

IN THE SHADOW OF THE MIND

written by

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FADE IN:

TWO EYES SHADOWED IN DARKNESS

Flashes of lightning reveal a mesmerizing, focused stare. Intense. Soulful. Haunted. It belongs to --

MARK

23, oozing raw sexuality. He stares darkly at an expensive, professional DSLR camera on a tripod several feet in front of him. Mark presses a wireless shutter remote -- a time lapse photo in progress of himself on the --

EXT. KANSAS CITY RIVERFRONT - NIGHT

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

THROUGH CAMERA VIEWFINDER

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

EXT. KANSAS CITY RIVERFRONT - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Mark leans against his faded, but still cool, '65 Mustang, 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 shudders, yanks a pill tin from his pocket and with it comes a piece of paper. He studies the scrawled writing: "Raphael Hotel. Rm 412. F on Thurs. Leave Fri." He pops a couple of pills. Closes his eyes. Lets their effect wash over him.

EXT. MODEST DUPLEX - NIGHT

Mark, a backpack slung over his shoulder and keys clenched in his hand, bangs his fist against the door.

MARK

Casey! Open. The. Damn. Door.

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

CASEY

I changed the locks, Mark. Go away.
I'm done with the druggies and all
your crap --

MARK

Come on, baby --

CASEY

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

Mark's eyes dart to his meager belongings piled in a haphazard mess. He seethes, charges at Casey. She slams the door in his face.

MARK

Fuck you, Casey, fuck you.
Open this goddamn door or I'm
breaking it down.

CASEY (O.S.)

No, fuck you, you shit. I'm
dialing nine-one-one right
now.

A sudden downpour forces Mark to scamper to protect his stuff. He rips off his jacket, throws it over an iPad and assorted camera lenses of varying focal lengths on top of the heap.

EXT. RUNDOWN 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. Mark sighs, unzips his backpack, searches through it.

MARK

Come on, man. Just for tonight.

DRUGGY

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

MARK

Make it worth your while.

Mark pulls a full baggy of pot from his backpack.

DRUGGY

No can do, but I'll buy that shit
off you, though.

MARK

Done.

INT. CHUBBY'S DINER - NIGHT

At his usual seat at the counter -- his throne -- Mark
inspects his prospects from among the mostly gay after bar
CROWD. He revels at being the center of everyone's attention.

A MUSCLE GUY, 30's, tips his cup. Mark nods, but plays it
cool. A tweaked out TWINKIE BOY gawks at Mark as his tipsy,
pretty GAL PAL pays their bill. Twinkie Boy bounces to Mark.

TWINKIE BOY

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

Gal Pal clutches Twinkie Boy. The baggy drops in Mark's lap.

GAL PAL

Time for us to go. Leave the pretty
boy alone.

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

MARK

Hey, what's your name?

GAL PAL

(to Twinkie Boy)
See, I told you he was straight.

TWINKIE BOY

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

Mark laughs as Gal Pal and Twinkie Boy giggle toward 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 to the door. A pointed glance back. Mark pursues his prey.

INT. UPSCALE CONDO - BEDROOM - DAY

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

MUSCLE GUY
You fuck as good as you look.

Mark seizes Muscle Guy's cigarette, takes a deep drag. Muscle Guy presses a business card in Mark's hand.

MUSCLE GUY
Call me next time you wanna get
off.

Mark takes another long drag. Snubs out the cigarette.

MARK
Yeah. That's not gonna happen.

He tosses the business card on the bedside table next to a pack of cigarettes and an intricately detailed Zippo.

INT. RAPHAEL COUNTRY CLUB PLAZA HOTEL - HALLWAY - DAY

Swanky. Mark scans room numbers. Glances at the piece of paper from earlier: "Raphael Hotel. Rm 412..." Takes a deep breath as he stops at 412. Knocks quietly. No answer. Almost relieved, he turns to leave.

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

HOTEL ROOM

Mark sheepishly follows. Steve unzips a suitcase and packs.

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

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

I've been here a 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, you are such a fuck-up.

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

Because he wanted to be buried here, in KC. And he wanted you to come to Chicago before he died. 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.

With pent up fury, Steve slaps Mark hard.

STEVE

Get the fuck out!

Stunned, Mark's bravado shatters. Tears flow in a primal
release. Startled by his own anger, Steve reaches for Mark,
but Mark shoves him away.

STEVE

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

Mark rips the pill tin from his pocket. Empty. He slams it
against the wall and falls to the floor in a full panic
attack. He tries to regain control. His breathing steadies
and he 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.

Mark stands, glares at his brother.

MARK

Fuck it.

EXT/INT. MUSTANG - CITY HIGHWAY - MOVING - DAY

The Mustang races in and out of traffic. Horns honk and cars
slide quickly into open lanes. Lightning shuffles across the
ominous sky as Kansas City fades in the distance.

Mark drums the steering wheel, screams along to AC/DC's
"Highway to Hell" BOOMING from an expensive stereo with the
iPad attached. Mark slams the gas pedal. The speedometer
shoots past 70-- 80-- 90--

He lights a cigarette with Muscle Guy's intricately detailed
Zippo. Thrusts his arm through the side window and flips off
the world.

INT. MUSTANG - COUNTRY HIGHWAY - MOVING - LATER

Springsteen's "Born to Run" CRANKED, Mark rockets past vast,
overgrown fields.

THUMP. Steam shoots from under the hood. Mark slams on the brakes, the car lurches off the road and jerks to a stop, enveloped in a cloud of steam and dust.

Freaked out, Mark fumbles with several prescription bottles. Devours a handful of pills. He turns up the music FULL BLAST and screams.

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.

EXT. COUNTRY HIGHWAY - DAY

Mark reaches through the intense steam 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, leans out.

FARMER

Got yourself a cracked radiator.
That's what that is. I'd give you a
hand, but ain't much I can do. And
some of my damn cattle jumped a
fence. On my way there now.

Takes out phone, dials.

FARMER

Tell you what, though, Five Mile
Corner Garage is just up the road.
I'll call 'em. They'll get somebody
out here.

EXT. COUNTRY HIGHWAY - LATER

Mark poses James Dean-like against his Mustang, the perfect picture of smoldering sexuality. He drags on a cigarette, focused on a tow truck, emblazoned with the "FIVE MILE CORNER GARAGE" logo, pulling to a stop.

A uniformed mechanic, QUINN -- 21, masculine boy next door, endearingly naive, an always infectious grin -- hops out. He stops, noticing 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. About six miles from
Merryville. Iowa border's about
twenty miles north, up Seventy-One.
(extends his hand)
Quinn.

Mark squeezes his hand with an intimate, two-handed shake.

MARK
Mark. You gonna be my knight in
shining armour today, Quinn?

QUINN
Do my best.

MOMENTS LATER

Quinn tinkers under the hood of the Mustang. Mark beside him.

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

MARK
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... a new radiator... This
could be a sweet car, though, man.

MARK
It's pretty sweet right now.

QUINN
I mean... I could show you what to
do with it.

MARK
I know what to do with it.

QUINN

Take me for a ride sometime.

MARK

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

Quinn almost collapses against the edge of the car. Gives Mark a cute, flustered grin.

QUINN

My buddy, Bobby, he's got a Mustang. Probably get me a used radiator cheap.

Mark moves in, slides his hands down on either side of Quinn, 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.

EXT. FIVE MILE CORNER GARAGE - DAY

Throwback to another era. Nothing much around, except for fields. Mark smokes, leaning against Quinn's tow truck, his Mustang attached behind.

Outside the open bay doors, Quinn talks to another uniformed mechanic, BOBBY -- 22, an affable, lanky former jock with a sardonic sense of humor. There's an easy rapport between these two best friends.

BOBBY

No way.

QUINN

I think Prince Charming just rode in on a Mustang. Help me get his car off the truck so I can get him to a motel.

BOBBY

You slut. At least have him buy you dinner first.

QUINN

Shut up, asshole. I'm just gonna drop him off --

BOBBY

I say go for it. Dude's got great taste in cars... And he has that bad boy thing going on... I mean, Jesus Christ, he's so hot I'm thinking about doing him.

QUINN

Don't think your girlfriend would like that.

They both laugh and move toward Mark.

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.

QUINN

What's your 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

Issues with my phone. 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.

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. Sighs. Sets down his duffel bag and backpack. Pulls a whiskey bottle from the duffel, takes a slug. Lights a cigarette and flops down on the bed, distractedly fingering the Zippo.

EXT. DOWNTOWN MERRYVILLE - DUSK

Backpack slung over his shoulder, Mark surveys the town, amused by its Norman Rockwell vibe. He aims his camera with a long lens attached.

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, PAGLIAI'S RESTAURANT, MIDWEST BANK, THE PUB, a sign reads: "MERRYVILLE. HOME OF NORTHERN MISSOURI UNIVERSITY," the COURTHOUSE SQUARE, filled with flowers in full bloom.

KEELEY -- 21, stunning, every college boy's dream -- drifts into view. Zoom in as Keeley leans in to smell a rose. There is something pure, and at the same time, strangely erotic about this moment. Repeated shutter clicks.

Keeley drifts out of frame. Blur of motion until the viewfinder settles back on Keeley crossing the street. Zoom and follow as she enters THE PUB.

INT. THE PUB - NIGHT

A dive with old school charm. Full of ROWDY COLLEGE KIDS. Keeley and a rugged BARTENDER, 20's, work behind the bar.

Mark makes his way through the crowd, eyes glued to Keeley. He approaches her, sets his backpack down, glances at her nametag.

KEELEY

What can I get you?

MARK

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

KEELEY

Any particular phone number? Or should I just pick one at random?

MARK

How about yours?

KEELEY

You're pretty sure of yourself, aren't you, Cowboy?

MARK

Think you can handle it?

With a devious grin, Keeley scribbles something on his arm. As she scoots away, Mark laughs when he sees: "660-Keep-Dreaming."

MARK

Only of you, baby. Only of you.

INT. THE PUB - DANCE FLOOR - NIGHT

Mark tears up the dance floor. His moves athletic, erotic and hypnotic. DANCERS move back and give him space, impressed. All eyes on him, he feeds off lusty energy from the crowd.

LACEY, 20's, a former cheerleader type, emerges from the throng of on-lookers and positions herself to be noticed.

Mark winks at her. He zeros in on Keeley. Their eyes meet. She's caught. His stare unnerves her and she busies herself. She's hooked and he knows it.

INT. THE PUB - LATER

Mark divides his attention between intense rain beating against the widows and Lacey eyeing him from across the room. Keeley swings by with a tray full of empties.

KEELEY

You need another beer, Cowboy, or you good?

MARK

I'm very good. You should try me.