

UNKNOWN- BY BHAVYA CHILAKAPATI

EXT- FOREST- MIDNIGHT

We see a tree branch in the darkness of the night. A rope is tied to the branch in a double knot. Just beside the double knot, an owl is perched on the branch and looking intently into the camera. It moves to the left and hoots.

We hear the rope tighten and strain. The branch creaks. The owl looks to the right and hoots. The branch bends a little and creaks more indicating there's a lot of stress on it. We hear it snap and at the same instant, we see the owl fly up from the branch that exits downwards from the screen. The owl flies down to the ground beside the broken branch.

A man lying down beside the branch groans. The rope that is tied to the branch is also tied around his neck. He is holding his back near the spine and groaning. We see the man looking at a cardboard box. 'TRIPLE STRENGTH ROPE FOR SUCCESS MISSIONS' is written on it.

JOSEPH V.O

I can't even die when I want to.

He grabs the cardboard box angrily as if to throw it far away in anger. But exhaustion enters his mind and face. He is so enervated from the failed suicide attempt that he just drops the cardboard box lightly on to the ground. He is looking at the owl.

We see the owl hoot beside him and it turns away from him. In a little distance from where the owl and JOSEPH are, we see a twig snap under a pair of moving boots. We now see Joseph's face.

PERSON 1 O.C

Did you hear that?

Joseph panics and looks around him to find a spot to hide. He sees a huge hole inside the tree trunk.

PERSON 2 O.C

Yeah. You snapped a twig.

Joseph tiptoes to the trunk and hides in it while catching a good view of the two strangers.

PERSON 1

Not that, you moron. A slight thump on the ground. As if someone threw a box down.

PERSON 2
Don't make me talk, man. I need
energy to carry this body.

Joseph's eyebrows rise up in surprise as if thinking "what
did I just hear?".

EXT-FOREST-NIGHT-(THE TWO MEN)

The scene now shifts to the two men we heard off camera. We
see two people, dressed in tank vests. They look muscular,
heavy and are covered in mud and sweat and blood. PERSON 1
is smaller than PERSON 2 and looks more serious.

PERSON 1
Let's bury him here.

PERSON 2
(Groans)

We can just throw him in the lake
nearby.

PERSON 1
But someone will surely find him.

PERSON 2
This far? I don't think so. Only a
man who is looking to die would
come here. No dying man would
report a dead man.

PERSON 1
I'm tired from committing all those
murders today. Too tired to reason
with you. Fine, let's just throw
him in the lake. The animals will
get to work on him eventually.

We see them throw the body into the lake. We hear a splash.
It floats up to the surface.

PERSON 1
Don't tell the boss we left him
here.

PERSON 2
OK. He will never know.

PERSON 1
Don't jinx it man. Take it back.

PERSON 2

Whhhhat? I'm jus sayin there's no way the boss man will know 'coz no one will find the bod.

PERSON 1

Ahh! You jinxed it again.. Just stop talking man.

PERSON 2

But I never jinx stuff up.

PERSON 1

Jesus! Kill me right now.

The men are moving away from the lake and they walk away into the darkness of the forest.

EXT-FOREST-NIGHT-(JOSEPH AND THE OWL)

The owl hoots beside Joseph. He has a dumb-struck expression. He rises up from the ground using his forearm as support. He walks towards the abandoned lake and sees the body floating near the shore. He slaps his fore-head hard and runs towards the forest screaming.

JOSEPH

Heyyyy.. Hey guyss.. I found the body.. don't you wanna kill meee..?!?!?

His screams echo and the entire forest is dead silent. He walks back towards the owl which is still looking at him. He begins talking to it as if it were a human.

JOSEPH

I could've gotten killed by the two men. But no, I had to lie down like a log when the murderers were here. I didn't know it's so hard to die.

The owl turns towards the river where the body is floating. Joseph goes back to look at the body. He sees something glisten around the dead body's neck. He gets curious and pulls the body out of the lake. As he flips the body to look at the neck, his eyes fall upon the face of the body.

He falls backwards, on his bum and with his hands beside him, in shock. There's panic in his eyes and he's breathing heavily. As his breathing slows down, he leans forward again to get a better look at the face. The camera zooms in on the dead body's face. It looks just like Joseph. Joseph takes in a deep and short breath. He sits back down and looks up at the sky.

He looks back at the doppelganger body and blinks.

EXT-FOREST OUTSKIRTS

We see the sun rise and then we see a long winding road with forest on both sides. We see a black blip on the road ahead and a car enters the frame. The car and the blip gets clearer. The blip is a man walking in a black suit. The car stops behind the man and two bulked-up men get down from the car. They approach the man from behind, tap him and as he turns around they jump forward to hug him. The man in the gangster suit is Joseph. He's puzzled but immediately pulls a straight face.

ADAM

We thought you dead man.

JUNIOR

We thought they gotcha an' they did
unspeakable things ta- ya.

ADAM

Let's go back to our shed soon.

They walk back to the car and start driving. Joseph looks at the suit he is wearing. He picked it off the dead body the previous night and he has fear in his eyes.

JOSEPH

Umm.. Actually, I am not-

Joseph is interrupted by a beep on his cell phone. He look sat it to find a message that says 'Stock market dropped by 27 points today'.

