

Pretty as a Picture

by

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EXT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Two men dressed in black approach an apartment building and walk up the steps of the porch to the front door. It is SAM NEEDHAN, a thin, dark-haired young man, and his accomplice, DENNIS, who is slightly taller and broader. Dennis tries the doorknob, only to discover that it is locked.

DENNIS
It's locked.

SAM
I'm pretty sure that's not right...
she never locks this door. Why
should tonight be any different?

DENNIS
I don't know why, but we aren't
getting in this way.

Sam thinks for a moment, then walks down the steps to look up at the second floor balcony.

SAM
I have an idea.

DENNIS
What, we're going to climb up
there?

SAM
We have to. She is the one, Dennis,
I'm sure of it.

Sam then begins to move up towards the base of the balcony, scaling it with relative ease. Dennis reluctantly follows, and they both make it over the railing and onto the balcony.

EXT. BALCONY - NIGHT

Sam and Dennis stand on the balcony, looking at a door that leads directly into the apartment.

DENNIS
Sam, wait, hold on. You realize
you've said that about the last
three girls, right? According to
you, they've all been the one - and
they've all ended up the same way.
Did you ever stop to consider the
fact that you might just be
addicted to this little game?

SAM
I'm afraid you'll have to trust me
on this one, Dennis. She's perfect,
I just know it.

Dennis sighs, and both men pull ski masks on, which they had been carrying in their pockets. The masks are not exactly ordinary - they are knit with animal face designs that make the two trespassers look quite terrifying in the moonlight. Sam tests the doorknob on the balcony door, which turns easily. They enter the apartment.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

The apartment is dark, aside from a faint light emanating from the bathroom. The pair proceeds cautiously through, taking care not to stumble into anything. They make their way through the halls of the apartment, arriving at a bedroom door that is open just a crack. Sam gently pushes it open, and light from the hallway spills in to reveal a beautiful young girl, LIZ, lying asleep on her bed. Sam appears visibly excited, and he and Dennis exchange a triumphant look through the eyes of their masks. Sam grips Dennis' shoulder with confidence.

SAM
(whispered)
What did I tell you?

Dennis gives Sam an affectionate tousle, and together they creep into the room towards the sleeping Liz.

CUT TO:

INT. THE HALLWAY

In the hallway outside Liz's bedroom we hear the sounds of a struggle, and then a piercing scream from Liz, which is abruptly cut short by one of the kidnappers. We then hear the faint sound of rope being fastened around her limbs, and after a moment the two men emerge from the room into the hallway, carrying an unconscious Liz. She has been bound by her hands and feet, and a black hood has been placed over her head. They carry her out of frame, and leave the apartment.

INT. SAM'S HOUSE - NIGHT

LIZ'S POV

From under the hood, all she can see is darkness.

SAM
Dennis, if you please...

Dennis pulls the hood off to reveal Sam sitting at the opposite end of a lavishly set table, dressed in a respectable suit jacket and tie. Two candles burn brightly at the center of the table, and a finely prepared meal is set out with silverware and cloth napkins alongside the plates. A bottle of wine stands on the table, and Dennis (who is now dressed in a fine collared shirt) moves to pour a glass each for Sam and Liz. However, both Liz's hands and feet are tied to the chair, immobilizing her completely. Dennis exits the room, leaving Sam alone with his captive.

SAM (CONT'D)
There's that lovely face!

LIZ
Look, I don't know who you are or what you want but if you let me go now, I swear.. no one has to know.

SAM
It's so nice to have you here, as my guest. I've had guests before, girls mostly. In fact, the last young lady I had over...why, she up and ran out on me! Can you imagine... But you're not like the others. You're sweet, and polite and... refined.

LIZ
(pleading)
I'm not who you think I am!

SAM
I must say, you're by far the most charming girl I've ever met. Such a way with words. How is the wine, by the way? I haven't tried it yet myself...

Sam takes a sip of his wine, savouring it.

SAM (CONT'D)
Oh, that is quite nice! You were right about the aftertaste, it is rather smoky indeed.

He takes a bite of his meal, appearing not to pay attention to Liz for the moment.

She struggles against her bonds, desperately looking around for something that she might use to escape. Sam laughs to himself, though still not looking up.

SAM (CONT'D)
Don't be silly darling, you're not
being rude. Not at all.

He looks up at her with a gaze that is both sinister and loving at the same time.

SAM (CONT'D)
Although, that reminds me! I have
something for you.

He wipes his mouth with the napkin and stands up from the table.

SAM (CONT'D)
I hope you'll forgive me if I
excuse myself for a moment to
retrieve it. I'll come right back
though, I promise. Don't go
anywhere, my dear, just stay right
there.

Sam leaves the room, and Liz immediately continues to struggle against the rope. She does not appear to be having any success.

INT. SAM'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Sam enters his bedroom and heads straight for his dresser. There is a dress neatly folded on the top surface, and he gently strokes it, fingering the folds. He then opens a drawer and takes out a photograph of a beautiful young woman, who looks strikingly similar to Liz.

SAM
(speaking to the photo)
I told you she was the one. She's
like you in every way.

Sam then picks up a grotesque plastic animal mask from beside the dresser and places it on his head. He stares at the photograph a moment longer, breathing heavily. Dennis suddenly appears in the doorway, already wearing his mask. He hands Sam a short length of rope, which Sam takes a looks at

INT. DINING ROOM

Liz sits at the table, still struggling with her constraints. All of a sudden, the overhead lights switch off, and the only light left in the room comes from the two candles burning on the table. Liz's terrified face is illuminated in the candlelight, and Sam and Dennis come creeping in with their masks also illuminated by the flickering light. They slowly circle the girl, getting closer and closer, and Sam brandishes his garrote menacingly. Liz lets out a scream for help, and at that moment they pounce. There is a struggle, and Dennis manages to hold her down in the chair as Sam twists the rope around her neck. Her cries are cut short as Sam chokes the life out of her. They untie her hands and feet, then carry the lifeless body into Sam's bedroom. We hear the sounds of clothing tearing and body parts being shuffled around.

SAM (O.C.)

There. She's perfect.

CUT TO:

INT. SAM'S BEDROOM

Liz's corpse is propped in an upright sitting position against the headboard of Sam's bed, looking strangely beautiful. They have dressed her in the elegant flower-print dress that Sam had in his room, and her eyes are still wide open, staring lifelessly out into space. A thin bruise circles her neck. Sam and Dennis stand over her, admiring their newest decoration.

SAM

She is a work of art. Nothing less, wouldn't you say?

DENNIS

She certainly fills out the room nicely.

SAM

You know, I think I really love her Dennis. She's absolutely perfect.

DENNIS

Sam, you two are going to be very happy together. I'm sure of it.

They continue to admire her, the masks still on their faces. Their eyes gleam through the slits.

CUT TO:

INT. SAM'S BEDROOM - NIGHT - REALITY

He is in front of the dresser, with the photograph in his hands like before.

SAM

Just like you... she's beautiful.

He puts the photograph away, but instead of putting on a mask he picks up the dress and leaves the room.

INT. DINING ROOM

Sam enters the dining room, where the table has been cleared, though the candles are still lit, and the black hood is there. Dennis is in the kitchen, and he pours himself a cup from a pot of coffee at the counter. Sam places the dress on the table.

SAM

This is for you, my love.

The camera cuts to reveal Liz sitting there, looking at the dress in front of her with abject terror. She is alive, however. Dennis brings his cup over and sits down at the table, where Sam joins him. They sit in silence for a moment.

DENNIS

I had a dream last night.

Sam looks up, interested.

SAM

Go on.

DENNIS

I was in a big metallic room sitting on a chair in the very center, and right in front of me was this great big two-way mirror. I couldn't see through, but of course I knew I was being watched. My arms were tied behind my back, and my mouth was bound but...I realized there was a door off to the side of the room.

(MORE)

DENNIS (CONT'D)

Like an exit, you know? I reached back, and found that my hands were untied, so I leapt up and dashed for that door.

As Dennis continues to describe his dream, Liz hangs her head in utter defeat, sobbing quietly. Sam and Dennis appear not to notice at all.

DENNIS (CONT'D)

I went through the door and came out in a huge field, with long grass waving about in the wind. I could hear the people behind me already starting to chase, so I started to run through the grass but my legs were so heavy... It was like I could barely move. The faster I tried to run away, the slower I moved. That's when I knew I would never escape. And then I woke up.

Dennis shrugs his shoulders and takes a drink of his coffee. Sam stands up and walks over to Liz.

SAM

That's fascinating, Dennis. But I wonder...

He puts a hand on the girl's shoulder, which he gently massages. She shivers and gives a small whimper.

SAM (CONT'D)

What kind of dreams will she have tonight?

Dennis looks down into his coffee.

DENNIS

God only knows, I guess.

SAM

Right. Give me a hand, will you?

Dennis gets up, taking the hood from the table. He slips it on her head in a POV shot that is covered in darkness as he pulls it down past her eyes.

THE END

