

ART IS SUFFERING

Written by

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Address  
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FADE IN:

**EXT. SEWER OUTLET - DAY**

A shallow river of muck and worn gravel leads to a large effluent opening, carved into the concrete under a bridge.

**INT. SEWER VAULT - DAY**

A cavernous room, surprisingly well-lit by battery-powered lanterns, which make the efflorescent stalactites glow.

A folding table and chair fight for balance on uneven pavers.

A mattress sits atop some well-placed cinder blocks.

ALEXIS (30), rail-thin and toned, tattooed and pierced, enters. He reaches a tripod, and perches his phone atop it.

Leaned upright against the far cave wall is the waifish JORDAN (35). Her chin rests on her shoulder, her eyes closed.

Alexis retrieves a Mardi Gras mask from the table. He dons it, cross back to the camera, and steps in front of it.

**ALEXIS' CAMERA VIEW**

ALEXIS

Hello again, my little perverts.  
Welcome to my latest performance  
piece. This is for all of you who  
suggested a Hitchcockian theme.

Alexis steps aside to reveal Jordan on the wall... the full shot of her body reveals she is fastened to the concrete wall with railroad spikes through her palms.

To Jordan's left, a bird feeder sits atop some milk crates. European Starlings perch and peck alongside New York pigeons.

**BACK TO SCENE**

Alexis stops the recording. He crosses over to the feeder.

He shushes the birds.... then approaches Jordan cautiously. He tosses the mask back on the table.

Jordan shakes violently, as if awakening from a dream.

Slowly... steadily... she regains her faculties.

She notices her hands... and emits a blood-curdling SCREAM.

She hangs her head in exhaustion... bobbing it up and down as she intermittently finds the strength.

ALEXIS (CONT'D)  
Welcome back.

JORDAN  
Wha... what are you doing? Help me!  
Help me, please! PLEASE!

ALEXIS  
Shhh, shhh, it will be okay. It  
will all be over soon.

Fear and pain compete for expression in Jordan's eyes.

JORDAN  
Somebody! Somebody HELP ME! What  
are you going to do to me?

ALEXIS  
Aw, you don't remember our last  
encounter? Hi, I'm Alexis. I'm a  
performance artist. And you are my  
latest exhibit. Oh, and don't worry  
about your dog Toto, honey.

Jordan turns angry. A protective mama.

JORDAN  
What did you do with Champ?

ALEXIS  
Oh, what a cute name! He's fine. I  
mean, I'm not an ogre or anything.  
I'll take him to the pound for  
adoption. If I don't get hungry,  
that is. Times being what they are,  
you know what I mean?

JORDAN  
You son-of-a-bitch, if you -

ALEXIS  
Squawk, squawk, squawk- let's get  
on with it, shall we?

JORDAN  
No! NO! Stop it! Don't! What are  
you doing, you sick bastard!

Jordan's adrenaline fades. She slumps, but plants her feet, anchoring herself so the spikes don't tear her hands apart.

ALEXIS

Patience, my dear. You are about to become a masterpiece.

JORDAN

Wait, what? What do you mean?

ALEXIS

You are going to be filmed.

JORDAN

For what? HELP! SOMEBODY!

ALEXIS

For my followers. Art is wonderful, but it doesn't pay the bills.

Alexis moves toward the phone. He looks through it, and makes an adjustment. He waves his hands in the air.

ALEXIS (CONT'D)

You know, when all this nonsense happened? I had to pivot. I design trade show displays. How many trade shows do you think are happening right now? I'll tell you - fucking none! But no mask here, girlfriend. Virus is the least of your worries.

JORDAN

I-I-I don't know what you're saying. I don't understand! Please... this hurts. PLEASE!

ALEXIS

I know, sweetie. I know it hurts. I was surprised when I killed my first person. I was sad, you know?

Jordan's face contorts into a mass of fear.

ALEXIS (CONT'D)

But in a way? Not so much. It was... freeing? Liberating.

Jordan SCREAMS.

ALEXIS (CONT'D)

Now, now, now. That's not going to help. You're in a sewer, dear.

JORDAN

You don't have to do this! I'll pay you! You don't have to do whatever -

ALEXIS

Honey, you'd be surprised how much they're willing to pay on the dark web. I know I was! You'd be amazed at what people want to see.

Alexis crosses over to the birds. The pigeons COO. He picks up a spray bottle from the floor. He blasts Jordan's face.

She moves violently from side to side in an attempt to avoid the spray. She throats a SCREAM through her closed mouth.

JORDAN

AHHH! What is that? It burns!

ALEXIS

It's an adhesive, honey. I need you to know that I wasn't always a monster. But it was kill or be killed. There are many ways to die, dear... some are quick. A lot of them are painful. Some are slow... just like we inch through life. In slavery... slaves to the system.

Alexis retrieves a handful of bird seed from a bag. He flings the bird seed square into Jordan's face.

JORDAN

(spitting)

No! Please! No! Noooooo!!!

Alexis hits record, and quickly steps behind the phone.

The birds begin to flap their wings... one by one, they leave the feeder... and attach themselves to Jordan's face.

ALEXIS

Behold... watch my creation, slowly being pecked to death!

Jordan's face is obscured by the birds... blood drips slowly down her neck and into her blouse. Her MOANS come from a place of unimaginable depth... as she attempts to rip her palms free from the spikes... in vain.

A pigeon flies away with one of Jordan's eyes in its mouth.

**I-PHONE VIEW - FROM TUNNEL**

Someone creeps through a tall but narrow inlet pipe, filming Alexis and his camera set-up from at a perpendicular angle.

BEAR (O.S.)  
 (whispering)  
 Target acquired.

**BACK TO SCENE**

Alexis reacts to a loud THWAP. He gasps... then looks down. A bloody, intestine-covered arrowhead protrudes from his ribs.

Blood gurgles from his mouth as he falls to his knees.

A giant of a man in a ski-mask, aptly named BEAR (50s), enters the vault, crossbow in hand. His wife, JUNE (50s), a stout and sturdy woman, closely follows.

JUNE  
 We got 'im!

Bear stares into his cell phone as it records him.

BEAR  
 There you go, you som-bitches! This is Bear five-six-seven, and that's that namby-pamby artiste who kills all them fruity people. You wanted 'im, and I got 'im!

Bear holds the cell phone over Alexis' corpse. He rolls him over to get a good shot of his face.

June notices Jordan. Most of her face is missing. She puts her hands on her knees and vomits.

Bear stops the recording. He catches the smell... and wretches... then heaves. June points out Jordan to him.

BEAR (CONT'D)  
 Yeah. That's a damn shame.

JUNE  
 Yeah. But if we film her too we can make more than the eighty K, baby.

BEAR  
 Well that sure dills my pickle.

Bear starts the camera. He spins around with the I-Phone in his hand, capturing a panorama of the carnage.

BEAR (CONT'D)  
 God bless that dark interweb.

FADE OUT.