INT-WALL STREET OFFICES-DAY-(FLASHBACK)

There is a lot of commotion going on in the office and bankers dressed in suits and ties are screaming. Some of them are holding their palms against their forehead, signifying distress. We see Joseph in the midst of it all. He is staring at a screen, in the center of the office, that says "175 points drop". He is motionless and all this commotion is happening around him. He slowly shifts his gaze from the screen to the people around him. His head is spinning and everything is hazy in his vision. Some of the bankers are motionless like him, some of them are arguing, while some are in despair.

INT-CAR-DAY-(BACK TO PRESENT)

ADAM
You were saying?

JOSEPH
Never mind. Just drive faster.

INT-STEPS TO A BASEMENT-EVENING

Joseph, Adam and Junior are walking down the stairs of a dimly lit basement. Joseph's face is panic-stricken.

JOSEPH V.O
Fuck! I don't know what my new name is.

INT-BASEMENT-LATE EVENING

As they enter the basement, there are a lot of gangsters at a table having dinner with wine being served by gorgeous Spanish women. They all stand up and cheer in happiness as they see Joseph enter the basement. Two woman flock around him and bring him to the table.

GANGSTER 1
So glad that you're safe man.

JAMES
Let's party later. Who were the ones that attacked you?

Joseph is suddenly worried that he doesn't know his attackers. He tries to cover up, but doesn't want to seem weak so he tries his best to sound assertive.

JOSEPH
The same ones who always attack us.

JAMES
Then it's one of the two rival clans. Was it the Barboza's camp or Daniello's men?

JOSEPH
Doesn't matter who the attacker is. We must finish both camps soon.

James walks up to Joseph and hugs him hard.

JAMES
This is why you're our boss. Let's do this!

Joseph feels awkward and so looks into his phone mindlessly to avoid looking into James's eyes. As he's just scrolling through the text messages on his phone, he comes across the name "Aisha". Below it is the text "You were never worth it". Joseph looks at James who is looking at him with respect in his eyes. Joseph wipes his forehead while his eyes are closed and lets out a sigh.

JAMES

Let's just celebrate tonight and plan our revenge tomorrow. You need to rest, boss. I will immediately inform our boss man that you're alright.

Joseph and the others continue with their party. After the party, Joseph is happily high and merry and he is led back to his room by one of the Spanish women. She has waist-length dark curly hair, olive skin tone and is wearing a long red gown. Joseph has a huge smile on his face and appears lost in the woman's beauty as she holds his hands.

JOSEPH V.O

Ah! The gangster life. Such beautiful women. To think that a guy with my face had the ability to woo such a woman.

INT-JOSEPH'S ROOM-NIGHT

She leads him to his bedroom and begins to undress him. As they're on the bed, another woman in a black dress and dark straight hair holds walks in. She sits by the bed and holds Joseph's face in her hands. The other woman is working on his clothes.

JOSEPH V.O

Whatt the helll. I was going to die a virgin and now I have two women on my bed. What do I do?

The two women begin undressing.

JOSEPH V.O

Where do I look?

Joseph's head is shuttling right and left.

JOSEPH V.O

Stop looking flustered, Joe. Just do something.

Joseph tries hard to focus on one woman and touch her.

JOSEPH V.O
Stop staring and just do something.
Touch her. Hold her hand.

The other woman runs her hand across Joseph's back.

JOSEPH V.O
OK, they're beginning. Do
something.

Joseph begins to sweat from all the panic. His nose starts bleeding slightly and he falls back on the bed unconscious.

INT-JOSEPH'S ROOM-DAY

Joseph wakes up and finds the two women sleeping beside him, one on each side. His face expressions suddenly change as realization hits him and he's embarrassed. He slips out of bed without making a sound and opens the room door. He doesn't want the women to see him knowing that he hadn't laid a finger on them the entire night.

INT- GANGSTER BASEMENT-DAY

The basement has turned into a business office. It looks the same, but there is an air of urgency and strained silence as the goons kept discussing their plans in hushed tones. Joseph is surprised by how organized the entire scene is, very different from what he had seen in movies. He sees James walk towards him in a hurry.

JAMES
The boss wants to see you, Ramirez.
Our narcotics shipment was
confiscated by Barboza's men.
Quick! Let's move.

Joseph is staring at James.

JAMES
Lead the way. What are you waiting
for?

JOSEPH
Yes! I'm Ramirez. Follow me.

Joseph begins to walk to the left and tries to appear confident.

JAMES
Holy carpet muncher. You must be
disoriented from all the fucking
last night.

JOSEPH

Easy, tiger. Let's find you some pussy after we deal with this.

JAMES

But we need to go to the boss man's office.

JOSEPH

No. We are going to the Barboza camp right now. This needs to be sorted. Walk to the car. I'll join you in a bit.

Joseph turns around as if walking towards his room but he's actually looking where James is going.

JOSEPH V.O

(Panicking) Holy cow! The Barboza Camp?!?!?! What on earth am I doing? Ok, calm down Joe. No, Ramirez. That's my name. This is going to be fun. Two days ago, I was preparing to die. Now, I'm courting death in style!

EXT - OUTSIDE THE BASEMENT- DAY

Joseph follows James outside where he's waiting in a car being driven by Adam. Joseph steps in and they zoom off to the Barboza camp.