

Liminal

by

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FADE IN:

EXT. DAY - WOODLANDS

The ripples of heat bring us to a rural and largely overgrown humid woodland, presumably in the Atlantic coastal plains or the Piedmont region. The summer air is thick with the ambient sounds of cicadas and mourning doves. Off screen we hear the crunching sound of footsteps. Faint. Light. A child, maybe 7 or 8 years old wearing a simple plaid collared shirt and jeans with rolled cuffs. Without a clear shot of his face, we follow the boy as he explores the woods with a sense of purposeful direction. After a moment the crunching of grass and leaves underfoot becomes softer, more of a squelching sound, as if the boy is walking through mud though it has clearly not rained in at least a week or more. The muddy squelching becomes more pronounced as we begin to see stange and fleshy tendrils growing up the stumps and trees, like a mix of veins and sinews but with a coagulated black blood color. The boy approaches a vast and expansive black hole in the ground. The clearing around it has a quiver to it, like a spasming muscle or a twitching eyelid. Without ever getting a clear look at the boy, he steps forward and plummets into the pit.

Cut to Black.

CUT TO:

INT. DAY - CAFE

With a start, ADAM BERGERON wakes in the booth of a cheap cafe. A man in his mid 30's, Adam has all the presentation of good wall paper. Plain, unassuming and with just enough presence to blend in without standing out. Just the way he likes it. Even the rough beard he has grown over the last few days strikes him as too attention grabbing. The cafe, however, has all the allure of popcorn ceilings. Functional but not something you would choose. The kind of place where the grill gets cleaned about as often as the menus get changed. A half eaten bagel and silty cup of coffee sit in front of him. A WAITER approaches the table, coffee pot in hand. He is a friendly sort, the kind who asks you about your day and really means it while knowing you probably won't ask about his. Shorter but with a smile big enough to make up for it.

WAITER

You know, for a moment I couldn't tell if the coffee was that bad or if you were just that tired.

ADAM

Good coffee. Long drive.

WAITER

Whereabouts?

He tops off Adam's cup as he watches the few grounds swirl about and settle below the black surface.

ADAM BERGERON
East. Up from Brookline.

WAITER
City man I see. Lemme guess,
mergers and aquisitions?

ADAM BERGERON
Paragraphs and Opinions mostly.

WAITER
You a writer?

ADAM BERGERON
Was a writer.

With a squint and a pause, the waiter looks Adam over. It clicks.

WAITER
Well shoot, now I remember where I
know you from! You write for that
one magazine, Roads less traveled.
Adam somethin'..

ADAM
Adam Bergeron.

WAITER
Adam Bergeron! Listen, I read your
stuff goin' back a few years now.
Wine towns in Virginia, Romanian
cuisines. My favorite is best beers
in Bavaria.

ADAM
(Hint of annoyance but
polite)
Oh yea, good places.

WAITER
I mean, I ain't ever been to those
places but it makes it feel like I
have, ya know?

ADAM
Look, I appreciate that. Say any
chance I could get that check?

The waiter is still miles away in his head.

WAITER
Say, when's the last time you put
out a piece? A few years back,
right?

ADAM
Yea. Quite a few.

WAITER

Hm. You sure you still want that check?

A beat. Adam isn't amused but he tries to hide it.

WAITER

(chortle)

Look I'm just yankin' your chain. Refills on me. You don't mind me askin' though, you got writers block or somethin'?

ADAM BERGERON

Something like that. I had a piece that was more...revealing. How do I say it...

WAITER

Like an expose?

ADAM

(Suprised by his knowledge)

Yes exactly. I wanted to branch out a bit from the usual people and places so I figured I'd get into some real stories.

WAITER

From the sound of it, nobody likes change.

ADAM

Especially not when they aren't expecting it.

WAITER

Or when it comes back on 'em when they ain't expecting it to.

Adam offers a small nod of solidarity.

WAITER

I had a friend go through somethin' like that. Few years back.

ADAM

He a writer too?

WAITER

No, no nothing like that. Personal stuff.

ADAM BERGERON

I see.

WAITER

He and his misses were having trouble and he swore he would change.

A beat.

WAITER

Change is never easy I suppose.

ADAM

I suppose not.

A brief and slightly awkward pause settles over the two men. Each feels it differently. The waiter collects Adam's bill.

WAITER

But this change is easy. Back in a second.

Adam's fained smile recedes quickly. Memories of that time are clearly not something he planned on thinking of today.

The waiter returns.

WAITER

Alright Mr. Bergeron, you are all set. Mind if I ask where ya headed?

EXT DAY - PARKING LOT

The bell on the cafe's front door jingles as Adam exits and walks to his car. He sits and we see the destination plugged into his phone GPS: Brightwood Falls.

CUT TO:

EXT DAY - BACK ROADS

Adam proceeds along the backroads and two lane routes of the countryside. The drive carves its way through towering pine barrens, rolling hills and the occasional roadside family farm. The forest and woodlands he passes through look familiar to the ones from the dream sequence in the beginning, but Adam doesn't recognize this.

CUT TO:

EXT AFTERNOON - BIRCHWOOD FALLS

As the midday heat of the summer fades into a balmy evening, Adam makes his way from the town outskirts to main street. The road leads Adam through the towns old quarter, filled with stained brick warehouses and rusted millworks. The town's outskirts has the feeling of a tooth cavity rotting from the outside in. A gentle rolling topography creates a cavernous valley of decrepid industrial mauseleoms.

The town center itself is surrounded with weathered and warped houses as well as worn rows of brick stores fronting each side of main street. A few taller buildings form a rudimentary skyline. Adam parks his car a few streets down. After checking the broken parking meter, he heads towards his hotel, Dunwich Tower. On a distant hill, just outside the town perimeter, sits a rather large estate.

CUT TO:

INT EVENING - HOTEL

Despite the towns downturn, the hotel itself remains in relatively good shape. A brass and oak chandler illuminates to foyer with a warm amber glow. Deep, almost blood red carpets trimmed with gold flow from wall to wall, though they are well worn and discolored. The check-in desk is a sandy mix of worn red oak and mahogany veneer. The brass bell on the counter is dented with a slight tarnish. Behind the check-in desk stands a young man in his early 20's. It's hard to tell but something about him is off. His color and complexion is that of unleavened bread dough.

CONSIERGE

Hello.

ADAM

Checking in.

CONSIERGE

You see a dog coming in?

ADAM

Sorry?

CONSIERGE

You see a dog...coming in?

ADAM

No I don't think so.

CONSIERGE

Pity. Name?

ADAM

The dog?

CONSIERGE

No.

ADAM

Uh.. Bergeron. Adam.

The Consierge walks into the back room behind the counter. Adam turns to look around the room once more and notices several people who have paused and watch him checking in. Their faces however are set in a strange posture. Not quite a smirk. Not quite flat. Uncanny. Upon second inspection, several of the chandler lights seem to have gone out. Or

were they always like that?

CONSIERGE

Sorry, no reservation for Bergeron.

ADAM BERGERON

What do you mean no reservation?
Can you check again?

CONSIERGE

Checked again. Still not there. Are
you sure you made a reservation? A
lot of people forget around here.

ADAM

I made the reservation a month ago.

CONSIERGE

Well, I can't say it's here.

ADAM

Is there another hotel I can go to?

CONSIERGE

Not one that's open.

ADAM

Well shit. Where am I supposed to
go?

CONSIERGE

Well, where are you from?

A beat. Adam taps his knuckle on the desk with frustration
but regains his composure. He turns to head to the door.

CONSIERGE

You know what happens if you spell
dog backwards right?

At that moment, Adam's phone chirps with a notification.

Lawtheley interview. 6pm.

ADAM BERGERON

Shit.

CUT TO:

EXT NIGHT - LAWTHELEY ESTATE

In the reflection of Adam's windshield, he looks up through
the windshield at the soft glow of the windows of the
Lawtheley home. No sooner does he pull up do the front
french doors open. OBIDIAH LAWTHELEY walks out dressed
modestly and professionally. A dark grey three piece suit.
Wool. Pressed. His full beard is well maintained and grey as
a rain cloud. With a wave and a smile, he beckons Adam
inside as a light drizzle begins.

CUT TO:

INT NIGHT - LAWTHELEY ESTATE

The interior of the Lawtheley home looks like it cost more than the whole town, though not in the manner of possessions. The hallway and side sitting room are paneled with warm and syrupy oak and mahogany. The wealth of the family is clearly on display, but through structure rather than things. Obidiah sits across from Adam in his high back chair, bulit of cherry and lined with fine patterned linen. His wife SERENA LAWTHELEY enters mid conversation with a simple yet expertly crafted drink tray of polished silver with oak handles.

OBIDIAH

Gotta say, that's a damn shame
about your lodgings. Warren never
could keep a calander.

ADAM

It wouldn't be the first time I
missed a reservation. I'm sure it
won't be the last.

Serena sets the tray upon the middle coffee table. Three
mint julips in equally brilliant silver mugs each with a
glisten of condensation.

OBIDIAH

Thank you darling.

ADAM

Yes ma'am, thank you.

Obidiah takes a long slow drink. Refreshing and crisp.

OBIDIAH

Now, lumber and ore. I got my start
in lumber and ore, up in Maine then
moved a ways down here.

SERENA

We never were one for the cold.
Have you been in the winter? Oh
it's terrible.

ADAM

I have and yes it can be brutal.

OBIDIAH

Warmer and cheaper.

ADAM

Can't beat that.

OBIDIAH

No you can't. So anyway, I opened the mine in '64 and the lumber works in '66. We had north of 1200 employees right after that.

ADAM

And before that this whole place was just a few houses and a gas station right?

OBIDIAH

Yessir. In two years we had a traffic light and two years after that we had an Amtrak stop.

ADAM

That's impressive. Did you have many visitors? Other writers or journalists come by to do any write ups?

OBIDIAH

Oh, we had a few.

There is an uncomfortable beat. It hangs in the air.

OBIDIAH

But as you can see lately, there is less to talk about.

ADAM

When did everything start to change?

OBIDIAH

Well we had a few accidents that we were forced to settle. Amicably.

ADAM

Amicably?

SERENA

We wanted the best for our people. But we also wanted to keep the business going. But sometimes things change.

Serena looks to her husband.

SERENA (CONT.)

Even when you try your best to avoid it.

Adam thinks on this. Change. A pause.

OBIDIAH

Well I've read about you and you know what it takes to build a name for yourself. Doesn't just happen over night. Travel work all over the country, Europe, Africa. Small places in a big world. That was your column, right?

ADAM

Yes sir it was.

OBIDIAH

Sir? What's this sir! Please, call me Obidiah.

ADAM BERGERON

(With a smile)

Obidiah.

All three toast as the mood lightens once again.

OBIDIAH

Now listen, I don't mean to pry but I also know that you too may have had your own share of trouble. Enough to mirror my fair town. Am I right?

ADAM

In a sense.

OBIDIAH

Wrote a few things about a few people that didn't like it? I know how that is. Tell me, you still in Brookline?

ADAM BERGERON

You know..

OBIDIAH

I do my homework, son.

ADAM

It's like bad tastes you can't cleanse from your pallette.

OBIDIAH

So this is your chance to cleanse that pallette then? A fresh start.

ADAM

Well, not so utilitarian as that.

OBIDIAH

Oh, I don't take offense by it. Man has to make his way in the world. His own way.

ADAM

I had started a segment about some lesser known places around the country and I thought that this would be a good start.

SERENA

You don't mind me asking, as we are lesser known, how'd you find us?

ADAM

You mean you and your husband?

SERENA

Sure.

ADAM

Honestly, m'am, I felt like I'd heard the name years ago and remembered it one night. Almost like it was from a dream, as silly as that sounds.

OBIDIAH

Like a waking world trapped in a dream.

ADAM

Sure you aren't the writer here?

A laugh carries across the room as the hour carries on.

ADAM

Look, I appreciate your time but I need to see to getting a room for the night. Is there another hotel close by or..

SERENA

Oh now that's nonsense. You must stay here dear.

ADAM

No, no I couldn't impose like that.

OBIDIAH

Too late. Rooms already made up.

Suddenly, a chill catches Adam. Though he can't quite place it, there is a sense of uncertainty about the evening. But where else has he to go?

ADAM

(hiding his unease)

Thank you both.

END SCENE:

