

the object

INT. OFFICE BATHROOM - DAY

RETCHING NOISES...as a mousy woman, JANICE (31) hunches over the sink.

JANICE (V.O.)
Once upon a time, there was a
little angry girl.

Cheers, muffled, outside.

Janice wipes her mouth on the sleeve of her rumpled blouse, locking eyes with her sickly reflection.

INT. OFFICE HALLWAY - SAME

Janice emerges. PEOPLE fill the hall, smiles all around. Everyone is crowded around MARISSA, a young woman sporting a fat engagement ring on her finger.

MARISSA
Janice! I finally said yes!

JANICE
(shrinking back)
Congrats.

She hurries off from the group.

JANICE (V.O.)
Nobody ever saw her. Not if she
could help it.

INT. JANICE'S CAR - AFTERNOON (PARKED)

Janice hammers her fists on the steering wheel.

JANICE
Fucking...bitch...Never my turn!

Each punch causes the horn to beep.

Marissa passes, shoots Janice a dirty look. Janice sinks down in her seat.

INT. JANICE'S CAR - LATER (MOVING)

Janice crawls through the seemingly endless line of cars in her shitty sedan.

To her left in the carpool lane, a luxury sports car whizzes past. Janice seethes.

EXT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Janice pulls up by the curb. She gets out wearily -- a BURLY SHAPE looms, blocking her path.

She cowers. The man is still. Oh -- it's not a man.

The DUMMY is a sort of mannequin fashioned out of a soft, sock-like material. The figure protrudes from a trash can.

JANICE

Golly. Sure scared me, mister.

She smiles shyly at its blank face.

INT. JANICE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Janice rolls over, awake. Upstairs, LOUD SEX NOISES.

JANICE (V.O.)

People let her down. The real thing
was never as good as her dreams.

Her hand creeps down her belly. She caresses herself as the sounds continue overhead.

She bites her lip. Peers out the window -- the dummy still shoved in the dumpster, looking sad and lonely like her.

INT. JANICE'S CAR - SAME

Janice sings with the radio, the dummy in the passenger seat. She merges into the carpool lane, speeding past the other cars stuck in the congestion.

INT. BOSS'S OFFICE - DAY

Janice stands in the center of the sterile room, across MS. HENDRICKS (55), sitting behind a big oak desk.

MS. HENDRICKS

Listen, Janice, it's not that
you're a bad employee. It's just...

JANICE

It's just what, Ms. Hendricks?

Ms. Hendricks looks uncomfortable. Everyone always does. It's Janice's hard, unwavering stare.

MS. HENDRICKS

A few of your coworkers have asked
if...ah, you know what I'm talking
about. Please don't make this --

Janice falls to her knees.

JANICE

I'll do anything.

MS. HENDRICKS

What are you doing?

JANICE

I can't lose this job, I -- Please.

Ms. Hendricks sighs and comes around his desk. She extends a hand -- Janice closes her eyes, resting her cheek against the older woman's hand.

MS. HENDRICKS

(recoiling)

Jesus Christ.

She hurries out, leaving Janice alone with her shame.

JANICE (V.O.)

Maybe she didn't need anyone. Maybe
people were a mistake.

INT. JANICE'S CAR - AFTERNOON (PARKED)

The dummy sits in the passenger seat. Janice gets in, stifling a sob. She looks over at it, wiping her tears.

JANICE

What do you want?

INT. JANICE'S CAR - SAME (MOVING)

Janice exits the freeway. A pickup truck stops abruptly at the red light ahead -- and Janice miscalculates, tapping the truck's bumper as she skids to a stop.

JANICE

Shit.

The DRIVER throws the truck in park, gets out.

JANICE (CONT'D)
I'm sorry! I'm sorry!

DRIVER
What the hell was that? Your brakes
not work or something, lady?

DRIVER'S POV: Janice in the driver's seat, another figure
shotgun -- it's the dummy, but he looks real.

DRIVER (CONT'D)
(getting back in)
Y'all just drive safe, all right?

Janice waits a beat. She looks over at the dummy. A honk
behind her. Light's green. She's holding up traffic.

Janice exhales.

HOOONK.

She flips the car off behind her and guns it.

JANICE
Think you can mess with me? Huh?
FUCK! YOU!

She pounds the steering wheel. The dummy watches silently.

JANICE (CONT'D)
You're the only one who doesn't
mess with me. You're helpful!
Nobody hurts a girl with a man.

She lights a cigarette, giggles.

JANICE (CONT'D)
You probably don't even hear
me...you wouldn't judge.

TIME CUT

Janice drives deliriously. The dark road blurs ahead of her.

She turns her head to gaze at the dummy, riding silently.

JANICE (CONT'D)
Are you sure? Well, I guess I am.
Okay, okay...if you say so.

She pulls off onto the shoulder of a dark road.

Janice curls up, resting her eyes. The dummy sitting there,
watching over her with a sort of stoicism.

JANICE (CONT'D)
Brad...I love that name...my only
friend in the world.

Her eyes flutter as she dozes.

TIME CUT

A shadow falls on her. A clink against the glass. She jerks her head up. A MAN stares through the window.

MAN
You okay? You need help, doll?

Janice shakes her head, groggy. He glances up and down the empty road.

MAN (CONT'D)
You're gonna open up for me now.

Oh shit. Janice scrambles up as the door opens.

JANICE
Please -- I didn't do anything --

The man snarls as he climbs in the car. Janice kicks, slides across the seats, over the dummy, out the passenger door.

He fumbles with the dummy's limp body, flustered, struggles to back away -- BUT IT'S GOT HIM.

MAN
What the fuck is this? Hey! Stop --

EXT. BACK ROAD - CONTINUOUS

Janice lies on the asphalt, watching in a daze as the man struggles, letting out a choked scream...

Then, eerie silence. Janice pukes. It's the only sound in the night. She collects herself and rises.

THE DUMMY NOW SITS IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT. Sniffling, Janice gets in the passenger side.

JANICE
You...you...

The car peels out, leaving the contorted shape of the man, lying limp beside the road.

JANICE

watches in the rearview mirror.

Her hand brushes the dummy's soft cotton limb.

JANICE

Thank you.

INT. JANICE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Noises of carnality...this time, it's Janice, writhing in bed atop the dummy.

JANICE

Oh my god, Brad...oh, baby.

EXT. FREEWAY - MORNING

Janice's sedan speeds, merging into the carpool lane...under the watchful eye of a TRAFFIC CAMERA...on until --

INT. JANICE'S CAR - LATER (PARKED)

The car is parked outside the office. Janice sits shotgun, staring, unseeing, out her window.

JANICE'S POV: The dummy approaches the car, sliding its feet along the pavement as it moves in a strange gait.

BLOOD smears the concrete in its wake.

People spill out of the office. Shouts.

The dummy gets in. Janice stares at the blank white face. It turns to her.

JANICE

Oh...okay. Whatever you want, darling. You know that.

She extends her hand. The dummy's mitten one touches her fingers, sliding a gaudy engagement ring on her...the fat diamond glistening with red.

Janice beams as they drive on, away from everything.

end.