

Not Even a Gravestone

by

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FADE IN:

INT. BROTHEL - FRONT ROOM - NIGHT

The year is 1980.

A dimly lit brothel. Sounds of fornication emanate from upstairs.

JULIUS (40), sits alone at a small table. He wears high-waisted trousers and a white button-down shirt with the sleeves rolled up. His hair is long and he has a thick beard.

He drinks vodka, counts money slowly and scribbles figures in a note pad. Edward Elgar's "Cello Concerto in E Minor" plays at low volume on a small radio.

JULIUS (V.O.)

Boys,
Sometimes I feel like I was cursed
from the start.
Like I was destined to do the
devil's work.

VALERIE (20)-a beautiful, elegant, yet sad young woman-walks down the stairs with a client and enters the front room. She has dark hair and wears a red dress.

The client is dressed like most of the men that pass through here: black shoes, trousers, white shirt, black tie.

JULIUS (V.O.)(CONT'D)

But the fact of the matter is that
I've been a careless man.

Shadows envelop the client such that his face is invisible. He nods at Julius. Julius nods back. The man exits.

JULIUS (V.O.)(CONT'D)

My soul wasn't born tainted. I
tainted it myself.
My heart wasn't born frozen. I
froze it myself.
I've seen so many other cold-
hearted men pass through this
house. I've looked into their eyes

(MORE)

JULIUS (V.O.)(CONT'D) (cont'd)
and seen nothing.

CUT TO:

INT. BROTHEL - FRONT ROOM - NIGHT

Julius sits alone at the same small table. Across from him stands a client—a short man with dark hair and black eyes. Julius stares at the client and says nothing. The client stares back.

JULIUS (V.O.)(CONT'D)
One night I drank too much and
asked a client how he suppresses so
much darkness, so many secrets. He
just glared at me with his raven
eyes.

CUT TO:

INT. BROTHEL - FRONT ROOM - SAME TIME

Valerie walks over to the table and sits down. Julius, without looking up from his work, collects a wad of cash and slides it in her direction. She picks it up gingerly and pockets it without counting.

JULIUS (V.O.)(CONT'D)
Men—we feel so much and say so
little. We fear so much and act so
brave.

Valerie doesn't stand up. Instead, she looks directly at Julius. Julius avoids her gaze at first. After a moment, he looks up and into her sad eyes—they speak of longing and trust.

JULIUS (V.O.)(CONT'D)
We cry tears of blood and hurt the
people around us.

Julius' eyes speak of lust.

INT. BROTHEL - FRONT ROOM - NIGHT - WEEKS LATER

Julius sits alone at his table. He drinks, counts money slowly, and scribbles figures in a note pad. Edward Elgar's "Cello Concerto in E Minor" plays at low volume on a small

radio.

Valerie walks down the stairs alone, visibly anxious. She approaches the table and sits down. Julius, without looking up from his work, collects a wad of cash and slides it in her direction. She picks it up gingerly and pockets it without counting.

Valerie doesn't stand up. Instead, she slides a positive pregnancy test across the table.

JULIUS (V.O.)(CONT'D)

But you needn't be that way, boys.

Julius glances at the test, and then at Valerie, his stare colder than ever.

JULIUS (V.O.)(CONT'D)

You can live good lives.

You can be good men.

You have each other.

INT. BROTHEL - FRONT ROOM - NIGHT - YEARS LATER

A FRAMED PICTURE of two smiling little boys, one blond and the other brunette, sits on a shelf. They're the same age, and they have their arms around each other.

JULIUS (V.O.)(CONT'D)

The world will reduce you to
nothing.

Demons await your downfall at every
turn

Valerie picks up the picture and admires it.

JULIUS (V.O.)(CONT'D)

But as long as you have each other
you need not fear the world.

EXT. NEARBY WOODS - DAWN

JULIUS (V.O.)(CONT'D)

Your father,
Julius.

An unidentifiable figure carries Julius' limp body over his shoulders. The sun rises behind them.

TITLE SEQUENCE:

Not Even a Gravestone

INT. BROTHEL - FRONT ROOM - EVENING

The year is 2000.

SIMON (20), blond and muscular, sweeps the floor.

Julius (60), sits alone at his table. He drinks, counts money slowly, and scribbles figures in a note pad. Edward Elgar's "Cello Concerto in E Minor" plays at low volume on a small radio.

JULIUS
Where's August?

SIMON
(looking down)
Huh?

JULIUS
Where's your brother?

SIMON
I think he went for a walk.

JULIUS
Where does he go on these walks?

SIMON
The woods, I think.

JULIUS
(contemplative)
The woods...it's gonna be dark soon.

SIMON
Says he doesn't mind going in there when it's dark. Claims he can see the stars through the tree tops.

A client walks in through the front door.

JULIUS
How can I help you, sir?

CLIENT
I've had a tough week.

JULIUS
Have you? Well, let's see if we
have a remedy for that.

Julius looks at Simon.

SIMON
Everyone's busy except Valerie.

INT. BROTHEL - VALERIE'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Valerie (40), sits on her bed and looks at the FRAMED
PICTURE of August and Simon when they were little boys.

Valerie's youth is absent, but her beauty certainly isn't.

There's a knock on the door. She stuffs the picture in a
nearby drawer.

VALERIE
Yes?

SIMON (O.S.)
Your services are being requested.

INT. BROTHEL - FRONT ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Simon has resumed sweeping. Julius pours the client a glass
of vodka.

Valerie descends the stairs wearing a black dress.

JULIUS
My friend, meet Valerie.

The client nods at her and raises his glass.

CLIENT
Nice to meet you.

The front door swings open. A shaft of light floods in from

the doorway, revealing a silhouetted figure.

AUGUST (20), dark-haired and thin, steps inside and closes the door behind him.

Julius, Simon, and Valerie look at August. The client glances over at him.

August stares at his feet, and then at Valerie. His eyes are cold and lustful, just like his father's.

VALERIE

You shouldn't stay out in those woods so long, honey. They're not safe at night.

AUGUST

Don't worry about me so much.

VALERIE

It's my job to worry.

AUGUST

Is it?

August walks upstairs.

SIMON

(to the client-he's said this hundreds of times)

It's \$500 for an hour. Every 30 minutes past that is \$200. No funny shit or I'll kill you personally.

The client grins-it's a big fucking game for him.

CLIENT

Sounds fair to me.

INT. BROTHEL - AUGUST'S BEDROOM - LATER

August sits on his bed. He can hear Valerie and the client fucking a few doors down.

He crosses his legs and covers his ears.

INT. BROTHEL - FRONT ROOM - MORNING

Simon sits at his father's table. He drinks, counts money, and scribbles figures in a note pad.

August walks slowly down the stairs. At the bottom of the stair case, he stops.

Simon glances up.

SIMON

Sleep okay?

AUGUST

Sure.

August joins his brother at the table. He watches intently as Simon counts, writes, drinks, and counts again.

SIMON

You gonna go out in the woods or somethin'?

AUGUST

It's raining.

Suddenly, the sound of pattering rain becomes more prominent.

SIMON

That's never stopped you.

August stares off into space. The rain gets louder.

CUT TO:

EXT. NEARBY WOODS - DAY

Simon and August sit side by side on the forest floor, letting the rain drops soak their hair and clothing.

AUGUST (V.O.)

We used to go out in the woods when it would rain.

CUT TO:

INT. BROTHEL - FRONT ROOM - SAME TIME

Simon stops what he's doing and looks up at August.

AUGUST

The sound. I loved the sound. And
the way the drops felt on my skin.

CUT TO:

EXT. NEARBY WOODS - DAY

August looks up at the sky, directly into the rainfall. He
closes his eyes and lets the water stream down his face.

Simon smiles.

SIMON (V.O.)

I'm sorry we don't do that anymore,
August. I've been so busy helping
dad out around here-

AUGUST (V.O.)

It's okay. I didn't mean to make
you feel bad about it.

CUT TO:

INT. BROTHEL - FRONT ROOM - SAME TIME

The sound of rain intensifies.

A single tear streams down August's cheek.

After a long pause, he stands up and walks upstairs.

INT. BROTHEL - STAIRS - CONTINUOUS

As August makes his way up the stairs, Valerie appears at
the top of the staircase.

She looks at August adoringly.

VALERIE

You had breakfast yet, honey? I
can make you something to eat.

August refuses to look her in the face.

AUGUST
I'm not hungry.

VALERIE
Are you sure? I can-

AUGUST
Why do you listen to my father?

VALERIE
What?

AUGUST
My father-why do you do what he
says? Why do you let men do this
to you? Why do you stay here?

VALERIE
I just work for your dad, honey. I
can leave anytime I want.

AUGUST
Doesn't seem that way.

August walks past her.

INT. BROTHEL - AUGUST'S BEDROOM - EVENING

August sits on his bed. His legs are crossed and his hands
are on his knee caps.

He can hear Valerie fucking some client a few doors down.

He covers his ears.

INT. BROTHEL - UPSTAIRS - NIGHT

August walks down the upstairs hallway towards the bathroom.
It's pitch black. He reaches the bathroom door, flicks on
the light, and walks to the toilet.

INT. BROTHEL - UPSTAIRS - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

He unzips his fly and starts peeing. After a few seconds,
he senses something is wrong and looks down.

His urine is red.

Not tinted red.

Completely red, like grenadine.

It trickles from his penis like molasses.

August, terrified, peers up. Directly above the toilet is a painting of a bathroom with a porcelain bath tub in the center. August looks directly into the painting, as if something in the frame is beckoning him.

CUT TO:

INT. DIFFERENT BATHROOM - NIGHT

August is standing in an entirely different bathroom, much like the one in the painting. Parallel to August is a porcelain tub with a leaky water spout. Each drop of water can be heard as it hits the surface.

Valerie sits in the tub, scrubbing her legs. She lifts them gracefully in the air and cleans thoroughly.

August stands still and watches her.

Valerie drops her legs back into the water and looks over at August.

Her eyes are completely black.

She motions to him with her index finger: "come closer".

August walks slowly in her direction.

Within steps of her, he looks down

and realizes that

the tub is full of blood.

INT. BROTHEL - FRONT ROOM - MORNING

August stands at the bottom of the stairs, frozen in place.

Julius sits at his table. He counts money and drinks. Simon sits next to Julius and scribbles figures in a note pad.

August doesn't move. He just stares straight ahead, his eyes full of fear.

Simon looks up.

SIMON

Sleep okay?

August says nothing.

SIMON (CONT'D)

August?

August stares at Simon. His gaze is steady but his eyes are one thousand leagues deep.

The sounds of Valerie fucking can be heard faintly. August winces. Valerie enters through the front door. The sounds get louder and August clutches his head.

AUGUST

(exasperated)

I have nightmares.

The sounds stop.

AUGUST (CONT'D)

I have nightmares.

Terrible nightmares.

Every time I close my eyes.

And each day when I wake up

I find it harder and harder

to distinguish between my

nightmares and living in this God

damn house.

Julius stops counting money, yet he doesn't look up.

AUGUST (CONT'D)

Every fucking room is cursed! Every

square inch has been sodomized and

soiled. Strange men, evil men,

walk these halls and ejaculate on

our linens as if they pay our

fucking taxes.

And why, in God's name, would you

bring a child-let alone two-into

(MORE)

AUGUST (CONT'D) (cont'd)
this, this fucking whore house!

Julius finally looks up. Simon is agape. Valerie holds back tears.

A client barges in without warning.

August stares coldly at the client. The man enters without hesitation, completely oblivious to the tension in the room.

JULIUS
What can we do for you, sir.

