand, rubbing his thumb over her fingers as if trying to warm them.

ANDREW

You wouldn't believe it, baby. The crowd went crazy at the end of your show. People kept asking me questions that I didn't know the answer to, of course. "What was your inspiration? What was this and what is that?"

Andrew sets her hand down gently.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

The movie star was there. We had a great conversation. He told me to send him the script.

He pours a whisky.

ANDREW (CONT'D)  
Oh, yeah. He's a great feller.  
Classy. Montgomery Clift type.

EXT. CABIN C DECK - NIGHT

Andrew steps outside, the cold air hitting him sharply. Snow has covered everything, but there is a small depression where the bread crumbs had been placed.

INT. CABIN C - NIGHT

Andrew tucks a blanket around Della, smoothing it over her shoulders. He leans down, whispering.

ANDREW  
I just remembered, I have to go out  
and get a few things for the  
journey home. I'll be back soon.

He waits as if expecting a response. Then he grabs his coat and steps out.

INT. COWBOY BAR - NIGHT

Andrew slings open the saloon doors. He surveys the room, eyes locking onto Jesse in the back corner, seated with Cassie.

Andrew strides to the bar, ordering a whisky. He takes a slow sip, watching Jesse in the mirror behind the bar. A song plays softly from the jukebox, an old country ballad, something sorrowful.

Andrew watches as Jesse and Cassie rise, heading toward the exit. He tosses back the rest of his drink and follows.

EXT. COWBOY BAR - NIGHT

Jesse stumbles slightly as Cassie helps him toward their Escalade, the snow thick on the ground.

ANDREW  
Mind if I join?

Cassie spins around, startled. Jesse, without turning, groans.

JESSE  
Fuck off.

CASSIE  
It's you... We... I was just going to drive Mr. Burrows home.

Jesse finally turns, squinting in the dim light.

JESSE  
Jesus. This cunt? I told you to fuck off. Go find your wretched lady friend who made that shitty little film and tell her to fuck off. Let me guess... she was too embarrassed to show up tonight? She realized what a piece of absolute turd she made.

Andrew steps closer, voice calm.

ANDREW  
Actually, she's the one who sent me to invite you over for a nightcap. We have a nice cabin at the lodge...

JESSE  
Is this some kind of joke? You think I would hang out with the likes of you?

Jesse turns to Cassie.

JESSE (CONT'D)  
Turn on the car! Get me out of here.

Andrew reaches into his coat and reveals the wooden bat with the meteor carving. Jesse squints at it.

JESSE (CONT'D)  
Is that a drumstick? You fucking  
wanker. Cassie, get in the car!

Cassie hesitates, her eyes flicking between Jesse and Andrew.

Andrew takes a measured swing, striking Jesse's thigh. Jesse collapses onto the snowy pavement with a howl of pain. Cassie gasps, frozen in place.

ANDREW  
I still want you to start the car,  
Cassie.

Jesse writhes on the ground, cursing. Andrew clamps a hand over his mouth.

ANDREW (CONT'D)  
Now, pop the trunk.

Cassie, trembling, presses the key fob. The trunk pops open with a soft beep. Andrew glances at the license plate: JESEZGRL.

ANDREW (CONT'D)  
Okay, that's kind of messed up.

Cassie hurries to help Andrew lift Jesse into the trunk. Jesse thrashes, but Andrew holds him firm.

CASSIE  
It was like that when I took the  
job.

Jesse screams, muffled by Andrew's hand.

ANDREW  
Do you have something to tie his  
mouth?

CASSIE  
Excuse me?

ANDREW  
A shirt. Anything.

Cassie grabs a jacket from the front seat and hands it to Andrew. He secures it tightly around Jesse's face.

A group of drunk patrons spills out of the saloon, stopping in their tracks at the sight.

ONLOOKER

Is that Jesse Burrows?

Jesse yells, thrashing again. Cassie quickly steps forward, offering the group a reassuring smile.

CASSIE

He had a bit too much tonight. The British, amirite?

ONLOOKER 2

I loved you in Fury Falcon!

Jesse lets out another muffled scream. Cassie leans in toward the group.

CASSIE

He's going through a rough patch right now. All I can ask is for your discretion. I can't stop you from taking photos, but maybe think of his sanity. It might push him over the edge if those photos get out. You wouldn't want that guilt on your hands.

The Onlookers glance at one another, then slowly put their phones away, murmuring to each other as they move on.

Cassie turns back to Jesse, locking eyes with him.

CASSIE (CONT'D)

Trust me. It's better if we just cooperate.

INT. ESCALADE - NIGHT

Andrew sits in the back with Jesse, restraining him as he squirms against the tight grip.

CASSIE  
Where are we going?

ANDREW  
I just need you to drive us to my car. It's two blocks west, in back of the bank.

CASSIE  
You're taking him?

ANDREW  
You seem like too nice a person to be working for this guy.

CASSIE  
You seem like too sane a person to kidnap a movie star.

ANDREW  
My wife really wants to meet him. At least I think so. I could be wrong. The communication lines seem to have gone dark.

CASSIE  
You're not sure if she wanted you to...

ANDREW  
You can come along if you like, but I'm not sure any of us will leave. So, your choice.

Cassie hesitates, glancing at Jesse, who glares at her from behind the gag. He shifts uncomfortably. His hands are tied.

CASSIE  
I wouldn't miss it for the world.

ANDREW  
I was afraid you would say that. Now you really can't come. I need to be clear-eyed. Just drop us off at my car. The brown one.

Cassie pulls around the corner slowly and stops on a dark street next to Andrew's car. Andrew peers out the window, scanning for any unwanted attention before moving quickly.

EXT. SUBARU - NIGHT

Andrew finishes stuffing Jesse into his car's backseat, ensuring he's bound tightly.

Andrew turns to Cassie.

ANDREW  
Get your phone out.

Cassie pulls out her phone hesitantly.

ANDREW (CONT'D)  
My number is 206-355-2518. Send me  
a text so I have yours. I won't  
turn it on unless I need you.

Cassie taps the number in and presses send. Andrew's phone buzzes in his pocket. He nods, satisfied.

CASSIE  
He's a bit of a prick, but he  
doesn't deserve this.

ANDREW  
Don't follow me, or the night gets  
ugly for everybody.

Cassie exhales, debating her next move. She hesitates before speaking again.

CASSIE  
I don't think you've thought this  
through. I could talk to your wife.

ANDREW  
Ex-wife. She would like you.

