

LAST DEATH OF 1962

WRITTEN BY

CHAI SIMONE

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702-666-1109
chaigalicia@gmail.com

FADE IN.

1 INT. LAUREN'S CAR - NIGHT

It's 1962. The road is a long and isolated one. It's snowing. The driver is LAUREN DOBOWICKI, 30s-40s. Worry lines are set on his sunken on his face. He tends to keep his arms close to his body, that sort of thing. Pale, blonde, short, glasses. Capote-like.

He's absorbed in his own concerning thoughts. We see the faint silhouette of the desert in darkness passing by looking like a graveyard.

TITLE OVER - BEGINNING CREDITS.

2 EXT. DARK ROAD ACCIDENT SITE - NIGHT

Drips of blood stretch slowly over headlights.

Lauren steps out of his car, his face drained at the sight of what's ahead. He walks forward unsteadily, shaken. His breathing is off.

We hear people *skittering* about someplace behind him.

WOMAN (O.S.)
(distant)
Someone call 911!

MAN (O.S.)
I'll run and find a phone!

Lauren continues forward and comes to a stop at the sight before him: an OFFICE WORKER hanging halfway out his car window. The man's head is bashed in and dark with blood, an eyeball half popped out. Headlights from behind illuminate him. Long beat. He's still until his mouth hisses a bit and his body relaxes into death.

CUT TO:

3 EXT. DARK ROAD - NIGHT

The white dashes painted on the road dart by, pulsating as we drive on.

4 INT. LAUREN'S CAR - NIGHT

Lauren is haunted. Beat.

LAUREN (V.O.)
He was on his way to work.

CUT TO BLACK.

5 INT. OFFICE - NIGHT

The lights turn on. Bothered, Lauren shuffles to his desk in the windowless spot in the very back of the office. He sits staring at his typewriter. Prepares it. He writes: "He was on his way to work." Continues to stare at the paper, his fingers hovering over the keys.

LAUREN (V.O.)
I'm evil.

We see a fast montage of pictures and news articles concerning corpses from accidents or homicides (pulled real life), all written by him. We see an article titled "Molestation of the common man is the catalyst for genocide."

LAUREN (V.O.)
Picture after picture, word after word of articles I've given to the public eye... How could I continue to care about each and every face I see bored out, long in horror, unidentifiable? How could I keep track? ... I've stopped trying to see the humanity in all of it. Dead is dead, what does that make me?

Lauren is sickly, sweaty. Sounds like he's having a hard time breathing. He pulls a bottle of dark liquor out of his desk and drinks it.

CUT TO:

CLOSE. He looks as if he's swooning, dizzy: body tilting from one side to another a little bit. He takes a deep breath and stops. Goes still.

LAUREN (V.O.)
My life has been one long, white line... of nothing.

There's sadness in his eyes. He feels at his typewriter with a lost intimacy.

LAUREN (V.O.)
Nothing.

CONTINUED:

He sees a roach on his papers ahead of him and jumps at the sight of it. It jumps too, falling into his barely open bottom file cabinet. He looks at it wide-eyed and shaking a little. The roach skitters and jumps around, clanging against the metal.

CUT TO BLACK.

6 INT. OFFICE - NIGHT

"He was on his way to work" is still the only thing written on the page. We hear the roach is hopping about in the cabinet as if it's throwing itself against the walls.

Lauren stares at the cabinet, sniffs, and wipes his eyes. Lays his hands on the keys and begins to write.

LAUREN (V.O.)

His body was torn from the inside through his organs, most likely. The causality started in his head, as they often do in cases such as these. An eyeball nearly hung out like a plug loose in its socket.

After a moment, Lauren scratches the last line out and continues:

LAUREN (V.O.)

We are all made to come across some sort of tragedy external to our own lives. "Though I experienced it, that experience was not wholly mine..." It was not my death, not my kill. I was run into. The reason as to why he died the way he did is still a mystery, as there was hardly anything he could have run into out there, and my involvement leaves me feeling incredibly peculiar. I do not know the meaning in the place of it happening to me. I don't want to believe there is any. For many of my readers, perhaps you feel the same, perhaps that is why you read about death every day as I write it. And yet I have this creep on my shoulder, a weight I'm bearing made heavier. As I'm aware from over ten years of reporting,

death leaves a slimy trail on everyone. Today it was a gross opportunity to not be the reporter so much as the reported. It's a dirty feeling.

(beat)

When I saw his dead face, it felt like I was looking at myself.

The roach suddenly thumps against the cabinet loudly. Lauren's eyes dart towards it, startled. Switches back to writing, he crosses out the last sentence.

LAUREN (V.O.)

I am reminded that behind every sensational square and circle word and letter report on the murder of John or the rape of Jane, there are tears. There are lives still ruined past them. There was a life.

(bitter)

Someone is crying over that man, I assume.

He pauses. Something goes strange in Lauren's eyes. The roach's scratching grows.

LAUREN (V.O.)

Or they could be alone and no one will cry over them. There is no loving wife and darling children to abandon, no friends to pour one out. This is many a man's greatest fear--

He punches the last key, the typewriter dings sharply. He looks down annoyedly at the scratching in the cabinet. Frustration bubbles, he tries to hold it in. Looks like he wants to scream. Lauren sticks his hands over his mouth and thinks, breathing heavily.

Lauren opens the file cabinet.

LAUREN (V.O.)

It had to fall onto my manuscript.

Stares at it for a moment. The roach is not visible. Beat, Lauren drops his head into his hands and begins to cry.

LAUREN

I'll never get it finished.

LAUREN (V.O.)

You stale, pungent fuck. You fucking disgusting piece of shit. You disgust me so fucking much I wish I could kill you myself.

CUT TO:

Lauren unhappily masturbates while reading through a crime journal/magazine (the one he works for).

LAUREN (V.O.)

My novel was simple. That's how it started. Fast and easy. Writing began a decade ago, right after I proposed. It's about a handsome man who met a girl, a beautiful girl. He married her. They had children. He aimed to get a promotion at his job. It was pure Capra.

Lauren's breathing becomes labored and wheezy.

LAUREN (V.O.)

Several years days ago, I was at a bar. I drank too much and I wrote for a very long period of time. When I read back at the stained pages, the story had taken a turn I hadn't expected. The man got the promotion. And he hated himself. He *expired*.

The novel is now 566 pages. I've entrapped myself in a story about a character that doesn't even want to live.

Lauren kicks the file cabinet, hard, and stops. He catches his breath.

CUT TO:

Lauren carefully takes his manuscript out and looks through the last words written on it. He takes the old page out of his typewriter and inserts a new clean one in. Stares ahead.

MOVE IN. He stares at his typewriter then about the room, within his own mind. Lost. Beat. He reads from the last page he wrote.

LAUREN (V.O.)

"What have I done? --Married, gotten a job. What for? I'm a shell. I bleed, it's just blood; my face is broken, it's only bone. My flesh sags and hangs, it's just skin. The photographs and stories I hear every day are nothing, give me nothing. Five weeks ago my doctor handed me a cigarette and told me I had a bad heart and too much plaque in my veins from a bad diet, even though ten years ago we were told all this food was healthy for us. God, I'm gonna fucking die."

We see and hear the visuals he describes next. They're loud, nearly overbearing his speech.

LAUREN (V.O.)

In my nightmares, there are those chugging, humanoid machines, gears, pumps, dark bodily fluids gushing and spraying out of them as they grind and screech in a crowded steel box. I'm wandering through a factory that doesn't want to be a machine.

7 EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD / STREET - DAY

The sky is dark. Lauren chases after something with a knife. He drops it as he runs, then tackles his WIFE.

LAUREN (V.O.)

I see the wife I married beside me in bed. I remember the only night we fucked was to consummate. And she nearly choked me to death. I was trapped in my body, paralyzed, I couldn't move. I didn't know how to. My hands looked blue in the dark.

8 INT. DARK BEDROOM - FLASHBACK - NIGHT

Lauren's hand is outreached, shaking as he's being choked. It is turning bright blue.

LAUREN (V.O.) CONT'D

I didn't think she had the gall to kill me, at least right away. Now she fucks other men and treats it as normalcy. I'm the breadwinner, she's

the baby maker. That's how she likes it to be read.

9 EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD / STREET - DAY

He chokes her to death.

LAUREN (V.O.)

If only those children she had were mine, maybe I'd care for something.

10 INT. OFFICE - NIGHT

Lauren sits plainly, his eyes dark. Beat. We see the empty page in the typewriter.

LAUREN

I'm out of words. I have nothing left to say.

11 INT. OFFICE - DAY

The office is busy. Lauren proofreads work, exhausted. His face twitches and his hands shake a little. His manuscript is put away.

A COWORKER walks up to him, a little belligerent.

COWORKER

Hey. You have that final draft done?

LAUREN

Working on it.

COWORKER

You're looking pale. Maybe you, me, and the wives ought to go out to the beach sometime? Or not, but Martha needs something to do.

The guy chuckles and walks off while Lauren speaks, his voice quiet.

LAUREN

Thank you.

Lauren tries to keep working. The roach knocks about in the cabinet. Lauren scratches his head frustratedly; his face scrunches up as he rubs his temple. Tries to keep focused. Beat.

He looks up to see someone in the distance, his expression shifts. Distracted, maybe relieved. LUCY (30s/40s, European, possibly British) walks quietly into frame but for her low heels clicking on the floor. She has a kind yet sort of withdrawn-demeanor, a stack of papers and folders in her arms. She approaches Lauren's desk. Her eyes are dark; she looks tired.

LUCY

Hello.

LAUREN

Hello.

LUCY

It's been a while. you look quite a bit...

LAUREN

Pale? Paler than usual.

Lauren wipes his glasses on his sleeve.

LUCY

Tense. ... May I?

Lucy motions to an empty chair next to Lauren's desk.

LAUREN

W-will Driver--

LUCY

He's on a break, so, so am I.

LAUREN

Oh, good. Then by all means. How have you been?

LUCY

(sits)

I've been--I suppose I've been alright. Don't know what else I could say about it.

LAUREN

Yeah, me too.

LUCY

Really?

(slight humor)

--That's disappointing to hear. You've

been gone the whole week.

LAUREN

Say, what terms am I on with upper management?

LUCY

Em, not good ones. You didn't leave any notice.

Lauren looks away.

LAUREN

You look nice today.

Something changes in Lucy's face.

LUCY

If you ever need help, you shouldn't be afraid to ask me for it.

Lauren looks at her, unsure how to respond.

LAUREN

Ditto.

LUCY

(pauses)

Do you? Need help?

LAUREN

...I don't know. No. I'm alright.

Roach *scritch-scratches*.

LUCY

Well--what's (that?)--do you hear that that?

LAUREN

(quick)

No.

LUCY

It's coming from inside your cabinet...

LAUREN

It's a roach.

LUCY

Oh, ew. Gosh. Here, why don't you take it out--

LAUREN

What? Uh--

LUCY

Is anyone looking?

Lucy scans the room.

LAUREN

I don't think so, no.

She opens the cabinet but can't see anything inside but the manuscript.

LUCY

Ha, your novel?

LAUREN

--The bones of it.

LUCY

That's a lot of bone.

LAUREN

(smiles in spite of self)

It's big-boned.

LUCY

I'd love to read it sometime when you both are good and ready.

LAUREN

(insincere)

Okay.

(nods)

Sorry, I'm tired.

LUCY

I can tell.

(pauses, reads him)

I won't pry.

LAUREN

I read in the paper that that new Frank Perry film is showing. I know you're a fan of his.

LUCY

Yes! I'm itching to see it. Maybe we could go after work?

LAUREN

--How would your husband feel?

LUCY

He doesn't care for the movies much. I have the sense it's because I'm so taken by all of them. Maybe he just needs an excuse to play contrarian, him and his little ships in bottles and cards.

LAUREN

Sounds like him.

Lucy gives him a curious look, though the statement humors her a little.

LAUREN

Sorry.

LUCY

(confrontational)

Be honest with me. How does he sound to you?

LAUREN

... By way of your descriptions of him, a hypocrite.

LUCY

(pauses)

I haven't been to a real theater since I was little, y'know. Back home with my parents. I miss it. I remember the magic of it.

LAUREN

Really? How little?

LUCY

This.

Lucy measures absurdly low to the ground, they chuckle.

LAUREN

Could you walk?

LUCY

Not--

A door in the office opens and Lucy is caught. She jumps, startled.

LUCY

(to Driver)

I'll be with you in a moment. I'm delivering papers.

DRIVER (O.S.)

Doesn't look like it.

Lucy keeps her mouth shut.

DRIVER (O.S.)

Keep walking.

The man walks back into his office as ANOTHER MAN *laughs*. Short beat. Subdued, Lucy turns back to Lauren.

LUCY

I do have papers for you, actually. Important, considering your absence.

LAUREN

(sighs)

I'm sure.

Lucy sifts through her stack of papers. She glances at him a bit oddly, then hands him a collection of envelopes.

LUCY

I'll see you around. We'll have to have lunch sometime.

LAUREN

Lucy--

Lauren puts a hand on her knee. They stare at each other. Silently, Lucy leaves another paper on Lauren's desk and walks away. Lauren looks after her as she does, limp. He shrinks back, emptied.

He takes the paper and opens it--it's a note. He reads it.

LUCY (V.O.)

I wish my husband was dead.

Lauren stares out, confused. Beat as he takes it in.

LUCY (O.S.)
(next scene)
It's sad.

12 INT. GALLERY - DAY

Lucy stares at a painting.

LUCY
It's silly, at least. People thought
it was immoral. Masochistic, or
something. Through word of mouth or
whatever else it was, they called it
'*The Vampire*,' just because the woman
holds the man in an embrace. You see,
the man's arm is up, he's receiving
her.

Lauren is observing her.

LUCY
'Love and Pain.' ... It scared people.

Lauren keeps staring at her.

LAUREN (V.O.)
I fell in love with her.

13 INT. OFFICE - LATER

Lauren continues to stare ahead. Long beat. He crumples up
Lucy's note and drops it into the bin.

14 INT. OFFICE - NIGHT

In the background, people pack up. They say goodnight, see
you tomorrow. Lauren stares at his typewriter for a moment,
then begins to type.

LAUREN (V.O.)
"His eyes were shrunken, the skin of
his fingers tightening about the bone.
His dusty knuckles cracked without
intention. He was less of a person,
managing his weight and the ache under
the cold weather. He would sit at the
foot of the mirror, gaping his mouth
at his reflection when no one was
around. He wondered when the time
would ever come when he would return
to the brightness he carried not long

ago, but then wondered when he started growing earhairs and loose skin and yellow under his toenails, and somehow this disgusted him less than the idea of dying beside his wife. Time was catching up. He had to get it back. He would take back everything. It was as simple as that."

Lauren inhales. He slides the carriage back violently.

CUT TO:

Lauren looks up LUCY HEMMWICH in his address book. He's shaking again, his hair out of place.

15 EXT. STREET - DAY

Lauren rushes down the street trying not to look conspicuous despite his growing desperation. We track his profile down the sidewalk. There are flashes of article titles regarding homicides, flashes of dead faces.

LAUREN (V.O.)

(hurried, anxious)

Don't look scared. Don't look suspicious. Don't leave fingerprints. They always look for fingerprints. Don't let them suspect anything until you move out of the country. Would she even want that? What does she want from me? I don't understand. It doesn't matter. I'll help her. She's a dead fish like me. Dead. Don't think too hard about it but think clearly. If he dies, he's relaxing. Early retirement. I'm sure maybe he's tired too, like us. Caught in the gears like us. He wants to be dead like us, but her doesn't love her. He's hurt her, I know it. I love her. I love her so much. She has to love me, she has to love me back. I get it! I get it now, crimes of passion. I understand. It hurts, it hurts so bad, I have to do something about it! I never thought I'd feel this way again...

We hear sounds of banging and whirring of machines, insects, and typewriters distorting into each other intensely.

LAUREN (V.O.)

It's chemical, I know she can smell me. She can smell how I'm rotting, how every time she looks at me it stings. Does she know how much pain she causes me? I want more from this stupid life, I need to feel more!

Lauren approaches:

16 EXT. LUCY'S HOUSE - DAY

He catches his breath. Hypes himself up to knock, or ring the doorbell... or knock. He takes a moment. He wipes his sweat away and rings the doorbell.

17 INT. LUCY'S BATHROOM - MEANWHILE

Lucy gets up from the floor in a daze, her work clothes covered in blood. She shakes like a ghost. She drops the knife into the sink and stumbles into the shower, turns it on for a second trying to clean herself off. The effort is futile. She gets out, disregarding the shower.

18 INT. LUCY'S HOUSE - DAY

She reaches the door and opens it.

19 EXT. LUCY'S HOUSE - DAY

Lauren stares at the bloodied Lucy and Lucy at Lauren with his hand on a gun in his pocket. Beat. They both look confused, then regretful. They retreat into her house as if falling into it.

20 INT. LUCY'S HOUSE - DAY

Lucy lies on the couch, the blood on her person has dried. She stares at the ceiling, expressionless. Lauren sits in a chair next to the couch.

Lucy sits up and looks at him. Puts a hand on his knee but recoils it at realizing she got some blood on him. She tears up, staring at the knee.

LUCY

I'm a monster.

LAUREN

... Me too.

LUCY
You aren't.

Beat. Lauren takes her bloodied hand. She gets up, willing to let him go but he clings to her. She walks out.

21 EXT. STREET - DAY

They walk down the streets, hand-in-hand. The atmosphere is strange; dreamy as they go along, covered in blood.

22 EXT. CITY - DAY

They walk through the city. No one notices them.

LUCY (V.O.)
I always wanted to be happily afraid.
There are different types of fear. The
fear you live for and the fear that
kills you.

23 EXT. DRAIN - DAY

They retreat to the base of a water drain. They lie down and watch the sky: it looks vast, appearing to grow bigger and bigger.

LUCY (V.O.)
You always get what you desire in a
fantasy. And when you do, you're still
happy. You have power over your own
ending.

They kiss passionately. The clouds pass. Beat.

CUT TO:

Lauren aims his gun perfectly at his and Lucy's heads as they rest.

24 INT. DRAIN - DAY

We travel through darkness. Darkness, until we come upon Lauren and Lucy walking through, *covered in blood*.

Darkness further, until we find them again, *only less bloody*.

Again, *but with no blood*.

Again, and then they look like they're stuck together by the chests and heads: wet, stumbling around with eyes drawling.

25 EXT. DESERT - DAY

Lauren drives them in a convertible through a lone road in the desert. We hear the typing of the typewriter as it comes to a stop.

LAUREN (V.O.)
I finished.

They laugh and smile, freed as their hair whips back in the wind. *Music plays on the radio.*

LUCY (V.O.)
How does it end?

FADE TO BLACK.

...The scratching of roaches. We see a blurry, distorted face of a DEAD MAN, shot in the eye.