

RELUCTANT DESTINY

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EXT. STREET SCENE-AFTERNOON RUSH HOUR

LAURA is walking down a crowded Hollywood Boulevard sidewalk. She is talking on the phone and seems harried as she tries to carry on the conversation while dodging costumed characters, Hollywood crazies, construction, and other hazards.

LAURA

I might as well be wearing a T-shirt that says "Just fell off the turnip truck." You can see it from space. Why didn't you warn me about what a bumpkin I was when I told you I wanted to move here? The other day I tried to look jaded and my boss gave me her neurologist's card and said he could do wonders for that eye twitch. I TWITCH when I'm trying to look cool! And by the way, I'm curvy, or fat, by Hollywood standards. The wardrobe person on set the other day had to go into the special stash of dresses for extras that actually have hips! I am relentlessly uncool and I'm sleeping on the floor and living on wonton soup. I have to go. I have to cross Highland now and I don't think I can talk on the phone without getting run down. I know. Destiny, my ass, sister. Bye.

She hangs up and stuffs the phone in her bag, upset. She hurries to cross the street before the light changes. PRICE rounds the corner and collides with her. There is something awkward and a little unsettling in his manner.

LAURA (CONT'D)

God damn it!

The tears she has been holding back bust loose. PRICE looks at her and draws a sharp breath. He gives her a look of astonished recognition and a little fear.

LAURA (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. It's not your fault. I just feel like the universe is trying to let me know I'm not welcome here.
(off his look) Um, are you OK?

PRICE

It's a you. (beat) You're here.

LAURA

For the time being, yes. OK, well...sorry again. See you later, I mean, bye.

She walks away. After a few moments of hesitation, PRICE begins to follow her, staying about half a block behind her, but never taking his eyes off of her. LAURA reaches her building and starts to go up the stairs when she spots him.

LAURA (CONT'D)

Dude! I said I was sorry.

PRICE

I can't help it.

LAURA

Yeah, well, my parents fucked me up, too, but I'm not stalking people over it.

PRICE

You don't understand. Would you walk somewhere with me?

LAURA

Do I actually look like I'd say yes to that? I mean, we do have "Law and Order" in the Midwest. And "SVU."

LAURA is now glancing around nervously and digging for her keys.

PRICE

I'm going to leave this piece of paper right here-

He takes the paper out of his shirt pocket and puts it under a brick he finds on the ground.

PRICE (CONT'D)

-and I'll walk away. Slowly. Please just look at it and then decide if you want to come with me.

He walks away. Slowly. LAURA debates with herself, rolls her eyes, and approaches the brick as if it's a live bomb. She edges the brick off with her foot, picks it up, and looks at it. The piece of paper is a drawing, yellowed and frayed. It is a drawing of LAURA, exactly as she looks today, with tears in her eyes. It is dated December 15, 1992. She runs after PRICE and falls into step beside him.

LAURA
Where did you get this?

PRICE
I drew it.

LAURA
What's with the date? I could put 12/15/92 on a piece of paper today.

PRICE
When I was twelve.

LAURA
On some crappy old piece of paper.

PRICE
It was the afternoon-

LAURA
Have you been spying on me?

PRICE
-of my mother's funeral.

A beat.

LAURA
What?

PRICE
I felt so alone and overwhelmed. Everyone around me was caught up in their own grief, and I think it was just easier not to deal with me. I sat down at a blank piece of paper and let everything out through that pencil. And I drew you. And you cried with me.

Another beat.

LAURA
Where are we going?

PRICE
I want to show you the rest of my work.

LAURA
Oh.

They walk in silence, then-

LAURA (CONT'D)
This is crazy.

PRICE
Yes.

LAURA
If this is some kind of seduction scheme that you run, I have to tell you, it's really clever. You deserve every conquest if you put this much work...into...

PRICE
You don't really want to be talking right now, do you?

LAURA
No.

PRICE
So you don't have to.

LAURA takes this in and swallows her nervous chatter. They reach PRICE'S loft. He opens the door and LAURA steps in after a small hesitation. PRICE follows her in, closes the door, and turns on the lights,

revealing a huge painter's work space. There are paintings on the walls and the floors, some finished, some are works in progress. All of them contain images of LAURA. One is a painting of her as a child, dancing on stage. Another shows a teenage LAURA in the arms of a high school sweetheart.

PRICE (CONT'D)

I hate that one.

LAURA walks slowly around the studio in a state of shock. She stops in front of a painting that shows a young LAURA asleep in her room and a shadowy figure at her door.

PRICE (CONT'D)

I hate that one more.

LAURA

You...are sick. I don't know how the fuck you know these things about me, and I don't want to know. I'm getting out now and if you make one move to stop me I'll have the cops on the way. I've got them on speed dial.

She pulls out her cel phone.

PRICE

I don't know how I know these things. I'm sorry. I don't even know your name. Until 15 minutes ago I thought you existed only in my head. Just don't run away from this, please.

LAURA

Run away from what? Some tortured Oedipal psycho who's been following me MY WHOLE LIFE!

PRICE

This is innocent. I'm innocent-

LAURA

The fuck you are.

PRICE

What if this is real? Just consider it. What if I'm not lying?

LAURA

That's impossible.

PRICE

Is it? My muse has just come to life before my eyes and I'm not going to question it! Nothing in my real life has ever measured up to you. Nothing and no one. And here you are.

LAURA

You're crazy.

PRICE

I know. I am. God help me. But not about this.

LAURA

So what am I supposed to believe? That somehow the gods sent you a vision of me, so now I have to be with you or something? Don't I have a say in this?

PRICE

Of course you do.

LAURA

I don't know you at all.

PRICE

Tell me your name.

LAURA

It's Laura.

PRICE

Laura.

LAURA

I don't believe in fairy tales. A month after the happy ending the princess finds herself picking the prince's boxers off the castle floor and she wonders what the hell she's done with her life. Or she sits there and drinks too much mead to help her forget the fact that the prince is tumbling in the stable with a scullery maid.

PRICE
(laughing)
Mead?

LAURA
Don't, OK? This is hard (she starts laughing a little).

PRICE
Nice reference.

LAURA
Thank you. I worked the Renaissance Faire once.

PRICE
Me, too.

LAURA
Oh, so now we have enough in common to...I'm sorry. This is too much for me. I can't think.
She gets up to leave.

PRICE
Don't think.

LAURA
I don't trust you.

PRICE
Why don't you look at me and tell me that?

LAURA
No.

PRICE
Tell me to my face and you'll never have to see me again.

LAURA
Psycho.

PRICE
I promise.

LAURA looks into his eyes and starts to tell him. She can't finish.

LAURA
I don't...this is crazy.

PRICE
I know.

LAURA
If you turn out to be a stalker-

PRICE
Laura-

LAURA
Tell me your name so I can tell the authorities.

PRICE
Price.

LAURA

Price. If that is your real name. We're taking whatever this is slow.

PRICE

Good idea.

LAURA

Bullshit. So, do you eat?

PRICE nods, amused.

LAURA (CONT'D)

Would you like to get some dinner?

PRICE

Alright.

LAURA

OK. I'm just trying to get you back to a public place, you know.

PRICE

I know.

PRICE offers his hand. LAURA hesitantly takes it. The two of them walk out of his loft and slowly down a garbage-strewn alley toward a brilliant West Coast sunset. With her other hand, LAURA squeezes the keychain mace bottle in her purse, just in case.

