

THE LAST QUEEN

by

Tim Macy

FADE IN:

EXT. WHEAT FIELD - EARLY MORNING (A FICTION)

Flying along past thousands of acres of golden wheat, not one sign of man. Not a road, not a fire, not a footprint.

NEFF (V.O.)

(a young woman's voice)

"It's difficult to say how the Last Queen of this land came to be. No one knew her mother or father. No one saw her as a child.

PAN UP to reveal a marvelous castle atop a hill. No defensive walls, just wood, earth and stone molded together into a perfect home at the peak of a small hill in the center of this absolute quiet.

The LAST QUEEN (late 20s, hair magnificently intertwined and falling down her back, dressed in sharp blue, one or two steps out of the pages of a fairy tale), stands on her balcony, smiling, listening to the CALMING WIND. She is a part of the serenity, maybe even the cause.

NEFF (V.O.) (CONT'D)

"One day her castle was not there, the next day it stood made of stone, as if it had always been there.

Close in on her face... closer... closer... until all that can be seen are her blue eyes and the earth and wheat calmly reflecting within them.

Destroying the serenity: There is a SCREAM. In the distance she sees faint lights... orange and red, ominous, judging by her reaction, still very far away.

The once peaceful blue eyes JOLT.

CUT TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY - EVENING (A REALITY)

The SCREAM becomes the SCREAMING of tires as a blue Toyota Celica spins out of control on a highway in the rain, ending with a violent SLAM into a DITCH, tipping over on its side.

The windshield SPLINTERS from the INSIDE. RAIN pours down onto the exposed, hot engine beneath the bent hood. Each drop evaporates as it hits, STEAM rising.

INT. WRECKED CELICA - CONTINUOUS

NEFF (late 20s, the same woman as the Queen without all the dressing) lifts her bloodied head and looks into the field beside her. There is an ABANDONED HOUSE there. Something from the turn of the 20th century, stone and wood, four stories high.

Through her foggy vision she sees a SHADOW move on the highest balcony. On second glance, nothing.

Now she looks into her rearview mirror.

Through Neff's POV: (likely suffering from a concussion) A few red and orange LIGHTS glow in the far away distance, similar to the red and orange lights from the fiction.

NEFF (V.O.)
 "How she came about is a mystery.
 How she ceased to be is the story."

She loses consciousness.

CUT TO:

INT. PUBLIC LIBRARY - DAY - ONE WEEK LATER

Neff, a slept-in ponytail crooked down her back, jeans, t-shirt, a butterfly BANDAGE on her forehead covering a mostly healed GASH, sits alone at a table in the corner of this small library, handwritten pages and sketches of fairy tale type characters spread all around.

A nearby WOMAN reads a fairy tale to a few YOUNG KIDS sitting on a red mat. It's Story Time in the library. Neff turns her head and watches.

WOMAN
 You see children? The wolf dressed
 up as the grandmother.

Some of the kids look frightened by the picture.

WOMAN (CONT'D)
 It's okay. Why is it okay?

SOME OF THE CHILDREN
 Because it's only pretend.

WOMAN
 That's right.

Neff gathers up her papers to leave.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

LIVINGSTON WELLS (late 20s, tall and thin with an academic distance to him) stands among a handful of MOURNERS as they disperse from a burial.

JUNIPER (35, Livingston's sister, neat black dress, even neater eye shadow and a tight bun of hair where she stores her excess anger and frustration) looks more at Livingston than she does at the casket.

MRS. MUNCHEK (60s) approaches Livingston. She puts her hand on his arm.

MRS. MUNCHEK
Will you be okay Livingston?

LIVINGSTON
(too quickly)
Yes.

MRS. MUNCHEK
You should consider coming to
services on Wednesday night...
You'll feel better.

He forces a polite smile and steps away from her.

Juniper leans across him, takes the woman's hand in both of hers and smiles a big, warm smile.

JUNIPER
Thank you so much for your concern
Mrs. Munchek. We're struggling
with this of course but he had such
a wonderful life and we're
cherishing those memories.

This puts the woman at ease.

LIVINGSTON
(quietly)
Your speech writer put that
together for you?

Juniper ignores him, keeps perfect eye contact with Mrs. Munchek.

JUNIPER
He's hurting...

MRS. MUNCHEK

Of course.

(beat)

Good luck in the election.

JUNIPER

(smiles)

Thank you!

Livingston walks toward his parked pickup truck.

He sees, in the older part of the cemetery, alone, Neff walking with a notebook and pen in hand, kneeling to read the faded headstones.

By the way he looks at her, she means something to him.

EXT. TUT'S SUPERMARKET - DAY

Not a Walmart but not a Mom and Pop joint either, somewhere in between. Twenty cars in the lot, shopping carts rolling along in the wind.

A group of DAY LABORERS, Hispanic men, young and old, sit in the back of their truck, waiting for offers of employment.

Neff gets out of her blue Toyota Celica, the same one she wrecked, a crack still splintering through the front windshield. She waves at the laborers who smile. Her bandage is gone, her forehead completely healed.

INT. TUT'S SUPERMARKET - DAY

The store is sparsely filled with SHOPPERS. They look miserable. No one talks to anyone. No smiles or laughter. Just people living dull lives. People who have forgotten how to enjoy something as simple as shopping for groceries.

Neff, a cashier, stands at her register, no one in her line. She writes a letter, trying to get the wording just so.

NEFF

(reading it back)

"Dear Wyndham Publishing... I'm writing to tell you about a children's book I have written entitled The Last Queen..."

TODD (45, the supermarket manager) walks up behind her. He flips on the light for her aisle.

TODD
(friendly, smiling)
Now you're open for business!

Neff smiles at him. He looks down at her letter.

TODD (CONT'D)
School work?

She doesn't want to talk about it with him.

NEFF
Sort of...

TODD
Not trying to get my job are you?

Neff looks at his paper thin shirt, the sweat beading on his neck and ears and his black polished tennis shoes pretending to be dress shoes.

NEFF
Never...

He takes it as a compliment.

TODD
I'm only teasing.
(dead serious)
Tut's has a comprehensive management training program. It's two weekends in Des Moines but they put you up at a Best Western and give you a ten dollar a day meal per diem. Paid vacation really.

NEFF
I'll think about it.

TODD
You seem like the kind of girl who wants to *be somebody*.

She WINCES and puts her fingers to her temples.

TODD (CONT'D)
You alright?

NEFF
Still a little achy from my accident.

TODD
If you need to go home...

NEFF

I'll live.

He looks on as she rubs her temples. For some very immature men this might be sensuous. She stops rubbing when she sees his lips part unconsciously.

TODD

(quickly)

Do you have plans Sunday morning?

NEFF

No, I can come in. Somebody sick?

TODD

I was going to see if you'd like to come to church with me?

NEFF

Oh... You mean *this* Sunday?

She thinks hard for an excuse.

LATER...

Neff scans items and bags them while reading a children's book... all at the same time. The only person in line is a POLICE OFFICER, very short in stature.

OFFICER

(re: children's book)

That's my kid's favorite. I've read him the scene where the giant catches them in his palm a thousand times.

NEFF

I love that part.

He swipes his card.

NEFF (CONT'D)

Debit or credit?

OFFICER

Debit.

NEFF

Enter your pin... cash back?

When the Officer finishes, Livingston steps up with a basket of groceries. Neff smiles at him but doesn't really look at him. He opens his mouth to talk to her...

to say something meaningful, but ANOTHER CASHIER taps Neff out for a break before he can speak.

EXT. POST OFFICE - DAY

SARAH (late 20s, dyed black hair with one streak of blonde, a few last letters of a quote tattoo emerging from her shirt collar) holds a fistful of packages near the mail drop. She is having serious second thoughts.

Neff gets out of Sarah's car and forcibly releases Sarah's fingers. The packages drop in.

NEFF

Feels good right? You are now officially waiting on the world to respond to your art.

SARAH

Nobody even gets my pictures.

NEFF

I love your work!

SARAH

What about you?

Neff takes one envelope out of her back pocket.

SARAH (CONT'D)

One letter? Where's your children's book?

NEFF

That's not how it works. First you query then you send the manuscript. Besides, I'm still... tinkering with the story.

Neff drops the letter into the mailbox.

SARAH

Look at us!

NEFF

Practically working artists.

EXT. WELLS FARM - EVENING

Livingston stands at the front door of a farmhouse in the center of a field of wheat, watching as it blows.

INT. WELLS FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

Livingston lies on the couch, the TV playing the History Channel. Fake Roman soldiers reenact an historical battle.

Juniper cleans the already clean kitchen.

JUNIPER

I'm sick with worry about what you're going to do. You got dad's farm... it's worth half a million easy with all the equipment and the reputation.

LIVINGSTON

Yeah?

JUNIPER

You can't be trusted! I know you. You're going to wait two days and then find a real estate agent, sell this place for the first low-ball figure anyone throws at you and go off on some cockeyed adventure with the dough until it runs out.

LIVINGSTON

You think that's what I'll do?

JUNIPER

That's what you did with the money you got when mom died?

LIVINGSTON

I went to college.

JUNIPER

We're farmers! Mom, Dad, me... my husband... grandma and grandpa!

LIVINGSTON

You're a City Councilwoman.

JUNIPER

Not yet! Not yet. Please don't say it with such assertion because people will hear it and assume I have it in the bag and not go vote. Same thing happened with Reagan in '84.

He looks around as if to say "who will hear me?"

She sits next to him.

JUNIPER (CONT'D)
Stay on the farm. Be a farmer!

He tries not to laugh.

JUNIPER (CONT'D)
You could look up that girl from
high school. The one you used to
write all those poems about... Did
you ever give those to her?

Livingston thinks about those poems, that love.

LIVINGSTON
I threw them out.

JUNIPER
Then sell it to me. It'll give me
the biggest crop in the county.
That means something to the people
around here.

This is what she really came here to say.

LIVINGSTON
For how much?

EXT. TRAILER PARK - NIGHT

Not the greatest or the worst trailer park in the Midwest.
Hundreds of units separated by a few feet in every direction
are planted in the middle of a field.

EXT. CASTLE - NIGHT (A FICTION)

The Queen stands on her balcony, now in a red dress.

NEFF (V.O.)
"Her story begins with her demise.
She ruled a peaceful and prosperous
land... guiding her subjects
mercifully and tenderly... a mother
to them all. She was the first to
see the torches in the distance,
mysteriously riding through long
nights to eradicate her from
history."

GLOWING TORCHES appear on the horizon, closing in quickly on her castle. They are not here in peace. The queen's face changes. She grabs her temples and folds over.

CUT TO:

INT. NEFF'S TRAILER - NIGHT

This place is a shoebox. You could touch both walls with your fingertips if so inclined. There are pictures of Neff and her PARENTS on the walls, a young and loving couple. There are also DISTORTED PICTURES of Neff and Sarah and others, tricks of light and photo finishing to make the people within them appear CELESTIAL. Sarah's art.

Along the walls are bookshelves overfilled with tall, slender children's books and big thick ones. Hundreds of them.

The bathroom is tiny. The door is open. Inside Neff holds her temples and heaves over the toilet. SCREAMING IN PAIN.

INT. NEFF'S BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Neff kneels next to the toilet, holding her head in her hands, rocking back and forth.

Neff's POV: Burning red spots in every direction she looks like the red flames in the distance of the castle.

INT. TOWN HALL - EVENING

Juniper stands at a podium directly opposite COUNCILMAN BROWN (50s, conservative in appearance, not a natural smiler). A CROWD OF TWENTY mostly older people sit in folding chairs.

There is no moderator at this debate.

Livingston watches from the back row. The Officer from before stands in the back as crowd control.

COUNCILMAN BROWN

My opponent has zero years of experience. She has lots of big ideas but I know what happens to big ideas. They become big disappointments and big money wasters.

He nods to Juniper.

JUNIPER

I respectfully disagree. New ideas formed our very town. When our town's founder, Mary Wutherford, made camp here in 1817 because she heard a voice telling her to do it... that was a pretty radical idea. But look what happened? They had water. The crops grew. They... we... flourished.

A hand raises in the front row. It's Mrs. Munchek.

JUNIPER (CONT'D)

Mrs. Munchek.

She stands to ask her question.

MRS. MUNCHEK

On that subject... What about the statue in City Park of Mary Wutherford? It's dirty and cracked and needs repaired.

JUNIPER

The statue...

COUNCILMAN BROWN

I believe I have first retort.

Juniper stops. They take this quite serious.

COUNCILMAN BROWN (CONT'D)

It's a beautiful old statue but the fact is that no one sees it down there. It'd cost too much to repair it just so it could be damaged again the next time the river floods.

JUNIPER

I completely disagree. Mary Wutherford was a strong woman...

COUNCILMAN BROWN

(raising his voice)

Where do you propose we get the funds to do that kind of restoration?

JUNIPER

Perhaps we could go back to the...

She looks at her notes.

JUNIPER (CONT'D)
 (raising her voice)
 Third question of the evening
 concerning allocations of city's
 semi-annual grain profit
 allotment...

Livingston has heard all he can stand. He gets up and walks out, Juniper notices but does her best not to show it.

JUNIPER (CONT'D)
 (takes a deep breath)
 Does posterity mean nothing to the
 Councilman?

COUNCILMAN BROWN
 People take posterity too far. If
 you commemorated every important
 person and moment with a statue or
 a plaque you couldn't drive down
 the street without smashing into
 ghosts. We have to be practical.
 We have to move forward.

INT. HOSPITAL - MORNING

Neff, in a hospital bed, medicated, tries to keep her eyes open as the television plays the History Channel. Pictures of the Giant Sphinx flash across the screen but the words are too distorted in her foggy mind to hear anything.

LATER...

Neff, awake, listens to her doctor speaking as he points to a CT-Scan of her brain.

Sarah has squeezed into the bed next to Neff though there isn't enough space to be comfortable.

DOCTOR
 There's no easy way to say this...

SARAH
 We need to get a second opinion.

DOCTOR
 I recommend a second opinion in
 cases like these.
 (beat)
 Neff, you have a small...
incredibly small subdural hematoma.

Before Neff can respond.

SARAH
What is that?

DOCTOR
A tear resulting in a collection of
blood in the brain.

SARAH
How'd it get there?

DOCTOR
A small... very small tear in a
blood vessel. It's hard to be
certain because we can't get a good
look at it... and it's in a place
that we just can't reach, not
without...

NEFF
Killing me.

The Doctor sits down.

DOCTOR
Have you had any blunt trauma to
the head in the past few weeks?

NEFF
I wrecked my car on Highway 10.
Hit my head into the glass.

DOCTOR
That could be it.

NEFF
They said I was okay.

DOCTOR
It's small enough, they could've
easily missed it.
(beat)
In time, that small tear will
become a big one and when that
happens it will kill you within a
matter of a few days.

Neff and Sarah are in shock.

NEFF
How much time?

DOCTOR
 Could be three months. We have
 counsellors on call for this kind
 of thing.

SARAH
 It's not a hundred percent though?!

He doesn't respond.

INT. SARAH'S CAR - DAY

Sarah cries as she drives.

SARAH
 Talk to me Neff!

NEFF
 (eerily calm)
 What am I supposed to say?

SARAH
 You don't have to say anything...
 but isn't there something you want
 to say?

Sarah looks at her. A dog trots out in front of the car.

NEFF
 Look out!

Sarah dodges the animal. The car veers violently toward a
 ditch but Sarah regains control as the back tires fishtail.

SARAH
 Jesus! Are you okay?

Neff gazes out the back window of the car.

NEFF
 That's almost exactly where I
 crashed my Celica.

The huge abandoned house in the field is clearer in the
 daylight. Ivy grows along the outside. The windows are
 boarded over. No one on the balcony.

NEFF (CONT'D)
 (still looking back)
 I guess that's where I died,
 technically.

SARAH
Put your seat belt on at least!

Neff buckles in.

NEFF
It's like putting on your seat belt
in the electric chair.

SARAH
It's not a hundred percent!

NEFF
Ordering a pizza right before you
blow your brains out.

EXT. NEFF'S TRAILER - DAY

Neff gets out of Sarah's car.

SARAH
I should come in with you.

NEFF
I just want to be alone.

She goes inside, the screen door SLAMS behind her.

EXT. WELLS FARM - EVENING

Livingston walks out of the front door of the house, letting
the screen door SLAM behind him. He walks straight into the
wheat field with a metal detector and a shovel.

INT. NEFF'S BEDROOM - DAY

A tiny bedroom. She lies in her bed, covers up to her neck.

A KNOCK at the door. She doesn't budge. Moments later, a
knock at her bedroom window.

SARAH (O.S.)
Neff! Neff you have to let me
inside! At least let me know
you're okay!

She remains still.

EXT. FIELD - NIGHT

Livingston, near hills and a nearby stream, has found what he was looking for. The metal detector WHISTLES its alert.

He takes his shovel and strikes it into the earth. Again and again he hits the same spot hard, throwing loose dirt behind him until he hits something metal with a sharp PING!

CUT TO:

INT. NEFF'S TRAILER - DAY

Shades drawn. Absolute black inside.

The small and insecure front door to the trailer snaps open with a sharp PING. A beam of light zips into the darkness, illuminating a heavenly picture of Neff on the wall.

The Police Officer stands outside with Sarah.

POLICE OFFICER
(calling out)
Ms. DeLeon?

He stands outside. Sarah blows past him.

SARAH
Neff?!

POLICE OFFICER
We should wait...

Sarah yanks up a shade. The room lights up.

Neff comes walking out of the bathroom. She looks like she's been crying for days, not eating, not getting any sunlight.

POLICE OFFICER (CONT'D)
I'm sorry... your friend here
thought...

SARAH
You wouldn't answer me! Are you
okay?!

Neff looks at her broken lock.

NEFF
Come in.

INT. NEFF'S TRAILER - LATER THAT NIGHT

Neff sits on the couch with Sarah. There are three empty bottles of wine on the coffee table.

SARAH

Can we please talk about this?

NEFF

What can we say?

(beat)

The minute you die, I stop existing.

SARAH

When *I* die?

NEFF

You'll be the only person to remember me in forty years. Got no family... If your parents hadn't taken me in when I was a little girl I would have been lost in the system.

SARAH

People know you. People love you!

NEFF

People nod at me. People recognize me from Tut's but don't remember me or my name.

SARAH

That isn't true.

Neff puts her head in Sarah's lap.

NEFF

Once you exit the collective conscience of the world then that's when you really die. Memory and soul, vanquished. Like you were never here.

SARAH

Then I'll keep you around as long as I can. I'll go door to door telling people about you if I have to. Showing them your picture.

NEFF

I want more than that. I want to
be remembered for a million
years... through wars and famines
and space exploration... until the
sun starts to flicker and gray old
mankind lies down to make her exit.
Then I'll go quietly.

(beat)

What can I do to leave that kind of
mark on humanity?

INT. TUT'S SUPERMARKET - DAY

Neff scans groceries. There is a long line of morose
shoppers watching her, tired from their jobs, their lives.

If ever there was a moment that lacked magic, this is it.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

Neff walks down a long hallway, low ceilings, corners getting
tighter with every turn. She doesn't like these enclosed
spaces. She takes deep breaths and does her best to not
touch the walls to keep from feeling trapped.

She looks at a hand-written slip of paper with a call number.
She looks down another long row of books, the light flickers.

SOON AFTER...

The LIBRARIAN emerges with a tattered old copy of Grimm's
Fairy Tales and gives it to Neff, waiting in the open air and
sunlight.

LIBRARIAN

No one reads these old stories
anymore. Now all the kids want are
vampires.

NEFF

These stories remind me of being
young. Full of life...

The Librarian, an older woman, scoffs at her.

LIBRARIAN

You've got plenty of life ahead of
you. I'm jealous of you.

Neff gives her a sweet smile.

INT. TUT'S SUPERMARKET - EVENING

Neff reads from the book. She closes her eyes.

EXT. CITY WALL - EVENING (A FICTION)

A village filled with people dressed in clothes from a thousand years ago. The Last Queen stands at the only gate, hundreds of SOLDIERS and CITIZENS lined up behind her.

In the distance are the same torches, the same orange and red ominous lights, closer now than before.

NEFF (V.O.)

She had fallen from the sky. In broad daylight she had drifted down and landed in the center of their world, speaking in a voice that calmed. A voice that caused the long dormant crops to come up above the ground, as if hoping to sneak a glance at the new queen.

(beat)

Though she had no king and no need for one, a man did appear soon after the lights began marching toward her. A protector.

The gate opens, it splits in the middle. Standing there is a GALLANT MAN, his eyes find hers.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. TUT'S SUPERMARKET - CONTINUOUS

When the automatic doors split down the center, Livingston enters through them. Their eyes meet briefly.

LATER...

Livingston waits behind two other SHOPPERS in Neff's line, despite the other register with no line at all.

LATER...

Neff scans Livingston's items. He looks at her, sneaks glances. He sees her book.

LIVINGSTON

You like Fairy Tales?

NEFF

I do.

LIVINGSTON

Me too.

She offers a quick smile.

NEFF

Credit or debit?

LIVINGSTON

Debit.

He enters his code.

LIVINGSTON (CONT'D)

Do you remember me at all?

Livingston... Wells...

NEFF

You moved away after high school...

LIVINGSTON

I went out of state for college.

Been there... roughly a decade.

(beat)

I come back every couple of years.

Usually come through your line at
least three times...

NEFF

Did you finish?

LIVINGSTON

College? Yeah.

The machine spits out his receipt. She puts it in his bag
and pushes it toward him.

NEFF

That's great.

Their transaction is over. He can't let it end this way.

LIVINGSTON

I saw you... the other day... at
the cemetery. You must have some
old relatives to be out in that
section of the graves.

NEFF

Oh... no. I don't know any of
them.

This is where most people smile and walk away. He waits, wanting to hear more, fully engaged.

Surprised, she continues.

NEFF (CONT'D)

This is gonna sound dark but I like to walk around and read the dates and the names. They had better names back then. Edson and Florine. Some of them don't have names at all. Just Baby Johnson... they didn't name them until they were sure they were going to live.

LIVINGSTON

Really?

He maintains full eye contact.

NEFF

It's fascinating to see when they died. Some die at nineteen and others at eight and it never gives the reason. Sometimes you can guess... when the whole family dies on the same day... Probably a fire. Or when the kids all die in the same year... epidemic, Small Pox or something. But the ones who died in 1874 at age three... they're history is just gone. No one anywhere could tell you what happened to them... too much time has passed. And when their names fade from those headstones... that's it for them.

(she's talking too much)

What were you doing out there?

LIVINGSTON

My dad died. That's why I'm home.

NEFF

I'm sorry.

Livingston looks like he might walk away, but he just can't bring himself to end the conversation.

LIVINGSTON

He left me his farm but I'm not a farmer. Trying to decide what to do.

NEFF

Sounds like a problem.

LIVINGSTON

I'm sure some people have worse problems.

NEFF

Yeah.

She's projecting a certain coldness now. He gets it.

He picks up his groceries.

LIVINGSTON

I guess I'll see you around.

She smiles politely at him and picks up her book.

He stops, his groceries in hand.

LIVINGSTON (CONT'D)

Real quick... I'm probably going to sell my farm this week and then leave town... forever. I wanted to tell you that I don't need these groceries.

NEFF

No?

LIVINGSTON

No.

NEFF

Then why are you here?

LIVINGSTON

I wanted to tell you that I loved you from the minute I saw you in the fourth grade, when my family moved here. That I moved to the other side of the country for college because I hated seeing you and your boyfriend all through high school... and that, in ten years time, I haven't stopped feeling this way.

Neff has nothing to say to that.

LIVINGSTON (CONT'D)

Do you think you'd want to hang out for a little while.

(MORE)

LIVINGSTON (CONT'D)

Maybe if I got to know you better this would go away and I wouldn't think about you anymore. That perfect image that I've built in my mind, like a Neff statue, could maybe be torn down if we had dinner and you were rude or dumb... or both.

NEFF

I get off in an hour.

He wasn't expecting that.

LIVINGSTON

Great. I'll pick you up.

She smiles. He leaves.

INT. OLIVE GARDEN - NIGHT

SINATRA plays on a loop. Neff sits across from Livingston, not sure why she's there but there all the same.

LIVINGSTON

Tell me something about yourself. Something I don't already know.

NEFF

What do you know?

LIVINGSTON

Your parents died when we were in the fifth grade. I remember you changed after that.

NEFF

Wouldn't you?

LIVINGSTON

I'm still finding out.

NEFF

(changes the subject)

What'd you go to school for anyway?

LIVINGSTON

Archaeology. Egyptology.

NEFF

Seriously? I've read a dozen books on the pharaohs.

LIVINGSTON

I thought you only read fairy tales.

NEFF

Cleopatra, Nefertiti, Hatshepsut... they're similar to fairy tales. Beautiful women sent from the gods to live among their people and guide them... ending in tragedy.

LIVINGSTON

I'm thinking maybe I'll sell my dad's farm to sponsor a dig. Maybe you could ask for some time off at Tut's?

NEFF

A second date in the Valley of the Kings?

LIVINGSTON

Too forward?

NEFF

Any other day it would be.

LIVINGSTON

Would you want to go?

NEFF

More than anything.

LIVINGSTON

Feels like a yes...

NEFF

(putting it all out there)
I crashed my car a few weeks ago. Because of that... I have a leak in my brain that's going to kill me soon. I've done zero with my life. No kids, no real love... no contributions.

That stops him in his tracks.

LIVINGSTON

For real?

She nods. The color vacuums out of his face. He looks the doctor just told *him* that he was going to die tomorrow.

LIVINGSTON (CONT'D)
Then why are we at the Olive
Garden?

EXT. FIELD - NIGHT

Livingston and Neff sit in the bed of his truck. He shines a big flashlight at the beginning of his excavation from before. Exposed is the entrance to a submerged bunker.

NEFF
What is that?

LIVINGSTON
My grandfather put that there when everyone thought the Russians were coming.

NEFF
You found it by accident?

LIVINGSTON
No... I knew it was around here somewhere. My father used to talk about it but he'd never let me dig for it. He used to say "the ground is there to grow food, not dig around in." So... I figured he isn't here to tell me not to anymore.

NEFF
What's in there?

LIVINGSTON
I haven't had the nerve to go in yet.

Neff gets out and walks to the entrance. He follows.

LIVINGSTON (CONT'D)
Grandpa disappeared one winter night in 1978... no trace of him.

NEFF
You serious? That really happened?

She takes a step back from the bunker... which has just become a coffin in her eyes.

LIVINGSTON
Yes... but then they found him in
Vegas weeks later remarried with a
kid on the way.

INT. BUNKER - NIGHT

Total blackness.

Rusty metal GRINDS as...

A lip of moonlight disrupts the blackness. More light and
even more... until Neff and Livingston stand at the top,
their flashlight pouring in from above like great explorers.

LIVINGSTON
You want to go first?

NEFF
Not really.

Livingston climbs down. Once the inside is filled with
light, Neff joins him. She isn't comfortable here.

NEFF (CONT'D)
I don't love enclosed, dark spaces.

LIVINGSTON
It's perfectly safe.

NEFF
How long since anyone set foot in
here?

Against the walls are two ancient cannons and a score of
cannonballs that have been left to rot.

He picks up a magazine on a rack filled with rusted canned
food. He looks at the date.

LIVINGSTON
March 14th, 1969.

NEFF
Forty years?

He holds the magazine out. It's a "nudist" magazine.

LIVINGSTON
Good old grandpa. He liked to
restore Civil War artillery and he
liked to look at the naked ladies.
Usually at the same time.

He moves the light around in the darkness. A few dirty mattresses are stacked against the wall.

NEFF

We're not exactly Howard Carter.

LIVINGSTON

We are not.

NEFF

I like to think about that first moment when he cracked Tut's tomb... the first glimpse he caught of all that gold and history.

Neff sits on one of the mattresses. Tears come into her eyes. Livingston sits next to her.

LIVINGSTON

Anything I can say here?

NEFF

No.

TREES RUSTLE outside. Neff startles.

LIVINGSTON

You scared?

Playfully, he turns off the light.

NEFF

Turn it back on!

He does.

LIVINGSTON

Sorry... thought it might be a quirky thing to do... might lead to a kiss.

She kisses him.

NEFF

I don't have time for games and I hate the dark.

The girl of his dreams just kissed him. He's shaken.

LIVINGSTON

You should know I'm leaving in a couple of days. My sister's buying the place... should fund a small dig.

She smiles.

NEFF

Do you really think I'm looking for
long-term?

EXT. NEFF'S TRAILER - MORNING

Neff sits in a chair outside enjoying the sunlight as if she has already started the countdown. People who walk by take an extra look at her... to the point where she begins to feel self-conscious. It's a small town, people know everything.

She looks down at a letter from Wyndham Publishing. She takes a deep breath and opens it. Her reaction tells everything. It's disappointing.

NEFF

Once again immortality eludes me.

INT. TUT'S SUPERMARKET - MORNING

Neff stands at her checkout lane.

RALPH (55, kindly and completely disarming) puts a loaf of bread down on her belt.

RALPH

Hello.

Neff smiles at him, scans the bread and puts it into a bag.

NEFF

Two-fifteen.

He gives her a five dollar bill.

NEFF (CONT'D)

Out of five.

She gives him his change.

RALPH

You're Neff right?

NEFF

Do I know you?

RALPH

I heard you were sick.

NEFF

You too?! Well... you and about a hundred other nosey assholes in this town. Why are you talking to me about this? Are you my doctor? Are you a doctor or just some morbid sightseer who wants to know what a dying person looks like?!

Ralph has taken two steps away from her.

RALPH

I'm also sick... Some of *us* have a very low-key meeting at the public library on Wednesday nights... in Conference Room B.

NEFF

Us?

RALPH

We're all fatal... three of us. It's nice. Not the dying. But sharing. Make you feel less alone.

Ralph takes his bread and walks out.

Todd walks up to Neff as soon as she's free.

TODD

Neff.

NEFF

Todd.

TODD

You okay? I heard you might be... sick.

Obviously, he has heard the whole truth.

NEFF

I'm fine.

TODD

My offer still stands for this Sunday morning... or any Sunday morning.

(beat)

Now more than ever.

Thankfully, a customer comes into her lane.

NEFF
Paper or plastic?

INT. TRAILER BEDROOM - LATE NIGHT

Neff and Livingston lie in bed together, fully clothed, staring up at the ceiling.

NEFF
You didn't seem to grieve much for your father.

LIVINGSTON
In my own way.

NEFF
When people have mere days to live they don't appreciate enigmatic conversation. We have to flip to the last page.

Livingston lets the words come together in his mouth.

LIVINGSTON
My sister cried and talked about it. I built him a heaven.

Neff sits up, looks at him.

NEFF
You what?

LIVINGSTON
You ever heard of Star Registry? You get to name a star anything you want for thirty bucks... less if you name five or more.
(beat)
I named two-hundred, all clustered together, where he can hang out if he so chooses.

NEFF
What'd you name these stars?

LIVINGSTON
One's named after my mother. Another after the dog we had growing up... everything he loved in life. They're all up there.

NEFF
They can't tear down that monument.

She puts her head on his chest.

NEFF (CONT'D)

What do you think you'll remember about me... when I'm gone?

LIVINGSTON

Your smile. Your eyes. Your soft fingertips... your DNA.

NEFF

I want to be more than all that.

LIVINGSTON

Like what? Tell me what you want me to remember and I'll do it.

NEFF

I've been writing this children's book for the last couple of years.

LIVINGSTON

Why a children's book?

NEFF

The last and best memory I have of my parents is of both of them sitting on my bed, reading me a fairy tale. I was six years old and I believed every word of it.

LIVINGSTON

What's yours about?

NEFF

A woman who falls from the heavens to save the people in a small village.

LIVINGSTON

Is it finished?

NEFF

More or less. I've been changing it around a little... always having new ideas.

LIVINGSTON

Would you read it to me?

Neff gets up and takes a stack of handwritten pages from her bookshelf. She climbs back into bed with him and reads.

NEFF

It's called The Last Queen.

She clears her throat. She reads reluctantly, most likely reading this story for the first time aloud.

NEFF (CONT'D)

"It's difficult to say how the Last Queen of this land came to be. No one knew her mother or father. No one saw her as a child."

LIVINGSTON

Wait... does it have a sad ending? I don't know if I want to hear it if it has a sad ending. Not tonight.

NEFF

You want me to ruin it for you?

LIVINGSTON

Yeah.

NEFF

At the end, after a small battle that includes cannons and magic... the people who love her come together and bury her in a secret tomb beneath a pyramid... filled with the story of what she did here for future generations to uncover.

(beat)

Proof.

LIVINGSTON

Empirical proof of a miracle to give the future some spark of hope.

(beat)

My life would be infinitely better if there was a video of Christ rising from the dead two thousand years ago. Even if it was a fake.

NEFF

Maybe you could do that for me then? Bury me in a secret tomb beneath a pyramid? Hidden proof that the Last Queen was real... not just some story.

LIVINGSTON

You're the Last Queen?

NEFF

Why not?

Why not?

LIVINGSTON

If you want me to I will.

She laughs. He does not.

Livingston gets closer to her. He looks at the sketches that go with the words as they share the same pillow.

LIVINGSTON (CONT'D)

I'm ready to hear more.

With less reluctance, she continues.

NEFF

"One day her castle was not there,
the next day it stood made of
stone, as if it had always been
there.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOME DEPOT - DAY

Livingston walks out of the store pushing a dolly with several serious tools, drills, lights, extension cords, etc.

The Day Laborers linger now near this store. He approaches them. They have a brief and inaudible dialogue before the men jump in his truck and he drives away.

NEFF (V.O.)

"She did not exist on a throne in a
distant land. She lived among them
and they would do anything for her
as she would for them.

INT. DARK ROOM - NIGHT

Sarah's pictures of local people are hanging all over the room. The light around their faces and bodies has been altered to make them appear angelic... other-wordly. She's talented.

Panning slowly through the pictures.

NEFF (V.O.)

"She fell to give them proof of something greater... something more than the misery and loneliness they felt each day.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Juniper walks from house to house knocking on doors. She's dressed smartly and her big smile stands in contradiction to the cold countenances that greet her.

NEFF (V.O.)

"Not everyone loved her, not from the start. She went from person to person, telling them what she wanted to do for them... how she wanted to make their lives better."

INT. PUBLIC LIBRARY - CONFERENCE ROOM B - WEDNESDAY NIGHT

Ralph, LYNN (40s) and TOBY (20s) sit around a small table with coffee and Krispy Kreme donuts.

Neff opens the door.

RALPH

Neff... I'm glad you came. This is Lynn and Toby, my name is Ralph.

NEFF

Hello.

She takes a seat.

LYNN

What have you got?

NEFF

(nervously)

A tear in a blood vessel... in my brain. Inoperable.

LYNN

I meant what did you bring?

RALPH

I didn't tell her to bring anything.

LYNN
Everyone usually brings something.
I brought the donuts, Toby got the
coffee...

TOBY
I have a missing heart chamber. I
could go at any time.

NEFF
Sorry... for both things.

LYNN TOBY
Next time. No problem.
They all look at her.

RALPH
We've heard each other's stories.

NEFF
I should say something?

RALPH
If you're comfortable.

NEFF
I'm Nefertiti DeLeon... I'm twenty-
seven...

TOBY
You have a boyfriend?

NEFF
No.

LYNN
I don't either.

TOBY
We know.

LYNN
You start to make a list of things
you don't have because you never
will given that your time is
officially at an end.

TOBY
(quietly)
Stop it .

LYNN
No boyfriend. No husband. No
wedding. No anything.

Neff looks around at these sad, miserable people.

LYNN (CONT'D)
Next time you should bring
something sweet.

INT. SARAH'S CAR - NIGHT

Neff and Sarah drive down the road.

NEFF
(mocking Lynn)
No boyfriend... no wedding... no
bachelorette party...

SARAH
This sounds like the worst night
ever!

NEFF
It was so depressing! I thought
it'd be cathartic or
inspirational... they have no
business congregating with their
negative energy. I mean... what's
the purpose of that?

SARAH
Who says you can't have those
things anyway?

NEFF
Well... even if I can't... who the
hell wants to sit around listing
things they don't get to have?

SARAH
You *can* have it all!

NEFF
I can?

SARAH
What comes first? Bachelorette
party right? Done.

NEFF
I don't even have a fiance!

SARAH
Who cares?!

She turns her car around sharply in the road.

NEFF
Where are we going?

SARAH
Liquor store.

EXT. NEFF'S TRAILER - NIGHT

PARTY NOISES emanate from the trailer.

INT. PUBLIC LIBRARY - DAY

Livingston sits at a table near Story Time, all the kids back on that red mat as the Reader tells them about the Three Little Bears.

He has a table full of books about Egypt and pyramids. He makes notes as he goes through them.

INT. NEFF'S TRAILER - DAY

Neff, surrounded by a GROUP OF ACQUAINTANCES, looks at THIRTY CANDLES on a sheet cake.

She sees the same ominous lights again in place of the candles... glowing in the distance.

She blows out the candles.

LATER...

Neff and Sarah stand next to a pile of presents.

NEFF
I'm so embarrassed that they brought me presents.

SARAH
It's your birthday. Isn't that what friends do?

NEFF
I don't know half of these people.

SARAH

Sure you do. We went to high school with most of them.

NEFF

I haven't talked to them in ten years. And it's *not* my birthday. Do they even know that?

SARAH

I explained it to them.

Neff looks around at very sympathetic glances.

NEFF

They all know I'm dying?

SARAH

They already knew. Come on! You're thirty! Next week you're turning forty... your prime is slipping away. Start enjoying it.

She thrusts a present into Neff's hands. Everyone watches as she unwraps it.

NEFF

Wrinkle cream...

She smiles, tries to look happy about it.

WOMAN AT PARTY

You start to get crow's feet around thirty. Happened to my older sister.

NEFF

Thanks...

EXT. NEFF'S TRAILER - ONE HOUR LATER

Livingston pulls up in his truck, which is completely covered in mud and has several dents that weren't there days ago.

Neff sits on her front stoop with her story and a pen. She smiles when she sees him.

NEFF

I thought you were leaving town with your fat bank account? Going to have some Indiana Jones adventures?

LIVINGSTON
Changed my mind.

NEFF
Changed your mind about all that
money?

LIVINGSTON
Yeah.

He sits down next to her.

LIVINGSTON (CONT'D)
Writing?

NEFF
I had a couple of new thoughts...
some good changes I think.

He looks through her living room window and sees the women.

LIVINGSTON
Having a party?

NEFF
I'm thirty today.

LIVINGSTON
Happy birthday.

He grabs both of her hands and pulls her up onto her feet.

LIVINGSTON (CONT'D)
Come with me. I have one last
present for you.

NEFF
Leave my own party?

LIVINGSTON
Yeah.

NEFF
What happened to your truck?

LIVINGSTON
Been farming...

EXT. FOREST - EVENING

Livingston drives slowly down a poorly kept path. Limbs
SCRAPE against the side of his truck and SLAP into the
windshield.

INT. LIVINGSTON'S TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

Neff has no idea where he's taking her.

NEFF

You want to give me a hint?

LIVINGSTON

You know in your story... when you say that the Last Queen fell from the heavens?

NEFF

Yeah...

LIVINGSTON

The ancient Egyptians believed that pharaohs were gods. The pharaohs believed it too... that they were representatives of the gods here on earth.

They barely trudge through a patch of thick mud.

NEFF

Okay?

LIVINGSTON

You said you wanted to be like the woman in your story... you wanted her history to be your own.

NEFF

(embarrassed)

I thought maybe you'd forget that part of the night.

LIVINGSTON

I've been dreaming about laying in the same bed as you since I was twelve years old. I can tell you every detail of that night.

NEFF

I don't understand...

The trees clear. Livingston's truck comes to a stop.

EXT. CLEARING - CONTINUOUS

In the middle of a clearing is a HOLE. A big, empty hole. Big enough to bury something huge, not deep enough yet, but there is a handful of LABORERS working with shovels and a backhoe and picks, attacking the dirt, going deeper.

The men all stop and wave as Livingston and Neff get out.

NEFF

What are they doing here?

LIVINGSTON

On the last page you said that he takes her to a secret tomb, to lie in waiting for the future to find her and learn about her.

She looks again at the hole, this time getting it.

NEFF

You're going to build me a tomb?

LIVINGSTON

Dig it, build it, create it, bury it. Yes.

NEFF

You can't...

LIVINGSTON

(quite serious)

You asked me to.

NEFF

I asked you... Livingston... I had been drinking and it was a nice moment but... How much is all of this costing you?

LIVINGSTON

Who cares? I've been waiting for you to ask me to do *anything* for the last twenty years.

She turns again to the dent in the earth.

LIVINGSTON (CONT'D)

I've already been approved on a loan against the equity of my dad's farm. It's enough to rent the equipment, pay the workers... haul in stones from the quarry down south... spend the time.

(MORE)

LIVINGSTON (CONT'D)
I've dug these things up.
(not completely confident)
I think I know how to build one.

NEFF
Like a *tomb*, tomb?

LIVINGSTON
The pyramid and everything.
Nothing too big, but big enough. I
figure we'll have it deep enough by
the end of the week to get started
on the foundation. It should be
easier because we're working down
into a hole, not building up like
they were.

NEFF
And I'll be under it?

LIVINGSTON
In an airtight steel box about the
size of my living room.

NEFF
The bomb shelter?

LIVINGSTON
We're going to move it. Should be
a hell of a project.

Neff looks at the laborers.

NEFF
Do they know?

LIVINGSTON
Not yet. So far they think it's a
big swimming hole. I'll have to
tell them something else...
eventually.

Neff tries to decide what question of the fifty in her head
she wants to ask him first.

NEFF
Who's to say anyone would ever find
it?

He puts his hand over her mouth and calls for them to shut
off the backhoe, for everyone to stand perfectly still.

LIVINGSTON
Listen... Do you hear that.

A faint sound of WATER RUNNING.

NEFF

Is that a river?

LIVINGSTON

Technically, it's a stream.

He walks with her to the top of a hill. When they get to the top he points to a CURVING STREAM a few hundred yards away.

LIVINGSTON (CONT'D)

In the past two hundred years, since they started keeping topographical maps of this area, this stream has bent that way, a few inches only. It used to run there, now it runs over there. That bend will continue until the end of time itself, assuming the water source holds out... which it should, at least for ten thousand years.

NEFF

Ten thousand?

LIVINGSTON

You've got to figure, with all of this technology and record-keeping, you need a wide berth. You need to leave ample space for the inevitable destruction of computers and libraries... things that would only serve to negate our... *your* story.

NEFF

So in ten thousand years this stream's going to be over here.

LIVINGSTON

Washing away the topsoil above your tomb... leaving some man-made objects exposed once it's passed. Your tomb will then be ready to be explored.

NEFF

They'll think that I... or the Last Queen...

LIVINGSTON

Who's to say the Egyptians didn't
do the same thing with Tut? Maybe
it's all a big story.

She looks back at the men as they dig. She's falling in love
with the idea.

LIVINGSTON (CONT'D)

The past is nothing but a
storyteller for the future.
They're our little children, all
tucked in up to their necks, ready
to believe whatever we tell them.

EXT. CITY PARK - EVENING

Sarah takes pictures of Neff sitting on a swing, the browning
grass in the background, children playing nearby. A lovely
Rose Garden also in the background, still alive and blooming.

Near them is the STATUE of Mary Wutherford, her name faintly
printed at the base, her body cracked and stained from past
rising waters... her eyes staring down at them.

Sarah takes picture after picture of Neff.

NEFF

You never wanted to take so many
pictures before.

SARAH

You look extra pretty today.

NEFF

No I don't.

SARAH

Sure you do.

NEFF

Have you heard back from any of the
magazines where you submitted?

SARAH

Every last one.

NEFF

Nothing?

SARAH

It's okay. I'm not in it for the
recognition.

NEFF

One day millions of people will see
your work.

SARAH

You think so?

NEFF

I feel it.

Sarah takes a few more shots of Neff.

NEFF (CONT'D)

I know what you're doing.

SARAH

What am I doing?

NEFF

You're trying to preserve me... You
think these frozen moments in time
will somehow let you keep your
grasp on me when I slip away.

Sarah puts her camera down. She sits on a swing.

SARAH

Quit talking like it's a definite
thing. It's not a hundred percent.

NEFF

I went to another specialist,
Sarah. She didn't know how I was
even alive right now. It's
happening. It will happen soon.

This is tough news for Sarah.

SARAH

I know that I don't have any right
to...

NEFF

Grieve?

SARAH

Shit, Neff!

NEFF

You're biding your time until I'm
out of earshot and then you're
going to break down... right?
That's your plan?

She's got it right.

SARAH

I can't grieve now. That's not fair to you. You're the one who's dying... you don't need me wrecking your last time here.

NEFF

Grieve! It's okay. I don't mind.

SARAH

What the hell happened to you anyway? A week ago you had the gallows humor and now you're some type of serene existentialist.

NEFF

I feel okay about it.

SARAH

How?

NEFF

I came up with a solution.

SARAH

You gonna cheat death now?

NEFF

In my own way.

Neff isn't going to tell her more. The two women swing, Sarah snaps another shot.

FREEZE on the STILL PHOTO:

Neff's upper half. Her white cotton blouse and humble smile with a backdrop of a setting sun and roses.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. SARAH'S DARK ROOM - NIGHT

Sarah hangs that picture on her line to dry. With the finishing effects, Neff looks like she stepped out of a fairy tale.

INT. FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

Livingston carves letters into a slab of stone with a power drill on his carpeted living room floor, covered with a plastic tarp. He chips away at the rock, creating three equal-sized sections. It is tedious work.

EXT. FARM - MORNING

Juniper drives slowly past the field, spying on her brother's progress as a farmer. She stops her car, gets out with a sign that says JUNIPER HARBOUGH FOR CITY COUNCIL. She plants it by the side of the road before yanking up a handful of dried wheat, crushing it in her palm and letting it blow away.

Her face is a hybrid of disappointment and anger.

INT. LIVINGSTON'S TRUCK - DAY

Neff drives Livingston down a rough path, through trees and forest until the truck can go no farther.

NEFF

We have to walk it from here.

LIVINGSTON

How far is it?

NEFF

Less than a mile.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Neff and Livingston each lug one end of the heavy stone, now with words carved into each of the three separate areas.

NEFF

Tell me again why we're doing this?

LIVINGSTON

The tomb will be discovered in thousands of years. And when that happens, archaeologists, or whoever they have at that time, will expect to find other remnants of your reign nearby.

NEFF

But why all the writing?

LIVINGSTON
They won't speak English.

NEFF
How can you be so sure?

LIVINGSTON
It would be entirely unprecedented.
Languages don't live that long. It
may be a long-evolved version of
English but it would sound like
Farsi to you and me.

They stop walking. Neff sets her end down.

LIVINGSTON (CONT'D)
Where is it?

Neff pushes back tree limbs to reveal the entrance to a cave.

NEFF
My boyfriend in high school showed
me this place. Told me no one else
knew about it.

LIVINGSTON
Adam Dowery. I hated that guy.

NEFF
What'd he ever do to you?

LIVINGSTON
Mocked me relentlessly. Made fun
of my clothes, my body, my
vocabulary... Stole my girl.

NEFF
Me?

LIVINGSTON
Yeah.

NEFF
You didn't exactly ask me out.

LIVINGSTON
In my own subtle way.

She picks up her end to carry into the cave.

LIVINGSTON (CONT'D)
Where is Adam now?

NEFF

Died in a motorcycle accident two years after graduation.

LIVINGSTON

(ouch)

Oh...

NEFF

There's a memorial plaque for him at the high school. Main hallway, outside of the principal's office.

LIVINGSTON

That's nice.

NEFF

It's crooked and dusty and no one ever bothers to read it.

EXT. CAVE ENTRANCE - LATER

Neff takes deep, erratic breaths beside the cave entrance, the heavy tablet sitting beside them.

LIVINGSTON

It's okay. I can get it...

He tries to pick it up by himself. He can barely move it.

NEFF

No... I just need a second.

She works up her confidence and lifts her half.

INT. CAVE - DARKNESS

Neff and Livingston crouch down as low as they can go while still carrying the heavy stone between them.

They reach the end of a long corridor, blocked by an enormous stalactite. Livingston holds a small flashlight in his mouth to guide the way.

NEFF

(panicky)

Now what?

LIVINGSTON

Now we bury it.

NEFF

In here?

Livingston sets it down and spreads dirt over the top.

LIVINGSTON

Eventually water will come into this cave... from a flood or a new river... or a new ocean. We don't want any spelunkers to stumble onto it before then.

She stops him from covering it.

NEFF

Shouldn't I read it first?

LIVINGSTON

It's not all that interesting. A fake receipt for the sale of a farm. But it does mention you...

This is the first time he's really said it aloud.

LIVINGSTON (CONT'D)

The queen of... here. It's a standard Rosetta Stone. English. French and then Hieroglyphics.

NEFF

You know how to do all that?

LIVINGSTON

I spent the last ten years in college remember?

NEFF

And it's all about... me?

LIVINGSTON

I thought we'd write the story itself within the walls of the tomb. But you're mentioned, yeah.

NEFF

Oh.

They bury it together.

LIVINGSTON

Chances are they won't be able to read any of them... but smart people will be able to figure it out after enough study.

NEFF

Thank you. In case I forgot to say
it earlier.

Like he's just been thanked for opening a door...

LIVINGSTON

Sure.

INT. TUT'S SUPERMARKET - DAY

Lynn, thinner, paler, sicklier, moves slowly through the store. She watches Neff out of the corner of her eye. Neff smiles at the customers in her line. A legitimate happiness.

It sickens Lynn.

LATER...

Lynn gets to the front of Neff's line. Neff smiles cautiously, seeing Lynn's gaunt appearance.

NEFF

Hey. How are you Lynn?

LYNN

(no pretenses)

You know how I am. Where have you
been?

NEFF

I'm sorry... it wasn't for me.

LYNN

(quite definitive)

Yes it is! It is for you...
actually!

Lynn unloads her basket. She slams the frozen meals, cleaning supplies and cans of cat food harder and harder until finally just dumping her basket.

Todd watches from across the store.

NEFF

You want paper or plastic?

LYNN

Plastic. What do I care about the
future of our planet?

She forces out a small laugh. Neff smiles politely as she bags the items.

Neff's non-reaction infuriates Lynn.

LYNN (CONT'D)
What is wrong with you?!

NEFF
With me?

LYNN
You smile at people. You come to work. You look... *normal*.

NEFF
I'm taking things in stride.

LYNN
No you are not. I know about stride. Stride is a word that means the length of your steps and it's a silly way to describe the placement of emotions within a human timeline. I've thought a lot about *fucking stride*.

NEFF
I'm sorry.

LYNN
Are you taking drugs? Because I've thought about taking drugs. All my life I've avoided them. I smoked pot once in high school but I hated it. I got sick.

Lynn leans across Neff's counter like a tweaker begging for another hit from a dealer.

LYNN (CONT'D)
Do they really make you feel better?

NEFF
I'm not taking any drugs.
Sometimes I have to take pain meds for headaches.

Lynn reaches across the belt and grabs Neff's apron and arm. She has tears in her eyes.

LYNN
I want to look as carefree as you.

Todd comes over.

TODD
Everything okay here?

NEFF
Fine, Todd.

Neff takes Lynn's hand off of her. Tears stream down Lynn's face and she lets out an unprotected SOB.

TODD
Is there something wrong miss?

LYNN
(full on crying)
I don't even have any children! I
meant to...

She wipes her tears away, grabs her groceries and walks out, very much the center of attention.

CUT TO:

EXT. CLEARING - MORNING

Livingston and the laborers work as a team while a big piece of machinery pulls the steel box that used to be a bomb shelter out of the ground. Several pry at the edges with their shovels or thick pieces of wood as it slowly comes unglued from its would-be final resting place.

EXT. TOMB SITE - DAY

Livingston and some of the workers move the newly transplanted bomb shelter into place with backhoes, forklifts and a pulley system. It is slow, tedious work.

The other workers are busily cutting at a giant boulder with a stone saw, some are smoothing another finished product.

There are more total workers than before.

A CAR HORN blares in the distance. Livingston looks up like he recognizes the tone of the honk in question.

LIVINGSTON
Let's take five fellas.

INT. LIVINGSTON'S TRUCK - DAY

Livingston bumps along the field to the farmhouse where Juniper waits for him by the front door.

EXT. FIELD - DAY

Livingston rolls his window down as he pulls up.

LIVINGSTON
You honked?

JUNIPER
Where have you been?

LIVINGSTON
Working in the field.

JUNIPER
No. The field's right there and
you weren't in it.

LIVINGSTON
I'm busy out here. What's up?

JUNIPER
I got an interesting phone call.

LIVINGSTON
Yeah?

JUNIPER
Your neighbor up the road wanted to
tell me that my brother let half
the crop go bad because he didn't
harvest. You know anything about
that?

LIVINGSTON
What do you have spies?

JUNIPER
I talk to a lot of people in this
town and they tell me things. I
also hear you're spending a lot of
time with the checkout girl from
Tut's?

LIVINGSTON
So?

JUNIPER
Are you dating her?

LIVINGSTON
What difference does that make?

JUNIPER

I have to know everything about my family. Who they're dating... what they're involved in... The election is weeks away.

LIVINGSTON

I missed one section, okay? It wasn't half. It was one small section and I missed it. The rot'll do good for next year's soil.

JUNIPER

What do you know about soil?

LIVINGSTON

I'm learning.

JUNIPER

My offer still stands to take this place off your hands.

LIVINGSTON

Go home. I'm busy out here.

JUNIPER

Busy with what?

As he rolls up his window...

LIVINGSTON

Building a baseball field.

Livingston drives away. Juniper calls after him.

JUNIPER

I can't have a crazy brother right now!

EXT. PUBLIC LIBRARY - EVENING

Neff walks through the front door carrying a tray of Tut's Assorted Cupcakes.

INT. PUBLIC LIBRARY - CONFERENCE ROOM B

Neff knocks, enters. Ralph and Toby sit in there alone, not talking. They couldn't be happier to see her.

RALPH

You came back!

TOBY

Hi Neff.

NEFF

Hi Ralph, Toby. Where's Lynn?

They look to one another, solemnly.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Lynn lies in a hospital bed, tubes in and out of her. This isn't a room she'll ever walk out of.

Neff knocks and enters.

NEFF

Lynn?

Lynn's eyes open. She is finally on those drugs that she wanted to try.

LYNN

I'm so sorry, Neff.

NEFF

For what?

Lynn stares straight ahead while she speaks.

LYNN

You're younger than I am. I should be the one who puts on the brave front. Or maybe it's not even a front. Maybe you know something I don't or have an older soul...

NEFF

It's not any of those things.

LYNN

Whatever it is. You deserve your peace. I can't believe I tried to barnacle onto it like that. So embarrassing.

Neff sits next to Lynn. It's a grim picture of what will most likely befall her in the very near future.

NEFF

Would it help if you could change the way you're remembered?

LYNN
It's a little late for that.

NEFF
But what would it be? If you could
have been anything?

She doesn't have to think about it.

LYNN
An entertainer. A singer... I had
a really pretty voice before this
happened to me.

Lynn turns slowly toward her. Neff gets closer.

NEFF
What else?

LYNN
When I died, the people who loved
me... they would cover me in roses
and diamonds.

CUT TO:

INT. FUNERAL PARLOR - EVENING

Fifteen or so MOURNERS pay their respects at the open casket
of Lynn, her thin face now fully relaxed in death.

Neff, Toby and Ralph sit in the same row.

NEFF
(to Toby and Ralph)
Are either of you any good at
keeping a secret?

TOBY
No secrets in small towns.

NEFF
But can I confide in you two?

RALPH
Of course you can.

Neff looks around. Too many people.

NEFF
Let's go somewhere private.

TOBY
We have a burial to go to after
this.

Neff stands up.

NEFF
We'll catch her on the next one.

She waits for them to get up.

NEFF (CONT'D)
We have to stick together don't we?

Toby and Ralph reluctantly stand and follow her out.

CLOSE IN ON Lynn's face.

NEFF (V.O.) (CONT'D)
"At night the village would gather
around to listen to a woman sing.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

Lynn's coffin is laid to rest while a MINISTER reads quietly.
Neff, Toby and Ralph are not present.

NEFF (V.O.)
"Her voice crept into the hearts of
all who heard it, nested there and
warmed them.

INT. JEWELRY STORE - NIGHT

Ralph, the manager of this little store, locks the front
door. He turns off the front light and walks into the back.

INT. BACK OF JEWELRY STORE - NIGHT

Ralph opens a safe. Inside are bags and bags of diamonds.
He takes a few from each bag.

EXT. CITY PARK - DAY

Toby walks past the statue of Mary Wutherford, into the Rose
Garden, an empty paper bag from Tut's in his hands.

LATER...

Toby walks out of the Rose Garden, his paper bag full.

PAN AROUND to see several rows of missing roses.

INT. NEFF'S TRAILER - EVENING

Neff sits on her sofa, dirt beneath her fingernails, a candle burning beside her, pen gliding effortlessly along the paper.

NEFF (V.O.)
 "When she passed, they declared a
 holiday in her honor. When they
 buried her body, it was covered in
 roses and diamonds."

CUT TO:

EXT. RIVERBANK - EVENING

Livingston, on his hands and knees in the mud, digs for a perfect stone. He takes several out of the ground and washes them in the flowing stream until he finds one that suits him.

INT. SARAH'S HOME - NIGHT

A group of WOMEN somewhere between 40 and 70 sit in Sarah's living room. There are no men at this party.

There are no gifts either, only a stack of cards and a cake with a 5 and a 0 showing that it's Neff's 50TH BIRTHDAY.

Neff looks uncomfortable as the women hug her and kiss her cheek and whisper encouraging words. She steals a moment out of the crowd with Sarah as she cuts the cake.

SARAH
 Happy 50th!

NEFF
 Who are all these women?

SARAH
 Some of them are in my photography
 class at the parks and rec.
 Others... word of mouth?

They all smile at Neff.

LATER...

Neff is the center of attention, sitting on the carpet in the middle of an estrogen circle. She picks up one of the birthday cards. The women listen as she reads aloud.

NEFF

Happy 50th Birthday Neff. I was so scared when you told me about your breast cancer, but I knew that you would overcome this thing because you are a fighter. I'm here for you anytime you need to talk.

Not sure what to make of that... Neff smiles and puts the card down. The women are very quiet.

Neff picks up another card and reads.

NEFF (CONT'D)

Neff, you are officially getting old.

There is a small CHUCKLE from the group.

NEFF (CONT'D)

I know that it makes you sad that men no longer look at you the way they used to. It makes you sad that your body is being tugged down by gravity and that the man you loved since high school left you for a woman in her thirties who wasn't even alive when you married him...

LATER...

Neff continues to read from the cards. The women are solemn.

NEFF (CONT'D)

That disgusting "M" word...

LATER...

NEFF (CONT'D)

Now it feels like a month doesn't pass where you don't get a call because somebody you love has died.

EXT. SARAH'S HOUSE - NIGHT (LATER)

NEFF (V.O.)
Your children don't need you for
anything but the occasional loan
and to baby-sit grandchildren who
are more interested in video games
and computers than talking to you
and hearing about your life.

LATER...

NEFF (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Retirement becomes something you
can actually see in the near future
and you're scared to death about
what you will do to fill up your
days when it really happens.

INT. SARAH'S HOME - NIGHT (LATER)

The women look completely deflated.

NEFF
Your biggest wish is that your
youth could have lasted forever.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVINGSTON'S TRUCK - EVENING

Neff caresses a rough statuette of a young woman's figure cut
from something like limestone. It's perfect, detailed.

LIVINGSTON
Manuel's got real talent with
sculpting. I'm trying to talk him
into applying for an art program.

Neff looks at the bottom of the figure where "QUEEN NEFF" is
crudely carved into the rock.

NEFF
It's beautiful.
(beat)
Where are we putting it?

LIVINGSTON
I know a place.

EXT. LAKE - EVENING

Neff and Livingston row toward the center of an empty lake in a small, open boat. There is no one around for miles.

LIVINGSTON

What happened when you had your accident?

NEFF

It was raining... I lost control.

LIVINGSTON

Just like that?

NEFF

I might've been daydreaming. I do that sometimes.

LIVINGSTON

I've noticed. Writing fairy tales in your head?

She doesn't answer.

Livingston stops rowing. He nods to Neff who lifts the statue of herself, looks at it one last time.

NEFF

What do you think they'll make of it?

LIVINGSTON

Hard to say. If they find it, and they find the tablet... and you... As long as they're somewhat organized then they'll piece it together. I would think.

NEFF

I'll be a children's story come true.

LIVINGSTON

Finally.

Neff lets the idol slip out of her hand, over the side of the boat. With a quiet drip it disappears beneath the dark surface of the water.

EXT. BENEATH THE SURFACE OF THE WATER - CONTINUOUS

The idol drifts downward, through the murky, muddy water, past fish, snakes, into deep darkness. It settles with a soft bump into the thick goo at the bottom of the lake.

RALPH (V.O.)
"All who attended the singer's
funeral swore they heard singing as
she was laid to rest.

CUT TO:

INT. CHILD'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ralph reads Neff's story, bound paper with simple sketches, to his LITTLE GIRL (6) who lies in bed, fully engaged. She looks so happy.

RALPH (V.O.)
"That same warm feeling in their
hearts returned."

RALPH'S WIFE KNOCKS on the door. He stops reading, looks up. Her face suggests bad news.

INT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

The Officer sits across from Ralph at a small table. This is a small town interrogation room, no two-way mirrors. Just a table, chairs and a coffee machine.

OFFICER
Ralph... you could be charged with
grand larceny.

RALPH
I didn't think anyone would notice
until after I was gone.

OFFICER
Leaving the country?

RALPH
Leaving the earth.

OFFICER
Come again?

RALPH
Pancreatic Cancer.

The Officer's voice changes.

OFFICER

I'm sorry... Still... We need the diamonds back. Have you sold them already?

RALPH

Sold? No. I buried them.

OFFICER

I need you to explain this to me in the simplest way you know how and we'll go from there. The owner of the store doesn't want to press charges. But he will if he has to... Think about your daughter. You don't want to spend any of this time in jail do you?

Ralph puts a copy of Neff's book on the table between them.

RALPH

It's all part of a story...

EXT. LIVINGSTON'S FARM - MORNING

Livingston stands outside on the cool fall morning. Next to him is a cannon, his grandfather's. Next to that is a stack of cannonballs. He lifts one with some effort, drops it into the shaft.

NEFF (V.O.)

"The Queen's enemies followed closely as she fled..."

He takes out a zippo lighter and sparks the fuse.

He takes a step back. And then another, unsure of what will happen.

BOOM! Everything trembles, including Livingston.

NEFF (V.O.) (CONT'D)

"The ground beneath her shook, mortar crashing down all around."

He watches the ball fly out of his range of vision. He pushes the big gun a few inches to the right and does the whole thing over again... lobbing cannonballs into the deserted woods a few hundred feet away.

Juniper pulls up in her pickup as he lights the third fuse. He does not hear her at first, his ears still ringing from the explosions. She gets out and watches as a cannonball rockets into the trees in the distance.

JUNIPER

Are you the North or the South?

Startled, Livingston turns and sees her.

LIVINGSTON

What are you doing here?

JUNIPER

He asked as if I was the one acting strangely...

LIVINGSTON

I'm busy.

JUNIPER

Doing what exactly?

LIVINGSTON

It's difficult to explain.

JUNIPER

In the same way it would be difficult to explain how you let all of dad's farm go to hell this season? Or difficult to explain in the same way that it would be hard to put into words why you would've taken out a mortgage against this property in the amount of two-hundred-thousand-dollars and then done nothing to ensure that you would have a good harvest.

LIVINGSTON

That information should've been private.

JUNIPER

It's a small town.

She pulls the copy of Neff's book out of her front seat and walks it over to him.

JUNIPER (CONT'D)

Difficult to keep secrets.

He sees the book in her hand.

LIVINGSTON

Shit.

JUNIPER

Tell me you're not a part of this.

LIVINGSTON

Where'd you get that?

JUNIPER

Does it matter?

LIVINGSTON

What do you know?

JUNIPER

That the clerk at Tut's, your girlfriend, is going around trying to turn this stupid fairy tale into a story that the future will believe by creating fake tombs and stealing diamonds.

LIVINGSTON

(legitimately surprised)

Wait... diamonds?

JUNIPER

Someone dug up a coffin and filled it with stolen diamonds... and roses.

(beat)

Apparently this checkout girl...

LIVINGSTON

Neff... is her name.

JUNIPER

She claims that she has a tomb being built for her. The epicenter of this whole crazy business. Buried someplace secret. And she's the queen! She's the ruler of all this land. The munificent matriarch who magically saves us from ourselves.

LIVINGSTON

Huh.

JUNIPER

It's some serious revisionist history.

LIVINGSTON
Sounds like it.

JUNIPER
Tell me you're not a part of this.
Tell me I'm not going to hear
voters whispering behind my back
about my crazy brother!

His face says it all. She looks at the cannon again.

