The Conversion Draft #8

By

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CHARLIE DRAKE (25 - 28) is tossing and turning in bed. He's bare-chested, wearing BOXER SHORTS. His eyes are squeezed tightly shut, as if he's in physical pain. He moans underneath his breath. Whatever he's dreaming about, it's not good.

The bedroom lights suddenly turn on, seemingly on their own. Charlie wakes up with a start, his eyes wide. He looks wildly around the room.

Cut to two CREATURES standing in the doorway. The creatures are dressed in BLACK SUITS. They smile warmly at Charlie and we see that their teeth are rotted, black. They bleed from the gums. Their hair should be long, shoulder length at least. They look vaguely masculine. Archaic-looking HIEROGLYPHS are painted in red on their faces. The hieroglyphs should be original. However, they should vaguely resemble something Egyptian or Sumerian.

> CHARLIE DRAKE You two. I've been dreaming about you for weeks. I knew you would come for me. I'm ready.

The creatures step into the room. They walk to either side of Charlie's bed, still smiling.

CREATURE 1 But we haven't come for your soul, Charlie Drake.

CREATURE 2 We only want your guilt.

CREATURE 1 We offer absolution.

CREATURE 2 We want your conscience. We want to free you.

CREATURE 1 Will you accept our absolution?

Charlie closes his eyes, inhales deeply and exhales slowly.

CHARLIE DRAKE Yes. I've been waiting for this. CREATURE 1 Good. You can join the woman.

CHARLIE DRAKE

The woman?

CREATURE 2 Sandra Bell is with us now.

CREATURE 1 She has been absolved.

Close up on Charlie's eyes. He's terrified.

EXT. DESOLATE ROAD - DAY

Charlie's standing in the grass on the side of an old COUNTRY ROAD. He's wearing a well-worn BACKPACK.

There's a car coming down the road. It's OLD, DISHEVELED. Charlie watches as it heads his way, finally stopping beside him.

A woman reaches over to open the passenger door for him. It's SANDRA BELL (21 - 23). Charlie registers a look of surprise when he sees just how beautiful she is. But she's worn, too. There's a world-weariness about her demeanor.

INT. CAR - SIDE OF THE ROAD - DAY

Charlie gets into the car, closing the door behind him. Sandra smiles at him quickly, nervously. She turns her head to look at the steering wheel.

A few silent, tension-filled seconds follow. Sandra briefly glances at Charlie again and then looks back at the steering wheel.

SANDRA BELL I guess this is our last chance to back out, eh?

CHARLIE DRAKE I'm ready. But you can back out whenever. I mean it. Say the word and we'll call this off.

Sandra turns toward Charlie and offers him her hand.

SANDRA BELL My name's Sandra.

A look of severe surprise on Charlie's face.

CHARLIE DRAKE That wasn't -- look, we shouldn't use real names. Just in case.

SANDRA BELL Who said that was my real name?

Charlie takes a deep breath, exhales.

CHARLIE DRAKE You said you knew a good spot.

SANDRA BELL

Yeah.

Sandra steps on the gas. The car lurches forward.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

We're deep into the woods. Sandra and Charlie sit side by side on a downed log. Charlie's backpack lay at his feet.

CHARLIE DRAKE Why do you want to do this, anyway?

SANDRA BELL I...I...well, I haven't said this out loud to anyone yet. But I guess it doesn't matter now. (beat) I killed someone.

CHARLIE DRAKE (ambivalent) Why?

SANDRA BELL He was my boyfriend. Sort of. We'd only been dating for a few weeks. Anyway, he tried to attack me.

CHARLIE DRAKE (getting excited) So you killed the fucker first! Goddamn! Good on you!

SANDRA BELL

(shaking her head) No. It wasn't like that. We'd gone bar hopping in the city. We were pretty drunk, so we decided to get a hotel room instead of trying to make the thirty-minute drive back to town. We were in the room when he started getting rough with me. He hit me. He hit me so hard I bled from my mouth.

CHARLIE DRAKE

Goddamn.

SANDRA BELL

I backed away and he ran after me. I moved out of the way and he was going so fast he went through the sliding glass doors and collapsed out on the balcony. It was the most gruesome thing I had ever seen. Blood everywhere, glass everywhere. But looking at him there, moaning in pain, all it did was make me angry. I thought about the things he probably wanted to do to me and my only thought was to get him the fuck out of my life. Permanently. It took all my strength, but I managed to get his half-unconsious body over the balcony railing. His throat was so cut up he could barely scream when I pushed him over the side. But he did scream.

