

JUBILATION

by Taylor Buckley

[Feature screenplay excerpt]

INT. ARNOLD'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM - DAY

Hazy morning light slips through the slats of the electric blinds, striping the bed. Arnold and Freya lie tangled in the sheets, fast asleep.

A sharp, demanding knock rattles the front door in the other room.

Arnold jolts awake. His eyes are bloodshot, his skin clammy. He grips Freya's shoulder, shaking her out of sleep.

ARNOLD

Freya... we missed the injection window.

He slips his feet into slippers and throws a hoodie on.

INT. ARNOLD'S APARTMENT, LIVING AREA - CONTINUOUS

Arnold cracks the front door open, forcing his mouth to anchor into a wide, artificial grin.

Two POLICE OFFICERS stand in the corridor. They wear bulky, matte-black ballistic body armour and rounded helmets. They flip up their heavy visors, revealing radiant, impossibly cheerful faces.

OFFICER 1

(Beaming with immense warmth)
A spectacular morning to you, Mr Wellington!

ARNOLD

(Voice cracking)
And a beautiful day to you, Officers! How can I be of service?

OFFICER 1

We're dropping by on behalf of your lovely coordinators over at the REPCON collective. They noticed your workstation sat empty yesterday and felt a wave of concern.

ARNOLD

Ah, yes. I've been meaning to ping them. I took quite a nasty fall on the stairwell, hurt my leg rather badly. I took the day to rest up so I can maintain efficiency.

OFFICER 2

(Smile widening)
Sir, you know the directive.
(MORE)

OFFICER 2 (CONT'D)
In the event of physical trauma,
citizens must log the anomaly
immediately for remote evaluation.

OFFICER 1
Why did you neglect to follow the
safety protocol, friend?

Arnold grips the edge of the doorframe, trying to stop his
fingers from shaking. A cold sweat beads on his forehead.

ARNOLD
The pain was... overriding. I fully
intended to present myself for
evaluation today.

OFFICER 1
Understood. Tell us, have you had
any physical contact with a Miss
Freya Rosemary?

Arnold's heart sinks.

ARNOLD
Freya? No. Not recently.

OFFICER 1
Fascinating. Our shift logs show
you two are incredibly close
colleagues. We simply assumed your
absences might be connected. You
won't mind if we conduct a brief,
routine sweep of the premises, will
you?

Before Arnold can answer, Officer 1 places a heavy, armoured
hand against the door and forces it open.

ARNOLD
A sweep? For what?

OFFICER 1
Just a standard environmental
wellness check. It will only take a
moment.

Officer 1 steps into the open-plan living area, his eyes
scanning the minimalist room. Officer 2 remains planted
right in front of Arnold, staring directly into his eyes
with a pleasant, unblinking intensity.

OFFICER 2
Mr Wellington?

ARNOLD
Yes, Officer?

OFFICER 2

When did you perform your morning injection?

ARNOLD

First thing, sir. Right before my morning ration, as always.

OFFICER 2

Wonderful. Mind if I run a quick biometric test?

Arnold goes entirely rigid. His synthetic smile remains locked on his face, but his eyes track Officer 1, who is currently walking toward the closed bedroom door.

OFFICER 2

It's just protocol, sir.

ARNOLD

Of course, whatever the state requires.

Arnold rolls up his left sleeve, exposing his bare forearm. Officer 2 opens a sleek, clinical kit and pulls out a biometric monitor tipped with a bright silver needle.

Meanwhile, Officer 1 pushes the bedroom door open.

INT. ARNOLD'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Officer 1 steps into the sterile bedroom. He appears to be alone in the room. He wanders over to the bed, calmly pulling back the sheets to check beneath it. Nothing.

His eyes slowly drift across the room, landing on the built-in wardrobe.

INSIDE THE WARDROBE: Freya crouches in the narrow space behind a row of hanging engineer uniforms, folded tightly into the darkness. The heavy coats conceal most of her body. Her knees are clamped to her chest, hands pressed over her mouth. Her body is shuddering from intense Jubilation withdrawal.

Through the slats of the wardrobe door, she watches the shadow of the Officer approach.

Officer 1 stops before the wardrobe. He grips the handle and slides the door open. He parts the hanging uniforms with one gloved hand, pushing them aside to inspect the cramped space behind them.

Freya presses herself against the back panel, her face turned into the darkness. A tremor runs through her legs. She bites down hard on her lip to keep from making a sound.

The officer pauses.

His visor catches a faint glint of light as he peers between the coats. For a moment, he seems to be looking straight at her. Then he draws the uniforms together again. He slides the wardrobe shut and turns towards the door.

Then, his boot clicks against something on the floor. A stray earring.

He stops dead.

Slowly, his joyful smile returning to his face, the Officer turns back toward the wardrobe.

INT. ARNOLD'S APARTMENT, LIVING AREA - CONTINUOUS

Officer 2 hovers the gleaming needle just millimetres above Arnold's skin. Arnold stands completely frozen, his eyes wide with terror, sweat dripping down his neck as he stares at the bedroom doorway.

OFFICER 2
(Soothingly)
Hold perfectly still for me, sir.
It's just a pinch.

A piercing, terrified SCREAM tears through the bedroom door. It's Freya.

OFFICER 1 (O.S.)
(Shouting happily)
We have a localised anomaly! She's
here!

ARNOLD
Freya!