

JABERSNATCH

By

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FADE IN:

INT. CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Fidgety feet, slipped from their cheap pumps, scratch together, awkwardly.

Writhing hands, snake each other, wiping away constant perspiration.

NEL FOSTER, twenty, dark hair, beautiful, with an attractive flaw you can't quite put your finger on - bites her bottom lip in nervous disposition, as she sits waiting in silence upon an old, but expensive looking, wooden chair against a drab wall in a poorly lit corridor.

She looks to a side table opposite her. Ornamental riches dwell there, too many for a pleasing presentation.

Above the table she notices a painting hanging on the wall; artwork she's seen before by a hand she knows she knows but can't quite remember.

A few shy glances to an unopened door across and to her right.

Then heavy thuds, like metal against wood, followed by a slow churning creak.

The door across has opened and Nel nervously watches the vacant hole.

A GIRL walks out - disappointment on her face. She begins to walk the corridor but stops at Nel, looking down at her.

GIRL

When you read it. Play innocent. I think he likes that.

(Pause)

Guess he wasn't looking for a girl with my 'experience'.

(Pause)

You look like you'll do okay though.

She smirks and leaves. Nel watches her as she does. Then she turns to the door, still open.

A head emerges from the space, and a torso, leaving the legs firmly inside. An older fellow in an expensive suit - LINUS TOZER - calls out in a solemn voice:

LINUS
Miss Foster?

She swallows.

NEL
Yes. That's me.

Her voice cracks at the last word.

Linus looks up and down the corridor, as if there were anyone else present, when clearly there is not.

LINUS
It would appear so.

He disappears back into the room, and from Nel's view, leaving her wondering what to do.

She clumsily gets up, grabbing her plain Jane handbag from the floor, and eventually makes her way into the room beyond the door.

CUT TO:

INT. CHAMBERS - NIGHT

As Nel creeps through the doorway, like the lamb that lost its flock, we are brought into a fair sized study that could belong to a literary professor, if we didn't know any better.

What could be priceless artefacts don the tables and mantles; ancient books fill every shelf and slot, with some scattered about a large desk at the centre.

Linus Tozer sits at that desk, staring directly and blankly at Nel.

She fumbles over to a spot in front of the desk, trying to suppress her nerves.

He visually scrutinises her. Then:

LINUS
Are you wasting my time girl?

The uncertainty of how to answer is clear in Nel's face.

NEL
(Sheepish)
No.

LINUS

There's only one of me and I could
feel you shaking in the corridor.

(Pause)

What will a crowd do? An audience?

Just then, Linus looks like he's just heard something and glances at a large wardrobe at one end of the room. Then looks back to Nel, who doesn't appear to have noticed, amid her quivering.

LINUS (CONT'D)

Are you made for this game?

Nel attempts to gather herself, straightens her back, chest out and chin high.

NEL

I know I am.

LINUS

You'd better know it. You'd better
know it for real and not think
otherwise or it's the pile for you.

(Pause)

I've seen endless amounts standing
where you are, and they don't know.
They think they know, but they don't
know.

Nel almost interrupts.

NEL

(Confident)

I know.

Linus looks her up and down, considering.

LINUS

Julie's a good agent, she knows her
Streep's from her Lohan's, and she
thinks you can shine.

(Pause)

Can you shine?

NEL

I think--I know I can.

LINUS

I rarely use fresh meat but this role
calls for it.

(Pause)

I don't like risks. Unless the payoff is worth it. You're nerves are in control and that bothers me. You know who I am so I know the reason, and you know what you have to do.

(Pause)

Success isn't final. And failure isn't fatal. It's the courage to continue that counts.

(Pause)

Shine for me, Miss Foster.

(Pause)

That's what I need.

Nel retrieves a manuscript from her handbag, holds it in front of her and exhales.

She begins reading a monologue, in a South Florida accent:

NEL

I always wanted to be in the movies.

(Pause)

When I was little, I thought for sure that one day, I could be a big big star. Or maybe just beautiful.

(Pause)

Beautiful and rich. Like the women on TV. Yeah, I had a lot of dreams. And I guess you could call me a real romantic 'cause I truly believed that one day, they'd come true.

(Pause)

So I dreamed about it for hours.

(Pause)

As the years went by, I learned to stop sharing this with people. They said I was dreaming, but back then, I believed it wholeheartedly. So whenever I was down, I would just escape into my mind, to my other life, where I was someone else.

(Pause)

It made me happy to think that all these people just didn't know yet who I was going to be. But one day, they'd all see.

(Pause)

I heard that Marilyn Monroe was discovered in a soda shop and I

thought for sure it could be like that. So I started going out real young and I was always secretly looking for who was going to discover me. Was it this guy? Or maybe this one. I never knew. But even if they couldn't take me all the way, like Marilyn, they would somehow believe in me just enough. They would see me for what I could be and think I was beautiful. Like a diamond in the rough. They would take me away to my new life. And my new world. Where everything would be different.

(Pause)

Yeah.

(Pause)

Lived that way for a long long time. In my head, dreaming like that. It was nice.

(Pause)

And one day. It just stopped.

The confidence in which Nel reads for Linus quickly diminishes, and she returns to her shell. But maybe a little less covered than before.

