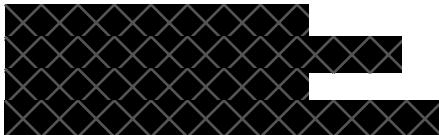


THE MELTING CLOCK

Written by
Richard L Bergh



BLACK:

Rain. TAP, TAP, TAP.

TITLE CARD:

"Whether you call someone a hero or a monster is all relative to where the focus of your consciousness may be."
Joseph Campbell, The Power of Myth

SLOW FADE IN:

EXT - A DARK AND STORMY - NIGHT

RAIN DROPS STRIKE A LEAF. TAP, TAP, TAP.

FARRAH (V.O)

(a young woman)

This is a simple tale. But don't let that lure you into a sense of safety. It's not some fire-side chat with Grandpa Roosevelt, or an ordinary bedtime story of pretty princesses, wicked queens, and daring knights who come to carry you off to a land of sugar plum dreams; a tale that begins with something sweet and irresponsible like: Once. Upon. A time...

THE RAINDROPS FOLLOW A RUBE-GOLDBERG PATH DOWN.

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

...Brimming with little lies to set you at ease. Lies like there is such a thing as *a time*, or that anyone could ever *sit upon it*. Or that any thing ever happened... only once.

THE PATH LEADS TO A RAIN DROP SMASHING AGAINST GLASS. TAP, TAP, TAP.

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

Truth is no lullaby. And time is no dewy grass-en earth.

(beat)

They are an all consuming fire.

LIGHTENING!

FARRAH (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Try and sit upon that.

REVEAL THROUGH GLASS: A WOMAN'S FACE.

LILA (36), in wealthy evening wear, is upright and unconscious in the passenger seat of a wrecked car, her face bisected by a crack in the glass.

FARRAH (V.O.)
It was a dark and stormy night...

THUNDER!

Lila's eyes POP.

INT. WRECKED CAR - NIGHT

Rain TAPS against the windshield. A streetlamp shines overhead, light refracts through the spider-crack. She reaches for it.

LILA
It's so pretty...

She looks over and sees DAVID (40) staring at her, mouth agape, head against the steering wheel, dead.

LIGHTENING!

Her reach moves toward his face.

LILA (CONT'D)
Oh, David, no. No, no. Don't go.
Don't you leave me. David. No...

THUNDER.

TITLE CARD: "THE MELTING CLOCK"

TITLE SEQUENCE

MUSIC: OVERTURE

END SEQUENCE.
END CREDITS.

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - DAY

FROM BLACK.

A digital time stamp advances. A lens cap is removed revealing, OUT OF FOCUS, FARRAH (24), sullen.

The focus adjusts, but remains a hair soft.

FARRAH (V.O.)
That's me. Farrah Lorne, 24, and ordinary.

Focus pulls out.

FARRAH (V.O.)
But this story isn't about me.

Back in for hard focus.

FARRAH (V.O.)
Or any other ordinary thing.

ELLEN WATKINS (30's), in a JC PENNY pantsuit, steps from behind the camera to adjust Farrah's hair out of her face. As she steps away, Farrah flips it back. A BOOM OPERATOR gets into position.

WATKINS
(to boom)
Ready?

BOOM
Sound-speed.

Watkins steps behind the camera. A RED DOT blinks ON--"REC".

WATKINS (O.S.)
Camera rolling.

Watkins marks a slate.

FARRAH (V.O.)
Ellen Watkins. She's ordinary too.
But she doesn't know it.
(MORE)

FARRAH (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 She's making a documentary about
 Anton and the Society. The big
 break for her career.

WATKINS
 (to boom)
 Ok, we good?

BOOM
 Sound. Speed.

FARRAH (V.O.)
 Little does she know...

WATKINS
 The Volkov Society. Farrah Lorne.
 Take one. Marker.

She claps the marker.

TITLE CARD: "FARRAH"

FARRAH (V.O.)
 ...this story isn't about her
 either. Or Anton. Or the Society.

Watkins adjusts her seat into an OTS.

WATKINS
 Ok, Farrah. Are you ready.

Farrah nods, slightly.

WATKINS (CONT'D)
 Tell me about Dr. Volkov.

EXT. A HANGING TREE - DAWN

A MALE FIGURE dangles by the neck, the branch CREAKING as the
 body sways.

FARRAH (V.O.)
 Sorry. That hasn't happened yet.
 It's just where my mind goes.

INTERVIEW ROOM

Farrah stares blankly.

WATKINS
 Whenever you're ready.

FARRAH
Where would you like me to start?

WATKINS
I find it helps to start in the middle. Then work our way to the edges.

FARRAH
I didn't really know him until the end.

She spies a stack of file boxes labeled "Volkov, Anton".

FARRAH (CONT'D)
I don't research people.

WATKINS
Tell me something I don't know.

FARRAH
I don't know what you know.

WATKINS
Tell me something I couldn't know.

She considers this for a moment.

FARRAH
He was beautiful.

INT. ANTON'S OFFICE - DAY

ANTON (48), eyes like crystal balls, face cut from stone.

FARRAH (O.S.)
And he was magic.

Before Anton is an alter of mixed religious symbols. The center is a an idol of KRISHNA. He lifts a sage bundle and lights it.

WATKINS (O.S.)
I met him once.

Anton blows on the sage. It flares, the red glow reflecting in his azure eyes.

WATKINS (O.S.) (CONT'D)
He was handsome.

Anton swirls the sage clockwise. Chanting an OHM.

WATKINS (CONT'D)
And very charming.

He smudges the office.

FARRAH (O.S.)
I don't mean how he looked. Acted.

He switches the sage for a SINGING BOWL.

WATKINS (O.S.)
You're speaking of inner beauty.

FARRAH (O.S.)
Anton wasn't an ordinary man.

The bowl SINGS.

FARRAH (O.S.) (CONT'D)
He was an experience.

TITLE CARD: "ANTON"

INTERVIEWROOM

WATKINS
It's interesting that you say he
was magic.

FARRAH
I hate that word.

WATKINS
Magic?

FARRAH
Interesting.

WATKINS
Why's that?

FARRAH
It's demeaning.

INT. ANTON'S OFFICE - DAY

Farrah is on the couch, staring off. Unseen, ever-present, a cheap clock TICKS. TICK. TICK. Anton watches her in silence. Finally...

ANTON
Tell me something about where you
are right now.

Farrah doesn't change.

ANTON (CONT'D)
Is there anything you see?

ANTON (CONT'D)
Anything about it you can describe?

ANTON (CONT'D)
It doesn't have to be something
tangible. Is there a mood?

ANTON (CONT'D)
A feeling?.... A smell.

Farrah doesn't move. Anton shifts. He looks up to the clock.

FARRAH
Lavender.

ANTON
Oh? That's nice--

FARRAH
--No. Rose. Rose water.

ANTON
I see. How beautiful.

ANTON (CONT'D)
How does that make you feel?

ANTON (CONT'D)
It can be a physical feeling.

He puckers his lips. Looks at the clock.

FARRAH
Nauseous.

His attention snaps back to her.

ANTON
That's interesting.

ANTON (CONT'D)
You didn't like that.

FARRAH
It's a stupid thing to say.

ANTON
How so?

FARRAH
It's odd. You're odd.

ANTON
Ok. Thank you.

FARRAH
It's not, like, a compliment.

ANTON
Thank you for your honesty.

Farrah shrugs

ANTON (CONT'D)
It's more typical for people to
associate roses with pleasant
feelings.

FARRAH
Sorry I'm not typical.

ANTON
You're interesting. Unique
feelings, like unique people, have
something to show us. I'd like to
explore this.

Farrah is silent.

WATKINS (O.S.)
I hope people find me interesting.

INTERVIEW ROOM

WATKINS

And my work. I work hard to make it interesting.

FARRAH

That's interesting.

WATKINS

You think so? Why?

FARRAH

I don't think you're interesting.

(beat)

It's a compliment.

WATKINS

It's an odd compliment.

FARRAH

That's interesting.

Watkins shifts her position.

WATKINS

I find it... curious... that you said magic...

Farrah cocks her head.

WATKINS (CONT'D)

Given his roots.

FARRAH

He's from New York.

WATKINS

There's more to it than that.

INT. SMALL LIVING ROOM - BROOKLYN, 1976 - DAY - FLASHBACK

Books. Crammed on shelves. Towering from the floor. Among them, A BOY (8), completing homework on the Pilgrim landing. A Grandfather clock, TICKS, its pendulum swinging back and forth. O.S., a woman's voice, indiscernible, plodding.

The Boy closes the workbook, timidly moves to a curtained doorway, the voice grows closer.