

THE RED DRESS

Written by

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FADE IN:

WHITE, BLINDING LIGHT.

Gradually losing its brightness, until it becomes--

INT. OFFICE - NIGHT

--A white sheet of paper.

RED lines stain the clean white, made by a MARKER, held by a delicate, feminine HAND.

CAMERA follows the hand across the paper for a few moments, until--

--the phone RINGS.

The delicate hand picks up the phone and we now see the face that matches the hand: ANNETTE. In her thirties. Beautiful. Elegant. Tired.

ANNETTE

(still drawing)

Hello?

(beat)

God, Mom, why are you awake?

(beat)

Oh... dreams... Forget about them.
You always dream something.

(beat)

Don't you worry. I can take care of
myself.

(beat)

Mom, calm down and go back to
sleep. I'll leave just after I
finish this, won't be long.

(beat)

OK, Mom, I will be. Come on, put
down the phone and go to sleep.
I'll call you in the morning and
I'll come to pick you up.

(beat)

Thank you, again. Good night to you
too. Kisses. Bye.

Annette puts down the phone, eyes still locked on the sheet of paper. Another two, three moves of the hand and ready.

Annette is satisfied. A charming smile of content lights her face. Fatigue kicks in and the smile turns into a yawn. Annette covers her mouth with her hand. She stretches. She folds the sheet of paper and turns off the desk light.

INT. BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

Annette hurries out of the office, sheet of paper in her hand and walks to the end of the corridor. She goes down the stairs and out of sight.

A CLOCK, at the end of the corridor shows 3:35.

LIGHTS go out.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Annette is driving. Her face shows the marks of a backbreaking work day.

SPEEDOMETER shows over 60 mph.

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

The car closes on an intersection.

The RED LIGHT is on.

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

Annette is fighting fatigue, struggling to keep her eyes open.

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

The car is about to enter the intersection. It doesn't slow down.

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

Annette breaks. Her eyes close.

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

ZOOM IN - THE RED LIGHT

Closer and closer.

The intense RED turns into--

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

--BLOOD.

Slowly emerging from the tip of the index finger of a small, delicate HAND, a little girl's hand.

ANNETTE, SIX YEARS OLD, watches the blood drop getting bigger. She is not at all scared and she doesn't show any sign of pain.

In the other hand, she holds an empty BOTTLE, broken at the top. Around her, there are dozens of empty bottles and a bucket filled with soapy water.

Annette puts down the bottle and heads towards the HOUSE. Modest. Somewhere at the edge of a city.

INT. HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Annette walks in, holding her injured finger.

ANNETTE
Mommy, I cut myself.

MOM, worried, puts down the kitchen knife she was chopping some vegetables with and focuses on Annette.

MOM
Annette! I told you to be careful!
Good God! Come here, let me look at you.

Mom sets Annette on a chair, examines her finger and walks out in a hurry.

Annette looks at the blood, dripping from the tip of her finger to her dress.

Mom quickly comes back with a bandage and attends to Annette's finger.

MOM (CONT'D)
Oh, Annette. Thank God that you didn't cut it off. I told you to leave the bottles and help me with the soup.
(beat)
You're as stubborn as your father was.
(beat)
At least he pretended to listen sometimes.

Lost in her memories for a beat, Mom sheds a tear.

Annette looks at her, touched and holds Mom's hand in her little hand with the bandaged finger.

ANNETTE
It doesn't hurt, mommy.

Mom looks at her. Smiles. Hugs her gently.

MOM

Very well. Let's make the soup.
Then we'll both go and finish those
bottles.

Mom kisses Annette on the forehead. Annette smiles happily.

INT. STORE - DAY

Bottles. Empty. Clean. On the counter.

The SALESWOMAN counts them.

Mom and Annette watch her, waiting.

SALESWOMAN

...forty six, forty seven, forty
eight, forty nine.

(to Annette)

You've done very good. If you had
one more, you would've had fifty.

