

Trappings

An Original Short Script

by

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FADE IN:

INT. HIGH SCHOOL LUNCHROOM - DAY

Chaos, as generated by teens -- the most chaotic sort there is.

Perpetual motion. A deafening buzz of chatter, chairs scraping on tile, and the occasional girlish shriek of laughter.

A young teen, CHIP, pushes his way through the swinging doors of the cafeteria.

He is slight, with choppy, home-cut hair and thick glasses. He wears a feigned confidence that fits him like wet socks.

He makes his way to the chow line, and pretends not to notice the eyes that follow him -- the whispered conversations -- as students size up this unfamiliar boy who has somehow found his way into their lunchroom.

CHIP (V.O.)

(as he walks)

When you move to a new town...
and your parents tell you about
all the new friends you will make,
you have to wonder...are they
just liars, telling you things
to make themselves feel better...
or have they really forgotten
so much?

A LUNCH TRAY

Something horrible plops onto the tray -- a slice of fried bologna, topped with an ice-cream scoop of mashed potatoes, and that topped with shredded, processed American cheese-food.

ANOTHER KID (O.S.)

What kind of poison is this?!

THE CAFETERIA LINE

Chip turns to look at the boy in line behind him, AUSTIN, the source of this lunchtime grievance.

Austin is a big, chunky kid who looks as if he knows what constitutes a good meal. Or a poor one.

The dour LUNCH LADY looks up from her scooping.

LUNCH LADY

It's called a flying saucer.
I just serve it. You eat it.

AUSTIN

Sweet Jesus! I can't eat
this crap!

Chip guffaws. The lunch lady narrows her eyes at Austin.

LUNCH LADY

Then bring your own lunch.
That's what I do.

Austin scowls, then turns on Chip.

AUSTIN

What are you laughing at?

CHIP

I just...what you said.
I thought it was funny.

AUSTIN

But, see...nobody asked you.

Austin pulls a giant wad of gum from his mouth, then presses it into Chip's chest, grinding with his thumb.

AUSTIN

Now that's funny.

Chip can only stand there, stunned.

AUSTIN'S FACE

Austin laughs at his own cruel antics, his face getting red as his howling laughter echoes and fades.

DISSOLVE TO:

AUSTIN'S FACE

Older, mid-forties. No longer laughing. Eyes closed.

A nasty bullet hole in his forehead.

VOICE (O.S.)

Chip? Hey! Chip!

EXT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Chip blinks, as if awakened from a dream.

Chip has also morphed into the mid-forties version of himself, but pretty much the same hair. Pretty much the same glasses.

He wears a white uniform with his name stitched onto the pocket.

He looks down at Austin -- laid out on a wheeled gurney -- his face exposed within a partially unzipped body bag.

This gurney is behind a white van with "Kroehner Funeral Home" printed on the side.

DONNIE, a younger man with a Rasta vibe, in a uniform similar to Chip's, snaps his fingers under Chip's nose.

DONNIE

Hey, you still with us?

CHIP

Yeah, I'm OK. When I saw the name on this one...I just... I had to look, you know?

Donnie opens the rear doors of the van.

DONNIE
You know this guy?

CHIP
Yeah. I did.

DONNIE
Bound to happen sooner or later.

Donnie grips his side of the gurney, nods for Chip to grab the other side. They hoist the gurney into the van.

DONNIE
Last year I had the doctor who
delivered me...when I was a baby!
He brings me in and I take him out.

With the gurney now loaded, Chip slams the van doors closed.

DONNIE
Now that is some circle of life
shit, right there.

CHIP
Yeah. That's something.

INT. VAN - DAY

Chip drives. Donnie rolls down the window, lights himself a smoke, then glances to the stiff in the back.

DONNIE
You know this guy pretty well?

CHIP
One day. I knew him for one day.

DONNIE
One day? Shit, you got a good
memory.

CHIP
Too good, I guess. I wish I
could forget him.

Donnie ponders this. Takes a drag.

DONNIE
So what do you think?

CHIP
What do I think about what?

DONNIE
About how he died, man.

CHIP
Bullet in the head? I don't
know. Probably earned it,
I suppose.

DONNIE
No, no...the rest of it.

Chip looks to Donnie, confused.

CHIP
What do you mean?

DONNIE
Don't you watch the news, man?
'Cause we got us some news-worthy
shit here in our back seat.

Donnie rummages around on the floor of the van, extracts a crumpled newspaper from the mess down there.

A photo of Austin -- sans bullet hole -- adorns page one.

DONNIE
Was his old lady popped him.
Whipped up on her one too many
times, and the next thing this
motherfucker knows...BAM!

Donnie chuckles to himself at the thought of it.

With the lit end of his cigarette, Donnie burns a smoldering circle between the eyes in the photograph -- a more accurate representation of Austin's present state.

Then he tosses the newspaper onto Chip's lap.

DONNIE

Read all about it, brother.
Your friend back there was one
mean sumbitch.

CHIP

I wouldn't exactly call us
friends.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL BATHROOM - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Chip is at the sink, shirtless. He holds his missing shirt
beneath the faucet -- a vain attempt to remove the gum.

The door creaks behind him. He glances up at the mirror.

It's Austin.

AUSTIN

Still here?

Chip continues to work on his shirt, wary of the boy behind him.

CHIP

Missed my bus...didn't know
which one, you know? So now
I gotta walk.

AUSTIN

So why'd you tell...like a
little cry-baby punk?

CHIP

I didn't tell anybody anything.

Austin steps over to Chip and spins him around.

AUSTIN

Why'd you tell?!

Austin shoves Chip. Chip stumbles and falls to the filthy floor
of the restroom.

CHIP
I didn't tell!

Austin kneels down in front of Chip.

AUSTIN
So how come I got called to
Carmichael's office, huh?
So how come I just got out of
fucking detention?

CHIP
I don't know...it could have
been anybody, man. There were,
like, 100 people in there.

Austin looks around on the floor. He snatches up a soggy
cigarette butt from a urine-damped corner.

He sticks it in Chip's face.

AUSTIN
Eat this. Then I'll believe
you didn't tell.

CHIP
I'm not gonna eat that.

AUSTIN
Eat this or I'll kick your ass,
you shitty little tattle-tale.

CHIP
Leave me alone. I didn't do
anything!

Austin shoves the butt towards Chip's mouth. Chip struggles and
lands a lucky -- or unlucky -- punch to Austin's face.

Austin stills -- an eerie still.

He stands and steps over to the mirror. He places his finger
to his face -- where blood runs from a split lip.

Austin suddenly turns with a FURIOUS SCREAM kicks the door to
one of the stalls. It slams hard enough to snap the latch.

And the latch bounces to the floor with a metallic CLINK -- loud and resonant -- amplified by the weird acoustics found only in a restroom.

Austin turns back to Chip.

EXT. FUNERAL HOME - DAY (PRESENT DAY)

The van pulls into the manicured circular drive of the Kroehner Funeral Home -- an attractive, somber building.

EXT. VAN

Donnie gets out and shuts the door. Chip remains in the driver's seat, engine running.

Donnie leans inside through the window.

DONNIE

You gonna help me with this stiff or what? Brother ain't about to walk himself in.

Chip continues to stare straight ahead with his hands on the wheel. Donnie whistles at him.

DONNIE

Hey!

CHIP

You tell them this was all me, alright? That this had nothing to do with you.

Chip turns to face Donnie now.

CHIP

You tell them you couldn't stop me, OK? And I'm fine with you telling them that. Don't feel like you need to cover for me.

Donnie squints at Chip, confused.

DONNIE

All this talk is very ominous,
bro...cover you for what?

CHIP

I'm not exactly sure.

Chip throws the van back into gear and guns the motor.

The speeding van roars down the driveway and corners hard into the street -- leaving Donnie puzzled in the dust.

He plucks a cigarette from behind his ear and lights it, then shakes his head as he stares after the receding van.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL CORRIDOR - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Chip bursts out of the boy's bathroom.

Austin barges out a moment later -- as he pursues Chip down the abandoned corridors of the high school.

Chip rounds a corner too fast and, looking back, smashes into a garbage can. Debris flies as Chip tumbles to the floor.

Austin catches up -- snatches him up by his shirt -- breathing heavy into Chip's face.

Then Austin looks behind Chip and grins as an idea forms.

Austin reaches behind Chip and pulls open a locker. Then he spins Chip around and shoves him inside.

Chip struggles. Austin subdues him with a punch to the kidney.

It's a tight fit, but Austin leans on the door and forces it closed. He sets the latch into place.

CHIP

(muffled)

Let me out, you asshole!

Austin pulls a pencil from his back pocket and shoves it through the hole meant for a padlock -- a fit both tight and secure.

Then he snaps the pencil off, sealing the locker.

Austin pounds on the locker.

AUSTIN

Who's the asshole now, dick-
weed...can you hear me in there?
I said who's the asshole now?

EXT. A HOUSE - DAY (PRESENT DAY)

The house is a small one, with an ill-tended front yard and old, fading paint.

Chip steps onto the porch and knocks at the door -- the crumpled newspaper clenched in his fist.

BARKING DOGS from behind the door immediately greet his knock, but after a moment, a woman's voice.

WOMAN (O.S.)

I don't have anything to say
to you, so please go away.
These are very big dogs and
I swear I will let them out.

CHIP

I'm not a reporter, ma'am.

WOMAN (O.S.)

Well, if you're a cop then call
my attorney. He told me to say
that, you know...he was very
specific about that point.

CHIP

I'm not a cop, either.

WOMAN (O.S.)

Well, what the hell do you want?

CHIP

I'm with the funeral home, miss.
Kroehner's? I knew your husband.
And I just want to talk.

After a moment, the door cracks open, but the chain remains intact. The face of the woman peering out is puffy and bruised.

She looks his uniform up and down. Her eyes shoot to the van, clearly marked as Kroehner's. Chip nods politely.

CHIP

It's Mira, right?

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Chip sits at a small dinged-up table, absently scratching the head of one of the dogs. MIRA sets two cups of coffee onto the table, holding them with one hand.

That's because her left arm is in a cast and sling.

Mira is quite pretty -- which somehow makes her collection of purple bruises all the more ugly.

She sits down across from Chip.

MIRA

I thought all the funeral arrangements had been taken care of already.

CHIP

Yeah. Well, I'm not really here officially. I wanted to talk to you about your husband.

MIRA

Did he owe you money?

CHIP

No. Nothing like that.

MIRA

Thank God.

CHIP

I know this may sound strange, but I just wanted to know...I need to know...if he remembered me.

MIRA

Were you friends?

CHIP

No. We were...we weren't anything. But I've never forgotten the day we met. And I need to know that he remembered it, too. I need you to tell me that it all meant something. To him.

MIRA

I'm not sure I understand what you mean.

CHIP

When I was in high school, a freshman, we moved to a new town...

Mira draws a sharp breath, putting a hand to her mouth.

MIRA

Oh my God!! You're the guy, aren't you? The one who got him expelled and...sent away.

CHIP

I didn't do anything to him.

MIRA

That's not how he remembered it.

CHIP

So...he did remember?

MIRA

He hated you! He blamed you every day for everything that was wrong with his life.

(a sip of coffee)

When he wasn't blaming me.

She bites her lip at few memories, then back to Chip.

MIRA

Always back to me. Sorry.

CHIP

No, that's alright. I don't know what I expected to hear. Or even what I wanted to hear.

MIRA

Would it help you to know he was the sickest bastard to ever draw a breath, Chip? It's Chip, right?

She nods to his stitched pocket. Chip nods in return.

MIRA

You caused him pain, Chip. Every day. You were like a cancer to him.

(tearing now)

God, I hope I'm telling you the right things. But he deserved all of it...all of that hate...every ounce.

Mira begins to sob.

Chip reaches out to cover her hand with his own.

CHIP

He can't hurt anyone anymore. It's over now.

MIRA

But it's not. Now there are attorneys...and I have to bury that...pig. Do you have any idea what that costs?

(a bitter laugh)

Look who I'm talking to. I have to sell this house. Sell damn near everything! I guess I didn't think this through very well, huh?

(grits her teeth)

The first thing to go will be that fucking boat.

Chip leans forward in his chair. An idea takes root.

He smiles at Mira -- and his tired eyes show life for the first time since we met him.

CHIP

A boat?

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - EARLY MORNING (FLASHBACK)

The building is still asleep.

The sky above tinted pink as dawn approaches.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL CORRIDOR

The silent hallway lit by shafts of sunlight that cut through the windows at a low, sharp angle.

A lone JANITOR works his wide broom across the floor.

He frowns as he spots the toppled waste can. He stands it erect, then sweeps up the scattered debris as he grumbles about the fucking kids.

CHIP (O.S.)

(weak, muffled)

Is someone there...help me...
please...

The janitor jerks alert. He looks around him, finding no one.

JANITOR

Who's there?

CHIP (O.S.)

Oh, God...let me out...

The janitor moves cautiously to the lockers now -- and he looks a little frightened as he moves from locker to locker.

JANITOR

Hello...?

And the janitor nearly jumps from his skin as Chip, in the locker next to him, cries out with all of his remaining energy.

CHIP
CHRIST!! OPEN THE DOOR!!

The janitor spies the jammed locker next to him. He tugs the pencil from the lock and raises the latch with trembling hands.

Chip tumbles from the locker and collapses to the floor. He curls into a fetal position and begins to vomit as huge, gasping heaves wrack his body.

The janitor backs away in horror -- then races wide-eyed down the deserted hallway as he calls for help.

EXT. ISOLATED BOAT LANDING - NIGHT (PRESENT DAY)

Chip and Mira stand together at the water's edge -- alone save for the chirp of crickets or the odd croak of a frog -- lit by a pale, gibbous moon.

And the boat -- just a small, wooden fishing boat -- rests with its nose in the sand, ready for launch. Austin's lumpy body bag is in this boat.

A large gasoline can rests on the ground beside Chip.

Chip kicks the boat. It slides off the sand and begins its slow meander away from the shore.

Chip holds a book of matches out to Mira. She considers, but then pushes it gently back to Chip. He nods.

Chip strikes a match, then holds it to the pack, igniting them all. He tosses this small fireball into the boat and a moment later -- WHOOMP -- it is consumed by roiling flames.

Chip and Mira watch for a silent moment as the blazing boat drifts out into open water.

CHIP
You hungry?

MIRA
Yeah.

And they turn to leave.

As they walk back to the van, lit by the flames behind them, Mira takes Chip's hand.

Neither of them bothers to look back.

CHIP (V.O.)

They say that what doesn't kill
you only makes you stronger.
But that's a load of shit, you know?
We all carry scars that...diminish
us somehow. We heal as best we can,
but they never go away. Not really.
But sometimes...if we're lucky...
sometimes we get to make our peace
with all of that. Isn't that almost
just as good?

FADE OUT.