

FAREWELL CINEMA

written by

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FADE IN:

1 DEEP BLACK SPACE

We hear the RATTLING sound of a 35 mm projector. It intermingles slowly with the ROARING of rain.

Superimpose:

"FAREWELL CINEMA"

The sound of the rattling projector and the rain fades into muffled watery sounds as an embryo might hear. The soft TICKING of a clock fades in and mixes with the sound of a THROBBING heart gradually slowing down until it almost falls silent.

A curved slot of light slowly appears and breaks into the deep blackness of the space. The light disappears again returning the space to black, but reappears in the same way.

This time the light keeps expanding into the shape of a circle flattened at the lower half. We approach it rapidly until the white light finally fills the space. We almost imperceptibly fly through a membrane.

CUT TO:

2 INT. CINEMA - FOYER - EXTREME CLOSE-UP - EYE - NIGHT

The muffled sounds stop and it is quiet. We piecemeal wing out, finally viewing an eye. A car PASSES by in the distance. The face of a young woman gradually appears.

3 INT. CINEMA - FOYER - NIGHT

We leave the woman's face and begin to float through the room. We see the foyer and HER - an attractive woman, mid twenties, in a tasteful cocktail dress, massaging her aching temples with her fingers.

She turns around and looks for a mirror, only now realizing that she does not know where she is.

HER
(hesitantly)
Hello?

She stands in the middle of a grand cinema foyer that has seen better times. The slightly worn red carpet has faded into the color of the walls with their cracking plaster. She twists around looking for help. An abandoned machine whirs and spits out a constant stream of popcorn.

HER (CONT'D)
 (louder)
 Hello, anyone there?

She finds a door with a "PRIVATE" sign; the door is ajar. We hear SOUNDS emanating from the room as she approaches the door.

4 INT. CINEMA - PROJECTION ROOM - NIGHT

She takes a peek inside the room.

HER
 (embarrassed)
 Excuse me ... anyone there?

She cautiously enters the room that looks very large despite its functionality. In the center stands a 35 mm projector. HE sits at the editing table, working on a large film reel. We only see him from behind.

HER (CONT'D)
 (somewhat relieved)
 Sorry to bother you, but could you help me? My name is ...

HIM
 (kindly interrupting)
 Yes, please?

He stops his work and turns around to her. He is an elderly gentleman with well-groomed white hair; he wears a fine grey suit and white cotton gloves.

HER
 Oh, thank you so much ... I ...
 ugh ...
 (hesitatingly, somewhat
 confused)
 ... I don't know how I got here.

HIM
 Not to worry, my dear. Nobody can hurt you here.

He gives her a kind smile.

HER
 Thank God! The last thing I knew I was going to a cocktail party with my best friend, and then I ... I think I must have lost the plot somewhere ...

HIM
 (smirking at the phrase)
 Oh dear. Take a seat and try to
 collect yourself.

He offers her a seat, POURS her a glass of water, and passes it to her.

HIM (CONT'D)
 Here you are, drink this.

He turns back to his work. She barely takes a sip, looks around and sees some of the equipment that probably belongs to the 35 mm projector.

HER
 (cautiously)
 And you? You run this cinema?

HIM
 (affably professorlike)
 Good Lord no, I'm just the
 projectionist. It's my boss who
 runs it.

HER
 I beg your pardon.
 (awkward silence)
 ... and ... as the projectionist,
 you ... isn't that cello...

HIM
 Celluloid. 35-millimeter
 projection. Correct.

HER
 I thought that died ages ago.

He gives her a piercing look.

HIM
 (slowly)
 Some people think too much.

HER
 What do you mean?

HIM
 (melancholically)
 Analogue cinema is the only true
 cinema, and always will be. Digital
 imaging just can't ...
 (hunting for words)
 ... can't bring life to the screen
 ... the way a 35-millimeter film
 reel can ...

He sighs and lowers his head.

HIM (CONT'D)
Analogue cinema ...

A brief moment passes; he straightens up again, looking deep into her eyes.

HIM (CONT'D)
... but you're right, I'm afraid.
It's curtains.

HER
Sad. I didn't see anyone in the foyer. Is there anyone else who appreciates your work and comes to your cinema?

HIM
People like you ending up here give me a reason to go on.

HER
Do other people come here?

HIM
Just giving a single guest an enjoyable experience makes it all worthwhile.

She takes another sip of water and he focuses on his work again.

HIM (CONT'D)
Speaking of enjoyable ... Have you realized that joy and love are the same thing?

HER
If you say so. Maybe ... but you can't live off love and joy.

HIM
Maybe that's what you think.

HER
And what does the guy that runs the cinema think? Is it worth it for him?

HIM
He's never complained.

HER
What's on today?

HIM
(pleased)
Look, I'm just splicing the last reel. Just came in. You'll love it.
(MORE)

HIM (CONT'D)
You could say I've spliced it just
for you.

She steals a glance at her gold watch; she'd rather find her way back into her old life than watch a film. She does not notice the second hand moving as slowly as if time had stopped.

