

**LOVE'S GATE**

script sample

Written by

J.W. Newberry

**EXT. ART GALLERY - DAY**

**SAMUEL "SAM" BROWN**, African-American male, late 20s, handsome and bookish, approaches an ATTENDANT at the door.

SAM

Sam Brown.

The Attendant looks over her list on an iPad.

ATTENDANT

Sorry, I don't see you on here.

SAM

Samuel maybe.

The Attendant shakes her head. Sam leans in to catch a look.

SAM

Are you sure though? You really don't see my name? It should be--

She holds the iPad to her chest and glares at him.

ATTENDANT

Yea.

Sam turns away in a huff. He sends an email on his phone to *friendlyAnon@hotmail.com*: "My name wasn't on the there??"

He looks into the gallery through its big front window.

Connoisseurs and business folks mingle and sip wine. Laughing at dry jokes. Admiring abstract paintings. Praising a HIPSTER ARTISTE.

Sam studies them.

THE ART DEALER, an African-American man, 55, exuding charisma in a designer suit, limps into frame with a cane.

He shows off his Hipster Artiste like a pony at a State fair.

Sam holds his gaze and records a voice memo into his phone.

SAM

Bullshit is in the eye of the beholder. Only some of us see it. You get under all the fluff and you'll find how broken a man is. Rugged, worn, tired. Most never think to ask...

CUT TO BLACK.

ON BLACK

We hear a piano playing Mozart's Sonata 16.

The sun sets over the glistening Chicago Skyline from our view on Lake Michigan. An old lighthouse withers away in the foreground.

The rolling sounds of the sonata guide us toward the city.

**EXT. VACANT LOT - DUSK**

A melancholy man, 70s, pale and frail, stands on the sidewalk. Hands in the pockets of his ironed slacks. He gazes through a fence at an empty lot near the lake front. This is **GREGORY SULLIVAN**.

The sounds of gentle feet make contact with floor and leap away under the sonata...

**INT. THEATER - SAME**

THE MUSIC IS HERE.

A dark-haired ballerina LEAPS across a giant stage. A spot light attempts to keep up with her. This is **ZOE GABRAN**, caucasian female, 30, messy hair bouncing as she dances.

From a private box seat up on the left sits **LINAS GOLDWATER**, African-American male, 55, the captivating art dealer we saw at the gallery opening.

He's got one foot up on the balustrade, and his cane leaning against the chair. He taps his fingers to the music.

Zoe's hair whips her face as she does pirouette turns.

**CLAUDIA DOWD**, caucasian female, 45, English and cold as ice, stands in the front row. She wears a shawl over a long dress.

CLAUDIA

What's going on with your hair?  
This isn't *Giselle*. Put it up!

The silhouette of one Ballerina offstage whispers to another.

BALLERINA

(sarcastic)  
Ask your husband.

The other Silhouetted Ballerina giggles and swats her on the arm.

Zoe smirks up at Linas from the stage. She puts a hand on her leg and extends it straight back into an arabesque.

Up in the box seat, Linas rests his cheek on his hand with a twinkle in his eye.

**EXT. VACANT LOT - DUSK**

THE MUSIC CONTINUES.

Back on Gregory Sullivan, gazing eerily at the empty lot.

BIRD'S EYE VIEW: There's a giant hole in the ground. The abandoned foundation of a skyscraper, surrounded by buildings on three sides.

He lowers his head and shuffles up the sidewalk.

**INT./EXT. GREEN LINE TRAIN - NIGHT**

Gregory looks out the window of the elevated train as it leaves the Chicago Loop.

**INT. THEATER - SAME**

The theater is empty and dark, all but for a lone ghost light glowing on stage.

HEAVY BREATHS AND MOANS over the continuing piano sonata.

**INT. BACKSTAGE HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS**

Not a soul in sight. We follow the sounds of pleasure to...

**INT. DRESSING ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL. Bodies rocking. The light is dim.

TIGHT ON: Zoe, as she moves back and forth on--

Linas. In a chair. His eyes fixed on her. Piercing her. Hands on her hips.

He strains to sit up and kiss her, but--

She GRABS his cane and forces it down across the arms of the chair, trapping him.

He GROANS. She looks down on him with satisfaction.

Claudia circles them like a shark. She dives in for a kiss on Linas' lips, forceful hands on his shoulders.

**EXT. SULLIVAN HOUSE - NIGHT**

Gregory lumbers up his back porch steps.

He struggles to get his key in the door. Succeeds. He trips in as the door opens.

**INT. SULLIVAN HOUSE - CONTINUOUS**

Gregory makes his way through the living room to the foyer and slips his shoes off.

He looks down at a waist-high package leaning against the wall. He tears some of the wrapping off. It's a painting.

He scoffs and walks up the stairs as the PIANO MUSIC BUILDS.

Creak. Creak. Creak.

He reaches the top, but halts. A gaze of confusion, and he is-PUSHED by a gloved hand.

His frail body tumbles backward.

Down

Down

Down the stairs, until he hits the foyer floor with a THUD.

