

PAS DE DEATH

Written by

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INT. BALLET STUDIO - MORNING

Sprawled across the wooden floor, DAISY, 18, fights to wake from a near comatose state.

DAISY
(wearily)
Mom, we're gonna be late...

She sits up. The room forms around her in ripples – there's a VHS TELEVISION towards the MIRRORS, a BARRE, a WARDROBE, and a COT near the back. Nothing else. She's alone.

DAISY (CONT'D)
Mom?

No answer. Alert now, she rises to her feet.

DAISY (CONT'D)
Hello? Mom?

She hunts for a way out – throws open the wardrobe, pounds along the wall, turns her gaze towards the ceiling.

Nothing. Just a washroom partitioned off by a curtain and some windows, too high and small to let any real sunlight through.

DAISY (CONT'D)
Anyone? Hey! Let me out!

Overhead, a SMALL LIGHT blinks. Above the wall of mirrors sits a CAMERA – next to it a COUNTDOWN, which reads: 7 Days, 0 Hours, 0 Minutes, and 0 Seconds.

It starts as soon as she sees it. Ominous observer found – she speaks to the lens now:

DAISY (CONT'D)
Okay – whoever you are, and whatever your deal is, my mom's waiting for me! She'll know I'm missing and call the cops. She probably already has!

A CAN OF GREEN BEANS and a GALLON OF WATER slide out from a compartment in the wall.

DAISY (CONT'D)
I have friends! Teachers! They're all gonna be worried and they won't stop looking until I'm home!

Silence. The countdown TICKS.

DAISY (CONT'D)
 ...C'mon, I have a lacrosse game
 today!

Tick. Tick.

DAISY (CONT'D)
 (defeated)
 Just let me go? Please? I won't- I
 won't tell.

On the TV, a VHS tape starts - it rewinds rapidly across a
 compilation of Odette and Odile's solos from Swan Lake.

Horror dawning, she runs to the wardrobe she left ajar in her
 haste. Inside is a singular change of clothes - POINTE SHOES
 and a GREY TUTU with an iconically feathery silhouette.

She faces the camera.

DAISY (CONT'D)
 You want me to...dance? Eat these
 stupid green beans? Or what, I die?

Below the lens, a brick slides away. The BARREL OF A GUN
 pokes through, aims at her, and COCKS.

DAISY (CONT'D)
 (sobered)
 No. Why? Why me? You could've
 picked anyone, **anyone**-

Falling to her knees, sobs wracking her chest, she screams -
 but all noise ebbs away.

INT. BALLET STUDIO - EVENING

Daisy sits limp against the mirrors, visibly disheveled.

The countdown ticks. And ticks. And ticks.

A sliver of moonlight pours in from a clerestory window.
 Where it touches her skin, goosebumps form. She watches,
 despondent and still, until -

- Silver feathers pierce through their pores, blood SPURTING
 and GUSHING in their wake. Horrified, she tears them out.

More grow in their place. She keeps tearing.

DAISY
 (screaming)
 What did you do to me? Dammit, what
 did you do?

Over and over she clutches and tears, but to no avail –
 they're endless. Kneeling in a swelling pool of her own blood
 and feathers, she grows faint.

Falls still.

DAISY (CONT'D)
 Sorry, Mom. Love you.

Everything fades as she collapses, unconscious.

INT. BALLET STUDIO - DAWN

Daisy wakes in the cot, covered in a downy coat of feathers.
 Someone has cleaned the studio floor while she slept.

She glares down the barrel of the gun.

DAISY
 Fine. You want me to dance? I'll
 fucking dance.

Pushing herself up, Daisy stalks towards the untouched food
 and water. She drinks. Peels open the can and eats.

DAISY (CONT'D)
 These green beans are fucking
 gross, by the way!

She throws the wardrobe open. Laces up the pointe shoes.
 Waits until the tape rewinds, then takes her place at the
 barre.

She follows along – she's clumsy, too focused on the screen,
 wobbling out of every turn. She attempts a leap and nearly
 smashes her head against the mirror.

On the ground, heaving, she screams:

DAISY (CONT'D)
 (to camera)
 Are you happy? Is seeing me fail
 what you wanted?

No answer. The tape rewinds.

Defeated, she stands and starts over.

INT. BALLET STUDIO - EVENING

The tape rewinds. Daisy is still poised at the barre.

Her eyelids drag. Bruises cover her body. She starts again and topples violently, bursting into tears as she collides with the floor.

Heaving, she staggers to the washroom.

INT. BALLET STUDIO - WASHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Throwing the curtain aside, she hunches over the sink, coughing blood and feathers into the drain.

She splashes water in her face. Meeting her own gaze in the mirror, she raises a hand to her lips. They've grown sharp, curved – beakish. Dark rings form a mask around her eyes.

DAISY
(delirious)
Whoa. I won't ever have to do
eyeliner again.

She giggles at herself – and HONKS. She giggles harder, honking again. Cackling now, she falls to the floor in cathartic hysteria.

INT. BALLET STUDIO - MOMENTS LATER

She trudges out of the washroom with an odd smile on her face. Climbing into the cot, she falls asleep.

INT. BALLET STUDIO - MORNING

The compartment in the wall opens. A PLATE OF MOSS and a gallon of water slide out.

Woken by the noise, Daisy pushes herself up.

She eats. Drinks. Laces up the pointe shoes over webbed, veiny feet. Waits until the tape rewinds. Takes her place at the barre.

INT. BALLET STUDIO - AFTERNOON

She takes another tumble, more brutal than the last. She rushes to the washroom, throwing up moss and bloodied feathers – but she doesn't linger. Brushing herself off, she returns to the barre.

MONTAGE:

Six days pass. The camera light blinks unendingly. She eats the plate of moss. Drinks the water. Collapses in the cot, then rises once again.

Her neck develops an unnatural curve, her arms metamorphosing into viscera framing a pair of silver wings. Her arches sharpen. A shake plagues every muscle, but she crosses the floor in leaps and turns she should not be capable of.

She no longer needs the tape. She instead stares at her own inhuman face in the mirror – the stubborn set of her jaw may change in shape, but it does not falter.

OUT OF MONTAGE.**INT. BALLET STUDIO - DAWN**

One hour left on the clock.

A sway of the curtain, and Daisy ballet-walks out from the washroom. She is more swan than human, the signature tutu barely distinguishable from her skin. She assumes her starting position.

The music pours out from above, grand and resonant, invoking a stage's grace for what may be her final performance.

Distantly, a memory, a voice we haven't heard—

DAISY'S MOM (V.O.)
It's okay, Daisy. It's hard. It's
not for everyone.

Daisy begins. Music and memory interweave.

YOUNG DAISY (V.O.)
But you did it! And you're so good!

DAISY'S MOM (V.O.)
Not at first. I did it for years,
baby. Years and years, because I
loved it.

Daisy's every step is otherworldly, but so, so fragile. She is Odette, innocent and longing—then Odile, flirting with seduction.

DAISY'S MOM (V.O.)
It made me lose myself— in a good
way. Transformed me into someone
else. Someone...capable.

Halfway through. Somewhere from outside the studio, surrounding it: GUNSHOTS. SCREAMS. Some human, some not – all at a devastating volume.

Daisy's shaking grows violent. Tears bead, but she has come too far, so she clamps her beak tight and bears it.

DAISY'S MOM (V.O.)
It doesn't do that for everyone.
And that's okay.

YOUNG DAISY (V.O.)
But I want to be—

More gunshots, more screams, but soon it nears the end – she's going home – CRUNCH! She hits the ground wrong after a leap, and a bone in her ankle shatters.

She bites back a scream. Tears fall, and she wavers, fighting to maintain her balance until the final note rings out. Eyes closing, she settles into the crowning pose.

Tick. Tick. The countdown stops, nowhere near zero.

No gunshot.

Instead, APPLAUSE. The mirror slides apart, revealing an open door.

YOUNG DAISY (V.O.)
I just wanted to be...

Daisy falls to her knees in relief.

DAISY
Like you, Mom. Just like you.

She sobs and clutches at her heart, the last remaining evidence of her humanity.

INT. MONITORING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

In black and white on a SMALL MONITOR, Daisy continues to wail.

ZOOM OUT:

It's only one monitor out of hundreds. The rest have no one in them – only dead swans with bullet wounds in their chests, crumpled in silver heaps on the wooden floor.

FADE OUT.