

TINSEL TOWN

“I live for these movies. They remind me of a world where I used to live. They bring my memories alive. They are special for me.”

Evangeline Walters was moving in to a new apartment in Los Angeles.

One of then tenants approached her, “You’re like a dead ringer for the girl who used to live her.”

“She was my cousin”.

All the apartments overlooked a quant courtyard.

“Sorry to hear that. My name is Burt. I live in four D.”

“Good to meet you, Burt.”

“Charity and I were friends. What did she tell you about me?”

“She never said much. We were friends, but I didn’t know her that well. We grew up in different parts of the country.”

Detective Richard Barnes was investigating Charity’s death. He knocked on Evangeline’s door and introduced himself.

“It’s dangerous to go out on your own at night.”

“Are you telling me that you’re my new bodyguard?”

“I wouldn’t mind volunteering for the job.”

“I have done pretty well on my own up to this point.”

“It’s a pretty dangerous world.”

“I think I have a pretty good idea who is the source of that danger.”

“I know this neighborhood pretty good. It’s good to take the advice of someone experienced.”

“I’ve handled things pretty well up to this point.”

“Evangeline, you’re new here. You should take the advice of someone who knows.”

She realized that there was a lot that she didn’t know about this place. But she hated the way that Richard lorded over her. She was an adult. She knew things on her own. She wasn’t going to get muscled out of her way of life.

Evangeline had been a stage actress in New York. She had friends in the profession out in Los Angeles. She felt that she could take advantage of the opportunities.

Shep was in acting class with Evangeline. He spent all his time staring at her.

“Evangeline, you are pretty cute. Maybe we could run lines together.”

“I’m good for now. I am taking another acting class. They’ve got

“I know a casting director. I could help you get some film work.”

“I’m not really ready for that. My agent has plans for me.”

“You have an agent. You just got to Los Angeles.”

“I have some good friends in New York. They set me up.

Burt was a well-known novelist. He was also a studio consultant on screen plays. He made money by doing rewrites.

“I wanted to help your cousin in any way that I could. She was a lovely girl. She photographed so well. You remind me of her so much.”

“Thanks for the complement.”

“I would help Charity with her acting. She was so captivating on screen. But she was not a great actress. She wanted to be good. I tried as best as I could. I wanted to bring out her high points. She didn’t have that subtlety. She could almost be rough on screen. It was a little disconcerting.”

“I did everything that I could. I wasn’t really a drama coach. I knew little things. That made her better. But she didn’t have that deep understanding about what made a great actress. She lacked the magic.”

He was revealing too much about himself. He missed her a great deal. But there was something that he wanted from Charity that she would never give him. And he worked her for that.

“I am good with actors. I know things.”

He seemed to be contradicting himself. He had told her that he wasn’t a drama coach. Now he was professing that he was good with actors.

Evangeline feigned interest.

“Tell me what you know. It could help me.”

“It’s all about being honest with the role. Finding the right emotion for the part.”

He was trying to make love with his eyes. He looked her up and down. He tried to make eye contact.

She could feel his weakness. Perhaps her cousin realized the same thing. When you expose a weak man, he can get violent. She wanted to press him more. She wanted to know what he might be hiding.

“Did you see my cousin the night that she died?”

“We had plans. I had promised her dinner. But she cancelled at the last moment. She said that something important came up.”

“Did you ask?”

“She wouldn’t tell me. It didn’t seem like a big deal.”

“You didn’t stop by uninvited. You weren’t curious about what she was doing.”

“Sure, I was curious. But I also respected her privacy.”

“It wouldn’t have been a big deal to walk past her apartment. You could have seen if someone was in there with her.”

“You can see her apartment from the street. And I could have checked if she was alone. But I was a gentleman.”

“But a gentleman might have thought that it was a good idea just to take a look on her.”

“That’s not really a gentlemanly thing to do.”

“It is sort of a guy thing to do. A normal guy would take a look.”

“Not me. I thought that would be wrong. Sure, I wanted to know.”

“You couldn’t help me with some evidence.”

“She called me to tell me that our dinner was off. I didn’t follow up on it. I thought that it was a little rude.

“You’ve been extra protective of me since I moved in. Were you like that with my cousin?”

“Your cousin was a different sort of girl. More worldly, but not as refined.”

“Did you ever come on to her?”

“Why would you ask me that?”