Our POV gazes upon him from above. He lies there motionless.

THE SONATA ENDS.

**EXT. STREET - DAY**

One of those weird diagonal Clark street intersections in Chicago's Lakeview East neighborhood.

A BICYCLIST swerves as cars speed by.

PEDESTRIANS hurry across the road and the walk-sign blinks

3 - 2 - 1

A city bus pulls away revealing...

A coffee shop crammed into an old limestone building.

**INT. CAFE - DAY**

Sam gazes out the window, glazed over, eyes red.

YOLANDA, Latina female, late 40s, sits across from him.

YOLANDA

Sam.

No answer. She gives up and looks down at her laptop. She scrolls an online magazine whose header reads: "IRL CHICAGO" with a headline below it: "FAMED ARCHITECT DEAD."

Sam grips a cup of coffee until his fingers turn white.

YOLANDA

You need a shot of espresso.

She wipes her forehead with the back of her hand.

YOLANDA

Back in February I vowed not to bitch about the heat... But damn.

SAM

Linus Goldwater. I saw him at a gallery opening. The intrigue is just-- You'll get clicks *and* it'll be for a person of substance.

YOLANDA

Oh, you're awake. He's the ballet director right? At the Dahlman.

SAM

(turns to her)  
President. His wife is Artistic director.

YOLANDA

You want to write a fluff piece on a philanthropist business guy?

SAM

A man who fosters art for a living. Someone who *makes* it happen, through no artistic ability of his own. *But*, there's a whole chapter of his life they leave out of his bio. The fallen dancer who lost a leg.

Yolanda is mildly intrigued.

YOLANDA

Listen, I might have ate that shit up back when I was a Tumblr girlie, but we write about community. Not exposés on mysterious men. And I've got Caldwell covering Arts and Entertainment.

SAM

What about today's cover story? Gregory Sullivan. He was a philanthropist.

YOLANDA

A prolific architect first. And he just *died*.

Sam sits back.

SAM

Do you know what it's like to be an art major who covers fucking food?

YOLANDA

Food is art, papi.

SAM

No it's not. And my stomach isn't going to take it much longer.

YOLANDA

The finest restauranteurs of Chicago are going to smack you upside the head.

Sam leans forward. His eyes strain.

SAM

I need this.

Yolanda looks away and sips her latte.

SAM

I'm serious. Please?

She turns back to him.

YOLANDA

If you take care of your usual beat, sure. But you're on your own. And you're only getting paid if we use it.

She shuts her laptop and slides it into her satchel.

YOLANDA

Good luck getting in touch with him. The ballet only responds to Caldwell with opening night tickets. Don't piss him off.

She walks to the door--

YOLANDA

This coulda been a Zoom.

And she's gone. Sam pulls out his phone. He scrolls through an email thread with *friendlyAnon@gmail.com*.

Sam: "I can't do this anymore. Do it yourself."

*friendlyAnon@gmail.com*: "Don't need the \$\$\$? Ur the writer. Try the studio @ 1pm"

He rests his head against the cafe window.

#### **INT. DANCE LOUNGE - DAY**

Sam looks around. The place is empty but for some chairs and gym bags along the walls. Above them are posters of past "Dahlman Ballet" shows.

He follows the sound of a piano, and pokes his head through a door.

#### **INT. DANCE STUDIO - CONTINUOUS**

The door creaks. The PIANIST stops playing. All eyes turn to Sam. He gawks at the SWEATY BALLERINAS and MALE DANSEURS.

Claudia, arms folded across her shawl, whips her head toward him. She relaxes when their eyes meet.

CLAUDIA

Yes?

SAM

(leaning in the doorway)  
I uh, I'm covering the upcoming show for IRL Chicago. I was hoping to get the... vibe of the rehearsal.

CLAUDIA

I had a ticket sent to Caldwell.  
Not even the Tribune sits in on  
rehearsals.

SAM

Exactly. We're a community and arts  
driven magazine. This would be big  
for us.

Silence. Claudia purses her lips, and then--

CLAUDIA

Alright. You're welcome to sit off  
to the side.

Sam drops his notebook and scrambles to pick it back up.

The dancers murmur and laugh at him. He sits on the floor  
against the wall.

CLAUDIA

And stop making noise.

SAM

Yeah. Sure thing.

The pianist plays a waltz, and the dancers begin. Claudia  
claps on the down beats.

CLAUDIA

*One, two, three. One, two, three.*

Sam takes notes.

CLAUDIA

(to the dancers)  
Yes, keep going.

She summons Zoe. They walk over to Sam. He rises.

CLAUDIA

This is Miss Gabran, one of our  
principals in the show.

SAM

Hi. Sam. I'm Sam.

He holds a hand out to Zoe. She nods.

SAM

I thought Mister Goldwater might be  
around too?

Zoe grunts.

CLAUDIA  
Mister Goldwater doesn't frequent  
the studio Samuel-- Sam. I can  
convene with you after rehearsal.  
For now, ask Zoe what you like.

SAM  
Okay, uhm--

CLAUDIA  
Out there.

She motions toward the door.

SAM  
Oh, for sure.

He follows Zoe out.

CLAUDIA  
(to the dancers)  
One, two, three! One, two, three.

**INT. DANCE LOUNGE - CONTINUOUS**

The music fades away. Zoe sits with her legs stretched wide  
on the floor. Sam joins her.

ZOE  
You can grab a chair. I just need  
to stretch.

SAM  
This is fine.

ZOE  
So.

Sam opens his notebook.

SAM  
So what's it like returning to that  
stage again?

ZOE  
This is our first show at the Opera  
House. We used to be at the  
Auditorium theater. Bit of an  
upgrade.

SAM

Right.

A pause.

SAM

Is there a lot of pressure? Leading a show?

Zoe extends her arms between her legs, and stretches.

ZOE

I've lead like five now.

SAM

Yeah...

A beat.

ZOE

I was pressured my whole childhood just to get to this point. Being here is the easy part.

Sam nods.

ZOE

Other than the basic bullshit.

SAM

Basic bullshit?

ZOE

Like my diets never stop pissing me off.

SAM

What is a uh usual diet for you?

ZOE

Leading up to a show? Nothing. I don't eat.

Sam raises his eyebrows.

ZOE

Nah. Peas, lots of peas. Frozen ones.

She stands up, turns around, and bends over stretching her hands to the floor, peering at him between her legs.

ZOE

Have you ever been to a ballet?

Her butt is right up in his face.

SAM

What?

ZOE

You just seem a little out of the loop.

Sam hesitates.

SAM

I love the ballet. Your shows aren't cheap though.

Zoe slides down into the splits.

ZOE

We're on streaming.

SAM

Really?

ZOE

No.

SAM

You know Linas Goldwater right?

ZOE

Well, yeah.

She sits in a butterfly position, legs bent in, feet touching, thighs turned out.

SAM

He's kind of elusive isn't he?

ZOE

Not really. He's just busy playing with money.

SAM

I heard he actually used to be a dancer.

Zoe clears her throat and reclines onto her back.

SAM

(softly)

Are you able to get tickets?  
Like... comped.

ZOE

I am.

SAM

Our other writer, Caldwell, might need his, and I'd really like to see you. It.

Zoe sits up.

ZOE

Are you asking me out to my own ballet?

Sam gulps.

SAM

Just doing my job.

ZOE

Is your job to get awkwardly close to me?

He freezes up.

ZOE

I'm kidding. Pull me up.

She reaches her hand out. He stands and pulls her up off the floor. She pulls her phone out of her gym bag and hands it to him.

ZOE

Give me your contact info.

He does and hands it back to her.

ZOE

Will-call tomorrow at six.

SAM

Thanks.

He turns to go.

ZOE

Aren't you going to wait for Claudia?

SAM

Oh, no. I got what I needed.

He departs.

**INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT**

Claudia sits up in bed, reading on a tablet. Her face glows in the darkness.

Linas enters and leans his cane against the bedside table. He pulls his shirt off.

He turns on his table lamp and sinks onto the bed. He removes his prosthetic leg and lets it fall to the floor.

CLAUDIA  
Turn that off.

Linas looks over at her and the glowing tablet. He reclines back onto his pillow and gazes up at the ceiling.

Claudia turns to him. *Well?*

He doesn't move. She reaches across him. Pauses, hovering over him. Looks into his eyes.

CLAUDIA  
Remember when it was just us?

He stares up at her. She turns his lamp off and rolls back to her side of the bed.

CLAUDIA  
Neither do I.  
(reignites her tablet)  
Roza. What do you think of her?

LINAS  
She's disciplined. Calculated.

CLAUDIA  
No. Attraction.

LINAS  
Zoe's our star.

CLAUDIA  
We don't do stars remember?

LINAS  
Passion.

CLAUDIA  
Uh huh.

She turns her own lamp on and faces him.

CLAUDIA  
She's peaking.

LINAS  
No.

CLAUDIA  
Passion peaks too.

LINAS  
Come on now.

CLAUDIA  
You know better. It's time to move  
on.

Linas turns to her.

LINAS  
I'm happy.

Claudia sits up.

CLAUDIA  
Well, it's gotten dull.

LINAS  
Can't keep up?

CLAUDIA  
She wasn't supposed to be part of  
our *marriage*. It's not that  
serious.

She rises from the bed and walks around to his side.

CLAUDIA  
Why don't we get a man? A young,  
handsome one.

She sits beside him, and runs her hand around his head... and  
his face... and his neck. He writhes with satisfaction.

CLAUDIA  
Or are you too selfish to share  
that side of yourself with me.

She goes down to pull his boxers...

LINAS  
I meant it. I'm happy.

She comes up.

CLAUDIA

Why don't you marry *her* then for Christ's sake. A fine dancer who knows how to get you off. Is that all it takes to replace me?

LINAS

She gets us both off.

Claudia crawls back to her side of the bed.

CLAUDIA

That's all in good fun.

She turns off her lamp and lies down. Darkness. Silence.