

(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)

# In the Slush

Written by

Daniel Prillaman

8/12/19

1830 Steeplechase Run  
Charlottesville, VA. 22911  
434-981-0043  
danielprillaman@gmail.com

(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)

CAST OF CHARACTERS

LAURA BETH GARDNER  
30s, Female  
Editorial Assistant  
Wife of Ethan  
Pregnant

(NOTE: Does not need to "look" pregnant)

ETHAN GARDNER  
30s, Male  
Not an Editorial Assistant  
Husband of Laura Beth

HOPE ROSENSTOCK  
30s, Female  
Editorial Assistant  
Colleague of Laura Beth

With Special Appearances by:

RODINA WAITS  
(As portrayed by Hope Rosenstock)  
30s, Female  
Poet  
Single

ORLANDO BOOM  
(As portrayed by Ethan Gardner)  
Age Unknown, Male  
Impossibly Sexual Interstellar Space Explorer  
Marital Status Unknown

And

HAROLD BECKLESBY  
60s, Male  
Not an Editorial Assistant  
Marital Status Unknown

SETTING:

The Gardner Household basement.

TIME:

Recently.

(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)

*"Like the boundless sea*

*You are colossal to me."*

*-Rodina Waits, Untitled*

(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)

In the Slush, Daniel Prillaman, 1.

SCENE ONE

*The Gardner Household  
basement.*

*Renovated and released from its once gray, cinder blocked appearance, carpets and refurbished furniture cover the room. While its age creeps through, the naked eye sees it as it is now intended, a comfortable and all-purpose lounge. A TV and game system rest prominently. Shelves of books and DVDs line a wall while a fridge commands another.*

*On (and significantly around) a coffee table is a plethora of filled boxes, folders, and uncovered manuscripts. It's a rather striking amount of unread hopes and dreams.*

*There are two entrances/exits to the "comfort cave." A single door on the basement's main level, presumably leading to a boiler/laundry room or a bathroom, maybe some combination of all three. The other sits unseen at the top of the stairwell running behind all the furniture and main set-up.*

*This second door opens and a pair of feet descends the stairs. A second pair follows behind. Their voices are heard before the full bodies of LAURA BETH and ETHAN GARDNER are revealed, each carrying yet another box.*

ETHAN

You know, you should really let me carry these for you.

LAURA BETH

Not on your life, Mr. Gardner.

(CONTINUED)

**(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)**

In the Slush, Daniel Prillaman, 2.  
CONTINUED:

ETHAN  
Ooh, say that again.

LAURA BETH  
That again?

ETHAN  
You know, it is a good thing you're pretty.

LAURA BETH  
Is it now?

ETHAN  
It is. Because you are certainly not funny.

LAURA BETH  
Ah! What a husbandly thing to say. Insulting your wife's sense of humor while making her carry all these boxes.

ETHAN  
Making?

LAURA BETH  
Well, something like that.

ETHAN  
If I remember correctly, you said something along the lines of "over my left nut."

LAURA BETH  
Something like that.

ETHAN  
Exactly like that.

LAURA BETH  
Oh. Well, silly me. Must've been my mistake.

ETHAN  
Uh huh.

*They kiss.*

ETHAN  
Bad memory, too. Remind me why I married you?

LAURA BETH  
Because you love me.

ETHAN  
I do love you.

*They kiss.*

(CONTINUED)

(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)

In the Slush, Daniel Prillaman, 3.  
CONTINUED:

LAURA BETH  
Ugh. Don't let me do all this.

ETHAN  
Hah. If I could save you, I would.

LAURA BETH  
My hero.

ETHAN  
Here. I'll tell you what I can do.

*ETHAN pats a couch and sits.*

ETHAN  
Let me see those feet.

LAURA BETH  
Oh my god.

*LAURA BETH sits and removes her shoes, then lays her feet on ETHAN'S lap. He massages her feet over the following.*

LAURA BETH  
(Relaaaaxing)  
Ohhhhhhh.

Mmmmm.

Ooh, ah.

ETHAN  
You all right?

LAURA BETH  
Very. You spoil me.

ETHAN  
Only when you let me.

LAURA BETH  
Hmmm.

*Beat.*

*ETHAN stops briefly, staring at LAURA BETH'S feet.*

LAURA BETH  
Noooo. Why'd you stop?

(CONTINUED)

(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)

In the Slush, Daniel Prillaman, 4.  
CONTINUED:

Sorry--your toes.  
ETHAN

What about them?  
LAURA BETH

I've never noticed this before, your toes, your middle toes,  
they're--connected.  
ETHAN

Only halfway.  
LAURA BETH

That's still, like, half-webbed.  
ETHAN

Yeah. I'm a fish. I didn't tell you?  
LAURA BETH

I just--can't believe I never noticed that.  
ETHAN

Well, you're lucky you're pretty.  
LAURA BETH

*ETHAN kisses her feet and  
continues.*

You know, it's not that uncommon. There's a word for it. I  
forget what it is. But there's a word for it.  
LAURA BETH

Yeah?  
ETHAN

I think it starts with an "V?" S? S. I don't remember.  
LAURA BETH

It's all right. Don't worry about it.  
ETHAN

Sin...something. I don't know.  
LAURA BETH

Ssssh.  
ETHAN

Mmmmm.  
LAURA BETH

*Beat.*

(CONTINUED)

**(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)**

In the Slush, Daniel Prillaman, 5.  
CONTINUED:

LAURA BETH

You know an actual weird thing, speaking of feet...

ETHAN

What's that?

LAURA BETH

When I was on the coffee run the other day, there were three separate people in that Starbucks without shoes on.

ETHAN

Yeah?

LAURA BETH

No socks, either. All barefoot.

ETHAN

What's your point?

LAURA BETH

It was weird.

ETHAN

That's not that strange.

LAURA BETH

You don't think? In this part of town? This weather?

ETHAN

No. There are a lot weirder things out there than not wearing shoes in public. You know it's actually supposed to be good for you.

LAURA BETH

Is it?

ETHAN

Oh, yeah. It's, like, healthier for your feet, they get less deformed in the long run.

LAURA BETH

You don't think it's unhygienic?

ETHAN

No more unhygienic than stealing my toothbrush.

LAURA BETH

Hey, I'm allowed to do that now. It's a rule.

ETHAN

Oh, is it?

(CONTINUED)

(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)

In the Slush, Daniel Prillaman, 6.  
CONTINUED:

Yeah. LAURA BETH

Says who? ETHAN

Uh, the Priest. It even says so in really tiny print on the certificate. LAURA BETH

Bullshit. ETHAN

Bullshit your bullshit. LAURA BETH

*They kiss.*

*LAURA BETH revels in ETHAN'S eyes.*

What? ETHAN

I'm just so happy. LAURA BETH

I am, too. ETHAN

*Perhaps another kiss, as ETHAN'S hand finds its way to LAURA'S BETH belly. LAURA BETH places her hands on top.*

What about Jude? ETHAN

Jude? LAURA BETH

Yeah. ETHAN

Little archaically Biblical, don't you think? LAURA BETH

No, it's not. ETHAN

Besides, what makes you so sure she's going to be a boy? LAURA BETH

(CONTINUED)

**(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)**

In the Slush, Daniel Prillaman, 7.  
CONTINUED:

ETHAN

Uhh, you think it's a girl?

LAURA BETH

I know she's a girl. I've already decided.

ETHAN

Pretty sure that's not how it works.

LAURA BETH

Oh, it is. Guinevere.

ETHAN

Guinevere?

LAURA BETH

Mmmhmm.

ETHAN

And you think Jude is archaic?

LAURA BETH

It's the good kind of archaic.

ETHAN

Guinevere Gardner.

LAURA BETH

Gwen for short.

Good, right?

Yep, there it is.

ETHAN

The alliteration.

LAURA BETH

I thought you'd like that.

ETHAN

King Arthur.

LAURA BETH

Yep.

ETHAN

Nerd.

LAURA BETH

You love it.

(CONTINUED)

**(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)**

In the Slush, Daniel Prillaman, 8.  
CONTINUED:

ETHAN

I do.

*They kiss.*

LAURA BETH

And, hey, by the time I'm done with all this, she'll be here. Get ready.

ETHAN

I sincerely hope it doesn't take that long. I would still like to see you before she comes.

LAURA BETH

Look at it. I die a little inside just looking at it.

ETHAN

I still can't believe you convinced Barry to let you bring the entire thing home.

LAURA BETH

If I recall correctly, I believe the phrase "over my left nut" was used.

This is barely half, that's how. We've got the weekend to trim the thing and find a needle of bare minimum competency in a haystack, we're not doing it in that damn office.

ETHAN

There's got to be something good in here.

LAURA BETH

You'd think so, wouldn't you? I've done this a few times before. It's...not fun.

ETHAN

Is it really that bad?

LAURA BETH

Some of this stuff you have to see to believe. Now, yes, there are gems hidden away, but--so so much of it is just crap. Worse than crap. Not even "so bad, it's good" crap. Just--"so bad, it's bad." Crap.

ETHAN

Well, crap.

Demands of the dream, huh?

LAURA BETH

Everybody does it. Did it. At least that's what they tell us.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

**(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)**

In the Slush, Daniel Prillaman, 9.

CONTINUED:

LAURA BETH (cont'd)

Every assistant does it.

ETHAN

Hey. You got this. Knock out this weekend. Get right back to the climb. Right?

Rue Britannia?

LAURA BETH

Rule Britannia?

ETHAN

King Arthur.

LAURA BETH

That was so after.

ETHAN

Excalibur.

LAURA BETH

Stop.

ETHAN

Quit using my toothbrush.

LAURA BETH

I love you.

ETHAN

I love you, too.

LAURA BETH

Thanks for helping.

ETHAN

You barely let me.

LAURA BETH

When do you go on call?

ETHAN

Not till 9. When's Hope coming over?

LAURA BETH

Probably about 8? I'm sure she'll have more of these, too.

ETHAN

Well, since you will be deep in concentration by that point, I will help her if she does. What can I get you? Drink? Late dinner?

(CONTINUED)

**(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)**

In the Slush, Daniel Prillaman, 10.

CONTINUED:

LAURA BETH

Wine?

ETHAN

No wine.

LAURA BETH

No wine. Fuck. You little bastard, you couldn't show up a week later?

ETHAN

Guinevere.

LAURA BETH

See?

ETHAN

I'll make you some tea.

*ETHAN crosses and begins climbing the stairs.*

LAURA BETH

Thank you!

ETHAN

Maybe order a pizza.

LAURA BETH

No pineapple!

ETHAN

We'll see!

LAURA BETH

Don't you dare! It is a cardinal sin!

*ETHAN is gone.*

*Perhaps LAURA BETH watches him go, then turns and sighs, stealing herself for the impending...emotions.*

LAURA BETH

(Suddenly, yelling up after ETHAN)

Syndactyly!

It's syndactyly. That's the word.

Weird fucking word.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)

In the Slush, Daniel Prillaman, 11.

CONTINUED:

LAURA BETH (cont'd)

(To her belly)

Strap in, kiddo.

*She grabs a stack of papers  
and/or a box and sits on the  
couch.*

*She moves to put her shoes  
back on, but stops halfway  
through.*

*She decides against it.*

*She lays out on the couch and  
begins to read.*

*Lights fade.*

SCENE TWO

*In the darkness, we hear the  
voice of HOPE ROSENSTOCK,  
reading one of the manuscripts  
aloud, amid a combination of  
laughter and disgust.*

*Lights rise during her speech,  
revealing the same, later that  
evening, the main clues to the  
passage of time being HOPE'S  
presence, an emptier pizza box  
or two, teacups, wine bottle/  
glasses, and many shuffled  
papers.*

HOPE

(Reading)

"The paint splattered her barest essence. My fingers brushed her skin, and her nipples surged outward and hardened in the ultraviolet light. My penis quivered with jubilant glee."

LAURA BETH

Oh god.

HOPE

(Reading)

"The expectation. The anticipation. This was it. The moment I had been waiting for. What I had dreamed of since I was a child. I was about to conquer a Colactian. Or was she about to conquer me? I looked into her six eyes, each of which looked into my soul, striking me deeper than any gaze I've ever known. I pulsated in my sex, and began to stroke my

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)

In the Slush, Daniel Prillaman, 12.

CONTINUED:

HOPE (cont'd)

manhood. 'Stop,' she said, a tentacle rising naughtily above her shoulder. 'You will not cum. You will not even touch your cock unless I give you permission. Is that understood?' Oh, Gods, yes. Yes, I understand. 'I understand,' I nearly shouted. 'Good,' she uttered. 'Now lie down. On your belly.' I obeyed, and her moist tentacles slathered over my backside, entering the cavernous opening of my--

LAURA BETH

Stoop! Oh my god!

HOPE

God, LB, it gets so much better!

LAURA BETH

I'll take your word for it.

HOPE

I think we've got a winner here.

LAURA BETH

I will admit, it's certainly much more...colorful than this half the government are robots assertion.

HOPE

Ah, those are a dime a dozen. This guy. This guy knows what he's doing.

LAURA BETH

Read me the name again.

HOPE

*"The Sexual Ceremonials of Orlando Boom, Volume I: The Galactic Treaty."*

LAURA BETH

Orlando Boom?

HOPE

You can't drug up something that brilliant. That's amazing.

LAURA BETH

I see it as more of an animated series.

HOPE

I needed that.

LAURA BETH

Not a novel.

HOPE

Erotica's big.

(CONTINUED)

(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)

In the Slush, Daniel Prillaman, 13.  
CONTINUED:

LAURA BETH

As big as Mr. Boom?

HOPE

No one is as big as Mr. Boom.

*They laugh.*

*Silence.*

*HOPE shuffles through more of Orlando Boom. LAURA BETH puts down her manuscript and picks up another. On to the next one.*

HOPE

(Yawning)

What time is it?

LAURA BETH

(Checking her phone)

10:43.

HOPE

Seriously? Jesus, it feels like it's past midnight.

*HOPE puts down Orlando Boom and grabs a slice of pizza.*

LAURA BETH

Time flies when you're having fun.

HOPE

Sure does.

*HOPE grabs another manuscript, leafs through it.*

*Silence.*

HOPE

Do you ever feel bad?

LAURA BETH

Hmm?

HOPE

When you read through this stuff? Do you ever feel bad for some of these folks? Like, do you think they have any idea that what they've written is so unreadable?

(CONTINUED)

(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)

In the Slush, Daniel Prillaman, 14.  
CONTINUED:

LAURA BETH

If they sent it to us, probably not.

HOPE

You'd think they'd be able to see it.

LAURA BETH

Mmmhmm.

HOPE

Don't get me wrong, I don't mind sending out rejection after rejection, I just feel bad sometimes. You know? They made this. Poured their soul into it and released it into the ether. It's just a strange, melancholy feeling to hold someone else's dreams in your hand, knowing there's a 99.99% chance you're just going to toss it in the nearest stack, never to see the light of day again. Stacks upon stacks of stacks of hopes and dreams. It's, like, I wonder what they would do if they ever met us. Could talk to our faces. What would they say? What would I say? I felt bad? Would I say that even more than bad, I just hated how their dreams were so goddamn illiterate?

You haven't heard a word I said, have you?

LAURA BETH

Hmm?

HOPE

Nothing. Whatcha' got there?

LAURA BETH

I don't know, it's a poem. It's interesting.

HOPE

How was the cover letter?

LAURA BETH

Didn't have one.

HOPE

And you're still reading it? You're too nice.

LAURA BETH

Good assistant, bad assistant.

HOPE

Nyeh nyeh nyeh, let's hear it.

(CONTINUED)

(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)

In the Slush, Daniel Prillaman, 15.  
CONTINUED:

LAURA BETH

(Reading)

"*The Circle*," by Rodina Waits.

"Listen to the air

Feel it  
Around you  
Beneath  
Within  
Hear how striking it feels

To perceive the closing of a chapter of your life  
See it impending  
Approaching  
It is imminent now

The dawn of the next."

*Silence.*

HOPE

That's...actually not bad.

LAURA BETH

Interesting, right?

HOPE

Am I crazy? Is that good or is that shit?

LAURA BETH

It's the most captivating thing I've seen tonight.

HOPE

That title belongs to *Orlando Boom*.

LAURA BETH

Impactful.

HOPE

She give any more?

LAURA BETH

A couple. Looks like some prose, too.

HOPE

May I?

*LAURA BETH hands HOPE some of the papers, who leafs through them.*

*LAURA BETH muses on the words.*

(CONTINUED)

**(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)**

In the Slush, Daniel Prillaman, 16.  
CONTINUED:

*HOPE comes to some sort of  
conclusion or...whatever.*

HOPE

Let's set her aside.

LAURA BETH

Agreed.

So that's one. Maybe.

HOPE

Yeah. Maybe. I call that break time?

LAURA BETH

Let's push through to 11.

HOPE

You're preggers. Take a load off.

LAURA BETH

See, but I have to be good. Because you're terrible. And if  
neither of us are good--

HOPE

Fine fine, shuddup. Killjoy.

*LAURA BETH does an air kiss to  
HOPE.*

HOPE

Hey, why don't you pick me one, I'll pick you one?

LAURA BETH

Can't argue with that.

HOPE

Find us a good one!

LAURA BETH

Will do.

*The women stand and search the  
stacks for "good ones."*

*Eventually:*

LAURA BETH

Oh, ho ho ho.

*LAURA BETH selects the  
manuscript she's perusing.*

(CONTINUED)

**(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)**

In the Slush, Daniel Prillaman, 17.  
CONTINUED:

HOPE

I like the sound of that.

LAURA BETH

You ready?

HOPE

Nope. I am braving the depths.

*LAURA BETH sets the manuscript  
aside and checks her phone.*

LAURA BETH

Oh no.

HOPE

What?

LAURA BETH

Email from Barry.

HOPE

Noooo. What it's say?

LAURA BETH

Oh. It's not bad, just a few more manuscripts that came in this week? He wants us to review the recent stuff before the older stuff. To help keep the pile organized?

HOPE

How the fuck does that make sense?

LAURA BETH

I don't know.

HOPE

He should leave the organization to us, that's literally the only thing we get paid for.

LAURA BETH

He says he put them in a box on my desk.

HOPE

He did? Hang on, I saw that. I grabbed that one as I left. It's here. Somewhere.

*HOPE searches for the box.*

LAURA BETH

Really?

HOPE

Yeah. Somewhere.

(CONTINUED)

(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)

In the Slush, Daniel Prillaman, 18.  
CONTINUED:

LAURA BETH

It's difficult to tell what's new and what's old anyway.

HOPE

(Finding the box)

Ah! Here it is.

*HOPE takes the box, opens it,  
and sifts through it.*

HOPE

New and old doesn't matter. Unless it moves on it all goes  
in the trash.

Hey! Here.

(Taking a manuscript,  
handing it to LAURA  
BETH)

This one just says "Urgent matter enclosed!" That ought to  
be good.

LAURA BETH

(Handing hers to HOPE)

I eagerly await it.

HOPE

(Reading)

*"The Economy of Friendship."* By Lockwick Greene? Oh my god.

LAURA BETH

Enjoy.

HOPE

Who the fuck names some of these people? Why do parents do  
that to their kids?

LAURA BETH

Could be a pen name.

HOPE

Orlando Goddamn Boom.

*They read.*

*Silence.*

*Separately, they both get a  
little wild-eyed at the words  
they encounter, HOPE in a  
morbid curiosity, LAURA BETH  
in a slow-growing state of  
frozen distress.*

(CONTINUED)

(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)

In the Slush, Daniel Prillaman, 19.  
CONTINUED:

HOPE

Woah.

Woah, fucking listen to this.

(Reading)

"Yet fundamentally, it is a truth found in every relationship. Every relationship, friendship, or even minor acquaintanceship throughout the course of our lives is ultimately one-sided. While benefits are shared, one subject always and irrefutably cares more about the other subject than vice versa. Person A loves Person B more than Person B loves Person A. Both may cherish the mutual interaction, but internally, either A or B is more dependent upon the existence of the relationship than the other. The bond is vital for the greater carer in order to navigate their life's happiness and terms of success, while the second party's would be less affected were the partnership to dissolve. Our need for companionship is understandable and inevitable, but we must not ever forget this fact. Doing so allows us to function at our greatest level of potential, for only when we have the ability to impartially determine our standing within each of our relations can we truly use them to our benefit."

What the fuck, like--

That's so cynical.

And depressing. Isn't it?

LB?

LB, you okay? You didn't hear a word I said, did you?

Laura Beth.

*LAURA BETH finally looks at  
HOPE, stupefied with fear.*

HOPE

What's wrong?

LAURA BETH

I--

I--

HOPE

What?

(CONTINUED)

(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)

In the Slush, Daniel Prillaman, 20.  
CONTINUED:

LAURA BETH  
(Shaking, handing  
HOPE the manuscript)

Read--read that.

HOPE

What?

LAURA BETH

Hope.

HOPE  
(Reading)

"Mrs. Gardner. My name is Harold Becklesby.

I sincerely hope that once these words have found their way to you that you will forgive them this intrusion, as well as my reaching out to you in such an unorthodox manner, but I could conceive of no other way. Forgive me for the things they are about to impart, but they must be read, for they concern a matter of the gravest importance. I must be blunt to you now."

*Perhaps HOPE looks up at LAURA BETH at this, incredulous, but she can only keep reading.*

HOPE  
(Reading)

"You are not human. Your baby is not human. You are an artificial vessel for the Second Coming of the Glory Darkness. At the end of its gestation in your body, you will birth an entity of evil whose sole purpose is to plunge our world back into a blackness not seen since the days of the most ancient of terrors. It will not destroy human life. But it will enslave it. Torment it. Forever. We must prevent this. There are people who believe in this destruction. Who want more than anything for it to occur.

Your husband is not the man you think he is. I understand the absurdity of my claims, but you must forget everything you think you know of him. Every memory. Your first meeting at Clary McClennon's book signing. Your spontaneous excursions to the Adirondacks. Even your very dreams of a being an editor, they are not real. Every part of your life was fabricated. His sole purpose is to keep you alive in order to see the successful birth of that fiend. You must believe me. The fate of humanity rests on your shoulders. Escape from him. However you can. And meet me at the following address: 1737--"

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

**(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)**

In the Slush, Daniel Prillaman, 21.

CONTINUED:

HOPE (cont'd)

(Unable to take any  
more)

This is--

I mean, what the--this is--

This is insane!

This is insane. This is insane. This is insane. I mean, this  
has to be a joke. This has to be a joke.

Laura Beth?

LAURA BETH

How does he know those things, Hope?

How does he know those things?

HOPE

Everybody knows you two take off to the mountains.

LAURA BETH

Hope, you are one of practically 5 people who even know I am  
pregnant. We haven't announced it yet. What kind of fucking  
joke is this?!

HOPE

I don't know.

LAURA BETH

Because if it is, it is not fucking funny!

HOPE

Okay, so it's not a joke, it's a crazy guy.

LAURA BETH

Oh my god.

HOPE

I don't know, it's just a crazy guy who--found out somehow  
and--

LAURA BETH

Oh my god!

HOPE

Hey, calm down.

LAURA BETH

Don't you fucking--don't you fucking tell me to calm down!  
Hope! Don't you--Hope, you didn't just read a personalized  
manuscript saying you're not fucking human!

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)

In the Slush, Daniel Prillaman, 22.

CONTINUED:

LAURA BETH (cont'd)

Or that your baby's fucking Cthulhu! And your hus--oh, oh my god!

HOPE

Hey, but hey, freaking out isn't going to help anything, we just need to take a breath and think.

LAURA BETH

YOU FUCKING TAKE A BREATH!

HOPE

Hey!

LAURA BETH

THIS SHIT'S NOT ABOUT YOU!

HOPE

LB!

LAURA BETH

Oh my god!

HOPE

LB! Hey!

LAURA BETH

Oh god.

HOPE

Breathe. Breathe! Hey! Listen to me! Breathe. Breathe. LB? Breathe. Hey, listen to my voice. Listen to me, all right? Breathe. Breathe. Look at me. Breathe. Breathe. In out. Breathe. I don't know what this is. Okay? I don't. But this cannot be real. Okay? Think about it. Just think about it. What the fuck? This guy is--he's--he's rambling on about cults and Darkness, he's delusional. He's got to be. I don't know how he knows what he knows but he certainly doesn't fucking seem to be all there in the head. We'll figure this out, okay? Breathe. It's gonna be okay. Okay?

Okay?

LAURA BETH

Hope. What the hell is going on?

*Before HOPE can answer, the stairs door opens, and we hear the voice of ETHAN as he begins descending, carrying a tray with more tea.*

*The ladies' heads turn.*

(CONTINUED)

(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)

In the Slush, Daniel Prillaman, 23.  
CONTINUED:

ETHAN  
Knock knock! How you gals doing?

*A silent, manic conversation  
between LAURA BETH and HOPE,  
HOPE madly trying to get LAURA  
BETH to sit down and act  
natural, or at least not break  
down.*

*It ends by the time ETHAN  
comes into their view.*

HOPE  
Never better!

ETHAN  
Finding anything good?

HOPE  
Um. What?

ETHAN  
I said, have you found anything good?

HOPE  
Oh! One--thing. Maybe. It was a poem. Right, LB?  
LB?

*Beat.*

LAURA BETH  
Yeah. Yeah, it was a poem. Some young lady, I think.

ETHAN  
What was it about?

LAURA BETH  
New beginnings.

ETHAN  
Hmm. Neat. Well, I hope you don't mind, but I figured you  
could use a refill.

LAURA BETH  
Thanks, honey.

ETHAN  
(Refilling LAURA  
BETH'S cup)  
Now, I tried putting something new in this one, so if it  
tastes funny, that's my bad, but--I was reading this article  
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

**(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)**

In the Slush, Daniel Prillaman, 24.

CONTINUED:

ETHAN (cont'd)

about this citrus and mint concoction, it's supposed to be good for your health, I thought why not give it a try? Here.

*ETHAN hands LAURA BETH the cup.*

LAURA BETH

Oh.

ETHAN

Yeah.

(To HOPE)

Hope? Any tea?

HOPE

I'll, uh, stick with the wine, thanks.

ETHAN

Suit yourself. Now, hey, you're not letting Laura Beth sneak any, are you? Haha. Got to make sure Gwen pops out of there nice and strong.

HOPE

Gwen?

ETHAN

Do you like it? Laura Beth's idea.

HOPE

Gwen Gardner?

LAURA BETH

Guinevere.

HOPE

King Arthur.

ETHAN

Exactly. I pushed hard for Merlin, but--she won. Aha, I'm just kidding.

(To LAURA BETH)

Whatcha' think?

LAURA BETH

What?

ETHAN

The tea.

LAURA BETH

Oh.

*Beat.*

(CONTINUED)

(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)

In the Slush, Daniel Prillaman, 25.  
CONTINUED:

ETHAN

You aren't going to try it?

*Beat.*

LAURA BETH

Yes. Of course.

It's just a little hot, still.

*ETHAN leans over and blows on  
the tea.*

*Perhaps runs a loving hand  
over her ear.*

LAURA BETH

You spoil me.

ETHAN

Only when you let me.

*Beat.*

*LAURA BETH slowly raises the  
cup to her lips and drinks.*

ETHAN

Well?

LAURA BETH

It's good.

ETHAN

Yeah, I like it, too. It's weird, but good. Surprisingly easy to make, too. It was not hard at all. Took me less than, like, ten minutes, all while watching that new show, you know, the one everyone says is really good, with the--guy. You ever read that article or hear the thing about the spoilers? Apparently, knowing spoilers about something in advance increases your enjoyment of the material. You know, it enhances the viewing experience, you're more invested or something. I never really bought into that, but the guy, somebody at work told me he dies--oh, spoiler, I guess, sorry...but I'll be damned if I'm not really eager to find out when. And how. You'd figure I'd lose interest, but--

Makes you think.

Are you crying?

LAURA BETH

No.

(CONTINUED)

**(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)**

In the Slush, Daniel Prillaman, 26.  
CONTINUED:

Why are you crying?  
ETHAN

*Beat.*

I'm just so happy.  
LAURA BETH

*Beat.*

*ETHAN leans in and kisses  
LAURA BETH.*

*Then moves to leave.*

Well, I will get out of you ladies' hair. Keep trucking.  
Just give me a shout if you need anything.  
ETHAN

*Perhaps as he's even halfway  
up the stairs:*

Hey, Ethan?  
LAURA BETH

Hope and I...

Yeah?  
ETHAN

Hope and I were thinking of going out for breakfast in the  
morning.  
LAURA BETH

Okay?  
ETHAN

Just the two of us.  
LAURA BETH

...Okay?  
ETHAN

Is that okay?  
LAURA BETH

*Beat.*

Why on earth wouldn't it be? Have fun! Treat yourselves,  
you've been working hard. Just no mimosas, right? Haha.  
ETHAN

*ETHAN exits up the stairs.*

(CONTINUED)

(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)

In the Slush, Daniel Prillaman, 27.  
CONTINUED:

*But returns after a moment.*

ETHAN

Hey. Are you okay?

LAURA BETH

Just tired.

I love you, honey.

ETHAN

I love you, too.

Don't stay up too late, okay? Make sure you get some rest.

LAURA BETH

I will.

*ETHAN exits up the stairs.*

*LAURA BETH lets out the tension.*

*HOPE can only watch.*

*Silence.*

*HOPE stands and crosses with purpose to the teacups. She grabs them and crosses to the boiler room/bathroom door, entering. She disposes of the tea down some drain.*

*She returns to the basement with the empty tray and tosses it back on the table.*

*She picks up the Becklesby Manuscript and leafs through it once more.*

*She stops and finishes off her wine glass. Maybe pours herself a new one. Or maybe she just swigs from the bottle for a few seconds.*

*She thinks.*

*Uncomfortably laughs in disbelief.*

(CONTINUED)

(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)

In the Slush, Daniel Prillaman, 28.  
CONTINUED:

HOPE

You know, this would actually make a pretty interesting story.

I don't know what to do.

You're right. You're right. Tomorrow morning. You and I will go see this guy. Make him explain himself.

This has to be a joke.

*HOPE tries to say anything else, but can't.*

HOPE

I'll be back in a second.

*She crosses to exit up the stairs, but walks past LAURA BETH, who grabs her arm to stop her.*

*Beat.*

LAURA BETH

Please don't leave me.

HOPE

I just have to get some things out of my car.

LAURA BETH

Hope.

*Beat.*

HOPE

Of course not.

No, of course not. I won't leave you.  
(Sitting down next to  
LAURA BETH,  
consoling her)

I won't leave you.

We're going to figure this out. You hear me?

We're going to figure this out.

LB, you are real. Your baby is real. This is just some fucked up, crazy fucking trick. Okay?

Okay?

(CONTINUED)

(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)

In the Slush, Daniel Prillaman, 29.  
CONTINUED:

*Beat.*

LAURA BETH

What if it's not?

*Lights fade.*

SCENE THREE

*The sound of spoken word jazz  
fills the darkness.*

*The ambience of an attentive  
gathering.*

SULTRY ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Ladies and gentlemen. Thank you all for making your way out  
to us this evening. Prepare your minds and your bodies for  
our artists. They are bursting to share theirs with you.

Ladies and gentlemen, it our pleasure to present...

Rodina Waits.

*Light hits RODINA WAITS, who  
is just HOPE, suddenly wearing  
the scarf and beret of a beat  
poet.*

*A smattering of applause.*

*Snaps.*

RODINA (HOPE)

Bonjour

Hello

My name is Rodina Waits  
I have a poem  
I would like to recite for you all  
This poem is called

*Fuck Me in the Cabinet.*

*A blacklight hits the closed  
boiler/bathroom door,  
illuminating a message across  
its face: "THE CABINET."*

*The crowd ooohs and aaahs.*

(CONTINUED)

(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)

In the Slush, Daniel Prillaman, 30.  
CONTINUED:

*Snaps.*

RODINA (HOPE)

There's a cabinet in my house  
My basement  
It's big and  
Rectangular

It's not square  
Cause you ain't one, baby  
You're  
Rectangular  
And cylindrical

It's a large cabinet  
Big enough to fit a whole person inside  
Two people, even  
But not that much space after that  
If you know what I mean

You know what a cabinet's for?  
My cabinet's for  
Other activities  
Kinds of  
Storage

I want you to fuck me in the cabinet  
If that wasn't clear  
Metaphors  
They can be so  
Literal

And  
Rectangular.

(Pause, posing)

Shazam. Rodina.

*Snaps.*

SULTRY ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Rodina Waits.

*Snaps.*

RODINA (HOPE)

Thank you. Thank you.

I'll be in the cabinet.

RODINA (HOPE) crosses to "THE  
CABINET."

(CONTINUED)

**(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)**

In the Slush, Daniel Prillaman, 31.  
CONTINUED:

*She opens the door to reveal  
ORLANDO BOOM in the threshold,  
who is just ETHAN, dressed in  
garb that can only befit a man  
capable of the greatest  
interstellar sexual exploits.*

ORLANDO BOOM (ETHAN)  
Ahhhhhhhhhh! Rodinaaaaaaaaaaaaaah!

*The crowd ooohs and aaahs.*

RODINA (HOPE)  
Gasp! Orlando Boom?!

ORLANDO BOOM (ETHAN)  
'Tis I! The same!

RODINA (HOPE)  
What are you doing in my cabinet that I use for having sex?

ORLANDO BOOM (ETHAN)  
What the hell do you think? I'm here to insert my penis into  
several of your main orifices!

RODINA (HOPE)  
O! Fondle my breasts, Orlando! Take me to the stars!

ORLANDO BOOM (ETHAN)  
Certainly! With pleasure!

