

COOP

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EXT. STREET - END OF DAY

Gray, on the edge of darkness, oppressive. The bus bench on the side of the road offers a stationary perspective of the single-mindedly speeding vehicles. The MAN sits still on the bench, contrasted against the constantly mobile background of seemingly purposeful human existence. Though there is a chill in the air, he is underdressed, wearing a simple black suit and tie. His shoes are worn, dull. His hand is wrapped in a bloody bandage.

Whether he sees the road with glazed eyes is unclear. The man's face could be mistook as expressionless, but that's not what it is. It's disparaged, beyond emotional display.

OLD MAN (O.S.)

Why the long face?

The man is brought of his reverie, but not quickly. His eyes regain a degree of focus before he slowly turns his head.

Next to him on the bench, which was previously empty, sits an OLD MAN, probably homeless. He wears an amalgam of clothing, seemingly unmatched and from different time periods: a hat with a pom-pom, a large overcoat, a garish scarf. His eyes are shielded by glasses. He looks over at the man, grinning slightly, receiving a blank look in return.

MAN

What?

OLD MAN

I was like you once.

MAN

What?

The Old Man holds out his hand, revealing a scar. The Man's eyes widen.

OLD MAN

You're looking for something.

The man looks away, at the ground, considering the words.

OLD MAN

Tell you what...see that
over there?

He nods to the right, and the man's eyes follow the gesture.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)
Go over there. You'll find what
you're looking for. Warm you up a
little, too.

The man is unsure. His eyes waver back to his companion.

OLD MAN
Go on now! I've been there.

This last bit is somewhat undecipherable. Another moment's hesitation, and the man rises, slowly, deliberately. He takes one last look at the old man. He starts walking.

OLD MAN (calling after)
Don't worry. Some of it's real.
And some of us. You, too.

The man stop, but does not turn around. He takes a deep breath, and keep walking.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - A MINUTE LATER

It's empty, abandoned. Can't tell when the last customer was served. Strange pools of light illuminate portions of the floor and leave dark shadows in others.

Through the glass pane in the door, the man is seen approaching. He pauses with his face against the window, looking in. Hesitating.

The doorknob turns on the inside of the door, and it swings inward. One foot steps in, and with a pause, the other follows.

The man approaches the counter, looks around himself, and takes a seat on a stool. Something catches his glance at the other end of the counter. A pile of tools. Hammers, screwdrivers, wrenches. Sewing needles, thread, pieces of fabric.

He turns back to the counter. Slipping his hand into his pocket, he slides out a police badge and a knife. He contemplates them in his bandaged hand.

Something slaps down with a clink on the counter beside the man, making him jump in his seat and drawing his attention. An empty coffee cup sits beside him.

He follows the muscular arm that connects the hand holding the cup to a massive, rippling frame. A BARISTA glowers down at him.

BARISTA

What the hell do you want?

The man gulps, dwarfed by the figure in the strained white t-shirt before him.

BARISTA

People don't come in here unless they want something. I'll ask one more time: what do you want?

The man considers the empty cup, the bicep, the scowl. Just when it seems like it's too late...

MAN

The truth.

The barista gives him a scoffing laugh as he turns away from the bar.

BARISTA

Oh, one of those.

He turns back around holding a coffee pot, proceeding to pour the cup full of scalding, black-as-hell coffee.

BARISTA (CONT'D)

Never understood your type. Why it matters.

The man slides the cup over, apprehensively, looking at the frothing, vile liquid. It's murky depths do not seem to be a promising place for enlightenment.

BARISTA

Do you want cream?

The man starts, looking up.

BARISTA

It's easier with cream.

The man shakes his head.

MAN

No.

BARISTA

Suit yourself.

A moment of preparation as the man gazes at the mug. As the barista watches, he lifts the mug to his lips and takes a sip. He lowers the cup to the counter. As it travels down, we anticipate the clink of the mug on the wood...

INT. BARE ROOM - NO TIME

...but the man's closed, bandaged hand settles on a completely different surface.

The man looks around. He is in a bare room, bathed in a flickering, sickly greenish light. The room is empty save the man, a cheap plastic table, a cheaper plastic chair in which he sits, and electric outlet, and a door.

He sits back in the seat, unsure of what has happened. Moments pass, filled on with the electric buzz of the struggling light.

The door opens. A short, elderly woman in a frumpy dress walks in backwards, dragging an ancient, block TV set on a rolling cart. Once the cart is in the room, she glances back at the man, gives a "hmpf" of disgust through her heavily colored lips, and returns to her task. The man eyes her, with something between nervousness and intrigue, along her path.

She stops when the television is centered in front of the man, at which point she turns her scornful gaze to him.

LIBRARIAN

Well?

MAN

Uh...

LIBRARIAN

Well, what do you want. Don't tell me you called me here for nothing. What are you looking for?

MAN

Uh.... the truth?

She gives him a scoffing laugh.

LIBRARIAN

Oh, one of those.

She reaches to the bottom of the cart, and brings up an old crate. She puts it on the table, right in front of the man. As he watches, she dumps things out onto the plastic surface, DVD cases, the disks themselves. 3D glasses Old laser disks, floppy disks, VHS tapes. The pile grows in front of the puzzled man.

LIBRARIAN (CONT'D)

Never understood your type.

She stops when she picks up a particular VHS tape. With it in hand, she shuffles back to the cart.

VHS PLAYER

There's a combo DVD/VHS player below the TV. She shoves the tape in. We see it is labelled "THE TRUTH."

BARE ROOM

LIBRARIAN

Are you sure this is what you want?

MAN

Yes.

She sighs.

LIBRARIAN

Suit yourself.

She flicks the TV on, letting it add to the electric whine, and leaves the room. The man is left alone.

TV SCREEN

The white ripples end on the screen, which turns black. Then, an image of a forest, with the accompanying sounds, fades in. The camera taking the image tracks through the greenery.

THE MAN

His eyes narrow as he watches.

TV SCREEN

Tracking on through the trees.

MAN'S EYES

Filled with the screen.

TV SCREEN

Tracking on...

EXT. FOREST - DAYTIME

The tracking shot is exactly what was on the screen, but we're **there** now. After a few moments, the man walks forward into the shot, moving forward.

He's not puzzled. Instead, he walks through the forest in a semi-trance. Soon enough, he begins to pass objects: pieces of furniture, clothing. Old lamps. All lying askew amidst the shrubs. They all draw his attention, but he soon comes upon something which makes him stop.

In a clearing, amongst some items, stands an upright door in a frame. A plain, wooden door.

The man approaches the door, taking a moment to walk all the way around it, studying it. He returns to the side where he started.

It plays out from the side. We see him reach open slowly, pulling the door open towards himself. The sounds of birds chirping and the wind rustling stop. His eyes widen, and there's a momentary pause. He steps behind the door.

A second passes. The door swings shut. The man is gone. The sounds of nature resume in the now empty clearing.

INT. PROP SHOP - NO TIME

The door shuts behind the man. He turns to take in his surroundings.

He's in a long, dark room, filled with...stuff. His eyes straining, he finds a light switch. Some sparsely distributed overhead lights flicker on.

The room is filled with rows of furniture. Chairs, tables, lamps. All seemingly discarded, not in use. He begins making his way through, nearly tripping over an antique-looking wheel chair.

INT. STAIRWELL - NO TIME

He comes to a dark staircase, and looks up. He proceeds up through the shadows. He catches his reflection in a mirror standing on the landing, alone in the darkness.

INT. CLOTHES SHOP - NO TIME

The man finds himself in a clothes shop. Rows upon rows of clothing: clothes for men, women, children. Old clothes, new clothes. Dresses, rags...

His fingers brush slowly along the row. He comes to a brief pause as he encounters a hangar carrying a strange combination: a large hat, an ugly scarf, an overcoat. The next hangar carries a frumpy dress. His eyes narrow.

Through the racks, something moves. The man freezes.

MAN

Hello?

There's no reply, but someone keeps moving. The man starts moving towards the site of motion.

A clearing appears amongst the racks. A wizened COSTUMER stands before his mannequin, which is wearing a white-shirt. He does not look away.

COSTUMER (slowly)
Distractions can be ... fatal.

The man freezes in his tracks.

COSTUMER
Good.

As the man watches, the Costumer picks up a paint can at his feet. Gaze unwavering, he lifts out a thin brush, shaking it off above the can before lifting it before his face.

Everything stands still for a moment.

With a flick of his wrist, the Costumer sends brown drops flying through the air, glinting in whatever dim light falls upon him.

The man watches as they strike the white fabric before...

MINDTRIP

Flashing sirens.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM

The Man sits at a table, grilled by an OFFICER. The Man's badge lies face up on the table.

OFFICER (O.S.)
Quite a bloodbath, there. What did you see.

INT. PROP SHOP

Through the racks of clothes. The Costumer wavers before him for a second.

COSTUMER
You've seen me at work.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM

MAN
I...I don't....

OFFICER
You can tell me.

EXT. FOREST

Through the forest. The door recedes in the distance.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM

MAN
They were...empty.

OFFICER
What?

INT. BARE ROOM

The librarian stands before him.

LIBRARIAN
Are you sure this is what
you want?

INT. COFFEE SHOP

Barista stands with arm folded, leaning on the bar.

BARISTA
Never understood your type.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM

OFFICER
You're talking crazy...

MAN
I'm not.

OFFICER
We're going to have to...

With a feral yell, the man lunges forward, swinging his knife.

EXT. STREET

Outside. The bench. The old man leers from under his hat.

OLD MAN
It'll help!

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM

The Man stands over the Officer with a slit belly, cotton stuffing spilling out of the split shirt. The Man looks at his own hands, holding the knife.

Darkness.

END MINDTRIP

INT. COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT

The coffee mug clicks down onto the counter. The man spits out the contents of his sip all over the barista's white t-shirt.

BARISTA
Shit, man!

He jumps back a step. The man gasps for breath, gripping the edge of the counter as his whole body heaves.

BARISTA (CONT'D)
Look what you did! I told you,
take it with fucking cream!

He grumbles to himself and wipes his shirt with a rag. As the man regains control of himself. His eyes focus onto the coffee mug, and he stares into the depths. He starts to cry.

The barista looks at the man in his despair.

BARISTA
Shit...

He picks up a vessel with cream.

BARISTA (CONT'D)
Look, it's all good. It's just a
shirt. This will make you feel
better.

He pours a healthy dose of cream into the coffee. It immediately swirls up, turning from threads to a full-bodied milky color. The man looks at it, unsure.

BARISTA (CONT'D)

I promise.

He makes a "cheers" gesture with the cream cup. The man picks up the coffee. The barista clinks the mug with the cream, and proceeds to drink straight out of the cream cup.

The man continues to look at the cup. He raises it to his face. The murky, opaque liquid obscures any answers. He glances to his badge and knife, his hand.

He looks back at the cup. He glances over to the pile of tools at the other end of the bar. And he makes the decision. He lifts the cup, putting it to his lips...

Cut to black.

END