ANNETTE

One of them was broken...

MOM

Oh, don't worry, Annette, there are
plenty of bottles left in the
attic. Next time we'll bring a
hundred.

The saleswoman opens a drawer.

SALESWOMAN

Let me give you the money. Would
you like something else?

MOM

A bag of rice. And two pounds of
sugar. And... a pack of cocoa.
We're going to make cookies
tomorrow. Isn't that right,
Annette?

(turns around)

Annette?

Annette is no longer nearby. She is a few feet away, in front
of a shelf. Lost in her world, looking mesmerized at--

--A DOLL.

Small. Beautiful. Dressed in a white lace dress.

Mom's hand on her shoulder wakes Annette up from her dreams.

MOM (CONT'D)

You like it?

ANNETTE

It is beautiful. Does it cost a lot of money, mommy?

MOM

(smiling affectionately)
No, honey, I don't think so.
(to the saleswoman)
How much is it?

SALESWOMAN

Fifty, for the doll. And another thirty for the rice, sugar and cocoa.

MOM

(looking in her purse)
Well... We'll take the doll now.
And... we'll take the rest tomorrow.

Mom pays, hesitantly.

Annette cannot believe what she just heard. Her face radiates with unexpected joy.

ANNETTE

We will bring more bottles, tomorrow. A hundred!

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

CLOSE UP - THE DOLL

Annette is holding her tight.

BACK TO SCENE

In bed, Annette rests her head on her mother's shoulder. Mom holds a book in her hand.

A lamp, on the night stand is the only light in the room, giving it a fairy-like look.

MOM

(reading)
And so, the poor, dirty girl and the prince had the most beautiful wedding that the world had ever seen. And they lived happily ever after.

Mom closes the book. Annette sighs, still dreaming of what she just heard.

ANNETTE

Mom, please read me another one.

MOM

It's enough for tonight. Let's sleep.

ANNETTE

Tomorrow night then?

MOM

Yes, dear. Tomorrow.

Mom turns off the light.

Darkness. Silence, for a few moments.

ANNETTE

Mommy, how should I name my doll?

MOM

I don't know, honey. It's your doll, you have to name her yourself.

ANNETTE

But how did you pick my name?

MOM

Your father did.

(beat)

It was the name of his aunt, who raised him. And 'cause he loved her very much he gave you the name that you have now. The most beautiful name in the world.

A beat.

ANNETTE

Then I will give her your name.

Mom starts laughing. She kisses Annette, noisily.

MOM

Oh dear, Annette. I'll eat you up. Let's sleep and we will figure out the name tomorrow.

ANNETTE

And I will make her a new dress. Red.

INT. STUDENTS DORM - DAY

MONTAGE

A HAND, feminine, delicate, skillfully guiding a pair of SCISSORS, cutting pieces of a PINK fabric.

Same hand, holding a PEN, leaving weak marks on the fabric.

WAVES of pink fabric coming out of a SOWING MACHINE.

SHOULDERS, beautiful, naked, covered by the pink fabric.

The hand, closing a ZIPPER and arranging gorgeous BLACK HAIR over the fabric, the last touch for everything to be--

END MONTAGE

--PERFECT. ANNETTE.

NINETEEN YEARS OLD, in a pink, below the knees dress. Brunette Marilyn Monroe. Even more beautiful.

She admires herself in the mirror. She turns around.

ANNETTE

So, how is it? I told you it's going to come out OK.

Her roommate, Amy, standing a few feet away, watches Annette, fascinated.

AMY

It is incredible, Annette. I've got goose bumps. You have to make me one too. Exactly like this one.

Annette laughs, spinning and showing off her dress.

ANNETTE

You think it might be too much for a first date?

AMY

Too much? It is beautiful. He'll fall on his ass when he will see you. What time did you say you have to be there?

ANNETTE

Seven. But... I think I'll make him wait for a little while.

The two girls laugh.

AMY

Hey! I just got an idea! Let's go have a cake. There's a new sweet shop right next to the park.

ANNETTE

Let's have two!

The girls laugh again.

INT. SWEET SHOP - DAY

Sunshine comes in through a big window.

A FORK. Slicing through a piece of RED cake. That disappears between Annette's lips.

Amy is enjoying her cake on the opposite side of the table.

AMY

Mmm! This is incredible! I could live with this only. I wouldn't need anything else. Maybe just a dress like yours. You should make them for money.

ANNETTE

God, Amy... Like someone would pay me money for what I do...

AMY

Are you kidding me? Every time you make yourself a dress you blow me off my feet. And not just me... Maybe you don't see the other ones looking but I can see it... The lust in guys' eyes... The envy in women's... They would pay you money for what you do. I would pay you money for what you do. A whole lot of money. If I had any.

The girls burst into laughter. They are interrupted by--

--A LARGE BOUQUET OF RED ROSES. Appearing in front of Annette, held by a manly, neat HAND. The girls look at--

--David. Twenty years old. Black hair, elegant, good looking.

DAVID

(to Annette, emotional)

I apologize... I've been waiting for two days to talk to you. I saw you in the park the other day and today, when I saw you coming here, I brought you... a small attention, hoping you will give me some attention... and that we will talk, because... for two days... I am continuously dreaming of you.

Annette is speechless. Amy, the same.

DAVID (CONT'D)

May I sit down?

Annette doesn't say anything, still shocked. Amy slowly gets up.

AMY
Well... Of course. I... have
something to do, anyway. You can
sit here.

Amy winks at Annette and leaves, looking over her shoulder.

David sits.

DAVID
(to Annette)
Hi. I'm David.

ANNETTE
Annette...

EXT. SWEET SHOP - MOMENTS LATER

Through the window, Amy looks at Annette and David, who are talking. Amy smiles, pleased and heads down the street.

A calm, soothing WALTZ is heard from everywhere.

CLOSE UP - THE SUN

Fills the entire scene with light, that becomes--

EXT. BALCONY - NIGHT

--THE WHITE FABRIC OF A WEDDING DRESS.

The waltz continues.

THE HAND of David caresses the white fabric.

David, wearing a groom suit, and ANNETTE, wearing a wedding dress, at TWENTY FIVE YEARS OLD, are dancing on a large balcony at the top floor of an apartment building.

DAVID
Can you believe it's over?

ANNETTE
It's not over. It's only just
began.

David laughs.

DAVID
Was it as you imagined it?

ANNETTE
It was a thousand times better. It
was... perfect.

DAVID
 You're perfect. My wife. I love
 you, Annette.

ANNETTE
 I know. I love you too. My husband.

The two laugh, cheerfully.

INT. APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

A VASE FULL WITH RED ROSES--

--CRASHES on the floor, with a DEAFENING NOISE.

ANNETTE, THIRTY FIVE YEARS OLD, sobbing. She sits on the
 floor, powerless.

ANNETTE
 The hell with him! With his
 promises and lies! I don't want to
 see him anymore! Mom, I'm going to
 die...

MOM, visibly decrepit, stands in the door frame and watches
 Annette, helplessly. She walks to Annette, sits next to her
 and hugs her.

MOM
 Good God, Annette! Calm down. Don't
 cry. There. Calm down.

ANNETTE
 My heart hurts. Why, Mom, why? Is
 it because I have a career? Because
 I got older? Why? What does she
 have that I don't? Why cheat on me,
 mom, why? What have I ever done to
 him to hurt me like this? You tell
 me. What?

MOM
 Nothing, dear... It's just... life.
 With its ups and downs. Good
 moments and bad moments. You cannot
 know what comes next.

ANNETTE
 What am I going to do now, mom?
 What?

MOM
 You go on. You recover.
 (beat)
 You have the show tomorrow.
 (MORE)

MOM (CONT'D)

You have to focus on that and amaze everyone with your creations. Then you will feel better, you'll see.