Linus, taps his fingers together below his chin as he considers. Then:

LINUS

A diamond in the rough.

(Pause)

An impressive, and brave, display, Miss Foster. Courage is one attribute I'm looking for. However--

Nel, smiling at Linus's feedback, frowns at the last entry.

LINUS (CONT'D)

--I need something else.

NEL

(Eager)

Anything.

LINUS

A particular trait I seek that escapes me, thus far.

(Pause)

Vulnerability.
 (Pause)
 An innocent soul.

Nel looks confused, but remembers what the girl in the corridor said, and now she becomes guarded.

LINUS (CONT'D)
 The role advertised, and what you just read for is not in fact the role at hand.
 (Pause)
 I did not get where I am now by remaking fifteen year old pictures, Miss Foster.
 (Pause)
 What we have before us is something far more lucrative.
 (Pause)
 A pot of gold, if you will.

Nel's smile returns, which she attempts to hold back.

NEL
 Whatever it is, I can take it on Mister Tozer. Whatever it takes.

Linus thinks for a moment, looking at Nel with narrow eyes.

LINUS
 A good statement then.
 (Pause)
 Whatever it takes.
 (Pause)
 Willing to please. To go the extra mile.

Nel's concern and guard returns.

NEL
 I mean, I would throw myself into any role you gave me. Dedicate myself--

LINUS
 (Interrupting)
 --Are you a virgin, Miss Foster?

Nel is shocked, and it's apparent. But she does not immediately reply. Her face tells us that she's appalled, but it also begins to let us know what she is reluctantly willing

to do for this chance.

NEL
(Whispers)
No.

LINUS
Have you had many lovers? How many?

NEL
Mister Tozer, I don't see what this
has to do--

LINUS
--Then go home and stop wasting my
time.

NEL
(Desperate)
No. Please. Mister Tozer.

She reaches for words but struggles to find a voice. On the
fence between dignity and shame, or failure and success.

NEL (CONT'D)
I've had two lovers. Two.

LINUS
Did you love them?

NEL
What--Yes. I did. Yes.

LINUS
Both of them? Truly?

NEL
(Teary)
Alex Goddard was my high school
boyfriend who I doted on, until he
cheated on me with Sarah Lawson, his
sisters friend. She was older than me.
And prettier. It took me two years to
get over it then I met Harry. We were
engaged and I was happy while. Until
he cheated on me as well. Countless
times, I've been told. That ended
three weeks ago.

(Pause)
I won't ask what this is about anymore
and I'll trust it's for a good reason,

because all I want to do is act. It's all I'm good at. I think.

Nel is fighting off tears by this point.

Linus watches her eagerly.

LINUS

A good soul. Innocent I think, and crushed by no doing of your own.

(Pause)

This role is different than what you'd expect, Miss Foster. It requires particular obstacles to be overcome. Obstacles that cannot be directly explained.

NEL

Okay.

LINUS

I repeat. There is no seat at the table for explanatory dialogue. It requires your bravery to overcome your vulnerability. And with that, your trust.

(Pause)

We want the treasure at the end of the rainbow, do we not?

(Pause)

Success is no accident, I can vouch for that. Success is hard work. It is perseverance, it is learning. But most of all it is sacrifice.

(Pause)

Will you know this? Will you sacrifice?

NEL

I--Yes. Yes I will.

LINUS

To your right, against the wall, is a wardrobe.

(Pause)

I need you to get in it.

There is a good period of time as Nel absorbs what Linus has asked of her, and she slightly shakes her head without even realising.

NEL
Mister Tozer?

LINUS
The obstacle, Miss Foster. Trust.
Courage. Do you want this?

NEL
Y--Yes.

LINUS
Then get in the wardrobe.

For what seems like an eternity, Nel shuffles over to the large wooden wardrobe standing at the end of the room.

Linus watched on, sweat beading from his forehead.

She hovers her hand over one of the handles, hesitating, then twists it and opens the door.

Darkness lies in front of her.

She turns around to Linus, struggling not to cry.

NEL
And--And--Do I get in?

Linus does not answer. He watches her, there is sorrow in his eyes, but also greed, which prevails.

We see Nel standing facing us, the dark hole of the wardrobe behind her, when two black demonic arms lash out, clasp around her mouth and torso. She lets out a muffled scream as whatever it is in the wardrobe drags her into it.

The door slams shuts.

Linus watches on, breathing heavily, as we can hear thuds and suppressed screams coming from within the cabinet. The doors open and close minutely, slamming onto the wooden frame, before stopping, and the innocent blood of Nel Foster begins to seep out onto the floor into a pool of claret.

Linus, nervously, wanders over to the wardrobe. but not too close.

Suddenly one door swings open and a small leather pouch is thrown onto the floor before him. Then the door slams shut again.

Linus picks up the pouch, undoes the string tie and peers inside. It is full to the brim with sand-size pieces of gold.

He looks at it with devilish delight.

There is a fair sized safe in the opposite corner of the room, to which Linus goes to and opens.

Inside are a number of similar leather pouches mixed together with bundles of cash.

He chucks in the pouch in his hand and slams the safe door shut.

CUT TO BLACK: