

"FRAGILE"

Written by
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FOURTH DRAFT

August 17, 2003

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FADE IN:

1. INT. KITCHEN - DAY

1

The blinds have been drawn but the light is on. Unwashed plastic plates crowd the sink and there are empty frozen dinner packets stacked on the kitchen table. But it is not the mess that is out of place here: it is the PADDING taped to the corner of the cupboard doors, to the benches, to the edges of the table. Pieces of uneven, hand-cut foam padding taped with thick masking tape.

We HEAR more tape being pulled from a roll and broken off.

Near the door to the lounge room, LAYTH HORREX is on his knees with his back to us, attaching more padding to the bottom corner of the fridge door. He wraps the tape around it, pushes it down firmly. There is a blood-stained bandage on his right hand.

From behind him, we can see he is unkempt and untidy. His hair is greasy and unwashed, his clothes dirty. There are blood stains on the back of his shirt.

The phone RINGS and he turns his head slightly, waiting for the answering machine to kick in. It does.

LAYTH (V/O; filtered)
Layth here. Leave a message.

2. INT. LOUNGE ROOM - DAY

2

The answering machine BEEPS. There is a pause, then the booming VOICE of an OLDER MAN, somewhat frustrated.

OLDER MAN (V/O; filtered)
Pick up Layth. I know you're there.

The OLDER MAN speaks over faint vaudeville MUSIC and a WOMAN barking instructions. Nearby, a LION growls.

We move along a row of trophies and medals, gathering dust on one of the shelves in the lounge room. There are little golden statuettes on top of some of the trophies; one has a man jumping through a flaming-hoop on a motocross bike, another is engraved with the words CIRCUS PERFORMER OF THE YEAR: LAYTH HORREX. There is a framed photo of LAYTH wearing a helmet, flanked by two CLOWNS giving a "thumbs-up" gesture to the camera.

OLDER MAN (V/O; filtered)
I can't keep covering for you,
Layth. Stan's doing your clown
routine but I got no-one else for
the trapeze.

3. INT. KITCHEN - DAY

3

LAYTH is turned towards the lounge room, listening to the message. His face is drawn and haggard. There is a bruise on his forehead and three of four shaving cuts around his mouth and chin.

He focuses back on the fridge door, wrapping a fresh square of padding to the final corner. The message continues in the background but LAYTH ignores it.

OLDER MAN (V/O; filtered)
No-one takes risks like you do.
(growing desperate)
Call me.

He hangs up.

The light in the kitchen, a single globe in the middle of the room, flickers once or twice, then goes out. LAYTH, lit only by thin shafts of light poking in between the blinds, looks up at it.

LAYTH

Damn.

4. INT. KITCHEN - LATER

4

LAYTH lifts his leg awkwardly up onto an uneven wooden chair in the middle of the room, directly under the blown globe. There are pillows and cushions arranged around the chair on the floor.

Holding a new globe, LAYTH lifts his other leg up onto the chair and tries to steady himself. The little chair squeaks, shakes a little. A bead of sweat trickles down LAYTH'S forehead.

He looks downward, struggling to keep his balance. He reaches up hesitantly but the globe is out of reach. He stretches a little but he loses his balance and the chair wobbles, slipping out from under him.

He hits the ground with an unsettling THUMP, his jaw cracking against the untaped corner of the kitchen table on his way down.

5. INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE FRONT DOOR - DAY

5

Through the peephole we see ANNE-MARIE, a plumpish woman in her late thirties.

6. INT. HALLWAY INSIDE/OUTSIDE FRONT DOOR - DAY

6

LAYTH, pressing a fresh bandage against his bloody jaw,

undoes the chain and unlocks a succession of locks and latches lining the door. He opens the door wide.

ANNE-MARIE

What's so urgent?

LAYTH

I'm glad you came.

ANNE-MARIE steps in briskly, taking off her coat and walking past LAYTH towards the lounge room. She notices the bloody bandage, the cuts and bruises.

ANNE-MARIE

I can't stay. Dale's waiting in the car.

LAYTH

He won't come in?

ANNE-MARIE

We're going to a tarot card convention on the coast.

LAYTH

Why won't he come in?

ANNE-MARIE

You know he doesn't like you, Layth. He can't stand the way you treat --

ANNE-MARIE stops mid-sentence, looks about.

ANNE-MARIE (cont'd)

Where is she..?

LAYTH

She left.

ANNE-MARIE stops in her tracks, spins to face LAYTH with wide, startled eyes.

ANNE-MARIE

She left? When did she leave?

LAYTH

Last week. The week before. I don't know.

ANNE-MARIE

What did she say?

LAYTH

She said she couldn't be there for me anymore. Said I didn't

appreciate her. Made her life
difficult.

(defensive)

I never took her for granted.

ANNE-MARIE looks on, concerned.

7. INT. KITCHEN - DAY

7

LAYTH is standing near the chair in the middle of the room.
ANNE-MARIE is in the doorway, taken aback by the state of
the kitchen.

LAYTH

I just need you to hold the chair.

ANNE-MARIE

(ignoring him)

You're a wreck, Layth. You need to
find somebody else. Fast.

LAYTH

It's not that simple.

ANNE-MARIE

You can't go it alone. You know you
can't.

LAYTH

Just hold the chair.

ANNE-MARIE looks at him, considering it. But she thinks
better of it.

