

Cerulean Enigma

written by

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I looked up quotes on hope. This was the first I found. I like LH quite a bit.

TITLE CARD: "HOLD FAST TO DREAMS, FOR IF DREAMS DIE, LIFE IS A BROKEN-WINGED BIRD, THAT CANNOT FLY." -- LANGSTON HUGHES.

FADE IN:

EXT. MOUNTAIN - EVENING

A beautiful mountain sunset. Look at it from every angle.

BILLY (V.O.)

This scene is exactly my point. To underline how stupid dialogue and moments of false depth like this are. American Beauty convinced people it was deep using this trick. I hate that movie so.

I look out at the sun setting. This one sun that provides the energy for all of us. The entire world runs on this glowing orb. Every day we get to see it for a few hours then it vanishes again, only to come back. It's like hope. It goes away for a time then comes back.

I know nothing about Hegel. Not one bit. I didn't think my "writer" did either. I love Brave New World though. Oh and yes Josh Huxley is supposed to be a Christ figure.

BILLY HUXLEY, 12, looks out. He's sitting next to JOSH HEGEL, 12. They're dressed in Spider-Man (1995) shirts. It's 1996 to be clear. An important year.

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

I look below at the valley. All of these people's lives are beyond me.

Insert shots of the valley, done in a badass filter. Ordinary, boring lives. Even a child sees it.

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

Real location btw. Lovely area.

They're so small, so insignificant. Up here I am mighty. Up here, I rule.

DISSOLVE TO:

GD I love Radiohead. This is an obvious choice but that's the point. You're never supposed to include music cues. So I had to break the rule.

THE CREDITS OVER WHICH RADIOHEAD'S "FAKE PLASTIC TREES" PLAYS. BECAUSE BILLY HEGEL GETS REALITY.

INT. CAR - EVENING

I've never read much Ayn Rand. I'm not a knee jerk opponent though.

The sun has just set to create a mood of between time because that's where the characters are. Billy and Josh sit in the back while RAND HUXLEY, 30, unshaven and free, drives.

RAND

Cliche'd band name from the 90s alert.

It's a shame your mom is being such a Nixon and won't let you go to the Warriors of The show tomorrow. We're playing with Imbecile Peepshow and Kudd.

BILLY

I'll get to go eventually.

RAND

Inevitable political rant, focus on the purity of not selling out. Had to get that in early. I don't agree,

See your mom's not like me. When we split up and she married that Republican councilman, she gave up what made her unique. I'm not like that. I'm still free.

BILLY

I want to be like you dad. Fun.

RAND

How often has this trope been used? The powerful idea your father isn't who you thought. And it would suck but it's always used to shame the mother. Hate it.

And you will, even though you look oddly nothing like me. I'm sure that's not because you more closely resemble your mother's friend Jeff who I still trust like a brother.

(MORE)

RAND (CONT'D)
That won't eventually be a lesson
you'll learn.

I thought it was funny Josh was always mad.

Billy nods. Josh looks around, an inscrutable look on his face. He is anger embodied but ignored.

RAND (CONT'D)
Gotta live life fully. Now let me
throw on the radio.

Let me stress: I'm not making light of the fact Rimes has never quite lived up to this. In fact I think her current life sounds great! She's had a solid career. Full good will to her. I love the idea of someone looking back and being mad they never did as well as she did.

He does so. Blue by Leeann Rimes hits.

At once everything stops as the song plays. A blue filter covers everything as Billy listens. It's transcendent, powerful, real.

Yay stock footage! Gift to idiots.

There are insert shots left and right. Stock footage. Images of the sky, pain. A sense that maturity is hitting.

Get it? No more childish things. He's growing up.

When we cut back, Billy and Josh are wearing different, nondescript clothes. Josh still looks angry. Billy looks dazed.

The song ends.

D.J. (V.O.)

OK, I really do not want subtlety.

That's the new song from 13 year
old Leeann Rimes. 13. Wow. Anybody
even close to that age has truly
got to feel like a total failure!

Billy looks out the window. Is he a failure? He's 12. Not too far off. Damn.

Josh glares. He has such rage in him.

EXT. CITY - EVENING

I am well aware they went by KFC in 1996. My "writer" wasn't.

The car drives through the city, passing a faded Confederate flag mural. In front of it is a sign: future home of Kentucky Fried Chicken.

The car keeps driving through town. A business named Mom & Pop's Drugstore has a for rent sign in the window. A Local Hardware Store is closed for good. A Non-Chain Clothing Store looks abandoned.

I have no qualms with Wal-Mart in reality. The drive for convenience and bargains created them. I shop there often! But I had to throw in an easy slam at them because the writer would believe it.

The Wal-Mart booms and bustles.

INT. CAR - EVENING

Rand keeps driving. Billy looks out, soaking it all up.

RAND

OK this I kinda do think. I do miss the flavor of the area. Frankly the worst parts about the area have stuck around while the character is gone.

It's all going to be over when you get to my age, Billy. The South? It'll be one plastic tarp covering the land. Nothing left of the real south!

GET IT!

Josh continues his anger. A bit of growling now.

JOSH

I'm going to die at 32!

They ignore him.

RAND

You'll miss this land. It'll be a version, not the truth.

Obviously that would never happen but I'm underlining things, man.

He turns on the radio again. Blue is on again. Billy looks out as he passes--

EXT. MIDDLE SCHOOL - EVENING

The local middle school. It looks large. There is a sign:
Welcome to Your Future!

INT. CAR - EVENING

Billy turns back, shaking. He's scared. Josh continues to
look around. He glares at everybody.

RAND

I'm thinking this is supposed to be a literal thing that
happened to "Billy."

I have to stop off here at this bar
to pay a friend back. I know it's
irresponsible but it is the person
I am and one day you will decide
you won't act like me but you will
inevitably find yourself in this
exact situation because it'll be an
ironic parallel that reflects how
the son becomes the father.

He places a hand on Billy's shoulder.

RAND (CONT'D)

The sad part: I could've taken this line from any number of
actual indie films.

See you're destined to be unable to
outrun your DNA or your upbringing.
At some point you will realize this
but only after a moment of crisis
that makes you see everything
clearly.

He leaves.

EXT. BAR - EVENING

OK, I really do love Dante and reference The Inferno in my
serious work. The Third Circle is an apt reference here.

Rand gets out of the car and walks up to a bar named The
Third Circle. Billy peers out of the car, bars of light
giving the illusion he's in a cage.

INT. BAR - EVENING

OK, after True Detective had a character named Antigone I joked I'd write a character named Festus Bastard. Then I realized that joke belonged here.

Rand walks in. Don't Fear the Reaper plays as he walks up to HEPHAESTUS BASTARD, 46, an ugly man if there ever was one. A cane sits beside him.

RAND
Hello Hephaestus Bastard.

HEPHAESTUS
Rand Hegel, my dear friend. What brings you here?

RAND
I come to pay you for your iron work. How is Venus?

HEPHAESTUS

I love Greek Mythology. But I'm not this blunt usually.
She is out tonight with my half brother Aaron, a soldier from the Gulf War, a dreadful mistake never to be made again.

RAND
And how is your mother?

HEPHAESTUS
She is fine, though she has visions of my father, a man I've never known and never will.

RAND
Find peace, Hephaestus Bastard.

INT. CAR - EVENING

Billy sits still in the car. Josh continues to shake with rage.

BILLY (V.O.)

I realize I keep hammering this in but hey, it's the joke.
Am I a failure at my young age? I have done nothing of note. I'm a B-student. Better than average but just barely. The top tier escapes me. I am incapable of greatness.
(MORE)

BILLY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 I am ordinary and doomed at this
 moment. Yet I also sit on the
 precipice of change. I might yet
 become something.

On the radio an ad plays. Billy listens.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Disclaimer: I actually really like Taylor Swift. She's
 interesting and has her own sound. No, I really blame country
 music circa 1995/1996 for starting to chase pop. Swift is
 honest at least.

Do you want the look of the future?
 To see what will become of the
 world tomorrow? Then look to us:
 The Tailors Swift. We take Northern
 style and bring it to southern
 fashion. We're the Tailors Swift
 and we're inescapable!

BILLY (V.O.)
 There are signs. Am I feeling them?
 Will I become something bright and
 new? I know not.

Josh punches the seat.

JOSH

The sad part: Most Christ figures in film are this clear.

I feel such anger tonight! Your
 father neglects us yet you are
 passive about it! My anger serves
 to reflect the way you feel even
 though you aren't outwardly
 expressing it. I take on your sins
 in lieu of my own. One of my
 friends will turn me in for
 revolutionary behavior mistaken for
 terrorism.

BILLY (V.O.)
 I am unaware of anything tonight
 but my own mind. My friend reacts
 to the world but I do not for I am
 fixated on my own crisis of
 conscience.

He looks out at the bar.

EXT. BAR - NIGHT

Symbolism.

Another cage shot. Billy is trapped in this situation.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Loser Whiskey.

Rand sits with Hephaestus as they take shots from a bottle labeled Loesser Whiskey.

RAND

This cheap whiskey tastes awful but feels good.

HEPHAESTUS

Just underlining the parallel.

The burn reminds me of fire, that which I work in daily at the steel mill. In my off hours, I craft sculptures of steel like the one you purchased.

RAND

I love your sculptures as they reflect my lifestyle, this bohemian transience I love so.

Often grossout moments are used in films like this to "reflect reality." In truth they're really just the writer provoking the viewer.

He stands up and walks to the bathroom. He walks in and proceeds to urinate. As he does, there are grunting noises heard from a stall. Loud, aggressive ones.

Onan Constant. Reference to the "Sin of Onan."

Finally they stop. ONAN CONSTANT, 23, walks out. He washes his hands.

RAND (CONT'D)

Hello Onan Constant.

He finishes up.

ONAN

I feel uncomfortable speaking in the aftermath of this moment.

RAND

The neglectful father is noble. Oh the contradiction.

It is ok, my friend. There are men such as you in this world who have urges society disdains. I am wise because I respect you and embrace you though I am foolish for I have left my son in a hot car in June.

ONAN

I express gratitude.

Rand walks out. He greets Hephaestus.

RAND

I gotta take off, but I hope you have peace with your crises Hephaestus Bastard though the universe curses you never to do so.

HEPHAESTUS

Thank you, Rand Huxley.

They shake hands. Rand walks out.

EXT. BAR - NIGHT

Rand walks to the car, passing Billy, once more shot as in a cage.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Rand gets in the car. He looks in at Billy and Josh.

RAND

Now that I have done my good deed in a place of sin, who wants ice cream?

BILLY

I do!

Rand starts the car. Billy looks off again.

BILLY (V.O.)

Will the ice cream soothe this pain in my heart? I know I am a mediocre soul who has and will fail to do more in life. Do I deserve the sweetness of a scoop of milkfat and sugar?

The car drives off. Billy turns to look at Josh.

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

Translation: who helps the helpers. Had to throw Latin in.

I stare at Josh. I watch him, still
incomprehensible to me. I hope I
can know how to ease his pain. For
though he may try to ease my pain,
qui adjuvat adiutores?

EXT. CITY - NIGHT

I wanted to try to create the most pretentious scene possible. I think I succeeded.

They drive past a daycare on fire. There is a closeup on the cartoons of children burning in the flames. On the soundtrack, throw on Madonna's "This Used To Be My Playground."

There are no fire engines in sight but there is a crowd standing by, throwing gasoline on the fire. They cheer at the sight of each leaping flame.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Billy still looks out.

BILLY (V.O.)

That fire represents so much to me,
for this is my life. My childhood
burns in the flames of time, fueled
by the actions of others.

He looks at Josh who sheds a tear without actually crying otherwise. Blue comes on again.

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

Again I am reminded I am nothing,
this mere Billy Huxley.

He listens to the song once more.

EXT. ICE CREAM SHOP - NIGHT

Reference to the Odyssey. Another work I love.

They pull up in front of the Ithaca Ice Cream Parlor. Billy gets out. He touches the walls. Josh joins him.

BILLY

I feel like it's been 20 years
since I've been here.

He looks right at the camera. They walk in.

INT. ICE CREAM SHOP - NIGHT

Billy, Josh, and Rand walk in. There are people sitting around, eating with no expression on their faces. They are deadened.

Reference to the ever ongoing Galatea Films project. Consider this an artifact of that world.

Billy walks to the front. The guy working the counter is TIMMY ERWIN, age 33, looking old and bloated.

