

GABRIELLE

A Short Film

by

Daniel Patrick Moan

THIRD DRAFT

Started: Tuesday 4 May 2021
Completed: Thursday 6 May 2021

EXT. NIGHT SKY - SUBURBAN STREET - NIGHT

A cloudless night. A beautiful star field. The MOON is full and bright. THEN a DARK SHADOW MOVES across the stars and the MOON.

ON THE STREET, lamplight floods the quiet suburban street in a warm orange glow.

PRE-LAP: Scraping.

INT. LOUNGE - NIGHT

A WALLPAPER SCRAPER CUTS through ornately patterned wallpaper; a huge chunk falls to the floor.

DANNY, 12, sad eyes, older than he looks, stares at the wall where the wallpaper used to be. Tears form in his eyes.

TERRY, 40s, Danny's father, scraping at the other end of the wall, senses Danny's sadness, goes to him.

Danny fixates on the wall. His breathing quickens. He starts scratching his right forearm. Terry follows his eyes to--

--THE WALL where a HANDWRITTEN POEM is framed by red coloured HEARTS, RABBITS and ANGELS.

THE SOUND OF ECHOED Voices of a CHILD and MOTHER are heard singing the lines of the poem.

FLASH-CUT TO IMAGES of ANGELA, 35, vibrant, and YOUNG DANNY, 5, singing the words to the poem.

THE POEM READS:

*I'll be sitting on a moonbeam,
Whilst you're asleep under the
stars.
When you're eating toast at
lunch-time,
I'll be watching you from Mars.
And when you really miss me,
You may shed a tiny tear.
You will find me in a candle's
light,
And know that I am here.*

Underneath the poem: *Danny and Angela, 14 February 2014*

TERRY

Wow. That's a blast from the past.
I remember you and your mum doing
that.

Danny scratches his forearm, it's now red raw, drawing blood. Terry gently tries to stop Danny scratching.

He shrugs Terry off. Terry moves to hug Danny, but he turns and heads towards the door.

TERRY (CONT'D)
Where you going?

DANNY
To get some paint from the garage.

Terry quickly moves to block Danny.

TERRY
I'm not sure we should do that.
It's a lovely memory, Danny.

DANNY
(breathing faster)
I don't want to remember.

TERRY
You know memories of her will be
precious when you're older.

Danny's scratching increases.

TERRY (CONT'D)
How about we wait til tomorrow
before we--

DANNY
I'm doing it now!

Danny moves to get around Terry, but he blocks his path.

TERRY
(soothing)
Okay. We'll do it tonight.
(crouches down to Danny's
level)
But, there's no paint in the
garage. I'll get some from the
hardware store.
(checks watch)
They might still be open.
(pats Danny's shoulder)
Why don't you get the painting
sheets from the garage?

Danny slows his arm scratching. His breathing slows. Terry grabs his car keys on a side table and heads out.

EXT. DANNY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Terry comes out the front door and looks into the star-filled night sky, as if looking for a sign. He gets into the car, fires up the engine and drives off.

INT. LOUNGE - NIGHT

Danny's eyes are fixed on the poem on the wall. He kneels down and reaches out to touch the words on the wall, tracing the letters.

FLASH CUT TO:

INT. LOUNGE - 7 YEARS AGO - DAY

FLASHBACK to ANGELA, 35, Danny's mother sitting, drawing on the wall, YOUNG DANNY, 5, is drawing with her. They giggle and sing as they draw.

FLASH CUT TO:

INT. LOUNGE - NIGHT

Danny touches the letters of ANGELA on the wall.

BLURRED IMAGES DISSOLVE IN AND OUT: Angela and Danny writing on the wall. Angela smiling at the CAMERA, Angela Crying into the CAMERA, Angela with hair, Angela bald from chemo. Angela lying in a Hospital Bed. Then the empty Hospital Bed. Angela's headstone in a graveyard. Withered flowers at the foot of the headstone.

BACK IN THE LOUNGE, Danny scratches his bloody arm, then pounds the wall, leaving blood splotches across the poem.

EXT. SUBURBAN HOUSE - NIGHT

A DARK SHADOW is cast on the white Garage door, the shape is twisted, large and sinister. Rasping breath fills the night air. The SHADOW of a long thin ARM is raised.

INT. LOUNGE - NIGHT

Danny holds his stare on the wall when ALL THE LIGHTS GO OFF plunging the house into darkness. The only light is from the moon through the red curtains. Danny wipes away his tears, gets up and leaves.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

A drawer opens, Danny fishes out a red candle. A match strikes lights the candle, casting a light on Danny's worried face.

EXT. BACK GARDEN - NIGHT

The Door opens, Danny's makes his way across the grass, listening for any noise, but only silence abounds. He protects the candle with his hand. He reaches the SIDE DOOR of the garage and heads into--

INT. GARAGE - NIGHT

Danny steps into the darkness of the garage, the flickering candle barely illuminates it. He picks his way through boxes piled high. he arrives at the fuse box on the wall. He flicks one of the fuse switches UP, but it flicks back DOWN on its own. Danny flicks AGAIN, but it flicks DOWN automatically. Danny turns to--

--the SOUND of SCRAPING METAL--

Danny shines the feeble candlelight at the bottom of the Overhead Garage Door.

A DARK, LONG, HOOKED FINGER curls under the door, tries to pull the door up.

THE SHADOW

(sinister hiss)

Danny. Don't be afraid. Let me in.
I want to help you. I want to help
you forget all those painful
memories.

Danny backs away to the garage SIDE DOOR.

A BRIGHT WHITE LIGHT fills the garage for a moment, then fades to reveal a YOUNG GIRL, late teens, dressed in beautiful white suit, white bow tie, barefoot and WINGS, yes, White feathery wings!

Danny's breath quickens, he grabs a nearby trowel, waves it at her, threateningly. The GIRL puts her hands up defensively.

DANNY

Who're you?

GIRL

Don't be afraid, Danny. I'm
Gabrielle.

(beat)

I'm your guardian angel.

Danny lets it sink in for a moment, then backs away towards the door.

DANNY

Bollocks you are!

The crooked hand of the SHADOW outside rattles the garage door in frustration. Danny looks trapped.

GABRIELLE

(nods to the garage door)
I'm here to protect you from that.
The Dark Shadow outside.

DANNY

How do you know my name?

GABRIELLE

I have known you ever since you
were born.

DANNY

Bollocks you have!

GABRIELLE

You were born on July twelfth,
twelve years ago. Your mother
Angela died six months ago.

DANNY

(unconvinced)
And?

Gabrielle looks at the boxes piled high. She opens one, fishes out a red sweater that belonged to Angela.

GABRIELLE

You have packed away all your
mother's things here in the garage.
You find it hard to have reminders
of your mother. You've decided to
remove all the reminders of your
mum.

(beat)

A few minutes ago, you uncovered
the poem you wrote with her on the
wall. You told your father you want
to paint over it.

Gabrielle holds up the red sweater.

GABRIELLE (CONT'D)

And your mum wore this the day you
wrote that poem.

FLASHCUT TO:

ANGELA wearing the red sweater, writing the poem with Danny.

BACK TO: Danny's breathing becomes laboured. He's back to arm scratching. The garage door RATTLES again.

THE SHADOW

Danny? Don't listen to her. She lies.

The Voice of the Shadow is smooth, gentle and reassuring.

DANNY

What's that outside?

GABRIELLE

It's a Dark Shadow. A spirit of darkness. It wants to extinguish all light. Once you let it into your mind it'll suck up the light in your soul and make you live in the darkness. It makes you think it'll help you forget sad memories, but it only creates darkness where once there was light.

THE SHADOW

That's not true, Danny. She wants you to remember all the pain. I want to help you forget it. Only a hardened heart will help you through this world. I can harden your heart for you. Then nothing will touch you again.

DANNY

(to Gabrielle)

Sounds like it is on my side.

GABRIELLE

Every memory is a candle, it lights your path from where you've been, to where you are and to where you're going.

(beat)

Without the light of these memories, we're only left to stumble in the dark.

DANNY

But these memories make me sad all the time.

GABRIELLE

I know. But this memory of your mother is a good one. Believe me, keep the this memory, for there will be enough darkness later in life.

The garage door RATTLES again.

THE SHADOW

Danny? Candles cannot stay alight
in the whirlwind of life. You
cannot run and keep a candle lit.
She is lying to you. Only a
hardened heart will survive this
world.

DANNY

How do I get it to go away?

GABRIELLE

Hold onto this memory of your
mother and the poem. Keep the
memory alive. Keep it as a lighted
candle.

Danny is torn. He scratches his arm even more. The Garage
door rattles louder this time.

THE SHADOW

Don't listen to her, Danny. She
only wants you to be in pain all
your life.

GABRIELLE

We're not safe in here. We must be
nearer that poem. That is the only
way to combat this Shadow.

Danny looks to the garage door as it continues to rattle and
back to Gabrielle. Danny spies a small pot of paint on the
floor with a brush next to it. He grabs them.

They hear the Shadow take a deep breath and exhale. The
breath rushes into the garage and extinguishes Danny's
candle, plunging the whole garage into darkness.

In the Darkness Danny looks from the garage door to
Gabrielle.

EXT. BACK GARDEN - NIGHT

The Garage Side Door opens, Danny and Gabrielle step out.
Thee garage door is being rattled. They head towards the
Kitchen Door.

The sound of the garage door STOPS rattling! An agonising
pause. The rasping breath of the Dark Shadow grows louder.
Danny looks to Gabrielle's terrified face. They bolt for the
kitchen door.

The breathing of the Shadow follows them. Its Shadow is cast
on the wall of the house. It knocks over a bin and some pot
plants behind Danny and Gabrielle.

Danny pushes the kitchen door open and forces Gabrielle inside, turns and slams the door shut. The Shadow casts it sinister inky blackness on the glass of the kitchen door. The shadow of it's gnarled hand moves to the lock and begins scraping to try and unlock it. It's rasping breath fills the night air.

THE SHADOW

She will only make you remember the pain, Danny. I can take it all away.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Danny and Gabrielle catch their breath. The scraping of the nails on the door STOPS and all is silent.

Danny shares a look of hope with Gabrielle.

GABRIELLE

A Dark Shadow doesn't give up that easily. It'll look for a weakness in the house to get inside. We must be near that poem and the memory of your mother.

Danny opens one of the drawers, takes out a bunch of candles and matches.

INT. LOUNGE - NIGHT

Gabrielle rushes across the room and kneels in front of the poem on the wall. She touches the words with her hand and closes her eyes.

FLASH-CUT TO:

INT. LOUNGE - FLASHBACK - DAY

Young Danny and ANGELA laugh as they write on the wall. The images are more faded than before. Colour is being drained.

INT. LOUNGE - NIGHT

Danny comes in with the candles matches, paint pot and brush. He puts the paint and brush on the coffee table. Lights two candles and stands them up on the table. lighted candle and stands it on a small table. Gabrielle turns to Danny.

GABRIELLE

This memory grows weaker.

DANNY

I don't think you get it. I don't
want to remember.

Danny pulls the lid off the paint pot and dips the brush it.

EXT. BACK GARDEN - NIGHT

The Dark Shadow falls across the PATIO DOORS, moves to the lock. The gnarled hand moves closer and the nail scratches at the lock.

INT. LOUNGE - NIGHT

Danny and Gabrielle turn to the SCRATCHING at the lock. The Shadow looms behind the curtains that cover the patio doors.

GABRIELLE

Danny, the weaker the memory, the
stronger the Shadow becomes.

Danny's tries to go past Gabrielle to the Poem, paint brush in hand.

The LOCK on the patio doors begins to TURN.

GABRIELLE (CONT'D)

If the shadow gets in, it'll be a
permanent part of your soul. A dark
memory forever.

The lock CLICKS OPEN and the patio doors SLIDE across behind the curtains.

The curtains billow with the wind coming in; the candles struggle against the rush of air.

The Shadow fills the curtains into a frightening shape and moves forward.

Danny and Gabrielle stare at the Curtains.

THE SHADOW

Danny, a soft heart will make you
sad your whole life. Let me harden
your heart and you will have no
more pain.

Danny is transfixed by the curtains that form the shape of the Shadow. On the wall the Shadow of the gnarled arm stretches out to the frozen Danny. White paint drips from the brush in Danny's hands onto his black shoes.

Gabrielle gets up, gets between the Shadow's hand and Danny.

GABRIELLE

Danny, its promises are false. It will only make you feel shame and regret if you let it destroy this memory.

THE SHADOW

She lies, Danny. I'll always tell you the truth. You know these memories will only become more painful with time. Living in the darkness means no more sad memories.

Danny bows his head, then nods. The Shadow takes a step closer and pushes Gabrielle out of the way. She stumbles back against the wall where the poem is and crumples to the floor. The Shadow has clear access to Danny. Danny closes his eyes--

INT. LOUNGE - FLASHBACK - DAY

DANNY'S POV: The images of ANGELA become blurry and faded. ANGELA turns to the CAMERA. The light around her is FADING, a DARK SHADOW FALLS upon her.

ANGELA

(echoing)

Don't let me go, Danny.

INT. LOUNGE - NIGHT

The Shadow reaches out towards Danny's forehead. Danny's eyes open, he stares at the Shadow, then takes a stumble back. The Shadow's hand grips into a fist.

THE SHADOW

She is only a memory. She is dead and long gone. There is no need to keep these reminders. In the darkness there is no pain, there is no memory. A hardened heart will protect you from such pain.

Danny takes another step backward. The Shadow moves nearer. Danny takes another step so that he is flat against the wall. He still holds the paint brush in his right hand, the Poem just below his left. Gabrielle lies on the floor, helpless.

GABRIELLE

(weakly)

Don't let it take the memory, Danny.

Danny looks at Gabrielle with sorrowful eyes of tears. The Shadow reaches out its gnarled hand and touches the forehead of Danny.

THE SHADOW

That's it, my boy. Let me take it
all away from you. I'll take away
this pain, I'll harden your weak
heart.

Danny's left hand reaches down and touches the poem on the wall.

INT. LOUNGE - FLASHBACK - DAY

ANGELA kneels in the near darkness, holding a candle that flickers to almost going out.

INT. LOUNGE - NIGHT

Danny, his eyes close, breathing quickly. The candles in the room are being blow to almost extinction. They desperately struggle to stay alight.

INT. LOUNGE - THE FUTURE - NIGHT

An ADULT DANNY, 35, kneels in front of the wall, candle in one hand, the other hand traces the wall, looking for signs of the poem, but the wall is blank.

ADULT DANNY

No, no, no!

The candle in his hand FLICKERS low. He squints to see in the fading darkness, the candle goes out, plunges him into BLACK.

INT. LOUNGE - NIGHT

Danny's eyes are closed. The Shadow touches Danny's forehead with its finger. Danny lifts the brush towards the wall. Hovers over the poem, INCHES away from painting over the words, erasing the memory.

THE SHADOW

That's it, Danny, paint this memory
out of your mind.

Danny opens his eyes and stares at the Shadow, steels himself, takes a deep breath.

DANNY

I'll be sitting on a moonbeam.

The Shadow shivers and recoils its hand from Danny's forehead and the reciting of the first line of the poem. Gabrielle's grabs hold of Danny's hand.

GABRIELLE

Whilst you sleep under the stars.

The Shadow takes another step backward. Danny yanks Gabrielle to her feet. Danny is renewed in strength, he and Gabrielle take a step forward towards the Shadow.

THE SHADOW

No! Don't let her win, Danny.

DANNY

When you're eating toast at lunchtime.

GABRIELLE

I'll be watching you from Mars.

The Shadow takes another step back.

THE SHADOW

You'll only suffer your whole life.

Danny and Gabrielle stand side by side.

DANNY & GABRIELLE

And when you really miss me,
You may shed a tiny tear.

The Shadow is at the curtain in front of the patio door now.

DANNY & GABRIELLE (CONT'D)

You will find me in a candle's
light--

Danny and Gabrielle look to each other, squeeze each other's hand and face the Shadow.

DANNY & GABRIELLE (CONT'D)

(point to their hearts)
And know that I am here.

The Shadow makes a chilling scream and bolts through the curtains into the night. The Curtains flutter for a moment. Danny pushes the patio doors shut, locks them. Danny puts the brush back in the paint pot, collapses into an armchair.

GABRIELLE

You are very brave, Danny to choose
to keep this memory. There are many
who would not.

DANNY

I saw myself in the future without
this memory. I was in more pain
than I am now.

GABRIELLE
 Keep memories like this alive,
 Danny.

The LIGHTS in the house come back ON.

Gabrielle hugs Danny tightly. She unlocks the patio door and slips through the gap in the curtains which flutter into Danny's face. He pushes the curtains to one side and looks outside the open Patio Doors.

IN THE BACK GARDEN: Gabrielle has turned into a bright light. She flies into the sky.

IN THE LOUNGE: Danny watches as the light becomes smaller and smaller, then closes and locks the patio door.

Terry is stood by the door with a pot of paint and some brushes. Danny looks through the curtains into the sky, trying to spot Gabrielle's light.

TERRY
 You okay?

Danny turns from the patio door to his dad.

DANNY
 Yep.

TERRY
 What's with the candles?

DANNY
 Just a short power cut.

Terry spies the paint pot and brush on the table.

DANNY (CONT'D)
 I found some paint in the garage
 when I checked the fuse box.

TERRY
 I've got a few more colours to
 choose from.

Danny looks to the paint pot in Terry's hand.

DANNY
 I've got an idea.

INT. LOUNGE - LATER

A ROLLER BRUSH slaps against the wall then moves up and down. Danny is painting at one end of the wall, Terry is at the other. JOYFUL MUSIC plays on the radio as father and son cover the wall in a vibrant colour.

INT. LOUNGE - LATER

Danny is sat on the floor that is facing the wall where the poem is. He closes his eyes--

INT. LOUNGE - FLASHBACK - DAY

Young Danny and Angela recite the poem on the wall they have just written. The colour and detail of the memory is more vivid than we first saw it.

TERRY (O.S.)
There you go, son.

INT. LOUNGE - NIGHT

Terry holds out an open can of soda to Danny. He grabs it, They sit next to each other facing the wall. Terry chinks his can of soda with Danny's, they gaze at the wall.

TERRY
I think it works.

ON THE WALL, the new coat of paint covers everything, except the poem. An elaborate frame is painted around it, with angels wings, making it the main focus of the wall.

Danny smiles at their handiwork. He catches a glimpse of ANGELA sat next to the poem, smiling back.

The CAMERA MOVES from the poem, PAST Terry and Danny TO THE WINDOW and a VIEW OF THE STARS in the night sky.

One STAR TWINKLES a little BRIGHTER than the others.

The SOUND of wings beating then--

CUT TO BLACK: