

SOUL SKIN

Written by

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INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

It's dark, the only light streams in through the small window, from an outside street lamp.

RUNNING WATER is heard, mixed with a groan and the breathing of a woman, out of view.

A PHONE RINGS in another room. *

PERCY (O.S.)
Goddammit! Yeah?... Who is this?
Well, I don't care. No... *

The shaggy purple bathmat has obvious dark spots across it. A woman's hand squeezes the mat, covered in the same kind of dark goop... it's blood. *

PERCY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Right. Well, I just said so, didn't I? Yeah, well I'll be expecting overtime. Un-fucking-believable. Sons of bitches. Can't a man ever get a day off?

FOOTSTEPS and BANGING AROUND is heard below. *

PERCY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Hardy! Get over here, girl. *

The blood covered hand reaches up and grabs hold of the porcelain. She uses it to pull herself up. *

PERCY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Now, I don't want you anywhere near that door, you got it?

RONAN, 30, looks at her reflection in the mirror. A large gash across her forehead oozes blood.

PERCY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Unless you want some of the same.

Ronan puts a shaky hand under the running water and rinses the cut. FOOTSTEPS stomp across the floor below.

PERCY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
How the hell they ever run that goddamn plant when I'm not there is beyond me.

A DOOR SLAMS below. *

After a moment, Ronan straightens up, she turns off the tap and listens hard... Still nothing.

Her breathing intensifies as she looks at her reflection, a hint of strength not seen before.

She turns off the tap and rushes over to the door. Ronan bangs on the door.

RONAN

Hardy! Hardy, can you hear me?
Hardy! Please, baby, please...

Ronan rests her cheek against the door and closes her eyes.

RONAN (CONT'D)

Please...

HARDY (O.S.)

Mama?

Ronan's eyes fly open.

RONAN

Baby, I need you to turn the key.

HARDY (O.S.)

But --

RONAN

This is our chance, love. He forgot to bolt the door. Please, you have to trust me. Turn the key.

Ronan waits with baited breath.

CLUNK.

Relieved, Ronan turns the doorknob and pulls the door open to reveal...

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

HARDY, 6, stands in the dimly lit and battered hallway with the skeleton key in her hand. *

HARDY

Am I going to be in trouble?

Ronan wraps her arms around Hardy.

RONAN

Never again, baby. Never again. I
promise.

She wipes hair from the eyes of the dirty, ragamuffin-looking child. Ronan stares at her, hands on her cheeks as she takes her in.

Ronan stands up and takes the girl by the hand as she rushes down the hallway.

RONAN (CONT'D)

But, we have to hurry.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The worn and torn furniture supports empty beer cans, dirty dishes and scattered clothes.

Hardy stands back and watches as Ronan steps slowly toward the door.

She reaches the door and looks back over her shoulder at Hardy. The girl wipes her nose.

Ronan takes a deep breath then places her hand on the doorknob and turns slowly and silently. She pulls and the door cracks open.

Breathless and overwhelmed, Ronan stares at the tiny open space between the door and doorframe. She turns back to Hardy, a huge smile on her face. Hardy smiles back.

Ronan closes the door again, as quietly as she can, then turns to Hardy.

RONAN

Look everywhere. We have to find it
before we can leave.

*

Hardy nods, but her smile has vanished.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ronan digs through dresser drawers. Nothing. She scans the room: now ransacked, everything torn from it's place, it's a mess.

She crosses the room and pulls open the closet door.

INT. WALK-IN CLOSET - NIGHT

Hands feel around the top shelf of the closet.

Ronan pulls her arms down, frustrated.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

She steps out of the closet and nearly jumps out of her skin, not expecting to see Hardy. Then off the look on Hardy's face...

RONAN

What is it?

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

Ronan follows Hardy through the dirty, musty and cobwebbed boiler room.

Hardy squeezes herself behind the water heater as Ronan looks on. Ronan glances at her watch, then bites her nail as she fidgets.

After a moment, a large, dirty and old piece of fur covered skin is pushed out through the gap.

Ronan gasps. She hurries over and helps to pull the piece through the small opening.

RONAN

Oh, look... Hardy.

She helps her back out through the small gap.

RONAN (CONT'D)

How did you know --

HARDY

Saw him with it when he put the new heater in.

Ronan holds the skin to her face, almost in tears.

HARDY (CONT'D)

Said he'd kill me if I told you what I'd seen... and that you'd leave.

*
*

The pain is reflected on Ronan's face as BRIGHT LIGHTS pass over both of them.

Hardy's eyes shoot up at the window as she swallows hard.

HARDY (CONT'D)
He's back.

RONAN
Come on!

She grabs Hardy by the hand and they race for the stairs.

INT. STAIRWAY - NIGHT

Ronan and Hardy run up the stairs as fast as they can.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Ronan flicks the light switch and the room goes dark. She ushers Hardy through the kitchen, toward the living room, as fast as she can.

A TRUCK DOOR SLAMS shut and MOVEMENT is heard just outside the window.

Ronan looks down at her daughter.

RONAN
As quiet as a mouse, okay?

Hardy nods.

They exit into...

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Ronan and Hardy bolt across the living room toward the door.

Breathless, Ronan closes her eyes tight, one last time, then yanks open the door.

EXT. FRONT PORCH - NIGHT

Hardy and Ronan slip out the front door, fur skin in hand. Ronan pulls it shut behind her.

They hurry across the porch, then Ronan lifts Hardy up over the railing.

FOOTSTEPS near. She looks over her shoulder and then jumps over the railing into the bushes below.

Both of them crouch down as low as they can, into the bushes. Breath held, as dirty jeans and work boots stomp past them, inches from their faces.

Hardy looks to Ronan, terrified.

The JINGLING OF KEYS.

PERCY (O.S.)
Jesus Christ!

THE DOOR SLAMS OPEN and HITS THE INSIDE WALL.

RONAN
(whispers)
Go, now. Go!

Ronan and Hardy bolt out of the bushes.

EXT. ALLEYWAY - NIGHT

Hardy sprints in front of Ronan as the two run as fast as they can down the alley.

Ronan catches up and grabs Hardy by the arm.

RONAN
Wait! Here, this way...

She lifts up a broken part of a chainlink fence, and ushers Hardy through.

Ronan sees Percy's truck turn toward them, down the alley. She squeezes herself through the fence, the skin with her.

EXT. NEIGHBOR'S YARD - NIGHT

Ronan and Hardy race across the neighbor's yard. Ronan trips over a scooter and hits the ground hard.

LIGHTS turn on inside the house. A DOG BARKS.

HARDY
Mama!

RONAN
I'm okay. Don't stop.

Ronan pulls herself up and they continue on to the side gate.

EXT. FRONT OF NEIGHBOR'S HOUSE - NIGHT

They slip out of the side gate and dash across the front yard.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Ronan grabs Hardy by the hand, with the skin tucked up under her arm, the two of them sprint down the street.

EXT. PIER - NIGHT

Exhausted and out of breath, Hardy and Ronan reach the CROWDED pier, lit up like a carnival. They stop to catch their breath and look around.

A group of PASSENGERS line up to board a ferry at the very end of the pier. Ronan raises her head high and takes Hardy by the hand as she nods toward the ferry.

RONAN

Over there.

Ronan pulls her bangs down to cover the gash on her head and tucks the skin up under her arm real good as they walk, as casually as they can, toward the ferry.

PERCY (O.S.)

Ronan!

Hardy and Ronan turn, eyes wide toward the voice.

PERCY, 40's, stands twenty feet from them.

PERCY (CONT'D)

Now where in the hell you think you're going?

Ronan tucks Hardy behind her as she walks backward, toward the ferry. She keeps a wary eye on Percy.

RONAN

(whispers to Hardy)

Get on the ferry, ask for help. Go now, run!

Hardy turns on her heel and maneuvers her way through the Crowd.

Percy catches sight of the girl.

PERCY

Goddamn you, woman!

Percy rushes for Ronan. Ronan turns and runs behind Hardy. She tries to push her way past people. But, it's so crowded it's hard to move.

Percy right on Ronan's heels, he can almost touch her, but not quite.

Ronan does her best to look over and through the crowd. Desperate for a glimpse of Hardy. She can't see her anywhere.

PERCY (CONT'D)

Ronan! So help me...

Ronan eyes the line of ferry passengers... Hardy's not there. She spins, panicked.

RONAN

Hardy? Hardy!

She looks and looks, but can't find her.

Percy spots Hardy near the fishing boats. He sneers after Ronan then turns for Hardy. *

He pushes past PEOPLE to make his way toward her.

RONAN (CONT'D)

Hardy!

HARDY (O.S.)

Mama!

Ronan gasps at the sound of Hardy's voice. She turns back toward the fishing boats and sees Percy approach Hardy. *

Ronan runs through the crowd.

RONAN

Hardy! No! Don't you touch her!

Ronan pushes past a group of TOURISTS, only to come face to face with Percy, Hardy in his clutches.

RONAN (CONT'D)

Let her go!

PERCY

Ohhh weee! Well, look at you trying to give me orders now. *

(MORE) *

PERCY (CONT'D)

Keep it up and it's gonna get you
in a whole heap of trouble.

*

RONAN

Let her go, Percy or I'll make a
scene. I swear it.

PERCY

Oh yeah, and what exactly you been
doing up to now?

He looks down at the girl as he shakes her by the arm.

PERCY (CONT'D)

Didn't I tell you not to go near
that door? Didn't I?

Hardy nods, in tears.

RONAN

It's not her fault.

PERCY

Oh, I have no doubt about whose
fault all this is. And believe you,
me, you'll know it, too when we get
home.

*
*
*
*

RONAN

I'm not going home.

PERCY

That so?

*

RONAN

I'm not your property, Percy.

PERCY

Not my property? Well... she's
mine!

*

He shakes Hardy again for good measure.

*

PERCY (CONT'D)

And, ain't I the one who found you?
Put a roof over your head? I'd
venture to say, you are, in fact,
my property. Can't exactly leave,
now, can --

*
*
*
*

Ronan shifts the skin under her arm. It catches Percy's
attention. His eyes grow wide as he fumes.

PERCY (CONT'D)
Where'd you get that?

Ronan stares at him, silent.

RONAN
I said we're not going home.

Percy, furious, squeezes the girl's arm hard and pulls her face in, close to his.

PERCY
What'd I tell you'd happen if you
said anything 'bout that?

HARDY
I'm sorry. I didn't mean --

PERCY
You didn't mean. Don't lie to me,
girl.

He slaps her, hard, across the face and releases his grasp.
Hardy drops to the ground, in tears.

Ronan dives for Percy, the skin falls, as she attacks him.
She claws at his face and pushes his head back, as she fights
to keep him away from Hardy.

RONAN
You don't ever get to touch her
again!

*

Hardy crawls over to the skin and hides behind it.

BYSTANDERS take notice and watch from a distance.

PERCY
Get off me, woman!

He pushes Ronan back hard. She slams into a rack of fishing
gear. Poles hit the ground around her, making a huge RACKET.

*

Percy looks up and notices the onlookers.

PERCY (CONT'D)
What you gawking at? Huh? Go on,
mind your own damn business! All of
you!

A few bystanders move on. One MAN reaches for his phone.

Ronan looks up to the Bystanders as they disperse.

RONAN

No! Help us! Please!

*

The Man steps forward. As he reaches for Ronan...

PERCY (O.S.)

Pick one.

Ronan looks to Percy. He has Hardy in one hand and the skin in the other.

PERCY (CONT'D)

Pick one, Ronan.

RONAN

What?

PERCY

You heard me. I want to know how much she really means to you. Pick.

RONAN

I don't have --

Percy lifts Hardy up, out over the water.

A WOMAN screams.

The Man steps forward toward Percy.

PERCY

(to Man)

Stay back!

(to Ronan)

I said pick!

HARDY

Mama! Help me!

Tears stream down Ronan's face as Hardy cries in terror.

RONAN

Don't hurt her, Percy!

PERCY

Then pick! You love your daughter?
You want her? Then this here skin
is mine. Get it?

Ronan, unable to speak, nods.

PERCY (CONT'D)

What's that?

RONAN

Okay.

PERCY

Okay, what?

RONAN

The skin is yours.

Percy grins, then he drops Hardy.

Hardy screams as she splashes into the cold ocean below.

RONAN (CONT'D)

No!

PERCY

I warned her what would happen.
Girl needs to learn to mind.

POLICE SIRENS scream in the distance.

Ronan's hands tighten around a pole behind her.

Percy tucks the skin under his arm and turns to Ronan.

She lunges forward and slams a harpoon through Percy's stomach.

His eyes grow wide with pain and fury as he looks up at Ronan.

He reaches out, and grabs her by the hair. As they wrestle, the rail snaps behind them. Ronan, Percy and the skin all tumble into the water below.

EXT. OCEAN - NIGHT

Ronan, head above water, desperately searches: Hardy is no where in sight.

RONAN

Hardy! Hardy!

She looks. Turns and looks. She spots Percy, with the harpoon sticking up, gurgling as he struggles and slowly sinks. The skin sinks beside Percy and disappears. *

Ronan dives under the water. *

EXT. PIER - NIGHT

The CROWD gathered by the broken rail, as they search for signs of life in the water below.

MAN

There! I see something.

Without hesitation, he dives into the water. TWO MORE MEN, follow him in.

The Woman leans over to see. *

WOMAN

It's too dark. We need a light!
Someone shine a light!

The fishing boat's LIGHTS flip on, illuminating the water.

EXT. OCEAN - NIGHT *

The Men dive down and resurface, repeatedly. *

MAN *

I can't see anything. *

Man #2 resurfaces. *

MAN #2 *

It's pitch black down there. *

A SEAL pops up from below the surface with Hardy's body held just above the water up by it's nose. *

Man spots Hardy and the Seal. *

MAN *

There! Look at that! *

He swims for Hardy. *

EXT. PIER - NIGHT

FISHERMEN, TOURISTS and Bystanders look on as the Man grabs hold of Hardy. *

Hardy coughs as they wrap a blanket around her. She looks out to the water at the Seal. She holds up a hand, as to wave. *

The Seal vanishes under the water.

Hardy slowly closes her fingers and lowers her hand. *

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Ambulances and police cars litter the street. Their red and blue lights add to the pier's distant glow.

Hardy stares at a body bag as it is wheeled passed her.

She watches from the back of an ambulance, wet and cold, but alive as EMTS examine her.

The body bag is lifted into the next ambulance. As they close the back doors, Ronan is revealed. Soaking wet and her forehead bloody, she limps toward Hardy.

Hardy's eyes grow wide.

HARDY

Mama!

The girl jumps up and races into Ronan's arms. *

HARDY (CONT'D) *

I thought you left me. *

Ronan squeezes her daughter tight. *

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

The house is tidy and warm now. All windows and doors wide open.

LAUGHING and CHILDREN PLAYING can be heard from outside.

INT. STAIRWAY TO HALLWAY - DAY

The daylight streams in to fill what was once a dark void.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Ronan stands by the dresser as she stares out at Hardy and the NEIGHBORHOOD KIDS at play in the yard below. Peace reflected on her face.

She takes a deep breath as she turns her attention back to the dresser. Ronan carefully tucks the fur skin into the drawer and closes it.

FADE OUT.