

A BALLAD OF
MORBID FANTASY

Written by

Zackary Akers

zack.akers.89@gmail.com
Oblong Box Productions

OVER BLACK

CLAIRE (V.O.)
Do you believe in God?

FADE IN:

INT. CABIN - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

A decorative moon lamp glows red on a long side table, which rests against the far wall. The red glow fills the otherwise dimly lit space.

Seated at one end of a dining table is GABE (35), thin and awkwardly handsome. He looks towards an open doorway.

GABE
Ugh... I don't really know, to be honest. I suppose I try to.

CLAIRE (O.S.)
Hmm. Not really what I was expecting. Considering...

GABE
What about you? You a believer?

CLAIRE (O.S.)
Fuck no.

Gabe fidgets around in his seat, nervous.

GABE
(under his breath)
Figured.

His eyes scan the room. It's tidy and well furnished.

CLAIRE (32), pretty with wild eyes, enters through the open doorway. Two glasses are clutched in her hands, each half full with dark brown liquid.

CLAIRE
Here, this should help take the edge off.

She offers Gabe one of the glasses, who accepts with a smile.

GABE
Thanks.

Claire takes her seat across from him. She takes a drink from her glass.

Gabe downs his glass in one gulp, winces. He pats his chest as he coughs.

Claire grins.

CLAIRE
Too dry for you?

GABE
I don't drink much.

CLAIRE
Me neither. Always hated getting drunk. Well... I hated the hangovers. But I'd say this is a drinking sort of occasion.

An uneasy chuckle escapes Gabe's mouth.

GABE
So... Are you nervous? You seem, well, pretty relaxed.

Claire shrugs.

CLAIRE
Meh. Not really. More excited than anything. Kinda like when you're about to get on a big rollercoaster, you know?

Gabe looks down at his hands, fiddles with his thumbs.

GABE
Yeah, well... I'm nervous as Hell.

Claire frowns, cocks her head to the side.

CLAIRE
You're not about to puss out on me, are you? Because I promise my plan is foolproof. Just follow my instructions to the T and you'll never be suspected of a thing.

GABE
No. No, that's not it at all. I've... I've always wanted to do this. It's just...

CLAIRE
You never thought you'd actually have the opportunity.

Gabe looks her in the eye, nods.

GABE

Yeah.

Just then, something BEEPS loudly from the other room.

Claire perks up, jumps to her feet.

CLAIRE

Dinner's ready!

She hurries out of the room.

Gabe looks down at the table before him, takes a deep breath.

CLAIRE (O.S.)

It's my mother's special recipe!

GABE

I'm sure it's great. Really don't have much of an appetite though...

CLAIRE (O.S.)

Trust me. You're gonna love this!

GABE

(halfhearted)

Yeah. Sure. I'll give it a try.

Sweat starts to bead up on his forehead. He takes a deep breath, exhales.

GABE

So, um, I'm sorry to ask, but...

Claire reenters the room with a small plastic tray. She sets it down before Gabe.

CLAIRE

Yeah?

Gabe looks down at the tray, frowns. It's a cruddy-looking salisbury steak TV dinner.

GABE

I thought you said this was your mother's recipe?

CLAIRE

This is my mother's recipe. Is that your question?

She hands Gabe a fork.

GABE
No. Um, I just...

Claire returns to her seat across from him.

CLAIRE
Go on. Spit it out.

Gabe takes another deep breath, uses his forearm to wipe the sweat from his brow.

GABE
Why not just kill yourself? Why go through all the trouble of finding someone to help you?

A grin stretches across Claire's face.

CLAIRE
Good question! Not sure I've got a good answer for you though.

With his eyes never straying far from her, Gabe cuts his salisbury steak with his fork. He takes a bite, frowns.

CLAIRE
It's just the way I've always wanted it to be. I've had this reoccurring dream since I was a kid. In the dream, I'm being strangled, while classical music plays. And the entire time, I'm staring into my murderer's eyes. It's so... Strangely peaceful... Romantic even. I guess...

She watches as Gabe struggles to swallow his bite. He forces a smile. Her grin widens.

CLAIRE
I guess you could say I'm just chasing that dream. Fucked up, huh?

Gabe clears his throat, shakes his head.

GABE
But, you seem so... Well off. I mean... You're still young. You seem healthy. You've got a nice place. A ton of privacy. I just don't get it. Why?

CLAIRE
(deadpan)
Why not?

She motions around the room.

CLAIRE
What's so great about all this stuff? It means nothing. And I don't have any real friends. Nor do I want any. I hate people. This world fuckin' sucks. So... Yeah. I just want that peace I've always dreamed about.
(beat)
What about you, Gabe? Why did you agree to do this? I know it's not the money I promised.

GABE
Oh yeah? What makes you say that?

CLAIRE
You haven't mentioned the money once since you've arrived. So. What is it then?

Gabe breaks eye contact with Claire, looks down.

GABE
I don't know. I've just always wanted to know what it was like to, you know, kill somebody.

Claire smirks.

CLAIRE
Simple enough. I can respect that. The cash is in a briefcase in my bedroom closet, by the way. Double what I promised.

She stands up.

CLAIRE
Keep eating. I'll be right back.

Again, she exits the room.

GABE
(calls after her)
I'm not a violent person. Hell, I've never even been in a fight.

He sets his fork down, coughs.

CLAIRE (O.S.)
That's why I chose you. You seem
so... Innocent.

Sweat stains have begun to form on Gabe's shirt. He wipes more sweat from his brow. The color in his face drains away. His breathing grows heavier.

GABE
Is it just me, or is it really
fucking hot in here?

CLAIRE (O.S.)
Must be you. I feel fantastic!

Claire reenters the room with a small boom-box stereo. She places it down on the table.

CLAIRE
You mind if we listen to some jams
while we do this?

She notices how bad Gabe looks.

CLAIRE
Holy shit. You feelin' alright?
You're looking pretty rough, buddy.

Gabe stands up on wobbly feet, nods.

GABE
(weak)
Yeah. Sorry. I just need some fresh
air, that's all.

He takes one step and falls face first onto the floor. Gabe rolls over onto his back, struggles to catch his breath.

GABE
W-what's... Happening t-to... Me!?

Claire lets out a nervous laughter.

CLAIRE
Goddamn. For a second there, I was
really starting to get worried.

Gabe coughs violently. Blood trickles down his chin.

Claire stares down at him, watches him suffer, savors it. Her face beams with excitement.

GABE

The f-food... You... P-poisoned it!

Offended, Claire frowns.

CLAIRE

No. I didn't poison your food. I'd never tarnish my mother's recipe like that! Asshole.

She reaches over, turns on the stereo.

"In the Hall of the Mountain King" by Edvard Grieg STARTS UP and BLASTS through the speakers.

Claire waves her hand around like a baton, as if she's conducting the music herself. She grins from ear to ear as she slowly makes her way over to Gabe.

She stands directly over Gabe, who struggles and fails to lift his head. She kneels down close, holds out a small glass vial for him to see.

CLAIRE

I poisoned your drink.

GABE

(in pain)

P-please... Claire...

She holds the vial closer to her own face, admires it.

CLAIRE

I read that a couple of drops would be enough to kill a large man.

A crazed laugh escapes her lips.

CLAIRE

I gave you the whole fuckin' vial!

Carelessly, she stuffs the vial back in her pocket.

Gabe takes rapid, shallow breaths. He sweats profusely.

Claire shrugs, shoots him an genuine smile.

CLAIRE

Not to worry though. It's a slow and agonizing death, so we've got plenty of time!

Gabe coughs up more blood, struggles to raise a shaky hand.

GABE

P-please...

Annoyed, Claire swats his hand away.

CLAIRE

Stop that! You're just embarrassing yourself at this point.

She leans down even closer to him.

CLAIRE

Now. Try and keep your eyes open as long as you can. Eye contact is crucial to me.

Claire holds her hands out in front of her face. She clenches them into fists, squeezes tight. Then, she lets her hands fall open, looks over her palms.

Gabe watches in horror as she admires her own hands.

Claire takes a deep breath, then --

With a WAR CRY, she lunges forward and wraps both of her hands around Gabe's throat.

Gabe gasps for air as he desperately tries to defend himself, but it's no use. He's too weak.

The veins throb in his neck as his eyes bulge open. His sweaty face is as red as a tomato. Foamy spittle seeps from the corners of his mouth.

GABE'S P.O.V.

Claire leans over us, her face as red and as sweaty as Gabe's. The crazed grin on her face stretches wider as she squeezes tighter.

We continue to CHOKE and GURGLE O.S.

A long beat.

Claire glares down at us as she maintains her hold. Sweat drips down her face.

Finally, we fall silent.

Slowly, Claire loosens her grip. She exhales a deep breath.

END P.O.V.

Claire looks over Gabe's wide-eyed corpse, admires her art. A dark bruise has already formed around his neck.

She stands, closes her eyes and tilts her head back, enjoys the moment.

The music continues to BLAST from the stereo speakers.

Claire walks over to a bookshelf against the far wall, grabs a hidden video camera from the top shelf.

She smiles into the lens.

CLAIRE

This one might be my favorite!

SMASH CUT TO:

BLACK

TITLE CARD -- A BALLAD OF MORBID FANTASY

The MUSIC comes to an end as we --

FADE OUT.