

PENUMBRA

By

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EXT. EMPTY STREET - NIGHT

JOHN (19) is walking down the sidewalk. It's dark and late in the evening, and there's an eeriness in the air. As he walks, the street lights cast shadows all around him, like a lotus spread out around his feet.

John turns a corner into an alleyway. Now he has a shadow on the wall right next to him as he walks. Since the street lamps are spread out, the shadow seems to stretch out and gradually disappear until John reaches the next street lamp, where it is reborn.

Halfway through the alley, there is a distant, loud banging sound. John turns around to check his surroundings. Seeing nothing, he continues walking.

There is another banging sound, this time seeming to come from somewhere closer. John looks around him, scared.

He exits the alley and is back on the main road sidewalk. The street is empty and the street lamps are spread out at regular intervals. John keeps walking briskly as the sound seems to get closer. As the sound gets louder and louder, we start seeing his shadows wiggle unnaturally on the ground, like they are waves. It goes on for a while and it seems like they will break out of the ground anytime.

Which is exactly what happens all of a sudden. It takes only a second. The shadows rise into the air and form a cocoon around John and suck him into the ground.

CUT TO:

INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE - DAY (8 YEARS LATER)

An adult John (27) is sitting in front of a THERAPIST. He is clothed in a shirt, pants, and a blazer.

THERAPIST

That's the last thing you remember happening?

JOHN

Yeah. It felt like they just rose out of the ground and wrapped themselves around me. The next thing I remember was waking up in the hospital bed.

THERAPIST

What did the doctors say?

JOHN

They didn't know. I never had anything like that before that day, and nothing like that after it. Until the dreams, of course.

THERAPIST

And when did those start?

JOHN

I think two weeks ago

THERAPIST

Tell me more about them. Are they exactly what you think happened to you that day?

JOHN

Yeah, more or less. They just seem... I don't know... more malicious this time.

THERAPIST

More malicious?

JOHN

Like I'm not going to survive this time.

CUT TO:

MONTAGE BEGINS

A series of images of John walking through the crowded city, lost in the crowd, a sling bag hung around his shoulder. He looks troubled.

He goes to the train station and catches a train.

INT. TRAIN - EVENING (DREAM)

John (adult) is sitting on a seat in a moving train. His head rests on the window as he sleeps. He has a prominent reflection in the window. The sun outside is setting. As the train moves, shadows of the passengers form on the ground and on the walls of the train.

Suddenly, his shadows start to lift off the ground and tiny, shadowed, bony hands extend out of the ground and take hold of his body - grabbing his feet, torso. They go all the way up to his face, waking him up by that point.

As he looks in horror at what is happening, unable to process it, it's too late. The tiny fingers enter his mouth, eyes, nostrils, and ears and engulf him completely.

CUT TO:

INT. TRAIN - EVENING

John wakes up with a jerk. He is on a train going back home after his therapy session. He seems tired and his suit is a bit unkempt now. He has a sling-bag hung around his shoulder and resting on his lap as he sits on the seat.

He looks around him. People are sitting, minding their own business. Most of them have earphones on. He examines all the shadows, and they seem normal. He sighs and rests his head back on the window. He is tired and troubled.

An OLD WOMAN (70, wrinkled) sitting beside him notices him.

OLD WOMAN

Bad day, huh?

John is a bit shaken off by her voice. He sits straight up and collects himself.

JOHN

You could say that, yeah.

A beat.

OLD WOMAN

It's a difficult time in a man's life - his late twenties.

JOHN

I guess.

OLD WOMAN

Have a wife at home?

JOHN

Yes. Her name's Kelly.

OLD WOMAN

That's a nice name. Are you going home to her right now?

JOHN

Yes.

OLD WOMAN

Does she make you feel better when you get back home after a day like today?

JOHN

Yes, she does.

OLD WOMAN

That's fortunate. You're a very lucky man.

JOHN

I am.

A beat.

OLD WOMAN

You know, I don't think it was a dream.

John is startled. He turns towards the woman. She has a faint wicked smile now that wasn't there before.

JOHN

What do you mean?

OLD WOMAN

(calmly)

You know what I mean, John. You know what's happening, don't you? It's finally catching up to you.

JOHN

Who are you?

OLD WOMAN

I'm your old friend. I've waited for this moment a long time, John.

JOHN

I don't know what you're talking about.

OLD WOMAN

Oh, you will soon.

JOHN

What do you mean?

The old woman slowly gets up, an eerie smile on her face. Once she is up, she drops dead all of a sudden. John is terrified and he gets up, looking at her dead body. He then looks around him.

All the passengers on the train are staring at him, a peculiar evil in their eyes. It is dark and shadowy in the train.

The train comes to a stop at John's station. He quickly walks to the doors to leave, terrified. As he is leaving, a LARGE MAN standing by the door speaks to him.

LARGE MAN
(maliciously)
Going home to your wife, huh?

John is mortified, and runs out of the train to his house, desperately trying to make it to his house in time to save his wife.

INT. JOHN'S HOUSE - LATER

John enters his house and frantically calls out to his wife.

JOHN
Jane? Jane? I'm home, honey! Where
are you?

JANE (28) comes out of a room in a hurry after hearing John's panic.

JANE
What happened, John?

John, relieved, rushes towards her and hugs her tightly.

JOHN
Oh thank God!

JANE
What's going on?

John looks around the apartment. Everything seems normal. He goes out to the balcony and looks down.

JANE (CONT'D)
John? Tell me what's going on!

JOHN
It's nothing.

As John turns back, he notices something peculiar with Jane's shadow. It seems to wiggle. He leaps forward when he realises what is happening, but is too late. Jane is engulfed by her shadow and vanishes.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Noooo!

John stares at the empty spot his wife was standing on just seconds ago. A beat. He gets extremely agitated and ends up breaking some stuff in the house before he falls on the ground, crying uncontrollably.

As he sits on the floor weeping, he notices something odd with his own shadow.

It seems to be acting independently instead of following him.

He follows it as it moves away from him.

He stops to check again if the shadow is actually moving on its own. It is. It moves into the living room of the apartment and stops at the door. It moves from the ground and stands upright on the door. John walks towards the door slowly, but stops at a distance. The shadow and John seem to be facing each other now.

A voice starts speaking. It is presumably coming from the shadow. The voice is soft, eerie and hissing.

SHADOW

Dreaming well these days, huh,
John?

John stares at the shadow, unable to speak.

SHADOW (CONT'D)

You knew this day would come some
day, didn't you, John?

JOHN

Where is Jane?

SHADOW

She's with us. You remember us,
don't you?

John doesn't speak.

SHADOW (CONT'D)

We've all waited for this day for
so long.

(A beat.)

Does she know?

Silence from John. The shadow sniggers.

SHADOW (CONT'D)

Of course she doesn't. That makes this so much more fun. I get to tell her myself how much she means to me. How she changed my life.

JOHN

You leave her out of this!

SHADOW

She's at the centre of this all, John. There's nothing you can do about it.

A beat.

SHADOW (CONT'D)

Tell me one thing, John. Do you know my name?

JOHN

No, I don't. You aren't supposed to have a name.

There is silence, almost as if the shadow is offended. In a while, the door slowly starts to creak open, but there is nobody in the hallway. John is puzzled.

Behind him, a figure slowly and silently approaches him. It picks up a vase lying on a table nearby and before John realises he's there the figure hits him with the vase on the head, knocking him out.

As John falls down on the floor, unconscious, we see his assailant. It is John himself - a scarred and tattered version of him. He takes another swing at John.

SMASH TO BLACK.