Andrew gets into the car, adjusting the rearview mirror to glance at Jesse.

INT. SUBARU - NIGHT

Andrew pulls into a parking spot in front of Cabin C.

ANDREW

I'm gonna walk you inside now. If you decide to scream, I'll go at the mouth this time. No teeth and a smashed-up face is no bueno for movie stars.

Jesse mutters something unintelligible.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

I thought you would understand.

EXT. CABIN C - NIGHT

Andrew looks around, ensuring the lot is deserted. He yanks Jesse from the car, dragging him through the falling snow. Jesse stumbles, his breath ragged, trying to orient himself.

INT. CABIN C - NIGHT

Andrew guides Jesse through the darkened cabin, the only light coming from the embers glowing in the fireplace. He steers him into a chair directly in front of Della's shadowed form.

ANDREW

I told you my wife just wanted to meet you. And you couldn't just be a gentleman about it. Selfish is what you are. I personally don't see what she saw in you, but here we are. Couple of ragged motherfuckers.

Andrew shuts the curtains tight and flips on a dim table lamp. Jesse's eyes widen in horror as he takes in Della's lifeless body. His breathing turns erratic, a whimper rising in his throat. A small wail bubbles up, but Andrew silences it by raising the bat. Jesse stills immediately.

ANDREW (CONT'D)  
Baby, look who we got here with us.  
Jesse Burrows himself. He took a  
little fall leaving the bar, hence  
the hitch in his step, but  
otherwise, he's fine.

Andrew loosens Jesse's gag slightly, just enough for him to speak.

ANDREW (CONT'D)  
Say hello, like a nice feller.

Jesse gasps for air, shaking his head in disbelief.

JESSE  
What did you... Jesus!

Andrew tightens the gag again.

ANDREW  
It was a pretty simple request.

Andrew pours himself a whisky, rolling the glass in his hands before taking a slow sip.

ANDREW (CONT'D)  
I wonder if you believe in free  
will?

Jesse nods rapidly, eyes darting.

ANDREW (CONT'D)  
Interesting. Would you agree that  
you don't have control over the  
parents you get, the people you're  
surrounded with as a child, the  
teachers you get, the town you are  
raised in, the way you look, the  
size of your brain, or the way your  
mind is wired?

Jesse shakes his head vigorously.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

Yet knowing all that, you still think you have free will? See, in my mind... free will would imply that you're not affected by the things that happen around you.

Andrew presses his fingers deep into the bruise forming on Jesse's thigh where he hit him earlier. Jesse writhes in pain.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

Let's say you're walking on a trail in the woods and a bee stings your arm. You flinch, startled by the pain, and stumble sideways, losing your footing and tumbling over the edge of a fifty-foot cliff. Now, let's say you survive. Somehow, you're still breathing, trying to claw your way back up. But then, a brown bear wanders by, and you can't use your leg. Tell me, Jesse, what does your free will give you in that moment?

Andrew stokes the fire.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

I've heard people say, 'You can only control your reaction to adversity.' But I'd say you only know what you know. If nobody ever sat you down and told you how to stay calm when a bear runs up on you, or to cover yourself in mud like in Predator, then how can you decide how to react? You can't. Just like you didn't choose how you reacted on that stage tonight.

Andrew caresses Della's face, gently tilting her head into the glow of the lamp.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

You were always going to be an asshole up there, because that's who you are. It's not your fault. It's just... the way you were built.

Andrew lays Della's head back and sighs, staring at Jesse with something close to pity.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

You'd have to know everything, have the same brain chemistry, the same upbringing, the same everything as someone else to truly understand the choices you could have made. But you didn't, Jesse. And that's why we're here. Because while I don't blame you, there must be punishment.

Jesse mumbles under the gag, his body trembling.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

You want me to take it off?

Jesse mumbles louder, nodding desperately.

Andrew tightens his grip on the bat, holding it close to Jesse's other knee.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

An actor who can't walk is dead.

Andrew loosens the gag, allowing Jesse to gulp in air.

JESSE

You think you have no choice but to continue holding me hostage? You could do a thousand things right now. The first of which should be to let me call my assistant to pick me up, and we'll pretend that none of this ever happened.

Andrew smirks, pouring Jesse a drink. He forces Jesse to sip it by tilting his head back, the whisky dribbling down his chin.

ANDREW

You missed the whole point. You didn't factor the anger running through my blood or the story that brought me here into your equation of me having a thousand choices.

JESSE

Well, let's have it then. That's what you want. To give me a sales pitch.

ANDREW

Not me.

Andrew nods toward Della.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

She's the talented one.

JESSE

Fuck me.

ANDREW

Della was a brilliant artist. About a year ago, doctors told her she had a year to live without treatment for lymphoma. With treatment, maybe three years. But she had no insurance after her membership in the Directors Guild lapsed. Did I mention she used to direct commercials for a living?

JESSE

Of course, she did.

Andrew forces another drink down Jesse's throat, holding his head back. Jesse coughs uncontrollably, gagging as Della's lifeless body tips forward onto him. He screams, thrashing in horror.

Andrew calmly sets her back upright, then places the gag back on Jesse.

ANDREW

She called me after five years of silence. Said she had a mission and couldn't think of anyone else she'd rather go on it with. Imagine my surprise. Her mission? Driving from festival to festival, hoping to meet you, Jesse fucking Burrows.

Andrew moves toward the window, peering through the blinds.

Jesse's eyes dart to a lighter on the table.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

Believe it or not, this was only the first stop. The good news? You finally met her. The bad news? She died about thirty minutes before we arrived in this fancy little town.

Andrew sips his drink, shaking his head at Jesse.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

Oh, yeah. That got you in that black steel heart of yours? Tell me something... If someone believes Jesse Burrows was sent here by God, then doesn't that mean I was sent here by the same God?

Jesse mumbles, trembling.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

It's rhetorical. I'm just nature correcting itself after a hundred thousand years on the wrong track.

Andrew retrieves Della's suitcase, pulling out a neatly packed screenplay titled JESSE BURROWS. Jesse groans, shaking his head furiously.

Andrew pulls up a chair in front of him, lights a cigar, and opens to page one.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

This is the only way you're getting  
out of here. But hey, you have free  
will, right?

Jesse skims page one, then nods for Andrew to turn to the next.

A KNOCK at the door.

Andrew stuffs Jesse into the closet, carefully positioning Della in front of the fire, and covering her head with a cowboy hat.

