

INT. OUTSIDE PROF'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

ANDE, mysterious, aloof, early 20s, walks up to an office door in a THREE-PIECE-SUIT. Light streams in through the Venetian blinds on the window of the office door. She knocks.

ANDE (V.O.)
The seedy underbelly of higher
education really makes you think -

There are whisperings from inside the office. We see the silhouettes of two figures appear against the shades.

ANDE (V.O.)
What makes an idea stick out - in the
sea of all the rest...

Close-up of Ande, she adjusts her ASCOT. The door opens, then shuts. A figure, CAMERON, 20s, rushes out and past her, too quickly to register. The camera nor Ande pay her any mind.

ANDE (V.O.)
I've been drowning too long in this
campus of pseudo-intellectualism and
overconsumption. Time for a change.

The door opens, flooded in light, the silhouette of THE PROFESSOR, 50s, suit and tie and fedora, motioning her in.

INT. PROF'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Everything is bright, the Professor closes the shades, then he returns to stand at a PODIUM. We register an office, dimly lit.

Ande sits across the table from him, drawing out a MASSIVE BINDER from her BRIEFCASE.

THE PROFESSOR
Ah, yes. "Through Existence The
Opening of Death; Derrida's
Logocentrism at the Center of a Post-
structuralist's Sophocles' Oedipus
Rex." I've seen this paper in office
hours every day this week.

All of a sudden, Ande has an INK BOTTLE, QUILL, and SHOT GLASS beside the binder.

ANDE
Well, what did your literary agent

think of it? Did she get back to you?

THE PROFESSOR

I wanted to let you down easy - but
it's best to tell it like it is. My
agent's not interested.

Ande lurches forward towards him.

ANDE

What? What did she say?

THE PROFESSOR

There's too much style and not enough
substance.

Ande starts furiously writing with her quill and ink bottle.

THE PROFESSOR

And that only every other chapter is
any good. Not as fresh.

Ande pulls out a METAL FLASK and pours her shot glass full.

ANDE

It's hard to be fresh with classics.

THE PROFESSOR

And you're not quite there. I think
it's missing something.

ANDE

(perking up)

You think a new source?

THE PROFESSOR

The Agent's note reminded me of this
one book. Something really fresh.
Practically no one has written on it.

Ande adjusts her ascot, hanging on every word.

THE PROFESSOR

It's called VERITAS OBSCURA. Most
academics don't believe it exists.
Find Trish, she knows the whereabouts
of its sole copy.

ANDE

I'll find it.

Ande closes her briefcase, her things packed away except for the shot glass. She DOWNS IT.

THE PROFESSOR
Oh and one other thing. There's someone else after it too. Another student. Good luck!

Ande makes searing eye contact, then rushes out.

INT. LIBRARY READING ROOM - AFTERNOON

A long study room. Portraits of old men high above, full book shelves. Ande forges down the aisle between shelves and tables. She passes a GROUP OF STUDENTS.

TWO COLLEGE STUDENTS, in HOODIES, illuminated by their glowing LAPTOP SCREENS, look at her warily as she passes.

At the end of the room at a table filing books, sits TRISH, librarian, 60s/70s, slight southern drawl.

Ande sits opposite. They share a moment of silence.

TRISH
Looking for something, toots?

ANDE
Old book. It's called Veritas Obscura.

Trish closes her eyes. A moment passes. Another. We wonder if she's even going to open them ever again.

TRISH
(brooding)
Veritas ... Obscura ...
(eyes snap open)
This book was originally transcribed onto clay slabs and for years it remained untranslated. The only reason the school even has a copy is because one of the key translators was a past colleague of mine... A damn fine archivist too.

Trish takes a long deep breath, staring into space wistfully. Ande is on the edge of her seat, adjusts ascot. Desperate.

ANDE
So it's here?

Trish snaps back, looking at Ande with a fiery intensity.

TRISH

It was here. It was misfiled years ago. Not on my watch, trust me. Could be in the book jacket of any other book in this place.

Ande sighs dramatically and raises, gearing up to leave.

ANDE

Better start now.