*ORLANDO fondles RODINA'S  
breasts.*

ORLANDO BOOM (ETHAN)  
Do your nipples feel satisfaction?!

RODINA  
LACTATE ME!

*An embrace. RODINA and ORLANDO  
begin going at it.*

RODINA (HOPE)  
Yes! Yes!

ORLANDO BOOM (ETHAN)  
I have similar feelings!

*The two disappear into "THE  
CABINET."*

*The door shuts behind them.*

(CONTINUED)

**(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)**

In the Slush, Daniel Prillaman, 32.  
CONTINUED:

Look at this! ORLANDO BOOM (ETHAN)

OH GOD! YES! RODINA (HOPE)

I AM SEXUALLY PLEASED! ORLANDO BOOM (ETHAN)

FUCK MY BRAIN OUT, ORLANDO! RODINA (HOPE)

ALL RIGHT! ORLANDO BOOM (ETHAN)

RECTANGLES! RODINA (HOPE)

*RODINA and ORLANDO continue,  
ad-libbing the exceptional  
experience.*

*Their sound then distorts.*

*It becomes corrupted.*

*Something strange and  
unnatural is happening in "THE  
CABINET," but their fun is no  
less.*

SULTRY ANNOUNCER (V.O.)  
Well. Perhaps we should give these two some privacy. I  
imagine they'll be in there for quite a little while.

OH! OH! RODINA (HOPE)

BOOM! BOOM! ORLANDO BOOM (ETHAN)

PUT A BABY IN ME! DO IT! PUT A BABY IN ME! RODINA (HOPE)

*The crying of a baby now, from  
behind "THE CABINET."*

*It gets louder.*

*Distorts.*

*Into something quite dark.*

(CONTINUED)

(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)

In the Slush, Daniel Prillaman, 33.  
CONTINUED:

*Malevolent.*

*Shrieking.*

*Unceasing.*

*Unceasing.*

*Unceasing.*

*Light shifts as LAURA BETH  
awakens on the couch, in  
terror, alone in the room.*

*It is morning (although there  
aren't any windows around to  
provide that information).*

LAURA BETH

AHHHHHHHHHHHHH! AH!! AHH!! AH!

*The stairs door opens and HOPE  
runs down to console her.*

HOPE

(Overlapping)

Hey! Hey! Hey! Shh! Hey! It was just a dream! It was just a  
dream. Just a bad dream.

LAURA BETH

(Overlapping)

AH! AH! Ahh! Ah! Ahh! Ah. Ah. Ahh.

Mmm. Ohhh.

Ohh.

HOPE

Breathe.

LAURA BETH

Oh my god.

HOPE

You all right? You okay?

LAURA BETH

...Yeah.

HOPE

Sounded like a monster. What the hell was that about?

*Beat.*

(CONTINUED)

**(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)**

In the Slush, Daniel Prillaman, 34.

CONTINUED:

LAURA BETH

You and Ethan were fucking each other.

HOPE

What?!

LAURA BETH

(Pointing to "THE  
CABINET")

In there.

But you weren't...you were...Orlando Boom.

HOPE

Orlando Boom?

LAURA BETH

Mr. Boom.

Hope, I think I just need to get out of this house for a minute. Clear my head.

HOPE

Sounds like a good idea.

Why don't you go get some air? I'll make some breakfast or something.

LAURA BETH

What? No, we're--we're going out. Right?

Is Ethan here?

HOPE

No, he's--I haven't seen him, he must've got called in.

LAURA BETH

Oh. Okay.

(Standing, beginning  
to get ready)

So let's go. What are we waiting for?

HOPE

LB.

LAURA BETH

I just need to find my shoes. Brush my teeth, we can--

HOPE

LB.

*LAURA BETH stops.*

(CONTINUED)

(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)

In the Slush, Daniel Prillaman, 35.  
CONTINUED:

LAURA BETH

What?

We're going to talk to this creep. Right?

Right?

HOPE

I have to tell you something.

And it's probably not something you're going to like. But you need to stay calm, okay? You got to promise me you will try to stay calm. We can't freak out again. Okay? It's just going to make things worse.

LAURA BETH

Hope.

*Beat.*

HOPE

My car's not starting.

*Beat.*

LAURA BETH

Your car's not starting?

HOPE

No.

And I know what you must be thinking, it doesn't mean it was him. Why would he do that? If he was legit trying to do all this, if he really didn't want you to know, why would he tip his hand like that? It's obviously sketchy as hell. It doesn't make any sense. At all. Now, I know I've been having issues with it a little. The car. It's been rocking a little at stoplights, but whose car doesn't do that? I didn't think anything of it. It's just bad timing, right? It's got to just be a coincidence. I mean, if he, if he, if he actually did something to it, that wouldn't--...

Cars--cars fuck you over. All the time, they--stop. And they--they leak, they--

*HOPE continues her attempts to speak, but falters.*

HOPE

Please--please say something, I can't--

I can't keep talking anymore.

(CONTINUED)

**(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)**

In the Slush, Daniel Prillaman, 36.

CONTINUED:

*Beat.*

LAURA BETH

Okay.

Why don't we just walk? Then.

HOPE

The address is across town.

I looked.

*LAURA BETH sits.*

LAURA BETH

There's only so many ways that something like this can be interpreted.

What is it? The thing? The simplest explanation is often the correct one?

HOPE

Occam's razor?

LAURA BETH

Yes.

What's the simplest explanation here?

*Beat.*

HOPE

Look. Whatever the hell's going on. I think getting some air is a good idea. We've been down here too long. Let's, let's go chill on the porch or something. We'll bring some of this. I'll make us some breakfast. Eggs, bacon, all that shit. We'll have a nice morning and just forget about this for a second. Just for the morning.

And we'll figure it out after that.

Okay? LB?

I think that that's--

LAURA BETH

Will you give me your keys?

*Beat.*

HOPE

What?

(CONTINUED)

(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)

In the Slush, Daniel Prillaman, 37.

CONTINUED:

LAURA BETH

I'd like to see your keys.

HOPE

LB...

LAURA BETH

Please.

I just need to hear it for myself.

*Beat.*

HOPE

Do you not trust me?

LAURA BETH

Hope.

HOPE

Answer the fucking question. Do you not trust me?

I am just as scared as you, all right?

LAURA BETH

Are you?

HOPE

I am! Maybe not in the same way, maybe for not the exact same reasons, but I am! This situation is every shade of fucked to hell and it's the most ludicrous nonsense I've ever heard! The fact that you and I are actually freaking out over this--this dime-store Lovecraft plot is insane! I mean, WHAT THE FUCK IS GOING ON?!

I'm sorry, I shouldn't yell at you, I'm sorry, I--

LB, I'm trying to be strong for you, I really am. And I know you need me right now and I--I cannot begin to understand what it is that you must be feeling because I can't understand what the hell it is that I'm feeling.

But I'm trying. I am trying. I am going to get you through this. All right? I promise you. Both of you. All of us--are going to get through this. But you have to be with me. I have to be with you. We have to be on the same page. We have to--

*Beat.*

*HOPE removes her keys from her pocket (or a bag) and places them on the table.*

(CONTINUED)

(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)

In the Slush, Daniel Prillaman, 38.  
CONTINUED:

I'm trying.

HOPE

Thank you.

LAURA BETH

Go.

HOPE

*LAURA BETH picks up the keys  
and exits up the stairs.*

*HOPE breathes, semi-exhausted.*

*Silence.*

*She pulls out her phone and  
begins texting.*

*Silence.*

*She finishes and puts the  
phone down.*

*Silence.*

*She grabs the phone and puts  
it in her pocket, exiting up  
the stairs.*

*Silence.*

*HOPE comes back down the  
stairs and grabs an unread box  
of manuscripts.*

*She ascends the stairs and  
exits.*

*Silence.*

#### SCENE FOUR

*Later that day.*

*The stairs door opens and HOPE  
descends the stairs.*

*She looks around the room,  
looking for something.*

(CONTINUED)

(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)

In the Slush, Daniel Prillaman, 39.  
CONTINUED:

*After a few (or more) moments,  
she finds it, the Becklesby  
Manuscript.*

*She leafs through it, skimming  
it, reading it once more,  
thinking.*

*Something very much on her  
mind.*

*But her thoughts are  
interrupted by the sound of  
the stairs door, feet  
descending the stairs.*

*She freezes, looking towards  
the stairs.*

*It's ETHAN.*

*HOPE relaxes.*

*A bit.*

ETHAN

Hey.

HOPE

(Finger to her mouth)

Shhh!

ETHAN

You've blown my phone to hell, what do you mean "she knows?"

HOPE

(Overlapping)

She knows! What the fuck do you think I mean?!

ETHAN

Like, she knows?

HOPE

She knows, dumbass. Get the fuck down here!

ETHAN

How did she find out?

*HOPE tosses/thrusts the  
manuscript at ETHAN.*

ETHAN

What is this?

(CONTINUED)

(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)

In the Slush, Daniel Prillaman, 40.  
CONTINUED:

Just read.  
HOPE

*ETHAN begins to read and the weight begins to slowly set in.*

*HOPE continues as he reads, half to herself, half to him.*

HOPE  
He mailed it to the office. He mailed it. Right under our fucking noses. I literally handed it to her, I--  
I can't fucking believe this. This isn't happening.

Oh my god.  
ETHAN

Yeah.  
HOPE

Oh my god!  
ETHAN

Quiet.  
HOPE

*Beat.*

Where is she?  
ETHAN

HOPE  
Still sleeping. In the bedroom. She's so wired, I barely got her out. What the fuck do we do now? Huh? Because I don't have a game plan here and I am holding this shit together by the skin of my teeth.

Wait, so she--  
ETHAN

HOPE  
No, she doesn't trust you. She's fucking scared to death. Especially after your Martha Stewart citrus and mint routine, I doubt she'll touch anything you're near.

ETHAN  
How was I supposed to know?

HOPE  
I was giving you signals the whole time!

(CONTINUED)

(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)

In the Slush, Daniel Prillaman, 41.  
CONTINUED:

ETHAN  
Hey! Shhh!

HOPE  
She was crying!!

ETHAN  
Shhhh!

HOPE  
DON'T--Fuck you shush me!

ETHAN  
Look, we can't--

It's done. It's the past. We're fucked. We deal with it, but we can't get angry at each other, not now, not if we're going to fix this. We have to be on the same page.

*HOPE laughs.*

ETHAN  
What?

HOPE  
Nothing.

You're right. You're right, I'm sorry. I'm just--stressed.

I'm freaking out.

We were so close.

ETHAN  
We are. We're in the home stretch. So fuck him. Let's finish it.

HOPE  
That's a little easier said than done.

ETHAN  
Then we'll figure it out. I'll call Schmit, get him to cover the rest of my shift.

Let's work the problem. What are our options?

Can we drug her?

HOPE  
I mean, we can. But there's no guarantee it would make her forget anything. Besides, she's too jumpy, it'd be too hard to sneak it into something.

(CONTINUED)

**(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)**

In the Slush, Daniel Prillaman, 42.  
CONTINUED:

ETHAN

Okay.

Can't kill her.

HOPE

Can't kill her.

*Beat.*

HOPE

She's on edge about you. I have no idea how she feels about me. But I do not imagine my Academy Award-worthy performance is gonna go much further. I can't keep her in this house forever. Not without stretching every limit of believability.

ETHAN

Can you get out of town?

HOPE

For eight and a half months?

ETHAN

Yeah, it felt stupid coming out of my mouth, too.

HOPE

Dumbass.

About that, too, I, um--...I had to gut my car. Took out the spark plugs. So it's, um--

ETHAN

Out of commission.

HOPE

Yeah.

Without an explanation, at least.

Couldn't let her see him.

ETHAN

No. I mean, smart.

HOPE

Was it?

*ETHAN chuckles.*

*Beat.*

(CONTINUED)

**(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)**

In the Slush, Daniel Prillaman, 43.

CONTINUED:

ETHAN

Can't kill him.

HOPE

Can't kill him.

ETHAN

Certainly would make everything a lot easier.

HOPE

Believe me, I would have done it years ago.

*Beat.*

ETHAN

Can't reset it.

HOPE

Not without a lot of lost work.

ETHAN

And time.

And we can't keep lying.

HOPE

Not for long.

Not a lot of options.

*ETHAN shifts, moving.*

*An idea.*

HOPE

What?

ETHAN

We can't keep lying.

HOPE

Not for long.

ETHAN

Not for long.

This is--this is maybe stupid.

HOPE

No.

ETHAN

What if we don't?

(CONTINUED)

(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)

In the Slush, Daniel Prillaman, 44.  
CONTINUED:

HOPE

No.

ETHAN

But why not? Why don't we just tell her the truth? Get out in front of it?

HOPE

There's nothing to get in front of! The fucking bus hit us miles back.

ETHAN

But if she freaks we're right back where we started. Right? What if she goes with it?

HOPE

In what world does she accept what she is and just "goes with it?" We made this thing, it's no different than a fucking robot, and it just gained sentience, Ethan! She won't join us, she'll fucking kill herself. And it! Everything that we've worked for!

ETHAN

Or us.

You said it yourself, we don't have a lot of other options.

If we curated the environment, made her comfortable? We make our case, express upon her her importance, how invaluable she is, how vital? Give her her part. Acknowledge her part. Isn't that a better shot if the cat's out of the bag?

Well?

HOPE

No.

No, that is fucking imbecilic. That is the stupidest, most ignorant idea to end all stupid, ignorant ideas. Ever.

ETHAN

Hey, I am trying, here! All right? Please!

We have to do something.

Hope.

HOPE

I'm thinking!

*Suddenly, the stairs door opens.*

(CONTINUED)

(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)

In the Slush, Daniel Prillaman, 45.  
CONTINUED:

*HOPE and ETHAN freeze.*

LAURA BETH  
(Off, calling down)

Hope?

*A silent, manic conversation between ETHAN and HOPE, HOPE haphazardly pushing ETHAN towards "THE CABINET," ETHAN protesting, but reluctantly hiding.*

HOPE  
(Calling up, still pushing ETHAN)

Yeah! Down here.

*LAURA BETH descends the stairs, coming into full view just as ETHAN disappears from view behind "THE CABINET" door.*

*She holds a ring of keys.*

LAURA BETH  
Hope, listen.

HOPE  
Hey, I thought you were sleeping.

LAURA BETH  
I can't, I--Hope.

HOPE  
You need to rest, LB.

LAURA BETH  
Hope, his car's here.

HOPE  
What?

LAURA BETH  
Ethan. His car's out front. Have you seen him?

HOPE  
...Uhm. No.

(CONTINUED)

(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)

In the Slush, Daniel Prillaman, 46.  
CONTINUED:

LAURA BETH  
(Showing HOPE the  
keys)

His keys were on the counter. We have to go now.

HOPE

What?

LAURA BETH  
His keys! He left them on the kitchen counter. He could be  
anywhere. We have to go now, Hope!

HOPE

Wait.

LAURA BETH  
There's no time!

HOPE

No, wait!

LAURA BETH  
Hope, come on!

HOPE

Just--stop!

LAURA BETH  
Hope!

HOPE

Laura Beth, stop!

LAURA BETH  
Why?! Why?!

What's wrong, Hope?

HOPE!

*HOPE still can't answer.*

*LAURA BETH turns and begins to  
ascend the stairs, when HOPE  
finally blurts out:*

HOPE

It was a joke!

*LAURA BETH stops.*

*She turns to face HOPE.*

(CONTINUED)

(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)

In the Slush, Daniel Prillaman, 47.  
CONTINUED:

LAURA BETH

What?

HOPE

It was a joke.

All of it.

I'm really sorry. Really. It was my idea. And I--I told it to Ethan and--he got a kick out of it and we both thought you'd like it.

Clearly, that was a misjudgment on our part.

We didn't think you'd react the way that you did. Really. Otherwise we wouldn't have done it. We were--we were down here trying to figure out the best way to tell you.

LAURA BETH

We?

HOPE

Yeah, um...

(To "THE CABINET")

Ethan! You can come out now.

*The door to "THE CABINET"  
slowly opens and ETHAN enters.*

HOPE

We're so sorry, LB. Really. We didn't think you'd go off the handle like that, seriously. I mean, we never would have done it if we thought it would actually hurt you. But it did, and everything I said just seemed to be making it worse. We didn't know how to tell you.

We were just trying to make the weekend less boring for you.

ETHAN

We're sorry, honey. Really.

We thought it would be goofy.

LAURA BETH

You thought it would be goofy?

ETHAN

Yeah.

HOPE

Yeah.

*Beat.*

(CONTINUED)

**(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)**

In the Slush, Daniel Prillaman, 48.  
CONTINUED:

*LAURA BETH chuckles.*

*She chuckles again.*

*She starts laughing.*

*It is an exquisitely layered laugh, filled with fatigue, relief, stress, disbelief, toxicity, and other words one might find in an unsolicited manuscript.*

*HOPE and ETHAN are unsure how to react.*

LAURA BETH

(Laughing)

You--you were joking!

*LAURA BETH keeps laughing.*

*HOPE and ETHAN tentatively begin to join in.*

LAURA BETH

(Laughing)

Because you thought--it would be goofy!

HOPE

Yeah.

*The laughter continues.*

LAURA BETH

(Laughing)

And I freaked the fuck out!

*The laughter continues.*

*LAURA BETH makes her way back down to HOPE and ETHAN.*

LAURA BETH

(Laughing, to ETHAN)

I thought you wanted to--I don't know what you wanted to do to me!

(Laughing, to HOPE)

And that's why you've been acting so weird!

(Laughing)

Because you two didn't know how to tell me!

(CONTINUED)

(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)

In the Slush, Daniel Prillaman, 49.  
CONTINUED:

No. HOPE

No. ETHAN

*The laughter continues.*

That's funny! LAURA BETH  
(Laughing)

*The laughter continues.*

*The laughter continues.*

*LAURA BETH slugs ETHAN in the  
shoulder, no longer laughing.*

Ow! ETHAN

*She slugs HOPE.*

Ah! HOPE

Don't you EVER...do that again. LAURA BETH

All right?

I won't. I'm so sorry, Laura Beth. ETHAN

Yeah, LB. HOPE

Why on earth would you make a joke like that? LAURA BETH

I-- HOPE

It was different?

What? LAURA BETH

It was bad judgment. ETHAN

(CONTINUED)

**(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)**

In the Slush, Daniel Prillaman, 50.

CONTINUED:

HOPE

I take full blame. I do.

LAURA BETH

My god.

I need to sit down.

*HOPE moves to help LAURA BETH sit.*

LAURA BETH

No, you've helped enough.

(Pause, to ETHAN)

Hey, rub my feet. You owe me for this shit.

ETHAN

Yes, ma'am.

*ETHAN begins to massage LAURA BETH'S feet.*

LAURA BETH

Ohhhhhhhhhh my god.

I mean, seriously, you two just about gave me a heart attack.

HOPE

Yeah. I promise, we'll make it up to you.

LAURA BETH

You better.

HOPE

Dinner on me? For a start?

LAURA BETH

Yeah, that's a start.

What time is it?

ETHAN

3ish?

LAURA BETH

Fuck, we're so behind.

HOPE

Don't--don't think about this shit for right now.

LAURA BETH

Barry's going to be pissed.

(CONTINUED)

(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)

In the Slush, Daniel Prillaman, 51.

CONTINUED:

HOPE

Forget about work, just relax.

LAURA BETH

It's--Hope, thinking about work right now is the only thing keeping me from strangling you. It's nice to be able to think about something else again for a second.

HOPE

Sure. Sure, that makes sense.

ETHAN

We were just trying to spice up the weekend.

LAURA BETH

Yeah, you keep saying that.

ETHAN

'Cause we mean it. Hey.

(Moving a hand to her  
face)

You know we would never do that to you on purpose, right?

LAURA BETH

You're touching me with feet hands.

ETHAN

I'll touch with you these, then.

*LAURA BETH and ETHAN kiss.*

HOPE

(Turning away)

Ugh.

ETHAN

I love you, Mrs. Gardner.

LAURA BETH

Yeah? Remind me why I married you?

ETHAN

Because you love me.

You are my life, Laura Beth. And never in a million years would I cause you pain intentionally.

(Moving a hand to her  
belly)

Or it.

If anything happened to you two, I don't know what I'd do.

*Beat.*

(CONTINUED)

(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)

In the Slush, Daniel Prillaman, 52.  
CONTINUED:

Gwen.  
LAURA BETH

King Arthur.  
ETHAN

*Beat.*

You said it.  
LAURA BETH

What?  
ETHAN

You just called her "it."  
LAURA BETH

*Beat.*

Did I?  
ETHAN

Well, she is an it. The fetus, you know?

You fucking idiot.  
HOPE

*LAURA BETH bolts up, pushing  
ETHAN off her, and attempts to  
escape.*

*HOPE, however, is ready and  
waiting, and practically  
tackles LAURA BETH into a  
nearby stack of manuscripts/  
boxes. Papers fly everywhere.*

*A struggle as the women  
grapple on the floor. LAURA  
BETH fights for her life, but  
HOPE is...quite ferocious,  
actually. This is a side of  
her yet to be seen.*

*ETHAN watches, without much  
help, not quite sure how to  
contribute.*

*The struggle continues, but  
HOPE eventually manages to  
grab hold of some blunter  
object (maybe the wine bottle)*

(CONTINUED)

(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)

In the Slush, Daniel Prillaman, 53.  
CONTINUED:

*and smashes it over LAURA  
BETH'S head, knocking her out.*

*LAURA BETH slumps on the  
ground, out cold.*

*HOPE stands, breathing hard.*

*Beat.*

HOPE

Well.

I guess we go with your plan, then.

*Beat.*

*HOPE crosses to ascend the  
stairs, but turns back to  
ETHAN.*

HOPE

Way to help, by the way.

You left your keys on the kitchen counter?

I'll go find some rope.

*HOPE ascends the stairs and  
exits.*

*ETHAN, speechless, nigh  
incredulous, is alone.*

*He slumps into the couch.*

*Sits.*

*He notices that LAURA BETH has  
yet to move.*

*He looks at her, concerned.*

*Lights fade as the soulful and  
mournful wail of a saxophone  
fills the air.*

SCENE FIVE

*It continues in the darkness,  
having a conversation with  
itself.*

(CONTINUED)

(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)

In the Slush, Daniel Prillaman, 54.  
CONTINUED:

*The ambience of an attentive  
gathering.*

*Light hits RODINA WAITS, who  
is still just HOPE, suddenly  
wearing the scarf and beret of  
a beat poet.*

*A smattering of applause.*

*Snaps.*

RODINA (HOPE)

This piece is called

*Open Me.*

Dreams

Dreams are like  
A cabinet.

*Unless it has been lit this  
entire time (which is fine,  
just redraw attention to it),  
a blacklight hits the closed  
boiler/bathroom door once  
more, illuminating the same  
message.*

RODINA (HOPE)

Well, not the cabinet itself  
We're the cabinet  
Dreams are like what we keep inside  
The cabinet  
Locked away  
For safekeeping  
Somewhere between the balaclavas and a Magnum condom that  
shouldn't actually be in there  
Seriously, how did that get in there?  
Doesn't matter  
Because this cabinet's closed  
For business  
You ain't in my dreams  
'Cause they're silently sleeping on a memory foam mattress  
in a far away land  
With seasons that last  
Right next to our pasts  
Both of which remember all too well what you did to me

You ain't in my dreams  
Not anymore, shindig  
When I walk down the street I think of rain and cigarettes

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)

In the Slush, Daniel Prillaman, 55.

CONTINUED:

RODINA (HOPE) (cont'd)

and baguettes with blades hidden in them  
Stilettoes  
Stabbing the stones in the sidewalk  
You think about me  
You said you were my key  
But you kept your doors locked to me  
This shit has to go both ways, my lordly love  
We have to be on the same page  
Plus, you were a feet guy, that's not my kink  
I'm more of a  
Roleplay girl  
But that ain't the role I wanna play  
I wanna be something more someday  
So I ain't gonna let you roll over me  
Joyfully  
That smile was nice but it wasn't real  
Was it?  
It was empty

Like a cabinet

Well, I'm my own goddamn cabinet  
And I'm filled now  
With my own dreams  
So au revoir mon chéri  
J'espère que tu mourras dans un incendie comme celui qui  
brûle dans mon coeur

That's French  
For "Look it up"  
Or don't  
Just sit there  
Listening

Listen

J'espère que vous mourrez dans un incendie comme celui qui  
brûle dans mon coeur.

(After letting that  
sit for a fair bit)

Merci.

*Snaps.*

SULTRY ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Rodina Waits. Answer us a question for these cool cats and  
kittens.

Where do you see yourself in eight and a half months?

*Light cuts off RODINA,  
plunging the world back into  
darkness.*

(CONTINUED)

**(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)**

In the Slush, Daniel Prillaman, 56.  
CONTINUED:

*And silence. The saxophone has stopped.*

*The cry of a baby.*

*It fades.*

SCENE SIX

*HOPE and ETHAN converse in the darkness.*

*Perhaps the light fades in and out over the following, mimicking the opening and closing of a weary eye.*

ETHAN (V.O.)  
She's been out way too long.

HOPE (V.O.)  
We didn't have a choice.

ETHAN (V.O.)  
I know that, I'm just saying.

HOPE (V.O.)  
Here.

ETHAN (V.O.)  
I got it, I got it.

HOPE (V.O.)  
Fuck, this is so fucked.

ETHAN (V.O.)  
Hey, it's gonna be okay. We're going to figure it out.

HOPE (V.O.)  
Sure.

ETHAN (V.O.)  
Let me take care of this.

HOPE (V.O.)  
No, I got it.

ETHAN (V.O.)  
You're stressed as hell. Go take a nap, go fix your car. Let me take care of this.

It's not like she's going anywhere.

(CONTINUED)

(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)

In the Slush, Daniel Prillaman, 57.  
CONTINUED:

Okay.

Okay, I'm sorry.

ETHAN  
It's okay. I love you.

HOPE (V.O.)  
I love you too.

*The sound of HOPE on the stairs.*

*Perhaps a focused light source moves about in the darkness, mimicking a penlight in the eye.*

*The rest of the lights fade in.*

*It is evening.*

*LAURA BETH is tied to an armchair, and well, at that, her hands able to hold things, but that's about it.*

*ETHAN examines her, looking into her eyes with a penlight.*

*She groans.*

ETHAN  
Hey! Hey, easy, easy. You're okay. Breathe.

LAURA BETH  
If one more fucking person tells me to breathe.

*She stops, intaking/  
remembering where she is...  
what's going on.*

*She strains against her restraints.*

*She looks at ETHAN, tears in her eyes.*

ETHAN  
I'm sorry.

(CONTINUED)

(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)

In the Slush, Daniel Prillaman, 58.

CONTINUED:

LAURA BETH

Oh god.

ETHAN

How's your head? Any fuzziness? Confusion?

LAURA BETH

You mean beyond what's happening?

ETHAN

Yeah. Um, yeah.

I'll take that as a no. Headache? Nausea?

Okay, um, let me look at your eyes, okay?

*ETHAN moves to examine her eyes once more with the penlight, but LAURA BETH resists.*

ETHAN

Please.

Look, you were out for...longer than is normal. Getting knocked out from a blow to the head like that, staying out, that only happens in stories, movies. Typically if someone's out for any longer than a minute or two, that means pretty serious head trauma. Brain damage. If they're not dead.

Please?

*ETHAN tentatively raises the light again.*

*LAURA BETH doesn't resist.*

ETHAN

Just look into the light.

Okay, now follow it, with your eyes.

*ETHAN moves the light around, LAURA BETH follows it with her eyes.*

ETHAN

Your eyes are fine. No blurriness, double vision?

*LAURA BETH shakes her head no.*

ETHAN

Numbness?

(CONTINUED)

(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)

In the Slush, Daniel Prillaman, 59.

CONTINUED:

No. LAURA BETH

No dizziness? ETHAN

I feel fine. LAURA BETH

Okay. Huh. ETHAN

Any light sensitivity?

I feel fine. LAURA BETH

Okay. ETHAN

*Silence.*

How long was I out? LAURA BETH

About five hours? ETHAN

*Beat.*

I have a headache. That's it. LAURA BETH

Okay. ETHAN

Well, if that gets worse, let me know.

Or if anything else pops up.

*Silence.*

Laura Beth-- ETHAN

So what happens now? LAURA BETH  
(Overlapping)

What? ETHAN

(CONTINUED)

**(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)**

In the Slush, Daniel Prillaman, 60.  
CONTINUED:

LAURA BETH

You keep me down here until this...thing inside me bursts out?

ETHAN

...That's not really our first choice.

We were kind of hoping that...you might join us. If you heard us out?

*LAURA BETH laughs.*

LAURA BETH

And how am I supposed to trust a single word that comes out of your mouth? I don't even know who you are.

ETHAN

Fair enough.

My name *is* Ethan. Gardner. I mean, not everything was a lie, Laura Beth. I'm just a regular guy.

LAURA BETH

Besides the world domination?

ETHAN

That's--

There's a little more complexity to it.

LAURA BETH

Ah.

ETHAN

I'm pretty much the guy you know.

LAURA BETH

But I don't know you.

ETHAN

I'm the guy you thought you knew.

LAURA BETH

No. You're not. Because nothing that I thought I knew was real. You? Hope? My life?! None of it. I'm not real.

ETHAN

Laura Beth--

LAURA BETH

Is a fucking name! That you picked out of a hat.

I don't think you appreciate how destabilizing this

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

**(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)**

In the Slush, Daniel Prillaman, 61.

CONTINUED:

LAURA BETH (cont'd)

situation is.

What am I? How am I alive?

ETHAN

It's a little complicated to explain.

LAURA BETH

We have time. Eight and a half months, to be exact.

You don't think I deserve it?

ETHAN

You're humanoid. For all intents and purposes.

*Beat.*

LAURA BETH

That's it? That's all I'm going to get?

Bit of a cop-out.

ETHAN

Is it that important?

LAURA BETH

Forgive me for having a natural interest regarding my creation.

ETHAN

Yeah, well, no one ever gets all the answers on that front.

LAURA BETH

You worship some Dark Lord, you'd think you'd know more than that.

ETHAN

Yeah, well, if what we thought we knew is bullshit, then may--

(Stopping himself,  
Pause)

I'm sorry. I'm sorry. That was--this isn't exactly easy on me either.

*LAURA BETH scoffs.*

ETHAN

I'm not making excuses! I'm just saying.

*Beat.*

ETHAN

I--

(CONTINUED)

**(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)**

In the Slush, Daniel Prillaman, 62.  
CONTINUED:

*But he doesn't know what to say.*

LAURA BETH

What?

ETHAN

Nothing.

LAURA BETH

No, let's hear it.

ETHAN

I don't know what I was going to say.

I didn't expect to be dealing with this any more than you did. I'm sorry. It's not what we wanted.

LAURA BETH

For me to find out how full of shit you were?

ETHAN

Hey, look, just because this is happening, it doesn't mean what you and I experienced wasn't real. Okay? It happened. You felt the way you felt, there was nothing manufactured about that. The memories might have been, sure, but the emotions behind them? That's what's real. That's what matters. Realness is what you believe in. And I mean it, the--the last thing I want is to see you hurt.

Not because of what's inside you, but because of you.

*Beat.*

LAURA BETH

People hate it when their dogs die, too, Ethan. Doesn't put the relationship on equal footing. You're a fucking liar.

It's astounding. Really, it is. Credit where credit is due. You made a fully functioning life with its own needs and wants. Emotions. As far back as I can remember, I wanted nothing more...than to raise a family with the man I loved and to edit people's stories for a living. Help them achieve their dreams. Because I had finally gotten mine.

But it's a lie. It's what you put there. What you said. Those emotions aren't mine. Those fucking needs and wants weren't mine. So how do I know what I want? Really? I don't know what I want.

You're probably right, you know. You're probably mostly the guy I thought I knew. But if I don't know what I want, then I don't know who I am. And if I don't know who I am, then

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

**(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)**

In the Slush, Daniel Prillaman, 63.

CONTINUED:

LAURA BETH (cont'd)

you most certainly do not know who I am. And that means...  
that I could be a very, very dangerous humanoid...to you.

So unless you're going to let me go right now, which I  
doubt...why don't you go get Hope and work on your pitch?

And tell her to bring dinner, too. I'm hungry. I'm eating  
for two, remember?

Go.

*ETHAN stands.*

*He ascends the stairs and  
exits.*

*LAURA BETH lets out the  
tension, in marvel of herself,  
perhaps truly experiencing her  
life for the first time.*

*Lights fade.*

SCENE SEVEN

*HOPE and ETHAN argue in the  
darkness.*

*Muffled yells, as if we can  
hear them through the ceiling  
of the basement.*

WHAT THE FUCK, ETHAN?!

HOPE (V.O.)

Hope, don't yell.

ETHAN (V.O.)

I TOLD YOU THIS WOULD HAPPEN!

HOPE (V.O.)

We'll figure it out!

ETHAN (V.O.)

Stop! Saying! That!

HOPE (V.O.)

Hope!

ETHAN (V.O.)

DON'T FUCKING "HOPE" ME, FUCKER!

HOPE (V.O.)

(CONTINUED)

**(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)**

In the Slush, Daniel Prillaman, 64.  
CONTINUED:

*The smash of a thrown object,  
shattering.*

HOPE (V.O.)

YOU DON'T FUCKING GET IT, DO YOU?! WE'RE DONE! WE DON'T WIN!  
WE CAN'T FIX THIS SHIT!

EVERYTHING WE HAVE EVER WORKED FOR IS RUINED!

ETHAN (V.O.)

Not yet! We can't take this out on each other!

HOPE (V.O.)

YOU SIMPLE, USELESS FUCK! I'LL TAKE IT OUT ON WHOEVER I  
FUCKING PLEASE!!

*The slamming of a door.*

*The squeal of tires against a  
driveway, peeling out into the  
street.*

*Silence.*

*Lights rise.*

*It is some time later, now the  
early hours of night.*

*Wine and half-eaten Chinese  
takeout now litter the  
basement (along with  
everything else).*

*LAURA BETH is still tied to  
the chair.*

*HOPE and ETHAN are there,  
exhausted.*

LAURA BETH

So that's it?

HOPE

That's it. There's no other way.

LAURA BETH

Hell of a saleswoman.

HOPE

You know me.

(CONTINUED)

(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)

In the Slush, Daniel Prillaman, 65.  
CONTINUED:

LAURA BETH

Right.

So, just to recap, if I may, my choices are...cooperate against my will? Which nobody wants.

ETHAN

No.

HOPE

Nope.

LAURA BETH

Struggle and fail to escape, forcing you to kill me? Which nobody wants. Struggle and succeed in escaping?

HOPE

If you go to Harold, he's just going to kill you. He wants you destroyed. He won't help you.

LAURA BETH

There are a lot of other places to go.

HOPE

He'll find you.

LAURA BETH

Will he?

ETHAN

Yeah. He will.

HOPE

So it really leaves you with just the one option.

LAURA BETH

Stay here?

HOPE

At least with us, you get to live.

LAURA BETH

For eight and a half months?

HOPE

The delivery won't kill you.

LAURA BETH

Well, you'll pardon me if I'm slow to take your word for it.

HOPE

If you need time, we have it.

(CONTINUED)

(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)

In the Slush, Daniel Prillaman, 66.  
CONTINUED:

*LAURA BETH chuckles.*

LAURA BETH

Let me ask you two a question.

How do you think this is going to go? Put yourself in my shoes. You think I'm gonna make it?

HOPE

If you make the right call.

LAURA BETH

Aha, I don't know, see--I'm still not convinced what the right call is. You and I have read enough stories to ponder the perhaps cliché notion that living down here wouldn't really be "living." Obviously, I don't wanna die. Not really. But if I do, it's not like I'm gonna have any regrets. Didn't have the time to make any. Figure them out. I bet you did. What if I prefer the idea of killing you two because everybody else on the planet can't be fucking worse? You can't trust me. Not completely. Are you really gonna keep watch on me for the whole eight and a half yards? What if I stop eating? What happens then? You gonna force-feed me? Shovel Lo Mein down my throat? What if I bite your goddamn fingers off? What are you gonna do then? See, I think the right call, isn't mine to make. It's yours. I'm not the one who needs you in this transaction. Am I?

*Beat.*

*HOPE stands (if she wasn't)  
and moves to LAURA BETH.*

LAURA BETH

Am I? Hope?

Got nothing to say?

*HOPE punches LAURA BETH.*

*LAURA BETH laughs.*

*ETHAN is uncomfortable, but  
does nothing.*

LAURA BETH

Very mature.

*HOPE punches again.*

*LAURA BETH laughs, perhaps  
makes a biting taunt.*

(CONTINUED)

**(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)**

In the Slush, Daniel Prillaman, 67.  
CONTINUED:

*HOPE punches again.*

*Again.*

*Again.*

ETHAN

STOP!

*HOPE stops.*

*LAURA BETH coughs, in pain,  
but keeps her composure, blood  
perhaps falling from her  
mouth/nose.*

HOPE

I've got ten fingers, cunt. You're gonna do what we say.

*LAURA BETH laughs.*

LAURA BETH

All right.

All right. Yeah! That's good. Mmm!

(To HOPE)

See, you make so much more sense to me. I get you. Ohhhhh, I get you. You're angry. That's understandable. O god, I wanna fucking rip your limbs apart. I get it. What I don't get, is him.

(To ETHAN)

What do you get out of this, Ethan? You--This New World you two want so bad? This--Glorious Darkness? What do you get out of it that nobody else does?

You do have a reason, right?

Spit it out, come on.

HOPE

Shut up.

LAURA BETH

No, I wanna know, I'm curious.

HOPE

Shut the fuck up!

LAURA BETH

Why? Come on, I'm not hurting anyone.

HOPE

I swear to god.

(CONTINUED)

(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)

In the Slush, Daniel Prillaman, 68.  
CONTINUED:

LAURA BETH

Wow, you're touchy right now, Hope. I mean, you're touchy all the time, but, yeesh...sensitive subject?

Does it worry you that maybe he liked me more than he likes you? Is that it?

HOPE

Quiet.

LAURA BETH

We fucked a lot, you know. Hard.

HOPE

Quiet!

LAURA BETH

Fucking harder than Mr. fucking Boom.

ETHAN

Laura Beth, please!

*Beat.*

LAURA BETH

Ohhhh. Aha!

No. That's not it. I'm not in the equation. Am I?

(To HOPE)

What are your feelings towards him? Are you two married? Together?

HOPE

Shut the fuck up!

LAURA BETH

(To ETHAN)

I bet she doesn't love you.

HOPE

Now!

LAURA BETH

I could.

HOPE

NOW!

LAURA BETH

I'll love you. Kill her and let's run away together. To the Adirondacks.

(CONTINUED)

(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)

In the Slush, Daniel Prillaman, 69.  
CONTINUED:

HOPE  
(Bellowing)

AHHHH!

LAURA BETH  
Let's see them for real.

*HOPE tackles LAURA BETH,  
knocking the chair over.*

*She wails on her and ETHAN  
bolts up to try and stop her.*

*The entire scene devolves into  
a violent scuffle.*

*Eventually, ETHAN manages to  
pull HOPE off LAURA BETH, who  
is still having the time of  
her life.*

*HOPE punches ETHAN, who goes  
down.*

*Not out, but down.*

*At the sight of this, HOPE  
catches herself.*

*She moves to check him.*

HOPE  
Ethan?! Ethan?! Shit! Ethan?

ETHAN  
I'm fine.

HOPE  
Ethan? Are you--

ETHAN  
I'm fine! Get off!

*ETHAN pushes her away and runs  
up the stairs, exiting.*

HOPE  
Ethan! I'm sorry!

*But he's gone.*

*HOPE sits, breathing hard.*

(CONTINUED)

**(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)**

In the Slush, Daniel Prillaman, 70.  
CONTINUED:

*Silence.*

LAURA BETH

Sorry, did I do that?

*Silence.*

HOPE

He's brilliant, you know. What he did with you? He explained to it me a thousand times, I barely understood a word.

LAURA BETH

He explained it to you? All I got was some humanoid bullshit.

*HOPE laughs.*

*LAURA BETH does too.*

*Silence.*

HOPE

What's it gonna take?

For a yes?

LAURA BETH

Honestly?

I don't know.

I'll bet I know it if I hear it.

HOPE

You wanna see the mountains? For real? Grand Canyon? Niagara Falls? Anything. Name it. I'll take you wherever you want to go. Do whatever you want to do. Swim in the ocean. Hike the Appalachian. Name it. What do you want?

LAURA BETH

Now that's the million dollar question.

What do I want?

I kind of just want to get out of this fucking basement. But I don't think we've reached that point in our relationship, have we?

Hi. My name used to be Laura Beth. What's yours?

HOPE

Hope.

(CONTINUED)

(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)

In the Slush, Daniel Prillaman, 71.  
CONTINUED:

LAURA BETH

Oh, that's a beautiful name. It's very nice to meet you, Hope. What do you do?

HOPE

I'm an editorial assistant.

LAURA BETH

Get the fuck out! I, too, until very recently was an editorial assistant. Small world.

HOPE

Yeah.

LAURA BETH

Did you like it?

HOPE

Usually. Yeah. Did you?

*Beat.*

LAURA BETH

Yeah.

Yeah. Usually.

HOPE

What was your favorite part?

LAURA BETH

You know, I would always tell people the worlds? The hundreds of different, magical places we'd get to visit in the writing? But at the end of the day it was just the editing. I liked the words. Fixing the broken things. So they could be better. Help people.

HOPE

LB, that's what we're trying to do here.

LAURA BETH

Yeah?

HOPE

This world...is broken. You may not see it, but it is. We want to fix it. That's what this does. That's what your baby is going to do. Gwen is going to save our species.

LAURA BETH

King Arthur.

HOPE

King fucking Arthur.

(CONTINUED)

(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)

In the Slush, Daniel Prillaman, 72.  
CONTINUED:

*Beat.*

LAURA BETH  
Wasn't it her fault he died, though?

HOPE  
Fuck it, LB, don't you want to see her? Meet her? Mother to daughter?

LAURA BETH  
She's not my daughter.

HOPE  
No, she is! Fuck that! Fuck that! She's in you, isn't she?! Inside your belly? If anything's fucking real, she is!

LB, if anything is real, you are. You are a miracle. You're amazing. And you're right in front of me. Look at you.

So your head's fucked up, welcome to humanity, we can fix it. Gwen will rid us of every problem we've ever feared. Ever have to face.

You're our baby. Ethan's and mine. We want to watch you grow, we--

LB, we want you with us.

*Beat.*

LAURA BETH  
Then why didn't you just tell me?

HOPE  
I don't know.

LAURA BETH  
I do. But I guess I can't blame you.

It's a lot harder to smell your own shit. Isn't it, Mom?

But don't worry. Children are meant to surpass their parents.

*HOPE laughs.*

*It is an exquisitely layered laugh, filled with fatigue, hopelessness, bitterness, disbelief, toxicity, genuine amusement, and other words one might find in an unsolicited manuscript.*

(CONTINUED)

(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)

In the Slush, Daniel Prillaman, 73.  
CONTINUED:

What? LAURA BETH

Nothing. HOPE

No, let's hear it. LAURA BETH

*Beat.*

It's nothing. HOPE

Okay. LAURA BETH

I'm gonna go then.

*LAURA BETH breaks/slides loose from her bonds, which have become ruffled and slack from the fight, not as a superhero freeing themselves from peril, but simply working her way out.*

*Perhaps she had been working at that for a little bit.*

*HOPE tenses, immediately on guard.*

LAURA BETH  
The knots came loose when you--...I don't have superpowers or anything. At least, I don't think...

You gonna stop me?

*HOPE doesn't move.*

Good. LAURA BETH

*LAURA BETH crosses to the stairs, but stops at the sound of HOPE.*

Please. HOPE

Please, don't go. Just--

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)

In the Slush, Daniel Prillaman, 74.

CONTINUED:

HOPE (cont'd)

Just don't go.

*Beat.*

LAURA BETH

You asked me if I ever felt bad, didn't you?

I did. But for some reason, right now...seeing you like this? This shit's the most fun I've ever had.