“Just the way that you talked about her.”

“She was very different than I was. I like my woman a little more wholesome.”

“What?”

“Sorry. It’s not like it sounds. I couldn’t imagine your cousin staying home to bake me a pie.”

“And I remind you of that kind of woman.”

“I am getting it all wrong.”

“Not a fine thing for an officer of the law.”

“Are you teasing me?”

“Whatever gave you that idea?”

“Do I lack a sense of humor? Some people say that cops lack a sense of humor.”

“You look like you can take a ribbing. I hope that I’m not getting things wrong.”

“You are teasing me.”

“Detective, I think that you’re the one who has to be careful. You have no idea what a woman is going to do to you.”

“What are you going to do?”

“Richard, I don’t know you that well. I just felt that you could use a little fun poked your way.”

“Women are confusing.”

“That is what they say about us.”

“Are you developing a soft spot for me?”

“Let’s just say that I don’t feel quite so hard about you like I felt.”

“You sound as if you’re going to have me up on charges next thing that I do.”

“You seem like a pretty good man, Detective Barnes. You just need to learn how to give people a little more room to grow.”

“Am I stunting you, Evangeline?”

“I didn’t say that. You have to loosen up. You can’t expect the world to follow a code of conduct. We need to have our freedom.”

“Too much freedom can be a bad thing.”

“Were you lecturing my cousin?”

“I told you that we didn’t see eye to eye.”

“I’m not my cousin.”

“What is that supposed to mean?”

“I have a better sense of humor. Maybe I shouldn’t put it that way. It’s not good speaking ill of the dead.”

“That hardly sounds like that big a deal.”

Evangeline wanted to tell Richard about Burt.

“Burt scares me.”

“What did he say to you?”

“It’s his attitude. There is something really creepy about him.”

When she again met Burt, he acted even stranger.

“I got close to her and held her. She was the most exquisite creature in the world.”

“Burt, what are you telling me.”

“She wanted to succeed. She made no secret about it. I was willing to do anything that I could to help her out.”

Evangeline heard enough. She repeated it all to Richard.

“I think that she was intimate with Burt.”

“He always said stuff like that. I don’t think any of it was true.”

Richard also had an unusual way to talk about Charity.

“She was the most wonderful person whom I have ever known. She was like a summer rain. She was pure. Nothing could destroy her loveliness. Evangeline, you remind me of her so, so much.”

“I don’t think that I could ever live up to that much perfection. I’m a lot weaker person.”

“Don’t get down on yourself. You’re a special person.”

“Are you making fun of me?”

“You are a dream.”

“Richard, I hate trying to live up to our expectations.”

“I’m not asking you to be any different than you are

“You know that Scott was a major suspect in your cousin’s death. We have been keeping our eyes on him.”

“He is a very strange man. I felt a little uncomfortable talking to him. It is truly frightening if he really did kill my cousin, and he is still on the street.

“We are doing our best to collect evidence on him. If we had something, we’d pick him up.”

“Was he with her that last night?”

“He claims that he had an alibi. There was really no one who saw him there. But I had a feeling. He was a load of denials.”

“I still am a little afraid of him.”

“We has a tail on him for a while. It only proved to be a nuisance. We couldn’t find anything on him.”

“He was getting on us for harassing him. Imagine that.”

“You couldn’t break him down.”

“He is a hard ass.”

“Does he have a temper?”

“That seems to be all he has. He does odd jobs on movies sets. Electrical work. Sound. He knows things. But he’s a little bit of drifter. He gets it into it with people now and then.”

“Has he ever been picked up?”

“Now and then for some things. But nothing has stuck. He slips through the net every time. That is his style. That is why we want to get him once and for all. He really prides himself as a lady’s man. Did he do his thing on you?”

“Not really.”

“Seriously?”

“He felt more creepy than anything else.”

“Your cousin was a little bit of a sucker for him. He seemed like a real danger man to

her.”

“She fell for him.”

“It gave me the creeps. He and I had a run in one night. I caught him sneaking around the courtyard. I asked him if he was spying in her window. He just went off on me. He asked me what kind of business did I have asking him questions. He was nothing but a hot head. I couldn’t control him. He flew off the handle. I was ready for him to try to hit me.”

“Did he take a swing?”

“He knew that I would take him downtown. But he got good and nasty.”

“That was the only run in.”

“I would see him skulking about. He would claim that Charity had asked him up. But I really didn’t believe him. I was waiting to see if he was going to try to break in to her place. That was his style.”

“You never caught him doing anything.”

“He is a suspicious sort. You had to know that there was stuff going on. But I could never get enough evidence. He was always one step ahead of me.”

“That doesn’t sound like you.”

“I haven’t given up yet.”

“Do I have anything to worry about?”

“I don’t think so.”

Scott was a lot more casual about Evangeline.

“I dug your cousin. We had fun together. That’s what I loved about her. She didn’t care.”

“That’s an unusual way to describe her.”

“She loved to party. She knew the meaning of excitement. She lived every day as if it was her last.”

Scott didn’t apologize. He spoke his mind.

“I knew that she had it from the first time that we met. I could look in her eyes, and they would just light up. She wasn’t afraid to try things.”

Scott was scaring her a little. He hardly knew Evangeline. But he was already acting too familiar with her.

“You and I could have some fun.”

“You’re not really my type.”

“Are you one of those uppity babes.

“How did you get in here?”

“I had a key. I really didn’t know that you were here.”

“Where did you get the key?”

“From your cousin.”

“You expect me to believe that she gave you a key.”

“Believe it if you want. She gave me a key.”

“My cousin trusted you.”

“I was sure that you weren’t going to be here.”

“What are you here for? Some incriminating evidence.”

“It’s not like that.”

“What do you mean?”

“I wrote your cousin a letter. I wasn’t all that right. The police might get their idea.”

“I don’t really like you here.”

“I don’t want to be here. I am sorry.”

“I need a little more than an apology. Detective Barnes told me to watch out for you.”

“You don’t have anything to worry about.”

“You break into my apartment.”

“I didn’t break in. I have a key.”

“I live here now. I didn’t invite you here.”

“I’m sorry. I’ll leave.”

“I think that I should let Detective Barnes sort this out.”

“Detective Barnes has no love for me.”

“He has his reasons. Like breaking in my place.”

“I didn’t break in.”

“You are scaring me.”

“You have no reason to be afraid. I didn’t know that you were here. I’m leaving.”

“What about your letter?”

“I shouldn’t even be here.”

“What if I find it?”

“Call me.”

“I might want to call the police.”

“That wouldn’t be a good idea.”

“Are you threatening me?”

“Not at all. It wouldn’t be a good idea for me.”

“I have to protect myself.”

“You sound like your cousin.”

“Everyone say that to me.”

“You really do. She always tried to be the little Miss Sunshine.”

“What does that mean?”

“There’s really no other way to say it. Your cousin was a bad girl.”

“A bad girl? That seems extreme.”

“Not bad to me. But she had a little bit of a reputation.”

“There you go talking ill of the dead.”

“I am being honest. I couldn’t keep up with her.”

“Keep up how?”

“She liked to break heart.”

“You’re a big boy. What do you have to be worried about?”

“I’m a fun guy. You just have to give me a chance.”

“It is getting a little late for chances. You really should go.”

“I need my later.”

“I want you out of here.”

“What if I didn’t leave?”

“I ‘d call the police.”

“They’d take some time to get here.”

“That sounds a little like a threat.”

“Okay, I’ll go. But I can be gentle with you.”

“I’m not looking for that.”

“I want to kiss you. You seem like a real wild one.”

“Scott, you are trying my patience. Please, go.”

“The letter?”

“I’ll look for it. And I’ll call you.”

She scrambled to get herself together as Scott left. What was he talking about?

“I need to see you.”

Evangeline called Detective Barnes.

“I need to see you.”

“What is this about?”

“Scott was just here.”

“I’ll be right over.”

She was a little tense as she waited for Detective Barnes to arrive.

“I’m glad that you rushed over.”

“What is it?”

“He got in with a key. I forgot to ask him for it. I simply asked him to leave.”

“What did he want?”

“He said that he was looking for a letter.”

“We never found a letter. All that is strange.”

“If you never found a letter, there was probably no letter.”

“He said a letter.”

“Yeah. A letter that he wrote to my cousin.”

“This guy is one crazy madman.”

“I got him to calm down. He just left without complaining.”

“That is all so strange.”

“Strange isn’t the word for it.”

“Do you mind if I take a look around?”

“Go ahead. But it’s not as if a bunch of letters suddenly appeared when I moved in. A lot of her papers went back to my aunt’s place.”

“You sent them back.”

“No, my aunt took care of it.”

“I don’t know what he’s talking about.”

“He is a strange one.”

Richard Barnes found nothing. He just left.

Charity’s books were still in the apartment. Evangeline pulled down a copy of the *Preludes*. It had been Charity’s favorite as a girl.

Evangeline sat down with the book. A letter fell out of the book. That was too coincidental.

The letter was from Scott. It was pretty revealing. He really liked Charity a great deal. But there was a lot more. He wasn’t too flattering about Detective Barnes. Evangeline wasn’t

sure to whom she should talk. She didn't need to make a decision that night. She was tired. She got ready for bed.

Evangeline was almost asleep. She heard something scurrying in the front room. It sounded like a mouse. She was a little frightened. All the excitement of the day. She needed to get up to check.

"Who is it?"

She turned on a light.

"What are you doing here?"

"I needed to find out about that letter."

"You're not sure that there is a letter. How did you get in? You don't have a key."

"I didn't lock the door when I left."

"You what?"

"Don't get mad! I needed to check."

"I told you that I'd look for the letter. What are you so anxious about?"

"I need to know."

"What do you need to know? I don't have the letter. It probably is long gone if it ever existed."

"It existed!"

"You didn't know about any letter until I told you today."

"I know that Scott was here."

"He was here. And he left. And you need to left. What am I going to do? Call the police?"

"I am trying to do my job. I am trying to protect you."

"Like you did for my cousin."

"I took care of your cousin. She was a lovely girl."

"I think that Charity was afraid of you."

"You can't say that."

"I just have a feeling."

"Charity like me a whole lot."

"You were in love with Charity. But she didn't have any kind of feeling for you."

"Don't say that Evangeline."

"I am only speaking the truth."

"How can you possibly know? You weren't around."

"I don't have to be around to know the truth. I knew my cousin."

"She never spoke to you about me."

"I hardly ever spoke to her."

"So what do you know?"

"I know that I am tired. Nothing is going to happen tonight. I need to go to bed."

"What do you mean that nothing is going to happen?"

"I need to go to bed now!"

"I am going to check back with you tomorrow."

"Let me go to bed."

If she wasn't so tired, Evangeline would have been up all night. But her fatigue just

overcame her. The next morning, she was in a completely different place. She had to make her class.

Afterwards Shep chased after her.

“We need to do a scene, Evie.”

“I have had scenes up to here. I am living it.”

“What do you mean?”

“Life has a way of playing upon us. I have a lot to sort out.”

“I can help. I am good with situations.”

She almost wished that Shep could run interference. He was just another guy trying to force his way in her life.

When she got back to the apartment, Burt knocked on her door.

“What is it now? Oh, it’s you?”

“Who were you expecting?”

“I am beyond guessing. What do you want?”

“I heard that Officer Flatfoot was here bothering you.”

“What are you talking about?”

“He was bothering Charity. She was going to speak to his captain.”

“You know all the gossip.”

“I’m a writer. I know pretty much everything.”

“You are a real busy body. Everyone is around here. One day, I want to close my door and shut you all out. I just got here, and I am force to live my cousin’s life. That is hardly fair.”

“You are a beauty in your own right, and probably a better actress.”

“I’m a stage actress. And I’m not feeling it out here. In New York, I had my own life. Not a bunch of guys messing with me.”

“I am only trying to be friendly.”

“By reliving your life with my cousin.”

“I am not trying to interfere.”

“I can’t give you what you want.”

“What are you talking about?”

“Whatever my cousin gave you. We are two different people.”

“I can still like you.”

“You can like me. That doesn’t mean that I have to like you back. None of you guys can get that through your heads.”

“What does that mean?”

“You didn’t even call. You just stop by uninvited.”

“Do I have you number?”

“You know what I mean. I don’t need these surprise visits.”

“Okay, I will announce myself. I’ll be back in an hour.”

“Let’s get bit over with.”

“Get what over with.”

“Tell me that I remind you of Charity. Then I can thank you, and you can leave.”

“You don’t need my protection.”

“I’m not even sure that I can trust you.”

It was getting tense. Evangeline needed to see Richard. She felt that she could trust him.
 “Richard, I need you over here. Scott has just come in with his key. He has no idea that I’m here.”

“Where are you?”

“I’m hiding in the bedroom closet.”

“What?”

“I have an extension cord. I am scared.”

“I will get there as soon as I can. Hang up and stay there. Don’t come out.”

She could hear noises from the living room. Scott was going crazy. He was tearing the books from the shelves. She could even hear a lamp go down. She held her breath. She didn’t make a sound. She hoped that she would just go away.

She made a fist with both her hands. She squeezed tightly. It took all her energy to hold on. She could hear her every breath. She was sure that Scott knew that she was there. If he had come in, he would have seen the phone cord. She wished that she could just slide the phone out the door. Each heartbeat seem to echo. Y This was driving her crazy. She wanted to escape. She was sure that Scott was going to kill her.

She heard noises coming from the living room. There was a big thud. Then there was a series of noises. There was a struggle going on. It was getting pretty wild. She heard some gun shots. Then the sound of a body falling. She wasn’t sure what to do.

“Evangeline, you can come out now.”

She walked out and saw Scott lying on the ground.

“Is he dead? “Did you shoot him him?”

“He’s okay. He just got knocked out.”

“What was he doing here?”

“He was looking for the letter.”

“The letter?”

“You found the letter.”

“What are you talking about?”

“Give me the letter!”

“The letter?”

“I want that letter.”

“The letter. What letter are you talking about?”

“The one that you’re cousin wrote.”

“My cousin wrote a letter.”

“You’re playing dumb, Evangeline.”

“I don’t have the letter. I don’t even know if there is a letter.”

“You have the letter. I want you to give it to me.”

“I don’t have the letter.”

“Either I shoot you now, and I look for the letter myself. Or you give it to me.”

“And you won’t shoot me.”

“Maybe I spoke out of turn. I don’t want to have to shot you.”

“What’s your choice, Richard? I read the letter. It’s pretty obvious what you were doing.”

“Doing?”

“You were threatening my cousin. She was scared. She talked to Scott about it.”

“What are you saying?”

“Are you going to shoot Scott and me?”

“That’s nonsense! Why do you think that Scott was here tonight. He murdered Charity. And he was going to kill you.”

“None of this adds up. I read the letter. Scott is a little off. But he didn’t kill Charity. He was doing what he could to warn her about you.”

“What was he doing here? He broke into your place to get the letter.”

“Scott is desperate. But he is also afraid of you. For a reason. He wanted to make sure that you didn’t get the letter.”

“Why did you call me?”

“I didn’t get it at first. I thought that the letter proved that Scott was guilty. And you were on to me. But I started thinking. It was totally the other way around.”

“So I killed Charity. She wasn’t a nice girl. She was having an affair with Scott. And she was taunting me with the truth.”

“Charity was a beautiful girl, and you killed her.”

“Who are you going to tell that to?”

“The police.”

“I am the police. You called me to rescue you from Scott. But I got here too late. Scott had already killed you. Scott and I struggled. I subdued him.”

“You’re good at creating fiction. Maybe Burt can get you a job in Hollywood.”

“You’re not taking me very seriously. I am about to kill you.”

“You still don’t have the letter. Do you think that you can find it before the other investigators get here?”

“I’m not worried about the letter. It’s Scott’s fantasy.”

“You don’t care about the letter. It was pretty convincing for me.”

“Charity was your cousin. Do you think that anyone else really cares?”

“She was a living breathing soul, and you killed her.”

“Are you trying to make me feel guilty for what I’ve done. I did what I needed to do to protect myself.”

“You’re crazy.”

“Are you going to reason with a psychotic?”

“I want to think that there’s something human left about you.”

“Thanks for giving me a little credit.”

Richard had his gun pointed at Evangeline. He had stated his case. There was nothing more to do. Suddenly, Scott lunged at Richard. He knocked him over a table and his gun went off. He could hardly move as he tried to get up. Scott kicked the gun away.

Evangeline was able to call the police. Fortunately, they didn’t take long getting there.

“Richard was intensely jealous. We all loved Charity. But he wanted her for himself. She wouldn’t play that way. So he killed her in a rage. He really wanted to kill you. To get of Charity once and for all.”

“The police suspected Richard all along. They knew that his guilt would get him to act

irrationally. Scott, you pushed him to the brink. But you weren't exactly a model of sanity."
"I liked your sister too much!"