HIM (CONT'D)
I can see your impatience, my dear.
You know you should calm down a
little, watch the movie, and then
we'll see. We have plenty of time.

HER
How long is it?

HIM
That's not a question you should be
asking before a good film. The
apparent length of a film will very
much depend on its quality.

She pauses briefly for thought.

HER
May I ask then whether it's a good
film?

HIM
Of course, you may, but I can't
give you an answer - that's for you
to decide. But I can tell you
what's the key for a good film.

HER
I'm all ears.

HIM
Light and shadow.

HER
(frowning)
Hmm?

He rummages in a box of film cuttings and finally fishes out a strip of film.

HIM
Here you are, look.

He hands her a short strip of film with completely white frames. She takes the celluloid and holds it up against the light.

HIM (CONT'D)
Look at these frames. A completely
white picture is useless.
(MORE)

HIM (CONT'D)

Your audience won't see anything in them. It's the dark parts, the shadows, that tell the story. See what I mean?

HER

Very enlightening.

HIM

(smiling at the play on words)

And that's the same with the lives of people you see in my films. Wait and see.

HER

(eagerly)

Okay, all right then! Let me see the film.

She finishes her glass, puts it down on the table and walks towards the door.

HIM

To the right, the auditorium is dead ahead, can't miss it. Enjoy the film!

HER

Thanks! I'm happy if you're happy.

HIM

I almost forgot, the best seats are in the middle of the middle row - that's where you'll get the best sound.

He smiles and gestures towards the auditorium.

HER

Thanks for the tip.

She leaves the room. She pokes her head around the door again before leaving the room.

HER (CONT'D)

(politely)

Would you mind if I took some popcorn?

HIM

(smiling)

No, of course not. It's there for the enjoyment.

5 INT. CINEMA - AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

She goes into the middle of the deserted auditorium with a bag of popcorn, and chooses a seat half way along the middle row. Looking around again, she sits down on one of the soft red velvet folding seats, remaining the only viewer in the sumptuously decorated hall.

She looks without anticipation at the huge, arched canvas, and nibbles on her popcorn. The light dims, the black curtain draws aside and the film begins. We only see the light and shadow play on her face as the scene brightens.

Her eyes widen and she opens her mouth to a gape as popcorn falls from her hand. The screen to our back, we slowly withdraw from her, finally taking in the whole hall.

The seats around her seem to disappear; it feels as if she sits on the only velvet cinema seat in the whole cinema. Very slowly she seems to come adrift from her seat and begins to hover in mid air. The popcorn in her bag also becomes weightless.

The screen throws a furious play of light and shadow on the scenery as she hovers weightlessly in the auditorium. Darkness closes in from the walls.

Suddenly, the whole cinema shakes as if in an earthquake, flashing bright and dark. She shakes and arches like in pain. Dust and little wall pieces fall from the ceiling. It seems like the cinema is falling apart. The light and shadow of the film projection diffuse with flashing blue light.

All of this repeats three times while the PUMMELING of rain from the beginning fades in with a constant crescendo. The third flash remains white.

6 EXT. STREET IN FRONT OF A BAR - NIGHT

She lies on the wet tarmac of the street with the same rigid gape that she had before when she was hovering in the auditorium. A stream of blood drips from her temple and gets mixed with the gradually diminishing rain.

The top of her dress has been torn open, defibrillators expertly positioned on her chest by a PARAMEDIC. People surround her, some concerned, some just gawping. An ambulance with a flashing blue light is parked on the side of the street, a car with accident damage and a police car aside are in the background.

PARAMEDIC

One - two - and go!

Her body arches from the shock. Having escaped death, she gasps for air, her eyes wide open, and blindly sits up.

Satisfied that she is out of danger, the paramedics stop applying resuscitation. Her BEST FRIEND throws herself onto her and hugs her in relief.

BEST FRIEND
I thought you'd ...

Pause.

HER
(completely exhausted but
smiling)
... sometimes we just think too
much.

An expression of irritation crosses her face as she seems to remember something. We see the second hand on her watch ticking dutifully as it should, when her fingertips feel for the wound on her head. The paramedics lift her carefully on the ambulance stretcher. On the street remains some popcorn.

In moving further back to oversee the entire scene, we recognize an abandoned old cinema near the bar where the accident happened.

BEGIN CREDITS

The paramedics carry her to the ambulance. The crowd gradually dissipates, most going back into the bar. The crashed car is towed off, and finally the ambulance drives off with the blue light flashing, but no siren.

END CREDITS

The street is now empty and abandoned, illuminated only by the lights from the bar and the dim street lamps. Suddenly the door of the cinema opens and the old man of the projection room steps outside.

While locking up the cinema with a big bunch of keys, he turns his head looking upwards to the rain. He frowns and makes a hardly noticeable gesture with his finger. The rain stops immediately.

He walks off. In the background one of various movie titles at the cinema board glows dimly: "FINIS - COMING SOMEWHEN".

FADE OUT.

THE END