

IN THE SHADOW OF THE MIND

written by

Gerald B. Browning

Draft 5-12-17

Contact:

Gerald B. Browning

Gerald@GeraldBBrowning.com

816-213-0853

FADE IN:

TWO CLOSED EYES

Shadowed in darkness. The clinched lids snap open. Flashes of lightning reveal magnetic, mesmerizing eyes. Intense. Soulful. Haunted. They belong to --

MARK

Mid 20's, oozing raw sexuality. He stares darkly at an expensive, professional DSLR camera on a tripod several feet in front of him. Mark is pressing a remote shutter cable -- a time lapse photo in progress of himself on the --

EXT. KANSAS CITY RIVERFRONT - NIGHT

Sinister thunderclouds loom over Mark. Behind him, the river. Further, the city skyline. Lightning bolts zip across the sky, the water alive with their reflections.

THROUGH CAMERA VIEWFINDER

Mark lifts his arms in defiance and looks tensely to the storm as if he's testing himself. An anxious glance to his camera. Back and forth he fidgets as flashes electrify the night.

EXT. KANSAS CITY RIVERFRONT - LATER

Mark leans against his faded, but still cool, '65 Mustang. He shudders, eyes focused on the TIME-LAPSE PHOTO on his camera's LCD MONITOR: Numerous lightning bolts push to the ground. One appears to slice through Mark's ghostly, blurred figure.

Mark yanks a pill tin from his pocket and a piece of paper falls to the ground. He picks it up, studies the scrawled writing: "Raphael Hotel. Rm 412. F on Thurs. Leave Fri." He shoves a couple of pills in his mouth. Closes his eyes and lets their effect wash over him.

EXT. MODEST DUPLEX - NIGHT

Mark, a backpack slung over his shoulder, beats his fist against the door.

MARK

Casey! Open. The. Fucking. Door.

CASEY (O.S.)
I changed the locks, Mark. Go away.

MARK
Jesus, Casey, come on. What the fuck?

CASEY, 20's, pretty, but worn down, opens the door slightly, the chain lock clearly in place.

CASEY
I'm done with your shit, Mark. I'm
done with all the druggies you
bring around. I'm done with the
fact that you haven't paid rent in
months --

MARK
Calm down. Let me make it up to
you, baby --

CASEY
I'm not your "baby." I wouldn't put up with this shit from a boyfriend and I'm sure as hell not gonna take it from you. Every time you need something, you pull me into bed. Well, this insane roommate with benefits sex thing we've got going is finished. Your shit's over by the bushes. Get it and go. Now.

Mark's eyes dart to the yard. His meager belongings are thrown haphazardly on the ground. He seethes, turns to Casey and charges the door. She slams the door in his face.

MARK CASEY (O.S.)
Fuck you, Casey, fuck you. No, fuck you, you shit. I've
Open this goddamn door or I'm got nine-one-one on my phone
breaking it down. and I'm ready to press send.

Suddenly, a downpour. Mark scurries to protect his stuff from the rain. He rips off his jacket, throws it over an iPad and assorted camera lenses of varying focal lengths on top of the heap.

EXT. BUNDOWN HOUSE - NIGHT

Heavy rain pounds this derelict part of the city. A sleepy-eyed DRUGGY, 20's, leans against the door frame, shakes his head.

DRUGGY

No can do.

Mark sighs, unzips his backpack, searches through it.

MARK

Come on, man. Just for tonight.

DRUGGY

No can do, bro, got some pussy
stayin' over.

MARK

Make it worth your while.

Mark pulls a large, very full baggy of pot from his backpack and waves it, enticingly.

DRUGGY

Fuck, dude, put that shit away.
P.O.'s been hounding my ass. Shows up whenever. Don't think you wanna be around if that happens. Not with your rap.

Mark immediately shoves the baggy into his backpack, surveys the street, looking for anything out of place.

DRUGGY

I'll buy the shit off you, though.

MARK

Done.

INT. CHUBBY'S DINER - NIGHT

Mostly gay, after bar CROWD. Mark inspects his prospects from his throne, his usual stool at the counter. From across the room, he notices a MUSCLE GUY, 30's, gawking at him. Muscle Guy tips his cup. Mark nods, but plays it cool.

In a nearby booth, a tweaked out TWINKIE BOY aims his iPhone at Mark and snaps a picture. He shows it to his tipsy, pretty, GAL PAL and they giggle. Mark grins at them. Twinkie Boy takes this as an invitation, leaps out of his seat.