EXT. CABIN C - NIGHT

Jonah waits patiently, his breath visible in the cold air. He glances at the dark windows of the cabin, shifting his weight from one foot to the other.

Andrew opens the door, blocking the view inside with his body.

JONAH

Ah, Andrew. I hate to bother you,  
but the folks in Cabin B said they  
heard some strange screaming noises  
coming from your cabin.

INT. CABIN C - NIGHT

Jesse thrashes inside the closet, ramming his shoulder against the wooden door, sending dull thuds echoing through the cabin.

EXT. CABIN C - CONTINUOUS

Jonah tilts his head, listening. The first few smashes go unheard. Andrew steps out onto the porch, pulling the door partially shut behind him.

ANDREW

Of course. That was Della reacting to the news that her film won best short at the festival.

JONAH

That makes no sense. The winners aren't announced...

A louder crash interrupts him. Jonah's face hardens.

JONAH (CONT'D)

What is that?

Andrew sighs, lowering his voice.

ANDREW

Listen, my wife is in a bit of a fragile state.

Andrew shifts slightly, allowing Jonah a glimpse inside. Della sits by the fire, motionless.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

If I have to fudge the truth a little to keep her spirits up...

Jonah exhales, nodding slowly.

JONAH

I see. Do we need to call an ambulance? I can call for you.

Another loud crash. Jonah stiffens.

JONAH (CONT'D)

Jesus. What is that noise?

ANDREW

Sometimes she reverts to acting like a child. Stomps her feet and whatnot. Now, if you'll excuse me—

INT. CABIN C - NIGHT

Jesse, in a final desperate effort, bursts through the closet door, tumbling forward. His eyes dart around wildly before he spots the lighter on the table. He lunges.

EXT. CABIN C - NIGHT

Jonah starts to turn back towards the lodge, but halts when he notices the shape of somebody inside the cabin. Andrew closes the door.

INT. CABIN C - NIGHT

Jesse rolls over onto the screenplay, his fingers fumbling with the lighter, his breath ragged. He flicks the wheel. A tiny flame flares up. He grins, then presses it against the edge of the script.

Andrew rushes back, kicking the script away as the flames lick at the pages. He snatches the lighter, tossing it across the room. The screenplay lands at the base of the curtains. The fire catches immediately.

EXT. CABIN C - NIGHT

Jonah spins on his heel, eyes widening as flames flicker against the cabin window.

JONAH  
What the hell...

INT. CABIN C - NIGHT

Andrew rips the burning curtain from the rod, stomping the fire out before it can spread. A blind still conceals the window from the outside.

He turns and glares at Jesse, who watches with wide eyes, breathing heavily. Andrew lifts the smoldering curtain and wraps it around Jesse, pinning his arms.

ANDREW  
I can't blame you. In fact, I  
forgive you.

Andrew grabs a bottle of whiskey, tipping it slightly over  
the bundled fabric, threatening to douse Jesse in alcohol.

Jesse howls, his voice raw.

EXT. CABIN C - NIGHT

Jonah pounds on the door.

JONAH  
Andrew! Open up! What the fuck is  
happening in there? I'm calling the  
police!

INT. CABIN C - NIGHT

Andrew exhales sharply. He snuffs out the last embers, then  
yanks Jesse onto his feet and drags him toward the deck.

EXT. CABIN C DECK - NIGHT

Andrew steps out, the blizzard swirling around them, and ties  
Jesse to the railing with the half-burned curtain.

INT. CABIN C - NIGHT

Andrew opens the front door.

JONAH  
What the fuck is going on here? I'm  
calling the police.

ANDREW  
There's no need for that. She was  
celebrating and threw something  
into the fire that didn't belong  
there.

Jonah narrows his eyes, glancing past Andrew into the cabin. He sees the missing curtains, the displaced furniture.

JONAH  
The curtains?

ANDREW  
Women can be very passionate. I  
wish I had known that earlier.

Jonah folds his arms, unconvinced.

JONAH  
Your wife needs help. And you need  
to get out of our hotel.

CASSIE (O.S.)  
Everything is fine.

Jonah turns sharply to see Cassie standing nearby, composed.

CASSIE (CONT'D)  
Jonah, is it? You know who I work  
for, yes?

Jonah nods slowly, watching her.

CASSIE (CONT'D)  
Jesse would be very unhappy if you  
compromised a creative session.

Jonah's expression flickers with intrigue.

JONAH  
Is Jesse Burrows in there?

CASSIE  
Sometimes these things can get  
embroiled. Hard to distinguish  
between reality and fiction.

Jonah's demeanor shifts slightly, curiosity now outweighing suspicion.

JONAH  
Is it a new idea taking shape? I  
can say I was working here when...  
What's the name of the project?

Cassie glances at Andrew.

ANDREW  
It's top secret at this point.

Jonah nods, a grin forming.

JONAH  
That's a brilliant name. I'll let  
you get back to the process. But  
maybe no smoking in the cabins.

ANDREW  
Of course.

Jonah leaves, and Cassie steps inside the cabin as he  
disappears into the night.

INT. CABIN C - NIGHT

Andrew closes and locks the door behind her.

ANDREW  
How did you find me?

CASSIE  
I literally saw you at breakfast  
here two days ago. The only reason  
it took me so long was deciding  
whether I wanted to come.

ANDREW  
But you never really had a say in  
that, did you?

CASSIE  
What? Where the hell is he?

Andrew glances toward the deck.

ANDREW  
Shit. Hold on. I'll get him.

EXT. CABIN C DECK - NIGHT

Andrew opens the door to find Jesse on his knees.

Jesse whimpers.

Andrew swallows hard, shakes himself from his trance, and strides forward. He unties Jesse, lifting him to his feet, his grip firm but not. Andrew steadies him before dragging him inside.

INT. CABIN C - NIGHT

Andrew pulls Jesse toward the fire, setting him roughly in the chair. Cassie is staring at Della, her hand clamped over her mouth.

ANDREW  
Okay. Okay. There's an explanation for all of this. Let's get you seated next to the fire, and we'll have a little creative session. Just like you mentioned.

Cassie takes a slow step back.

CASSIE  
Jesus Christ, Andrew...

Jesse shivers uncontrollably.

CASSIE (CONT'D)  
Take the gag off his mouth.

ANDREW  
Of course.

Andrew moves carefully, untying the fabric from Jesse's mouth. Jesse gasps.

JESSE

Where the fuck are the police?

Cassie exhales sharply, forcing herself to tear her gaze away from Della.