RAND

Aren't you Timmy Erwin?

TIMMY

Yes, I once was known as Timmy Erwin, star of such films as Dogpatch Daze, Spider Monkey Junction, and as a failed adult, Revenge of the Return of Boogiesaurus but now I am but this you see before you, Tim Erwin.

RAND

I remember you! You were awesome then.

TIMMY

I was. But now I'm just me.

He leans in close to Billy.

TIMMY (CONT'D)

I decided William Huffman was a very sad failure in life venting about this fact in his art.

But pity me not. I've done more before I was 13 than you will ever do. My life is sad now but I can rest on the glory of my past for I have made something of my life, something you never will do, Billy. You will inevitably wind up working at a mill until an insurance settlement gives you the money to enter film school in your 30s.

(MORE)

TIMMY (CONT'D)
 But you will not succeed. So
 tonight, gaze upon me with mockery
 but I have succeeded where you
 never will!

He backs up.

TIMMY (CONT'D)
 Now, what can I get you?

BILLY
 Chocolate chip cookie dough!

JOSH

Bread & Wine to be clear. Communion.
 A cone of grape sherbet.

RAND
 Go get your seats and I'll bring
 it.

Inevitably the name of his Ex or something similar.

They walk to the table. Billy spies a girl, VERONICA CALUMET,
 12. She's very pretty.

JOSH
 Why are you looking at her?

BILLY
 She's pretty.

JOSH

OK, to say the least I do NOT think this. I despise this
 manner of thinking. So rapid fire I had to try to parody it.
 I just spat out every cliché I could.

You know she'll betray you! Women
 like her always do. They're rancid,
 fetid creatures composed of the
 blackest darkness that consumes the
 power of the man. In this modern
 age they think themselves worthy of
 the throne of man! They think
 they've ascended to our level
 through forced social progress but
 what they really want to do is
 force us under into a world where
 we are hunted, we are persecuted
 for being men. They will call us
 out in lies and we will have no
 recourse. We are hated for being
 us.

(MORE)

JOSH (CONT'D)

I say to you my friend we MUST
carry the spearhead on!

BILLY

I never thought of it that way.

JOSH

Women aren't funny. Except for the fact they are.

Because you've fed on the lies they
teach you. I ask you, have you ever
laughed at a woman? Have you loved
a film starring one? They tell us
to worship their art while they
ignore us and this I decry! Be not
weak, Billy Huxley. See through the
veil cast upon you.

BILLY

But what about her?

JOSH

Dave Sim thinks like this.

She will cheat on you! Cast you
aside. Abandon you because you
don't do enough for her. But what
about what she does for you? She
will devour you. Siphon all you
have. Fall not in!

BILLY

I shan't.

Rand walks over with the ice cream.

RAND

Here you go. I'll be right back.

He hands them the ice cream and leaves. Blue comes on again.

BILLY

This song...It hurts my soul. It's
so pretty. It makes me wonder what
could be. What I could be.

EXT. ICE CREAM SHOP - NIGHT

Rand walks out.

BILLY (V.O.)

Am I the sum of my parts? I know
 Rand Huxley isn't my forebear yet
 he has marked me. I carry within me
 the makings of my future self from
 his ways of raising me.

Rand walks to the car.

EXT. CITY - NIGHT

Rand drives.

BILLY (V.O.)

Am I fated to be like him, a fool?
 I hope not. I listen to this song
 and I feel frustration at a life
 not lived yet. I think of how he
 has fumbled. I hope I can ascend. I
 hope I can rise above, make
 something of myself. Yes I feel
 like a failure now and the universe
 screams at me I will become nothing
 and I expect it, but will I find
 myself at 33, a year past Christ,
 doing more?

EXT. BRIDGE - NIGHT

Rand walks to the edge of a bridge. He steps to the edge of
 it.

BILLY (V.O.)

Blue represents the hope I can be
 something more. Just like I know my
 dad will.

Why the suicide? Sudden acts of violence are a cliché. I had
 to throw it in.

With his arms out, falling in an inverted cross pose, Rand
 dives into the water.

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

I believe in hope in this world,
 this cerulean enigma.

FADE TO BLACK.

Ultimately my goal with this was to really tear apart things
 I hate. I hope I succeeded.