TWINKIE BOY

Are you a model? You should be a model. Seriously. I'd buy whatever you were selling.

Mark stares into his wide, dilated, eyes.

MARK

What if I wanted to buy something
you were selling?

Twinkie Boy smiles knowingly. He scrawls his number on a napkin and stuffs it into Mark's pants pocket, his hand lingering just a little too long.

TWINKIE BOY

That's me. You know, in case you
don't take me home tonight. Or, you
know, in case you want more X.

He pulls a baggy of brightly colored pills from his pocket, extracts one: Ecstasy. Mark opens his mouth. Twinkie Boy lays the pill flirtatiously on Mark's tongue.

Gal Pal clutches Twinkie Boy by the arm and the baggy drops in Mark's lap.

GAL PAL

Okay, Juliet, leave Romeo alone.
Time for us to go.

Mark grabs Gal Pal's hand as he pockets the baggy, unnoticed.

MARK

Hey, what's your name?

Giddy, she and Twinkie Boy stumble to the door.

GAL PAL

See, I told you he was straight.

TWINKIE BOY

Oh, please. He's at least bi.
Nobody that beautiful is completely
straight.

Twinkie Boy turns back, mouths, "Call Me," and they giggle out the door.

Muscle Guy strides by. Mark bumps into him on purpose.

MARK

Sorry, guy. You okay?

MUSCLE GUY

Yeah.

Mark squeezes Muscle Guy's arm.

MARK

Glad to hear it.

Muscle Guy saunters out the door, pointedly glances back at Mark.

EXT. CHUBBY'S DINER - NIGHT

Mark struts through the door, his eyes wide and dilated. He focuses on Muscle Guy who nervously puffs on a cigarette. Mark moves steadily toward his prey.

MARK

Can I bum one, man?

Muscle Guy hands him a cigarette, flips open a beautiful emerald green Zippo, and seductively lights it. Mark inhales deeply, staring right into Muscle Guy.

INT. UPSCALE CONDO - BEDROOM - DAY

Muscle Guy leans against the headboard, smoking. Mark emerges from the bathroom, naked and freshly showered.

MUSCLE GUY

You fuck as good as you look.

Mark seizes Muscle Guy's cigarette, takes a deep drag. Muscle Guy grabs a business card from the bedside table and presses it in Mark's hand.

MUSCLE GUY

Cell, office, home. Call me next time you wanna get off.

Mark takes another long drag, exhales slowly. Snubs out the cigarette.

MARK

Yeah. That's not gonna happen.

He tosses the business card on the bedside table, next to the emerald green Zippo.

INT. RAPHAEL COUNTRY CLUB PLAZA HOTEL - HALLWAY - DAY

Swanky. Mark scans room numbers. Stops at Room 412. Glances at the piece of paper from earlier: "Raphael Hotel. Rm 412..." He takes a deep breath and knocks quietly on the door. No answer. Almost relieved, he turns to leave.

The door opens, revealing STEVE, 30's, as handsome as Mark. Steve eyes Mark wearily, shakes his head and walks back into the --

HOTEL ROOM

Mark sheepishly follows Steve.

STEVE

I don't even know what to say to
you, Mark. Where have you been?
Don't you check your messages?

MARK

I'm having issues with my phone.

STEVE

Jesus, Mark, grow up. Pay your
bills.

Steve unzips a suitcase and distractedly packs his clothes.

STEVE

You have five minutes. Talk.
Explain. Say I'm sorry. Something.

MARK

I was thinking... maybe... maybe
I'd come up to Chicago.

STEVE

Oh, Jesus Christ, Mark, what did
you do this time?

MARK

I need some help, man...

STEVE

Mark, you are such a fuck-up.
I've been here a fucking week.
Doing it all myself and all you
have to say is you wanna come to
Chicago. Because, yet again, you've
screwed up your life.

MARK

I knew this was a big fucking
mistake.

STEVE

What the hell? You promised me
you'd come. You promised.

MARK

I don't know why you didn't just
shove him in the ground in Chicago
and be done with it.

STEVE

He asked for two things before he died. To be buried here, in KC, and for you to come to Chicago to see him. You never did. The least you could do is make an appearance at his funeral.

MARK

Dad was a piece of shit. I'm glad he's dead.

STEVE

Get the fuck out!

With pent up fury, he slaps Mark with an angry force that startles Steve.

