

LOVELACERS

Written by

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BLACK.

A scream is heard in the darkness.

Fluorescent lights turn on, revealing:

INT. PRISON CELL, UPSTATE NY - NIGHT

AMANDA FEATHERSTONE, mid 30s, crouches behind the sink and toilet in the far corner of a cramped cell, shaking.

AMANDA

(In tears)

Oh my god! Oh my god! Where am I?

The female Overnight CO who turned the lights on enters the cell.

CELLMATE

She just started screaming again.

The Overnight CO slowly approaches Amanda.

OVERNIGHT CO

Amanda, it's okay. You're safe.

AMANDA

Safe from whom? Where am I?

OVERNIGHT CO

You're in prison Amanda. C'mon you know where you are. No one is gonna hurt you.

AMANDA

No. No. No. This can't be real.

Amanda looks up at the Overnight CO.

AMANDA

Is this my life?

INT. PRISON HALLWAY - MORNING

We see two staff from the prison talking from a distance. DONNA SANTORO, the facility nurse speaks quietly with EILEEN DONNELLY, Amanda's Rehabilitation Coordinator.

EILEEN

What did the psychologist say?

DONNA

There's nothing actually wrong with her.

(MORE)

DONNA (CONT'D)

I think it's just night terrors. Everyone needs time to acclimate and she hasn't even been here a month yet.

EILEEN

She's suffering particularly badly. I'm worried.

DONNA

She seems better now. Why? Are you thinking self-harm?

EILEEN

I'm not sure with this one. Let me talk with her again.

INT. EILEEN'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Eileen enters her office where we see Amanda sitting in a chair in front of the desk. She holds a small styrofoam cup of green tea in her hand. She is visibly calmer compared to last night.

EILEEN

How are you feeling?

AMANDA

I'm fine now. I don't remember having any nightmares.

EILEEN

They're not just regular nightmares Amanda, you've been having *night terrors* more than half the nights you've been here. You wake up screaming, not knowing where you are. I don't know why you don't want any relief. We can give you medication to make them go away.

AMANDA

I don't like taking things that make me feel out of control.

EILEEN

You see yourself as someone who likes to be in control?

AMANDA

I am someone who likes to be in control.

EILEEN

So how are you going to handle being in a situation in which you are inherently out of control for the foreseeable future?

Amanda looks at the floor and remains unresponsive.

EILEEN (CONT'D)

Amanda, you won't be here forever, but you're going to be here for a very long time. And a big part of my job is to get you to accept that.

AMANDA

I'm not stupid, I understand my situation.

EILEEN

There's a big difference between understanding and acceptance.

AMANDA

What do you want me to say? I'm not causing any trouble. I'm doing what I'm told.

EILEEN

I'm not worried about you causing trouble, but I think you don't want to admit to yourself what an uncomfortable situation you've put yourself in because it would be too painful.

AMANDA

(Voice cracking)

Um...I'll be fine. I'm just a little hungry...am I allowed to go get breakfast now?

EILEEN

Breakfast ended about an hour ago, they'll be serving lunch at noon. But I actually keep a few little bags of gourmet nuts for in between meals.

Eileen opens a drawer in her desk, pulls out a 1.5 oz bag of gourmet nuts, reaches over and hands them to Amanda.

Amanda looks at the small cup of green tea in one hand and the small bag of nuts in the other hand.

Her eyes well up with tears and she looks up at Eileen.

AMANDA

Thank you...thank you for trying to help me.

EILEEN

You're not beyond getting help, you know that right?

AMANDA

(Looking down in tears)

No, I don't know that...I've lived my life completely without empathy, so I don't know why I would deserve it now from others.

EILEEN

Okay, well while you're here we can work on fixing that, but for now I just want you to take it one day at a time and tomorrow we can talk about how you can spend your time here. I think I know the perfect way for you to keep busy and help you learn to empathize with other people more.

Amanda wipes her eyes with the back of the hand holding the bag of nuts.

AMANDA

Yeah?

EILEEN

(Gently smiling)

Yeah, but for today I just want you to concentrate on not feeling sorry for yourself.

Beat.

AMANDA

Is that all? Are you kicking me out?

EILEEN

For now. We'll speak again tomorrow. You'll be okay.

Amanda pulls herself together and summons an inner strength.

AMANDA
(Nodding her head)
Okay.

Amanda takes a deep breath, gets up and walks out of Eileen's office.

INT. PRISON HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Amanda exits the office and walks down the hallway back towards the common area. There is a large metal double-door with security glass between the administrative wing and the rest of the prison.

When Amanda reaches the door a CO buzzes it open for her to pass through. With her hands full, Amanda pushes the door open with the back of her shoulder and torso so she can pass through.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. OFFICE LOBBY, FLATIRON DISTRICT - EARLY MORNING

Amanda enters the sleek lobby of the office building in the Flatiron District where she works. This earlier version of Amanda looks almost like a different person. Instead of a small styrofoam cup and little bag of nuts she holds a large coffee (not from Starbucks) in one hand and iPhone in the other. She is now wearing makeup and her hair and nails look flawless.

Even though Amanda and the Front Desk Attendant have never formally met and don't know each other's names, they both know each other's faces and exchange a friendly greeting.

FRONT DESK ATTENDANT
Good morning.

AMANDA
(With friendly smile)
Morning.

INT. OFFICE - MINUTES LATER

Amanda is the first in the office. She sits down at her work station and turns on her monitors. The screens of her computer are filled with terminals, text editors, browser windows and emails. Over 150 unread emails.

Unfazed, she puts on her headphones. THE STACCATO, ROBOTIC PULSE OF 80S SYNTH-POP kicks in. It is an aggressive wall of music designed to keep the human noise out.

She begins to go through her emails one by one.

As the hours pass, Amanda remains focused at her workstation while the office gradually fills up with her coworkers.

INT. OFFICE - LATER THAT MORNING

(Music Cont'd)

A young woman walks up behind Amanda and gently pulls off her headphones just before the second chorus is about to hit. This is JESSICA OH, late 20's.

AMANDA

I was just getting to the best part.

JESSICA

I don't care about your music
Amanda, I can't do my job like
this.

AMANDA

(Smiling)

Yes you can.

JESSICA

I'm serious, we need another
systems engineer who knows their
shit.

AMANDA

Yeah, and I already okayed another
hire, so what's up?

JESSICA

What's up? You're cock blocking
everyone I find before you even
meet them.

AMANDA

Then find someone who has some
actual experience working with
large systems.

JESSICA

No one is gonna have the level of
experience you're looking for.

AMANDA

Really? In this whole city you
can't find any systems engineers
that know Rust?

JESSICA

This tech is only two years old, so how are we gonna find someone with three years of experience? I mean, I can find programmers that can write Rust, but we're gonna have to onboard them onto the new framework.

AMANDA

Just tell me what you want.

JESSICA

You have to actually meet with the people I find.

Amanda makes direct eye contact with Jessica for the first time.

AMANDA

Ok, I hear you...but the number one most important thing is that whoever we bring onboard has to back us up on using the new GPUs. If not, I will lose my mind.

Jessica pulls a chair away from a nearby desk and sits down next to Amanda to think for a moment, then turns back to Amanda.

JESSICA

Alright, I may have an idea. There's a sport coding competition tomorrow night and it's gonna be full of systems engineers. Come with me and I'll buy dinner.

Amanda returns to her emails.

AMANDA

I don't know Jess. Dinner where? I mean...I hate those things.

JESSICA

There's no point in me going alone if you're just gonna hate everyone I bring to you. This is what I do and I'm telling you these are the people you wanna talk to.

Amanda Locks eyes with Jessica, smirking.

AMANDA

Okay, fine. I'll go if Dylan goes.
(MORE)

AMANDA (CONT'D)
But if this ruins my night, I'm
gonna blame you.

INT. OFFICE - AFTERNOON

In a glass meeting room a dozen software engineers work on a problem on a whiteboard. Indistinct chatter is heard. Everyone is focused and engaged.

At the far end of the conference table we see a young woman sitting alone. This is TAMSIN DEBARI, mid-20's. She is conspicuously uninterested. On her phone, chewing gum, sunglasses pushed up to her forehead. Several minutes later the room empties except for Tamsin and her boss ROBERT, early 40's.

ROBERT
You know, Tam, you're not the only
clever developer on this team.

TAMSIN
I just want to be fairly
compensated.

ROBERT
You are fairly compensated. You get
paid the salary on the employment
contract you signed.

TAMSIN
The contract says that I'm entitled
to a bonus based on performance.

ROBERT
Yeah, and you'll get the normal
stock and cash bonus along with
everyone else on the team at the
end of the year.

TAMSIN
I've gone way above and beyond a
yearly bonus here. I rewrote over
80% of the cloud team's internal
API's and saved the company over
ten million in compute cost just in
the past six months. That number
will triple after another six. So I
want my bonus to reflect my
contribution, I want one percent of
the cost savings at years end.

ROBERT
Okay, first of all...no way, and
how did you arrive at that number?

TAMSIN
I can do math.

Robert stares at Tamsin.

TAMSIN (CONT'D)
Look...I spoke to Sarah in
procurement and at the start of the
year the monthly AWS bill was x and
the usage was increasing by y each
week so thirty million is actually
a conservative estimate.

ROBERT
Well...assuming that's all
correct...

TAMSIN
(Without missing a beat)
It's all correct.

ROBERT
Assuming that's correct, it has
absolutely nothing to do with your
compensation. You're not getting
anything close to 300 on top of
your regular salary.

TAMSIN
After working with me for six
months you know that's what I
deserve.

Robert chuckles at Tamsin's audacity.

TAMSIN (CONT'D)
Why should I stay employed in a
place where my efforts aren't
appreciated?

ROBERT
Because you still have 18 months
left on your employment contract.

Tamsin returns to her phone.

TAMSIN
(Shrugging)
We'll see.

ROBERT
Well...good luck getting out of
that, Tam.

TAMSIN
I don't know, I said we'll see.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

In a packed, upscale Japanese restaurant, Amanda, Jessica and DYLAN HUGHES, early 30's, sit in the far corner booth. Jessica and Dylan share a small bottle of hot sake while Amanda looks around the crowded restaurant.

AMANDA
God, where is this fucking
waitress?

DYLAN
What's the rush? It's still early.

AMANDA
That's not the point, she hasn't
come by the table since before 9.
How hard is it to take an order?

DYLAN
When a small restaurant like this
is packed I'm guessing it gets
pretty fucking hard.

AMANDA
It's the one job literally anyone
can do.

JESSICA
Amanda, she's not young. I'm sure
she doesn't want to be here,
waiting tables.

AMANDA
So then find another job. This is
one of the biggest cities in the
world.

JESSICA
You think you could do better
working here?

AMANDA
I would never end up working at a
restaurant in the first place.

Amanda sees Jessica and Dylan make eye contact.

AMANDA

(To Dylan)

Oh, like you would work waiting tables?

DYLAN

No, but that's me. I don't know anything about her life.

AMANDA

(With a playful smile)

Well, maybe if she had worked a little harder in high school she wouldn't be in this position.

JESSICA

(In exasperation)

Oh, God. Let's just leave a fifty and go.

DYLAN

(To Amanda)

It's an expensive restaurant in Manhattan, the hostess just overbooked again.

JESSICA

I think they might have food there, let's just go.

AMANDA

No, I'm already going to this thing under duress, I'm not going hungry too. You know the second we walk out the door she's going to come by for our order.

Dylan first nods in agreement then gestures towards someone at the front of the restaurant.

DYLAN

Okay, she's coming.

WAITRESS

Hi, guys. Sorry to keep you waiting. It's unusually busy for a Tuesday.

AMANDA

(Without a shred of irony)

Totally fine, we don't mind waiting.