

Cleanse

By

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EXT.HOTEL.NIGHT

Inner city. A seedy hotel. A neon sign out front, flickering. In an upper room window, a silhouetted figure hastily pulls over curtains.

CROSS FADE TO:

INT.HOTEL - RECEPTION.NIGHT

The reception is as cheap and seedy as the outside. Behind the front desk sits a bald and obese HOTEL OWNER, wearing a stained vest under braces. He smokes a cigar while watching mindless TV.

CROSS FADE TO:

INT.HOTEL - STAIRWELL.NIGHT

An old, grotty stairwell, a stained mop is propped against a corner.

CROSS FADE TO:

INT.HOTEL - CORRIDORS.NIGHT

A series of empty corridors, ending in a long hallway with a door at the end.

CROSS FADE TO:

INT.HOTEL - ROOM.NIGHT

PAUL CLARKE, a stout, middle-aged man, sits on the side of a bed. Dressed in crisp boxers, socks and a vest he stares down towards the ground.

At his feet lies a semi-naked GIRL in her mid-twenties. Paul's belt is wrapped loosely around her broken neck, which is twisted at an unnatural angle. There is a small trickle of blood and vomit at the corner of her mouth.

Paul sits for a while, before grabbing his phone off the bedside locker. He skims through his contacts until he reaches one labelled 'DO NOT ANSWER'. His thumb hovers over the 'dial' button.

Paul gets up and throws the phone onto the bed. He paces the room, mumbling. Eventually he stops and looks at the phone once more.

PAUL  
...fuck...

He picks up the phone and presses the dial key. It rings three times.

PAUL  
Come on, come on.

It is answered. A gravely male voice speaks.

VOICE  
Councilman Clarke.

INT.UNDISCLOSED LOCATION.NIGHT

ECU of a man's mouth. He is unshaven, his teeth crooked and stained from smoking.

VOICE  
Good of you to call. It's been so long since we last spoke - we had started to worry...

A long pause. The mouth inhales from its filter-less cigarette.

INT.HOTEL - ROOM.NIGHT

A bead of sweat roll so down Paul's face as he hesitates.

PAUL  
... I... I'm in trouble...

Paul breaths in deeply.

PAUL  
...I need your help...

INT.UNDISCLOSED LOCATION.NIGHT

The mouth stops drawing deep upon the cigarette.

VOICE  
Strange... We seem to recall when we needed your help, you were ... less than accommodating...

He allows a moment to let the statement sink in.

VOICE  
Do you think we may see a change  
in that regard, yes?

INT.HOTEL - ROOM.NIGHT

Paul sits on the bed.

PAUL  
I... I don't...

Paul's shoulders slump; he puts his hand over his face and sighs.

PAUL  
...yes...

INT.UNDISCLOSED LOCATION.NIGHT

The side of the mouth curls up into a wicked smile.

VOICE  
Very good. Now, this problem of  
yours...

INT.HOTEL - ROOM.NIGHT

PAUL  
I've... There's been an accident.  
There's... there's a body...

INT.UNDISCLOSED LOCATION.NIGHT

VOICE  
...and you're hoping we could  
make it... go away, yes? Very  
well. Help shall be sent.

The phone is hung up.

INT.HOTEL - ROOM.NIGHT

A solid tone plays through the phone, cutting Paul off.

PAUL  
But you don't know where...

There is a knock at the door. Paul turns to it in shock.

Paul hesitantly moves towards the door, and looks though the spy-hole. Through it he sees a tall, gaunt STRANGER dressed in a black suit and carrying a black case. He looks directly at Paul.

STRANGER  
Mister Clarke? I'm here to help  
with your... conundrum.

Paul hurriedly opens the door and lets the Stranger in. he looks down the corridor, before closing and locking the door.

Paul turns from the door to see The Stranger crouched over the girl's body, assessing the cleanup. The Stranger tuts.

STRANGER  
Quite the pickle you find  
yourself in Mister Clarke. But  
fret not. I can make it all go  
away.

PAUL  
How?

The Stranger stands up and dusts off his hands.

STRANGER  
Mister Clarke, you should concern  
yourself less with how and more  
with how much.

PAUL  
It's ok. Money is no object.

STRANGER  
Quite right, Paul - may I call  
you Paul?

Paul nods meekly.

STRANGER (CONT)  
Well, Paul, Money is no object.  
I'm glad to hear we are all on  
the same page in that regard.

The Stranger begins to make himself tea from the complimentary in-room kettle.

PAUL  
I don't... What then?

The Stranger reaches into his inside pocket, produces an envelope and holds it out to Paul. Without getting too close, Paul takes the envelope, takes out the letter inside and begins to read.

PAUL  
What is this?

STRANGER  
A list of things you'll be doing  
for us. Simple enough - a few  
permits here and there, a few  
official resignations, a few...  
other items.

Paul reads the list. He is tense, but not unsettled until he gets to the end. He looks confused and then horrified.

PAUL  
Why would you want that? Why  
would anyone want...?

The newcomer just smiles at him, in this light he almost looks inhuman.

PAUL  
No, I... I can't. That's  
outrageous!

STRANGER  
Not as outrageous as 'Councillor  
murders girl in perverted sex  
act', wouldn't you agree?

PAUL  
Th-the... The media won't find  
out! My people will make sure of  
that!

STRANGER  
If you trust your people so much,  
why was it not they you called in  
the first place?

Paul is about to say something, but doesn't.

STRANGER  
No. You know you can't turn  
elsewhere. Our price is set.

Paul's legs fail him and he staggers onto the bed.

PAUL  
... I just. I can't agree to  
this.

STRANGER  
I see. Well, of course, this was  
always a distinct possibility.  
Here...

The Stranger rummages through his bag, and takes out a roll of black sacks and a hacksaw, which he hands to Paul.

STRANGER

...a gesture of goodwill.

Paul looks at them slowly, then back to the Stranger.

PAUL

What am I...? Fine. Fine. I'll  
take care of this myself. I got  
myself to where I am today, I can  
get myself out of this mess.

As he goes over to the girl's body, the Stranger sits down and sips his tea. Paul kneels over the body, takes a deep breath and places the saw against her neck. He hovers there for a moment before exhaling. His grip on the saw loosens.

PAUL

...fine... whatever you  
want. Just... just get rid of  
this...

He stands up to get out of the way. The Stranger holds out his hand. Paul reluctantly shakes it.

STRANGER

We have an accord.

Behind the two men, the girl's neck cracks back into place and she begins to fill with life again. As she slowly rises, Paul is terrified and stumbles back from The Stranger.

PAUL

Christ!

The Stranger takes a step back. The girl seems confused. She looks at Paul, as if trying to remember what happened. Her head keeps twitching from side to side. She is uncoordinated and stiff.

GIRL

What... What hap...pened...?

PAUL

(To the Stranger)

What the hell? Does she remember?

The Stranger picks up the saw and bags and puts them back into his case.

GIRL

(Interrupting Paul)

...Re...mem...ber...?...

STRANGER

Hush now. There is nothing to  
remember.

The Stranger places his jacket over the girl's shoulders.

STRANGER

Come. Let's get you out of here.

He guides her to the door, where he undoes the chain and  
turns to Paul.

STRANGER

You'd best clean up councilman.  
You have work to do.

He opens the door and leads the girl out of the room.

After a moment Paul follows them, but they are nowhere to  
be seen. Paul falls back against the door frame, slides  
down and sits on the floor, looking at the list in horror.

END