JUNIPER (CONT'D)
You selfish asshole!

She throws the book at him.

JUNIPER (CONT'D)
Can you think of no one but
yourself?!

He tries to hold it back but can not.

LIVINGSTON
(animated)
She's dying!

This gets her attention.

LIVINGSTON (CONT'D)
She's twenty-seven and she's gonna
be dead any day now! Maybe I am
selfish! The only girl I've ever
loved... the girl I want to grow
old with couldn't do that even if
she wanted to. So what can I do
for her? That's the new question.
Whatever I can do to make this last
time of hers the best time
possible. Whatever I can do to
make her memory outlive my own and
yours and the rest of humanity for
all I care... I'll do it.
(beat)
Who gives a shit about a seat on
the city council? Who cares about
any of it...

JUNIPER
I do! I'm sorry that she's sick
but why should she get to be so
important?! Why shouldn't she have
to fight and work for every vote
like I had to...
(MORE)

JUNIPER (CONT'D)

to even get a chance at having a tiny bit of influence over this town... much less being queen of the midwest!

LIVINGSTON

None of that will matter to anyone in fifty years... much less a thousand.

Juniper gets into her truck and speeds away.

Livingston picks up the book and leafs through it until he gets to the end. There's a new illustration... a picture of a man carrying the queen into a pyramid while a terrible army chases them in the distance, firing cannons.

He loads again, lights, fires.

FOLLOWING THE CANNONBALL...

Flying high over the field, carrying through the trees and striking down in the dirt near the PYRAMID.

It's big... and it's becoming magnificent.

Hundreds of big stones stacked perfectly within the hole, the highest stone reaching the ground level, mountains of dirt all around waiting to be pushed in on the rocks, burying it into secrecy.

The structure sits alone in the woods; an entrance into the bomb shelter marked by an earthen stairway near the bottom though you can see nothing of the bomb shelter now.

Another BOOM in the distance.

LATER...

Livingston sits on top of the highest stone. The sun has begun to set. He hears a VEHICLE moving through the difficult path in the forest. Neff's busted up car emerges through the only opening.

She gets out and smiles at him.

NEFF

You look like you already heard.

LIVINGSTON

My sister told me.

NEFF

I'm sorry...

LIVINGSTON

Sorry for what?

NEFF

I ruined it. You worked so hard on this and I... she... Lynn... this woman that I met in that death group... she was in the hospital and she was so sad because she never did anything with her life and I thought about what you were doing for me and if I could do that for somebody else...

LIVINGSTON

You don't have to explain.

NEFF

I don't?

LIVINGSTON

I'm not angry.

NEFF

But you spent all this money. You took out a loan! How are you ever going to pay that back?

LIVINGSTON

It's the least of my worries.

Neff takes a few steps closer to him, now getting a full view of the tomb in all of its grandeur. She stops, not able to find the right words.

He sees her amazement as she looks at the carvings of scenes on the outside of each stone... such meticulous work. Images of a castle atop a hill, a Queen standing in a circle of villagers. All leading up to a beautiful likeness of Neff's face on the highest stone, revealed when Livingston stands.

LIVINGSTON (CONT'D)

Yeah. We basically finished the outside. Still want to do some work on the bomb shelter. Some decorations, etchings... get the story up on the walls.

NEFF

It's...

She walks along the perimeter.

NEFF (CONT'D)

I can't believe you did all this.

He holds up the picture of the tomb in her book.

LIVINGSTON

Look about right?

NEFF

Perfect. Where are the guys?

LIVINGSTON

On their way back to beautiful Mexico with very fat pockets. I can handle the rest.

NEFF

They still think it's a swimming pool?

LIVINGSTON

They're not morons. I explained it to them. They loved the idea. Thought it was beautiful.

NEFF

Really?

LIVINGSTON

Manuel's going to bury some "artifacts" outside of Chihuahua when he gets back. International correlation now. That's big.

He climbs down the outside stones until he's at the bottom, near the entrance. Neff slides down the hill carefully until she reaches the same point.

NEFF

Can this even work anymore?

LIVINGSTON

People have seen us together. If my sister knows, then other people know... just a matter of time before they get curious about my land.

NEFF

I've ruined it then...

LIVINGSTON

I didn't say that. You changed our plan a little.

(MORE)

LIVINGSTON (CONT'D)

We have to bury it earlier than I had wanted to. Leave a staircase to the entrance, very small, hidden.

NEFF

The shelter's already under there?

LIVINGSTON

You want the tour?

She smiles. They walk down the staircase until they reach the opening for the shelter. Slowly, painfully, she descends the ladder into darkness.

INT. SHELTER - CONTINUOUS

Blackness.

Livingston lights a torch along the wall. The shelter has been emptied out. The walls have been etched with some pictures of a queen and her subjects... very similar to something you'd find in an Egyptian tomb.

Neff looks like the walls are closing in on her. Livingston stands in the middle of the shelter as she walks to a wall and puts her palms against it... a comfort mechanism.

LIVINGSTON

Here's where the sarcophagus will be. I'm working on that in my garage. It's... slow going. I've seen dozens of them up close, in museums, but never tried to make one. Because this thing's airtight we don't have to worry as much about working with wood. It's dry, a tight seal outside. They built them like that because of the threat of nerve gas...

Neff's HEAVY BREATHING echoes in the chamber. It's loud enough to get Livingston's attention.

LIVINGSTON (CONT'D)

You okay?

She dashes up the ladder, to the base of the pyramid where only a hint of sunlight remains. Livingston follows.

EXT. PYRAMID - CONTINUOUS

Neff sits on the dirt, staring up at the massive structure.
Livingston sits next to her.

NEFF

Sorry... I started thinking about
being trapped down there for all
those centuries. Got a little
short of breath.

LIVINGSTON

We don't have to do this...

NEFF

We do. We have to do it. Do you
want me to help you bury it
tomorrow?

LIVINGSTON

Maybe you shouldn't come back here
for a while. In case people are
curious and someone follows you.

NEFF

So the next time I come here...

It's a lot for her to think about.

LIVINGSTON

Maybe you'll just live and we'll
forget we ever built this thing.

NEFF

Maybe.

He puts his hand over hers and kisses her on the cheek as the
sun descends over the top of the pyramid in front of them.

LIVINGSTON

Do you remember when we were both
freshman? I sat behind you in
history class.

NEFF

Vaguely.

LIVINGSTON

I used to dream about the two of us
at our senior prom. In my
adolescent fantasies, I would be
the prom king and you'd be the
queen.

NEFF

Your sister was the prom queen...

LIVINGSTON

I'm trying to have a moment here,
Neff.

NEFF

Sorry.

LIVINGSTON

It's just strange... thirteen years
later... you really are my queen...

They kiss at the base of the pyramid, as the last bit of
sunlight disappears.

INT. TUT'S SUPERMARKET - DAY

Neff checks out a long line of customers. Now they really
stare at her. Todd gives her the equivalent of a dirty look
as he passes by.

NEFF

Credit or debit?

Sarah rushes up to Neff's register, butting in line.

NEFF (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

Sarah holds up a copy of the local op/ed section.

The headline: **LOCAL GIRL TO KILL GOD?**

NEFF (CONT'D)

What is this?

Neff looks at her line of CUSTOMERS. They've all read it.

Neff flags down Todd.

NEFF (CONT'D)

Todd... can I take my lunch a
little early?

TODD

You can never come back for all I'm
concerned.

INT. SARAH'S CAR - TUT'S PARKING LOT - DAY

Sarah sits in the driver's seat as Neff reads the article in its entirety.

SARAH
No way do you have a tomb being
built for you!

Neff looks up. It's obvious.

SARAH (CONT'D)
Holy shit! I have to see it!

NEFF
No... it's not a good idea. I'm
not going back there... not
until...

SARAH
Why didn't you tell me this?!

NEFF
I don't know. I felt like I should
keep it a secret.

SARAH
A secret in this town?

NEFF
I know.

She goes back to reading.

NEFF (CONT'D)
"The story that Nefertiti DeLeon
has written is a relatively
harmless fairy tale with the
exception of the clear lack of any
truths about our lord and saviour
Jesus Christ. Furthermore, after
shoving the holy carpenter from his
rightful place in the holy trinity,
she replaces Him with herself in
this story. Should her ridiculous
plan work, the future would worship
the checkout girl at Tut's! Good
story or not, that isn't the god I
want my great-great-great-great-
great grandchildren to worship."
(beat)
They're totally missing the point!

SARAH

Written by Councilman Brown himself. That should win him a vote or two.

NEFF

He even refers to me as a "known associate of Juniper Harbough's brother." It's political jargon. People won't care about this!

Sarah nudges her, points at Mrs. Munchek who stares at her through the windshield, not a friendly stare.

SARAH

I can't believe you didn't tell me about this!

NEFF

People look so disgusted with me.

Sarah gets Neff's full eye-contact.

SARAH

Neff... I think it's the most beautiful thing I've ever heard.

(beat)

But did you really dig up a dead body?

NEFF

I helped. Just a coffin. It's not like we *touched* a dead body.

SARAH

What can I do?

EXT. TOMB SITE - DAY

Livingston, using a backhoe, pushes the piles of dirt onto the pyramid, completely covering it, leaving only a staircase that leads to the bomb shelter, deep below.

EXT. TOWN HALL - EVENING

By the look of the street and the parking lot, filled with cars, everyone in town is at this meeting.

INT. TOWN HALL - CONTINUOUS

Standing room only.

There are two podiums once again. Councilman Brown stands at his, Juniper at hers. Juniper looks much less confident than she has in the past.

COUNCILMAN BROWN

I want to start by thanking everyone for coming out here tonight. It's great to see that this town cares about the direction we're heading.

JUNIPER

I would also like to thank everyone for coming...

Ms. Munchek, in the front row, doesn't let her finish.

MRS. MUNCHEK

Is your brother helping the girl? I heard he was helping her.

JUNIPER

Mrs. Munchek... we have a system of questions and retorts that we abide by. The first subject on the slate tonight is once again the question of our town's matriarch... the statue in City Park...

The crowd has no interest in this topic.

COUNCILMAN BROWN

Mrs. Harbough, I'm in full favor of getting down to brass tacks. These people came here tonight with one burning question in their hearts. They have a collective fear of someone doing harm to our system of beliefs.

They agree with him. Everyone stares at Juniper.

JUNIPER

My brother is an acquaintance of Nefertiti DeLeon. That's really all I know about the subject.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

You know more than that! I heard he was the one building the tomb... out on his land.

AUDIENCE MEMBER #2

He hasn't harvested anything! So what's he been doing out there?

JUNIPER

He's a first-time farmer. He's made some mistakes, I'll grant you...

The crowd ERUPTS with their FRUSTRATION and QUESTIONS. Councilman Brown has a reserved little smile on his lips, watching his opponent twist and writhe within the current of speculation.

COUNCILMAN BROWN

May I interject?

Juniper gladly takes any interruption.

COUNCILMAN BROWN (CONT'D)

If I'm elected back to my seat on the City Council in next week's election, I will ensure that this does not happen. That girl, and I'm sorry for her condition, will have to answer to someone.

The crowd likes this remark. It feels good and safe to them and they open up in APPLAUSE while Juniper shrinks back away from her microphone.

COUNCILMAN BROWN (CONT'D)

What if we all started rewriting history? Did these two not ever hear that little remark about being doomed to repeat our mistakes?

The door to the Town Hall opens. Neff comes walking in with Sarah. Slowly, the raucous crowd quiets down as the whisper of Neff's attendance reaches each of them.

Neff works her way to Juniper's podium. Juniper lets her take the microphone without any struggle.

NEFF

I'd like to say a couple of words.

COUNCILMAN BROWN

That's entirely inappropriate. This is neither the venue for that nor is it normal procedure...

JUNIPER

Councilman Brown, these people have
a burning question in their
hearts...

The people want to hear her speak. He nods his head,
reluctantly allowing the power to be taken from him.

The crowd quiets. Neff puts her lips close to the microphone
and looks at Sarah who sits on the floor in front of the
first row.

NEFF

My name is Nefertiti DeLeon. I've
seen all of you for the past eight
years coming through my line with
your groceries. I don't really
know most of you and you don't know
me at all.

MRS. MUNCHEK

Are you building this thing?!

NEFF

I guess my point is... I've been
watching and the one thing you all
have in common is that you're
basically miserable. You come
through my line, tired... with
mopey faces like you have nothing
good in your lives.

Neff is surprised at how attentive they're being.

NEFF (CONT'D)

Remember when you were little...
all of you? Remember the stories
you would hear? Jack and the
Beanstalk? Three Little Bears?
Alice in Wonderland? Those
beautiful and wonderful stories.
Didn't you feel happy then?...
Happier?

They could turn on her with one misstep.

NEFF (CONT'D)

Imagine what the world would be
like if we had any shred of proof
of one of those magical stories.

They look around at one another.

NEFF (CONT'D)

That's all I'm doing. I wrote a little story filled with magic and good people and I want the future to think it's real. I want my rotten corpse to be proof that it really happened... to live on in the hearts of mankind.

Neff steps away from the podium. The room is silent but far from being won over.

EXT. TOWN HALL - NIGHT

Neff and Sarah walk toward Sarah's car.

