

Excerpt from

Dude Ranch

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EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - OUTSIDE FAIRWEATHER - MID-AFTERNOON

The fat yellow sun hangs high in the sky. Fairweather, Alberta is baking in the heat.

On the outskirts of town, a goth in a baggy hoodie marches up a dusty hill, talking on the phone. Big Lisbeth Salander vibes.

PENELOPE, 28, gets animated as she speaks. Something has her close to the end of her rope.

PENELOPE
It's fucked up. The whole town's dry.

Chatter from the other end of the line.

PENELOPE
Every single one. I called every single one.

She pauses to listen.

PENELOPE (CONT'D)
Yep. Yep. Yep. Mm hmm.
I know. Oh, I know.

She arrives at a deserted crossroads.

The only landmark amidst the backdrop of dirt and grass is a skeletal wooden gate with the name 'Fortkinson' painted across the top. (It bears resemblance to a Japanese Torii gate.)

PENELOPE
Yeah, well, here I am.

She checks her watch.

PENELOPE
Wow. Two minutes early. This is what I meant by 'desperate.'

On the other end of the line, RANIA, 26, laughs. She says something we can't hear.

PENELOPE
Fuck you! I *will* have what I came for, and you *will* thank me for it. Many, many times.

The first part of Rania's response is unintelligible, but it ends with:

RANIA
(through phone)
Girl, good luck.

PENELOPE
Bye.

Penelope hangs up. She looks around. Once, twice--

A handsome cowboy on a horse is suddenly in the counter-shot. He's appeared as if by magic.

Startled, Penelope drops her phone.

PENELOPE
Good God.

She scoops up the mobile. Catches her breath.

PENELOPE
Well, thanks for meeting me.

KURT FORTKINSON, 25, tips his hat to Penelope--a sign of respect.

KURT
Ma'am.

PENELOPE
Really? How about *You've been inside me.* How about that instead of 'ma'am.'

Kurt doesn't know how to respond. A true southern gentleman.

PENELOPE
It's great to know you're still in love with your little *Mullholland Drive* disappearing act.

At the mention of 'in love,' Kurt's eyes dart back and forth.

PENELOPE
But seriously. Thank you for meeting me. You have no idea what I've been through.

KURT
I can imagine.

PENELOPE

You sure your dad's cool with
hooking me up on short notice?

KURT

Well, he hasn't technically said anything.
I'd have told him as soon as you called,
but--

PENELOPE

Doesn't matter. There's no time. Show's
in five hours.

Beat.

KURT

How've you been?

PENELOPE

No.

KURT

(deflated)

What'dya mean, no.

PENELOPE

You wouldn't know what to do if
I told you. And I don't really
want to tell you, so...

KURT

Still got the fire, huh. Haven't
changed a bit.

PENELOPE

Nope, and this is a business trip.

Kurt rubs his hands together.

KURT

We're doin' alright.

PENELOPE

What part of 'I didn't ask'--

KURT

I just--You look great.

PENELOPE

Kurt. What's going on in that noggin,
buddy? Are we, I dunno, sharing a
breadstick at the Olive Garden? You
reaching for my hand across the table?

Because--

KURT

It's funny. Y'know, I got this groupon...

PENELOPE

Oh. Oh.

Click. She gets what's going on here, and tries to hide her pity for the cowboy still hopelessly in love with her.

KURT

I just thought, maybe, if you're not doin' anything...

PENELOPE

(letting him down gently)

Hey. Come on, what we had was so good. It was *so good*. Wasn't it?

Kurt nods.

PENELOPE (CONT'D)

It was so good. Yeah. And we'll have those memories forever.

Kurt moves to say something. Penelope gives the horse, not Kurt, a comforting pat.

Kurt lets the words die in his mouth. He deflates just enough for us to notice.

PENELOPE

There, there.

She pats the horse again.

Penelope extends her arm, which Kurt eventually takes. He swings her up onto his horse.

PENELOPE

Let's go see your Pa.

They ride off through the gate, and up the hill towards the ranch.

Fade in:

Penelope and Kurt arrive at the ranch's big house.

A set of saloon doors swing wide to reveal a rustic library, in the centre of which is seated a stoic, mustachioed cowboy of some years. He gives off a definitively mystical vibe.

Taking in the newcomers, T.MAX FORTKINSON, ?, dismounts his leather stool.

No, wait, it's a miniature horse. It coughs, and T. Max sends it on its way.

T. MAX

Name's T. Max Fortkinson. Welcome to Fortkinson Ranch. I get the feeling you've come a long way.

KURT

Dad, this young lady here, she'd like to do some business.

PENELOPE

Just so we're clear, you do sell ketamine?

T. Max thoughtfully strokes his Yosemite Sam-looking-ass mustache.

T. MAX

Indeed... What *would* one do, given an eternity to ponder?

Penelope gets the feeling the question wasn't entirely rhetorical. She shoots T. Max a look like *Did you just imply you are immortal?*

KURT

(coughs)

Dad. As I understand, the lady's in a bit of a rush.

With but a glance between them, Kurt and T. Max have this exchange:

Kurt, woulda been nice if you'd called.
I'm sorry Dad, the lady here--
--Son. Need you really be so formal?
Dad, how the *hell* do you know? Does everybody?!
Boy, don't take it personal. There's much I see.
Dad, I--
Kurt. Later.

Kurt nods, blushing.

In-sync, T. Max and Kurt swivel their heads towards Penelope.

T. MAX
Welcome to Ketamine Ranch.

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INT. FORTKINSON RANCH - KETAMINE BARN - LATE AFTERNOON

T. Max leads Penelope on a tour of the Ketamine Barn: a massive wooden structure lined with faintly glowing purple crystals, ranging in size from baseballs to pickup trucks.

T. MAX
You're going to want to watch the corners.
Them rocks is pointy as a prickly pear.

PENELOPE
This isn't my first "rodeo."

T. MAX
S'pose not.

PENELOPE
It goes without saying that I appreciate
you hooking me up.

T. MAX
Well, as a snake slithers or a bird sings--

PENELOPE
--You sell drugs. Great. I don't mean to
be rude, but I've only got about five
hours to get back in time to do these
backstage at the concert of my lifetime.

T. Max doesn't miss a beat.

T. MAX
You got about four hours thirty-five.
Tour bus' ahead of schedule, manager's
pissed about the last stop. And the
opener's only got an EP's wortha songs.
Not bad for an electric mandolinist,
I will say.

PENELOPE
(skeptical)
Electric mandolinist? That's not really
the type of sound I--

T. MAX
Does some cool stuff with the reverb,

You'll see. And because you're still not convinced, your middle name is 'Hortensia.'

PENELOPE

Impressive. I've never told a living human. Which means you also know how much of your product I want.

T. MAX

Yes. I would say I'm impressed, but that'd technically be me in support of drug abuse. Though I do believe in bohemian consumption within reasonable limits, I--

PENELOPE

--Gotcha. That's weirdly cool of you.

T. MAX

So it is. Be responsible, would you?

T. Max stops the tour next to a medium-sized ketamine crystal. He breaks off a tiny protrusion and hovers it off his finger.

T. MAX

Now *that's* a toot!

PENELOPE

So it is.

T. MAX breaks off a much larger crystal, about the size of a kickball.

He produces a burlap sack from his back pocket, bags it up, and hands it to Penelope, who stuffs it in her hoodie.

PENELOPE

Niiice.

T. MAX

One of nature's few remaining majesties. Now, as for the matter of compensation...

PENELOPE

Obviously I brought cash. You want twenties or fifties?

T. MAX

Do I look in need of money?

PENELOPE

What? Take the money.

T. MAX

Y'see, I don't know what you've heard,
or not heard, but this is more of a
'quid pro quo' type of transaction.

PENELOPE

I am *not* having sex with you.

T. MAX goes red.

T. MAX

(sputtering)

Nope. That is not at all what
I... You are a vulgar woman.

PENELOPE

Thank you. What, then? You want
my goddamned soul? Ghosts have tried
and failed.

T. MAX

This is not a page ripped from 'Faust.'
And souls are not real, but if they
were, you'd certainly keep yours. No.
I'd actually like to ask a favour.

Penelope raises an eyebrow.

T. MAX

It is *not* of a sexual nature. My
miniature horse, Little Bill, has
been a dear friend to me, and a
comfort through times both high
and low. He has fallen ill of the
consumption, and I am in need of
someone to ferry him to medical aid.

PENELOPE

For real? You can't just do it?

He casts his eyes towards the floor.

T. MAX

I cannot. Let us leave it at that.

Penelope thinks on it.

T. MAX (CONT'D)

LB'll make his own way back up.
You just gotta get him down there.

PENELOPE

Alright. My friend's mom is a vet.
When does he need to be there?

T. MAX

Soon as.

She turns to leave. T. Max removes his hat.

T. MAX (CONT'D)

Oh, and Penelope? I appreciate you
goin' easy on Kurt. He's a good kid.
Much to learn, but... good kid.

PENELOPE

Of course.
(thinks about it)
It's actually not shocking,
just gross that you know.

Penelope exits the barn.

Cut to:

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EXT. TOWN OUTSKIRTS - HILLSIDE - LATE AFTERNOON

Penelope leads Little Bill down the hillside, silhouetted by the
setting sun. She tries to hustle, but the tiny horse moves at his own
pace.

Still, the evening's plans may well be within reach.

END