

Self-Destruction

By

Melissa Schrag

Registered WGA

(816) 799-2242

INT. CHURCH - CHAPEL - EVENING

Heavy BREATHING reverberates around the chapel, echoing off the walls decorated in CROSSES and other RELIGIOUS INSIGNIA. In the middle of the room stands ELLIE, 25, terror etched across her face.

Limp, dead BODIES are scattered across the floor, piled across one another. BLOOD seeps from beneath them. It reaches the pews, staining the bottoms of their legs. The bell CHIMES three times.

A door SQUEAKS open from the back left corner of the room. From it emerges a PRIEST. His robe is pressed with prayer beads hanging around his neck. He stops when he sees the bodies on the floor. Nothing about his demeanor changes except the wide smile that crosses his face.

PRIEST
You've done well, my child.

Ellie drops a BLOODIED KNIFE. She starts crying.

ELLIE
(hesitant)
Father John... please... I-I don't
think this was the right choice.

The priest, FATHER JOHN, walks towards her and grabs her shoulders, forcing her to meet his eyes.

FATHER JOHN
The Lord told me a purge was necessary
to keep His great green earth alive.
You did the Lord's work, Ell. Be proud
of yourself.

He wiped a SPLATTER OF BLOOD from her cheek, placing a soft kiss on the top of her head. She slowly backs away from him, visibly shaking.

ELLIE
No, Father. That didn't feel like
God's work.

She looks down at her hands as they shake violently. She begins hyperventilating and starts SCREAMING. Father John gives backs away with his arms spread wide, this time with a maniacal grin.

FATHER JOHN
(jubilantly)
You've done it! It's time for the next
phase of our plan!

Police sirens WAIL in the distance.

ELLIE
What have you done to me, Father? What
did you make me do?!

He doesn't respond. Instead, he grabs the prayer beads tightly and brings the cross up to his lips to kiss them. Ellie shakes her head vigorously before bolting out the door to run as far away as possible.

EXT. COLORADO FOREST - NIGHT

Ellie's feet SLAM into thick mud, propelling her forward into the darkness. Red and blue LIGHTS twirl faintly behind her. The moon barely lights the path through the tall, thick grass and into the dense forest in front of her.

Crickets CHIRP. Cicadas BUZZ in the trees. She HUFFS with exhaustion, hair flying behind her, catching LEAVES and TWIGS with every leap over FALLEN BRANCHES and through THICK BRUSH. Rain begins to PELT her wind-blown, splotchy red face.

The rain washes away the blood that stuck to her skin, but it can't get rid of the stains on her "Jesus Loves You" TANK TOP.

Thunder RUMBLES above. Lightning CRACKS a tree in half, catching it on fire. Ellie's face turns to one of fright. The police sirens are long forgotten deep in the woods. The BARKING and SNARLING of K-9 DOGS replace them in a much more immediate chase.

Ahead is a steep drop off with raging waters below. Ellie stops and whips around, frozen in fear at the quickly-approaching SILHOUETTES of policemen and their German Shepherds.

OFFICER 1
(faintly)
Stop right there! Hands in the air!

Ellie bounces on her toes anxiously. The RIPPLE behind reminds her that there is only one way out.

OFFICER 2
On your knees, now!

She can see the dogs now. They strain against the COLLARS and LEASHES holding them back. Saliva drizzles from their jaws, teeth bared ferociously. It is now or never.

OFFICER 1
(panicked)
Wait, don't--!

Ellie kicks up mud as she turns and jumps off the edge of the cliff, soaring towards the deep, murky river below.

EXT. COLORADO FOREST - RIVER - NIGHT

Everything is MUTED underwater - sounds, colors, even movements. Ellie struggles to keep her eyes open against the current. She fights to find footing but ends up slicing the bottom of her left foot on a ROCK at the bottom of the raging river. She opens her mouth to scream but instead gets a mouthful of water.

EXT. COLORADO FOREST - NIGHT

Officer 1, Cole, peers over the edge of the cliff. His dog sniffs around, searching for Ellie.

COLE
Looks like she jumped.

Officer 2, LARRY, nods in response.

LARRY
Should we look downriver? She might end up onshore.

Cole GRUNTS, agreeing.

COLE
Let's call for backup in case she makes it down there before us by some miracle.

The two officers walk back through the forest, leaving the area in their CRUISERS with the dogs.

EXT. COLORADO RIVER BANK - MORNING

Ellie GROANS as she opens her eyes. Gravel digs into her head, forcing her to sit up and look around. The forest is in

the distance. The water LAPS at the shore, a false sense of calm emitting from the sun reflecting off the surface.

ELLIE
(quietly to herself)
Where am I...?

The scene is a stark contrast from the day before. She takes the time to cry softly, folding in on herself into a seated fetal position.

COLE (O.S.)
Put your hands in the air!

Ellie's body goes rigid as his voice BOOMS from the SPEAKER on the cruiser. She squeezes her eyes shut and slowly raises her arms. In almost an instant, her hands are in cuffs and she's pulled up to stand. Larry shoves her towards the police cruiser.

LARRY
Got anything to say for yourself, kid?

He pushes her head down to get into the car.

INT. POLICE CRUISER - DAY

She looks up at him with teary eyes.

ELLIE
Tell my momma I'm sorry. I...
(sniffles)
... I only wanted to serve God.

Larry nods solemnly and purses his lips. He SLAMS the door in her face, and he and Cole take their spots in the front of the car. Cole turns to look at her from the passenger seat as Larry starts driving.

COLE
Ellie, I don't know why you did it,
but--

ELLIE
Father John told me I was helping God.
But he lied!

Cole shook his head sadly.

COLE
You decided that on your own. He only

asked you to pray about it.

ELLIE

He's a liar!

Larry interjects from the front seat.

LARRY

Save it for the judge. You'll need it
for how long you're getting locked up.

Ellie begins to cry again. The situation is hopeless.