An OLDER MAN comes out of the door behind her. As the door opens, the sounds of Councilman Brown addressing/inciting the crowd slips out.

COUNCILMAN BROWN (O.S.)

A lie is a lie is a lie...

OLDER MAN

Neff?

Neff stops, turns around.

OLDER MAN (CONT'D)

Can you do me a favor?

NEFF

What do you need?

OLDER MAN

I spent the last fifty years at a job that I despise.

NEFF

I'm sorry...

OLDER MAN

If I would've believed in stories like yours I never would've stayed that long.

She smiles.

OLDER MAN (CONT'D)

My name's Bernard. I'd like to be remembered as something else.

NEFF

You have something in mind Bernard?

OLDER MAN

Do they have cobblers in your story?

NEFF

I don't see why not.

EXT. NEFF'S TRAILER - DAY

Neff shades in an illustration of a cobbler holding the queen's foot in his hands as he puts on her shoe. Her NEIGHBOR, an older woman, comes hobbling out her back-door in her nightgown, curlers in her hair.

NEFF (V.O.)

"Bernard the cobbler repaired the queen's shoe after she had spent the night searching out...

Neff puts her head up, not sure of her next words. Her Neighbor stands next to her, talks to her, their dialogue inaudible. Her neighbor smiles, looks very pleased and walks, more briskly, back into her home.

NEFF (V.O.) (CONT'D)

"... Imelda, the creature of the woods.

Imelda, her neighbor, looks down at her through her window.

As Neff makes the last swoop with her pen a truck drives by, TWO YOUNG MEN sneer at her.

NEFF (V.O.) (CONT'D)

"And despite her efforts to help each and every one of them... there were still some who waited anxiously for the lights in the distance to erase her from history.

Neff puts her hands to her temples. Her book and her pen fall to the ground.

INT. BOMB SHELTER - NIGHT

Livingston works by torch light. He carefully scratches words and dates into one of the walls.

NEFF (V.O.)
"Every last remnant... "

PULL BACK to reveal that all of the walls, the ceiling and the floor are covered in the story of the Last Queen, complete with drawings of important moments.

INT. SARAH'S HOME - EVENING

Neff, Sarah, Livingston, Ralph and Toby are all present as Neff lies on the dining room table, fully extended.

NEFF
Is this too creepy for anyone?

SARAH
It's fine. It's important that we do it right so you can experience it.

TOBY
People don't usually get to experience their own funeral.

SARAH
Well she does... okay?

They're okay with it.

NEFF
Now what?

SARAH
What would happen at your funeral?
What would you expect?

NEFF
I would hope there would be more people.

SARAH
(apologetically)
I invited so many Neff...

NEFF
People are afraid to associate with me.

SARAH

Councilman Brown's got all the old people thinking you're a witch or something and everyone else doesn't know how to respond to a funeral invitation for a living girl.

(beat)

No imagination in this town, I swear.

Sarah looks at the men in the room. No one knows how to start or wants to be the one to start it.

SARAH (CONT'D)

I guess I'll go first.

NEFF

Are you going to eulogize me?

Sarah takes a piece of paper out of her pocket and unfolds it.

NEFF (CONT'D)

You wrote it down?

SARAH

Yes! I stayed up all night trying to write this. I was scared that I'd leave something out if I didn't get it on paper.

NEFF

Go ahead.

Sarah looks around the room. This is harder than it looks.

SARAH

We should all say something!
Ralph...

RALPH

(quite reluctantly)

I...

A KNOCK at the screen door saves him. A couple of YOUNG WOMEN (late 20s) come into Sarah's living room. They see Neff lying on the table.

NEFF

Hi.

They look at each other.

SARAH
It's okay to talk to her. We're
having an... interactive funeral.

YOUNG WOMAN #1
Hi.

YOUNG WOMAN #2
Hey.

A strange and awkward silence.

NEFF
Thanks for coming.

YOUNG WOMAN #2
Wouldn't miss it.

Neff smiles.

TOBY
We're going around the room...
saying something.
(beat)
My thing, that I want to say, is
that I had a really big crush on
Neff from the first time that I saw
her. I really... really wanted to
ask her out but I never did. I
regret that.

Toby looks to Livingston.

LIVINGSTON
He stole part of mine.

Neff smiles. There's another KNOCK at the door. This time
there is a GROUP OF PEOPLE, some young and some middle-aged.

SARAH
Come in... come on in. Squeeze
around the table.

The people file in, encircling Neff.

NEFF
I can't believe so many people
showed up.

WOMAN IN THE CROWD
We wanted to be a part of your
story.

EXT. SARAH'S HOUSE - EVENING

DOZENS OF PEOPLE walk down the sidewalks and street toward Sarah's front door.

NEFF (V.O.)
"When the time neared for the Last
Queen to pass into history,
villagers walked for miles to be
near her."

INT. NEFF'S CAR - NIGHT

Neff drives Livingston down the dark highway. At his feet is a bucket filled with carved stones.

LIVINGSTON
Where are we going this time?

She pulls off of the highway and looks out her window to the old abandoned house where she wrecked her car.

LIVINGSTON (CONT'D)
Here? Kind of public isn't it?

NEFF
Before my parents died... when we
would drive by this place... they
would tell me that a magical queen
used to live here.

He bends over to get a better look at the enormous old home.

LIVINGSTON
Was that where this all started?

NEFF
Maybe so.

LIVINGSTON
Have you ever been inside?

NEFF
No. Always been too terrified.
The windows are boarded up... no
one goes there anymore.

She opens her door and gets out.

EXT. HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS

She runs across the street and into the field in front of this abandoned house. Livingston follows.

Neff CRINGES as she runs, she slows. She looks up at the balcony and sees a shadow move there.

Livingston catches up with her.

LIVINGSTON
You okay?

NEFF
Fine.

They go to the front door. It's boarded over.

He pries the boards off with his bare hands and opens the door for her. With great trepidation, she enters first.

INT. ABANDONED HOUSE - NIGHT

Dirty, cobwebs, old furniture covered with gray blankets.

LIVINGSTON
Who used to live here?

NEFF
I already told you.

She takes it all in. He watches her as she moves through the room. She's gone somewhere else in her mind.

She goes up the stairs.

EXT. BALCONY - NIGHT

Neff stands on the balcony looking out into the night. She has a look of serious deja vu.

Livingston comes outside and puts his arms around her in the cold night.

LIVINGSTON
So this is your castle.

NEFF
Yeah.

He takes a few small hand carved idols out of his pockets and throws them into the field in each direction.

NEFF (CONT'D)
When it comes time for the real
thing... for you to bury me in that
tomb...

Her breath gets short just talking about it.

LIVINGSTON
We don't need to discuss it.

She sees the lights again. Red and glowing in the distance.
In some pain, her eyes fill with tears.

NEFF
Do you see those?

He looks out into the darkness, nothing.

EXT. WHEAT FIELD - NIGHT

The Last Queen stands alone on her balcony. Pull back to
reveal that the glowing torches are all around her castle.
They have arrived.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Livingston carries Neff in his arms through the hospital
doors. She holds her head in her hands, CRINGING with
overwhelming TENSION and PAIN.

INT. HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM - NIGHT

Sarah and Livingston wait in silence.

SARAH
She hasn't said anything to me
about feeling sick.

Livingston is quiet.

SARAH (CONT'D)
Did she talk to you?

He is still quiet.

SARAH (CONT'D)
The doctor said that she would be
fine one day and the next day she
might be completely incapacitated.
(MORE)

SARAH (CONT'D)
He said that and I didn't believe
it could really happen.

The DOCTOR enters. They both stand.

SARAH (CONT'D)
What?

DOCTOR
She's awake and talking. We've
taken some of the pressure off
but... things are moving quickly.

Sarah runs past the doctor.

INT. NEFF'S HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Neff's eyes are open. She has an IV running into her arm.

Sarah nearly lies down on top of her as she holds her.

NEFF
(weakened)
Stop. I'm not dead.

SARAH
You're not dead!

She buries her face in Neff's shoulder.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Livingston stands in the doorway. Neff gives him a look that says everything she could ever want to say. His eyes fill with tears as he backs out of the room, slides down into a sitting position in the hospital hallway.

He buries his head and sobs silently.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Sarah clings to Neff.

SARAH
The doctor said you had to stay a
few nights here.

NEFF
He told me that I'd never leave
this hospital alive.

Sarah cringes when she hears this.

NEFF (CONT'D)
I won't let him lie to me.

SARAH
It's not a hundred...

She can't finish the sentence.

Sarah climbs into the bed with Neff and holds her.

EXT. CITY STREET - EARLY MORNING

The streets are mostly empty. A few people walk down the sidewalk toward Town Hall.

EXT. TOWN HALL - EARLY MORNING

A line of VOTERS wraps around the building.

Councilman Brown is the first in line to vote as the doors open. Juniper is not present.

INT. JUNIPER'S TRUCK - DAY

Juniper stares straight ahead, a pained expression on her face. Tears in her eyes.

EXT. CITY PARK - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Juniper's truck is parked a hundred feet away from the BULLDOZER that KNOCKS DOWN MARY WUTHERFORD'S STATUE and crushes it into pieces.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - DAY

Juniper walks down the hallway with a small box in her hands. She sees Livingston sitting beside Sarah in two chairs, neither sleeping. She looks like she will stop and speak to them but she continues on down the hallway.

INT. ENTRANCE TO NEFF'S HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

The Police Officer stands outside Neff's hospital room. Juniper stops when she reaches him.

JUNIPER
Why are you here?

OFFICER
(ashamed)
Councilman Brown and some of the
others wanted me to make sure
nobody tries to...
(quietly)
Move her body.

JUNIPER
She's got a right to be buried
wherever she wants.

OFFICER
Not technically. You can't bury a
body outside of a cemetery without
a permit.
(beat)
I didn't know that before.

JUNIPER
You can't be serious.

OFFICER
I'm only doing my job.

Juniper blows past him, into Neff's room.

INT. NEFF'S HOSPITAL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Neff is hooked up to several machines. This is not a room
that she will ever walk out of.

Her eyes are closed but she stirs when she sees Juniper.

NEFF
Come to yell at me again?

JUNIPER
I never yelled at you. I expressed
certain concerns about detrimental
effects your relationship with my
brother might pose to...

She can't keep up the facade for another minute in this room.

JUNIPER (CONT'D)
I'm sorry I yelled at you.

Neff looks up at her. Juniper isn't the type of woman to
apologize, not even in a deathbed situation.

NEFF

Where did that come from?

JUNIPER

I'm not the cold-hearted woman that everyone thinks I am. I'm very... sensitive.

NEFF

You are?

JUNIPER

I can't show that side of myself. I've been working for the past five years so I could effect some real changes in our town. People want strength in their leaders.

NEFF

Did you win?

JUNIPER

I lost by a landslide.

NEFF

Sorry.

JUNIPER

It's not important now. The only thing that matters is getting you to where you belong. I'm sorry it took me so long to see that.

NEFF

They're watching me all day and night. As soon as I go they're going to have the coroner lock me up in some cold metal drawer.

Juniper gives Neff the box that she brought.

JUNIPER

I have a theory, Neff. I think that all this new media, going back to something as simple as the invention of the camera or the first television set has ruined myth for all of the world.

NEFF

Myth?

JUNIPER

A hundred years ago people used to talk about heroes. They used to talk about the stature of men and women, about miracles and god's hand reaching out of the sky in broad daylight, not caring who saw.

Juniper sits down next to Neff.

JUNIPER (CONT'D)

And then we all started getting camera phones and video recorders and pretty soon no one could ever sit us down like little children and tell us about heroes or gods or aliens without everyone asking to see proof. If something miraculous happened, the first thing we would do is take a picture and if no one did that then it wasn't real. Great men and women could never evolve through word of mouth into infallible heroes because all we have to do is go back and look and listen... no room for imagination anymore.

(beat)

In ten thousand years there will be no trace of me or Councilman Brown or this town or anything happening in this world other than some long-buried rubble from which they will extract a handful of clues.

(beat)

You may well be the rebirth of myth.

Juniper bows as one would to a queen. She walks slowly, taking backward steps, leaving the room.

Neff opens the box. Inside is Juniper's prom queen TIARA.

INT. LIBRARY - MORNING

The same Story Teller sits in a chair in the middle of a group of young children and THEIR PARENTS.

The Storyteller holds out her book for the children to see the pictures as she reads to them from "The Emperor's New Clothes."

STORYTELLER

"Here it is your Highness, the result of our labour," the scoundrels said. "We have worked night and day but, at last, the most beautiful fabric in the world is ready for you. Look at the colors and feel how fine it is." Of course the Emperor did not see any colors and could not feel any cloth between his fingers.

The children smile their big innocent smiles as they gaze at the pictures in the book. The parents, too, look at the pictures and smile and enjoy.

One MOTHER in particular seems caught up in the story, even more than the child in her lap.

CLOSE IN on her happy face and then...

CUT TO:

EXT. NEFF'S TRAILER - DAY

The same Mother gets out of her minivan, parked in front of Neff's trailer, her kid in a carseat in the back. She carries a beautiful SILVER TEA SET to Neff's front door and sets it there without knocking.

She gets back into her car and drives away.

EXT. NEFF'S TRAILER - NIGHT

Neff's humble front porch is overcrowded with TREASURES. A bear skin rug, jewelry, fine china, paintings.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Sarah sits next to Neff. She looks bad.

Neff's eyes flutter open.

SARAH

I'm right here!

Sarah takes her hand.

NEFF

(quietly)

I'm worried about you.

SARAH

Don't.

NEFF

You don't like to be alone.

SARAH

I will always have you.

Neff has something like a SEIZURE, shaking wildly, her eyes rolling back. Sarah runs into the hallway.

SARAH (CONT'D)

I need a doctor! Please!

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Neff uses what little strength she has to write in her book. Through her open window, she sees that the first snow of the season is falling.

She finishes the last sentence as Livingston opens the door. He pushes in a wheelchair.

He approaches Neff, touches her hair. She turns toward him and smiles.

LIVINGSTON

Ready to go?

NEFF

Where?

LIVINGSTON

Ten thousand years into the future.

He picks her up and puts her into the wheelchair.

INT. HOSPITAL ELEVATOR - NIGHT

The elevator goes down. Livingston is emotionless. Neff's eyes open and close.

The elevator stops on the 2nd Floor.

The doors open to reveal the Police Officer coming back up with a cup of coffee. He looks at Livingston and then to Neff.

OFFICER

I'll get the next one.

The doors close.

LIVINGSTON
Why'd he let us go?

NEFF
I promised to make him a giant in
my story.

EXT. NEFF'S TRAILER - NIGHT

The snow falls harder.

Sarah backs Livingston's truck up to Neff's porch. She starts in loading all of the treasures. Some of the neighbors come to help her.

INT. HOSPITAL LOBBY - NIGHT

The last level they must get through before getting outside. Livingston stops short of pushing Neff out of the elevator. Councilman Brown sits guard by the main exit.

LIVINGSTON
Come on...

Juniper walks up to Councilman Brown. She stands in front of him, her hand extended.

COUNCILMAN BROWN
Juniper! I missed you at the
election.

JUNIPER
I had more important things to see
to.

COUNCILMAN BROWN
Come to see the girl? The Queen?

JUNIPER
I came to congratulate you on your
victory.

Her extended hand finally lures him out of his seat. She takes a step back, effectively turning his back to the elevator and the main entrance.

JUNIPER (CONT'D)
You really killed me.

COUNCILMAN BROWN
Maybe this will give you cause to
rethink a run next year?

JUNIPER
Maybe.

Now Livingston wheels Neff out through the main doors, unseen
by Councilman Brown.

COUNCILMAN BROWN
It would be sad if your legacy was
that of a woman beaten four years
in a row...

Juniper waits until they are safely out of sight.

JUNIPER
Better than being remembered as a
slimy troll.

She smiles and walks away. Councilman Brown sits back down.

EXT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Sarah waits outside in Livingston's truck. When she sees him
wheeling Neff out of the hospital she guns it toward the
doors and helps him get her into the truck.

They flee the scene. All that remains is an empty
wheelchair.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - LATER

Councilman Brown walks up the hallway toward Neff's room. He
sees the Police Officer standing there and he bends his neck
around the door to look inside.

She's not there.

COUNCILMAN BROWN
Where is she?

OFFICER
Gone.

COUNCILMAN BROWN
Gone? As in dead?

OFFICER
I suspect she'll outlive us all.

The Councilman looks at the Officer and then back toward the empty bed. He takes off running down the hallway, slipping on the slick floor in his black dress shoes.

INT. LIVINGSTON'S TRUCK - NIGHT

Neff's head rests on Livingston's shoulder as he barrels down the highway toward his land.

Sarah sits next to her, doing her best to comfort her.

The thick snow hits against their windshield, coming down much harder now.

In the distance, behind them, police lights are just visible. Neff turns around and sees the red lights in the distance, like the glowing torches from her story and her visions...

LIVINGSTON
They're coming for us.

He goes faster.

NEFF
You see them too?

She puts her head back on his shoulder and watches in the mirror as three red lights in the distance move closer.

EXT. TOMB SITE - NIGHT

The truck comes to a stop next to the small entrance to the tomb, a deep staircase carved into the earth with a big pile of dirt next to it. All of the machinery, the signs of all of the work have all been removed with the exception of one last shovel to seal the only clue.

Livingston and Sarah get out of the truck, leaving Neff to lie her head down.

LIVINGSTON
We have to get all of this stuff
inside.

Sarah grabs the silver tea set. Livingston takes some of the framed pictures.

INT. TOMB SITE - CONTINUOUS

TWO TORCHES illuminate a fully decorated tomb. The walls are covered in writing and pictures about the Last Queen. There is now a sarcophagus in the center of the chamber.

Sarah is floored by what she sees.

Livingston comes in behind her.

LIVINGSTON
We need to hurry!

She puts the silver tea set down near the sarcophagus and hurries back out again.

EXT. TOMB SITE - LATER

Sarah carries the last item from the truck.

The SIRENS are closer now, turning onto the main farm road.

EXT. STAIRWELL - NIGHT

Livingston carries Neff over his shoulder as they descend into the bomb shelter/chamber, down the ladder.

Sarah holds up an ELEGANT BLUE DRESS.

INT. TOMB - MOMENTS LATER

Sarah and Livingston lay Neff down on the sarcophagus in the center of the chamber. She's wearing the dress now and JEWELRY.

Neff starts to panic in the small space.

SARAH
It's okay, Neff. We're right here
with you.

The SIRENS blare outside.

Livingston hands her his keys.

LIVINGSTON
You have to drive my truck away
from here. No lights.

SARAH
Leave her now?

She looks down at Neff.

NEFF
I like this one...

Neff looks at the framed picture of herself, taken in City Park, she looks like a real fairy tale queen in this picture.

Sarah, her eyes filled with tears, leans over her and kisses Neff on the cheek, she pulls her close.

SARAH
I can't believe I have to wake up
tomorrow and you won't be here.

Neff looks at all of the treasures in her tomb and then back to Sarah and Livingston.

NEFF
It feels like you're the ones
leaving... not me.

Sarah kisses her again.

Sarah exits the tomb.

EXT. TOMB - NIGHT

Sarah starts Livingston's truck, no headlights. She drives it slowly and quietly into the woods.

INT. TOMB - CONTINUOUS

Livingston holds Neff's hands in his as he kneels beside her. Behind him there is an eerily similar painting on the wall of a knight kneeled down beside the Last Queen.

Neff sees it, he does not.

NEFF
What if I don't die right away?

Livingston, so strong through all of this, has begun to show the signs of breaking down.

LIVINGSTON
(with difficulty)
I'm in no hurry to leave.

NEFF
I'm terrified of you leaving me in
here alone, in the dark...

LIVINGSTON

I know you are. I won't do that.

NEFF

You may have to.

EXT. TOMB - NIGHT

Sarah runs back toward the site after abandoning the truck in the woods. The sirens have stopped. HEADLIGHTS and SEARCHLIGHTS creep through the trees. Men on foot with flashlights call out to one another.

Sarah runs toward the small opening in the earth, the stairwell leading to the base of the buried pyramid.

SARAH

(in a loud whisper)

Livingston! They're almost here!

Livingston sticks his head out through the small opening at the base of the stairs.

The snow is beating down now... a total whiteout.

LIVINGSTON

Push that dirt pile with your hands. Get behind it and shove at the bottom. Use the shovel for the rest. Close this stairwell up enough to where they'll never find it in the dark.

SARAH

How will you get out?

LIVINGSTON

Come back for me tomorrow.

SARAH

It's going to be covered in snow. I'll never find it.

He gives her a long and pleading look.

LIVINGSTON

I can't leave her alone.

Sarah doesn't have time to think about this anymore. Livingston closes the top of the shelter.

INT. TOMB - CONTINUOUS

Livingston sits next to Neff. Her breathing is sporadic.

LIVINGSTON
Are you cold?

NEFF
No.

She seizes up. All of her muscles tighten at once, her back arching high above the table on which she rests.

He tries to help her, but she is beyond the point of help.

LIVINGSTON
(helplessly)
What do I do here Neff?

NEFF
You should go.

LIVINGSTON
I won't leave you here in the dark.

Again she seizes. The sound of DIRT landing on the opening of the shelter THUDS above them. They both know what that sound means.

Livingston suddenly looks more at peace. He puts both of his hands on her face and he kisses her forehead as he stares into her eyes. She does her best to raise her head...

EXT. TOMB - CONTINUOUS

Sarah is taking her time with the dirt. She didn't get behind the pile and shove like he asked her. She's moving it by the handful.

A flashlight breaks through the trees. Men's voices are close enough to clearly distinguish the words "Over here, I found the truck."

There is no time for what Sarah's doing. She gets behind the pile and gives it a real shove. Heavy clumps of soil fall into the opening, halfway filling it as she gets to her hands and knees in the snow to push the rest of the muddy pile in and cover the opening completely.

INT. TOMB - CONTINUOUS

Livingston does his best to comfort Neff. He smiles down at her, holds her hands in his as she trembles and quakes and coughs.

Livingston caresses her, pushes her matted down hair out of her face as tears stream out of his eyes.

She raises her head once more to get close to him.

NEFF

Do you think they'll find me?

LIVINGSTON

I'm sure of it.

She kisses him.

She smiles and lays her head back on the stone table.

Her trembling stops. Livingston falls to his knees beside her, still clutching her hands in his.

EXT. TOMB - CONTINUOUS

Sarah pushes the muddy dirt into the stairwell. It's mostly covered now.

A HAND bursts through the soil. She reaches for it and helps to pull a muddy Livingston through the mess as he GASPS for air.

SARAH

Is she... ?

He nods as he helps her to cover what remains of the opening with the shovel and to quickly smooth it over.

He sees the searchlights drawing nearer through the heavily falling snow.

LIVINGSTON

We need to get away from here.

He takes her hand and they run, crouched, toward the trees as men continue to search with their lights, hopelessly. The heavy snow has already covered what was left of the opening.

Flashlights hit Livingston and Sarah as they reach the trees, stopped by the police.

INT. TOMB - CONTINUOUS

Neff lies in the center of the chamber. Her eyes open as the torches begin to fade and diminish. The shapes and shades of the words and pictures on the walls are all that she has to sooth her. Slowly, the fires in the torches fade as they are starved for oxygen.

With her last motion she takes the tiara from the nearby stack of treasures and places it on her head.

Neff's eyes close with the last drip of light.

CUT TO:

EXT. LIVINGSTON'S FARM - MORNING

A few police cars remain near the woods. A handful of OFFICERS continue to search but they are quickly giving up the effort.

The ground is completely BLANKETED in a foot of snow.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Sarah collects what was left of Neff's things. She sees the finished copy of Neff's story sitting beside the bed. She sits down with it, opens it to read.

NEFF (V.O.)

"As they raced through the snowy night, the distant glowing lights gave chase..."

EXT. POST OFFICE - DAY

Sarah walks up to the mailbox... her arms filled with big brown envelopes, manuscripts being mailed out to publishers.

NEFF (V.O.)

"The Queen's friends and loved ones sacrificed everything to deliver her safely to her destiny."

She mails the packages.

EXT. LIVINGSTON'S FARMHOUSE - DAY

Livingston carries the last box to his truck. There is a FOR SALE sign in his yard.

NEFF (V.O.)
 "Some having nothing left but her
 memory to keep them company for
 years to come.

He takes one last look toward the trees and the clearing,
 still buried in snow, before he gets into his truck and
 drives away.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

A crooked and dusty plaque hangs in a dark corner for Adam
 Dowery, Neff's high school boyfriend.

NEFF (V.O.)
 "Some would forget her in their
 lifetime, despite their efforts to
 remember.

EXT. ABANDONED HOUSE - DAY

One of the idols that Livingston threw out into the field is
 mostly buried by dirt and leaves.

NEFF (V.O.)
 "All above-ground traces of her
 would crack and fade and be carried
 away by the wind.

INT. PUBLIC LIBRARY - DAY (YEARS LATER)

A YOUNG GIRL wanders through the deep and dark stacks. She
 kneels down and pulls out a book at random. It's called THE
 LAST QUEEN. It's dusty and old. On the cover is a picture
 of a young queen surrounded by people who love her.

NEFF (V.O.)
 "But her story would linger... a
 fiction to those who now heard it.
 A nice little fairy tale for so
 many young ears...

The young girl smiles as she reads the old pages.

EXT. HIGHWAY - EVENING (FLASHBACK TO THE NIGHT OF HER CRASH)

INT. CELICA - CONTINUOUS

Neff drives in the rain. Her eyes are glossed over as she stares up at the old stone house in the field.

She sees the Last Queen standing there, looking down at her.

NEFF (V.O.)
"Until the day when she would be
rediscovered and brought back into
the realm of truth."

CUT TO:

EXT. WHEAT FIELD - DAY

The sound of a STREAM close by and FOOTSTEPS.

INT. BLACKNESS

WHISPERS echo outside the darkness, but not in any language ever heard before.

RUSTY METAL GRINDS as...

A BRIGHT LIGHT PIERCES the blackness. The chamber has been breached. The first ray of light strikes the PICTURE OF NEFF, looking like she has stepped out of a fairy tale.

FADE TO BLACK.