Payer Fedris

A Gothic Dream Tax

Ву

Anonymous

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FADE IN:

EXT. OLDEN VILLAGE BARBER SHOP - MORNING

Green fog hails the cartoon facade, candy creepy. Out of a four horse carriage step the two worn shoes of a:

Raggy mother, coughing and itchy. MARY exits with her boy of 4.

LITTLE PAYER is set down wearing odd looking booties with knit tops. He sees his stupid feet on the cobblestone path then looks up to:

YE OLDEN BARBER SHOP, burnt letters in the wood sign. It swings on a black iron chain. Then his eyes light to see:

A finely dressed man, LAVAL, circa 1700s walks past. He's richly dressed in an elegant doublet, ruffled neck and cuffs of white lace that excite his black velvet cape.

Little Payer once again looks at his booties, his raggy clothes. His mother touches Laval. Laval gives her coins.

MARY Thank you for your kindness. Horse and carriage and now money too? I've never seen you before. Did you just move here?

LAVAL Live in Izabiza. Castle on the mount. Don't come in too often.

MARY But I thought it was empty. Thought it was haunted.

Mary looks up at the cloudy mist that becomes:

EXT. IZABIZA CASTLE - VISION AT DUSK

G-d of Heaven purple mist thicker than Ye village. It's like an I spy book. Search and find the toy shapes: scissors, combs and a metronomic Dream Meter.

EXT. BARBER SHOP - MORNING

Laval takes Mary's hand and kisses it. He saunters off, dissolving to vapor, before their stunned eyes.

The swing of the sign makes an ugly squeak. Payer tugs her hand to go back to his seat in the carriage.

No. It's time. She tugs him into the shop just as:

A TOWN CRIER toots his horn. The horn lies. Its sound is a cold discordant church organ. Fake horn. The Crier wears a festive pumpkin hat on his head. Stupid.

> TOWN CRIER Here ye Hoi polloi! A tax increase is now fully rendered. All dreams now seven percent. Here ye...

INT. FARM COTTAGE - DAY, - 12 YEARS LATER

TEEN PAYER, a frail boy of 16 sits naked save for shorts.

A DOCTOR, 50s, in a good black suit performs a perfunctory examination with crass demeanor.

Older Mary wrings her hands in concern. Work and worry has hardened her face.

DOCTOR He hasn't dreamed for a fortnight.

The doctor jabs him. On inspection, Payer's sunken eyes are lifeless as a doll's, while Mary's eyes speak horror.

MARY Payer! You went to school?!

She checks his bag: Paper. Pencil. Eraser. Hot Dog.

She shakes him like a baby. Too hard and maybe he will die from this because he looks on the verge...

INT. FARM COTTAGE - MOMENTS LATER

Mary sees the doctor to the door.

MARY

I beg you not to tell the Tax Man.

DOCTOR Why should I care? I'm a doctor.

First, a careful application of his wool cap, then he leaves without saying goodbye.

INT. IZABIZA CASTLE, GLONDE'S WORKROOM - MORNING

Pleasant golden walls the color of honey. The desk is so big, but the boy behind it so small.

GLONDE is only 17, but he's made it in society. He's the Tax Man and he's dressed in a garish floral shirt.

He spritzes perfume into the air, then settles to his next quarry. He lifts up a form that reads:

DREAM METER TOTAL FOR PAYER FEDRIS

Glonde secures hexagon glasses on his nose. Truly special glasses. He looks through them to see the dreams:

INT. PAYER'S BEDROOM/GLONDE'S WORKROOM

Payer clicks the metal dream collector bracelet around his wrist. Numbers flash on its tiny screen. 33:33 44:44 55:55 66:66...

He presses his alarm clock. It flashes 66:66 in tune with his bracelet and the fake horn sounds. Jhongore...

Payer sleeps. Then his dream appears in the form of TROPHY WIFE, neat and tidy in white apron.

Glonde's eyes orgasm at the sight.

GLONDE Trophy Wife... Steep. One golden.

Glonde drops a "golden coin" in his piggy bank.

Trophy Wife in white apron straddles Payer.

JHONGORE... goes the fake horn. Sound of a tape recorder on fast forward of Glonde's accounting...

INT. PAYER'S MAIN ROOM

Payer plays cards with TWO FRIENDS and a whisky bottle.

GLONDE (V.O.) Gambling. Drinking. Big 2 G.

INT. IZABIZA CASTLE, GLONDE'S WORKROOOM Glonde startles.

A blade flashes. Glonde lies dead. JHONGORE...

GLONDE (V.O.) Now that one's really going to cost you. 10 G!

Glonde's not dead, but in his chair. He rips off the glasses. He's rattled and shakes himself to clear off.

Ching ching ... More coins into the bank.

INT. FARM COTTAGE - MORNING

Mary returns to Payer, who's now rumpled but clothed.

MARY How long have you been sneaking to school? Tell me.

Payer's trance continues, but he manages...

PAYER

Longer longer...

Mary covers her mouth as she cries, imagining the worst:

FLASH:

EXT. PIT AT IZABIZA CASTLE, MARY'S VISION - NIGHT

Payer held by two MASKED GUARDS. Mary watches from behind, crying. Payer looks down the dark hole.

They shove him in. Down he falls. They leave, dragging a terrorized Mary with them. They fade into the distance.

Two hands appear at the side of the pit, Payer crawls out, dressed in Laval's clothes.

INT. FARM COTTAGE - MORNING

Mary falls to her knees at Payer's feet.

PAYER I dreamed of being that man that helped us years ago.

Mary shakes her head, bows her head on Payer's knee.

A creepy black toll booth set intimidatingly high. A SECURITY GUARD peers down at Payer.

SECURITY GUARD So, you've come to go to school?

He smiles greasy. Chomps on a chicken leg. Looks at Payer's passport.

SECURITY GUARD People from Izabiza have rules about this sort of thing you know. Death penalty. Can you handle it?

PAYER

I think so. I need to stop dreaming. The tax is so high. My mother can't pay. Please. I want to be a fine elegant gentleman. Just like Laval. He was good and kind. Truly a man of G-d.

SECURITY GUARD Was he now? Well. Shant want to hinder such high aspirations.

The Guard opens the uqly black iron gate. It screeks.

INT. FARM COTTAGE - MORNING

Wood stuffed in the stove. Mary turns. Payer's sad eyes.

PAYER Mom, will you sing to me?

She sings a heavenly melody. She combs Payer's short brown hair. Over and over... She's still combing. It has grown very long down his shoulders.

> MARY Beautiful darling, hair so long...

INT. IZABIZA CASTLE HALLWAYS

Two sets of FOOTFALLS, their echoes dampen the dry chains that drag O.S. Ere seedy green phantoms smear the walls.

Whispers take shape into voices as the two pairs of shoes step deliberately onward.

LAVAL If I could cross over I would.

GLONDE But how can I help you? Laval, you are a ghost. I'm only a man.

INT. CASTLE LIBRARY - NIGHT

Old walls loaded with books. Laval's hands crawl along them like a spider, searching for a place to weave. He takes one. It falls out of his hands, his sad grasp.

He wears golden spectacles, his salty hair seeps down his shoulders like old sea water. The sea is in his eyes.

Laval slides to a smoky mirror, studies himself. Behind him, is Glonde, so young and pretty by comparison.

> LAVAL You know why my mother named me *Laval*? "Yachad, Lev el lev"... she said... Together, heart to heart.

Laval travels the floor, waltzing with himself to a chest where he removes another shirt fashioned like Glonde's.

> LAVAL I had it made especially for you.

> > GLONDE

Must you?

LAVAL

You're not a man, but a boy. You know what it takes to be a man?

Laval scoops Glonde forward like he might be a girl.

LAVAL

Let's dance. Let's dance to that song our mothers sang long ago...

Jhongore... goes the fake horn. But somehow, this time, pleasant orchestral sounds ghost through the walls.

Round, round and round they go, but as the BARBER SHOP picture meets Laval's eye. FREEZE FRAME.

No music plays. Only that horrid false horn-- the ugly church organ. Raking at the walls. Artificial.

And Laval falls, crazy. Laughing.

LAVAL

Chocolate marvel and those thin little bites... What do you call them? If I could eat those things my mother made me...

And then Laval cries, sinking to the ground, curling in a ball. As hard as that. Then he rises like a storm. He moves into Glonde, presses upon him. He breathes on Glonde's face, kisses his cheek. Glonde turns away.

LAVAL

What's the matter? Why don't you want to play?

GLONDE You scare me sometimes, Laval. There is no music. None at all.

LAVAL

But I will continue to search.

Laval presses Glonde into a chair and glides over to his desk where he opens a small chest: to get a silver comb.

LAVAL

No lice no lice.

He slips back to Glonde like a child, playing, and begins to comb Glonde's hair. Glonde eases as Laval daintily threads the comb with gentle long strokes.

LAVAL

My mother used to wash my hair. I'm grateful for every louse... Every little licen, (giggles) that happened upon me.

GLONDE I know I know. You've told me the story and times I cannot count...

LAVAL And then she'd comb it and sing to me and I was in heaven.

GLONDE Like I am now. But why must we?

LAVAL

I need to remember the song.

Laval falls, crying, at Glonde's feet, his head resting in his lap. Glonde strokes his head gently. GLONDE You've given me a job. I'm so grateful. But I can't do the song.

Laval rises to his feet. Weak, he manages to <u>The Chair</u> that's twisted and gothic, then does a bipolar shift.

LAVAL There's the slave girl with powers to sing and powers to daven!

GLONDE Penny for your thoughts Penny? She's got the demons.

FLASH:

INT. POOR PENNY'S BED CHAMBER

PENNY, 16, is tucked in bed by her parents, ED and TARA, a zombeish pair. Thrashing, she is chained down.

TARA Kiss-kiss. Come now. Kiss-kiss.

GLONDE (V.O.) Her parents chain her to the bed at night to keep her from wandering. You don't want to get mixed up with demons.

INT. IZABIZA CASTLE LIBRARY - NIGHT

Laval slaps his thighs.

LAVAL I've sinned and I sin. Birds of a feather... What choice do I have?

INT. POOR PENNY'S HOME - NEXT MORNING

A tattered chair is quality furnishings. Plank floor. A pot of gruel on the stove. Glonde hands a heavy bag of coins over to Ed who nods, gracious. Tara cries.

TARA You can't sell our daughter.

ED She will be much better off. We can't keep forcing her nightmares. (MORE)

ED (CONT'D)

For what? For tax breaks? For savings on dreams?

GLONDE

To be truthful, your dishonesty has caused the demons to enter her, but I am willing to forgive.

Glonde reaches for a thick textbook that catches his eye. PERIODIC TABLE OF MIZTAKES.

GLONDE

This yours?

TARA We'll stop. Please.

Glonde puts the book down.

GLONDE

You know...

Tara falls into Ed's arms.

ED

But why?

GLONDE

Listen. If dreams aren't worth something then number 1, I'm out of a job, but even before number one is this:

Glonde raises his ten palms to the heavens in wonder.

GLONDE

If dreams aren't worth something...

He drops his arms and his head like a conductor, finished, when the fake horn blows organ crapolata.

GLONDE ...then everything turns to:

He looks mental now, running about, abracadabra fingers flicking and fuch-ing karate like.

GLONDE Bleepen fast. Fast Food and Friday Night Movies and Five Hundred Channels and there's nothing on.

Tara stops crying as confusion takes over.

TARA What are you talking about?

GLONDE I'm talking about the future.

INT. ZOMBIE TELEVISION ROOM, 2010, - DAY

A boy, looks like... It is! It's a modern Payer, staring into the screen, eating potato chips. Zombified.

GLONDE (V.O.) A wasted pathetic boy. Thought school could help him. Imagine?!

INT. POOR PENNY'S HOME

Glonde gazes around their simple abode. He brushes his hand on the tattered looking chair in sympathy.

GLONDE I will carry you without tax. But I want the girl...

Tara leaves and returns with Penny who's really fat. Glonde takes Penny by the hand and leads her out.

GLONDE Be careful at school.

EXT. POOR PENNY'S HOME

The door shuts behind him. He looks at Penny.

GLONDE School. They never learn.

INT. IZABIZA CASTLE - DAYS LATER

Penny sings. Her voice charming, but:

LAVAL That's not the song! Why can't you find me my mother's song?

She shrugs and nods intermittently with no words.

LAVAL Have you davened every morning, noon and evening and twice that (MORE) LAVAL (CONT'D) again for every one of my sins? Why don't you speak? You sing like a bird, but your voice! You drive me mad when you can't answer.

Penny curls into his arms. She sings. The melody follows:

EXT./INT. IZABIZA CASTLE LIBRARY - NIGHT

Where the wind plays through the leaves, caramel drips desire from bony trees, the sweet of Halloween, but it turns to blood as also does the gaping silvery moon.

FLASH! Lightning shocks. FREEZE FRAME as the castle lights fiery orange. Fuzzy black motion returns as bats flutter past. Black stillness for a twip.

CRASH! Thunder breaks it: The Dream Meter cracks.

Penny chokes. Laval helps her into a chair. She tries to sing, but can't. Glonde enters, waving a stack of papers.

GLONDE Payer has had four hundred and forty unpaid and unaccounted for dreams. It's broken the meter!

LAVAL My darling Glonde, love sweet how?

GLONDE I think he's dreamed the most expensive dream there is.

LAVAL

And what was that?

GLONDE He dreamed he wanted to be you.

<u>An angel's voice more heavenly than Penny's</u>. And Penny has changed. She's PENNY TALL AND THIN, 35. Laval might cry. He might die and he's already dead.

First Penny and now he has the most innocent look on his naked face as Payer enters oolah-la: 17th century-esque.

Laval looks down at his feet. They're bare and he's robed in a blue techelet. He feels himself to be sure.

Montage:

--Penny combs Laval's hair. Long soft strokes.

PENNY My darling boy with hair so long...

--The BARBER throws his cover around Payer who cries.

BARBER Time for your first hair cut.

--A book falls from its shelf in the library. The comb threads through Laval's long salty strands.

--The Barber's comb threads Payer's baby hair. SNIP go the scissors. JHONGORE... goes the fake horn.

More tears from Little Payer. His cry fades as:

--Laval falls asleep. Peaceful.

--The castle tops spear to the sky...

LAVAL (V.O.) I hear her. Yachad. Lev el lev... niftach venir'eh t'aor shebashamayim.

--Roll words over silver moon as the song rises...

Together, heart to heart we'll open, and we'll see, the light in the sky.

--The halls and FOOTFALLS. ECHOES. It's Payer. He enters to the library and takes his place in Laval's chair.

PAYER I've always admired you. Prayed to be like you. I think they were miztaken with the pit thing. Move on my benefactor, move on my darling Laval. Move on move on...

FADE OUT: