

The Rut

By

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Adapted from "The Rut" - Short story

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1st Draft

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INT. APARTMENT - BEDROOM - MORNING

JOSEPH

lays in BED, asleep. His apartment is a small studio apartment, with a kitchenette near the front door. Light pours in through the blinds onto the covers.

NARRATOR (V/O)

For Joseph, most mornings start out the same. Waking up at 6:00 by the shrill, unsympathetic beeping of the ALARM CLOCK on the bedside table. The repetitive noise only serves to remind him of the monotony he will be facing as he goes through his day in the same rut as he always does. Wake up, get ready, go to work and do maintenance on whatever needs fixing (which usually entails changing light bulbs and cleaning), and after work maybe go to the bar with Sam.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - FLASHBACK - DAY

NARRATOR (V/O)

(Continued; Montage of JOSEPH and SAM matches V/O)

Sam was Joseph's coworker and long-time friend. Joseph and Sam first met on Joseph's first day on the job, when Sam helped Joseph get acquainted with the new unfamiliar environment of the office building.

INT. SPORTS BAR - CONTINUOUS FLASHBACK - DAY

NARRATOR (V/O)

(Continued montage of JOSEPH and SAM)

A few days later, Sam had invited Joseph to go catch a football game at the local company hangout bar with a few other employees. After that day, afternoons at the bar came somewhat of a ritual to Joseph and Sam, particularly after extra-stressful days on the job. Joseph quickly learned that the

(MORE)

NARRATOR (V/O) (cont'd)
 afternoons spent at the bar were less of a social time for Sam, and more of a relaxation period. Sam didn't handle stress well, and it seemed as though he had resorted to drinking as a quick fix for his problems. But for the most part, Sam could maintain his composure, and just use the time to unwind.

JUMP CUT

INT. APARTMENT - BEDROOM - MORNING

CLOSE UP: ALARM CLOCK

The alarm changes from 5:59 to 6:00, and is accompanied by a loud, irritating buzz. A hand enters the shot and hits the snooze button. Hard.

NARRATOR (V/O)
 (Accompanied by montage matching dialogue)
 The morning rut usually started with hitting the snooze button several times, and then finally dragging himself out of bed twenty minutes later, taking a quick shower, and a bite to eat before heading out the door to drive to work. The morning started the same as usual, until about 6:35, when Joseph's breakfast was interrupted by a short burst of knocking on his apartment door.

(The montage quickly rewinds to JOSEPH eating BREAKFAST, and then pans to the door as a loud, quick, KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK is heard)

This was undoubtedly odd, but not necessarily unpleasant, as Joseph didn't often have visitors. What WAS unpleasant, however, was what awaited him on the other side of the door.

JUMP CUT

INT. APARTMENT - FRONT DOOR - MORNING

JOSEPH and THE LANDLORD stand in the doorway, facing each other.

JOSEPH

You're EVICTING ME?? You said I could have until the end of the month to pay the rent!

THE LANDLORD

I said that back in January, Joseph. It's October. We can't keep doing this month after month. I'm sorry, but I already have someone else interested in the apartment. It's too late to change anything now. I can give you until Sunday afternoon to clear out your things.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - MAIN CUBICLE AREA - DAY

NARRATOR (V/O)

(Again, a montage of shots accompany the narration)
Joseph arrived at work dispirited and despondent. It came as a shock to him when he got to his company's floor in the office building that many CUBICLES were empty, and many employees were standing around, or loading the ARTICLES on their DESKS into BOXES. Joseph looked over and saw Sam leaning against his desk, one hand resting on a BOX filled with the former CONTENTS of his desk, the other clutching a BOTTLE OF VODKA, the way a child clutches a blanket or treasured stuffed animal.

JOSEPH

hurries over to Sam
What's going on?

SAM

It's our parent company. They've decided they can save money by outsourcing the work we do here to the Middle East. We're all out of a job. I don't know what I'm going to

(MORE)

SAM (cont'd)
do; I can't get another job now,
not in this economy.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - JOSEPH'S OFFICE - DAY

NARRATOR (V/O)
Joseph walked sullenly to his tiny
closet of an office to collect his
things. He was packing his tools up
when Sam poked his head in the
door.

SAM
Hey, you want to go to the bar
after this?

JOSEPH
Not today. I just got evicted this
morning and I have a lot to sort
out. I'm sorry.

SAM
Come on, Joseph! We just got *LAI*
OFF. I'm not going to get another
job for months! I have no idea how
I'm going to pay my mortgage, or
support my family! My life is over!

JOSEPH
Look, I'm sure you feel horrible,
but I have my own problems to worry
about. I really am sorry, Sam, but
this isn't going to work for today.

NARRATOR (V/O)
Sam half trudged and half staggered
away from JOSEPH'S OFFICE, but not
after first unleashing a string of
obscenities and offensive comments.
Sam barely managed to stumble back
to his DESK, ever careful not to
spill what remained of his VODKA,
and dramatically backhanded his BOX
OF BELONGINGS off his desk onto the
floor,

MEDIUM: FROM LOW TO THE FLOOR, ANGLED UP AS SAM BACKHANDS
BOX OFF OF DESK
accompanied by a particularly
obscene comment about the company
CEO's mother. After this passionate
show of distaste,

EXTREME CLOSE UP: SAM WALKING TOWARD THE ELEVATOR, FOCUS IS ON HIS EYES AS A TEAR FORMS. THE BACKGROUND IS OUT OF FOCUS
 Sam dragged himself toward the elevator, the faintest hint of tears in his eyes.

Joseph sighs, turns, picks up his belongings, and begins walking toward PARKING GARAGE

INT. PARKING GARAGE - STAIRWELL - DAY

NARRATOR (V/O)
 JOSEPH wandered sadly down the stairs leading to the parking garage.

INT. PARKING GARAGE - DAY

NARRATOR (V/O)
 He loaded the BOX OF POSSESSIONS into his trunk, got into the driver's seat, put the KEY in the ignition, and started the CAR. Thus began his long journey back to what would soon no longer be his home. He was back in his rut.

JOSEPH unlocks his car, opens the trunk, loads his box in, and then opens the door and sits in the drivers seat. He buries his head in his hands for a moment, takes a deep breath, and turns the key. He backs out of his parking space.

GENERAL CITY - TIME LAPSE FROM DASH OF CAR - DAY

CONTINUOUS TIME LAPSE SHOT FROM DASH CAM OF CLOSEST TO SCRIPT-ACCURATE PATH.

NARRATOR (V/O)
 He drove three blocks north to the corner with the deli, turned east and continued four blocks, at which point he passed under Dent Bridge. Three blocks later, the road turned left and followed the shore of Transit Lake until he reached the turnoff, which he followed five more blocks west until he reached his apartment.

SNAP BACK TO REALITY

EXT. DENT BRIDGE - DAY

NARRATOR (V/O)

An object just smaller than a loaf of bread, made of what appeared to be glass, glistening in the sun caught JOSEPH offguard as he drove under Dent Bridge.

CLOSE UP: SLOW MOTION TRACKING GLASS BOTTLE AS IT FALLS

It had fallen from above and shattered loudly right in front of Joseph's car. He slammed on his brakes and quickly climbed out of his car.

He glanced down and examined what appeared to be a now destroyed bottle of Vodka.

WIDE: JOSEPH LOOKING AT GLASS BOTTLE WITH CAR ROOF OUT OF FOCUS IN FOREGROUND

No sooner had he processed this thought as the deafening sound of breaking glass and denting metal sounded behind him.

WIDE: SAME AS BEFORE, CAMERA JARS AS SAM'S BODY LANDS ON THE CAR IN THE TOP PORTION OF THE SHOT

Joseph whirled around to see his car, with the roof smashed in, and Sam's mangled, disfigured body lying in a heap where the roof now caved in over where Joseph had been sitting only moments ago.

Joseph stood there, in shock, staring at the corpse of his friend.

MEDIUM: SLOW MOTION

Joseph drops the remains of the bottle

His friend who had lost all hope and taken his own life because of it. Joseph had done nothing wrong, but his entire life had changed in just one day.

PAN: OVERHEAD SHOT, MOVING UPWARDS AS RAIN BEGINS TO FALL

Joseph falls to his knees as rain starts to fall

He looked up into the sky as dark clouds rolled in overhead. He began

(MORE)

NARRATOR (V/O) (cont'd)
to cry, longing for the familiar
rut that he had grown so accustomed
to, as the first raindrops started
to fall on the pavement around him.

FADE TO BLACK

Roll credits.