

A BEAUTIFUL CONTENDER

Written by

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1 EXT. BEAUTY SUPPLY STORE - NIGHT

1

A nearly empty parking lot with a couple of cars sprinkled throughout sits without noise and without movement. If there was life here, it's hard to tell until a car, on its last legs, slowly pulls in and finds a parking spot right out front of the store.

The driver's side door attempts to open but gets stuck. A second attempt from the inside to open the door doesn't quite convince it to comply, but the third, almost barbaric, shove seems to get the door to cooperate and swing open.

LUCAS (in his thirties, tall and built) steps out and slams the door shut. He's well dressed: two piece suit, slim tie, polished shoes. Lucas walks up to the store and goes in.

2 INT. BEAUTY SUPPLY STORE - NIGHT

2

The isles are slim. Lucas is not. The one or two people in the store that find him blocking the way try, with varying levels of success, to pass by Lucas and his basket full of beauty supplies.

Lucas is looking through a selection of foundation trying to find one that matches his skin tone, using the samples and rubbing them on his hand. He's found it.

Lucas finds himself looking at some concealer and, again, tries to find just the right shade for him. He finds two that could work and weighs his options but the one labeled "20% off" quite handedly makes the selection for him.

Obviously he can't forget the mascara. That'd be a rookie mistake and this isn't his first round in the ring. He quickly pulls two or three tubes of mascara off the shelf and drops them into his basket.

Lucas makes his way to the front of the store and gets in line. There is one person (WOMAN 1) ahead of him asking (see: pleading) the CASHIER (female, mid-20s/early-30's) for some help. Cashier has no desire to help. None what-so-ever. *Fantastic...*

WOMAN 1

I mean, this is your job right? You work here? Shouldn't you be the one I ask for help?

CASHIER

(how little she cares...)
Sorry lady. If don't know, I don't know.

WOMAN 1

(angry)

"If I don't know, I don't--". It's eyeliner! Liquid eyeliner! Avon?!

(she pauses)

Nothing? Nothing at all?

LUCAS

(quiet)

Aisle seven.

Cashier and Woman 1 both turn to Lucas. It's dead silent. *Who the hell is this guy anyway?* Woman 1 is confused, but Cashier's "I don't give a shit" demeanor seems to be a permanent fixture etched on to her face.

LUCAS (CONT'D)

Next to the brushes and replacement wands. Aisle seven...

There's a pause.

Woman 1 collects herself and walks away. She's got better things to do anyway. Lucas places his basket on the counter.

Cashier takes out one item at a time and begins to scan each one. There is no conversation to be had. Cashier barely acknowledges Lucas' existence while Lucas is standing quietly, keeping to himself, listening to the rhythmic chimes of the scanner that acts as a substitute for a conversation.

Cashier finishes scanning. Took her long enough.

CASHIER

Total's \$29.45. Cash or cre-

LUCAS

Sorry. I have a coupon.

(he points the coupon on the counter)

I believe it's still valid...

Begrudgingly, she scans the coupon.

CASHIER

That's \$25.32. Cash or cre-

LUCAS

My frequent shopper's card.

(he holds the card up)

Should have some points on here.

From last time.

Seriously, dude? Begrudgingly, she takes the card and scans it.

She hands the card back and waits. *You got something else or are we good here?* Lucas shrugs, he's got nothing else.

CASHIER

That's \$21.97. Cash or credit?

LUCAS

Credit.

Lucas pays, gets a receipt. He walks towards the sliding doors and exits. The doors closing behind him.

3 INT. THE GYM, BATHROOM - NIGHT

3

Lucas is leaning over a sink with the water running. He's removed his jacket, tie, and shirt and is now just down to his undershirt and some shorts. He looks at himself in the mirror. It's almost as if, for the first time, he's found some sort of inner peace, whatever that may be. He's calm and slipping from reality until...KNOCK, KNOCK, KNOCK. He comes crashing back to the real world.

OWNER (O.S.)

You comin' or what?

LUCAS

Yeah. Gimme a sec.

Lucas washes his face. The water in the sink begins to discolor as he looks at himself in the mirror. Cuts and bruises start to form all over his face as the makeup he had on starts to wash away.

