

THE SQUALL OF CHANGE

by

Nathaniel Bellasea

Nathaniel Bellasea
npdayspring@gmail.com

FADE IN:

INSERT - ARTWORK

A pen and ink drawing, grainy black on white background: skulls, faces, spider legs, lotus arms, and other body parts in a cosmic montage that conjures thoughts of ascending into darkness.

THWAK! THWAK! THWAK! THWAK!

The slow and steady sound of a knife against a cutting board.

CUT TO:

1 INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

A large knife makes easy work of some carrots. Slow and deliberate cuts.

A WOMAN's hand white knuckles the knife.

THWAK! THWAK! THWAK!

The knuckles belong to SONJA, she's mid 20's, and not paying attention to what she's doing.

As she stares off into the space in front of her...

THWAK! THWAK! --

Sonja looks down at her hands. The knife is lodged in her finger. A trickle of blood between the blade and skin. A wedding ring is on her third finger.

She looks back up calmly... And sees her reflection in a mirror... And right behind her is another WOMAN.

This is VALERIE, mid 20's, and looking at Sonja without much expression.

Val puts her hands on Sonja's shoulders and leans in close like she's going to kiss the back of her neck.

Her hand slowly moves down Sonja's arm.

Sonja's eyes follow Val's hand down as it delicately wraps around her own hand and the knife.

Sonja looks back up at the reflection of them both.

Val kisses the back of Sonja's neck.

Sonja trembles slightly, as if a chill runs through her, and closes her eyes.

When she opens them, Val is staring directly at her with a sinister smile...

THWAK!

2 INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

A hand turns on the light switch.

Sonja, in her pajamas, walks to the sink and splashes water on her face. She has all her fingers, no scars. It was a dream.

Sonja touches the spot on her neck where Val kissed her; so real.

She grabs her necklace, on it, a wedding ring. She looks at it longingly before tucking it back under her shirt.

3 INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Sonja cuts vegetables in the kitchen. She's wearing the same clothes as before, and staring off into space again.

THWAK! THWAK!

From behind her...

VAL (O.S.)

Sonj...

Sonja freezes and looks down. The knife is positioned right above her finger.

Val moves in closer behind Sonja.

Her hand delicately wraps around Sonja's as before.

VAL (CONT'D)

You gotta be careful.

This time she takes the knife and sets it down next to the cutting board.

Val kisses the back of her neck, and hugs her from behind.

VAL (CONT'D)

I like these fingers.

Val's other hand wraps around Sonja's, their fingers interlace, their wedding bands close to each other.

VAL (CONT'D)

I gotta go, my love.

Val kisses her neck one last time.

And on the way out she pauses at the kitchen door.

VAL (CONT'D)
Need anything while I'm out?

Sonja shakes her head no, ever so slightly.

VAL (CONT'D)
I'm gonna stop at the grocery after
work...

Sonja mouths these last words in sync with Val like she's heard them a million times over.

VAL (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Shouldn't be long...

The words hang in the air long after Val leaves.

4 INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Sonja splashes water on her face and looks in the mirror.

The lights flicker off and on briefly.

She looks up at them and they stop.

Sonja pulls the hand towel from the rack, it squeaks.

She dries her face.

The lights flicker off and on again, slower than before...

Off... And on...

Her face is completely covered with the towel.

Off... And on...

The room behind her is empty.

Off... And on...

Val stands behind Sonja. Her face is lacerated and bloody like she was in a horrible accident.

Off... And on...

Val's gone, the room is empty, the lights stop flickering.

Sonja slowly pulls the towel away from her face.

She casually wraps it around her neck like a makeshift noose and pulls it tight, cutting off air flow.

Her face goes red.

She pulls tighter still, suffocating herself.

Her eyes get watery.

Right before blacking out she releases the towel and gasps for air.

A minute to compose herself in the mirror.

SONJA

Coward.

5 INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Sonja takes one step into the hallway...

VAL (V.O.)

(echoing)

Shouldn't be long...

And stops dead in her tracks.

Right outside the bathroom door sits an old chair.

Sitting in that chair is Val, lacerated face, pale skin, dead eyes stare straight. The last vestiges of a death rattle escape her mouth.

Sonja stands there frozen. She doesn't look down directly at Val, but sees her out of her periphery.

Val's eyes dart toward Sonja suddenly.

6 INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

The dream is similar. Sonja cuts carrots. Val stands in the kitchen doorway.

VAL

Need anything?

Sonja looks at her this time.

SONJA

Don't go.

VAL

But I have to. Don't worry--

SONJA

Please...

VAL

What's wrong?

SONJA

You always leave. Every night you leave me again. Why can't you just stay? Once?

VAL

You should ask yourself that. It's your dream.

SONJA

A shitty dream of a memory.

VAL

All the same, I gotta jet. Shouldn't be long now.

Sonja's alone again. She slides down the cabinet to the floor.

She looks at the knife in her hand as a way out.

And traces the tip of the blade up her arm lightly.

SONJA

Just a dream. Doesn't matter what I do.

She presses the tip of the knife against her wrist...

VAL (O.S.)

(gently)

Hey... Sonj...

Sonja looks up to see Val leaning against the doorway, munching on some of the cut vegetables.

VAL (CONT'D)

What are you doing on the floor?

Sonja looks questioningly at Val.

There's something... different about her.

SONJA

What are you doing back? You never come back.

Val takes a bite of carrot, it snaps loudly throughout the kitchen.

VAL
Come on, walk with me.

SONJA
Where? My dream always ends here.

Val shrugs her shoulders.

SONJA (CONT'D)
You seem different.

An awkward pause as Val chews loudly.

VAL
(sternly)
Get off the floor, Sonja.

Sonja gets off the floor.

VAL (CONT'D)
And leave the knife. You don't need
it anymore.

Sonja drops the knife to the ground, it bounces and the sound
echoes through the room.

Val leads Sonja out of the kitchen and into a small hallway.

7 INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Where they walk a couple steps past a bathroom that has a
chair sitting right outside of it. The light in the bathroom
is flickering on and off.

Val walks by nonchalantly.

Sonja follows her with more caution and looks into the
bathroom.

SONJA
Is that my bathroom?

The lights flicker and suddenly she sees herself, standing
in front of the mirror, choking herself with the towel.

It's more tragic when observing from a distance.

The lights flicker and the bathroom is empty again.

Sonja looks down the hallway for Val, but the hallway has
now opened up into a small ballroom shrouded in darkness.

8 INT. BALLROOM - NIGHT

Val disappears into that darkness without looking back.

Sonja stops on the edge of the darkness.

SONJA

Val?

A spotlight appears on the wood floor of the ballroom in front of her feet.

It bounces playfully for a moment, then moves the same direction Val went, coercing Sonja to follow.

Sonia follows the spotlight across the floor and passes over the shirt that Val was wearing.

The light moves forward more and pauses over Val's pants.

Sonja kneels down to look at them.

A SHADOW FIGURE moves behind her quickly.

Sonja turns her head quickly, but it's gone.

The spotlight moves to

9 INT. STAGE - CONTINUOUS

A small stage elevated above the floor.

The light stops in the center where Val is lying in the fetal position, her naked back to Sonja.

VAL (V.O.)

(echo)

Shouldn't be long...

Sonja walks up to the edge of the stage.

SONJA

Val?

Above the stage and along the wall are some low rafters with various objects: small drums, cymbals, fake birds, etc... like some old vaudeville theater.

Sonja reaches her hand toward Val's back shoulder.

Val's eyes open up, they're black now, and a sinister smile creeps across her face.

Just as Sonja is about to touch her, her eyes closes again.

And one by one the weird objects above the stage sound off and animate on their own. Each one a different tone and unique movement.

Sonja's head starts to reel back and forth between the objects. A cacophony of sound fills the air.

Then, it all stops, all at once.

Sonja looks down at the stage for Val, but she's gone.

To her left, a player piano starts up.

She walks over to the piano.

It's keys move up and down on their own, and an eery light glows from inside.

The song ends and the piano goes silent.

From behind her, a similar melody starts playing, only more refined.

She spins toward the sound.

In the dark distance of the room she sees what looks like a CONDUCTOR playing a grand piano.

The music draws her in.

The conductor and piano seem to gradually float toward her, or maybe she's the one floating... She can't be certain, but now she's standing right there by the piano.

10 INT. BALLROOM PIANO - NIGHT

And she can see the conductor is wearing a suit, and has pale, wrinkly skin, like an apparition. His bony fingers move across the keys deftly.

He stops his tune and slowly turns his head to look up directly at her.

His eyes are a cloudy white, no iris, no pupil, no emotion.

She stares back into those vacant eyes.

They terrify her, and she takes a step back.

The Conductor doesn't move, doesn't speak, he just looks at her, directly into her soul.

She takes another step back...

And bumps into something.

SONJA

Aaah!

She jumps and spins to find a MAN standing there. He's dressed in a suit, but unkempt hair and bare feet.

SONJA (CONT'D)

Who the fuck are you?

MAN

Whoa, Sonj... it's me...

She stares back at him.

SONJA

Me who? I don't know you.

His face softens a little.

MAN

Yes you do. You gave me this.

He holds up his left hand, fingers splayed apart. A familiar wedding band sits on his ring finger.

She recognizes the ring, then instinctively grabs for the one around her neck.

SONJA

No...Val?

MAN

Bingo.

SONJA

Can't be. You're a man.

MAN

And why not?

SONJA

Because that's not how this dream goes.

His voice is sultry silk; mocking menace.

MAN

And how does this dream go?

SONJA

(under breath)

Not like this...

MAN

I can be anyone here... any... thing in this place.

SONJA
Why did you choose that then?

He shrugs a little.

MAN
Don't you recognize me?

SONJA
No. Should I.

MAN
You will.

SONJA
What should I call you?

VAL
Val's fine.

SONJA
Right, I guess that makes sense.

A loud scraping from behind as the Conductor pushes the piano bench backward and stands up.

SONJA (CONT'D)
And who's that?

The Conductor's bare feet shuffle across the floor in a small gait, his back is hunched over.

VAL
The Conductor. A husk really.

SONJA
And what does he do? I don't recognize him either.

VAL
Why would you?

SONJA
He looks dead.

VAL
(sweetly)
Sonj... everyone's dead. They just haven't realized it yet.

SONJA
That's morbid.

VAL

Truth. And please stop thinking in terms of him or her, it's limiting, and will only make the next part harder.

SONJA

What's the next part? And how can I dream of someone that I've never seen before?

Val points across the ballroom to where a warm light looms like a rectangular cut-out in the wall.

VAL

Take a look for yourself.

SONJA

Aren't you coming?

VAL

I'll be right behind you.

As before, Sonja floats instead of walks.

Behind her Val's shape contorts in the shadows. It becomes a black silhouette, and on the wall behind the human shape is the shadow of a dark creature with spiny tentacles.

As Sonja gets closer she realizes it's her kitchen.

11 INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

She looks in and sees herself on the floor, leaning against the cabinet. Dead eyes stare back up at her.

She has long cuts up her forearms starting at the wrists, a small pool of blood surrounds her dead body.

Sonja looks down on herself.

SONJA

That's me.

Behind her, Val glides from the shadows. His face is bloody and lacerated, eye swollen and purple. He's in a hospital gown.

VAL

Yep.

SONJA

So, if that's me, then... This isn't a dream is it?

VAL
No, it isn't.

SONJA
And if I'm not dreaming...

VAL
Keep going...

SONJA
Then... I'm dead.

VAL
Bingo.

SONJA
Like, really dead.

VAL
You finally found your courage.
It's like I said before, luv.
Everyone's dead, they just haven't...

SONJA
(same time)
... Realized it yet...

The moment sinks in.

SONJA (CONT'D)
Wait, so...

Sonja turns around and finally sees Val's bloodied face.

SONJA (CONT'D)
Aaah!!! What the fuck happened to
you?

VAL
Car crash.

Recognition creeps across Sonja's face.

SONJA
No...

She takes a couple steps back.

12 INT. BALLROOM CENTER - NIGHT

SONJA
You're him. You're the other driver.

VAL
I was the other driver.

SONJA
You ran the light, going like ninety.

VAL
I was drunk.

SONJA
Why? Why are you him?

VAL
Thought it might help put you at ease.

SONJA
Really?

Val shrugs.

VAL
Closure.

SONJA
Closure? What the fuck is wrong with you?

VAL
I'm dead, too. It's funny, no?

SONJA
Funny? No, it's not fucking funny. You were in prison.

VAL
I was. I found a way out. Not unlike yourself there.

Val nods to the kitchen floor where Sonja's corpse sits.

VAL (CONT'D)
Liberating huh? Deep down, it's what you always--

Sonja slaps the shit out of Val.

SONJA
It's your fault she's dead.

VAL
Yes, well, like I was saying... limiting beliefs. What was it you wanted? Justice? Revenge? Fairness? Oh if only I had been a decent person and died in that crash the same time as your sweet Val, right?

SONJA

Yes.

VAL

How many sleepless nights did you spend wishing horrible things on me? How many days almost walking into my hospital room? But you couldn't do it. Because you were a coward, right? Because once you started digging into my past you found out that part of what you wanted was true... I actually was a decent person. A decent person who made one giant mistake, and paid for it.

SONJA

Not good enough.

VAL

Oh really? You don't think prison was enough? You don't think having Val's death on my conscience was enough? What about my family? What about my kids growing up without a father?

SONJA

What about me? You took away the best thing in my life. The only person that made it bearable. My world is ruined now. I'm sorry about your kids, but it was your choice to drive that night. Your choice to end it all.

VAL

Yours too, luv. But I've already accepted that. Have you?

Sonja stands there silently. Her face says enough.

SONJA

So what is this then? Purgatory? The afterlife? Crossing over?

VAL

Limiting... This... is a conversation. A transition. Your final choice.

As if on cue, the Conductor walks out of the shadows, seemingly coming out of nowhere.

He makes his way to an old gothic organ with two rows of keys and opens a piece of sheet music.

The Conductor hits a couple notes, a loud drone comes from everywhere.

VAL (CONT'D)

Are you ready?

SONJA

For what? What's he doing?

VAL

I wouldn't worry about it. The melody is an ancient one. A stirring lullaby for the waking. Devastatingly beautiful if you know what to listen for.

SONJA

What am I listening for?

VAL

You're not, apparently.

A loud bang from the corner of the room as a door flies open.

SONJA

Jesus...

Smoke and atmosphere with a reddish-purple hue spills out of the door frame.

A loud bang from the opposite corner as another door opens.

SONJA (CONT'D)

Fuck...

This one has a bright warm-white light shining through the door frame. It's almost blinding.

VAL

It's time to choose, Sonja. What's it gonna be?

SONJA

What's what gonna be?

VAL

Your forever.

SONJA

Like, eternity? Heaven and Hell?

VAL

Something like that. Again... limiting beliefs.

SONJA

You mean I have to choose?

VAL

I mean you get to choose. Or I could do it for you...

SONJA

Hard pass... I guess I thought it wouldn't be up to me. Like, all the stuff I did in my life would kind of be measured in some grand gesture of reckoning and judgement. But instead you're saying it's just up to me. If I go through that door over there then I'm dooming myself, but if I go through that one then I'm in paradise. It can't be that easy can it? A whole life's worth of mistakes and failures. Unfulfilled dreams. The times I was depressed and selfish. All the years of people pushing their problems on each other, their organized guilt, all the bad shit they do, the love they share... and you're telling me that everyone's got it wrong. All they have to do at the end is choose for themselves? It can't be that simple.

VAL

Is it that simple?

Sonja thinks about it.

SONJA

Well, yeah. If it's up to me I'm going through that door.

Sonja points to the light door.

