

WHISTLE-STOP

Written by

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FADE IN:

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

The sun peeks through tightly shut curtains. The only other source of light from a laptop. The artificial blue light reflects on the face of ORSON MILLER (40s).

On the screen, his emails. He's refreshing the page, hoping for an email that's never coming.

He sighs deeply. Picks up a tumbler of WHISKEY, taking a sip.

He stands up, drink in hand, and in one motion swoops the curtains open. He recoils at the BURST OF SUNLIGHT.

On the street below, people walk by with their dogs, with coffee in hand, on the phone. He watches for a moment.

He walks away from the window, placing down his drink on the desk.

His walls are covered in photos. Him and various dignitaries, celebrities, politician. One in particular stands out: Orson in a PRESS VEST and HELMET.

Orson picks up the phone, dials.

It rings through an otherwise deadly quiet apartment.

RINGRING.

It crackles to life.

ORSON
Hannah, hi-

AUTOMATED VOICE (O.S.)
You've reached the voicemail
service of-

Click.

He places the phone down. Heading straight back to his desk.

Orson finishes what little remains of his drink. Every last drop.

EXT. VILLAGE - NIGHT

Crickets chirp. Fields as far as the eye can see.

Idyllic cobblestone cottages and buildings. Moonlight casts down alleyways, along the roads.

It's as close to perfect as a place can be.

Disturbing the quiet, a CONVOY OF 4X4S approach, TINTED WINDOWS, headlights beaming.

In perfect formation they drive through the village. We follow them as they move.

Past the village square, and around a massive FACELESS STATUE.

The smooth black car surfaces swallowing moonlight.

TWO MEN open black cast iron gates in readiness for the convoy.

One-by-one they enter, parking in front of a dull, grey COMPOUND.

The gate creaks and groans as the men SLAM it shut.

INT. APARTMENT - NEXT DAY

Orson awake with a jolt. Catching his breath, reaching for his phone. It's 10.20am.

ORSON
(under his breath)
Fuck!

He jumps out of bed. Walking over to the bathroom. He's brushing his teeth, checking his phone. He opens his emails. Refreshing constantly.

He spits out the toothpaste. Eyes glued to the screen.

Still trained on his phone as he wipes his mouth.

Then -

An email pops up, the subject reads:

'Effective Immediately, Termination of Partnership'

He stops in his tracks. His face drops.

A flash of ANGER. Orson throws his phone across the room.

ORSON (CONT'D)
FUCK FUCK FUCK FUCK FUCK!

His face contorting in rage.

Orson's phone THUDS and CRACKS.

Coming to his senses, he immediately rushes over to pick it up.

We see his reflection on the smashed black screen.

Instead of anger, he's holding his head in his hand.

A beat.

He inhales sharply, standing up. A few TEARS escape.

KNOCK, KNOCK, KNOCK.

Quickly wiping the tears away, fixing his hair, he heads for the front door. His poker face is on.

Sharp inhale, composing himself. With that he swings the door open.

It's Orson's LANDLORD. His face stern.

LANDLORD

I don't want to have to keep doing this.

Orson looks down, avoiding eye contact.

ORSON

I know, I-

LANDLORD

Rent. Monday.

A beat.

ORSON

Alright. No problem.

He closes the door before the Landlord can reply.

Orson leans on the door with one hand, staring through the floor.

RINGRING, RINGRING.

He rushes to his phone. Picks it up, slowly moving it to his ear.

ORSON (CONT'D)

(on the phone)

Hello?

LADY'S VOICE (O.S.)
We need you. Haven needs you.

I/E. ORSON'S CAR/HILLTOP - DAY

Fields of grass dancing in the gentle breeze.

At the top of the hill, Orson's crappy car rolls to a stop.
He's looking down on Haven below.

On the seat next to him is his VOICE RECORDER, PHONE, WALLET.
He snatches them up, shoving them into his pocket.

Stepping out into the open air. The sunlight on his face.
Orson basks in it for a moment.

He locks his car.

Eyes scan as he cautiously heads down the hill towards the village.

EXT. HAVEN VILLAGE CENTRE - MOMENTS LATER

VOICE RECORDER IN HAND, Orson strolls lazily. Passing by cute shops, VILLAGERS.

They smile at Orson, a quick nod of acknowledgment.

Subtly, he brings the recorder to his mouth.

ORSON
(into voice recorder)
Cute. Quiet. Not sure where to start.

He pockets it. Continues his walk.

Hands in pockets, he comes into the Village Square proper.

Orson looks on in awe at the FACELESS STATUE. He slowly reaches for his voice recorder, eyes fixated on the towering statue.

He hesitates.

ORSON (CONT'D)
(into voice recorder)
There's a statue. It evidently has no face. Not worn away. It looks purposeful. Strange.

Click.

Back in his pocket.

He continues, scanning, head down.

He BUMPS INTO AN OLD LADY.

OLD LADY
Oh dear. Excuse me.

Orson laughs awkwardly.

ORSON
No. No. I'm sorry.

She mumbles as she continues on her way.

ORSON (CONT'D)
Wait! I'm sorry, really sorry to
keep you. But... in Haven. People
are going missing. Is that right?

The Old Lady's smile turns to CONFUSION.

OLD LADY
I'm sorry dearie. I- I have no idea
what you're talking about.

She shuffles off quickly.

EXT. VILLAGE - LATER

CIGARETTE hanging off his lips, Orson is less attentive. He takes a drag, glancing around as he blows smoke.

Villagers SMILE when he makes eye contact. He barely reciprocates.

He takes out his phone. Checking the time.

It's 6.07pm.

On the phone screen, the SIGNAL BAR is noticeably empty.

He sighs deeply.

Taking another drag, he takes out his recorder.

ORSON
(into recorder)
No luck. It's getting late. I'm
heading home.

He STOMPS ON HIS CIGARETTE.

EXT. HAVEN HILLTOP - NIGHT

The sun set. A cold brisk air makes Orson retreat into his coat.

Approaching his car, reaching for his keys, when -
HIS TIRES ARE FLAT.

ORSON

Goddamn it. What the fuck!?

He crouches, looking around at the tires one-by-one.

First, popped.

Second, popped.

Third, popped.

He stands up, the other clearly popped.

Grabbing his phone, it's 8.45pm now.

He sees the signal bar again. BITES HIS FIST in anger.

EXT. VILLAGE - NIGHT

Now devoid of anyone, Orson walks through Haven. He mumbles to himself.

Taking out his WALLET, it's bare. NO CARDS. NO PHOTOS.

He checks his cash, the only thing in there. Counting a few bills.

Catching his eye, a SIGN. A B&B!

Promptly he heads for the door.

He enters bashfully.

INT. B&B RECEPTION - CONTINUOUS

Standing behind the desk is a YOUNG LADY. He smiles.

YOUNG LADY

Need a place for the night, Orson?

He approaches. Taking out his cash.

ORSON
More than anything, thank-

He pauses.

Looking at her NAME TAG, which reads: SAM.

ORSON (CONT'D)
Sam...

She's grabbing a KEY from the rack.

SAM
Yes Sir.

ORSON
Have we, have we met before?

Her brow furrows. Grabbing documents for him to sign.

SAM
No, I don't think so.

Orson places the cash on the desk. She hands him back to him instantaneously.

ORSON
Oh. I only ask because-

She offers him the key abruptly, along with the cash.

SAM
Upstairs. 2nd door on the right.

Smiling big. He takes it, but confusion plasters his face.

ORSON
What about the uh, the paper?

SAM
You can do it tomorrow. Have a nice stay.

He nods in appreciation, but eyes her as he heads upstairs.

INT. ORSON'S B&B ROOM - LATER

Orson rolls over in bed. Reaching out for his phone.

It's 12.21am.

In the light of the phone, FORMLESS SHADOWS surround him.

Orson is none the wiser.

He drops the phone on the sideboard.

Staring up at the ceiling.

In every corner of the room, the Shadows inch closer, a HAND almost reaching out to touch him-

INT. B&B RECEPTION - MORNING

Orson GALLOPS down the stairs. Sam greets him with the same big smile.

SAM

Morning! Someone's happy.

ORSON

I realised, there's one place I didn't look at properly. There was this compound, fenced off. Do you know it?

Sam stapling some papers.

SAM

I do. Nice group runs the place. They do Haven a lot of good.

ORSON

We'll see about that.

He winks, rushes outside.

EXT. VILLAGE COMPOUND - LATER

Again, a cigarette on his lips. A COFFEE in hand.

He's alternating between smoking and drinking.

His eyes are trained on the COMPOUND.

He flicks his cigarette, dashing for it.

VILLAGERS STOP AND WATCH.

Orson reaching the gates, out of breath.

He climbs the adjacent fence. Immediately crashing down to the ground.

ORSON
God, fuck.

He looks up, through the fence.

A MAN (around 30) stares right back at him. LONG CURLY HAIR, SUNGLASSES. Dressed casual.

The Man smiles at Orson.

Orson looks away for a moment. Back up.

The Man is gone...

More focused on his ankle, Orson gets up.

He LIMPS away.

The villagers who stopped and stared all of a sudden move again. A hivemind.

INT. B&B RECEPTION - DAY

Still limping, Orson enters. Looking around for Sam.

ORSON
(calling out)
Sam? You here?

He walks to the desk. Checking behind. Checking the back room.

No sign of her.

He pulls back, his hand brushing over a HANDWRITTEN NOTE.

Curiously reading it, head tilted.

It reads:

"You know where to find me".

ORSON (CONT'D)
Huh.

He walks away, we linger on the note.

INT. ORSON'S B&B ROOM - NIGHT

PEN AND NOTEBOOK in hand, Orson is sat on the bed scribbling words.

He looks to the sky for a moment, and then writes some more.

On the notepad, DRAWINGS of the statue, the compound. Some of the villagers.

Surround it, jumbled words and illegible phrases, exclamation marks.

Finally, he flips it shut.

Falling back onto the pillow, hands above his head, he closes his eyes.

Closer than ever, the SHADOWS creep.

Up the sides of the bed. From the ceiling. Inches away from his face.

Then everything disappears when -

Orson's eyes shoot open.

INT. B&B RECEPTION - CONTINUOUS

Orson dashes down the stair, straight to the entrance.

He gives a passing glimpse to the desk.

The note is still there. No Sam.

He heads out.

EXT. VILLAGE COMPOUND - NIGHT

Orson keeps low, crouching, as he moves to the same fence he fell from.

Inside the compound, the lights are on. No sign of life though.

He takes a RUNNING LEAP at the fence. Climbing. Groaning.

He reaches the top, and -

THUD!

He FALLS TO THE FLOOR on the other side.

Stumbling to his feet, he sneaks around the side of the compound.

He comes to a SIDE DOOR.

DEEP BREATH.

He pushes it.

Relief, but hesitancy as it OPENS.

He maintains his low position and goes inside...

INT. COMPOUND - CONTINUOUS

Orson's head is on a swivel. He tentatively walks around.
Standing up.

Still nobody.

His footsteps echo on the floor, even with such gentle steps.

MAN (O.S.)
Orson. I knew you'd join us.

Shocked, lost for words, Orson pivots.

It's the same long-haired Man. No longer donning sunglasses.

The Man smiles, outstretches his arms to the sides.

MAN (CONT'D)
I'm Simeon.

He beckons Orson.

SIMEON
Please. Join us.

Silently, eyes on Simeon, Orson follows.

Into the

MAIN HALL

Where a DOZEN PEOPLE sit on the floor. All likewise casually dressed.

There's a SPACE that Simeon gestures Orson to sit.

He does so. Looking around at all the faces around him. They smile at him.

SIMEON (CONT'D)
Get Orson a tea, won't you? Anyone.

One of the people jump to their feet, scurrying to bring a small CUP OF TEA to Orson. He takes it, his hand shaking a little.

ORSON
(meekly)
What uh, what is this?

Simeon laughs.

SIMEON
No need to be so anxious, Orson.
Drink up.

Everyone else takes a sip. Orson follows, grimacing before it even touches his lips.

We're up close as he takes a drink.

Orson looks at Simeon. Who watches Orson intently.

Behind Simeon, it's Sam!

ORSON
(slurring slightly)
S- Sam, it's...

Without a word, Sam walks over to Orson.

Orson tries to get words out but he can't.

He can only gape in terror as-

SAM'S FACE BLOODIES.

BRUISES AND WELTS.

CUTS ALL OVER.

She's unrecognisable.

She kneels in front of Orson.

He is frozen.

SAM
You left me for dead, Orson.

SIMEON
(delighted)
Remember that poor lady you hit
with your car. You didn't stop, did
you?

Simeon paces, Orson tries to talk, but can only spit and choke.

SIMEON (CONT'D)
And what's worse, Orson, is that
you left her again. BUT!

Sam backs away.

She walks into the darkness.

Simeon takes her place, kneeling in front of Orson.

ORSON
(spluttering)
Pl- Please.

SIMEON
But, Orson. We are giving you
another chance.

Simeon taps him on the shoulder.

SIMEON (CONT'D)
Run! Go on, git.

Orson's eyes widen, he's struggling to his feet.

He trips into the wall, hitting his head.

Simeon looks on, a smile still on his lips.

As Orson reaches the door

SIMEON (CONT'D)
Be purified!

Orson out of sight, Simeon whistles. The dozen people all
jump to their feet. Running single-file out of the room.

EXT. VILLAGE - NIGHT

Orson falls onto the road.

Birds CAW.

VOICES OVERLAP.

Everything is closing in.

He's back up, barely. He peeks behind him as he stumbles. The
DOZEN DISCIPLES are on his tail.

Orson trips again, at the feet of
A YOUNG MAN.

Orson looks up slowly.

The Young Man stares back at him, his eyes WHITE.

ORSON
I'm, oh my God. I'm sorry. I didn't
know that you were struggling.

YOUNG MAN
You knew. You just didn't care.

The Young Man is GONE.

Orson YELLS.

ORSON
PLEASE. STOP THIS!

The disciples circle him - predators moving in on their prey.

Orson stumbles again, falling to his knees.

Voices berate him.

He presses his hands TIGHTLY OVER HIS EARS. Bending down to
the floor.

The voices continue, DISEMBODIED HANDS hit him, scratch him.
We don't see their faces.

Then --

It stops.

Orson takes his hands from his ears. He's panting.

Warily, he arises to his feet.

He bursts into LAUGHING.

Hysterically laughing now.

Orson hobbles into the road.

HEADLIGHTS -

BADOOM, THUMP!

Orson lays, eyes unmoving. The biggest smile on his face.

He continues laughing as the Disciples surround him.

I/E. CAR/HILLTOP - DAY

The sun is at its peak in the sky. Birds chirp and whistle.

A CAR pulls up.

Screeching as it parks.

Inside, a WOMAN.

Her phone RINGS. She snatches it, answering.

WOMAN

I'm here.

LADY'S VOICE (O.S.)

Please, we need you.

Outside, in the undergrowth; rusted and burnt out...

Orson's car.

FADE TO BLACK.