CLIENT #2
I'm looking for some grade A pussy.
Am I in the right place?

JULIUS
You most definitely are.

August walks past Valerie and the client and slips out the front door.

EXT. NEARBY WOODS - EVENING - MONTAGE

-Sequential jump cuts of August trekking through the woods

-As the cuts become more rapid, it becomes darker and darker, until August becomes a faint outline in the forest

INT. BROTHEL - FRONT ROOM - DAY

Simon nervously sweeps the floor.

Julius sits at his table and drinks.

A client walks downstairs.

JULIUS
Was the service satisfactory?

CLIENT #3
Sure was.

The client nears the front door and puts his hand on the knob.

SIMON

Do you have a wife?

The client stops and turns around.

CLIENT #3

I'm sorry?

SIMON

Do you have a wife?

JULIUS

For Christ's sake, Si-

SIMON

I'm asking a God damn question,
dad.

CLIENT #3

I do, yes.

SIMON

What does she think you're doing
right now?

CLIENT #3

Working.

SIMON

And you go home to her each night?

CLIENT #3

I do.

SIMON

You tell her you love her?

CLIENT #3

Yes.

SIMON

And you share a bed with her and
kiss her on the cheek and hold her
when she's upset and somehow, while
doing all of that, you pretend that
your soul isn't completely and
utterly tainted?
And someday-and God help you if

(MORE)

SIMON (cont'd)

this day comes-she'll be on her death bed. You'll have to squeeze her hand and tell her it's gonna be okay and you, the man who couldn't keep his dick in his pants for the woman he married, you will be the last person she sees.

The life will drain from her eyes, she will breathe her last breath, and, worse yet, you'll be alone.

Alone with every time you lied to her just so you could fuck some whore and feel good about yourself for what? 15 minutes?

But maybe you're a fearless man. Maybe the menacing whispers of your past won't creep in and consume you. In which case, well, congratulations-you got yours and you'll never have to feel bad about it.

Silence.

Simon returns to sweeping.

JULIUS

We thank you for your business, sir. Come again soon.

The man leaves.

Simon sweeps with heightened intensity.

Julius takes a long sip of his drink.

JULIUS

If you don't wanna be a part of the family business, you can leave like your brother.

SIMON

The family business, huh?

Simon looks around in facetious admiration.

He raises the broom over his head and smashes it on the

floor repeatedly.

SIMON (CONT'D)
(to the rhythm of his violent
hacks)
Fuck the fucking family business.

Simon drops the remaining piece of the broom to the floor
and exhales.

SIMON (CONT'D)
You senile fuck.

Simon walks toward the front door, panting as he goes. Just
before he leaves, he turns to his father.

SIMON
Remember our sixteenth birthday?

JULIUS
If you had two testicles you'd be
out the door already.

SIMON
You probably don't remember,
because you were so drunk you could
hardly stand, let alone tell your
sons you love them.
August cried for hours.

JULIUS
August is weak.

SIMON
He's your son.
I was so angry I considered killing
you that night-snapping your thick
fucking neck.
Know why I didn't?

JULIUS
You two need me.

SIMON
I felt bad for you.

Simon slams the door.

EXT. NEARBY WOODS - DAY - MONTAGE

-Sequential jump cuts of Simon trekking through the woods in search of August

-Simon calls his brother's name, his head on a swivel

INT. BROTHEL - FRONT ROOM - DAY

Julius is seated at his table with a full bottle of vodka. He pours himself a tall drink.

Valerie descends the stairs.

VALERIE

Has August come back yet?

JULIUS

No.

VALERIE

He's such a troubled boy, Julius.

Julius clears his throat.

JULIUS

Do you regret that night?

VALERIE

No, Julius. I don't. Watching them grow...it's been such a gift.

Julius bows his head in shame.

JULIUS

I regret it. More than anything.
I fucked em' up so bad, Val.

EXT. NEARBY WOODS - SAME TIME

Simon trudges past tree after tree.

A loud crack of thunder. It starts to rain heavily.

Simon stops and looks up, letting the drops christen his face. He shuts his eyes.

VALERIE (V.O.)
They're strong, Julius.

JULIUS (V.O.)
But August-he's so thin; and the
fear in his eyes...

A strange feeling washes over Simon. He looks to his right.

VALERIE (V.O.)
He has Simon, Julius. They have
each other.

August sits under a large tree, his back pressed against the trunk. He, too, senses something and looks to his left.

The two brothers lock eyes, engaging in the telekinesis only close siblings are capable of.

INT. BROTHEL - FRONT ROOM - SAME TIME

Julius sits at his table, completely alone.

He pours a tall drink and gulps it down. Then pours another.

He grabs his note pad and starts writing.

JULIUS (V.O.)
Boys,
Sometimes I feel like I was cursed
from the start...

EXT. NEARBY WOODS - SAME TIME

August, bleary-eyed and anxious, tries to stand tall for his brother.

AUGUST
(yelling-competing with the
sound of the rain)
I couldn't, Simon. I couldn't be
there anymore.

SIMON
I know, August. I know.

Simon walks to August and hugs him harder than anyone ever

could.

The rain keeps pouring down.

They release. August wipes his eyes.

SIMON

Where you gonna go?

AUGUST

Far away. Someplace with plenty of trees.

SIMON

Maybe we can sit in the rain again once you get there.

August smiles.

AUGUST

I'll find a nice spot for us.

Simon grins. He hugs his brother once more and they part.

Simon walks in the direction he came from. August heads toward the unknown.

After a few steps, Simon pivots to get one more glance at his brother, but August has disappeared.

INT. BROTHEL - FRONT ROOM - LATER

Simon enters.

Julius is face down on his table, his left cheek buried in the note pad. The bottle of vodka is empty.

SIMON (V.O.)

My father drank himself to death that night.

EXT. NEARBY WOODS - DAWN

Simon carries Julius' limp body over his shoulders.

SIMON (V.O.)(CONT'D)

Valerie didn't want to see the burial, so I laid him to rest on my

(MORE)

SIMON (V.O.)(CONT'D) (cont'd)
own.

He reaches a satisfactory spot and lays the body down.

SIMON (V.O.)(CONT'D)
There was no memorial service, no
priest, not even a gravestone.
Just me, my father, and the dirt.

Simon pulls out a shovel and begins digging.

SIMON (V.O.)(CONT'D)
I tried to think of people I should
call, but I realized we don't have
any extended family. None that I
know of, anyway.

In the distance, August watches—a shadowy figure looming
over the non-existent ceremony. Tears stream down his face.

EXT. BROTHEL - DAY

Simon packs up his belongings and stuffs them in his car.

Valerie walks outside and leans on the side of the car.

VALERIE
Have everything you need, honey?

Simon nods.

A beat or two of silence—Valerie carries an unspoken
anxiety.

VALERIE (CONT'D)
Do you have any idea where August
might be?

SIMON
He's fine. I promise.

His hair falls in front of his eyes. Valerie tucks it
behind his ears.

VALERIE
God, if only your father could see
how handsome you are.

SIMON

He had a chance to.

Valerie frowns briefly, then extends her arms to give him a hug.

Simon hesitates, but quickly falls into her arms.

Valerie holds her son tightly.

Simon emerges from her clutch.

VALERIE

Goodbye, honey.

SIMON

Goodbye, mom.

Valerie squints in disbelief.

VALERIE

What'd you say?

SIMON

"Goodbye".

VALERIE

No, no. You called me something.

SIMON

I don't think so.

She smiles and backs away from Simon.

VALERIE

Okay. Well, safe travels.

SIMON

Thanks.

She blows him a kiss, turns, and walks inside. Simon watches her go.

Without warning, it starts to rain. Simon leans against the side of the car and looks around, puzzled.

He gets in, starts the ignition, and drives away.

CUT TO BLACK.