

A LOVELY MESS

Written by

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Script Preview

WGA #2168660

FADE IN:

EXT. SKY - SANTA CRUZ - NIGHT

SQUAWKING seagulls soar through the chilly murk, floating like phantoms through the sky.

BOARDWALK

Vaping, SWAN SINGLETON, 18, gritty, wooly hair flowing over her hoody, stenciled *Grill 'Em Crazy*, Zed longboard poking out of her tattered backpack, meanders through a blizzard of TOURISTS.

Arcades rage with the sound of BELLS and glistening lights.

She glances up at the dangling feet from the high tension cable cars.

A car loaded with passengers on Logger's Revenge slams savagely into the water, soaking its riders.

Pandemonium echos from the iconic Giant Dipper Roller coaster.

SUDDENLY...

Swan and her father, PAUL, 39, are screaming, holding hands strapped in the coaster's seat as it flings around the track, wood creaking like an old woman's bones.

KA-BOOM! Fireworks explode in the sky. Swan jerks back to reality.

CLICK-CLICK! CLICK-CLICK! She staples a missing person poster to a wooden post with a flickering lamp above:

PAUL SINGLETON, 37, FLANNEL SHIRT. LAST SEEN, OAK MEADOWS  
PARK. Call 555-4567 if you've seen him.

She leaps over a wooden barrier and lands hard in the moist sand.

UNDER THE BOARDWALK

The planks above are illuminated by a sliver of moonlight.

Swan pokes her tongue out, welcoming the salty water pitter-pattering from the weathered beams.

She shakes a can of fluorescent red paint and sprays it on a stone wall:

## Death is the Last Refuge

EXT. BEACH STREET - NIGHT

Swan slaloms down the sidewalk, dragging her foot to a stop on her skateboard, making a detour into an alley.

ALLEY

She snoops around the makeshift tents, searching for Paul. Weatherbeaten visages of delirium glare at her as they warm themselves around fire barrels.

She holds up a poster to a gruff MAN.

SWAN

Hey, I'm looking for this person.  
Have you seen him anywhere?

The Man slams her hard against a brick wall, licking her neck with his snaking tongue. She cringes from his putrid odor of urine and cigarettes, knees him in the groin, and scrambles into the night.

EXT. BEACH STREET - NIGHT

Swan glides down the street on the skateboard.

A car backfires in the distance. She bails off the board and frantically crawls under a 4-wheel drive truck for safety.

Frenzied, she digs at the pavement with her fingernails.

FLASHBACK:

Screaming, Swan's on a rusty gurney, blood-soaked flailing around.

Ghostly images of deformed bodies float along the hospital corridor walls.

Flickering fluorescent lights dangle from the ceiling by frayed electrical cords.

She wrestles off the gurney and lands hard on the filthy tiles, crawling, tears draining, forming Rorschach images of fear.

Swan looks into the distorted eyes of Doctor WA SHI, 36, with red hair in pigtails, garbed in a lab coat, clutching an IV bag of Vancomycin.

SWAN

What's happening to me?

WA SHI

Not schizophrenic, just over-medicated, my lovely dove.

She kisses Swan on the forehead. BOOM!

END FLASHBACK.

Swan's back under the truck now, popping several Xanax from a Wonder Woman PEZ Dispenser into her salivating mouth. She calms her breathing.

In the distance, a motorcycle's bouncing headlight catches her attention as she slithers out from under the truck.

A WOMAN lets go of the handlebars, closing her eyes. The cycle veers toward the truck.

SWAN

Watch out!

The Woman's eyes flicker open. She seizes the wobbling bars at the last moment, contorting Swan against the truck.

She skids the bike to a halt.

SWAN (CONT'D)

What the fuck was that, huh? You wanna tell me?

The Woman slumps with remorse.

WOMAN

Lilith.

SWAN

Who?

LILITH, 36, dumps the clutch on the bike and speeds away into the night.

EXT. THRIFTBOT - NIGHT

A neon sign flashes Thriftbot. Swan grinds her board to a stop, stuffs it into her backpack, and hustles into the store.

INT. THRIFTBOT

A lanky nerd in a Thriftbot shirt, name tag, TODD, angrily directs Swan his way.

TODD

Gonna have to write you up this time.

SWAN

Wait-wait-wait! I'm only a couple of minutes late. I never call in sick--

TODD

I told you to stop wearing that stupid sweatshirt in here. You can't be promoting your other job.

Swan hotfoots it behind Todd into the backroom, yanking off the sweatshirt.

BACKROOM

She opens her locker and shimmies into a Thriftbot work shirt, eye fucking Todd.

SWAN

You never punish Jane. She's always missing work. Back pain, that's bull crap. I do all the heavy lifting around here.

TODD

Another incident, you're outta here!

He stomps out of the backroom, feeling in total control of Swan.

Frustrated, she tears the shrink wrap from an enormous shipment of inventory.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Slurping an energy drink, creeping toward a boarded-up dwelling overrun with bull thistle weeds, Swan rips a foreclosure sign from the yard and tosses it behind an overgrown shrub, hiding several other notices.

She jimmy's open a dusty window and boosts herself inside.

INT. HOME

Swan clicks on her phone's flashlight and trudges through the barren living room, past the empty kitchen, and into the bedroom.

BEDROOM

She clicks on a Coleman light and sets her backpack on the floor.

She feeds a Betta fish.

SWAN

Hey, buddy, miss me?

She studies a wall filled with pictures of homeless encampments scribbled with dates and times.

She writes *BOARDWALK 9:45* on a post-it and sticks it on the wall.

She removes her t-shirt, revealing hairy armpits, and refreshes her body with baby wipes.

CLOSET

She crawls next to an Igloo cooler and tattered books, setting the light down, nestling into a sleeping bag. She picks up a book.

*A Treasury of War Poetry: British and American Poems of the World War, 1914-1917 by George Herbert Clarke.*

She reads a poem by Sara Teasdale, "Spring in War-Time."

SWAN

"I feel the spring far off, far  
off, The faint, far scent of bud  
and leaf- Oh, how can spring take  
heart to come To a world in  
grief..."

Yawning, she falls asleep.

EXT. BEACH - MORNING

Onshore winds blow, crumbling the lip and creating ribbing waves.

Surfers line up, waiting for the ultimate ride.

A surfer gets ragdolled and swung under a powerful wave.

Swan sits on a boulder, scribbling thoughts in a notebook as a blood-red sun peeks over the edge of the world:

*Horror beckons. I lean near. Skinned outside inward, the world hogties me downside up. Blood nourishes; the LOSS deepens. I recognize myself... not.*

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