CASSIE

That's her? She's beautiful.

JESSE

What is wrong with you? Clearly, he killed her. Now he's going to kill us.

Cassie steps forward, slowly sliding the scarf down from Della's face, her fingers trembling slightly.

CASSIE

He didn't kill her. You killed her. In your own way. I just don't know why.

Andrew moves to the counter, pouring three glasses of whiskey. He is wobbly, punch-drunk from emotions and rye.

ANDREW

A toast.

JESSE

To what, you freak?

Andrew turns, picking up the bat and flashing it at Jesse before moving to the suitcase. He kneels, pulls out another copy of the screenplay, and holds it up. Jesse recoils in disbelief.

JESSE (CONT'D)

Jesus Christ!

ANDREW

She always traveled with multiple copies of her stories.

Andrew hands the script to Cassie.

ANDREW (CONT'D)  
You read it. Out loud to the man.

Cassie hesitates for only a moment. She is locked in on Della.

CASSIE  
You have to catch me up. I feel like Jesse has a few more details than I do.

JESSE  
Crazy lady. Sick with cancer. Forgives this lump long enough to be her valet.

CASSIE  
Forgives him for what?

ANDREW  
I was an... arse.

JESSE  
Spot fucking on.

CASSIE  
She knew she was dying, and she refused to die in some institution or drug-filled haze. She wanted her dignity.

JESSE  
Say this chap didn't murder her. She forced him to watch her die by playing on his hopes of rekindling one last true moment. Unruly.

ANDREW  
I knew what I was getting into.

Andrew strokes the bat.

CASSIE  
So... say it was all about her art. One last chance for the world to see her in her purest form.

(MORE)

CASSIE (CONT'D)

Without all the talking and with  
all the listening.

JESSE

She made a film, for God's sake.  
She didn't go live at a monastery.  
She was full of herself, like the  
rest of us.

CASSIE

Could she have been herself?  
Grappling with mortality and all.

ANDREW

She still laughed like a  
Kookaburra. Whatever that's worth.

CASSIE

We know she named the film after  
our friend here. That has to count  
for something in this conversation.

Cassie stands and drinks.

ANDREW

The only time I heard the name  
Jesse Burrows was when she showed  
me the artwork for the film. Never  
came up again.

CASSIE

Let's just for a moment consider  
this was merely a publicity move  
meant to draw attention to the  
piece.

ANDREW

Seems like she would have picked...  
a man with character.

JESSE

You are not exactly unafflicted.  
Can we establish that in our little  
detective story?

ANDREW

(to Cassie)

What are your thoughts on where she might have gone?

JESSE

Yes. Do tell.

CASSIE

The reason I could never bring myself to hate this jewel of a man...

Cassie strokes Jesse's hair.

CASSIE (CONT'D)

I believe I am him.

JESSE

Of course you are.

CASSIE

Maybe not at this moment in time. But I do believe we are all sliced off the same onion. Sent here for an experience. To report back. Then, to move on. So we all know the terrible struggles of being a wealthy heterosexual white male in the world because the onion talks to itself. But there must be a purpose. And I cannot imagine he stays this boring for eternity. That would be cruel. I believe that someday he will know the experience of a village girl in Rwanda or a trans person in Siberia. He cannot go gently, only knowing so little. Not yet, anyway.

ANDREW

Trans-Siberian. I think I like you.

Cassie's shoe gets tangled up with a strand from the blanket covering Della. She stops walking momentarily.

CASSIE

I think part of me is him.  
Eternally, so I cannot hate him.

ANDREW

And your last hypothesis.

CASSIE

I'm sorry?

ANDREW

Who was the real killer?

JESSE

Yes. Let's wrap this up, shall we?

CASSIE

What if this were a gift to Andrew?

ANDREW

I don't see it.

CASSIE

Like the woman who wrote the op-ed piece for The New York Times about you wanting to marry her husband after she dies, or some shit like that. Maybe she knew that you had been in an irreversible state for some time, and she knew that sending you out here as her champion would set you up for success... socially going forward.

ANDREW

She was setting me up?

CASSIE

The sensitive man who selflessly escorted his dying ex-wife to showcase her final gift to the world.

Andrew settles onto the bed, picking up his guitar. He strums a few chords.

CASSIE (CONT'D)  
No? Well, back to the drawing  
board...

Cassie steps forward toward Jesse and inadvertently jerks Della's body onto Jesse.

This elicits screams from all three of them.

Andrew finally picks Della up and places her neatly back in the chair.

CASSIE (CONT'D)  
Shall we read the script then?

She clears her throat and begins.

CASSIE (CONT'D)  
Interior, high school media center,  
day. A female student, 16, Della, a  
sparkler lit from the bottom,  
splices together 16 mm film  
manually and runs it through a  
projector. The images show heavy  
construction equipment tearing up  
streets and demolishing buildings.

Begin montage:

- Cassie reads, flipping pages as she speaks.
- Jesse grits his teeth, pulling at his hair in frustration, unable to escape the words.
- Andrew plays, watching Della's still face.
- Jesse starts to sweat, his body tensing with each passing page.
- Andrew stokes the fire wildly.
- Andrew pours another round, his hands unsteady.
- Cassie stands, projecting the words.
- Andrew brushes the hair back from Della's face.

- Jesse's resistance falters; his interest, despite himself, is piqued.
- Andrew reads a few lines.
- Jesse downs his drink and, hesitantly, asks for another.
- Cassie reaches the final lines. She closes the script and bows her head.

End montage.

Andrew exhales deeply, staggering back a step.

ANDREW

I'd never actually heard it out  
loud from beginning to end.

CASSIE

It's fucking brilliant.

ANDREW

No. You... you made it sing.

Cassie tilts her head, studying him.

CASSIE

You've got some dramatic chops,  
too, cowboy.

ANDREW

It's a thing, right? It's  
traditional. Like country music but  
also...

CASSIE

An in-your-face punk rock, stop-  
fucking-scrolling-right-now-and-  
listen-to-this story.

Jesse sneers.

JESSE

You people are mad. Caught up in  
your own self-pleasure.

CASSIE

But you loved it. When was the last time you were involved in something that actually mattered? Stood up to the overlords that control you and made a little magic?

JESSE

So what now?

Andrew doesn't answer. His gaze is locked onto Della.

ANDREW

I need to call her sister.

JESSE

Am I correct in assuming that will be after you let us go?

ANDREW

I don't think she wants to go anywhere with you.

He nods toward Cassie.

CASSIE

That's not true.

JESSE

Should I keep you close? After you let me be kidnapped by this dullard?

CASSIE

I'm meant to do the impossible.

JESSE

Make it through this alive?

CASSIE

Make you matter.

ANDREW

Jesus.

CASSIE

I can see deep in that black tar  
soul of yours that you want to  
matter. In a way that resonates.  
Like a constellation before it  
becomes unrecognizable forever.

JESSE

I'll have you know, Blow by Blow  
grossed forty million dollars.

CASSIE

Did anyone walk out of that theater  
with tears in their eyes? Or,  
better yet, a raging hard-on? Fuck  
no! They washed their ears out with  
gasoline.

Andrew watches her closely.

CASSIE (CONT'D)

A girl desperate to show herself to  
the world tells this story. The  
audience is her hero. We are taken  
through the ugly depths of  
refinement because she is so afraid  
of actually meeting her hero that  
she only performs for herself.  
Looking for perfection. Looking for  
that one perfect day.

Andrew exhales and pulls out his phone. He dials.

Jesse is loosening the rope on his hands behind him.

The line rings. On speaker.

RAEGAN (O.S.)

Andrew?

Andrew looks to the ceiling, steadying himself.

JESSE

Please call the police department  
in Winthrop, Washington...

Cassie covers Jesse's mouth, silencing him.

RAEGAN

Andrew? What is going on? Is it Della?

Andrew's throat tightens.

ANDREW

Raegan. She made it. She showed her film. The people adore her.

RAEGAN

Andrew, what did you do?

Silence stretches between them, thick and suffocating.

RAEGAN (CONT'D)

Andrew. What did you do? Did you make her take her medication? I knew I shouldn't have let her go with you. For the life of me... please put her on the fucking phone. You don't deserve to be the last person...

ANDREW

They gave her a standing...

Andrew grasps at his eyes to keep from crying.

RAEGAN

Put her on the phone.

ANDREW

Okay.

Andrew puts the phone near Della.

RAEGAN

Della. Can you hear me?

Silence.

RAEGAN (CONT'D)

Della. My beautiful rabbit. Why wouldn't you tell me where you were going? I hope you got what you were looking for. I hope you got the closure you needed. I love you, rabbit. Profoundly. Forever, I love you, rabbit. The world has been dimmed. If you can hear me... shine on...

Andrew takes the phone away.

ANDREW

Did she tell you she needed closure? We never talked about the past. We just let the wind swallow us up.

Jessie groans loudly and breaks away from Cassie.

JESSE

The motel on the river in Winthrop. I've been kidnapped.

RAEGAN

Who is that?

JESSE

My name is Jesse Waters. I'm certain this man has done terrible things to your sister. She's rotting away in his hotel room.

Cassie mouths to herself.

CASSIE

Waters?

RAEGAN

Fuck. Andrew, how long has it been?

ANDREW

A day and a half. I'm not sure what to do. I figured you would know how to proceed.

RAEGAN

Jesus. I'm on my way. Don't do anything until I get there. Did you say Jesse Waters?

JESSE

Yes.

RAEGAN

The Jesse Waters, who now goes by Jesse Burrows? The movie star?

JESSE

You know my work?

RAEGAN

Fuck. You could say that. This all makes sense now.

ANDREW

Raegan?

RAEGAN

Della and I are only half-sisters...

ANDREW

She said she found out recently who her biological dad was, but...

CASSIE

RAEGAN

Silence.

Jesse reverts back to his ugly side.

JESSE

What the fuck is this? I get it now. Just when you were starting to Stockholm Syndrome your way deep into my cockles... you made a huge mistake. It's too early. You would have had me if you'd just waited for this information.

(MORE)

JESSE (CONT'D)

I've never assumed I would be canonized, but I'm not an absentee father.

RAEGAN

That would have meant you would have had to acknowledge the child in the first place. My mother confronted you when Della was an infant, and you had her removed from the venue.

CASSIE

Jesus. I knew you were cruel...

RAEGAN

I'll be there in an hour.

CASSIE

The weather is terrible. The pass will certainly be closed.

RAEGAN

I'm traveling from the east. I'll finish on a snowcat if I must. Do not desecrate my sister any further.

Andrew hangs up the phone.

Jesse frees his hand, turns to pick up a fire poker, and lashes out at Andrew.

Andrew evades the first swing but is struck by the hook of the poker on the second swing.

Jesse tries to dislodge it from Andrew's side, but can't.

Andrew quickly subdues Jesse and ties his hands again aggressively.

The hotel phone rings.

Andrew nods toward Cassie. She puts the gag back in Jesse's mouth.

Andrew picks up the phone.

ANDREW

Hello.

Andrew listens to a voice on the other end.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

I see. Tonight? At the motel  
ballroom? Of course.

Andrew hangs up.

CASSIE

What is it?

ANDREW

Della's film has been nominated for  
the best short film. The reception  
to announce the winners is  
happening now...

CASSIE

I almost forgot. Jesse's film is a  
finalist as well.

ANDREW

When did you find out?

CASSIE

It was pre-determined that it would  
be a finalist in exchange for  
Jesse's appearance.

Jesse groans.

Cassie takes down the gag.

JESSE

You've violated your non-  
disclosure. I will have my lawyers-

Cassie puts the gag back on.

CASSIE

What do we do?

Andrew pours another drink. He takes a washcloth and holds it against his wound.

ANDREW

We?

CASSIE

I feel like we've crossed the threshold together.

Andrew looks at Della.

ANDREW

She always did like a party.

Cassie cracks a smile.

CASSIE

You're going to take her?

ANDREW

It's the reason we're here.

Begin Montage:

- Andrew opens the closet to reveal a fashionable dress for Della to wear.
- Cassie also slips into one of Della's dresses and helps to apply some makeup to Della.
- Andrew pours another drink for Jesse and dribbles some in his mouth.
- Andrew staggers a bit, drops to one knee to admire Della.
- Cassie puts earrings on Della.
- Andrew places a pearl necklace around Della's neck, securing the clasp carefully.
- Cassie brushes Della's hair, styling it gently.
- Jesse watches, his panic momentarily overtaken by sheer bewilderment.

End montage.

CASSIE  
How do we transport her?

Andrew is silent.

JESSE  
I'm sure they have a bloody  
wheelchair in the lobby for all of  
the pedestrians on their last legs  
looking for the rejuvenating  
effects of the mountain air.

ANDREW  
He's right.

Andrew sizes Jesse up.

CASSIE  
I'll go.

ANDREW  
No.

CASSIE  
I'll put the finishing touches on  
our star. I have a few accessories  
in my bag. You never know when you  
might have to dress up a dead  
person.

Cassie looks at Jesse.

Andrew darts out into the snow.

JESSE  
You know you can't bring me there  
with my hands bound together.

Cassie sits down next to Jesse.

CASSIE  
You'll be announcing your plans to  
make Della's movie into a feature  
film tonight, whether she wins or  
not.

JESSE

The fuck... you really think you  
can treat me like this?

Cassie pulls out her cell phone and shows Jesse explicit  
footage of him with a woman.

CASSIE

What would your wife think?

JESSE

You've known about that? You are  
certifiable. Did you plan all of  
this?

CASSIE

I've been open to the opportunities  
that life presents.

JESSE

Well, I'd keep an eye on your drunk  
cowboy there. I don't think he  
knows which way the wind is  
blowing.

CASSIE

Do we have an agreement?

JESSE

My word doesn't really mean  
anything.

CASSIE

Tell me something I don't know.

Cassie pulls out a portable printer from her bag.

CASSIE (CONT'D)

I had your lawyer draw up the  
paperwork.

Cassie noodles on her cell phone for a moment, and the  
printer begins to go. Cassie pulls out a pen and puts it in  
Jesse's mouth. Then holds the paper in front of his face.

He scribbles. She takes the pen.

JESSE  
What's in this for you?

Andrew opens the door and rushes in with a wheelchair.

CASSIE  
Brilliant.

INT. MOTEL - BALLROOM - NIGHT

The main doors to the lodge swing open. Enter Cassie, Jesse, and Andrew, who pushes Della in a wheelchair. Her face is veiled by a scarf and a hat pulled low over her eyes with sunglasses. The air inside is thick with the murmur of conversations.

PHOTOG 1  
Who is that?

PHOTOG 2  
Jesse Burrows.

PHOTOG 1  
I meant the woman in the chair. She  
is positively radiating.

A few photographers pivot, cameras flashing, illuminating the group in bursts of white light. Jesse flinches at the attention, adjusting his collar, while Andrew remains stone-faced, pushing Della through the crowded entrance.

Jonah steps forward, hands folded neatly in front of him, a warm but questioning smile on his face.

JONAH  
Mr. Burrows, what an honor. I was  
sad to hear you weren't staying  
here at the lodge, but I'm  
overjoyed you could join us  
tonight. I hope everything is to  
your liking. Your table is in the  
front.

Jesse grits his teeth.

CASSIE

Actually, we would love to be seated in the back. Away from the lights.

Jonah hesitates for a beat before nodding.

JONAH

Of course. I just thought...

Andrew leans down, as if listening to Della, then straightens.

ANDREW

She has sensitive eyes.

Jonah glances at Della's oversized sunglasses, then tilts his head slightly.

JONAH

Della. I'm so happy to finally meet you. I'm Jonah, and I just loved your film.

He extends a hand. Andrew carefully lifts Della's gloved fingers into Jonah's grip. Jonah visibly stiffens at the unnatural feel but maintains his composure.

JONAH (CONT'D)

Oh. So delicate. Right this way. Let's get you by the fireplace.

Jonah gestures for them to follow. As they move toward their new table, a couple already seated there gather their drinks, pleasantly surprised to be relocated to the front of the room.

JESSE

The rest of you have to go.

Jonah discreetly leads the OTHERS to the bar.

A waiter approaches as Jesse lounges back into his chair.

JESSE (CONT'D)  
A flock of martinis for the lot.  
Deeply dirty.

The waiter nods and disappears.

JESSE (CONT'D)  
So how long until somebody notices  
our friend here lacks a certain...  
heartbeat?

CASSIE  
Think of this as your rehearsal for  
your first-ever heavyweight  
performance.

Jesse sneers but watches Della with something resembling  
curiosity. He reaches for her glasses and gently lowers them,  
only to reveal lifeless eyes.

JESSE  
I don't see the resemblance.

Andrew's hand clamps over his wrist and places the glasses  
back.

ANDREW  
You might end up looking like her  
if you try that again.

Lauren takes the stage, stepping to the microphone and  
tapping it lightly.

LAUREN  
We'd love to thank everybody here  
for coming to our little festival  
in the mountains. We had the  
pleasure of screening some world-  
class projects...

The doors to the ballroom burst open. Raegan strides in, 45,  
combustible, eyes scanning the room. She spots Andrew in the  
back and marches toward him.

CASSIE  
Andrew...

ANDREW  
I've got it.

Andrew rises to intercept her, but Raegan shoves past him.

RAEGAN  
Get the fuck out of my way.

ANDREW  
They're going to announce her  
category first...

RAEGAN  
How could you do this?

ANDREW  
This is...

RAEGAN  
Fuck you.

Falling to her knees beside Della, hands trembling as she  
cups her sister's face.

RAEGAN (CONT'D)  
My beautiful rabbit. What has he  
done?

JESSE  
Finally. Somebody with some sense.

Raegan's head snaps toward Jesse. Recognition flashes in her  
eyes, morphing quickly into fury.

RAEGAN  
You're the reason we're all here.

She turns to Andrew, her voice shaking.

RAEGAN (CONT'D)  
Help me get her out of here. Now.  
This is absurd.

The waiter returns, balancing a tray full of martinis. Cassie  
smoothly intercepts one and hands it to Raegan.

CASSIE  
I'm afraid gravity is rearing its  
head a bit. Sometimes it's better  
not to think about how fast we are  
moving through space.

Raegan's eyes narrow, but she downs the drink in one go.

RAEGAN  
This is the second time you've  
destroyed my sister. I will make  
your life hell.

JESSE  
Do tell.

RAEGAN  
Oh. What was her name? Francine...  
tall blonde. Norwegian bitch. I  
mean, I would have fucked her  
too...

CASSIE  
Medhaug? Francine Medhaug. The  
composer?

Jesse's face tightens, but before he can retort, Lauren's  
voice rings out.

LAUREN  
And now, the nominees for Best  
Short Film are... Live Henry Live,  
Belief, Flag Day, The Tulip Fields,  
and Jesse Burrows...

Raegan's hands clench into fists, her breath trembling. She  
turns to Andrew, her voice a low growl.

RAEGAN  
Andrew, I'll make sure that I live  
long enough to drag your dead body  
around the streets of Seattle to  
all your old haunts and pour  
whiskey down your throat.

JESSE

Actually, Richard Harris did that  
once with a dead pal of his...

Before Jesse can finish, Raegan lunges at him, wrapping her hands around his throat. He lets out a gurgled gasp, arms flailing, knocking over glasses and sending the martinis splashing across the table.

The room turns, eyes widening at the scene unfolding in the back as Lauren pauses, holding the sealed envelope in her hand.

LAUREN

And the winner is... Jesse Burrows.

The crowd erupts into applause. Glasses clink, chairs scrape, and Jonah lets out an exuberant yell, clapping furiously.

A spotlight swings across the room and lands directly on Raegan and Jesse, both frozen mid-scuffle. Jesse's hands remain in the air, Raegan's fingers still clenched around his throat. The applause falters, an awkward murmur rippling through the audience.

A WOMAN in the crowd yells.

WOMAN

Let us see Della.

WOMAN 2

Yeah, get out of her light!

Raegan hesitates before stepping aside. The light shifts, illuminating Della in the wheelchair. The applause reignites, swelling to a fever pitch.

JESSE

Well, they'll want an acceptance  
speech.

Cassie exchanges a glance with Andrew.

CASSIE

He signed a contract to produce the  
feature.

Andrew downs the last of his martini and wobbles slightly before nodding.

ANDREW  
Cassie will direct it.

Cassie hugs Andrew.

JESSE  
Oh, fuck me. You've all gone too far.

Jesse pushes himself to his feet, straightening his jacket.

JESSE (CONT'D)  
Ladies and gentlemen, I'd like you all to take a closer look at our award-winning director here.

CASSIE  
(to Jesse)  
Everything I have on you will be live in minutes if you don't stand down.

Jesse hesitates briefly.

JESSE  
Notice anything off about her?

CASSIE  
Your wife will leave you.

JESSE  
(to Cassie)  
I don't fucking care anymore. You expect me to be bullied by the Goonies? Stream all you like. Nothing matters anymore. Masculinity is back. They'll throw scripts at me when they see my virility.

The crowd murmurs, discomfited by Jesse's arrogance.

RAEGAN

If you fuck this up, I will end you.

JESSE

You'll have to beat your deadbeat ex-brother-in-law or whatever to the punch.

CASSIE

I'm not talking about the girls you slept with.

Cassie pulls out her phone and flashes a photo of Jesse with a young man in a compromising position.

JESSE

A blowjob is a blowjob. Fuck it.

CASSIE

Not from a seventeen-year-old, it isn't. Now sit the fuck down and shut up.

Jesse looks around, his face burning under the scrutiny of the audience. He forces a smirk and slowly lowers himself back into his chair.

Raegan kneels beside Della's wheelchair, pressing her forehead gently against her sister's hand. After a beat, she lifts her head and nods.

RAEGAN

(to Andrew)

She says you should accept it. You played the music on it.

ANDREW

I think the woman who will direct the film should speak.

CASSIE

I think her own sister should give us some insight.

Jesse stands again, brushing down his jacket. He walks toward the stage with slow, deliberate steps. The crowd watches in tense silence as he mounts the stairs, takes the award, and grips the microphone.

The applause quiets.

JESSE

It is named after me, after all.  
Although I'm still not a hundred  
percent sure what happened in this  
movie.

Cassie rises from her seat.

JESSE (CONT'D)

No matter. I'm here to accept this  
award on behalf of all the people  
who worked on it. Unfortunately,  
Della is a bit under the weather.  
Brilliant, she could join us, but  
she's a little weak in the knees.  
Know what I mean? Brilliant film.  
So brilliant that I'm going to be  
producing the feature version of it  
next year, and my assistant,  
Cassie, has been tapped to direct  
it by none other than Della  
herself.

The crowd applauds.

JESSE (CONT'D)

Unfortunately, Della's hanging up  
the old director's hat and passing  
the torch to the next generation.

He waggles the award in the air.

JESSE (CONT'D)

Thank you again.

Andrew leans down and kisses Della's cheek. Raegan takes  
Della's hand in hers and looks up at Andrew.

RAEGAN

I'll never know why she asked you to come here with her, but she must have had a reason. Can you get me another drink?

Andrew nods and ambles over to the bar.

Lauren takes the microphone back.

LAUREN

Let's hear it one more time for Jesse Burrows. And, of course, the actual Jesse Burrows.

INT. BAR - CONTINUOUS

Andrew holds up two fingers to the bartender, motioning toward the vodka.

BARTENDER

Soda? Lime?

ANDREW

Cranberry juice.

Andrew dabs at his bloody side with a napkin.

A woman sidles up beside him. FRANCINE. Regal. Norse. 50. She studies him, a wry smile playing on her lips.

FRANCINE

I was floored by the soundtrack.  
Then I saw your name.

Andrew looks up at Francine, eyes dull and lost.

ANDREW

I don't think she'd approve of us talking.

FRANCINE

Della? We cleared everything up last year.

ANDREW

I'm sorry?

FRANCINE

She was D.P. on a show I was scoring, and I came to set one day. She nearly tore my earlobe off with her teeth.

ANDREW

Sounds right.

FRANCINE

She told me you admitted to sleeping with me. I laughed. I nearly peed my pants. She could tell I was being honest. I explained that you passed out in my bed one night at a party. I slept on the couch.

Andrew's face goes pale.

FRANCINE (CONT'D)

I'm sorry to ruin your fantasy. And your marriage, apparently. You could have just asked me.

ANDREW

I...

FRANCINE

She didn't tell you?

Andrew takes a swig.

FRANCINE (CONT'D)

We could work together...

Francine starts to walk away.

ANDREW

Wait.

Francine stops.

ANDREW (CONT'D)  
What about death?

FRANCINE  
The Salesman type or Smoochy?

ANDREW  
Jesus. Smoochy? Listen, you owe something. I need to know what you think happens to Della, or you, or even me when time's up.

FRANCINE  
You're assuming the same thing happens to all of us.

ANDREW  
For the sake of this...

Francine notices the blood on Andrew's shirt.

FRANCINE  
They do have a hospital here. You don't have to ride this out in some macho last stand.

ANDREW  
What would I be standing for?

FRANCINE  
Della over there is pretty fucking lucky.

ANDREW  
You really believe that?

FRANCINE  
You want to know what I believe? My ancestors thought that if you die in battle, you go to Valhalla to sit around in your sexy armor, wielding weapons of war for eternity.

ANDREW  
You're related to Thor?

