

Treat

by

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FADE IN:

INT. CLOVER MOTEL - LOBBY - NIGHT

The only light is from a handful of candles on a check-in desk. Outside a storm rages. THUNDER peels. Wind HOWLS.

A vending machine displays a single candy bar held by a spiral retainer.

HOWARD, late 50s, bleary eyed and travel worn, he stands in a doorway linking rooms. His eyes roam the eaves, alert to every CREAK and GROAN.

DENISE and LYLE, both early 20s, hunker down against the wall opposite. They wear matching T-shirts with the slogan 'I HEART SUPER SMILEY FUN-PARK LAND'

They watch Howard with a growing unease.

DENISE

Mister you plannin' on holdin' out there the whole night?

HOWARD

Would it be a problem?

LYLE

Making us nervous. Feel like maybe this whole place gonna lift off.

HOWARD

Maybe it will. Gotta be a late sixties build. Know what they made these places outta back then?

They stare back, faces blank.

Howard flashes a business card with a practiced ease.

HOWARD

Howard Briggs. Construction.

DENISE

Like an engineer?

Howard shrugs and straightens his suit.

HOWARD  
It's like an engineer.

LYLE  
Is it more like a salesman?

Howard forces a smile. He notes their T-shirts as he slips the card away.

HOWARD  
How was super smiley world?

DENISE  
It's a Land. ...It rained.

HOWARD  
No shit?

PERCY, 70s, stooped and grey, shuffles out from a closet behind the check-in, his arms heaped with blankets.

Howard grimaces.

PERCY  
Sir, I got somethin' here make your stay more comfortable.

HOWARD  
Is it a room?

PERCY  
No can do. Not tonight. Honeymoon suite damn near blew clear into next county last storm round.

Howard flicks Denise and Lyle a look, 'told you so'.

PERCY  
Insurance people what says. Up to me I'd have more to offer than cold coffee an' blankets but it ain't. Not my time no more, no sir.

Howard raps on the doorframe.

HOWARD  
Safest place to be.

DENISE  
Thought that was earthquakes.

HOWARD  
Earthquake, twister, adversarial  
legal process -- all round good  
place to be when mother nature  
cracks the ugly nuts.

He looks back to find a stone-faced Percy waiting for him  
to take a blanket.

Howard studies Percy a beat before reluctantly taking one.

HOWARD  
There's a honeymoon suite?

As Percy shuffles away.

PERCY  
Was. We cater to all occasions.  
Bad weather exceptin'.

KNOCK. KNOCK. KNOCK.

All eyes travel to the front door.

Howard's shift back to Percy who stands frozen. A wary,  
troubled expression.

KNOCK. KNOCK. KNOCK.

LYLE  
Hey, old man, your door.

PERCY  
Motel's closed.

DENISE  
You opened for us.

PERCY

It's after dark. Don't open after  
dark. Not today, no sir, no ma'am.

Howard gives the blanket a tentative sniff.

HOWARD

Hell of a business model you got  
here Percy.

DENISE

You just gonna leave them out there?

PERCY

They'll find their way on.

LYLE

Mister, we're a ways from anywhere  
an' they don't go namin' rainy  
afternoons, that's a category three  
crap shoot out there.

PERCY

I knows' what it is.

The KNOCKING comes again. Harder, impatient.

Lyle stands to face Percy.

Howard watches, bemused at the standoff between them.

Denise pulls herself up beside Lyle in support.

DENISE

It's plain mean's what it is.

LYLE

I'm sorry Mister.

He moves to the door and takes hold of the handle -- a  
boney hand clasps his.

He looks back into Percy's frightened eyes.

PERCY  
(whispered)  
Motels closed.

A VOICE from outside, a rasped, almost mocking tone.

VOICE (V.O.)  
Trick or treat?

Percy bristles. The colour drains from his face.

DENISE  
What would--

Percy reaches back and clamps a hand across her mouth. He leads her eyes to a calendar on the wall.

Each day is crossed off save for the last: October 31st. A glowing Jack-o'-lantern illustrates.

