

SNOWFINCH

Written by  
Grant Wiggins

571-229-2418  
Iwriteforreasons@outlook.com

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1 EXT. COLBY MANOR

1

A lonely manor home sits under heavy snowfall between morning and noon. It's a stately sort, impressive even now but it's clearly falling into the beginning stages of disrepair and unlove.

2 INT. COLBY MANOR, ADA'S ROOM

2

Inside rests Ada Colby, somewhere between 25 and 35, looking anything but well as she sits up in bed.

Taking no time to toss off the sweat soaked blankets and sheets. Her hair an unwashed mess, strands stuck to face.

She's been trying to sleep off another battle with depression and it clearly wasn't working.

Plates of barely touched food on the nightstand having only partaken when the pangs of hunger grew intolerable.

Intolerable to her was only when her stomach growled too loudly to allow comfortable sleep.

Almost on cue, a knock at the door.

It's Harold Wellings, a heavily mustached man in a tail coat, a bit portly but his dressings were loudly Georgian.

Startled to see Ada up and about or as up and about as she'd been recently.

HAROLD

Good morning my dear.

Fidgeting nervously though Ada wasn't even looking at him.

HAROLD (cont'd)

I didn't expect you to be up so early.

Ada staring off at the far wall.

ADA

There's a limit to how long one can sleep before the body refuses to any further. Unfortunate as it is.

She sighs.

ADA (cont'd)

...Without aid at least.

Turning her attention to the window.

ADA (cont'd)  
Remove the food I don't want to  
attract flies, they irritate.

HAROLD  
Right away but might I ask?

ADA  
No need, it happened again.

Harold's face reading immediate disappointment that he tried to hide.

HAROLD  
Oh I'm sorry.

He moves to collect the trays with the plates and drops a bread roll in the process. Hurrying out with what is noticeably rather fine silverware from tray to plate to cup.

Ada all the while made no attempt to move, sitting still.

HAROLD (cont'd)  
Should I send the maids to change the  
bedding?

ADA  
No.

Knowing there was a bit of a stench in the room but her ever present sadness and exhaustion beat even the shame of that.

She just didn't care anymore.

ADA (cont'd)  
I don't wish to be cold.

A shameful excuse they both knew was a lie.

Hanging her head and drifting off into thought.

CUT TO: A DREAM

3 INT. COLBY MANOR, ADA'S ROOM, LAST NIGHT

3

Ada being pulled from her bed by an unseen force, wearing the same gown from present day.

She's thrown against the far wall  
where she crumples to floor.

(MORE)

## ADA (cont'd)

Focusing on the fear in her eyes as she tries to look back towards whatever is doing this.

Nothing is there.

She's dragged by her ankles towards the window, up into a seated position before being tossed backwards into it.

As she strikes the glass it breaks and she flies out into the darkness. The dark envelopes her until there's nothing.

Nothing but black.

Until she reappears.

Back in her room but laying on the floor in a mess of broken glass and blood.

She sits up, her nightgown covered in blood.

Reaching for her stomach where blood seems to pour from.

She's hurt but not alarmed. Because she can't feel it.

It's a dream and she *knows* it's a dream.

Raising her head, she looks across the empty room.

Only it's no longer empty, she sees her mother.

Returned to health, as beautiful as she was before her illness. Standing before her but looking through her.

Ada lit up, childlike in her happiness.

Climbing to her feet, trying to scurry over to her mother.

But her mother remained expressionless.

As the invisible force grabs her by the neck and begins to strangle Ada. Ada falling to her knees, gasping for air, still no response from mother.

Mother was here, she was still here baring witness to her present hell but could do nothing or would do nothing?

...Did it matter which?

3

BACK TO: ADA'S  
ROOM

3

4

INT. COLBY MANOR, ADA'S ROOM

4

Ada waking up gasping for air, heart racing.

Just before Harold had come in, he walks into the room this time with a fresh tray and sits it down on the noticeably clean nightstand.

Which lets us know it's actually new day in this cycle of sadness and madness.

HAROLD

Again my dear?

ADA

Yes.

HAROLD

Why don't you come for a walk with me, the air might do you some good.

ADA

It's never done me good. Why do we keep doing this? You know my answer before you bloody well ask it. It's a trodding cycle of shit.

HAROLD

Because you can't just sit here waiting to die...

ADA

Can't I? With father's money I could stay here for 500 years and not a thing would change.

HAROLD

But even that, you're the last of your name. Your father can't have more children and your mother is gone.

ADA

Ah, this again.

HAROLD

Yes this again!

Raising his voice momentarily before bringing it back down to a respectful level.

HAROLD (cont'd)

You are the last of your name and I worry about you.

ADA

It isn't me you worry about. It's being strung up by my father if you fail to save me from myself. You took a job thinking you'd win the day. Oh you got the poor little girl to finally buckle down and act like a lady. How my father will throw a parade in you honor. Your mistake.

Idly shaking her head, silence owning the space.

ADA (cont'd)

Have you ever considered we don't deserve to go on? The things this family has done to hold and maintain this position? The killings, skullduggery, what have you?

How many men do you think that man I call father has killed?

HAROLD

We can't change the past. You exist here and now and I can't not. I've grown to care about you far more than the means to shillings.

Every night I barely sleep in my own right expecting to find you hanging from the rafters. You're a constant source of worry.

Problem was, Ada would prefer the grave than being something of a worry on him or anyone for that manner. He was only fueling the self loathing without knowing it.

ADA

I won't face the risk of damnation. I let go of many things but that fear of hell stays with me.

(MORE)

ADA (cont'd)

Oddly enough not the love of the Lord  
but the fear of his ire.

HAROLD

Of course you'd see it that way.  
Always cloying at the worst of all  
things. All the promises of good that  
our Lord leaves us yet you see  
nothing but his fire and fury.

ADA

Do I appear to be someone that needs  
more negative thoughts bouncing about  
my head? Your judgement does far more  
harm than good regardless of whether  
or not you think it's the opposite.  
It hangs in my skull as the freshest  
meat for the damned ghouls in my mind  
to feast upon so perhaps...

HAROLD

As long as it is my duty to look  
after you I will try to get through  
to you in any way I see fit. You're a  
difficult case to handle.

ADA

See you do still see me as a project.  
There's an egocentric tilt after  
fall.

HAROLD

Your father hired me to make sure you  
stayed alive.

ADA

I will draw breath until this world chooses the time and  
place I fall and not a moment before.

HAROLD

Dramatic as always.

She closes her eyes and takes a deep breath, a tension in her  
chest had grown the heavier this banter got.

ADA

You're no doctor. I don't care how  
long you've seen after me. You can  
always be twisted into saying such  
stupid things.

(MORE)

ADA (cont'd)

I shouldn't be able to get your façade of aid to fall so easily. You break down like a child in a school yard.

He seemed insulted but held his tongue as she went on.

ADA (cont'd)

Explain to me Harold. What it is to dread every waking hour. To see no light in any act? No joy, nothing, just emptiness? -- Then to sleep and be faced with things somehow worse again and again. There's no rest for me. Just the hope of death.

Brushing her hair back as she goes on.

ADA (cont'd)

And yet I can't grab onto it because I believe in he just enough that I fear an eternity of even worse. Every single level of my existence is some sort of argumentive hell. No escape, this is the paradox.

Dropping back onto the bed in defeat.

ADA (cont'd)

I'm no fool *Harold*. All I have is time. Nothing calls me. I've spent years with this thing. Beating myself into some submission, such so no light remains.

HAROLD

You sound as if you're musing now. Is it you or this thing you speak of?

ADA

Perhaps I'm it. Perhaps I've always been it from the moment I first opened my eyes. I remember things from when I was a baby. It's odd. Like a light that has never turned off. I'm tired of it.

HAROLD

What's it? Your sadness?

ADA

How I see the world.



HAROLD

So it is your sadness?

ADA

Yes or lack thereof. - It's not sadness anymore. I would be lying to you my dear friend. I'd be lying if I told you I had cried in the past two years. I sorrow for nothing. -- This instead is the nothing behind it. It's a longing for something that isn't here. This is why you can't help me. **I'm already gone.**

That shakes Harold a bit more than even he expected, he shifts where he is and shakily speaks up.

HAROLD

...But I can try.

ADA

You can, you surely can.

Almost amused with his choice to keep this going.

He'd been stationed to her for what seemed like an eternity but fact was it had only been around four years on and off but working for Ada felt like an eternity.

ADA (cont'd)

Now that we've done our work for the day, bring me a drink.

HAROLD

Not unless you eat something.

ADA

Something I'll enjoy or something you want me to eat?

HAROLD

Fruit.

Ada turns her eyes towards him, not bothering to move an inch. She stared at him with those hollow dark eyes as having no intention of enjoying or suffering fruit was clear. Already off his game Harold chose not to argue.

HAROLD

Fine, your way.

He leaves the room and returns with a Fry's chocolate bar, unfoiled, along with a cup. A single coffee cup but there was anything but that inside. It was a particular mixture of things that she knew to help her sleep.

A liquid sedative, decaffeinated coffee and rum hard enough to make any pirate cough.

Ada broke the bar in half and quickly ate it like a sandwich then she gulped the cup to bottom and dropped back into place in the bed. The affects weren't immediate but the knowledge of what was to come was.

She sunk into her oblivion, staring up at the ceiling once again as Harold made his way out of the room and shut the door leaving her with her angels and demons, her haunt all her own. Her everything and her nothing.

MOTHER

Ade?

The voice of the dearest woman she'd ever known sweetly finding her as Ada lay motionless, staring up at the ceiling. One might question if she were alive.

Still as a doll.

The window switches from the light of morning, to pitch dark. So dark you may as well be below ground as an unholy droning sound replaced her mother's voice.

Oh bloody hell. **Sleep paralysis.**

Ada was coherent, but she couldn't move.

Her breathing was shallow and it felt like suffocating awake. She'd had this happen many times since her childhood but something about this concoction she liked drinking.

Not *concoction* in the sense that there was any method or measurement to it but only because it was whatever amount of everything they ever had on hand and she chose to drink down.

This outcome was always a risk.

The sound of her heart pounding between her ears, the growing feeling of suffocation **the panic.**

ADA  
(thinking.)  
Come on...come on.

Trying to will herself to move but it wasn't working.

The mood in the room changing to pure dread, as if the walls were melting and darker if it could get so.

A chill shooting through her form. She knew something was here. SOME THING. That wasn't.

It came all too regularly, like her own personal ghoul.

Her eyes the only thing she could move, tried to fight the will to look but she could fight no more.

Ada looked to the right, and she saw it.

It stood looming over her, a blackish mass, that dissipated into the floor and dared to touch the ceiling, craning whatever you could call a neck to peer down at her with the empty eyes of a skull that seemed to droop as if it were crying. But **this time**, she didn't look away.

She stared right back at it, defenseless but not fearless.

Waking dream or not, it was there.

ADA (cont'd)  
(thinking)  
If you're death take me...

But no response, there was never a response.

Willing herself, straining mentally but not physically, growling in mind, screaming in head.

ADA (cont'd)  
(thinking loudly)  
If you're nothing leave me, but do  
not stand before me and waste my  
fucking time you fur cunt. Or it's me  
who'll be hunting you!

No response.

Until it began to move over her, over her body as if climbing on top, enveloping her in the darkness.

Ada gave up the ghost and tried to scream out of her skull, her bravado shattering, she screamed out of pure fear.

Loud enough there was an echo.

Springing up in bed.

ADA (cont'd) (cont'd)

Mum!?

Momentarily reverting to her childhood call, ghoul gone, light of day returning to the windows in that same instant.

Her hands were now shaking, heart pounding enough to force her to caught. She couldn't allow herself to go back to sleep, not now. Or it would happen again.

She knew this from experience.

Ada stumbles for the end of the bed and nearly falls to the floor as she scurries to get her bedroom door open.

5 INT. COLBY HOUSE

5

Allowing a look at the state of the home starting with the hallway towards her room, much neater and more well kept than Ada's room of course but clearly late 19th century, from furnishings to paintings.

It reeked, positively reeked of old money.

Ada hurrying down the grand staircase, coming to a stop at the front door where she began to step into a pair of fine leather riding boots.

By then of course Harold had heard the noise.

HAROLD

What in the world?

ADA

Away with you old man, I screamed loud enough to wake the dead. I'd be dead if there was actually some highway man trying to end me with this slow response of yours.

HAROLD

Well you'll catch your death running out into this cold morning.

ADA

No more than I deserve.

HAROLD

Let's not go right back from wence we came dearie.

ADA

Shut, the, fuck, up, Harold.

HAROLD

Watch your tone, I know I work for your father but i'm still your elder.

Ada turns and **punches** Harold as hard as she can with her left hand, he goes down but so does she on the follow through.

Collapsing in a heap together but Ada makes a play to clutch at his collar with both hands and begins to choke him.

ADA

Listen to me you insufferable old bastard, you unyielding husk of a man latched onto me and my family sucking pennies out of my father's arse! -- I could kill you right now and no I'm not saying this as a threat!

Her hands tightening around his throat but Harold lay still.

ADA (cont'd)

It is a fact! My father would not mourn you! He would hire his henchmen to come burn your body or feed it to pigs and keep on bothering me! You'd never be spoken of again! That's why you aren't even trying to save yourself! If you lay a finger on me your life is over, if I kill you, your life is over, so your only hope is to fucking hope I'm through!

His face was reddening, he was truly being choked out and struggling, her words were true. If he fought back he knew her father would end him but he knew Ada enough to hold out.

Ada abruptly releases Harold who inhales sharply and coughs up a storm.

ADA (cont'd)

Get up, get me my coat and get away from me or I'll end you in this foyer.

She'd had enough, years of this, years of his pushing, they'd had their little tiffs but sometimes those you knew did not know when to stop. Her mental demons were her own and he couldn't confront the darkness riding her. Only Ada could.

Ada climbs off of Harold and takes a seat on the floor, hands folded in her lap. Head hanging in full a shift of demeanor.

As if she were a child that knew they'd misbehaved.

Harold rubs his jaw as he stands up and actually gets her coat then offers his hand to help her rise to her feet.

Once up he helps her into her coat and she heads out the door without ever making eye contact.

HAROLD

I'll come looking if you aren't back  
in an hour.

ADA

Very well.

6 EXT. COLBY MANOR, GROUNDS

6

She begins her walk away from the manor into a grey skied, snowy day through the partly cleared path towards the main gate. - The wrought iron between two well built but aging stone pillars with the Colby name emblazoned.

Ada slips through the slightly ajar gate like a cat through a closing door. Where she spots Lily coming down the pathway.

Lilian "Lily" Kendridge is a younger woman, perhaps 18 to 20 comparatively to Ada who's between 25 and 35 somewhere.

LILY

Ada!

Lily shouts from across the way, carrying a basket of something Ada was sure she was going to have to hear about.

Ada wanted desperately to be alone with her psychological warfare but Lily always treated her like the big sister she never had and Ada could never bring herself to deck Lily the way she would Harold. Harold earned it.

Lily launches herself into Ada, arms around in a bear hug and bathing her cheeks in kisses.

ADA

Alright Lily, alright.

LILY

Where about' you been? Been months it seems like since I seen ya. I knocked lots of times but Harold said you weren't taking visitors.

Thought you might be sick.

ADA

I am.

Lily's eyes widen in an exaggerated shock that's the thing about this girl, she's genuine where most aren't. So it was much more than Ada intended to thrust upon her.

LILY

What is it!? Will you be well?!

ADA

Yes, I suppose, it's not that kind of sick. It's sick of life.

LILY

How does one get that?

ADA

Time, time and life.

LILY

But you're so young.

Ada couldn't help but smile, she may have been a dreary sort but she enjoyed being flattered when it was the right person doing it. As much as she pushed Lily way there was an appreciation of being so appreciated.

Sisterly at best, but now and then Ada had other thoughts.

Ones she couldn't bring herself to act on lest she ruin what good there was to be had by trying to drag Lily's kind self into something sordid on a whim.

LILY (cont'd)

What of me then? You're barely older than me.

ADA

That you know of.

LILY

(Mockingly)

That I know of?

Bumping Ada playfully with her hip.

LILY (cont'd)  
 I have eyes. You're beautiful, you glow. Not now of course, you look like ghost but when you haven't been locked away in that prison of yours, you're luminescent.

Ada began to grin, blushing even and as such this needed to be stopped immediately in her mind.

ADA  
 Stop.

Embarrassment overtaking her, but Lily wouldn't let her escape so easy. Lily hooking an arm with Ada and leaning into what was a half hug as she pulls Ada into a walk.

ADA (cont'd)  
 It's not a prison.

LILY  
 What would you call it then?

ADA  
 I call it home.

LILY  
 You don't treat it like one.

ADA  
 What do I treat it like then, oh wise little one?

LILY  
 Well, you treat it as I said like a prison. You go in, you eat like a bird, you sleep all the time and you let yourself wither. Sounds like a prison if ever I've seen one.

ADA  
 Have you seen a prison?

LILY  
 Yes, actually.

One might mistake her for bragging, it also was throwing a wrench in Ada's plan to get the subject off of herself.



ADA

Really? When? They jailed you? You seem like one to be institutionalized not jailed.

LILY

Me? What about you, I saved you from that when your father had enough.

CUT TO: COLBY  
MANOR, 2 YEARS  
AGO

We see the exterior of the manor as we hear Ada's father yelling inside, loud, abusive in tone.

LORD COLBY

I've had it! I will not have my heir wasting away like this, I'm summoning the orderlies, I'd rather you locked away at Kenthill Asylum than the family shaming me with questions.

Sounds of him tossing things around.

LORD COLBY (cont'd)

Talk of the town, my daughter that never leaves the house.

It ends **one way or another!**

His voice fades from ear, vitriol intact as the sound of hurried footsteps replace it and the bedroom window flies open with a bang. It's Ada.

She looks disheveled, manic and her hair is a mess. *The way she always does.* Peering around for any sign of life.

Then she sees Lily walking by as is equally the usual.

And Lily of course sees Ada, just like before. Lily waves to her with a warm excited smile.

LILY

Hello Ada!

ADA

(firmly)

LILY!

LILY

Nice to see you! I like your hair! Are there birds in it?!

Lily laughs, tickled with that one.

ADA

Damn it, pay attention! My father is sending me away, I need your help! Fucking immediately!

LILY

Oh dear!...Alright!

**Lily runs off.** Out of sight.

Ada stares blankly then curses under her breath, looking back into the room, she disappears into it and the sound of the dresser sliding in front of the door can be heard.

She rushes back to the window as father starts knocking and yelling, now muffled sounds.

Ada is looking for any sign of Lily who returns with a rather large white horse, almost magical looking if it wasn't but more than likely it was a shire horse she'd somehow found or stolen from an adjoining property.

The shock on Ada's face can't be understated.

LILY (cont'd)

Your steed madam?

ADA

How am I supposed to?

LILY

You better figure it out.

The sound of the dresser sliding behind her took precedent, her father is making quick progress as Ada is forced to throw caution to the wind and launches herself out the window.

She hits the ground with a thud and climbs up onto the horse behind Lily. The two riding off into the tree line, making their escape.

BACK TO: THE  
PRESENT

7 EXT. COLBY MANOR, GROUNDS

7

LILY

I really am a wonderful friend to you.

ADA

Thank you.

Because it needed to be said after that recollection.

Ada clears her throat.

ADA (cont'd)

About your uncle though?

LILY

Oh him. -- Wasn't able to help him so much, he was challenged to a duel and cheated.

CUT TO: WINSLEY  
HOUSE, SOME  
TIME AGO.

8 EXT. WINSLEY HOUSE, WEST YARD

8

Spring time, outside of a home rivaling Colby Manor in size but painted a blinding white. Four men stand in the yard.

The duelist on the left is Lily's uncle William Kendridge, a rather svelte but well dressed man. Along with him was his second, Reginald Hastings who looked as unsure as one could about this entire situation they had found themselves in.

On the right was the besmirched known to be Kenneth Helmsley, a white haired shop owner and his own second Vincent Jennings who honestly looked as if he'd killed several people himself. Cut throat looking sort.

Lastly was the mediator standing off to the side. His name was George Barnes, he had officiated many a duel but seemed as if he'd been drinking this fine morning unfortunately.

THE MEDIATOR

Gentlemen, begin your ten paces.

The two began to walk away from each other but by the 5th pace Lily's uncle instead drew his weapon and...

**Shot Kenneth in the back.**

The smoke from the pistol hanging in the air as Kenneth falls to both knees, drops forward dead.

Vincent is in shock and tries to draw his own weapon.

But Lily's uncle rushes towards him and somehow snatches away his gun before he can react and shoots him in the mouth.

Kenneth and Vincent lay dead.

The mediator is in shock himself but realizes his predicament and begins to run towards the house, only to trip and fall on the front stairs but this happening brings a halt to the flurry of death and the reality of it all sets in.

REGINALD

Dear God man.

WILLIAM

I panicked.

BACK TO: THE  
PRESENT

ADA

Are you serious?

LILY

As you are about sadness.

Lily with these little jokes. That one caught Ada off guard, showing a half a smile but lowering her head into a pout.

ADA

Don't make fun of me. It's unkind.

LILY

Awww, i'm sorry but there it is.

Planting a kiss on Ada's cheek.

LILY (cont'd)

There's the glow.

Ada again grinning ear to ear as she tries to shake off her blush once more.

ADA

But honestly. The man's a brute, I mean how could he do such a thing?

LILY

Indeed but that's why I had to go to prison to see him.

ADA  
So what, what was it like?

CUT TO: LEEL  
PRISON

9 INT. LEEL PRISON, CELLS

9

Lily greeting her uncle in the bowels of a ratty old damp prison. Leaking fixtures from above, may very well be a basement if not for the iron bars keeping him in place.

More akin to a dungeon than a modern prison.

LILY  
Hello uncle!

WILLIAM  
Hello Lily!

CUT TO: THE  
GALLOWS

10 EXT. LEEL PRISON, GALLOWS

10

A large crowd stands before the wooden platform, William has a noose around his neck, hands folded and clutching a bit of parchment in his hands. Eyes damp as if he'd been crying, hecklers shouting incoherent things. Only Lily is amongst them, representing faces that he knows. Reginald is noticeably absent.

LILY  
Goodbye uncle!

WILLIAM  
Goodbye Lily!

The executioner pulls the lever and Lily's uncle falls to his damnation, his neck snapping with a crunch.

BACK TO: THE  
PRESENT

ADA  
Mother of God. That's awful.

LILY

I know, but maybe Ada you could see that we've all seen things, all dealt with death and darkness and things that haunt us. They don't need to destroy us.

ADA

Perhaps there's more to you than I know. You do have a habit of surprising me.

LILY

Oh I know there is.

ADA

Don't get cocky little one.

LILY

Oh please Ada, I care greatly for you but you lean into this...

ADA

This? Lean into what?

LILY

This -- not facade but you're like a crow. You're like a crow that likes to dwell in the idea of being a crow. -- Yet you're really not. You're sweet and playful, maybe more.

Lily smirks.

LILY (cont'd)

Just like me.

ADA

We can't all be little snow finches like you.

LILY

That's not it. It's as if someone or something made you think you were something else but you are, you are a snow finch and something happened to make you think you weren't. As if someone made you into a Penny Dreadful.

ADA

I didn't come out here for this.

Of course she could take the mental lashing when she was beating herself up but getting it from Lily was pissing her off. Ada let go of their arm in arm hooking and stepped away.

LILY

Oh don't be that way. I was just trying to help.

ADA

I don't need your help.

LILY

You have before, you will again.

Something in that struck Ada at her core, it was the idea of being seen as needy, as someone who needs help.

Her thoughts raced to how could she remove this, suicide? Was this the trigger? Her heart raced, she imagined cutting her wrists in a bath.

Searching the snow on the ground for some better answer as Lily reached for her.

Ada looked up but was confronting her own cowardice in Lily's face by holding her tongue because if she spoke it.

If she threatened to kill herself. She couldn't let Lily call her bluff. That twisting, burning dread and hatred boiling up so quickly she placed a hand against her chest and looked about to will herself into collapse. A panic attack was so very nearly upon her.

ADA

Lily.

LILY

Talk to me.

ADA

I can't keep doing this, I can't keep feeling these things, it's nothing but disgust within myself. As soon as you said that my only hope was to never need anyone again. -- It isn't right, it isn't normal.

LILY

We'll fix it.

ADA

You'll fail.

LILY

No, no I won't you silly little crow  
because I'm going to get *the finch*  
*out of you.*

Ada let out a snort of a laugh, Lily following suit, laughing along with her friend as they relinked their arms and continued down the path, onward ever onward.

FADE OUT