FRANCINE  
Don't act so surprised.

ANDREW  
Trust me. You're the most beautiful  
woman I thought I had ever slept  
with.

She smiles wryly at him.

FRANCINE  
Epicurus said something like "When  
you are alive, then death is not  
present, and when death is present,  
then you are not alive," so...  
what's the point of worrying?

Raegan approaches, her glare like ice.

RAEGAN  
You couldn't just keep your  
distance on tonight of all nights.

FRANCINE  
My apologies to Della. Andrew, you  
should really get that looked at.

ANDREW  
Not if I want to make it to  
Valhalla.

FRANCINE  
I can picture it.

Francine excuses herself. Raegan watches her leave before  
turning back to Andrew.

The bartender sets two vodka cranberries in front of them.

Andrew grips the glass like a Boa and constricts. His  
knuckles go white.

His eyes well up.

ANDREW  
Did you know?

RAEGAN

We can't go back in time and undo  
our mistakes.

ANDREW

Did you know?

Raegan takes a drink.

RAEGAN

She told me she wanted to give you  
another chance.

Andrew shatters the glass in his hand and severs the palm of  
his hand.

He chokes up, unaware of the pain. The bartender hands Raegan  
a napkin, and she tries to clean up the mess.

With a second napkin, she reaches out and grabs Andrew's  
hand, who is now doubled over, making guttural sounds from a  
different sort of pain. Wrecked on the jagged rocks.

Andrew stands. Backs away from the bar.

Raegan slugs her drink, then motions for another.

She looks upward.

RAEGAN (CONT'D)

Why didn't you tell him?

Andrew is standing in front of the buffet line, motionless.  
After a long beat, he grabs a dinner roll and stuffs it in  
his pocket.

He walks back to the bar, seemingly past the news. Raegan is  
still there, chatting with the Bartender.

ANDREW

Can I have two glasses of  
champagne?

RAEGAN

That was fast. I have always  
admired your ability not to live in  
the past.

ANDREW

Trust me. What you see in front of  
you is just a shell. I've never  
left the doorway I was standing in,  
the morning Della told me she  
wanted out.

RAEGAN

What are we toasting?

ANDREW

It's a special night for the  
auteur.

Raegan looks over at Della's motionless body. Cassie is  
chatting with a few guests, and Nobody seems to notice that  
Della has not moved an inch.

RAEGAN

Ah.

ANDREW

She used to do this thing... Press  
the tops of her feet into my arches  
in bed. They were like ice cubes.  
But I didn't care.

RAEGAN

The two of you had your moments.

ANDREW

I was looking for a sign. I've seen  
nothing. I actually believe we just  
go lights out when we die. Seems  
stark, I know. Then our particles  
are scattered. Never to know each  
other again.

RAEGAN

Not rabbit. She was too sharp. She  
will go on like a rabbit forever.

ANDREW  
I never knew why you called her  
that.

RAEGAN  
Because when her tears hit the  
ground... marvelous fucking flowers  
appeared.

Raegan constricts on her own glass.

Andrew puts his hand on hers.

ANDREW  
We should get back.

RAEGAN  
You should get back before she  
thinks you're hitting on me. I'll  
be there in a bit.

INT. LOBBY - NIGHT

Jesse approaches Jonah at the front desk. He looks up at the  
taxidermized deer head behind Jonah.

JESSE  
I need to get something off my  
chest before I lose my mind.

JONAH  
Of course. Anything.

Jonah looks Jesse up and down.

Jesse accepts the admiration.

JESSE  
Oh fuck it. Why not?

Jesse pulls Jonah into the back office.

INT. BALLROOM - NIGHT

Andrew sits next to Della and sets a glass of champagne in front of her. He clinks glasses with hers.

ANDREW

What a brilliant show. I'm sorry about all the questions on death earlier. It might have been better to break them up a bit. It was all a bit theatrical.

Andrew takes Della's hand in his.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

I'm all to speed. I do have one more question though... do you remember the time I was playing a casino in Marysville and you flew in from a job and surprised me? I was pretty down and out. The moment you walked in I felt like I had just been ejected out of a fighter jet. Ten thousand milliliters of uncut endorphins. I could see above the clouds. I felt like a king. I don't know how I finished the song the way my mouth went numb from the altitude of you. I just need you to know how I felt when you walked into a room.

Andrew takes another drink.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

I understand. That wasn't a question at all. My question... do you think I could be buried next to you when this is all over?

Raegan sits on the other side of Andrew.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

We should take her back to the room until everyone leaves.

(MORE)

ANDREW (CONT'D)

You can take her wherever you like  
in the morning.

CASSIE

They're about to announce Jesse's  
category. We owe him that much.

ANDREW

Of course.

Lauren returns to the stage.

EMCEE

Now for our last category... Best  
Feature Film. The nominees are The  
Stance, The Window, The Wall, and  
The Big Clang. And the winner is...  
The Wall.

Jesse slumps at the side of the stage, his film not making  
the cut. He glares at the winners, bitterness festering.

Then, suddenly, he storms onto the stage and grabs the  
microphone.

JESSE

There's been a murder. Your darling  
director over there has been  
nothing but carbon for like three  
days, as best I can tell, and that  
man over there murdered her!

The room gasps. Eyes dart toward Della and Andrew.

A man at the next table removes Della's hat and scarf.

Screams erupt. Panic spreads. People run.

Cassie lunges toward the stage, but Raegan stops her.

RAEGAN

He's not worth the sweat. You've  
already won.

Police flood the room, weapons raised. Andrew bolts for the  
exit.

EXT. BALCONY - NIGHT

Snow swirls. Two OFFICERS step forward.

OFFICER 1

Stop!

Andrew reaches into his pocket... for bread.

A gunshot rings out.

Andrew collapses into the snow. The bread tumbles from his fingers.

Cassie and Raegan scream, rushing to his side.

A raven lands on the railing.

The camera tracks back inside, towards Della, slumped over in her chair. Jesse is looming over her. Staring.

After a long look, Jesse is thumped over the head and falls forward into Della's lap and ultimately to the floor.

His head begins to bleed out.

Reveal Cassie standing over him, holding the bat.

CASSIE

I'm sorry. Did you say something  
about my instincts?

Cassie looks around to ensure nobody notices and walks toward the roaring fireplace.

She tosses the bat into the fire. There is a close-up of the meteor carving splintering, sparking, and ultimately being enveloped in flames.

Close on Della's face.

DELLA (V.O.)

And... cut.

**METEOR**