Mark is stunned. Tears flood from his tormented eyes in a primal release. His unsteady hand rips the pill tin from his pocket. Empty. He smashes it brutally on the floor. Steve reaches for him, but Mark shoves him away.

STEVE

I'm sorry... I'm sorry, Mark...
Mark...

Mark falls into a full panic attack and crumples to the floor. Tries to regain control. His breathing steadies. Sits in silence, contemplating. Eyes darkly focused.

MARK

No you're not, Steve. You're not sorry. You were never sorry. You're just like Dad.

(uneasily stands, glares
at his brother)

Fuck it.

EXT/INT. MUSTANG - MOVING - DAY

The Mustang zooms down the highway, weaving in and out of traffic. Dark ominous clouds. Lightning shuffles across the sky.

Kansas City fades in the distance as Mark drums on the steering wheel, screaming along to AC/DC's "Highway to Hell" BOOMING from the stereo with the iPad attached. He lights a cigarette with Muscle Guy's emerald green Zippo.

Mark slams the gas pedal. The speedometer shoots past 70-- then 80-- 90-- as he speeds precariously through traffic.

Horns honk and cars slide quickly into open lanes as the Mustang races down the road.

Mark thrusts his arm through the open side window and flips off the world.

INT. MUSTANG - MOVING - LATER

Springsteen's "Born to Run" CRANKED on the stereo. Vast, overgrown fields zoom past as Mark rockets down a deserted Northwest Missouri country highway. THUMP. Suddenly, steam shoots from under the hood.

He slams on the brakes. The car lurches sideways. A cloud of steam and dust blasts all around. WHAM. The car jerks to a stop.

MARK
Fuck me running.

He fumbles with several prescription bottles in the glove compartment. Shoves a handful of pills in his mouth. Abruptly, he turns up the music FULL BLAST and lets loose a guttural scream.

A streak of lightning in the rear-view mirror. He catches the reflection of the storm that seems to follow him. His eyes stare back at him. They grow dark. Wounded. For one taut moment his bravado shatters.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

Mark reaches through the intense steam still pouring from the Mustang and tries to lift the hood.

An overgrown, dusty pickup truck ambles to a stop. A FARMER, a big hunk of man, stumbles from the truck sipping from a flask.

FARMER
Got yourself a cracked radiator.
That's what that is. Damn big crack
looks like.

INT. FARMER'S PICKUP TRUCK - MOVING - DAY

Mark glances back at the Mustang as it zigs and zags precariously behind the truck. The Farmer watches him, amused. Pushes the flask to Mark.

FARMER

Have yourself a pull.
(Mark takes the flask)
Only goin' a couple miles. Haul
shit with those chains all the
time. They do good work at the
Corner. Only thing is, they got a
queer workin' there --

MARK

(plays along)
No shit?

FARMER

Well, I don't know if he'd suck
your dick, but he'd sure as shit
hold it for you.

EXT. FIVE MILE CORNER GARAGE - DAY

Throwback to another era. Nothing much around, except for fields. The Farmer's pickup truck pulls away.

Mark is posed James Dean-like against his Mustang, the perfect picture of smoldering sexuality. He drags on a cigarette, eyes focused inside the open bay doors:

Two young, uniformed mechanics work under a truck on a floor hoist. Their hushed conversation and periodic glances make it clear that they are talking about Mark. He delights at being the center of their attention. They are --

INT. FIVE MILE CORNER GARAGE - DAY

-- QUINN -- 22, masculine boy next door, endearingly naive, an always infectious grin -- and BOBBY -- 23, a lanky former jock with a sardonic sense of humor. There's an easy rapport between these two best friends.

QUINN

What, you got gaydar now? That
dude's not gay. Prove it to you.

Quinn whips out his iPhone. Taps the screen. A GRINDR APP appears filled with men's profile pics. He scans the photos. Holds up the phone to Bobby.

QUINN

See? Nobody within a mile of here.
Not on Grindr. Not gay.

BOBBY

Jesus, Quinn, not all gay dudes are
on Grindr. Even a hetero guy like
me knows that.

(yells to Mark)

Somebody be right with you, man.

(to Quinn)

I'm just trying to get you laid.
Work with me, here. The dude has
great taste in cars. Plus, he's got
that bad boy thing going on. Come
on, you know you like that. I mean,
Jesus Christ, he's so hot I'm
thinking about doing him.

