

LOVELOCKED

FADE IN:

EXT. LOVELOCK, NEVADA - DESERT RANCH HOME - DAY

ARDEN TEX, 15 years old, in silk pajamas stands beside a mailbox in the desolate Nevada desert. He's an awkward-looking kid.

A MAILMAN (70's) slowly drives up and hands Arden a letter.

MAILMAN

I believe that there's the letter  
you been waitin' for, young man.

Arden coldly eyes the envelope, it bears the HARVARD EMBLEM.

ARDEN

That would be a sound assessment.

The mailman scratches his head.

MAILMAN

Huh. So does that mean it's the  
letter?

Arden opens the letter, reads it, then smiles.

ARDEN

It's exactly the letter.

INT. ARDEN'S BEDROOM - DAY

Arden reclines on his bed intensely reading a book, "ADVANCED THORACIC ANATOMY." Anatomic charts adorn the small room.

A KNOCK at the door. Arden jumps to hide the book under his bed and snatches a "Playboy" magazine from under his pillow.

CYRUS TEX (47) walks in, an overweight drunken slob. He wears jalapeno boxers with a belt buckle that reads "Mr. Tex" and nothing else. A bottle of Jack Daniels in one hand.

CYRUS

What's that you readin' there boy?

Arden shows him.

ARDEN

July issue. Personal favorite.

CYRUS

I see... 'Bout time. I'm gonna get  
drunk and shoot squirrels out in the  
yard. You 'kay?

ARDEN  
Just fine, dad. Please pass along  
my condolences to the squirrels.

Cyrus walks out mumbling to himself.

CYRUS  
The boy might as well speak German...

INT. OLD FORD TRUCK - NIGHT

GRACIE (48) drives along a dirt road until she reaches a dilapidated ranch home. She's in nurse scrubs and wears the look of a long shift on her pretty face.

In the distance, she sees Cyrus running in circles, drunk.

She pulls into the driveway and notices something off to the side. It's a fat CAT, writhing in pain, freshly shot. She screeches to a stop and jumps out.

GRACIE  
CYRUS! You shot the neighbor's cat!

INT. ARDEN'S BEDROOM - DAY

Arden reads his textbook. He suddenly hears the front door SLAM SHUT.

GRACIE (O.S.)  
ARDEN! Baby, we need you! Stat!

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

The cat is on the dinner table bleeding profusely.

ARDEN  
Christ!

Gracie, thin and worn, runs back and forth getting towels, preparing the table. She grabs a handful of utensils.

GRACIE  
Get your gloves, Arden.

ARDEN  
What do you want *me* to do!?!

GRACIE  
You're gonna save this cat, that's what you're gonna do, baby. You haven't been reading all those books for nothing. Besides, if Twinkie here dies I won't hear the end of it. Now go. Hurry!

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Arden is gloved and works like a surgeon over the cat. Gracie assists.

ARDEN

Pull back a little more, Mom. There.  
I see it. I'm pretty sure that's the  
brachial artery. Hand me the fork.

Arden uses the other end of the fork as a retractor and opens the wound wider yet.

ARDEN (CONT'D)

Now hold this.

Arden starts with a needle and thread. Gracie looks up at her boy, impressed. She smiles to herself.

GRACIE

You're really gonna be something,  
baby boy. It's plain to see.

Arden looks up.

ARDEN

I need to be the best, so I can save  
you, Mom.

GRACIE

Don't talk like that, Arden. You  
know there's nothing no one can do,  
no matter how smart you are. Cancer's  
nobody's fault, you hear me!

Arden shrugs then refocuses.

ARDEN

Steak knife.

She hands it to him. Just then, the kitchen door SLAMS open and Cyrus slumbers in.

CYRUS

What the hell y'all doing with my  
squirrel!

GRACIE

It's no squirrel, Cyrus. You shot  
Twinkie.

Cyrus looks over her shoulder.

CYRUS

Huh. So I did.

He chuckles to himself when suddenly, the cat stirs awake, SHRIEKING at Gracie.

ARDEN

I'm not done! Tie her down!

The cat claws at Gracie.

GRACIE

Ouch! She got me!

ARDEN

Mom! Don't let her go!

The cat fights to crawl off the table, HISSING.

GRACIE

I can't stop her!

Then suddenly, from behind, WHACK! Cyrus has smacked the cat on the head with a wooden spoon. It passes out again.

CYRUS

...And I didn't have to read no fancy books to figure that out, boy!

He gently kisses his wife on the cheek.

CYRUS (CONT'D)

Good night, Gracie.

(walking away)

Oh, one thing, pumpkin, if I throw up on the sheets, wake me up, 'kay? I'll help clean up.

GRACIE

Always the gentleman, Cyrus.

They humorously smile at each another and he staggers off.

ARDEN

Great, now we have head trauma to contend with.

GRACIE

I'm sure he meant well, Arden.

Arden gives her a look.

GRACIE (CONT'D)

Okay, maybe not so sure...

INT. BACK PORCH - NIGHT

Gracie plays a wooden piccolo and stares into the moonlit desert. Arden opens the door and she stops.

ARDEN

Mom, it's two in the morning. You all right?

GRACIE

Yes, sweetie. Come here.

Arden settles in beside her. She hugs him with her blanket.

GRACIE (CONT'D)

I was so proud of you today, Arden.

ARDEN

I was pretty amazing, wasn't I...

From his pajama pocket, Arden takes out a folded-up page torn from a magazine.

ARDEN (CONT'D)

See, mom, someday.

THE RIPPED PAGE- a picture of a slick, super-handsome soap opera surgeon in a fancy suit, slick shades, great hair, surrounded by beautiful nurses.

ARDEN (CONT'D)

I took that from your magazine.

GRACIE

I can see that...But I think I like you just how you are now, Arden.

She smiles at Arden and he folds up the page. Beat.

ARDEN

You can't leave me, mom. You're the only one that gets me.

GRACIE

You'll be fine Arden. A boy like you will have the whole world at his feet. And I'll love watching every minute...

Eye to eye.

GRACIE (CONT'D)

...even if it is from up there.

They embrace tightly.

GRACIE (CONT'D)

There's something else, Arden. About your father...I worry about him more than anything. With you leaving so far away to school, I just don't know...

INT. DUSTY FUNERAL HOME - DAY

Gracie is dead in an open casket. Her wooden piccolo sits beside her. Arden pays his respects at her side in a second-hand suit. Cyrus and the church congregation of about 100 people are in the b.g.

GRACIE (V.O.)

...I want you to promise me something Arden, something serious. When you're all done with school, you watch after him, okay? At least for a little while. I need that piece of mind.

ARDEN (V.O.)

Fine. For you, mother, when I'm done...I promise.

Arden takes the piccolo back from the casket and inconspicuously slides it into his coat pocket.

ARDEN

I love you, mother.

He turns back to see Cyrus blubbering in the pew.

ARDEN (CONT'D)

(under his breath)

But what in the world did you make me agree to?

CUT TO:

INT. AIRPLANE - DAY

TITLE: SIX YEARS LATER

Arden (21) looks out as the plane taxis to the gate. He's in a fancy Italian suit with a thick-knotted stylish tie and designer shades.

ARDEN (V.O.)

Dear Father, I hope this correspondence finds you well, assuming you have survived the many years of relentless alcoholism...

INT. CYRUS'S BEDROOM - DAY

Cyrus is completely nude and even fatter than last time. He picks at his overgrown toes and reads the letter.

ARDEN (V.O.)  
 ...I have decided to come practice  
 in Lovelock for a short while...

CYRUS  
 Baby, look at this!

MAI PAN (30's) steps out from the bathroom in a night gown. She's a petite, sexy Vietnamese girl.

MAI PAN  
 Is it 'kay, Cyrus?

CYRUS  
 Better than okay, my boy's coming  
 home!

INT. DERBY FIELD AIRPORT - DAY

Arden marches through the small airport, all business.

ARDEN (V.O.)  
 No need to meet me at the airport.  
 The hospital has arranged a welcoming  
 committee.

A sorry-looking OLD MAN DRIVER holds a sign, "Dr. Arden NIXX".

ARDEN  
 You're the welcoming committee?

OLD MAN DRIVER  
 The marching band's running late.  
 What the hell did you expect, doc?

INT. PERSHING GENERAL HOSPITAL - FRONT - DAY

An older-model town car parks, and Arden gets out.

ARDEN (V.O.)  
 As you can imagine I'll be busy with  
 a number of high level hospital  
 dignitaries...

DR. BOOKBINDER (50's) waits at the front of the small hospital. Muscle-necked body builder, short, bolo tie. They shake hands.

BOOKBINDER  
 I'm Bob Bookbinder, the big cheese  
 around here.

They walk towards the hospital entrance. A beautiful butterfly flutters by.

BOOKBINDER (CONT'D)

Watch it!

Bookbinder swats it to the ground and flattens it with his shoe.

BOOKBINDER (CONT'D)

He'll think hard before crossing me again.

ARDEN

(looking at the remains)  
...I think that's safe to say.

They walk into the hospital.

BOOKBINDER

Wait 'til you see the R.R. unit.  
You'll love it.

ARDEN

You mean the O.R. unit?

BOOKBINDER

Hell no. R.R. unit, the "Recreational Room". Full Nautilus facility with free weights, press, squats, treadmill, the whole bit. Tell you this...

He stops walking and faces Arden.

BOOKBINDER (CONT'D)

When you're pushed to that edge, when all you see is red and you feel like you're about to explode into a million tiny pieces, a good workout's just the thing.

ARDEN

(half-frightened)  
I see.

They resume walking.

BOOKBINDER

Your parents must have been sad to see you go.

ARDEN

My parents?

ARDEN (V.O.)  
 ...I haven't quite yet decided what  
 to say about you, Cyrus, but I'm  
 sure I'll come up with something...

ARDEN  
 They're both dead.

BOOKBINDER  
 Oh. Damn shame.

INT. TOWN CAR - DAY

Arden pensively looks out as they drive. They pass the court  
 house and "Lovers Lock Plaza." A circular heavy chain is  
 arranged in the plaza with hundreds of locks on the chain.

OLD MAN DRIVER  
 That there is what we're famous for,  
 that chain over there. Couples put  
 locks on there and I guess it makes  
 their love last forever...some  
 oriental thing.

Arden scoffs.

OLD MAN DRIVER (CONT'D)  
 Not into the mushy stuff, I take it?

ARDEN  
 No actually, it's the "eternal love"  
 thing that I find absurd.

OLD MAN DRIVER  
 You never know young man. Trust me  
 on that, love's got a way--

ARDEN  
 --Well not with me. Turn right up  
 here, driver, there's one more stop  
 I need to make.

EXT. GRASSY FIELD - DAY

Arden walks in a grassy, well-trimmed field.

ARDEN (V.O.)  
 ...I will be great someday, and I  
 think we both know that. Quite  
 frankly, Cyrus, I just hope you don't  
 get in the way.

Arden reaches his mother's gravestone. He kneels in front of  
 it and removes his glasses.

ARDEN  
Hello, mother.

INT. TOWN CAR - DAY

Driving away.

ARDEN (V.O.)  
...For now, Cyrus, I just prefer to  
keep things low-key and simple.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Cyrus reads the last of the letter. Mai Pan works his thick  
nasty nails with a clipper.

CYRUS  
Low-key, simple!  
(chuckling)  
This I wanna see!

INT. OPERATING ROOM CORRIDOR - DAY

Arden walks in SLOW MOTION in scrubs, a surgical head light  
and hair cap.

In the b.g. he passes framed pictures of EINSTEIN, then ISAAC  
NEWTON, then LINUS PAULING, until finally he stops in front  
of the last print of...HIMSELF, a dramatic pose of self-  
importance, looking into the horizon with unbridled arrogance.

He sprays two squirts of Binaca into his mouth, then nods at  
his own picture in self-reverence.

INT. OPERATING ROOM AREA - DAY

A GROUP OF NURSES are circled round in the hallway drawing  
straws. A young, sweet-looking INDIAN NURSE looks confused.

INDIAN NURSE  
He's only twenty-one, how bad can he  
be?

NURSE #2  
Just pray for the long straw.

NURSE #3  
Remember that Doogie Howser kid on  
TV? Real cute, sweet and warm with  
patients?

INDIAN NURSE  
Yeah.

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