

Tell It Like a Movie | Rewind

The camera looks away depending on who's behind it. You know the scene; the woman who has been a woman the whole film now a girl again in a man's growing shadow. And the director makes him larger than even he could imagine himself, but of course, *of course*, it's just the low-angle shot. And the heels the woman must gasp out of. Still in her work clothes—the pencil skirt with seams that will sigh apart in his hands, the button down, that button the director needs to pop for *extra effect*, the one that takes ten takes ten cuts to get right. The wall the woman backs into again and again remembers her shape. Takes her in its own way, holds the warmth of her backside from every last try, presses like a crotch with demands. But back to the growing shadow, how the woman is a girl again plucked from the safety of flatness, her body's first curves begging things to tower over her. The camera gets a shot of her first scream over his shoulder as he closes in, high-angle to mimic girlhood. The director tells her to put her hands *up and out, he's gotta have a clean grab of your shirt collar, up and out*. Down and in on the first three takes—she can't turn off her instincts. When the grab is right, the director says her scream isn't real enough, thinks she must imagine her mother dying to feel grief in this moment. Tells her *holler like you've just walked in on her, facedown, no pulse*. Ten more takes and nothing. So everyone takes five. And while the woman stamps her red pout on the rim of a coffee cup, the director tells the man to improvise the next take, says *we need surprise on our side, she's gotta feel something*. And so the director smirks when they return to set, the woman smoothing her skirt, primping her collar for crushing. The director yells *Action*, the man goes straight for the skirt, it gives. The woman screams like someone has died—her mother on the bathroom tile, a cold cheek imprinted with small diamonds. And the man keeps pulling until the woman is standing in the middle of the set in her bra and panties, and he reaches for that too. The director yells *Cut!* And the woman's makeup is ruined. And the director says *that was the emotion we needed, that looked believable*. And the man grins, satisfied. And the woman finds the torn skirt and wraps it around herself. And she looks into the camera because that's what she's been taught to do; smudged mascara, streaked foundation and all. And the man's belt buckle is undone. And her lips are cracked from the screaming, so she licks them and is met with salt.

And you are met with salt, licking your lips that are cracked from the screaming, the unbuckled belt,
the man. Streaked foundation, smudged mascara, you look into the camera. Because it's what you've been taught to do, you wrap the torn skirt around yourself. You find the man satisfied, grinning. That looks believable, that is the emotion we needed. The director says your makeup is ruined, yells *Cut!* And he reaches for you until you stand in the middle of the set in your bra and panties. Your cold cheek imprinted with small diamonds, like the bathroom tile your mother died on. You scream. And it gives. The skirt. The man thinks, goes straight for the action. Crushes everything—your primped collar, your smooth skirt. The set returns. The director smirks, saying *she's gotta feel something*. Surprise; the next take the man improvises. The director pulls from his coffee cup. You stamp and pout, so everyone takes five. And nothing. Ten more takes. No pulse, like he's just walked in on you facedown. You feel grief, imagine your mother dying, your scream not real enough in that moment. The grab is right. Turn off your instincts. On the first three takes—down and in, up and out, a clean grab of your shirt collar. The director tells you to put your hands up to mimic girlhood. High-angle as he closes in, your scream shot over his shoulder. The camera towers over you, begs your body's first curves. Safety flattened, plucked from the girl again. Plucked from the woman. The shadow is back, growing demands. A crotch presses, tries every last backside, holds you in it, takes your shape, remembers again and again. You back into a wall to get ten cuts, ten takes, the one for extra effect. *The button pops*. The director needs the button down in his hands, sighing apart at the seams. The pencil skirt, still work clothes you must gasp out of. And the heels, low, of course, *of course*. It's just the angle that makes him. The director, large again, a man's growing shadow. The whole film now, the woman who has been a woman—you know the scene. Behind it, the camera depends on who's looking away.