Howard sips a coffee. Watches with interest.

BANG BANG! The door shudders.

VOICE (V.O.)  
Trick? Or treat?

Percy guides Denise and Lyle back, stepping over the heap of dropped blankets.

They draw level with the vending machine. Percy pulls a slow, rueful take at the lone candy bar.

They hold there in the silence, not daring to move.

LAUGHTER. They turn to see Howard near doubled over at the sight of the three of them.

HOWARD  
Shit. Kid needs a candy fix--

WHAMM!

The door nearly gives under the force of the blow. Howard startles and sloshes coffee down his shirt.

HOWARD

Trick you little bastard!

Percy sags. Denise looks over -- his hand still covers her mouth. He removes it and wipes it on his shirt.

Howard raises his eyes to the ceiling as the roof CREAKS. His brow creases in concern.

CRYING, faint at first. It draws closer to the door.

LITTLE GIRL (V.O.)

Help. Help us please. We're lost.

Denise gasps, trades a horrified look with Lyle.

LITTLE GIRL (V.O.)

Please, the storm. It's my little brother, he only wanted candy.

Lyle moves towards the door. Percy blocks his way.

PERCY

No. Not here, not tonight.

LYLE

This is unreasonable, illegal maybe and almost certainly unconstitutional.

PERCY

I can't let you open that door.

LITTLE GIRL (V.O.)

Please help us. We're so scared.

PERCY

It's not what you think.

LITTLE GIRL (V.O.)

Please, just save my puppy!

DENISE

Lyle -- there's a puppy out there!

LITTLE GIRL (V.O.)  
He's Bichon Frise mix, oh so sleepy.

Denise can take no more. She steps around them and takes the handle...

PERCY  
It's a--

...opening the door. Wind rushes in, kills the candles throwing the room into shadow.

Lightning frames a small, willowy CREATURE in the entrance.

It wears a fright mask that may well be its own face. Gone is the girl's voice, replaced by the raspy one from before.

CREATURE  
Trick.

Denise is ripped from the room.

Lyle freaks and rushes out into the darkness after her.

A chorus of voices, excited and maniacal. Their number unseen, unimaginable.

CREATURES (V.O.)  
Trick! Trick! Trick...

SCREAMS mingle with the storm.

Howard rushes the door and slams it shut. He braces his weight against it, muting the horror beyond.

Percy rummages behind the desk. He produces a pair of earmuffs and a book.

HOWARD  
Help me!

PERCY  
Motel's closed.

Percy solemnly dons the earmuffs. He grabs a candle and shuts himself in the closet. Several locks CLICK in place.

Howard stares open mouthed.

The SCREAMS subside. Howard moves to peek from the blinds.

Outside, lightning reveals a pair of writhing bodies strung from a tree limb.

Howard turns and watches aghast as the door swings open. He starts for the back room, trips on the blankets and falls.

He scoots back as the Creature pads across the room, backing him into the doorframe.

The Creature leans in, its face inches from his.

CREATURE

Trick? Or treat?

Howard nearly melts into the carpet. He swallows hard.

HOWARD

Treat..?

The Creature considers this a beat. It extends a boney hand and opens Howard's suit breast. It reaches in with the other and plucks a coin from his pocket.

The Creature pats Howard on the head like a good dog and pulls back to the vending machine.

The Creature inserts the coin. It CLATTERS through the machine landing with a CHINK in the change box.

A boney finger stabs a selection button.

Howard watches the retainer make its slow whirl to freedom.

The Creature turns and shoots him a coy grin.

CLUNK. The candy lands in the collection tray. The Creature retrieves it. Waggles the bar at Howard and exits.

Howard sinks back, relieved.

SWOOSH!

Howard frowns, looks down to find a rope looped about his foot. His eyes trace the other end to the front door.

The rope snaps tight. He grabs the interior door frame -- it splinters free in his hands.

He claws at the carpet as he's dragged towards the exit...

CREATURES (V.O.)

Treat! Treat! Treat! Treat...

FADE OUT