

THE WANTING WELL

an original screenplay by

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FADE IN:

EXT. THE WELL - NIGHT

A well centers a stately brick patio, shaded by an ancient oak tree. Flowers bloom in ornate urns beside stone benches.

The air is thick and deathly still.

In the distance, a mechanical whine shrills urgently.

INT. BARN - NIGHT

The grind of stone on metal rends the damp air.

An Amish carriage rests there. Hay stacked to the ceiling. But no horses. No bridles. No hint they were ever there.

A giant shadow looms over it all. Its movement frantic.

Behind a bare light bulb, a sturdy BOY (15) in Amish shirt and suspenders hunches over a workbench. He presses a circle of turquoise to an electric grinding wheel

Tears run down his face.

BOY

-- Give Your angels charge over us
to keep us in all our ways. Let no
evil befall us, nor --

Lightning draws his attention. He switches off the grinder. Steps to the open door, and hears screaming.

His mother. Screaming.

BOY

No...

EXT. THE WELL - MOMENTS LATER

An Amish FARMER (40s) steps onto the patio with a bundle in his arms. Behind him, his wife's screams shatter the calm.

FARMER

You wanted too much, woman.
Too much.

He coos at the bundle in his arms. A baby's hand reaches out and touches his tear-streaked face. He smiles.

His wife's screams die and silence descends once again. The farmer holds his head in agony.

FARMER

No, demon, you will not persuade me.

He walks defiantly to the well...

FARMER

NO! Here is my wish. That you remain chained here for eternity. May nobody find you. EVER!

...And then he drops his child into it.

Thunder rolls and rain begins to fall. The farmer slumps beside the well and weeps, inconsolable.

Then a shadow falls over him. He looks up with horror-filled eyes and screams.

The scene goes black but the screaming continues. A different pitch. Strident. Feral. Insane.

CUT TO:

INT. INSTITUTIONAL CELL - DAY

Institutional tile. Glaring lights. STEVEN (16) rants in a bed, his hands and feet immobilized. Writhing. Screaming.

STEVEN

KILL ME! I'M A BUTCHER!!

A DOCTOR with a syringe steps forward and the POV pulls back from Steven. To outside the cell. A YOUNG MAN's face reflects in a window.

CUT TO:

INT. HIGH SCHOOL BATHROOM - DAY

That young man - BRENDAN WYATT (mid-20s) - splashes water on his face. Stares at his reflection. Troubled.

STEVEN (V.O.)

A killer! A dirty WHORE!

An athletic man, twenty extra pounds removed from college competition. Strong face, trimmed beard. Soft eyes with bags beneath them. Creased brow. Rumpled blazer and tie.

We see other bits of Brendan. Fingers rubbing a forehead. A nice watch on his wrist. A laminated press credential that he pulls from his pocket.

He studies it like an alien artifact, something not his own.

BRENDAN

I do not like green eggs and ham.

Steven echoes in his head.

STEVEN (V.O.)

I'm a sinner. Please...kill me...

BRENDAN

I do not like them, Sam I am.

The screaming recedes, replaced by a rhythmic thumping behind him. A WOMAN'S enthusiastic voice joins the sound:

WOMAN (O.S.)

God, plow my field.

MATT (O.S.)

Shhh...quiet!

Brendan drapes the credential around his neck. Notes the two hands gripping the top of the stall behind him. White knuckles. Livid red fingernails.

The stall creaks. The door rattles. The muffled glory of climax. Then, silence. A fly zips.

Brendan fusses with his hair.

MATT (O.S.)

You stay put, sugar-tits.

MATT LUCIANO (30s) struts to a sink, damp from exertion but godly in his beauty. Chiseled body. Expensive suit. And he knows he had an audience.

Yet his eyes avoid Brendan.

BRENDAN

There was a Ramada down the street.

MATT

Don't you have a yearbook to edit?

BRENDAN

And you would be Most Likely to..?

Matt sees Brendan's press credential as he dries his hands.

MATT

Stick to your beat, greenhorn. Leave
the news to real journalists.

Matt tosses a three-point shot at the wastebasket that caroms
onto the floor.

MATT

Get that, would you?

And he saunters out the door.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL LECTURE HALL - MOMENTS LATER

JOAN

...And small farms are dying, so why
should we subsidize them? I mean,
Heinz grows one hell of a tomato!

The packed crowd laughs as charismatic JOAN CANNON (mid-40s)
exhorts them from stage. She is formidable. She owns them.

Brendan joins a small knot of reporters. Pulls out a ledger
pad. Scribbles notes on it.

Joan's press secretary TRISH (30s, efficient and in-charge)
notes Brendan. And his ledger pad.

TRISH

Are you with the press corps?

BRENDAN

Yeah, yeah, my credential was -- it
arrived late.

TRISH

I'm sure I sent you one. There must
have been a mix-up on our end.

Brendan fumbles to show it to her. Points to the name.

BRENDAN

I'm Brendan. Wyatt. As in Earp.

TRISH

Trish Sandberg. As in -- Sandberg.

They shake, sharing an immediate affinity. She steps back and watches him. He takes notes, aware of her attention.

Matt watches them both.

CHARLIE CANNON (mid-50s) – a substantial man nattily dressed in suspenders – joins them. Assesses the cheering crowd. Several SUPPORTERS shake his hand as they leave.

CHARLIE

Thanks for coming. Visit our donor page, would ya?

He greets several others as he slithers toward Matt.

CHARLIE

Mr. Luciano. I trust you'll write glowing commentary about the senator?

MATT

Italy is beautiful in the fall, isn't it? I do love a good Brunello.

CHARLIE

You seemed more a bourbon guy.

The crowd claps as Joan sashays from the stage and embraces a throng of SUPPORTERS. Hugs one, glad-hands another.

Brendan pushes toward her.

BRENDAN

Senator, I have questions...

But Charlie blocks him, maneuvering between he and Joan.

FISHER (16), a muscular lad, bounds over to Joan with her purse and a bottle of water. Joan chats with a BUSINESSMAN.

JOAN

Thank you, Fisher. Buck, this is my intern and man Friday, Fisher Carlyle. He keeps me sane through all this.

The businessman extends a hand to Fisher. They shake.

FISHER

A pleasure, sir. May I bend your ear? I'm new to all this...

JOAN

-- Spanking new, and unspoiled by
the jaded dance of politics.

Fisher charms the businessman as Joan greets her constituents
– feigning interest and keeping one eye on her intern.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Joan and Charlie lead the contingent down the hallway. Hold
hands. Smile for the cameras.

CHARLIE

I saw you ogling Fisher.

JOAN

It was electric in there, wasn't it?

CHARLIE

I hired that faggot for a reason.

Joan pauses for a photo with several handsome STUDENTS. She
cuddles in to them. Kisses one on the cheek.

JOAN

You lads! Tell your parents to vote!

Brendan waits for a chance to accost her. Fisher puts a
hand on his shoulder.

FISHER

So, you're joining our merry junket.
I'm the welcoming committee so,
welcome! Come this way.

Fisher pulls Brendan – over his objections – away from Joan
and her admirers.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - MOMENTS LATER

A custom bus emblazoned with "CANNON for U.S. SENATE" rests
at the curb. Drizzle falls as Trish accesses her cell phone.
Dials a number.

TRISH

Good morning, is Dr. Atri available?
Um, ok, maybe the nurse practitioner?

She wraps her coat around herself.

TRISH

Does anyone work there before noon?

(beat)

I'm sorry, I know it's hospice and everyone's busy preparing to -- it's just that I want to be there when...

Tears flood her eyes. She sees Joan exit the building and wipes the tears away angrily.

TRISH

No, I can't hold. I'll call back.

A VOLUNTEER gives Fisher two bags of ice and he adds them to a cooler. Joan works the crowd. Brendan observes it all.

SHARON (20s), the busty bus driver, examines her livid red fingernails beside Fisher without helping him. She blushes when Matt winks at her.

FISHER

He would be quite a ride.

SHARON

I wouldn't know.

BRENDAN

(eyes fixed on Joan)

She's a virtuoso. In a Gucci blazer.

FISHER

St. John blazer, and she's a velvet hammer. Best not be the nail, right?

Trish huddles with Joan and Charlie.

CHARLIE

Matt's opinion piece is for sale.

TRISH

Of course it is.

JOAN

Voters do love hearing that liberal whore bloviate.

TRISH

We're not buying his article.

JOAN

I want that opinion piece.

TRISH

Right. Let's just step into that ethical quagmire --

JOAN

-- Formulate a plan and make it happen. And get some Visine; people will think you have pink eye.

Trish buries her distaste and boards the bus. Charlie follows her. Joan motions for Sharon to join her.

JOAN

Take the Indian road, would you? We need time to strategize.

INT. BUS - MOMENTS LATER

Brendan boards behind two women.

BRENDAN

Finally made it, Does it matter where we sit? I'm Brendan...

He offers to shake hands. Both ignore him.

GILLIAN (20's) - a social media climber in conservative blue - slides into a seat. Checks e-mail. Twitter. Instagram.

ANNIE (50s) - a lesbian powder keg in a man's suit and pearls - makes a beeline to Charlie.

ANNIE

I need some time with the senator.

CHARLIE

Maybe tonight at the hotel. Maybe.

Annie plops beside Gillian. Frustrated. They watch Matt march on, assess them with scorn, and sit alone.

GILLIAN

I wish I knew how he became the "it" political wonk.

ANNIE

Matt Luciano would sell his Italian sausage and his mother's clam to get ahead. My advice, sweetheart? Hold on to your ethics and be careful what you wish for.

Charlie watches Joan as she flirts with Fisher. Squints at his antagonists on board. Focuses on forlorn and anxious Brendan Wyatt.

He leans in to Brendan. Flashes a reptilian smile.

CHARLIE

I know your work at *The Times*. It's green, rudimentary. Suitable for a puff piece about Joan, however -- help you earn those press credentials?

BRENDAN

Yeah, yeah, I'll do -- whatever.

(beat)

So will you, I assume. Both of you.

EXT. LONELY COUNTRY ROAD - LATER

The bus cruises past a sign for Chippewa County. Barren fields stretch behind it. Road quality deteriorates.

INT. BUS - CONTINUOUS

Matt bounces in his seat as the bus hits a pot hole.

MATT

Why am I in Chippewa County? Cell service sucks out here.

Fisher pauses in the aisle with a box of refreshments.

FISHER

Coffee, tea -- Twinkie?

MATT

Not on a dare. Can you whip up four bars of 5G service?

FISHER

Different box. Different bus.

He offers Brendan a snack.

FISHER

Dude, Charlie had me give you the bum's rush back there. Tick tock and all that shit. Sorry.

(MORE)

FISHER (CONT'D)

(offering a hand)

Fisher the intern, overworked and undervalued. That's a killer watch. Shinola?

BRENDAN

Wittnauer. A gift. My brother -- he hawked pumpkins to pay for it.

FISHER

Awesome guy. Good taste. Does handsome run in your family too?

BRENDAN

I, um, your call on that -- you seem way too young for this game.

FISHER

For what, politics?

BRENDAN

Well that, and --

FISHER

-- Dude, I'm nearly seventeen. The campaign's a co-op thing: school part time, work part time...
(he leans in)
...On the make all the time.

BRENDAN

Learning how to stuff the sausage.

FISHER

I guess, yeah, whatever. I wanna do politics someday. Run things, y'know? Who doesn't want that kind of power?

BRENDAN

Right. I bet a stud like you could get me time with the senator?

FISHER

Well, yeah, maybe. Let's find out.

Fisher leads Brendan to the back of the bus. Annie sees them and isn't happy about it. Neither is Trish.

Joan's face brightens when they step up.