VAL

Do you deserve to?

SONJA

Hey, fuck you. Of course I do. I did some good. Everyone deserves to be happy.

VAL

Do they? Why carry around all those bags then? Why cling to guilt? Look at you. You were so unhappy you killed yourself.

(MORE)

VAL (CONT'D)

So selfish yet you couldn't stand to be by yourself. Couldn't stand to just be ordinary, boring, Sonja; who wished that the bad man who killed her wife would get raped every day in prison.

SONJA

So what? I'm supposed to damn myself when I could spend the afterlife with-- wait a second-- which way is Val? What door did she choose?

The Conductor's tune starts to crescendo and get more ominous.

VAL

She chose the right one for her truth. Come now, you need to hurry.

SONJA

What the fuck does that mean?

VAL

(annoyed)

Does it matter? Which way do you think you'll see her?

SONJA

That way. She was a good person. She would've ended up there.

VAL

Sounds like you've decided then.

SONJA

I mean, come on, was it ever really in question.

VAL

You'd be surprised what a person thinks they deserve. What they think they'll find through there.

Sonja moves closer to the light door.

SONJA

So, I just walk through it like normal right?

VAL

You're stalling.

13 INT. BALLROOM DOOR - NIGHT

Sonja steps into the frame of the door. Her body is silhouetted against the light.

SONJA
Will I see you there?

VAL
You're not really seeing the real
'me' now.

SONJA
But Valerie right? I can't wait to
see her beautiful face again.

The light coming through the door gets smoky.

VAL
Yes... That face.

And changes into a reddish purple color.

SONJA
Who else will be there?

VAL
Hmmm...? Everyone goes there.

SONJA
Wait, what?

Sonia looks down at her feet, they're covered in reddish brown sludge, and smoke from the doorway encircles them.

She turns around and sees into an abyss. It's like looking through a door and down on a universe bathed in crimson hues. At the center is something primordial and ancient.

SONJA (CONT'D)
No...

Terror on her face.

She turns around and runs to Val.

14 INT. BALLROOM CENTER - NIGHT

The Conductor hits an ominous note.

Slats in the wall by the organ open up and the music gets louder and deeper, as if rushing from the outside in.

The force of it stops Sonja in her tracks before she can reach Val, and she stands there unable to move.

SONJA

But I chose the light.

Val steps in close to Sonja's face. His eyes are jet black.

VAL

Everyone chooses that door. Even when they feel they don't deserve it. Fear and disbelief, Sonj. That's the thing you can't quite wrap your head around. The thing everyone knows is true, but can't accept. You fear your actions don't matter, and when faced with the proof, when something comes out of nowhere to take your choice away, you refuse to believe it. A car wreck, sickness, death...

(mockingly)

Why did this have to happen to me? Right?

SONJA

You said it was up to me.

VAL

It was never up to you, any of you. In the end it just doesn't matter.

SONJA

What was all this about then?

Val shrugs playfully.

SONJA (CONT'D)

Why are yo--

Val's hand covers Sonja's mouth, silencing her.

VAL

Enough already. There is no other side. Just Azathoth. Eternal feeding. Eternal slumber. Your tiny human brains can't fathom the greatness surrounding your meaningless little lives. Good, bad, right and wrong. None of that matters when you ascend into Azathoth.

Sonja gets pulled backward across the floor.

SONJA

No...Val...

VAL

It is the oldest. It's dream spawned
creation. You are nothing. And
from nothing you will return. To be
slowly devoured in the belly of Its
universe.

She screams as she gets pulled into the abyss.

The door slams shut.

The slats in the wall close.

Val's eyes roll in the back of his head and he falls to the
floor like a husk of empty skin.

The Conductor's final notes slowly dissipate.

He turns over his sheet music and shuffles off into the
darkness.

Next to the sheet music is a drawing...

INSERT - ARTWORK

A pen and ink drawing, grainy black on white: A woman's face:
distorted and combined with sea creatures and monstrous
crustaceans. A tentacle encircles one of the eyes. The
woman resembles Sonja.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END