Mom takes out something from her pocket.

MOM (CONT'D)

Look what I have for you.

It's THE DOLL. In the same white lace dress, turned yellow in places.

Annette takes it. She stops crying. She looks at the doll, mesmerized, like the first time.

ANNETTE

Mom, where did you find this?

MOM

I kept it. Your first doll. You remember the name you gave her?

ANNETTE

Your name...

Mom laughs slowly and kisses Annette on the forehead.

MOM

You wanted to change something about her.

ANNETTE

Yes... I was going to make her a new dress...

Annette looks at her Mom like she suddenly had the best idea in the world.

ANNETTE (CONT'D)

Mom, thank you!

Annette gets up and hurries to the door, with the doll in her hand.

Mom looks at her, uncertain.

MOM

Annette? Where are you going?

Annette puts her shoes on, takes a short coat and a jacket. She walks back to Mom and hugs her tight.

ANNETTE

Thank you, Mom. You were right. You are always right.

Annette hurries out.

Mom watches her go out and smiles.

INT. FASHION HOUSE - DAY

An army of women, running around, carrying fabrics in different textures and colors, dresses, drawings, analyzing, discussing, preparing the next day fashion show.

Annette enters and rushes to the stairs. All eyes are on her.

BLONDE LADY

Hi, boss.

FAT LADY

Hello, boss.

Annette goes up the stairs.

INT. OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Annette walks in.

Amy, sitting at the computer, looks at her, surprised.

AMY

Annette! I thought you weren't coming. How are you?

ANNETTE

I need to be alone.

Annette walks to the DRAWING TABLE and prepares her markers and a white sheet of paper.

AMY

Well... What happened? Are you OK?

ANNETTE

Better than ever. I had a brilliant idea for the main piece. Go on, leave me alone. And I don't want to be disturbed, please.

Amy, confused, gets up and walks to the door.

Annette sits at the table.

ANNETTE (CONT'D)

And Amy... Find me the best divorce lawyer there is. From now on I'm going to do what is best for me.

Amy exits.

Annette puts the doll on a chair nearby. She looks at it for a few moments then she focuses on the white sheet of paper.

CLOSE UP - THE WHITE SHEET OF PAPER

It becomes--

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

--THE HEADLIGHT of a car.

Annette's car. What is left from it after a terrible accident with another car. A steaming pile of contorted iron.

Inside, among the remains--

A white sheet of paper with lines that come together into a perfect drawing. The most beautiful EVENING DRESS ever imagined. RED.

Annette. Eyes closed, immovable. A thin, RED line of blood streams down her cheek.

Her lips tremble. She hardly articulates the last words.

ANNETTE
I love... you...

CUT TO:

BLACK.

FADE TO:

INT. APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Annette, TWENTY EIGHT YEARS OLD, is sitting on the couch, near David.

DAVID
Why not, Annette? I don't understand. We have everything we need. We've been happily married for three years. Why not?

ANNETTE
I don't know... It's not... the time right now. I want... I want to follow my dream. To create. To make dresses. I have so many ideas. No... I'm not ready to be a mother... Not yet. Do you understand, David?

DAVID
No! I don't understand!

David gets up and starts to walk around, nervously.

DAVID (CONT'D)

I don't understand anything! You can follow your dream until the end of life. I cannot believe this! I cannot believe what you tell me. This is what I wanted ever since I first saw you in that park. To have children with you. To raise them together and be happy. But no! You want to make your stupid dresses! That's all you care about! That's all you love!

David stops. He calms down.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Have it your way, Annette. Follow your dream. You've just killed mine. Because I realize now... You don't love me.

David exits, slamming the door.

A TEAR slides slowly on Annette's cheek.

ZOOM IN - THE TEAR

Closer and closer. Crystalline. Sparkling. Like a star. It becomes--

WHITE, BLINDING LIGHT.

FADE OUT.

THE END.