ANNE-MARIE

It's not going to happen, Layth.

LAYTH

You won't help me change it?

ANNE-MARIE

If I help you with this one, who's
going to help with the next one?
And the one after that?

ANNE-MARIE turns and marches off down the hallway.

LAYTH

(calling out)

What do I do then?

ANNE-MARIE (V/O)

Call an electrician. Or get HER
back.

The door slams shut and LAYTH stands alone in the middle of the kitchen.

8. INT. KITCHEN - LATER

8

The kettle is letting out a high-pitched SQUEAL as LAYTH enters. He grabs it off the hotplate but the steam billows out and catches his hand. He YELPS in pain, tosses the kettle into the sink and whips his burnt hand under the cold tap.

The phone RINGS again and he turns. The message kicks in.

9. INT. LOUNGE ROOM - DAY

9

LAYTH stumbles into the room, knocking his knee into the trophy cabinet. He clutches it, grimaces.

LAYTH (V/O; filtered)

Layth here. Leave a message.

The speaker, a noticeably ocker MALE, talks in a raised voice over screeching tyres and revving engines.

STAN (V/O; filtered)

Layth? Mate? It's Stan. Are you there? Pick up the bloody phone, Layth. Layth? Pick it up or I'm coming over..

LAYTH snatches at the phone. He speaks with sudden urgency.

LAYTH

It's not safe.

STAN (V/O; filtered)

I knew you were there. Mr Sperling said you're not coming in again. What the hell's going on?

LAYTH

It's not safe.

STAN (V/O; filtered)

Of course it's not safe. That's why we do it.

LAYTH

I have to go.

STAN (V/O; filtered)

I don't jump through flaming hoops for anybody, mate. We're a team, remember?

He hangs up as STAN'S voice trails.

STAN (V/O; filtered)(cont'd)
Layth..?

LAYTH looks off, taken by a thought.

10. INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

10

We're close on the clean-shaven, spectacled face of a PRIEST as he stretches up towards the light fixture on the ceiling. LAYTH is holding the chair steady.

PRIEST
You're taking it all too literally,
Layth. Guardian angels don't leave.

LAYTH
But she --

PRIEST
They don't sit on your shoulder and
help you shave and hold the chair so
you can change globes. They're an
omniscient presence, around us
always. They NEVER leave.

LAYTH
But she said --

PRIEST
They don't have chats with us and
tell us what we're doing wrong and
how much they dislike us. Guardian
angels are not blonde women with
wings.

The PRIEST removes the old globe and hands it down to LAYTH, who passes up the new one.

LAYTH
She was a brunette.

The PRIEST gives him a look before turning back to the light fixture.

LAYTH (cont'd)
What if you just don't SEE yours?

Behind the PRIEST'S legs, opposite LAYTH on the other side of the chair, is an attractive BLONDE WOMAN in a cream top.

She's holding the chair firmly, just like LAYTH, and she has a strange glow about her. She smiles at LAYTH.

PRIEST

I'm a priest, Layth. I see everything.

LAYTH stares directly at the BLONDE WOMAN when he speaks.

LAYTH

She said I didn't appreciate her.
Said I was over-confident, reckless.

The BLONDE WOMAN stares back, her interest sparked. The PRIEST finishes replacing the globe and steps down from the chair, putting a consoling hand on LAYTH'S shoulder.

PRIEST

You need to start pleasing God, not this little imaginary angel of yours. She doesn't exist.

The PRIEST walks over to collect his coat from the hook on the back of the door and the BLONDE WOMAN follows him with her eyes. But they are hurt, lonely eyes; like the eyes of a child who longs for her father's attention.

LAYTH

But she does.

LAYTH stares directly at the BLONDE WOMAN -- she smiles back with a warm, appreciative smile.

The PRIEST fixes his coat and flicks on the light, smiling as it illuminates the room.

PRIEST

Glad I could help.

LAYTH is still looking at the BLONDE WOMAN as the PRIEST picks up his briefcase.

LAYTH

You could stay. I'd like you to stay.

The PRIEST heads off down the hallway, calling out as he goes.

PRIEST (cont'd) (V/O)

Must go. Others need my help. See you at mass.

And then he's gone. But the BLONDE WOMAN remains, still staring back at LAYTH from across the other side of the chair.

The PRIEST passes an OUT OF ORDER sign on the lift door as he heads for the stairwell.

The door closes gently behind him, the word STAIRWELL filling the frame. His whistle trails off as he heads downward.

12. INT. STAIRWELL - DAY

12

We're CLOSE on the PRIEST'S leather shoe as it slips on the step. His hand reaches vainly for the banister as he falls.

From the floor below, we HEAR a half-shout, followed by three of four quick THUDS, each punctuated by the PRIEST'S winded groans.

The PRIEST'S body comes to rest with a final THUD.

His briefcase tumbles to the floor in front of us, a crucifix and a book titled "MAINTAIN YOUR BELIEF: A SELF-HELP GUIDE" spilling out.

13. INT. KITCHEN - DAY

13

LAYTH is hunched over the edge of the kitchen bench, undoing the masking tape from the corner. He rises, not seeing the open cupboard door above.

The BLONDE WOMAN sees the impending danger and shields his head from the door's sharp corner, meeting LAYTH'S eyes as he stands.

He smiles at her, appreciative.

FADE OUT