CHARLIE DRAKE What happened after that?

SANDRA BELL

I told the police about how he tried to attack me. I said he ran through the glass door and tumbled over the balcony. I know, it was an absurd story. But the officers didn't ask a lot of questions. Turned out my supposed boyfriend had just done five years for armed robbery. He was a thug. I wasn't the first woman he had tried to beat up. He had a pretty bad reputation. I don't think the cops were exactly mourning his loss. Charlie's not impressed. He casually bends over and unzips his bookbag.

CHARLIE DRAKE So you got away with killing a scumbag. World's a better place for it, if you ask me.

Charlie pulls a HUNTING KNIFE from his backpack.

SANDRA BELL It doesn't matter who he was. Once you've killed someone, something just -- breaks. Inside, you know? It's all you can think about. At least that how it was for me.

Charlie pokes at his index finger with the hunting knife, drawing DROPLETS OF BLOOD with each little thrust.

CHARLIE DRAKE I still can't believe that's why you got in touch with me. All those forums I posted on, and for years, too. I thought I had disguised my intentions too much, with code words that were too hard to decipher. But you found me. And you took the time to e-mail me, practically begging me to do this. All because of some scumbag.

Sandra stares as Charlie keeps poking himself with the knife.

SANDRA BELL Isn't that unsanitary?

CHARLIE DRAKE (sullen) Like it matters, Sandra. Like it fucking matters.

SANDRA BELL I guess it doesn't. But..you're not really going to use that, are you?

CHARLIE DRAKE You said I could do it the way I wanted. That's what you agreed to. SANDRA BELL I just...want it to be quick.

CHARLIE DRAKE It'll be quick. Well, quick enough, anyway. Your death, my fantasy, remember? But whatever, like I said, you can back out whenever you want.

SANDRA BELL (voice steadily rising) Just do it, then. Do it! Fucking do it now!

Suddenly enraged and motivated, Charlie tackles Sandra to the ground.

Recognizing what is about to happen, a look of fear and desperation comes across Sandra's face.

SANDRA BELL (barely more than mouthing the word)

No.

He makes a quick slash at her throat. Blood drains into the dirt. Charlie starts stabbing her like a madman. One stab right after another. He's in a rage.

INT. CHARLIE DRAKE'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

CHARLIE DRAKE She was right. It doesn't leave you. Since I was a kid, I thought I wanted to take a life. I was so sure I wanted it.

CREATURE 1 We have taken her guilt. It has given us engergy.

CREATURE 2 Death didn't cure her, as she thought it would. She sought us out in the next world. She found us.

CREATURE 1 We freed her. Look... The creature points toward the doorway. Sandra's standing there. She's staring into nothing. She's empty, drained of any life, a kind of somnambulist, a creature in a permanent hypnosis.

CHARLIE DRAKE

Sandra? (to the creatures) What is this?

CREATURE 1 She has been freed.

CREATURE 2 We have given her absolution.

CHARLIE DRAKE And this is what you're offering me?

CREATURE 1 Let us feed.

CREATURE 2 Let us give you absolution.

CHARLIE DRAKE No. I don't want it. Not if I'm gonna end up like her. Goddamn it, I don't want it. Please.

CREATURE 1 You're bleeding.

Charlie touches his nose. Blood is pouring out, running down his chin and onto his chest. Helpless, desperate, Charlie looks over at Sandra.

CHARLIE DRAKE

I'm sorry.

More blood. Now it's flowing from Charlie's eyes.

CREATURE 2 You're dying. But it doesn't matter. You'll come to us in the next life.

CREATURE 1 You'll beg for absolution.

The pain is enormous. Charlie screams. He doesn't take his eyes off Sandra, who is simply not there. Nothing behind her eyes.

CHARLIE DRAKE I don't want it.

Blood soaks through Charlie's chest, like fruit punch spreading over a paper towel. He grabs at his chest, at the blood, which flows through his fingers.

Charlie falls face-first onto the bed, dead.

CREATURE 1 He will find us in the next world.

CREATURE 2 No. He is beyond our reach. And he has taken her with him.

CREATURE 1 Why do some of them hold out like that? Why do they choose death over absolution?

CREATURE 2 A perplexing thing, indeed. But it doesn't matter. There will always be someone who needs us.

EXT. MEADOW - DAY

An open meadow. Springtime. Sandra sits cross-legged underneath a tree. Charlie lays with his head in her lap.

> SANDRA BELL (singing) Twinkle, twinkle little star, how I wonder what you are...