

THE QUARRY

US IN JANUARY

Written by
Steven O'Mara
steven.omara@students.mq.edu.au

EXT. - CARPARK - DAY

FADE IN:
1

Summer sun beats down on the bitumen. ALANA (26) and KATE (22) lean against the hood of a beat up old Corolla. Alana is taking drags from a cigarette. They stare down the concrete monolith in front of them. An imposing building which says 'Stillgrove Medical Centre' on the glass sliding doors. Alana scans the building, looking through the windows. Nurses rush around on some floors, some floors have rooms that appear more like offices. Alana makes eye contact with a man who has a shaved head and is wearing a hospital gown. Guiltily she passes the cigarette to Kate, who takes a drag.

ALANA

Jesus.

KATE

Yeah, we should quit.

(beat)

Oh.

Kate stamps out the cigarette butt on the ground.

KATE (CONT'D)
Look, I didn't make you go in when Mum...

ALANA
Don't worry, I'm not gonna do a runner. I just won't get anything out of it.

KATE
You don't know that.

Alana looks back up at the window. The man has gone.

INT. WAITING ROOM - DAY

2

Alana and Kate sit side by side in a packed waiting room. Alana tries passing the time by leafing through well-worn magazines. Kate is peering around at the other patients in the room. They are a total cross-section across age, race, gender. Kate subtly points to a woman on the other side of the room.

KATE
(Whispering to Alana)
What do you think she's in for?

ALANA
Kate, you're actually despicable.

KATE
(Mock outrage)
How dare you? (Beat) I'm just trying to cheer you up.

SECRETARY (O.C.)
Alana Webster?

Alana gets up to leave. Kate pulls her back for a hug, and whispers in Alana's ear.

KATE
I'll text you pics of any gross rashes I see.

INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE - DAY

3

A clock ticks, jarring the otherwise overwhelming silence. Alana is slouched uncomfortably in a gaudy, pastel coloured chair. Across from her is DR. CAMPBELL (not much older than

Alana), reading paperwork for an exceedingly long time. No changes in expression, just the occasional tongue-click and head shake.

After an extended beat Dr. Campbell looks up at Alana and places down the papers, letting out a sigh.

DR. CAMPBELL

So you've indicated you don't wish to pursue talk therapy outside of the consultation last week?

ALANA

I don't trust people who profit off of other people's suffering.

DR. CAMPBELL

If you think that, why continue seeking treatment at all, if you don't mind me asking?

A text flashes up on Alana's phone, a picture of an oozing rash with Kate posing next to it with a thumbs up.

ALANA

Uh, family.

DR. CAMPBELL

I see. Well with the symptoms we've identified, we can definitely start you on a regime to get your life under more control.

ALANA

So what do I have?

Dr Campbell hesitates - he's young and still adjusting to blunt patients.

DR. CAMPBELL

The best we can do is identify collections of symptoms, even if the label doesn't necessarily cover it all.

Alana sits patiently with her arms crossed. She won't proceed unless he gives her a concrete, digestible label.

DR. CAMPBELL (CONT'D)

You've been diagnosed as Bipolar. Now with this regime there may be some side effects, but it's really the best chance...

Dr. Campbell's words begin to fade into muffled unintelligibility. Alana's face gets closer and closer, to the point of claustrophobia.

Her eyes sink, her face drops expression. The colour in the world slowly desaturates. The physical dimensions of the screen start retracting and closing in to a pinpoint.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

4

Alana and Kate are sprawled on a couch together, pizza boxes and an open bottle of wine in front of them. They're watching *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*.

ALANA

I'm liking this sympathy.

KATE

Don't get too used to it. It's still your turn for bin night tomorrow.

They sit for an extended beat, the lights of the television projecting onto their face.

KATE (CONT'D)

It's a good step though. Thanks for going.

Alana smiles back at Kate, without taking her eyes from the screen. The movie is at the point where Cameron's father's car goes crashing through the window.

ALANA

I love this scene.

INT. PHARMACIST - DAY

5

Alana is standing at a counter opposite a familiar looking PHARMACIST (note: the same actor as Dr. Campbell), and once again the world is severely muted in colour. In front of them is a small line of a few pill bottles. Each has the name 'ALANA WEBSTER' emblazoned on the label, above some medical mumbo jumbo.

PHARMACIST

...once every three days but only between meals. Got that?

Alana snaps out of a haze. Normal colour returns.

ALANA

I think so.

Alana takes the pill bottles and attempts to stuff them into her handbag. They don't fit. She begins unpacking the contents of the bag onto the counter - phone, purse, makeup mirror. But the items don't stop coming, like the bag of Mary Poppins. More and more peculiar objects begin to emerge - a teddy bear, a knife, a mesh bag of marbles, an encyclopedia, loose cut grass. A small mountain of objects amass, but the pill bottles still don't fit. Alana's heart is audibly pounding as she tries to stuff them in the bag, her breaths getting shorter and more urgent.

PHARMACIST

Alana?

Alana's head snaps up, remembering where she is. She looks down, at the pill bottles still in her hand and her handbag fastened shut. The mountain of objects is nowhere in sight. She makes awkward eye contact with the pharmacist.

ALANA

Do I know you from somewhere?

PHARMACIST

...no? I only started here a month ago. Anyway, you should be sorted with these, contact your therapist or GP if anything arises.

Alana puts the pill bottles in her handbag, with the greatest of care.

ALANA

Thanks.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

6

Kate is washing up the dishes, while Alana has lined up the pill bottles on the kitchen counter. One is in her hand, as she inspects the label.

ALANA

(reading)

Only take after meals. Got it.

Alana shakes out two triangle blue pills and chugs them down with water. Kate watches over her shoulder. She tries to ease the tension.

KATE

You fucking druggie.

Alana chokes down two oblong orange pills. She smiles at Kate, who's trying her best to look supportive.

ALANA

Go back to washing up, you might find a black pot and a kettle in there.

Kate laughs this off and flicks some soap foam at Alana.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT - LATER

7

Alana is asleep in the dead of the night. She is tossing and turning. She is covered in sweat - not Hollywood 'glowing' sweat. More of an aggressive, ugly sweat. Like an addict coming down off a binge.

A metallic, high-pitched whine begins to fade in.

Alana's stomach gurgles, her eyes shoot open. Disoriented at first, she looks around at the room in the dark. Glancing down she sees the sweat that has formed on and around her. Another gurgle.

The metallic screeching starts to crescendo.

Alana jumps up out of bed, with urgency and purpose. She takes two or three frenzied steps before clutching her back and crying out in agony.

Louder.

Alana bursts into the ensuite bathroom. She grips the sink, knuckles white. She looks up herself in the mirror. Bright red yet shaking as if she's in the Antarctic.

For a sudden, brief flash, an alternate vision of Alana appears in the mirror. Pale white, blood flowing freely from both wrists, purple bruising around her neck. The figure stares back at Alana, expressionless.

This brief flash sends Alana into panic mode, clutching her own hands to make sure they're really how she sees them, hyperventilating. A gurgle.

Unbearably loud. A climax.

Alana rushes over to the toilet, gets on her knees and flips the lid with reckless abandon. A short, sharp breath in. The screeching is replaced with the guttural sound of Alana emptying her stomach into the toilet. She flips her head up.

Uncomfortably close, Alana's face fills the frame. Streams of tears have run past her bloodshot eyes. The sweat is tenfold, and evidence of the vomit has already started to crust around her mouth. Staying focused, we pull back to reveal:

(MATCH CUT TO:)

INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE - DAY

8

Frozen, Dr. Campbell's office materialises behind Alana - still in her nightwear and in the vulnerable state from moments ago.

Dr. Campbell is writing some notes in his typically drawn-out manner.

DR. CAMPBELL

So you say you experienced some nausea in the past week. Any other symptoms?

Back to Alana, who is cleaned up. A sundress, flats, subtle eye make-up, and definitely no vomit.

Not a trace of the night before.

ALANA

Um, I sweat a lot now, which is new. My anxiety attacks are still a thing. But they feel much worse.

Dr Campbell raises an eyebrow. He writes even more arduously slow notes. The clock ticks.

DR. CAMPBELL

Well with these symptoms, I can offer you an adjustment. Then we'll see how you respond to it and keep trying and refining.

ALANA

This isn't very precise, is it?

This strikes a nerve with Dr Campbell. Flustered, he answers.

DR. CAMPBELL

We don't know exactly what causes deep, recurring disorders. The brain is mysterious, Alana. But our tools are strong. We can get you to a good place. We just have to find the path.

Alana shifts uncomfortably in her seat. She begins scratching at her arm. We stay focused on this.

DR. CAMPBELL (O.C.) (CONT'D)

Let's figure this out, try the adjustment.

Alana stops in her tracks and the screen rushes towards her face, like we're travelling through her eyes to...

INT. VARIOUS LOCATIONS - DAY

Cut to:
9

MONTAGE: Alana goes about her day to day routine, with differing adjustments to her medication affecting her world. An experimental, jazzy underscore. Alana is lying in bed. She is acutely conscious.

SUPER: Adjustment 1.

ALANA (V.O.)
I'm having trouble sleeping now.

Alana's eyes slowly start to close. The moment they shut, the alarm clock next to her buzzes. She punches it.

CUT TO:
Alana is in the kitchen making herself lunch. She attempts to open a jar of mayonnaise. She can't open it. Jump forward in time to her using a towel to grip the jar. Not useful.

Further forward. The jar is jammed between her legs as she uses both arms to try open the lid. The jar slips out from between her legs and smashes on the floor. She stares at it.

ALANA (V.O.)
My muscles seem weaker too. Alana walks out of the kitchen.

DR. CAMPBELL (V.O.)
Okay, we have your second adjustment configured.

CUT TO:
Alana is lying in bed again. This time she's alone, fast asleep with the alarm clock buzzing incessantly next to her.

SUPER: Adjustment 2.

ALANA (V.O.)
Now I'm too tired.

CUT TO:
Alana is having her morning shower when her stomach gurgles. A panicked look in her eye. She quickly runs out of the shower and embraces the toilet bowl like earlier.

CUT TO:

Alana is grocery shopping, staring down the fresh produce section. Her shopping trolley is empty.

ALANA (V.O.)
My nausea is getting much worse. My appetite is completely gone.

Alana walks out of frame to keep shopping.

ALANA (V.O.)
Yet I've gained weight, which is total bullshit.

DR. CAMPBELL (V.O.)
Third adjustment...

CUT TO:

SUPER: Third Adjustment.

Alana is sitting watching television at night with Kate. She scratches her arm again. She pulls up her sleeve to reveal a deep red rash that's blistering. Kate looks on concerned from the background.

ALANA (V.O.)
...skin problems...

DR. CAMPBELL
Fourth adjustment.

The underscore starts picking up speed at a frantic pace. Cuts become more frequent. All the voices blend into each other to form an unholy choir. Again, the world is literally losing colour throughout. As Dr. Campbell lists off the adjustments, the words appear and fly off the screen.

Dr. Campbell's voice becomes more uncertain with every adjustment, to the endpoint of a question-asking, permission-seeking tone.

CUT TO:

Alana roars down a highway in her Corolla, cigarette in mouth. Moments later, the car is stationary on the side of the road, Alana is crying and having a meltdown in the driver's seat.

ALANA (V.O.)
Mood swings.

DR. CAMPBELL (V.O.)
Fifth adjustment. Sixth adjustment.

CUT TO:

Alana is brushing her teeth when the same alternate version of her from earlier appears again in the mirror. She shrieks.

ALANA (V.O.)
Visions. Suicidal thoughts.

DR. CAMPBELL (V.O.)
Seventh adjustment. Eighth adjustment. Ninth...

Alana's world is now crashing together. Past symptoms. Dr. Campbell's voice is counting upwards and repeating over itself. Rapid fire cuts. The music indecipherable, distorted and unbearably loud.

QUICK CUTS:

Alana's rash.

The broken jar.

Excessive sleep.

Vomiting naked with the shower still running.

The mirror vision.

Insomnia.

Crying in the car.

**SMASH CUT TO:
END MONTAGE**

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

10

The world has only the slightest hint of colour, and the noise from milliseconds ago is replaced by the most still of silences.

Alana stares down the lineup of pill bottles on the kitchen counter.

A long beat.

She picks up one bottle and unscrews the lid. Two square orange pills fall into her palm. She inspects the label, which fills the screen.

"ALANA WEBSTER. TAKE ONCE DAILY BETWEEN MEALS. ACTIVE INGREDIENTS..."

Alana looks down at the pills in her hand. She crosses the room and defiantly throws them down the kitchen sink, followed by the whole bottle.

She grabs the other bottles and empties their contents too.
She takes the empty bottles and heads upstairs.
The world returns to colour.

INT./EXT. THE WEBSTER HOUSE - VARIOUS LOCATIONS - NIGHT 11

Kate pulls her car into the driveway. She enters the house with a bouquet of petrol station flowers.

KATE
Alana? I've got something for you!

Kate walks into the kitchen, pulls out a vase and fills it with water.

KATE (CONT'D)
(quietly muttering to herself)
Now, where are the scissors?

Kate turns around and one of the drawers is already flung open. She makes a quick face, but grabs the scissors and continues on her way.

KATE (CONT'D)
Alana?
She sets the flowers down, and takes a beat to admire them with pride. Realising there's no answer, she walks around to find Alana.
The messy living room. No Alana.
The sterile laundry. No Alana.
She makes her way upstairs and into the bedroom. No Alana.
She knocks on the ensuite door, then opens it.
Alana curled up in the corner of the dry bathtub, an empty pack of cigarettes and two empty wine bottles in front of her.
Kate coughs through the remaining smoke in the room. She looks over at the garbage bin on the other side of the room.
She notices the empty pill bottles and panics.

KATE (CONT'D)
Fuck, Alana. Have you taken al-

ALANA
No, I just got rid of them.

Kate gingerly walks over to Alana and gets in the tub with her. They sit quietly for a beat.

KATE
Why did you throw them?

ALANA

I always either felt worse than before or numb.
Which they call 'stable'. It's no way to live.

Kate holds Alana's hand, as Alana puts her head on Kate's shoulder.

**FADE TO:
12**

INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE - DAY

Both Alana and Kate are in the office this time. Outnumbered, Dr Campbell is visibly intimidated.

DR. CAMPBELL

This is highly unorthodox.

ALANA

I can't do this again without her here.

Kate smiles over at Alana.

DR. CAMPBELL

I'm not just talking about her. You want to go completely off the regime? You were making solid progress Alana.

Both Kate and Alana pull the crossed arm routine from earlier - it runs in the family.

Dr. Campbell sighs.

DR. CAMPBELL (CONT'D)

Alternatives are few, especially considering you won't pursue talk therapy. And you began developing symptoms of a treatment-resistant disorder.

KATE

So what do we do?

Dr. Campbell shifts uncomfortably. He hesitates his words.

DR. CAMPBELL

Electroconvulsive therapy is the standard in cases like these.

Alana and Kate share an extremely worried look. They clasp hands, both with white knuckles.

DR. CAMPBELL (CONT'D)

It sounds scarier than it is. It's effective for more than 50% of patients with your particular disorder.

ALANA

...and the other half?

Dr Campbell considers engaging, but pulls back. He is extremely measured with his response.

DR. CAMPBELL

Either you receive the treatment, with its risks and benefits taken into account...

Kate looks over to Alana.

DR. CAMPBELL (CONT'D)

...or you can suffer your symptoms for a few more years until they snowball.

INT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT - DAYS LATER

13

Kate is at Alana's bedside. She's reading over a pile of medical paperwork.

Through her eyes, we see some of the pages:

"By signing off I recognise the inherent risk in the procedure, including and not limited to the known side effects of: Memory loss, jaw pain, weakening of heart tissue, inability to process information..."

Kate puts the clipboard down.

KATE

What. The. Fuck.

Now the roles are reversed, Kate is anxious about what's going to happen and Alana tries to lighten the mood.

ALANA

Hey, when I get out of here we should download *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*.

KATE

Not funny.

(beat)

A little funny.

Alana motions for Kate to come over to her. They hug and Kate lies on the empty space on the bed next to her. A still, silent, perfect moment. The Kate pulls out her phone.

KATE (CONT'D)

This is going on my Snapchat story.

INT. SURGICAL WAITING ROOM - LATER

14

Alana is conscious, but a bit out of it. A SURGEON is nearby, trying to be reassuring. This surgeon, like all the other medical personnel we've encountered, looks oddly similar to Dr. Campbell.

ALANA

You seem very familiar.

SURGEON

(with a heavy Spanish accent)

I get that a lot.

ALANA

Will it hurt?

SURGEON

It'll mostly be confusion. Patients only record a small amount of lost memory.

ALANA

How do I know the amount of memory loss if I've already lost it?

A beat. The surgeon chuckles, conceding her point.

A crackle of inaudible, distorted words through an intercom system. Nurses on either side of Alana spring into action. Cannulas get inserted into her arms, electrodes are placed onto her head.

SURGEON

Do you have a history of seizures?

ALANA

No.

Alana goes to elaborate, but is intercepted by another nurse fitting a breathing apparatus. The sound of mechanical breathing fills our ears.

INT. OPERATING THEATRE - MOMENTS LATER

15

Alana is in the middle of the room, with a number of identical doctors hovering around her.

Suddenly we're seeing the room through Alana's eyes. Masked faces drift in and out of frame.

SURGEON

I'm going to get you to count backwards from ten, okay?

The screen nods up and down.

ALANA (V.O.)

Ten, nine,

The sound of static appears faintly, like an old CRT television warming up.

ALANA (V.O.)

eight, seven, six,

Edges become soft, light becomes dim.

ALANA (V.O.)

five... four...

**FADE TO:
15**

A VOID - OUTSIDE OF TIME

Extended blackness.

A visible waveform with the sound of lightning.

A flash of the pills going down the sink.

A spark. Back to nothing.

A flash of Alana driving down the highway, carefree.

Two frames of Alana's first meeting with Dr. Campbell.

Darkness.

Alana and Kate as children. Their mother still around. But only for a fleeting second.

A hundred unrecognisable memories appear at once for a second. Then nothing.

The sound of breathing appears.

INT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

16

Kate is sitting in a chair, watching the mounted TV on the wall. Next to her is an unconscious Alana in bed.

Kate has either just woken up from a nap or has been awake for an excessive amount of hours. She's frazzled. Alana's eyes flicker open. She stares at her surroundings, her wrist tag, the gown. The world is more saturated in colour than we've seen before. Kate looks over at Alana. Careful not to overwhelm her, Kate approaches and smiles.

KATE
Hey sleepyhead.

A nurse enters and gives Alana a plastic cup of water. Her hands tremble lightly as she drinks. Kate motions over to the corner table.

KATE (CONT'D)
Look at what I got for you.

There's a giant, gorgeous bouquet of chrysanthemums sitting in an ornate vase.

ALANA
Chrysanthemums - my favourite.
How'd you know?

Alana seems genuinely confused as to how she would know this, but Kate just smiles and holds Alana's hand.

Alana looks down at their hands, confused. The trepidation in Alana's eyes gives Kate pause, who lets go.

ALANA (CONT'D)
And you are...?

Kate stops dead in her tracks. Her face drops. Alana's face also changes, feeling bad for seemingly offending this unknown woman. The nurse leaves to get a doctor. They stand there in silence. Alana looks up at the television on the wall. There is the familiar scene of an expensive red car crashing through a window as Ferris Bueller, Cameron Frye, and Sloane Peterson look on.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END.