*LAURA BETH laughs, shaking her head, and crosses to the stairs.*

*She begins to ascend, and HOPE bolts after her in chase, murderously intent on stopping her.*

*The two run up the staircase as the lights abruptly blackout.*

*A scuffle in the darkness, quickly followed by the sound of a body (or bodies?) falling down the stairs.*

*The blunt impact of skull (or skulls?) hitting hard flooring or concrete.*

*Perhaps the cracking of bones.*

*Silence.*

SCENE EIGHT

*Light hits an empty spot in the darkness.*

*After a moment, RODINA WAITS steps into her light.*

*But this time, it isn't HOPE.*

*It's LAURA BETH.*

*Perhaps not even wearing the scarf and beret of a beat poet.*

(CONTINUED)

(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)

In the Slush, Daniel Prillaman, 75.  
CONTINUED:

*She observes the audience  
gathered around.*

RODINA (LAURA BETH)

*"To be, or not to be, that is the question,  
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer  
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,  
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,  
And by opposing end them? Yada yada yada  
Yada yada yada yada yada yada yada yada*

That's fame  
Greatness, at least  
Arguably the most known group of English words ever put in a  
particular order

That's all stories are, really  
Just groups of words  
In particular orders

That we hopefully haven't seen before

If we have seen them, they're a little less interesting,  
aren't they?  
But if you get the right ones  
In the right order?

You become  
Iconic

How does one make something iconic?  
Do something iconic?  
Why must we be  
Iconic?

Who gets to decide?  
Somebody does  
Who decided "what dreams may come" meant something?  
Who did they give pause?  
Who's the rub?  
Is it somebody who knows the fuck about anything?  
Because it sure as hell isn't us  
We don't get to make those calls  
Not down here  
In the dark  
With all our sins and orisons pouring in and out of one  
another  
Churning themselves into a delectable, frothy milkshake that  
tastes so good but it's your least favorite flavor  
A Root Beer float that's too sugary for your metabolism  
A mug just straight up filled with semen and you're not  
someone into that sort of thing

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

**(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)**

In the Slush, Daniel Prillaman, 76.

CONTINUED:

RODINA (LAURA BETH) (cont'd)

You just want a mug of hot coffee with a flaky danish  
Or a bottle of water with just the right amount of flouride  
An ocean and a sunrise  
Just a good goddamn glass of red wine

That's all you want

But we're too stubborn to drown

We spend our nights drenched  
With smiles plastered on our faces as we sleep  
As we sleep, perchance to dream

And they don't drown either, do they?  
Not all the way

We just bury them the same.

*Silence.*

*Unless it has been lit this entire time (which is fine, just redraw attention to it), a blacklight hits the closed boiler/bathroom door once more, illuminating the same message.*

*RODINA turns and crosses to "THE CABINET" to exit.*

SULTRY ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Ladies and gentlemen.

*The door slams shut behind her, and she is gone, along with her light.*

*"THE CABINET" burns alone, a light in the dark.*

SULTRY ANNOUNCER

Rodina Waits.

*Silence.*

*"THE CABINET" light fades out.*

*Darkness.*

(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)

In the Slush, Daniel Prillaman, 77.

SCENE NINE

*Lights rise.*

*Some days later.*

*Perhaps some effort has been made to clean and straighten the basement, but it hasn't been as successful. Many papers and minutia still litter the room, as do another wine bottle and glasses.*

*HOPE is alone, nursing a glass, and doing what she can, however, putting various papers back in boxes, emptying glasses or containers.*

*She picks up one manuscript that makes her stop.*

*She reads over it in silence, mulling with the glass in her hand.*

*The stairs door opens, breaking her out of that world.*

ETHAN  
(Calling down)

Hope? You good?

HOPE  
(Calling up)

Yeah!

Come on down.

*HOPE puts the manuscript wherever she deems it belongs as the voices of ETHAN and HAROLD BECKLESBY are heard before their full bodies are revealed.*

ETHAN  
You sure I can't offer you anything, Harold? Water? Tea?

HAROLD  
Oh, no. No, thank you, Ethan. I'm fine.

(CONTINUED)

**(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)**

In the Slush, Daniel Prillaman, 78.  
CONTINUED:

ETHAN

Okay.

*HAROLD and ETHAN reach the  
bottom.*

*HAROLD and HOPE lock eyes and  
stare at one another.*

*Silence.*

HAROLD

Hello, Hope.

*Beat.*

HOPE

Dad.

Sorry about the mess. We, uh...we haven't gotten a good  
chance to clean up yet. Busy.

HAROLD

That's quite all right.

HOPE

Sit, please.

*HAROLD takes a seat as ETHAN  
crosses to sit with HOPE.*

HOPE

You want a drink?

HAROLD

No, thank you.

HOPE

No, I insist. Come on. You're drinking.

HAROLD

Hope.

*HOPE begins pouring two more  
glasses of wine.*

HOPE

Ah. I won't take no for an answer.  
(Handing one to  
HAROLD)

Here.

(And to ETHAN)

And here.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

**(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)**

In the Slush, Daniel Prillaman, 79.

CONTINUED:

HOPE (cont'd)

(Raising her glass)

Cheers.

*She finishes her glass.*

*ETHAN and HAROLD maybe drink.*

*HOPE tops herself off.*

*Beat.*

HOPE

Well, Dad, I have to hand it to you. That was fucking ingenious. I mean, goddamn!

HAROLD

I regret that I had to resort to such measures, but you left me with no alternative.

HOPE

I mean, Christ, you could have left it the fuck alone.

I know, I'm kidding, I'm kidding. But the balls on that move! Bravo. I don't know if either of us would have ever thought of something like that. It's almost so ridiculous it should never have worked. But it did. Goddamn.

So did you come by to gloat or do you want something?

I won't be as vain to hope you came over just to have a heart attack in our basement.

HAROLD

No, I am in very fair health. If you're looking to wait out my death you've got quite a few more years of it to do.

HOPE

Had to ask.

HAROLD

I wanted to inquire about the funeral.

HOPE

(Snorting)

Why?

HAROLD

I would like to pay my respects. See her.

HOPE

We haven't set a date yet. But there's no point. Body'll be cremated long before the service.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

**(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)**

In the Slush, Daniel Prillaman, 80.

CONTINUED:

HOPE (cont'd)

You think we're fucking stupid? You're not getting the chance to dig her up.

HAROLD

I had no such intentions.

HOPE

Sure.

But if you feel that strongly about it, we'll let you know.

HAROLD

Thank you.

*Beat.*

HOPE

That can't be it.

HAROLD

No. But the question is old hat, you would say.

HOPE

I wouldn't. Old as fuck phrase.

HAROLD

I would implore you again, and you, Ethan, to reconsider your position in these matters. Cease your attempts to birth this being.

HOPE

Go back to saving the world?

HAROLD

I would settle for no longer trying to destroy it.

HOPE

Yeah, well...

Looks like we still have differing opinions on what that is, don't we?

HAROLD

So it would seem.

But I cannot emphasize enough, the further you pursue this course the more chaos you will release. It will not end well. Or how you think. I am, frankly, amazed you two managed to escape with the cuts and scrapes you did.

HOPE

Well, if somebody hadn't blown the secret to her, we wouldn't have had to worry about that at all. Would we have?

(CONTINUED)

**(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)**

In the Slush, Daniel Prillaman, 81.

CONTINUED:

HAROLD

Are you certain of that?

She would have found out, sooner or later.

Dangerous thing to not think through.

HOPE

We thought it through.

HAROLD

Clearly not enough, because I brought it down with three pages and a typewriter.

HOPE

Then I guess we know what else to watch out for next time. Don't we, Ethan?

*Beat.*

HAROLD

Would you excuse us for a moment, lad?

ETHAN

Um.

HOPE

It's okay. We won't be long.

ETHAN

Sure.

*ETHAN stands and ascends the stairs, exiting.*

*Beat.*

HOPE

Say what you want to say.

HAROLD

Stop.

Stop this. For the love of God.

HOPE

No.

HAROLD

Why?

HOPE

Because I don't want to.

(CONTINUED)

(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)

In the Slush, Daniel Prillaman, 82.  
CONTINUED:

HAROLD

Fair reasoning. You know, most children grow out of their rebellious phase in their teens?

HOPE

And most fucking childhoods aren't spent learning how to protect the world from cosmic darkness. Guess we're both a disappointment to each other.

*Beat.*

HAROLD

I know I haven't been the best to you. And for whatever it's worth, I genuinely regret that as well. I'm sorry for how my actions warped you in ways that I couldn't see. But I did not intend nor ever imagine you would stray so far from everything I tried to teach you.

HOPE

Oh, you feel bad? Is this the part where I cry and we hug?

HAROLD

Goddamn it, this is the part where you let down your wall for a minute! Listen to the words I am saying, don't just deflect them or shake them off. Forget the rest of the world for a moment, forget that boy you've conditioned to this folly, forget your damn ego and talk with me, father to daughter. Just us.

I can't stand seeing you like this, Hope. This person that you've become. I barely see my child that I once rocked to sleep in my arms. Just a woman with so much anger and hate pouring out of her. Directed towards everything. And yes, I am to blame for some of it. More than enough. So it should be me that suffers, no one else.

You don't want to help me, fine. But I can't believe...

I won't believe that deep down this is something you really want.

*HOPE has listened to this.*

*She thinks, perhaps taking a drink of wine.*

HOPE

Yeah, that tracks.

You know, there was always something that bothered me about that manuscript. I read your fucking warning again and again. Front to back. I didn't put my finger on it until just now.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)

In the Slush, Daniel Prillaman, 83.

CONTINUED:

HOPE (cont'd)

You went through all that trouble. Warned her about Ethan.  
What she was. The baby.

It occurs to me.

You never said a single word about me.

Aha.

That's funny.

That's really funny.

(After a longer stare)

I'll carry this fucking thing myself if I have to, Dad.

Now get the fuck out of my house.

*Silence.*

*HAROLD stands.*

*He ascends the stairs and  
exits.*

*HOPE lets out the tension,  
fighting back tears and  
complicated emotions one might  
find in an unsolicited  
manuscript.*

*Or maybe she just drinks the  
rest of the wine.*

*From the bottle.*

*Silence.*

*The stairs door opens and  
ETHAN descends the stairs.*

*HOPE wipes her eyes and  
adjusts herself before he  
sees.*

ETHAN

Hey.

He's gone.

HOPE

Good.

(CONTINUED)

**(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)**

In the Slush, Daniel Prillaman, 84.  
CONTINUED:

ETHAN  
You need anything?

HOPE  
No.

No, I'm good.

*ETHAN crosses and sits with  
HOPE.*

*Places a hand on her knee.*

*Silence.*

*HOPE grasps his hand.*

HOPE  
I'm sorry I yelled at you.

ETHAN  
It's okay. I get it.

*Beat.*

HOPE  
Do you think I'm a bad person?

ETHAN  
Do I what?

HOPE  
Am I a bad person?

*Beat.*

ETHAN  
No.

So what now?

*Beat.*

HOPE  
Square one?

*Beat.*

ETHAN  
Square one.

*HOPE smiles.*

(CONTINUED)

**(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)**

In the Slush, Daniel Prillaman, 85.  
CONTINUED:

*HOPE and ETHAN kiss.*

ETHAN  
Come on. I'll make some lunch.

HOPE  
You go ahead. I'll be up in a minute.

ETHAN  
You sure?

HOPE  
Yeah. I should clean a little more of this shit.

ETHAN  
All right.

*ETHAN stands and crosses to  
the stairs.*

ETHAN  
I love you.

*HOPE hasn't heard him, her  
mind elsewhere.*

*ETHAN stops.*

ETHAN  
Hey.

*HOPE looks at ETHAN, broken  
out of her world.*

ETHAN  
I love you.

HOPE  
Oh.

I love you too.

*ETHAN ascends the stairs and  
exits.*

*Silence.*

*HOPE sits alone, her mind  
elsewhere, astray and  
submerged in a sea of dreams.*

END. MERCI.