TRISH

Start in the stacks. Last I heard it was accidentally logged into the Intrinsically Diametric Cartesian Transcendental Empiricism sector.

(beat)

Funny, you're not the first to ask today.

ANDE

(immediately)

Who was?

She reaches into her pocket and draws out a post-it note. She hands it to Ande.

TRISH

She told me to give this to the next person asking for Veritas Obscura.

Ande looks down at the post-it. It reads: NICE TRY, FUCKER.

INT. STACKS - ANY TIME

There's a haze in the air. Stacks of books, dark, not a soul in sight. Ande's footsteps are loud. She scans a shelf.

A door SLAM. Footsteps approach LOUD. Ande looks around.

The FIGURE, turns down aisle to be face to face with ANDE.

Haze drifts around HER. CAMERON, mid 20s, peers through messy black eyeliner and adjusts her low-rise belt. She's winded, but attempting effortlessness. Her eyes are locked on Ande.

They share tense eye-contact. Ande's eye's narrow.

ANDE (V.O.)
Could this post-punk be the one after
my thesis? Her feminist deconstruction
of Aristotle made me seek therapy.

Tense. Stakes feel high. Both speak with a cool venom.

CAMERON
Ande.

ANDE
Cameron.

CAMERON
How's it been?

ANDE
Status quo. You?

CAMERON
It's busy.

ANDE
Hm. The Professor sent you?

CAMERON
Mmmm hmmm.

ANDE
Luck?

CAMERON
Already checked Trish's tip. Dead end.

Ande looks away, trying to conceal her frustration. Cameron swallows her pride.

CAMERON
I hate to say this, but I think we
could cover more ground together.

Ande looks back to her, curious. Cameron's smile turns sly.

CAMERON
We both need this book. How else would
we synthesize the post-modern
zeitgeist under Sophocles and Derrida?

Alarm bells are going off in Ande's head.

ANDE (V.O.)
Where did she get that? That's the
framework of chapter nine of my paper.

CAMERON
Veritas Obscura is known for arguing
style over substance. One of the
rarest texts to do so.

Ande looks away, shocked and appalled, trying to appear very
busy looking at the books on the shelf.

ANDE (V.O.)
She knows too much. Something isn't
right. This *collaboration* is a thinly
veiled trap. She wants more of my
thesis.

ANDE
It's not that big of a deal to me.
Just curious. Good luck though.

Ande turns and strides away. The camera follows her down the
aisle of shelves until she reaches the end, then veers right
to hide behind them. She peeks out, towards the way she came.

Down the aisle, we see Cameron walking into another aisle.

The camera follows opposite, multiple aisles in between.

We see Ande tentatively tracing those steps, pausing to hide
along each shelf after crossing a new aisle.

Through the shelves, we see Ande gaining on Cameron, moving
towards the left.

Through the shelves, we see Cameron wandering, looking at
books, moving towards the right.

Now they've crossed the space between them and are on the
same plane, with only a few aisles between them. Ande peeks
around a book to see what Cameron is doing. She's looking at
a very OLD BOOK, seemingly very interested.

CAMERON
(whispering)
This is it.

Cameron feels like she's being watched. She looks up at Ande.

Ande quickly ducks down. Then she ducks back up.

Cameron is gone. Ande is exasperated. She is about to start running in search of her - BUT THEN -

THE AGENT (O.S.)
Excuse me!

Ande snaps around to see THE AGENT. She is 30s, sharply dressed, slightly confused and carrying a CARDBOARD BOX.

THE AGENT
Do you happen to know where The Professor's office is? I think I'm lost. I'm his agent, I wanted to surprise him with some good news.

Ande is excited, gleeful even. This is her opportunity.

ANDE
Yes! Just take a left out of the stacks, you'll see it straight ahead.

The Agent nods politely, heading on her way.

ANDE
Oh - I'm Ande, by the way, Ande Antoni. I'm really grateful for your notes - the second draft will be on its way soon!

The Agent looks confused. She has NO IDEA what Ande is talking about. She nods, half smiling, half concerned, she strides away quickly. Ande's smile fades.

ANDE (V.O.)
What's got her so spooked? Did The Professor put in a bad word? I need to find him.

INT. PROF'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Knock on the door. Beat. Then the door pushes open as Ande peeks in, cautiously.

The room is empty and dark, except for THE BOX on the table.

ANDE (V.O.)
What's even in the Agent's box? I didn't think The Professor was working on any new books.

Ande heads straight for the box. She turns on the desk lamp,

her face illuminated in high contrast.

She lifts a flap of the box to take a peek.

Inside... A stack of copies of a printed, published book!

The title reads: "Through Existence The Opening of Death; Derrida's Logocentrism at the Center of a Post-structuralist's Sophocles' Oedipus Rex"

Ande gasps. She shuts the lid quickly.

ANDE (V.O.)
Impossible. He told me the agent
wasn't interested!

Ande turns back to the box. She opens the same flap. Then the other. The bottom half of the cover reads:

Written By: THE PROFESSOR

In DISBELIEF, Ande takes one out and examines it closely. Then she pulls out another, and another, as if hoping it might say something different.

ANDE (V.O.)
The Agent never even knew about me at all... Wow, he's really made a monkey out of me hasn't he. Where would I even go with this information?

Ande backs out of the room, in shock.

INT. LECTURE HALL - TIMING UNCLEAR

A spacious and empty lecture hall. Cameron sits at the front of the hall, donned in plaid pants and sequins, sitting at a table, writing in a notebook. Next to her is VERITAS OBSCURA.

A shadow passes over her, from the top of the lecture hall.

We see Ande, silhouetted. She moves closer, face obscured.

CAMERON
I found the book. But it's worthless.
Nothing to do with my post-structuralist deconstruction, I'm at a loss for what to do -

Ande slams down THE PLAGIARIZED BOOK on the table.

ANDE

I don't know where else to go. You knew him too. Everything was a lie.

Cameron looks surprised, but not terribly concerned.

CAMERON

Oh wow. Um, I'm not sure. Maybe there was a misunderstanding? You two did have similar ideas -

ANDE

Word for word. He even told me he sent it to the Agent for my benefit. I was so blind.

CAMERON

He told you that?! He told *me* that. He said I needed to best you in order to prove myself as a worthy writer.

ANDE

(scoffs)

A game.

Cameron scratches her head, her mind piecing things together.

ANDE

You know what's weird, though? Every other chapter... It's like my ideas but slightly different language. Maybe the Professor really did some writing of his own.

Something dawns on Cameron. She grabs the book and starts flipping through it.

CAMERON

(beat)

No. It's my writing.

Ande raises an eyebrow.

CAMERON

This fucker! He was playing both of us!

ANDE

I never saw *this* coming.

CAMERON

We can't let him get away with this.

Ande nods. Cameron reaches her hand out.

CAMERON

Truce? It seems we're more alike than we think.

Ande smiles and they shake hands.

ANDE

I'm in the market for a co-author.

EXT. BRADBURY BUILDING - DAY

Establishing shot of the Bradbury Building in DTLA.

INT. AGENT'S OFFICE - DAY

A well-decorated office, dark wood paneling. The PLACE CARD on the desk reads THE AGENT, she's seated behind it.

The Professor is seated across from her, looking smug.

THE AGENT

We're looking into the book tour now... But don't clear your calendar.

The Professor is caught off guard.

THE AGENT

With some accusations of plagiarism recently coming to my attention... I'm sure you'll understand I have to cut ties.

The Professor's suave demeanor drains from his face.

THE AGENT

Well now if you excuse me, I have two lovely new clients to attend to.

The door swings open, off screen.

THE AGENT

Ande, Cameron. Please have a seat.

The Professor jumps, turning around. Ande and Cameron walk towards the desk, towering over the seated Professor. Ande has the same smokey eye as Cameron. Cameron has an ascot.

INT. PROF'S OFFICE - DAY

The office is empty of The Professor's things.

Ande and Cameron sit side by side. They are both writing with quill and ink bottles, two full shot glasses on either side.

ANDE (V.O.)

Truth be told, me and the post-punk
draw a lot of water working the same
side of the street.

Ande and Cameron share a satisfied glance. They raise the shot glasses, clink, and down.