

"BACKLASH"

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CHARACTERS—

FINNÉUS "FINN" TESMAN : a man of science in his late twenties— reasonably tall, deceptively fragile in appearance. His blue eyes always look startled, and he keeps his dark hair clipped at ear length and slicked back, though not with much care. He probably couldn't grow a beard if his life depended on it.

AIDA KIPLING: a woman in her mid twenties— average height, athletic build, with a rosy complexion. Frizzy, honey-blonde hair inevitably escapes from whatever style she tries to force upon it.

ALLIGATOR: A 5ft juvenile alligator. Cranky.

SCENARIO NO.1

FADE IN:

1. INT: FINN'S BATHROOM - EVENING

1

The room is brightly lit and bottles of shampoo and body wash are strewn across the tile. **FINN** is on his knees, attempting to subdue a thrashing **ALLIGATOR** in the bathtub. He is dressed in formal slacks and a white dress-shirt, sleeves rolled to the elbow; both are drenched. **AIDA** stands in the doorway in a cocktail dress. Her hair was done nicely, but is quickly losing its patience as she loses hers.

AIDA

Why, Finn.

FINN

Why what.

AIDA

Why now, Finn.

FINN

*Well I'm sorry! It's not like I planned this! They just *show up* sometimes! Whenever people find them!*

Finn forces his arm around the alligator's jaw, clamping it shut. The alligator smacks his tail, and a wall of water hits Finn in the face. He gasps for a breath. Aida checks her watch.

AIDA

Funny, I just show up sometimes too,
but you never care nearly as much.

FINN

Christ, Aida! Are you going to hand me
the duct tape? Or are you just going
to stand there and be *agonizingly*
useless?

AIDA

I thought I would just wait here to
see if I got lucky and the thing
devoured you while I watched.

Aida walks over to the sink and grabs the roll of duct tape, ripping off a large
piece and tossing it toward Finn.

FINN

One minute you want me to hurry up and
take you to dinner, the next minute
you want me eaten for dinner. Make up
your mind, woman.

Finn uses the duct tape to bind the alligator's jaw shut. Fuming, Aida throws a
bit of torn bed sheet at him, which he uses to blindfold the creature. It slowly
stops fighting. Finn falls away and stares.

FINN

We'll need to find a tank for him.

AIDA

What makes you think there's a 'we' in
this plan.

Finn sighs, and stands. He reaches for Aida's face, but she pulls away.

AIDA

I'm sick of this, Finn.

FINN

Sick of what? Alligators? We've been
through this—

AIDA

It's not the alligators, Finn!

Aida storms out of the room. Finn throws up his hands and follows. The hallway is
dimly lit; neither of them bothers to turn a light on.

FINN

So what is it then?

AIDA

You're the scientist, Finn. You should be able to form your own hypothesis.

FINN

If I had wanted my head bitten off this evening I wouldn't have bothered to bind the alligator. You do realize that, right?

AIDA

God damnit, Finn!

FINN

Okay! You want to know my hypothesis? Here's my hypothesis: you're tired, you were looking forward to dinner—and I was too, Aida! And then our latest toothy specimen showed up on the doorstep and—

AIDA

Your.

FINN

What?

AIDA

Your latest toothy specimen. I claim no responsibility for this mess!

FINN

You say this isn't about the alligators, but every time you talk about them lately it sounds like—

Aida stops suddenly and spins around. Finn nearly crashes into her. The light is still dim, and tinted vaguely blue. They speak face-to-face.

AIDA

(hushed and tense)

Okay you know what? You're right. It is about the alligators. But it's also about you. And how you're always distracted! And how you always have to say something so fucking *clever* instead of just—

(beat)

I didn't realize what I was in for, with you.

FINN

Wait. Pause. How exactly did you *not realize* what you were in for? I think I've been incredibly honest with you

about my research since the beginning.
I thought you appreciated all of this!

AIDA

I thought I did too! I did, for a while. Maybe I still do! I don't know! But I didn't realize when I started seeing you that every, single, waking, minute would be consumed with you wrestling sea-monsters!

FINN

Now you're just exaggerating!

A shadow overtakes their already dimly lit faces, and suddenly a thunderous *BANG* echoes down the length of the hallway. Aida reaches to the wall and flips on a light switch, at which point it becomes evident that the hallway runs along an enormous tank, and they are currently accompanied by something resembling a *Liopleurodon*, on the opposite side of the glass.

AIDA

(between her teeth)

Tell me again how I'm just exaggerating.

FINN

(quietly, and with some hesitance)

I don't wrestle the *actual* sea monsters.

Aida says nothing, but grinds her teeth. Finn slips his hands into the front pockets of his wet slacks, rocking on his heels. Without warning, Aida turns to walk away again, but slower this time. Finn follows on her heels. They climb a flight of stairs that leads to the surface level of the pool where the sea-monsters are kept. The enclosure is large and the light is a saturated turquoise.

FINN

If you give me twenty minutes to find an enclosure for the gator, put on something dry, and grab my keys, I will still take you to dinner.

AIDA

I'm not hungry anymore.

Behind her, Finn rolls his eyes, exhausted. He stops, leaning over the railing surrounding the pool, staring into the water.

AIDA

You just have no idea how to handle women, Finn! If it's not scaled and cold-blooded, you're clueless!

FINN

Maybe you're right.

(beat)

But to my credit, have you ever considered that maybe I spend my time wrangling the Loch Ness Monster, because you make Nessie look *tame*?

Aida says nothing, but leans her elbows on the railing a few yards down, and buries her face in her hands.

FINN

(still hesitant)

And to your credit, you're the hardest thing I've ever tried to catch... and... to *me*, that makes you the most valuable, and most fulfilling... a-and I just wish I could make you see...

Aida lifts her face and looks over at Finn. His face is laced with pink.

AIDA

Finn...

FINN

... But it's so much easier to just duct tape an alligator's mouth shut and blindfold it when it thrashes, and when we start fighting I just have no idea how to make it stop, and duct tape clearly isn't the answer—

For a moment Aida looks utterly incensed. She walks back over to Finn, who straightens, uncertain what to expect. There is a tremendous pause. Finn swallows. Then Aida's face breaks into a grin.

AIDA

At least you know that much.

She reaches for Finn's face and kisses him, soundly.

FADE OUT