Creating Romance

Ву

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INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

It's a very typical college classroom: about two-thirds of the students are seated, half of those falling asleep, while the rest filter in.

The TEACHER begins calling roll.

In the back row, ADAM GIBBONS, 19, writes on an open notebook. His youthful features say high schooler, not college student.

TEACHER (O.S.)

Gibbons?

Adam is oblivious, adjusting his glasses as he continues to write.

TEACHER (O.S.)

Adam.

Realizing, he shoots a scrawny arm into the air.

ADAM

Here!

The roll calling continues as Adam returns to his notebook, brushing a hand through his brown curls.

TEACHER (O.S.)

Hewitt?

The name catches Adam's attention. He looks down his row at a vacant chair.

A STUDENT who's eaten too many Twinkies enters the room huffing and puffing. He mazes his way through the rows and plops down into the vacant chair that Adam observed. Definitely not the person he wanted to see occupy the chair.

Adam turns to the door, waiting for someone.

But no one arrives.

He returns his gaze down to his notebook.

A beat.

CONTINUED: 2.

DENISE (O.S.)

Denise Hewitt.

Adam quickly looks up as DENISE HEWITT, 19, enters the room. The striking beauty with short black hair notes the fat man who's taken her seat and scans for another vacancy.

Adam notices and pulls his backpack off a neighboring chair.

Denise strides towards the back row, but bypasses the seat, unaware of Adam's offer as she makes her way to another empty chair further down the row.

He spies on his crush as she slips into the chair and pulls out her notebook.

Through dangling black strands of hair, her brown eyes spot Adam watching her.

He jolts forward and quickly begins writing again.

TEACHER

Okay, who's our next presenter?

A young REDHEAD rises and mazes to the front of the class.

REDHEAD

I'm very proud of this project...

Her nasally voice slowly fades out until complete silence.

Adam leans forward a bit to get a better view of Denise.

The faces and figures of the surrounding students slowly dissolve into blurry masses until Denise is the only thing of clarity; the clarity enhancing her beauty.

Adam absorbs the moment.

Suddenly, Adam's lovesick smile disappears as a worried expression replaces it.

As if knowing, he shoots a look up at the lights.

The fluorescent bulbs flicker for a moment.

Adam turns toward the door as if expecting what's to come:

THREE LARGE MEN barrel through the door decked out in all black, and wielding machine guns. Their faces are hidden in black masks.

TWO MORE MEN come crashing through the windows on the other side of the room.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: 3.

The LEADER shoots a few wild shots into the air.

LEADER

Everyone on the ground!

The students quickly obey.

The men scramble about to form a perimeter around the students.

TEACHER

What's the meaning of this!?

In two steps, the Leader is by the teacher's side, planting a heavy fist into his face, sending him to the floor.

The Leader scans the room through the slit in his mask.

LEADER

Johnny Tango! Show yourself!

A beat.

TANGO (O.S.)

Over here.

The Leader turns to his left to see Adam.

His brown curls have been replaced by jet-black hair. His fierce eyes glare at the leader without glasses. His bulging muscles are about to burst out of his tight black shirt. This is JOHNNY TANGO.

In one swift motion, Tango snaps the gun out of the Leader's hand and knocks him to the ground with a powerful roundhouse.

The Leader's minions open fire on Tango who drops to the floor and seems to slide on the tile surface until he's beneath the two baddies by the windows. Without stopping, he sends bullets into their chests, jumps to his feet and let flies two ninja stars until they sink into the necks of the other two baddies across the room.

LEADER (O.S.)

Tango!

Tango turns to see the Leader gripping Denise in his arms with a pistol at her head. Her black hair is now long, brunette waves. She is known as ANNA.

CONTINUED: 4.

LEADER

What are you gonna do now, hotshot?

ANNA

Johnny! Help!

TANGO

Just stay calm, Anna!

LEADER

Give me the code or your girl gets it.

TANGO

I don't have it.

LEADER

Give me the code or in the count of three she's dead!

(a beat)

1...2...

TANGO

All right! Here it is!

Tango pulls out a red piece of paper.

LEADER

Hand it over.

The Leader extends his arm out, while Tango slowly moves closer.

TANGO

Now Anna!

Anna drops to the floor as Tango flings a ninja star into the leader's now exposed neck. The impact drops the baddy like a brick.

Anna races to Tango and they embrace heartily.

Everyone begins to rise and applaud Tango.

ANNA

Oh Johnny, you're my hero. I love you.

TANGO

I love you too, baby.

They kiss.

CUT TO:

INT. ADAM'S CAR - NIGHT

The feeble Adam that we first met is back, glasses and all.

He sits in the driver seat writing in a notebook, occasionally glancing out the windshield at the entrance of a bookstore.

INT. BOOKSTORE - NIGHT

A row of literary classic novels fills the screen.

Adam's bony hand pulls a copy of Wuthering Heights off the shelf, creating an opening.

Framed within this tiny, rectangular slot is Denise Hewitt, who works behind a counter ringing up customer after customer.

Adam's green eye watches for a moment.

An ELDERLY MAN turns down Adam's aisle. Adam quickly backs away from the shelf and fakes interest in the novel.

As the elder exits the aisle Adam slowly makes his way to the end of the row.

ADAM

(to himself)

Hi Denise. You don't really know me but... No. Hi, I'm Adam, we have a class together. No. Could I take you out to coffee sometime?

He peers around the corner, but she's gone.

DENISE (O.S.)

Excuse me.

Adam jumps back, startled.

ADAM

Oh! I'm sorry.

DENISE

It's okay.

Denise pushes a cart of books in front of the "Classic Fiction" section and begins placing more books on the shelf.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: 6.

Adam presses up against the opposite shelf, a bit unsure of what to do.

He dives his nose back into Wuthering Heights.

Denise glances over her shoulder at him.

DENISE

Don't I know you from somewhere?

ADAM

Excuse me?

DENISE

Haven't we met?

ADAM

No. I've never met you before in my life.

DENISE

(taken back)

Okay...

She returns to re-shelving as Adam hits the book against his forehead a few times.

A beat.

ADAM

Yes.

DENISE

Excuse me?

ADAM

I mean maybe.

DENISE

What?

ADAM

Maybe we've met.

DENISE

Yeah, you do look familiar. Where do you go to school?

ADAM

West Hills.

CONTINUED: 7.

DENISE

Me too. I've probably seen you around school.

ADAM

Yeah... probably.

She grabs the cart.

DENISE

Well, enjoy "Wuthering Heights". It's a classic.

ADAM

What?

She motions to the novel in Adam's hand.

ADAM

(realizing)

Oh... right. I'll... do that.

With a last smile, she pulls the cart out of the aisle and into the adjoining one.

Adam watches her through the empty slots between the books.

He looks down at Wuthering Heights. Suddenly the letters on the page begin to flicker and slightly jitter in place.

A beat.

Suddenly, a SHADOW FIGURE glides across the background. It's identity unknown.

Catching it out of the corner of his eye, Adam quickly turns, but sees nothing.

Curious, he heads toward the end of the aisle and peers in both directions.

He sees nothing unusual, except for one thing:

Quickly making his way down the main pathway that leads to the various sections, he begins looking down every aisle.

Coming to the end of the pathway, he quickly turns around, puzzled.

He begins walking back to where he came from, slowly at first, but his pace increases until he's in a full sprint.

CONTINUED: 8.

He finally pops into the aisle where Denise is still shelving books, but she's changed again: her features are the same, but she has long, blonde, curly hair, and the entire Revlon cosmetic line is plastered on her face. Her name is JESSICA.

ADAM

Jessica!?

JESSICA

(ditzy)

What's up?

In an instant, Adam is different: with a fake-and-bake tan, beach blonde locks, and designer polo shirt and shorts, he has become pretty boy JOSH.

JOSH

Everyone's gone!

JESSICA

What?

JOSH

The customers, they're gone!

JESSICA

What?

JOSH

Come on!

Josh grabs Jessica's hand and begins pulling her along as he runs.

At the end of the aisle she stumbles on her Stiletto heels, falling to the ground.

JESSICA

I can't go on! Just go without me!

JOSH

I'm not leaving you behind!

Josh picks her up and begins helping her walk down the main pathway, but the shadow figure from before stands tall and ominous at the end of the path.

Josh and Jessica freeze.

The black-hooded figure seems to pull a butcher knife from out of nowhere and wields it high above its head.

Josh and Jessica scream.

CONTINUED: 9.

Thunder strikes.

The bookstore lights go out.

The figure zooms forward, swinging the knife.

Josh and Jessica dive into a nearby aisle, barely missing the fatal blow.

They jump to their feet and frantically escape into another aisle, but the figure is hot on their heels. It continues to swing the blade as it gets closer and closer.

Finally, a lucky swing slices across Josh's back who screams in pain and collapses to the ground.

Jessica turns.

JESSICA

Josh!

JOSH

Go! Get outta here!

JESSICA

What?

JOSH

Run!

Jessica obeys as Josh rolls onto his back just as another swing is coming down on him.

He grabs the figure's wrist with the blade only centimeters away from his face.

He reaches for a fallen book with his free hand and swings, striking the side of the figure's head and knocking it off of him.

Josh scrambles to his feet and turns around.

But the figure's gone.

Josh winds his way through the aisles.

JOSH

Jess! Jess!

He finally comes to a clearing that is lit by the moon.

CONTINUED: 10.

JOSH

Jessica!

Lightning strikes outside, sending a burst of light into the darkened areas of the bookstore. Jessica is seen standing in the middle of the main pathway for a split second.

JOSH

Jessica!

A beat.

More lightning strikes, but where once stood Jessica now stands the figure.

Josh begins to slowly back up, frightened.

JESSICA (O.S.)

Josh!

Jessica races out from a darkened corner towards Josh.

The rain beats heavily against the walls and windows of the bookstore.

JESSICA

Where is it!?

Lightning strikes.

They look down the pathway.

It's gone.

JOSH

I don't know. Let's get out of here.

They slowly back up towards the glass entrance.

A large shadow envelops them.

They spin around to see the figure standing before them.

It swings.

They duck.

Josh tackles it to the ground.

JOSH

(to Jessica)

Go! Get out of here!

Jessica barrels out the front door.

EXT. BOOKSTORE - NIGHT

The torrential rain instantly soaks Jessica. She races to her car. Fumbling with the keys, she finally pops open the door and gets in.

Through the windshield she can barely make out Josh and the figure wrestling within the bookstore.

They disappear into the darkness.

A beat.

Suddenly, the figure flies through one of the windows, shattering the glass and collapsing into a heap on the concrete sidewalk.

A beat.

Josh staggers out the front door. Limping towards Jessica's car. He suddenly collapses.

Jessica quickly exits the car and races to him.

Dropping to her knees, she picks him up into her arms.

JOSH

I did it. I killed him.

JESSICA

We need to get you to the hospital.

JOSH

I'm not going to make it.

JESSICA

Don't talk like that!

JOSH

Jessica, I was going to marry you after I graduated from Stanford.

JESSICA

And you still are!

JOSH

Promise me one thing.

CONTINUED: 12.

JESSICA

Anything!

JOSH

Live a good life. Follow your dreams. Be the next Miss America. I believe in you.

JESSICA

You're the only one who ever did.

JOSH

I love you.

JESSICA

What?

JOSH

I love you.

JESSICA

I love you too.

Josh's eyes slowly close. Jessica pulls him closer and begins to cry.

TEACHER (V.O.)

Great job, Adam.

The sound of applauding is heard.

CUT TO:

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Adam stands in front of the class with his notebook in hand.

TEACHER

(to Adam)

You can have a seat.

Adam returns to his seat as the teacher moves over to the whiteboard. On it is written:

ACTION

HORROR

The teacher crosses out the two words.

CONTINUED: 13.

TEACHER

You guys have done a great job with "Action" and "Horror", so the next challenge will be quite different. Next week's genre is "Romance".

The teacher writes the word on the board as a few of the male students grunt and groan over the choice.

TEACHER

Same guidelines as always. Ten to Fifteen pages. Prose. Good luck.

With that, the students gather their things and begin exiting the room.

INT. HALLWAY - OUTSIDE CLASSROOM - DAY

Caught in the midst of the exiting stream of students, Adam is bumped, spilling his books.

He quickly begins picking them up. A slender arm extends down and picks up his notebook.

Adam follows it up to see Denise holding it.

She begins flipping through the pages.

ADAM

Could I have that back, please?

DENISE

You're a really good writer.

ADAM

Um... thanks.

They begin walking towards the exit of the building.

DENISE

Where do you get your inspiration from?

ADAM

I have an active imagination.

DENISE

It really shows.

ADAM

Could I have that back now?

CONTINUED: 14.

She continues scanning the notebook, pausing on various pages.

DENISE

I can't think of a good story for the life of me. I was meant to be a reader of fiction, not a writer.

ADAM

Really? I thought your last project was great.

DENISE

You're just saying that to be nice.

ADAM

No... I really liked it.

DENISE

Thanks. What are doing for the next one?

ADAM

I... I don't know. I don't have much experience in the whole... romance department.

DENISE

Oh, it's not that hard. Just have a handsome knight rescue a beautiful damsel in distress.

EXT. BUILDING - DAY

They step into the bright afternoon light, as other students enter and exit the building.

ADAM

Yeah... I guess.

DENISE

And if you need better inspiration... maybe I can help.

ADAM

Excuse me?

DENISE

It's not that hard, Adam. All you have to do is ask.

(a beat)

I love coffee.

CONTINUED: 15.

Adam is stunned speechless. There's a long, awkward pause between them.

Denise closes the notebook and hands it back.

DENISE

Well... if you need any help, I wrote down a few tips.

With a flirtatious smile, she turns and leaves.

Adam looks down at the "tips": her phone number.

He looks back at her with a giant smile on his face.

FADE TO BLACK.