

THE DIRECTOR

Written by

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FADE IN:

A SERIES OF SHOTS.

A WHIRLWIND OF NEWS FOOTAGE, FLASHING CAMERAS, FLASHING LIGHTS. SIRENS...

A SHARPLY-DRESSED MAN. HIS SMILE. HIS EYES...

NEWSCASTER (V.O.)
An incredible scene at the
Arlington Movie House...

RINGS ON HIS FINGERS...

OTHER NEWSCASTER (V.O.)
...people are calling it the most
fascinating story of the year. It's
blowing up online...

A LIMOUSINE. A FIGURE IN A BLACK HOODIE...

THIRD NEWSCASTER (V.O.)
...what started as just another
success in the visionary career of
this mysterious young filmmaker...

A few PARAMEDICS rush through a CROWD...

FOURTH NEWSCASTER (V.O.)
...a shocking report broke out when
college student Ash Walker...

MORE CAMERA FLASHES. NEWS ARTICLE HEADLINES reading "WHO IS 'THE DIRECTOR'?" and "MOVIE HOUSE FIASCO"...

OTHER NEWSCASTER (V.O.)
...tells her story of working with
the man only known to many film
festivals as 'The Director'...

NEWSCASTER (V.O.)
Her words tonight make us wonder,
now, more than ever...who exactly
is The Director?

THIRD NEWSCASTER (V.O.)
Who exactly is The Director?

OTHER NEWSCASTER (V.O.)
Who's 'The Director'?

FOURTH NEWSCASTER (V.O.)
Who is The Director?

These words SWIRL around the SIRENS, LIGHTS, RINGS, GLAMOUR. VOICES OVERLAP...all asking the same QUESTION. It builds to a cacaphony, and then, when it's almost overwhelming, we...

CUT TO:

INT. A PRISTINE BEDROOM - NIGHT

The place is spotless. Almost to a fault. A FIGURE lies asleep in a bed too big for their body, surrounded by walls covered in FILM POSTERS.

THEN...the droning beat of TAYLOR SWIFT'S "READY FOR IT".

A PHONE ALARM BLARES. A HAND WHIPS OUT from underneath the covers and shuts it off. The figure BOLTS UPRIGHT out of bed, bringing the phone to their face. A notification reads...

"PREMIERE TONIGHT".

INT. BATHROOM - LATER

The BACK of THE FIGURE. He's dressed in silk pajamas, combing his hair. He picks up a pair of SUNGLASSES and puts them on.

INT. WALK-IN CLOSET - LATER

The figure enters the closet, a wonderland of decadence.

A SERIES OF SHOTS.

Lacing up polished dress shoes...rolling a lint roller down a pair of pants...pulling on a pair of white gloves...putting on a beret...and grabbing a business card.

The figure takes the CARD and goes to put it in his breast pocket, but before it vanishes, we see it simply reads...

THE DIRECTOR

EXT. MOVIE THEATRE - NIGHT

A LIMOUSINE pulls up alongside the curb of a local movie theatre. There's a SUBSTANTIAL CROWD there. Some have CAMERAS.

They LIGHT UP the limo as a CHAUFFEUR steps out and opens the back door.

Only the BACK of The Director is seen as he emerges from within and struts his way through the CROWD, who are all ABUZZ with chatter. The Director heads into the theatre.

INT. SCREENING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The doors BURST OPEN as The Director strides down an aisle towards a BIG SCREEN. The THEATREGOERS see him enter and begin to APPLAUD RAUCOUSLY! Many RISE from their seats.

The Director's GLEAMING SHOES are seen taking the stage. He SPREADS HIS ARMS out wide, basking in the glory. He motions for it to keep going. Not wanting it to ever end.

As The Director showboats and boasts, a bit of RUSTLING starts to become noticeable behind one of the VELVET CURTAINS framing the screen.

Peeking out from behind it is a panting, desperate woman in a BLACK HOODIE. There's genuine fear and determination in her eyes. This is ASH WALKER, 22.

She stares at The Director, watching the applause wash over him. She smiles to herself, her eyes welling up with tears.

She takes a deep breath, pulls out A GUN, and aims it right at THE DIRECTOR's chest.

Her EYES CLOSE. Her FINGER GRIPS THE TRIGGER.

CUT TO:

INT. A DINGY COLLEGE APARTMENT - WINTER

The front door CREAKS OPEN. Ash is standing on the other side, bundled for the winter, rolling a SUITCASE behind her.

SUPER: "FIVE MONTHS EARLIER"

She closes the door behind her and SIGHS.

ASH
Home sweet home...

She walks into the COMMON SPACE, where THREE WOMEN sit. One of them, JULIET FLORES, is watering some PLANTS. The other two, ANNIE DRIVER and GABI D'ANGELO, are watching TV.

GABI
Hey, look who's back!

ANNIE
What's up, Ash-hole? How was your Winter Break?

ASH
My Winter Break was like "The Matrix: Revolutions": Painfully average with far too many religious undertones for my taste.

ANNIE
What'd your parents do this time?

ASH
Oh, the usual. The Christmas season war zone of political tirades and soggy casseroles. They're so eager to "honor God", they act like he'll take it personally if somebody so much as drops a spoon.

GABI

If only they knew you spend 80% of the year in the furthest place from God you could get. Hell, the last time a church group came here, they literally got struck by lightning.

Ash laughs and goes to join Annie and Gabi on the couch.

ASH

That's why I'm so glad I have a place like this to run away to. Even though in a couple months, the school's gonna force me outta here whether I like it or not.

JULIET

Graduation, baby! When the "real world's" gonna piss all over our dreams and we've just gotta shut up and take it!

ANNIE

Why...are you excited about that?

JULIET

You don't need to know. You DO need to know where I'm headed after I make my escape from here, though. Straight to the city! I've got an internship with Variety lined up for the fall. It doesn't pay much, but it's gonna get me major connections.

Ash nods, impressed.

ASH

Wow. Good for you, Jules. When did you land that?

JULIET

Oh, I've known about that since November. I applied for it last summer.

ASH

(Stunned)
Really? Last summer?

GABI

Yeah, that's when I found out I landed a job at my brother's company. He runs a fitness collective. Wants to put me in the Chicago office. I fly out the day after I graduate.

ASH

Holy shit, Gabi. I'm impressed.

ANNIE
Oh, I forgot to tell you guys! Over the break, I heard back from the grad program over at NYU.

ASH
Yeah? What's the word?

ANNIE
I got in!

GABI
Ayyy! Congrats, Annie!

JULIET
That's awesome!

Juliet joins the other girls on the couch. Annie reaches for a bag of CHIPS sitting on a nearby table. She passes it around amongst the suitemates.

ANNIE
What about you, Ash? What's the big plan after you escape the Ninth Circle? Got a dream to chase?

ASH
Me? Jesus, I...I honestly thought I'd have figured it out by now, but I also didn't really think I'd have to. My plan for now is just to enjoy this last bit of time in the societal limbo between childhood whimsy and adult responsibilities.

GABI
Hey, I respect that. You may not have your life together just yet, but you're gonna have a damn good time one way or the other, right?

Juliet, Gabi, and Annie all laugh. Ash weakly chuckles, but then stares wide-eyed, frightened, straight ahead.

ASH (V.O.)
I am in a major crisis.

CUT TO:

INT. DEAN KATZOPOLIS'S OFFICE - THE NEXT DAY

Ash sits in front of DEAN KATZOPOLIS, 40's, an overly-cheery and spindly-looking man. He lets out a hearty laugh.

KATZOPOLIS
Well, most people usually wait until the MIDDLE of their lives to have those! Don't rush things, Miss Walker! You've got a whole life ahead of you.

ASH

Exactly. That's why I came to see you. I've been back here for less than a day and my brain already feels like it's been stampeded upon by wildebeests.

KATZOPOLIS

Ah, yes. The mental savannah is a wild and untamed locale that only the brave ever dare trek through! That's exactly why we offer free counseling services to all our students, you know.

ASH

Is that why? Or do you only offer us free therapy because you secretly know we're gonna need it?

KATZOPOLIS

Miss Walker, are you here to ask for my help, or to criticize how I run my school?

ASH

Sorry, sir. It's just...everyone I know feels like they've got their lives all figured out. They've been thinking 5 years into the future, and meanwhile, I've been stuck in the present.

KATZOPOLIS

Well, it's important to live in the moment, Miss Walker.

ASH

Not if those moments pass you by before you get the chance to enjoy them! Now, I'm scrambling trying to figure out what my next chapter's gonna be before I even end this one! That's why I need you.

KATZOPOLIS

Well, have you applied for any internships or graduate programs in the past?

ASH

No...

KATZOPOLIS

Any jobs?

ASH

No! I...don't you need a degree for even the most decent of jobs?

KATZOPOLIS

These days, you'd be surprised how little that actually matters. Miss Walker, I've been a friend to your family for a long time, and I have tried my absolute best to keep you afloat. However, I'm going to be brutally honest with you here: I'm afraid you're too late. Most of the top graduate schools have already selected their students for the fall, and most internships started making their decisions over the winter break.

Ash's face falls. She sinks into her seat.

KATZOPOLIS (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, Miss Walker. It's out of my hands.

ASH

Well, why can't you just put it back in your hands? There's gotta be something I can do.

KATZOPOLIS

If there is, I wouldn't know about it. You know, there's no shame in taking a year off, moving back to your hometown...

ASH

You know that's not an option.

Katzopolis sighs. He gets up and opens the door.

KATZOPOLIS

Then the only door I can open for you right now is this one.

Ash gets up, scoffs, and storms out of the office. Katzopolis looks on as she leaves.

CUT TO:

INT. DINING HALL - THAT AFTERNOON

Ash is walking to a TABLE with Gabi, both carrying trays of questionable-looking FOOD.

GABI

Ash, the Dean's a total toad-boner! Don't listen to him.

ASH

How can I not? I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for him! Now, he's just throwing me under the bus!

GABI
 Nah, even that's too forgiving.
 It's like he's throwing you in
 FRONT of the bus!

ASH
 Oooh. Like in Mean Girls.

They SIT at a TABLE as someone nearby catches Gabi's eye.

GABI
 Oop. And speaking of mean girls...

Walking by their table is LIZ SHEPHERD, 22, an overconfident lacrosse player. Ash's gaze lingers as she passes.

GABI (CONT'D)
 Quit staring! I hear if you look at
 her too long, you'll turn to stone!

ASH
 Why do you have to be so hard on
 Liz? She seems perfectly nice.

GABI
 Says the girl who'll eat live
 grasshoppers if it means Liz'll say
 a single word to you.

ASH
 Shut up! You know I'm terrified of
 talking to women!

GABI
 You're talking to me.

ASH
 I meant HOT women.

GABI
 Ouch.

ASH
 I mean women...who are also into
 women! God, if it weren't for my
 parent's being so aggressively
 Puritanical, I'd probably have
 better luck with this shit.

CUT TO:

INT. ASH'S FAMILY HOME, LIVING ROOM - MANY YEARS EARLIER

Ash is sitting on a couch, with her parents, BRIAN and SARAH WALKER, mid-50's, eccentrically Christian.

SARAH
 God works in wonderful ways,
 Ashlynn. He gave men their...
 (MORE)

SARAH (CONT'D)

thingies in order to give women the ability to procreate and bring children into His world!

BRIAN

That's right, hon. And Ashlynn, you're going to want to experiment, maybe try showing some skin to a few men before you marry one, but that's Lucifer tempting you. Remember that. Every time you reveal yourself to a man, it not only pleasures him, but it pleasures the Devil, too.

SARAH

And you don't want to pleasure the Devil. It'd be uncomfortable. And probably very warm.

Sarah and Brian chuckle. Ash shifts in her seat.

CUT TO:

INT. DINING HALL - PRESENT DAY

Ash picks at her FOOD as Gabi nods in understanding.

ASH

Hell, I didn't know women could even LIKE women until I got here.

GABI

Well, there's one good thing this place did for you.

ASH

Yeah? Well, one good thing isn't much to look back on. If I don't get my shit together, I'm gonna end up moving back in with my parents, who'll probably either force me to join a convent or get a job at one of the two Chik-Fil-A's in town.

GABI

Yeesh. Those are probably the worst options since last season's Drag Race finale.

ASH

Exactly! I feel like this place has got me moving at a different speed. I haven't even kissed a girl! I haven't been anywhere outside here or my hometown because my parents are always on my back! My time here's leading to nothing! Hell, the only person I've ever told about any of this is YOU! I'm a mess, Gabi! A directionless loser!