

i feel like i'm
drowning

Written by

MARK OXMAN

FADE IN:

A SMALL SQUARE frames a man driving, at night, a frantic look in his eyes. He glances in his rear-view mirror. Continues on.

And the SQUARE SLOWLY EXPANDS, horizontally, vertically, until we are in full-frame.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

And it's now clear that RED AND BLUE FLASHING LIGHTS are flooding the rear windshield.

This man, CASPIN, 28, handsome, all-American, is distressed. He's smart, gentle, reserved. He drives on, silently. Ignoring the pursuit.

EXT. OREGON STREET - NIGHT

WIDE ANGLE VIEW: Caspin's mid-size car breezes up the street. And at a distance, a few feet behind, a patrol car pursues.

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

Caspin continues on, glancing behind him, occasionally. Pretending nothing is happening. Hoping this all goes away.

He suddenly, impulsively, makes a SHARP RIGHT TURN.

Continues on this new street. And the lights make a turn, following behind.

And through a police PA system, we hear, muffled --

POLICE OFFICER (ON INTERCOM)
PULL YOUR VEHICLE OVER!

But Caspin doesn't comply. He continues on, as if this is all imaginary. Instead, leans in for his radio.

A MOODY ROCK SONG pours out. As he continues to drive.

The lights disappear from his windshield. Caspin breathes a sigh of relief.

And CAMERA ROTATES 180° TO HIS FRONT WINDSHIELD,

revealing THE PATROL CAR has cut him off, blocking the path.

Caspin turns the music down. Silence hangs in the air. Through the glass, the PATROL MAN exits his vehicle, approaches Caspin's driver's side window.

POLICE OFFICER (CONT'D)
Do you know why I pulled you over?

And before he can get his final word out, Caspin abruptly shifts gears, REVERSES at 10 MPH, leaving the officer in the distance, who immediately rushes back to his vehicle.

Caspin doesn't see -- he's looking behind him, towards us, as he reverses to the end of the street. Then FLIPS HIS TURN SIGNAL, makes a THREE-POINT TURN.

And through the windows, we spot the POLICE CAR PIVOTING, driving OVER THE SIDEWALK, and rushing back towards him.

Caspin pays it no mind. He's now headed in the opposite direction and he continues on his way.

CAMERA ROTATES 90° TO CASPIN IN PROFILE, driving along. It's late at night; there is no activity on the road. Caspin drives in silence.

And then, gradually, the PATROL CAR rolls up alongside him. The officer shouts out through his open passenger window --

POLICE OFFICER (CONT'D)
Pull your car over!

He stares down Caspin, who acts like he doesn't see. Just zooms ahead while the patrol car maintains its equidistance.

Until Caspin rolls to a stop. CAMERA RATCHETS BACK TO HIS FRONT WINDSHIELD, revealing a RED LIGHT beaming down.

We wait a beat...

Then another...

POLICE OFFICER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Why are you ignoring me?

And we PIVOT BACK TO CASPIN IN PROFILE, to see the OFFICER at Caspin's window. Instinctively, Caspin ZOOMS FORWARD, through the RED LIGHT,

as a CAR ALMOST SMASHES RIGHT INTO HIM.

He gasps, ACCELERATES, looks behind him,

AND WE FOLLOW HIS GAZE, ROTATING TO THE BACK WINDSHIELD. The police officer now TURNS ON HIS SIREN, which blares as he channels through the red, following along.

A 90° SHIFT TOWARDS CASPIN IN PROFILE, as he glances in his rear-view. Oh, shit. He continues on and then hears, through the intercom --

POLICE OFFICER (ON INTERCOM) (CONT'D)
Pull over or I will arrest you.

Caspin doesn't.

POLICE OFFICER (ON INTERCOM) (CONT'D)
You ran a red light.

And Caspin slows to a stop. Waits.

Moments later, the POLICE OFFICER appears at his window.

POLICE OFFICER (CONT'D)
Roll down your window!

A moment of hesitation. And then Caspin complies. Slowly rolls the window down, just a crack.

POLICE OFFICER (CONT'D)
Why didn't you pull over when I...

Fuck this. Caspin hits the gas, continues on. We ride with him as he cruises along, with less of a care than ever. He reaches down, BLASTS THE STEREO. A new ROCK SONG pours out.

Caspin SINGS ALONG.

It's several lines into the song when CAMERA RATCHETS 90° TO THE FRONT WINDSHIELD, revealing the PATROL CAR has sped ahead, blocked his path again.

The officer emerges from the car, a super-sized soda in hand.

Which he TOSSES at the front windshield, hard, cracking it.

CASPIN
You motherfucker! You just cracked
my windshield!

As the officer steps in front of the car, whining --

POLICE OFFICER
And you cracked my heart. Into a
million pieces.

CASPIN
Brent, you're batshit insane. Leave
me alone or I'll call the cops.

POLICE OFFICER
I am a cop, you dipshit!

He crosses to the window as CAMERA TURNS 90° TO CASPIN IN PROFILE. We now see BRENT, Latin, broad-shouldered, handsome.

CASPIN
They're going to side with me. You
have so many infractions.

BRENT
Yeah... for not being in my duty
zone. I was picking you up from the
airport...

CASPIN
That was your insistence.

BRENT
 ...Fucking you in my backseat.
 Because you thought it'd be fun.

CASPIN
 I'm probably not the first.

BRENT
 Stop. You know you're the only man
 I've been with.

Caspin is speechless at this revelation. Ducks down, retreats with his phone in hand. Begins scrolling through pictures.

BRENT (CONT'D)
 This is all new to me. That's why
 you're so special.

And OVER HIS SHOULDER, Caspin scrolls through his phone, landing on a pic of Brent engaged in sex with another man. Holds the phone up to him.

CASPIN
 Really? Like when I stopped by
 Adam's house and you two were
 fucking?

BRENT
 That was the only exception.

Caspin scrolls through his phone, stops on a similar pic. Holds up his phone.

CASPIN
 Really? 'Cause every gay guy in
 town has stories about you.

BRENT
 Believe what you want to believe,
 Caspin. I'm just telling you, I
 love you and I want us to be
 together again...

And BRENT'S CELL PHONE BUZZES in his pocket. He pulls it out, looks at the caller ID. His eyes widen. He begins to walk away, his tone immediately shifting to gentle, as he speaks --

BRENT (INTO PHONE) (CONT'D)
 Hey, babe... how are you?
 (beat)
 I'm just on my patrol around town.
 (beat)
 Honey, no, I'm not gay. I was just
 experimenting. I had to try it at
 least once. Before the wedding.

He takes a quick glance behind him, at Caspin, suddenly feeling duplicitous. Turns away again. Listening.

BRENT (INTO PHONE) (CONT'D)
 Sarah, stop. You're scaring me.
 (beat)

(MORE)

BRENT (INTO PHONE) (CONT'D)
 You're having one of your episodes.
 Please calm down. You'll hurt
 yourself again.
 (beat)
 Oh, my God. Baby, stop... STOP! Oh,
 my God... oh, my God...

We follow CASPIN'S GAZE as Brent rushes back to his car.
 Calling out behind him --

BRENT (CONT'D)
 My fiancé is going to kill herself.
 And it's all your fault!

He JUMPS BACK IN THE CAR, TURNS ON THE LIGHTS, ZOOMS OFF,
 immediately COLLIDING with a WOMAN crossing a crosswalk. He
 SLAMS ON HIS BRAKES.

Caspin gasps. Rushes out of his car.

CAMERA FOLLOWS him, on foot, as he approaches the accident,
 past Brent's car, its door wide open. CAMERA POINTS DOWNWARD,
 to the older woman on the ground. BLOOD POOLS FROM HER HEAD.

WE POINT UPWARD, to see Caspin and Brent looking down at her.
 The RED AND BLUE LIGHTS from the patrol car flash behind
 them. Caspin is in shock. He glances over at Brent.

BRENT (CONT'D)
 Oh, my God... oh, my Lord Jesus
 God... I think she's really hurt.
 (beat)
 I'm on duty!
 (beat)
 I could get in trouble for this.

The FRAME begins to shrink, HORIZONTALLY, VERTICALLY, back
 into a tiny box on Caspin, studying Brent, in disbelief.
 Until the only thing on screen is a small square of Caspin.

Which then closes up, leaving us with a BLACK SCREEN.

And GIANT BLOCK LETTERS DROP FROM THE SKY, EACH LANDING WITH
 A THUD ON THE NEXT - STORY. TRUE. A. ON. BASED.

This piece of information sits for a second. And then we PUSH
 IN, PAST THE LETTERS, to find ourselves at...

EXT. BACKYARD - OREGON - NIGHT

WIDE, HIGH ANGLE: A dozen stragglers -- attractive 20-
 somethings, intellectuals, hipsters -- meandering around a
 SMOKY-HAZED backyard at the tail-end of a party.

CAMERA ZEROES IN ON Caspin, sitting in a hot tub, alongside a
 close friend, KIP -- he is 40, blue eyes, handsome, highly
 intelligent. Kip's laughing as Caspin is mid-story.

CASPIN
 ...He just T-bones right into her,
 crossing the street.

KIP
 No way.

By now, we're on a TIGHT TWO-SHOT of both men:

CASPIN
 Swear to God. The woman ended up
 with brain damage. She's suing the
 state. Isn't that fucked up though?
 Cops are the one group we're
 supposed to protect us. So if you
 can't trust them, you shouldn't
 trust anyone.

KIP
 Did he get fired?

CASPIN
 Probably not. Cops kill citizens
 and get a few months' desk duty.
 I'll never know because I never
 want to talk to him again.

KIP
 Oregon is so small though.

CASPIN
 Not really.

KIP
 Compared to New York, it is. When I
 lived in Montana, everyone knew
 each other. Especially in the gay
 world.

CASPIN
 I'm sure New York is the same.

KIP
 No. Everyone has their own thing
 going on. We all run in our own
 circles. It's completely
 liberating.

AND NOW we're TIGHT ON CASPIN, thinking. He admits --

CASPIN
 New York has always been a dream of
 mine. It's the one place I would
 live if I could choose anywhere.

KIP (O.S.)
 Oh my gosh, you should consider it.
 It'd be great for you.

CASPIN
 I moved to Oregon to hide from the
 world. I'm anonymous here.

BACK ON TWO-SHOT:

KIP
Well, not anymore. You have a crazy stalker now. You'll be looking over your shoulder everywhere you go.

CASPIN
True. But I'd have to find a place to live there. I wouldn't have my job anymore.

KIP
You could sleep on my couch. And I know a lot of people in the media world. I could get you a job.

CLOSE ON CASPIN, considering this. Then --

CASPIN
I do feel like I need something new.

KIP (O.S.)
Caspin, if you want to do this, I can help make it happen. That's what best friends are for!

Caspin smiles, deep in thought.

CASPIN
I've never lived in a huge city before.

KIP (O.S.)
It'll be life-changing. If I had never moved there, I would have regretted it forever. You should at least give it a try. You need a fresh start.

TIGHT PUSH in on Caspin as he considers. And then, slowly, a smile creeps across his face.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. NEW YORK CITY - DAY

FLASH CUTS of various spots of the city in autumn, TIME-LAPSED - Statue of Liberty, Central Park, Times Square, etc.

And then we find ourselves on the ground, following CASPIN, on a jog in the southwestern part of Central Park. He spins around, takes in the city - then continues out to

EXT. NEW YORK - COLUMBUS CIRCLE - CONTINUOUS

Caspin crosses the street into Columbus Circle, as CAMERA LIFTS UP TO A HIGH ANGLE, showing him making his way into the Time Warner Center.

INT. TIME WARNER CENTER - LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Caspin steps inside and surveils the shops that make up the ground floor. CAMERA FOLLOWS his gaze to the ceiling.

A nearby elevator opens, people exit, and he crosses inside.

INT. TIME WARNER CENTER - ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS

He presses for floor 12. The door shuts.

INT. VERITAS MEDIA CORP. - FRONT DESK - MOMENTS LATER

From the front desk, we see the elevator open and Caspin emerge. ROTATE to show a large, glossy, open space covered in wood paneling, minimally decorated. There is a wall of flat screens floor to ceiling, with different networks streaming.

REVERSE: Caspin greets the FEMALE RECEPTIONIST. And upon seeing him, her eyes widen, like she's fallen in love.

CASPIN
Hi... I'm here to meet with
Rashelle Williams.

The receptionist recovers. Looks down at calendar.

FEMALE RECEPTIONIST
Um... Caspin Alistair? You can head
on in.

She smiles, gestures behind her. An automatic gate barricade OPENS, allowing him to enter the office space. CAMERA LIFTS UP, as he takes in the surroundings -- an open floor plan with glass-encased offices around the outside walls. In the center are cubicles. It's sleek, a dream workplace.

INT. VERITAS MEDIA CORP. - RASHELLE'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

TIGHT ON a strong, brilliant Black woman, RASHELLE, as she goes through her spiel --

RASHELLE
...I know this seems like some
tucked-away company, a single floor
in a 50-story building. But we make
big decisions here. Veritas is the
community outreach arm of large
corporations.

(MORE)

RASHELLE (CONT'D)

This is how CEOs build positive PR and gain political influence. Have you ever worked in media before?

CASPIN

Yes, for TMZ. They hired me as a correspondent on a trial basis. But I hated it. It felt so shallow, exploiting celebrities. But I guess people like that kind of stuff.

RASHELLE

Well, this isn't that. We're an office of corporate responsibility. Businesses allocate funds from their profits that we use to support art groups. And creative programs for public schools for underprivileged kids. We don't use our platform to exploit. We use it to expand.

Caspin looks to his right. Outside the window are TWO WOMEN, 20s, hunched over, staring at him through the glass.

TIGHTER SHOT: The employees whisper, giggle.

Caspin blushes. Returns his attention to Rashelle --

RASHELLE (CONT'D)

Your job would be to schedule sums to go out on schedule, as well as respond to incoming requests for donations. We also cut one-time checks to foster innovative organizations. So you'd oversee things like funding benefit events for community arts in New York. Like, the Latin music festival that just took place in Central Park.

CASPIN

That was you? Wow... that's exactly what I'm looking for. A job where I'd be doing something to serve the community. It's the polar opposite of what my life has been 'til now. This is exactly where I would work if I was given the choice. It's literally my dream job.

RASHELLE

Works for me.

She extends her hand, for a handshake.

RASHELLE (CONT'D)

Welcome on board.

Caspin glows. PUSH IN as he reciprocates the gesture.

INT. ONE-BEDROOM APARTMENT - GREENWICH VILLAGE - DAY

Caspin is apartment hunting. A chipper realtor is showing him around an expansive one-bedroom in Greenwich Village.

APARTMENT REALTOR
Greenwich Village is the most well-positioned neighborhood in all of Manhattan. Just steps away from the best shopping, dining, nightlife in the city. This building has two fitness centers, on-site laundry, and two rooftop sky decks. And at just 4700 a month, it's a steal.

Caspin gives her a look. The shot resets and WE CUT TO:

INT. STUDIO APARTMENT - MIDTOWN WEST - DAY

They're now surveilling a place in Midtown West.

APARTMENT REALTOR
Midtown West is a very desirable place to live, especially for people who love arts and entertainment. This building has spectacular views, granite countertops, wood flooring. The studio is only 400 square feet but for only 3700 dollars...

INT. STUDIO APARTMENT - HARLEM - EVENING

Caspin is really taking in this new place, a small but charming studio in Harlem. She's now unenthused.

APARTMENT REALTOR
I mean, it's Harlem... it doesn't have any amenities. But the rent is cheaper.

Caspin looks out the window.

CASPIN'S POV: There's a sense of community as African-American men greet each other across the street.

CASPIN
Yeah, this feels like home to me.
I'll take it.