

ONCE WHEN YOU WERE MINE

Written by

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FADE IN:

INT. GROCERY STORE - PRESENT DAY

Standing in the snacks aisle, BUCKMAN SPIVEY leans on his mop and stares longingly offscreen. He's in his early twenties and in dire need of someone else to comb his own hair.

BUCKMAN
(in sotto)
Almonds are better for you.

The object of his affection is ELLIE ANDERSON. She's barely out of her teens and has noticeable BURNED SCAR TISSUE on the side of her face. She abruptly looks up from the bag of pistachios in her hand.

ELLIE
Excuse me?

Buckman is caught off-guard, slipping off his mop and out of his daydream-like state.

BUCKMAN
Huh? Oh, sorry - I didn't think I
said that out loud.

ELLIE
You said almonds are better for me?

Now blushing and hyperventilating, Buckman drowns in a world of social awkwardness. He stammers--

BUCKMAN
What? I - uh - yes - I mean... I've
heard that.

Ellie nods, turns back to her pistachios. Sweat beads run down Buckman's forehead as he searches for another opening--

BUCKMAN (CONT'D)
I know who you are.

ELLIE
You... do?

BUCKMAN
No.

And now she's a bit freaked out. Ellie puts her nuts back on the shelf and starts to walk away--

BUCKMAN (CONT'D)
I mean... I mow your lawn.

Ellie turns back, ponders--

ELLIE
You're my parents' gardener?

BUCKMAN
Uh huh.

She extends her hand, suddenly very comfortable.

ELLIE
Right - I've seen you. I'm Ellie.

Buckman shakes it awkwardly.

BUCKMAN
I'm Buckman.

ELLIE
How long have you worked for them?

BUCKMAN
Three months and nine days.

ELLIE
I just got back from college. On
Summer break--

BUCKMAN
--Two weeks ago. I know. I saw you
swimming.

Ellie stares into his soul. There's an innocent aloofness
about him and she seems to notice it.

ELLIE
Were you spying on me, Buckman?

BUCKMAN
What? No, no, no...

Ellie grins, smacks him in the shoulder--

ELLIE
Just kidding. Well... it was nice
meeting you. You better clean up
that salsa before it dries.

Sure enough, there's a big gunk of salsa on the floor
directly below Buckman. But rather than cleaning it up, he
watches Ellie walk away... completely and utterly smitten.

EXT. ANDERSON HOUSE - DAY

It's a bright Summer's day as an upper class house sits on an upper class plot of land. Money is spent well here.

In the backyard, Buckman straddles a riding LAWN MOWER and motors up a straight line toward the house. A SWIMMING POOL glistens in between them. Hedges in the shapes of ANIMALS pepper the landscape.

Up on the second floor, there's a balcony leading into what we hope is Ellie's bedroom, since she's currently in view and changing her clothes. Her bare back - and some more conspicuous SCARS - faces out as she sways to some music--

Buckman notices from the corner of his wide eye, then quickly looks down with guilt ridden on his face. He starts to breathe erratically again, until--

ELLIE (O.S.)

Buckman!

He looks up to see Ellie on the balcony, waving and wearing a skimpy two-piece bikini. He happily waves and relishes his momentary consensual show...

... and then PROMPTLY PLUNGES INTO THE SWIMMING POOL! Ellie gasps and rushes back into the house--

At the bottom of the pool, Buckman remains strapped into his mower. He actually looks calm, blinking at his surroundings.

A moment later, Ellie's arms wrap around him as she unbuckles him and then pulls him up to the surface...

... where he coughs his lungs free of chlorinated water. He lies on his back like a wet fish, while Ellie stares into his eyes, shaking her head.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

I don't want to assume... but was that my fault?

Buckman turns to her, regaining his color. He can't help but linger on how gorgeous she looks drenched.

BUCKMAN

What song were you listening to?

ELLIE

Song?

BUCKMAN

Yeah. You were dancing just now.

And now it's Ellie's turn to blush.

ELLIE
Oh, you saw that, huh? "Your
Wildest Dreams" by the Moody Blues.
It's my all time fave. You know it?

BUCKMAN
I don't think so.

Ellie starts to sing softly. It's absolutely serene, yet with a touch of sadness.

ELLIE
*"Once upon a time; once when you
were mine; I remember skies;
reflected in your eyes..."*

She notices the reflection of the clouds in Buckman's eyes and brushes away a lock of wet hair.

ELLIE (CONT'D)
*"I wonder where you are; I wonder
if you think about me; once upon a
time in your wildest dreams..."*

A single tear runs down Ellie's cheek as she grins sullenly.

BUCKMAN
Are you okay? What's the matter?

ELLIE
I'm fine.

Ellie brushes another lock of Buckman's hair and goes into deep thought--

ELLIE (CONT'D)
Who ARE you?

BUCKMAN
Buckman.

She laughs at his literal translation and abruptly stands--

ELLIE
I'll get you a towel.

BUCKMAN
Hey, Ellie...

ELLIE
Yeah?

BUCKMAN

Thanks for saving my life.

The statement seems to resonate with Ellie for a second.

ELLIE

Your life doesn't just belong to
you, Buckman.

They share a moment. Ellie turns and walks away. Buckman
leans back, content to stay forever. A light breeze nips at
his face as he takes in the tranquility, until--

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

What do you think? The next fifty
paychecks?

Buckman immediately sits to attention to find DR. R.G.
ANDERSON looming over him. He's in his fifties and born with
a silver spoon up his ass.

Standing next to him is a menacing looking man named ELIZONDO
PASTOR, and another with a perpetual sneer and long, slicked
back hair who we'll affectionately call CHARLEMAGNE.

BUCKMAN

Oh, Dr. Anderson! I didn't hear you
walk up!

DR. ANDERSON

So, how about it? You think your
next fifty paychecks will pay for
that mower you decided to go
fishing with?

BUCKMAN

Oh, yes sir! How ever much you
think it'll cost, sir!

ELIZONDO

I'd fire him... and make him pay
you back another way.

Buckman looks over at Elizondo, who has a stone cold face.

DR. ANDERSON

I would... but this guy's actually
an artist with my hedges. See those
penguins? He did those.

ELIZONDO

THIS guy?

DR. ANDERSON

I know. You couldn't tell it just by looking at him. And he's real cheap.

ELIZONDO

Not anymore.

Elizondo motions to the sunken lawn mower.

ELIZONDO (CONT'D)

Were you drunk? High? Maybe he got a hold of your supply, Doc?

DR. ANDERSON

No. Not Buckman. He's different.

Buckman remains silent, absolutely oblivious to the insults flying around. He looks over at Charlemagne, who squints and seems to study him with vehemence.

DR. ANDERSON (CONT'D)

Why don't you go home, Buckman? Come back next weekend.

BUCKMAN

Oh, yes sir. And I'm really sorry sir.

Buckman looks over at Charlemagne again, seems to get shivers down his spine. He then sprints across the lawn and around the house.

ELIZONDO

He's different?

DR. ANDERSON

Just a little slow.

Elizondo looks over at Charlemagne and shrugs--

ELIZONDO

He could still be high.

The men share a laugh, as they settle into lounge chairs.

Around the front of the house, Buckman reaches the drive way and grabs his BICYCLE. Ellie rushes out of the house--

ELLIE

Buckman! Your towel!

Buckman grabs the DISNEY BEACH TOWEL and starts frantically pedalling away. Ellie looks a little disheartened.

INT. BUCKMAN'S APARTMENT - DAY

Buckman sits in a beat up recliner, stationed in a sparse efficiency. All of the furniture looks like it was probably donated by Goodwill. The only sign of anything exciting is Buckman's own collection of artsy plants.

Though he's completely dry, Buckman snuggles with Ellie's towel like it was a Teddy bear. He's got the slightest grin.

INT. RECORD STORE - DAY

Buckman stands at the entrance of a vintage record store, mouth dropped to the spectacular vinyl inventory. A hip, older SALESMAN approaches--

SALESMAN

What'cha lookin for?

BUCKMAN

The Moody Blues.

SALESMAN

Right this way.

The Salesman leads Buckman over to the correct section. He points to the label that reads "MOODY BLUES, THE."

SALESMAN (CONT'D)

Know which album?

BUCKMAN

Album? No. Just want one song, really.

SALESMAN

Oh. Well, we don't have that many 45s. You may just have to buy the whole album. Which song?

BUCKMAN

"Your Wildest Dreams."

SALESMAN

Of course. I prefer "Nights in White Satin" myself. "Your Wildest Dreams" came off the "Other Side of Life" album, but you should just get the "Best of." Can't go wrong with that.

He procures the album and hands it over to Buckman, who stares curiously at the ancient relic.

EXT. ANDERSON HOUSE - NIGHT

Buckman stands in the middle of the lawn, looking up at the house. All of the lights are on inside, illuminating the entire backyard. He holds Ellie's towel and the RECORD.

Up in Ellie's bedroom, she's dancing again.

In the living room, Dr. Anderson sits on the couch watching the television as MRS. ANDERSON delivers a bowl of popcorn.

Buckman waves at Ellie every time she crosses the window. It takes several times for her to finally notice. Ellie turns to the glass balcony doors and spots the mysterious figure standing on the lawn. She slowly steps out and whispers--

ELLIE

Buckman?

BUCKMAN

Hi, Ellie. I brought back your towel in case you needed it.

Ellie giggles at his sincerity.

ELLIE

We have hundreds. You can keep it.

BUCKMAN

Oh. But I washed it already. And I used this powder stuff that made it smell like oranges.

Ellie shakes her head and rolls her eyes with a grin. She disappears back into the house. Buckman twists on his heels and looks over at the swimming pool--

Yep, the lawn mower is still inside.

Ellie reappears from the house and approaches him. She grabs the towel...

ELLIE

Like I said, you didn't have to.

... and then notices the Moody Blues album.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

Oh, hey! Look at what you got! Did you listen to it already?

BUCKMAN

No. I don't know how.

ELLIE

What do you mean? Don't you have a record player?

BUCKMAN

No. I don't think so.

ELLIE

Then why did you buy it, silly?

BUCKMAN

I thought I'd figure it out later.

Ellie laughs.

ELLIE

You're a funny guy. Why didn't you ring the doorbell? Kind of creepy you just standing out here.

BUCKMAN

I didn't know if your dad would be angry for using one of his towels.

Ellie raises the towel...

ELLIE

Not the same as a lawn mower.

... and tosses it behind her. Awkward silence. And then--

ELLIE (CONT'D)

Wanna go for a walk?

EXT. LAKESIDE - NIGHT

Buckman and Ellie walk around the edge of a lake. The moon light reflects off the slowly cascading water.

BUCKMAN

Were you dancing to the same song?

Ellie blushes again.

ELLIE

Yes. Lame, right? I just love that song. But I love to dance too. Sometimes I put on my black night gown and dance by myself. Makes me feel pretty.

BUCKMAN

You ARE pretty.

ELLIE

Aww, thanks. Even naked?

BUCKMAN

Huh? Oh - I didn't see anything last time. I missed it.

ELLIE

Were you disappointed?

BUCKMAN

No. I mean - yes! I mean--

Buckman's in a pickle. Ellie lets him off the hook--

ELLIE

It's okay if you were. I don't get many looks these days.

She smiles whimsically and shrugs.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

So if you missed it last time... would you like another chance?

Ellie starts to strip. Buckman's catatonic, stricken to silence. Once finished, she quickly dips into the lake.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

Are you gonna join me?

Without missing a beat, Buckman enters the lake...

... leaving every article of clothing on. Ellie can't help but laugh again.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

You're the oddest guy I've ever met. WHO are you?

BUCKMAN

Buckman.

Ellie puts her arms around Buckman and hovers her lips sensually close to his--

ELLIE

Well, Buckman... for some reason... this feels right to me. Like I was supposed to meet you at this moment... this moment of my life.

Buckman quivers at the closeness of her body. And lips.

BUCKMAN

When I saw you for the first time... I couldn't breathe.

ELLIE

And now?

BUCKMAN

My stomach feels funny.

ELLIE

Just relax...

They sway in silence for a moment. Ellie looks up at the night sky and the twinkling stars.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

This is my favorite part of life - seeing the stars. They twinkle like they're winking. And nothing can take that away from them. They're untouchable. You can't turn them off no matter how hard you try.

Buckman sees the sadness in her eyes. He lets her admire the stars for a moment longer, until--

BUCKMAN

What did you mean when you said my life doesn't just belong to me?

Ellie goes into deep thought--

ELLIE

Your life will always be important to the life of someone else's. Maybe not now, but later.

She looks deep into his eyes and smiles. It's magic.

EXT. ANDERSON HOUSE - NIGHT

Buckman and Ellie return to the backyard. He retrieves the towel and starts to dry off.

ELLIE

Keep the towel this time. See ya around, Buckman.

Ellie walks back into her house. Buckman remains, toweling off and waiting for her to reappear into her bedroom. When she does, she waves good-bye. Buckman reciprocates with a satisfied grin. But that quickly fades when he sees--

-- a TEAM OF MEN IN SKI MASKS bursting through the front door! Dr. and Mrs. Anderson spring up from the comfort of their couch and are immediately BEATEN DOWN!

On Buckman's side, it's completely silent, until one of the masked men pulls out a GUN...

... and FIRES ONE BULLET INTO EACH OF DR. AND MRS. ANDERSON'S TEMPLES! The shots muffle to the outside, but it's abundantly clear that they ring through the house...

... as Ellie's eyes widen within her bedroom. She looks back outside toward Buckman--

-- who immediately starts waving his arms and shaking his head, pointing to the first floor.

In the living room, a couple more men enter and survey the violent aftermath--

It's ELIZONDO and CHARLEMAGNE. Both of them are unmasked.

Buckman's eyes widen with more concern. He looks back up at Ellie, who seems to be listening at her closed bedroom door.

Suddenly--

The back door of the house opens and Charlemagne exits. He immediately sees Buckman standing in no man's land...

... and pulls out his own gun! But before Buckman can react--

A BULLET HITS HIS CHEST, FLOORING HIM INSTANTLY!

Buckman gags blood and looks up at Ellie's window, just in time to see several of the masked men burst into her room--

They throw her onto the bed and start BEATING HER, GROPING HER, HAVING THEIR SADISTIC WAY WITH HER!

BUCKMAN

Ellie...

Buckman reaches a hand out to her...

... and then closes his eyes to unconsciousness.

FADE TO BLACK.

A HEART MONITOR slowly BEEPS in total blackness. Ellie's voice reverberates a haunting helplessness--

ELLIE (V.O.)

Buckman...