

THE DEARLY IMPARTED

drama, sci-fi

INT. KITCHEN - AFTERNOON

A fountain pen touches paper. Unseen hands write easily.

RUBY (V.O.)

The notion comes upon me, in a most
pleasing way, that the time has at
last come for me to end my life.

EXT. PARK - NIGHT

A small box is opened to reveal an engagement ring.

SAVANNAH (V.O.)

Oh my god! I was beginning to think
you wouldn't ask!

INT. BASEMENT

A gun safe is opened and a handgun is collected.

AUSTIN (V.O.)

Though I did wonder against it, I
was certain this day would come.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

On a nightstand, a cell phone chimes with a notification.

Almost immediately someone in the room is heard moving
before a hand comes in and snatches the phone.

ASH (V.O.)

And thus, my being alive today is
justified.

PRODUCTION TITLE CARDS

INT. KITCHEN - AFTERNOON

The suicide note is almost complete.

At a small table in an impeccably clean kitchen, sits RUBY,
398 though apparently 60s. She is dressed in a simple dress
that, though stylistically from the 1600s, is as well cared
for as everything else. Across her chest, she wears a sash
of military medals.

(CONTINUED)

A signed check, a bottle of pills, and a small cup of water lie to the side as the pen touches paper again.

RUBY (V.O.)

And upon your person, my dearest child, are to be bestowed all the rights and pleasures of motherhood; as we who have lived it know, there is a magic in the creation of a child, in the knowing of them before they know themselves; and it is this that with my present demise, I pass onto you.

The final greatest sin of a parent is in the restricting of their offspring's future; my time has been long and full, but a fourth century holds less value than the third, which in turn holds less than the second.

It is time for my life to rest and from its ashes, your time as a mother, to rise; you will find my accounts settled and your child, whomever you may raise them to be, with a place in this world reserved.

With all the love I have ever had,

On the last line, she writes "Mama" before placing the pen in a cushioned box.

Ruby sits back and takes a moment to look around. The weight of the moment is clearly upon her, but she does not look troubled. This is a decision she's long since made peace with.

When she is ready, she picks up the bottle of pills. The label reads "Endstention". Ruby breaks the seal, removes the lid and pulls out the single pill inside.

Her resolve firm, Ruby places the pill in her mouth and swallows it with the cup of water.

She glances over to the window and smiles at the birds flapping about outside. The sunlight illuminates her face as the light leaves her eyes.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Hours later. A hand is holding a tablet with Ruby's birth certificate on the screen.

INVESTIGATOR MORT (O.S.)
How old was she?

VIOLETT (O.S.)
I don't know exactly, but she
always told stories about fighting
in three different revolutions.

INVESTIGATOR MORT (O.S.)
Quite respectable.

VIOLETT (O.S.)
That was her.

The tablet lowers to reveal Ruby lying dead upon the kitchen floor.

Standing over her, tablet in hand, is INVESTIGATOR MORT, 110 though apparently 30s. His clothes are modern but chosen and worn to reflect the early 1900s. His face and tone project a matter-of-factness. VIOLETT, apparently 20s sits on the table, wearing a graphic tee and jeans. She appears to have cried, but now her expression is one of serenity.

Mort looks at the tablet again.

INVESTIGATOR MORT
In her letter, she states she did
this for you.

VIOLETT
Yeah, my husband and I want a kid.
His parents already gave their
capacities to his sister so Mama
said she'd go for me.

INVESTIGATOR MORT
A decision we can all hope to make
one day.

VIOLETT
Yeah, she was always there for me.
Still is, I guess.

INVESTIGATOR MORT
Far superior than subjecting
yourself the general collective at
any rate?

(CONTINUED)

VIOLETT

Uh yeah. How many centuries is it up to now? Four?

INVESTIGATOR MORT

Near enough. I take it her check will cover all fees?

VIOLETT

Yep, she was always saving her money for when the time came.

INVESTIGATOR MORT

Splendid. I'm told it is being processed as we speak.

Violettt smiles.

INVESTIGATOR MORT

What do you want to have?

Violettt looks at him questioningly.

INVESTIGATOR MORT

(clarifying)

As your...

He gestures toward her abdomen.

VIOLETT

Oh! Right. Probably a boy. Though I guess, we really don't have any control over who comes out, do we?

INVESTIGATOR MORT

I think it's safely said one knows nothing of control until they've come face to face with their child's teenage decades.

VIOLETT

Do you have kids, Investigator...?

INVESTIGATOR MORT

Mort. One son. In his forties now.

VIOLETT

What does he do?

INVESTIGATOR MORT

He's attempting to make a life as an accountant. I trust he will grow up eventually.

(CONTINUED)

Mort's cell phone rings.
Pardon me.

He answers it.
Mortimer speaking. Yes, we are
together presently.

He shoots a surprised look at Violetta before turning away
slightly.
And you are certain this is not an
error in processing?

He sighs heavily.
Yes. The usual procedure then. I'll
speak to her.

He hangs up the phone and takes a deep breath. There is a
trepidation about what comes next in his face yet unseen in
this room today.

INVESTIGATOR MORT
Violetta, your mother told you she
was saving money for your child?

VIOLETT
(suspicious)
That's right. She's been putting it
aside since I was born. Why?

INVESTIGATOR MORT
It appears that she possibly wasn't
saving as much as she might have
needed to be.

Violetta's breath catches in her throat.

INVESTIGATOR MORT
(forcefully straightforward)
I'm certain she thought, some small
discrepancy would likely go
unnoticed...

Violetta's eyes are filling with tears.

INVESTIGATOR MORT
That's probably the reason for her
choosing to depart now. To prevent
her remaining funds from dwindling
further.

Violetta is looking into his eyes as the tears stream down
her face. He looks away as he puts away his tablet.

(CONTINUED)

INVESTIGATOR MORT
Regrettably means your parenthood
application must be submitted
through the general collective.

These last two words get Violettt's attention. She grabs his arm and looks imploringly at him.

VIOLETT
But, I can't wait that long! She
saved her whole life. If she's a
little short, I can cover the
difference! Please...

INVESTIGATOR MORT
I understand, Violettt. I assure you
nobody can feel more sorry than
myself that this happened. But the
restrictions put in place clearly
regulate against the buying of
unused capacities.

VIOLETT
It's not unused. It was promised to
me!

INVESTIGATOR MORT
Most unfortunately, that is not
what the law was written to do.

VIOLETT
Please! You can't do this. There
must be something!

INVESTIGATOR MORT
I'm sorry. There's nothing I can
do. She should have made doubly
sure she had the funds.

He turns to leave. Violettt looks down at her Mama's body.

VIOLETT
How could you do this!? How could
you!?

She suddenly grabs a kitchen knife and lunges for Ruby's body.

INVESTIGATOR MORT
Violettt!

Violettt brings the knife down on her mother's chest.
Stabbing her over and over while screaming.

(CONTINUED)

VIOLETT

We were gonna have a baby! And now
we can't! And it's all your fault!

Mort grabs Violettt around the waist and pulls her off Ruby's
body. She flails and her screams get louder.

VIOLETT

(screaming)

I HATE YOU!! COWARD!! YOU WERE
NEVER A MOTHER TO ME! YOU HAD TO DO
ONE THING! JUST ONE! AND YOU
COULDN'T EVEN DO THAT! I HATE YOU
SO MUCH!

Investigator Mort throws her against the wall, knocking the
air out of her. He holds her in place while she catches her
breath and the screams give way to sobs.

INVESTIGATOR MORT

You requested I help you. This is
all I have to offer. I will not
report for desecrating a corpse.
But get control over yourself. When
the removal crew arrives, if
anything else has happened to your
Mother, I will see to it you
forfeit your parental right
entirely.

His humanity comes through for a moment.

INVESTIGATOR MORT

I am sorry, Violettt. I will pray
that you can find another way.

He leaves the room as Violettt slides sobbing down the wall.
Her mother's blood seeping across the floor.

TITLE CARD

EXT. PARK - NIGHT

The engagement ring slides easily onto a finger.

SAVANNAH (V.O.)

Oh, it's just perfect!

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

The fancy room is at its fanciest tonight. The ornately polished antique settings for a celebratory dinner for 4 sit on the table. Wine bottles and new candles stand at the ready.

At the head sits AUSTIN BOROUGHS, 267 though apparently 50s. His face contrasts the scene as his wife ALEXANDRIA BOROUGHS, 183 though apparently 40s, puts on the finishing touches. Both are dressed elegantly. He in what would be called colonial and she in a reconstruction era ballgown.

A clock chimes. Alexandria turns to her husband.

ALEXANDRIA
They should be expected her any
minute.

AUSTIN
I know.

ALEXANDRIA
Do you intend to speak about it
tonight?

AUSTIN
There is still time...maybe we...

He is cut off by...

EXT. PORCH - NIGHT

The hand wearing the engagement ring knocks on the door.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Austin & Alexandria look towards the door. Austin, the weight of the world on his shoulders, rises from his chair. The couple embraces.

ALEXANDRIA
I love you.

AUSTIN
I love you.

The tension breaks as they both laugh. The knocking is heard again.

AUSTIN
I'll answer the door, shall I?

He moves toward the door.

(CONTINUED)

ALEXANDRIA
(getting his attention)
Darling, we've done well.

AUSTIN
(grinning)
What else might you expect?

Alexandria grins back. The knocking becomes more insistent.

AUSTIN
We could have allotted more time
teaching her the virtue of
patience.

He leaves the room as Alexandria lights the candles on the table.

EXT. PORCH - NIGHT

The door opens revealing Austin.

AUSTIN
If it isn't my talented girl! Come
here!

SAVANNAH BOROUGHS, 32 though apparently 19, bounces into her father's arms. The hug is warm and loving - everything a hug should be.

AUSTIN
Let me see.

Savannah holds out her hand so he can see the ring.

AUSTIN
(examining it)
It's perfect on you. Well done,
Corwin. I think I may finally have
to accept this dating scheme you
two have gotten yourselves mixed up
in.

He holds his hand out and greets CORY, 35 though apparently 18. They both wait to see if it will turn into a hug but it never does.

AUSTIN
Come on in before the food and your
mother's patience freeze over.

He steps back to let them enter before closing the door.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Alexandria is standing beside the door when Savannah comes in.

SAVANNAH
Hi Mom!

She stops, perplexed by the seemingly empty room before Alexandria surprise-hugs her from behind. Savannah jumps in surprise and they both laugh.

ALEXANDRIA
Darling!

SAVANNAH
Mom, look!

She examines the ring.

ALEXANDRIA
Oh yes. Far better than your father!

AUSTIN (O.S.)
That's quite true!

Cory walks in. Alexandria turns to him and hugs him.

ALEXANDRIA
Corwin!

CORY
(stiffly)
Mrs. Boroughs.

Alexandria shows him Savannah's hand with the ring on it.

ALEXANDRIA
Corwin, you're an adult now. I'm to be your mother as well as Savannah's.

CORY
Whatever you say, Alexandria.

Austin enters with a bottle of scotch.

AUSTIN
For certain a phrase I expected to say more often.

(CONTINUED)

ALEXANDRIA
Fortunately for us, we think the
same way.

She hands him an ice bucket as she says this. He takes it
and kisses her before opening the bottle and pouring out 4
healthy glassfulls.

AUSTIN
(raising his glass)
Family.

Alexandria, Cory & Savannah all echo him and clink their
glasses. Everyone but Savannah drinks. She just stares into
her glass as if hoping she'll see a way to avoid what she
has to do.

She looks up to see her dad watching her.

AUSTIN
(knowingly)
Savannah.

SAVANNAH
Yeah, Dad.

The candles on the table flicker.

AUSTIN
Not tonight.

SAVANNAH
It's time, Dad.

AUSTIN
I know it is, but...

Cory lays a heavy hand on Savannah's shoulder.

CORY
Sav, your dad's right.

Suddenly there's a fire in Savannah's eyes.

SAVANNAH
You want the ring back already?

Cory holds up his hands and takes a step back, giving
Savannah the floor. She looks to her father. Austin lets out
a sigh as Savannah's eyes burn into him.

AUSTIN

You are right. You are right. I was hopeful we could wait at least until after the wedding...

SAVANNAH

And give him more time to waste money? We don't even know if he has enough right now.

AUSTIN

Sweetheart, you are speaking most unfairly. Despite his faults, he has never found himself quite so short of funds.

ALEXANDRIA

Usually.

SAVANNAH

Usually.

Austin looks from his daughter to his wife. Alexandria gets the message and takes the lead.

ALEXANDRIA

Sweetie, why is it of such importance that this happen now? The wedding's a while off. We have time...

SAVANNAH

Mom, do you remember my friend, Violet?

Austin & Alexandria share a look.

ALEXANDRIA

(with the appropriate weight)
We do. Her aunt telephoned me.

SAVANNAH

Why do you think I went and bought this ring yesterday?

Austin & Alexandria look from the ring to Cory in surprise. He shrugs. The look back at their daughter.

SAVANNAH

After what happened to her, I'm not going to wait any longer. I've wanted to be a mom my whole life. Mom, you remember how I used to practice discipline on my dolls. How you said you couldn't wait to see me with a kid of my own?

(CONTINUED)

Alexandria is visibly remembering.

SAVANNAH

Well, now it's that time. Please.
My daughter needs her capacity
secured.

There's a long pause. Off to the side, Cory pours himself more scotch.

Finally Austin looks her in the eye.

AUSTIN

You're right. The agreement was
settled on your engagement, not
your wedding. And he has not met
the requirements.

ALEXANDRIA

And it will take time to process
the paperwork. And properly dispose
of the body.

AUSTIN

(to Savannah)

You are aware it has to be you that
does it?

Savannah nods quickly. The fire is still in her, but there's a sense of genuine happiness beginning to creep in.

AUSTIN

Yes. Well, it would appear as if
more congratulations are in order!
More scotch? If Corwin has left any
for us.

Austin grins mostly jokingly at Cory who waves the less-than-expectedly full bottle at Austin.

ALEXANDRIA

To Savannah and to Corwin and to
whomever else joins them.

The glasses clink and this time everyone drinks.

AUSTIN

Now, who among us is ready for
supper?

SAVANNAH

Me!

(CONTINUED)

ALEXANDRIA

Good, you and Corwin retrieve the
food in whilst your father and I
open the wine.

Savannah grabs Cory's arm

SAVANNAH

Come on, husband!

CORY

So you still love me, then?

Savannah mock-thinks for a moment.

SAVANNAH

You'll do.

They smile as they leave the room.

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

The handgun is placed on a table beside a box of ammunition.

AUSTIN (V.O.)

Remember sweetie, he must give his
permission.

SAVANNAH (V.O.)

I know, Daddy.

EXT. COURTYARD - DAY

A cell phone chimes with a notification. ASH, 145 though
apparently 40s, grabs it eagerly from the arm of his chair.

He is sitting in a small park surrounded by suburbia. His
clothes could not be less formal and he looks as though he's
barely slept. But the smile on his face & the light in his
eyes attest that it's all worth it. There is a heavy,
well-thumbed book on the chair beside him.

As he types a hasty and excited response on his phone,
Savannah and Austin appear behind him.

Ash lifts the phone to take a selfie and sees them behind
him. He leaps to his feet.

ASH

Brother! What a surprise!

(CONTINUED)

AUSTIN

Ash.

Ash catches Austin in a hug.

ASH

And little Savvy accompanies you.
How are you, Sweetie?

SAVANNAH

I'm good Uncle Ash.

ASH

As always. Hey, do us a favour: try
calling me Ashton. Let us hear how
it sounds.

SAVANNAH

Ok, Ashton.

Ash takes it in. His grin widens.

ASH

Yes, could get used to that.

SAVANNAH

Get used to what? It's your name.

ASH

Certain, but I haven't used it
in...half a century. Never seemed
to suit. Maybe I've finally grown
into it. I feel like a completely
different person. Amazing what
small changes can do. Call me
Ashton from now on.

SAVANNAH

But I've always called you Ash.

ASH

Right, thus it's time for a change.
Way too long since something
changed around here. Amazing what a
paralysis immortality can be.

Savannah takes a deep breath before reaching behind her for
something.

AUSTIN

(warningly)

Savannah.

Ash looks at them.

(CONTINUED)

ASH
Savannah? Looks like Savvy's been
making some changes of her own.

Savannah looks to her father. With a look, Austin hands her
the reins.

SAVANNAH
Well...actually...

She holds up her hand to Ash. The ring on it shimmers in
the sun. Ash's jaw drops.

ASH
Really!? That's...wow!

He goes in for a big hug. Savannah carefully lets him.

ASH
This calls for a drink.

He pulls a flask from beside his chair and offers it to
Savannah. She holds up her hand to refuse.

ASH
Come now! It's fantastic. Distilled
the same year I was born.

AUSTIN
You almost said same year you were
distilled, did you not?

ASH
(with a wink)
I have never been stilled.

He takes a drink and enjoys it.

ASH
(to Savannah)
See, not even poisoned. Try some.

SAVANNAH
No thank you, Uncle Ash.

Ash looks at Austin.

ASH
Gee, you change your name and it's
as if you're a completely different
person.

SAVANNAH
I'm getting married, Uncle Ash.

ASH
Yep, that also qualifies as a
change. Seems you have a head
start, Savvy.

There's a pause. Everyone is smiling. Only one of them is
genuine.

AUSTIN
Ash... You recall the
agreement...right?

Ash nods and laughs.

ASH
Yes. You're not actually here to
talk about that, are you?

From behind her back, Savannah pulls out the handgun. The
realisation hits Ash harder than any of the trio have ever
been hit. It takes him a minute to form words.

ASH
You're not actually here to **talk**
about that.

SAVANNAH
I'm sorry, Uncle Ash but this was
the deal. You're still single...
and...

ASH
Well...I mean to say...yes...for
the moment.

AUSTIN
Do you have the funds?

Ash's head snaps to his brother. He crosses his arms.

ASH
I confess, no. I'm a little behind
actually.

Austin looks to Savannah.

AUSTIN
Did he?

(CONTINUED)

SAVANNAH

Yeah.

ASH

Did he what?

AUSTIN

You twitch your foot when you lie.

Ash looks down at his foot and stills it. It takes him a while to look back to his brother and niece.

ASH

It's always the little things, is it not?

Silence resumes. Finally Savannah takes a step towards Ash. He steps back immediately.

SAVANNAH

Uncle Ash, don't make this harder.

ASH

You're asking that of me?

SAVANNAH

I don't want to do this.

ASH

Then why are we?

SAVANNAH

Because it's time. Because I'm getting married.

ASH

You know how long a wedding takes to plan? There's plenty of time.

AUSTIN

Ashton...

Ash looks at him.

ASH

It occurs to me, I'm not sure I like it as much when you say it.

AUSTIN

For Christ's sake Ashton, grow up!

(CONTINUED)

ASH
(pointing to a house)
Careful yelling "Christ". Bill knew him.

AUSTIN
Do you not see? You spout that gibberish yet still expect to be taken seriously.

Ash doesn't even know how to respond. He flounders for a response.

ASH
There is more to life than being serious. There's a lot of good in...

AUSTIN
(cutting in)
Ashton, you are unmarried, working innumerable transient jobs, continuing to reside in a single room apartment. What good is there in your life?

Ash seems to be trying to find words that Austin will understand.

ASH
I'm still here.

Austin shakes his head.

AUSTIN
Your capacity would serve much better giving Savannah a child.

ASH
Why? Because one day it might "grow up?"

SAVANNAH
Yes.

Ash stares at her.

SAVANNAH
Dad's right, Uncle Ash. You had your chance and you wasted it.

(CONTINUED)

ASH
And that decision lies with you,
does it?

AUSTIN
No, it was your doing, all those
decades ago. At the time you were
immeasurably sure you would be
married before the rest of us. That
you would be first of the twelve.

ASH
(uncomfortably remembering)
Stuff happened.

AUSTIN
None of which was fault of yours.
However the rest of our family was
able to move on...

Savannah steps forward and begins to raise the gun.

SAVANNAH
I'm sorry, Uncle Ash.

He looks into her eyes. She is struggling to pull the
trigger. Her father comes up behind her and lays a
comforting hand on her shoulder.

The gun's hammer begins to move. Ash sees this.

ASH
(almost frantic)
Hold! look, look! I met someone.

He holds up his phone. A photo of an attractive girl smiles
from the screen. Savannah looks at the picture then to Ash
as if imagining them together.

SAVANNAH
(past the point)
And you...uh...you really think
this relationship is The One? You
and...her?

ASH
I don't know yet. That's the point.
What about you? You and your...

He doesn't want to say the word.
...fiancee? You've known him for
two years. Is he The One?

Behind her, Austin looks to his daughter.

(CONTINUED)

SAVANNAH
I made him The One!

Ash looks at her in disbelief.

ASH
And like that, all poetry was
solved.

SAVANNAH
Don't you joke about this!

ASH
Why would I? Clearly you can't take
it.

AUSTIN
Steady, Ash.

ASH
Are you kidding!?

AUSTIN
This is the agreement.

ASH
Fuck the agreement! Is this what
we've become? You're going to take
my life...

AUSTIN
...so her child can lead a better
one? Yes.

ASH
A better one? Who are you placing
value on it? What gives you that
right?

AUSTIN
I'm not the one who's failed.

Ash looks to Savannah. Finally ready to say the sentence he
didn't want to say.

ASH
What if your kid's a moron? What if
they're ...I don't know...not
perfect? You'll spend their whole
life regretting that you did this.

(CONTINUED)

SAVANNAH

But what if she's not? What if she could be perfect but I never get to have her? I'm not going to be that woman with no children. To have other people think me lonely or selfish. I'm going to be a mom no matter what and my daughter will be perfect.

ASH

But you don't know. You know me. You know the stories I have told you. All the adventures we talked about having. You'd give all that up?

Savannah's fist curls and her face becomes rigid. She's done letting his attacks get to her.

SAVANNAH

Stop complicating this. It's simple.

ASH

Nothing this big is simple.

SAVANNAH

Big things are always simple. It's little things that make a difference. You taught me that.

Ash stops. From Savannah's words, something inside him has begun to make peace with this.

ASH

Well, some part of me will live on, at least. Ok. You and that little bullet do your...thing.

He turns away from them. Savannah raises the gun again. This time, the hammer begins to come back easily.

Suddenly Ash spins around.

ASH

Look! We're alive now! Together! Think of all the moments we've got coming! You're telling me, you imagined your wedding without me there? Your college graduation? The Christmas fire songs with your husband, and parents, but not me?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

ASH (cont'd)

The...the...the trips to Mount
Lucania and getting up early to
chase the caribou off the patio.
Those are our moments. You can have
them and still have a child
afterwards. Come on, Savvy! You're
telling me you're ok missing out on
all those memories?

Savannah is struggling to keep going.

Somewhere across the courtyard, a baby's cry is heard. They
all look in that direction. When Ash turns back, Savannah
isn't struggling anymore.

SAVANNAH

I'll have more memories with my
daughter.

Ash crumbles. His eyes drift aimlessly as if looking for any
solid ground left to stand on. They settle on Austin.

ASH

You can't let her do this.

SAVANNAH

Let me? He's not letting me. I've
earned this!

And with those three words, it is over.

ASH

Well, that's the last word, isn't
it?

Ash looks to his brother.

ASH

(to Austin)

Write Ash on the stone.

AUSTIN

Of course.

Ash finally faces Savannah straight on.

ASH

Well...Savannah. I guess
congratulations are in order.

(CONTINUED)

SAVANNAH

Thank you.

ASH

What are you going to...

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

The gunshot rings through the air.

Mr & Mrs. Harbin, who until this moment were sitting in opposing lawn chairs, engrossed in their own activities, look up.

MR. HARBIN

Seems the Boroughs girl is finally getting married.

MRS. HARBIN

So the case would appear. We must to send them something.

MR. HARBIN

A blender, as usual?

MRS. HARBIN

Perhaps not this time. The boy in the appliance shop has begun to address me by my first name.

The both smile and go back to their respective activities.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

On a table is a tablet with a birth certificate on the screen. A little "Authorising" progress bubble covers most of the data.

After a second, the bubble is replaced by a check mark and disappears to reveal the name and sex:

Male - Ashton Boroughs Burg.