He truly sees himself for the first time. Brazen, unfounded confidence, the likes of which most of wish we had, he turns around and swings open the door. He's ready. He's been ready.

4 INT. THE GYM, THE RING - NIGHT

4

Lucas is in the center of an MMA style ring ready to fight an opponent. This is a gym, a glorified gym with all the overpriced personal trainers you could ask for, but a gym nonetheless. There is a decent size crowd left at the gym considering how late it is.

Lucas and his opponent (OPPONENT 1) exchange a handshake as OWNER steps into the ring addressing the crowd. The energy is electric.

OWNER

All right, all right. Got another hometown brawl going on tonight, but as always we do the checklist. Make sure everyone's on the up and up. Number one. This is a gym. This is MY gym. So you break something, I sue you. Number two, you or your opponent get hurt in anyway, you don't sue me. And third, I'm doing everyone here a kindness turning a blind eye to your little fight club. That said, if your check don't clear then you are violating the terms and services of this gym and guess what?

The crowd grows restless. *Jesus...We've heard this before!*

CROWD

(general murmuring)
You'll sue! We know...

OWNER

For damages, pain and suffering,
and the \$30 bounced check fee.

The owner puts his hand in the middle of the ring. Lucas and Opponent 1 places their hands on top. Air's getting thin, heart beating in their throat. It's time.

OWNER (CONT'D)

Ready?

Absolutely they're ready! The two in the ring nod. Owner steps out.

OWNER (CONT'D)

All right then. Have at it.

Lucas and Opponent 1 waste no time exchanging blows. Lucas' face is a magnet if we've ever seen one, but he's good for it. Takes 'em like champ. He turns it around with some well placed kicks and punches. These hit land like someone's got a grudge that they just doesn't want to talk about quite yet. But it doesn't quite matter. His opponent throws a few more solid hits and Lucas drops. The crowd erupts as Owner enters the ring and checks on Lucas who is starting to get up off the ground. He's good. No one's getting sued tonight.

Owner turns his attention to the crowd.

OWNER (CONT'D)

Got ourselves a winner!

The crowd continues to cheer as we hear: DING DING DING. The chiming of a bell.

5 INT. LUCAS' HOME, BEDROOM - THE NEXT DAY 5

BRING BRING BRING. The chiming of an alarm clock is blaring. And it keeps going. And going still. *When's he going to get up?* Lucas jolts awake and turns the alarm off. He lays in bed for a long moment before he gets up and starts to walk to his bathroom.

6 INT. LUCAS' HOME, BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS 6

Lucas looks in the mirror and, man, does he look ROUGH! Cuts and bruises all crowd his face. Each one looking worse than the last.

He reaches for the plastic bag where all of his beauty supplies were put in last night and dumps them out on the counter next to his sink. He fishes for some of the makeup and begins to cover up his bruises and cuts.

7 INT. LUCAS' DAY JOB, CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY 7

Lucas seems ready for work. Well dressed, cuts and bruises perfectly concealed but...Lucas is staring blankly, bored out of his mind. *God, he hates this.* He's in his own world until he is rudely confronted with reality. Around him he sees that several other people (all men) are sitting around the conference table he's at including ROSA (30's, female) and NICK (30s, male. Asshole).

NICK

Lucas! Out in space again?

LUCAS

(coming to)

Sorry. Yeah, I'm here.

A beat.

NICK

(condescending)

C'mon little man, you've got yourself a presentation to present.

Excuse me? "Little man?" Lucas gets up and stands in front of the room. A projector displaying business related documents mainly pertaining to software development lights up the screen. All looking just as boring as the last.

LUCAS

Well. As you can see from the last release, there are clear deficiencies in the product. None more critical than the lack of a fail-over for a downed server. We tend to experience heavy loads during our peak hours, naturally, but can't handle the load at capacity.

(he points to something on the display)

Here is where I think we need to increase stability with a few more servers that can--

NICK

(Clearly no attention was paid to Lucas)

Hold on, hold on. Sorry. Let me stop you right there. We're getting a little short on time here and I'll be honest, I just don't know what you're saying. All I know is I have a product to sell and you broke that product. So, in simple terms, why don't you explain it again?

LUCAS

(annoyed, reserved)

I didn't break the product and in simple terms...if there are too many people the software goes down.

NICK

See! There you go! That's just all you gotta fix.

LUCAS

(professionalism slipping...)

Right, which is why we are having the meeting to discuss what possible--

NICK

(to the others at the table)

I think it's a good time for lunch now, huh? Thai?

LUCAS
 (under his breath,
 annoyed)
 And apparently I'm done...

NICK
 (to Lucas)
 You're done? Fantastic.

LUCAS
 No. I just--

NICK
 Why don't we head on out now then?

Everyone starts to get up and leave except for Lucas.

NICK (CONT'D)
 How 'bout you stay here Lucas and
 rework that a bit, yeah?

Everyone starts to leave and Nick stops and turns to Rosa.

NICK (CONT'D)
 (dismissive)
 Why don't you stay and help him?

ROSA
 (hurt)
 Oh...

They all leave. Rosa turns around and takes a seat at the table.

There is a long silence. Lucas is fuming as he takes his seat by his computer. Rosa looks to break the silence.

ROSA (CONT'D)
 Hi. I'm Rosa.

Lucas doesn't respond.

ROSA (CONT'D)
 From marketing?

Lucas pulls himself together. He doesn't mean to be rude it's just...man, Nick is an asshole...

LUCAS
 Hi. Hello. I'm not trying to be
 rude it's just--

ROSA

I have no way of helping? I know.
He, uh... just didn't want me to go
with them I think. Actually, I know
he didn't.

Lucas doesn't know what to say, doesn't respond. He turns his
attention back to his computer.

ROSA (CONT'D)

You're quite. I did this marketing
seminar once. They said the best
way to get a customer speaking was
to get them talking about
themselves. It's the subject they
know the most about.
(she hesitates)
How do you like it here?

Lucas breaks his attention away from his computer and looks
over at Rosa and considers the question. ...How do I like it
here...? As if hearing the words for the first time...

- 8 INT. THE GYM, THE RING - NIGHT 8
- Lucas has taken a hard blow to the face and hits the ground.
The crowd winces and cheers. He gets up only to be struck
again, hitting the ground. He keeps trying to get up and the
hits just keep raining down. Lucas can't ever quite find his
footing as the crowd keeps up the enthusiasm. It's not
glamours. It's not even respectable. It's...just embarrassing
actually.
- 9 INT. LUCAS' HOME, BEDROOM - THE NEXT DAY 9
- Lucas lays in bed as the sound of his alarm fills the room.
He shuts it off. Eventually. Lucas gets up and walks to his
bathroom
- 10 INT. LUCAS' HOME, BATHROOM - DAY 10
- Lucas looks in the mirror. He's battered and bruised again.
He fishes for some makeup and starts to make himself
presentable.
- 11 INT. LUCAS' DAY JOB, CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY 11
- Just like the before, the conference table is filled with
everyone including Lucas(in his work suit), Rosa and Nick.
Lucas' makeup isn't quite doing it this time.

We can barely see a bruise and a cut coming through. Lucas is up in the middle of the presentation. No one is interested except Rosa. She's paying full attention which is surprising because it's God-awful boring.

LUCAS

...barring any unforeseen server cost incurred by AWS, deploying an array of T2-micros behind a load balancer should suffice for preliminary tests and--

He's cut off. Lucas has to calm himself immediately. *Are you kidding me right now?!*

NICK

Right, right, right! Good! Better even! The best I've seen you do. Still not great though. Not good enough. But you know, I think we should all take lunch, yeah?

(he address everyone else in the room)

Mexican? New place around the corner? Anyone up for tacos?

Everyone gets up to leave, including Rosa, but Lucas just stands there dumfounded.

NICK (CONT'D)

(to Lucas)

Why don't you stay and see what you can do about making this one a little bit more up to our standards, you know?

(to Rosa, patronizing)

He told me you really helped out on this one. See if you can bring him any further okay, hun?

Rosa sits back down. *"Hun?"* The rest start to leave.

NICK (CONT'D)

(as he's leaving)

You know I heard that place is good. Bet it's a Mexican restaurant with actual Mexicans! Someone get Jose. One of 'em's gotta be his cousin, right? Think he could get us a discount if we bring 'im along this time?

Rosa and Lucas are the only two left in the room. It's silent for a moment as Lucas goes to sit down by his computer at the table.

LUCAS
I didn't tell him--

ROSA
I know. And don't worry about missing Mexican. There isn't a Mexican restaurant. It's Cuban.
(a pause)
Don't let him get to you.

LUCAS
I have an outlet. Don't worry.

This, for a moment, peaks Rosa's attention. An "outlet" huh?

Lucas begins to type away at his computer.

ROSA
Never told me how you got here.

LUCAS
Went to school like was told to do, got the degree I was told to get, found the job I was told I should have. Pretty cut and dry really.

ROSA
If you don't like it, why are you doing it?

Lucas stops and considers the question.

LUCAS
Never said I didn't like it.

Bullshit. Rosa doesn't by that for a second.

LUCAS (CONT'D)
What else am I supposed to do?

12 INT. THE GYM, THE RING - NIGHT

12

Lucas is on the floor of the ring propping himself up, spitting out blood. He gets up and returns a few bunches only to get laid out yet again. It's not an elegant loss.

13 INT. LUCAS' HOME, BEDROOM - THE NEXT DAY 13

Lucas is in bed and, guess what, his alarm is going off again. He lays there even longer than before. Not even sure if he's getting up this time...

14 INT. LUCAS' HOME, BATHROOM - DAY 14

Lucas is really beat up, worse than ever. He starts to put makeup on but as he picks up different containers some are empty and he tosses them to the side. He's running out. Not good.

15 INT. LUCAS' DAY JOB, CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY 15

Lucas is standing at the front of the room as everyone is getting up to leave, Rosa included. Lucas' makeup is doing even less than before, bruises and cuts really starting to show through.

NICK

(to Lucas)

Almost, buddy, almost!

(to Rosa)

You do that thing you do okay,
girl?

Of course... Rosa takes her seat but it's pretty obvious she new this was coming. Nick and his crew exits. Lucas just stands there at the front of the room while Rosa looks directly at him, anticipating conversation.

LUCAS

"Girl"?

ROSA

It's fine.

LUCAS

Is it?

It's clearly not fine. There is a staleness in the air. The two stop for a moment thinking about both of their situations.

ROSA

If he could have it any other way I
wouldn't be on his team.

(MORE)

ROSA (CONT'D)

But HR thought my role here is better served with him so he can learn how to "appreciate and interact" with the women of the office since he's gotten so many complaints. Not a day goes by where he doesn't gripe about how I'm a distraction to the rest of the team.

(she points to Lucas,
helpful)

...you're dripping blood on the floor.

The irony... Lucas wipes his face and tries to compose himself.

ROSA (CONT'D)

Sometimes. Things just aren't fair.

LUCAS

Doesn't mean it's okay.

ROSA

We both get walked on all the same. At some point you have to make a decision. Do you live the life that someone laid out for you because it's easier? Or do you take a chance and deal with the consequence later? Not sure I've decided yet.

They get silent again. An idea pops into Lucas' head.

LUCAS

Do you like sci-fi? There's that new movie out.

ROSA

Intergalactic Space Wars III?

LUCAS

(awkward)

Yeah. Do...Do you want go with me?

There's another pause.

ROSA

(genuinely sorry)

Oh. I...I have a girlfriend...

LUCAS

Oh...

Another pause.

ROSA
If you don't want to go anymore I--

LUCAS
No. No, we should go. It's a good movie. So I hear.

ROSA
Great. Good. I'll bring her. My girlfriend. If that's fine I mean.

LUCAS
I'm sure she's great.

Another pause. It's pretty awkward but at this point he can't really go anywhere but up, right?

LUCAS (CONT'D)
(sincere, hopeful)
Do you want to be friends?

Rosa considers the questions happily. *Yes, you dork.* The awkwardness seems to dissipate.

- 16 INT. THE UNDERGROUND, THE RING - NIGHT 16
Lucas throws a wide, hard punch dropping his opponent to the floor. He throws his arms up in celebration. It's a hard earned, seldom-found victory.
- 17 INT. LUCAS' HOME, BEDROOM - THE NEXT DAY 17
He's in bed. The alarm rings. He lays in bed for a long time. The longest he's laid there yet.
- 18 INT. LUCAS' HOME, BATHROOM - DAY 18
His face is torn to high-hell. Cuts, bruises, gashes, the whole nine. He goes to put on some makeup and realizes he's totally out but he just...doesn't care...
He turns around, walks out of the bathroom.
- 19 INT. LUCAS' DAY JOB, CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY 19
Lucas is at the front of the room again giving a presentation. He has clearly hit his wits-end.

He's dressed nice and professional as usual, but his face is SO TORN UP. Everyone seems to be staring in shock at Lucas.

LUCAS

(annoyed and just done
with everything and
everyone)

And...then...with the services
provided by our...uh...third-party
clients we can--

NICK

You know what, Luke? I think...

The words start to fade away. Lucas hears nothing Nick is saying. All he can hear is his impending breaking point, the sound of white noise and the pounding of a drum.

ROSA (V.O.)

At some point you have to make a
decision. Do you live the life that
someone laid out for you because
it's easier? Or do you take a
chance and deal with the
consequence later?

NICK

Luke? Lucas? You there buddy?

Lucas snaps back. Nick has his hand on Lucas' shoulder and is patting him on the chest like he's his best friend. They totally aren't. Like. At all.

Nick begins to snap in Lucas' face.

NICK (CONT'D)

(laughing to himself)

There he is! Welcome back, buddy!
We missed you! Were'd you go this
time, huh?

There is a long pause. Lucas finally turns his head and locks eyes with Nick. And as clear and as calm as he can be...

LUCAS

I fucking hate you.

CRACK! Lucas launches a full-body, full-weighted, well deserved punch square in Nick's face knocking him unceremoniously to the ground. Everyone gets up out of their seat to get a better look out of concern. One or two come around to help Nick up off the floor. Rosa though. Rosa stays seated and can't help but relish the moment. *You deserved this, jerk.*

Lucas stands up front for a moment and then walks, calmly, out of the room as if nothing had happened.

It's silent. The weight of the situation is crushing.

NICK
(PISSSED!!)
Well, someone go bring his ass back here!

No one moves except to look at Rosa in a "well why aren't you getting him" manner. Rosa gets up, she hesitates, reading the room, and then quickly leaves going after Lucas.

20 INT. LUCAS' DAY JOB, HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS 20

Rosa finds herself out in the hallway several yards away from Lucas who turns around at the sound of footsteps. The two look at each other for a moment, no one making a move.

21 EXT. BEAUTY SUPPLY STORE - NIGHT 21

The parking lot is dead as usual until the rattling of Lucas' car comes barreling in and finds a parking spot.

The passenger door attempts to open but it proves just as stubborn as the driver door. After a few solid attempts the door opens and Rosa steps out.

ROSA
It'll be just a second.

22 INT. BEAUTY SUPPLY STORE - NIGHT 22

Rosa walks up to the counter where Woman 1 is, yet again, attempting to get service from Cashier. Cashier is, yet again, as unhelpful as she can possibly be.

WOMAN 1
For the love of...You can't be the only person who works here!

CASHIER
Be rather unlikely wouldn't it?

WOMAN 1
(a pause)
Well are you going to get someone else?

Cashier sees Rosa and for the first time she smiles. It's almost weird because it wasn't until this moment we even thought she had the capacity to smile. She turns back to Woman 1 and the smile is gone faster than it came. She leaves from behind the counter and walks to Rosa.

CASHIER
(to Woman 1)
I'm leaving.

WOMAN 1
Excuse me?! Are you kidding?!

Cashier and Rosa start to walk out the store.

CASHIER
Quit your job?

ROSA
Yeah. Walked out. Want to catch a movie? Brought a friend from work. I think you'll like him.

CASHIER
Doubtful.

ROSA
Be nice.

CASHIER
Aren't I always?

The two exit the store leaving Woman 1 all by herself.

WOMAN 1
Seriously?!

END