(grabs Quinn's shoulders)

Maybe Prince Charming just rode in
on a Mustang. Just go.

Bobby pushes him outside --

EXT. FIVE MILE CORNER GARAGE - DAY

-- Quinn stops, noticing for the first time Mark's intense
eyes. His penetrating gaze draws Quinn toward him.

MARK

This Missouri or Iowa?

QUINN

You lost?

MARK

Seems that way.

QUINN

Missouri. Five miles from
Merryville. Iowa border's about
twenty miles north, up Seventy-One.

LATER

Quinn's head is buried under the hood of the Mustang.

QUINN

Yeah, your radiator's got a crack
in it. Big time.

MARK (O.S.)

Maybe it just needs to be filled
with something.

QUINN

No, no. You're gonna need --

Quinn's head pops up and he finds himself just inches from Mark's face. Their eyes lock. Electricity.

MARK

What do I need?

QUINN

Uhhh... What?

The desire in Quinn's gaze is palpable.

QUINN

Oh... a new radiator... But... this could be a sweet car, man.

MARK

It's pretty sweet right now.

QUINN

I'd love to go for a ride sometime --

MARK

You wanna go pedal-to-the-metal or smooth and easy?

QUINN

-- Show you what you could do with it.

MARK

I know what to do with it.

Quinn gives Mark a cute, flustered grin. Sits against the edge of the car.

QUINN

My buddy, Bobby, he loves Mustangs, dude, and he can get me a used radiator cheap.

Mark moves in, slides his hands down on either side of Quinn, artfully trapping him against the Mustang.

MARK

Sounds like you know how to take good care of me. I'll owe you, man, big time.

QUINN

Take me out for a beer.

MARK

It's a date.

There's Quinn's grin again. Sweet and goofy. Adorable.

INT/EXT. TOW TRUCK - MOVING - DAY

Quinn guides the truck to a grumbling stop in front of the HITCHING POST MOTEL, a cheap 1950's strip motel on the verge of being extinct. Darker thunderstorms hover above.

Mark grabs a duffel bag and backpack from the floorboard.

QUINN

What's your cell number?

Mark's knowing grin is all sex. Quinn blushes, but tries to play it off.

QUINN

So I can call you when your car's done.

Mark squeezes his knee, relishing the effect he has on Quinn.

MARK

Have to call me here if I can get a room.

QUINN

They always got rooms. You sure you wanna stay here, dude? There's a Holiday Inn up the road.

MARK

No, man, this is fine. It's got character. Plus I'm broke as shit.

Mark hops out of the truck.

QUINN

I'm holding you to that beer, dude.

Mark smirks and swaggers toward the motel office, savoring being watched.

INT. HITCHING POST MOTEL - MARK'S ROOM - DAY

Mark glances around the depressing room. Sets his duffel bag and backpack on the floor. Sighs. Lights a cigarette and flops down on the bed, distractedly fingering the Zippo.

EXT. DOWNTOWN MERRYVILLE - DAY

On the sidewalk, backpack slung over his shoulder, Mark surveys the town, amused by its Norman Rockwell vibe. He aims his camera.

THROUGH CAMERA VIEWFINDER

A late 1800's COURTHOUSE, its clock tower rising to the heavens. Majestic. Shutter clicks.

More photos are snapped: ORIENT WEST, LIVING HOPE BAPTIST CHURCH, NODAWAY DRUGS, A & G CAFE, MIDWEST BANK, THE PUB. Finally, settling back on the COURTHOUSE SQUARE, filled with flowers in full bloom.

KEELEY -- 22, stunning, every college boy's dream -- drifts into view. Zoom in. The shutter clicks rapidly. Zoom closer as Keeley gently leans in to smell a rose. There is something pure, and at the same time, strangely erotic about this moment. The shutter clicks repeatedly.

INT. THE PUB - DAY

A dive with old school charm. Full of ROWDY COLLEGE KIDS. Mark talks to the rugged BARTENDER, 20's, but his eyes are glued to Keeley, who sits at the corner of the bar drawing in an artist's sketch pad.

BARTENDER

If you're up for a challenge, be my guest.

MARK

I'm always up for a challenge.

BARTENDER

You say that now...

(laughs, yells to Keeley)

Hey Keeley, if your break's almost over, you wanna get this guy a drink?

Keeley closes her pad and tosses it in a tote bag.

KEELEY

What'll you have?

MARK

Well, Keeley, how about a Bud. And a phone number.