

WHISTLE-STOP

Written by

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FADE IN:

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

The sun peeks through tightly shut curtains. The only other source of light from a laptop. The artificial blue light reflects on the face of ORSON MILLER (40s).

On the screen, his emails. He's refreshing the page, hoping for an email that's never coming.

He sighs deeply. Picks up a tumbler of WHISKEY, taking a sip.

He stands up, drink in hand, and in one motion swoops the curtains open. He recoils at the burst of sunlight.

On the street below, people walk by with their dogs, with coffee in hand, on the phone. He watches for a moment.

He walks away from the window, placing down his drink on the desk.

His walls are covered in photos. Him and various dignitaries, celebrities, politician. One in particular stands out: Orson in a PRESS VEST and HELMET.

Underneath, a SINGLE PHOTO OF HIS CHILDREN.

Orson picks up the phone, dials.

It rings through an otherwise deadly quiet apartment.

RINGRING.

It crackles to life.

ORSON  
Hannah, hi-

AUTOMATED VOICE (O.S.)  
You've reached the voicemail  
service of-

Click.

He places the phone down. Heading straight back to his desk.

Orson finishes what little remains of his drink. Every last drop.

EXT. VILLAGE - NIGHT

Crickets chirp.

Fields as far as the eye can see.

Idyllic cobblestone cottages and buildings. Moonlight casts down alleyways, along the roads.

It's as close to perfect as a place can be.

A SIGN reads: Welcome to Haven

Established 1690

Disturbing the quiet, roaring past the sign; a CONVOY OF 4X4S, TINTED WINDOWS, headlights beaming.

In perfect formation they drive through the village. We follow them as they move.

Past the village square, and around a massive FACELESS STATUE.

The smooth black car surfaces swallowing moonlight.

TWO MEN open black cast iron gates in readiness for the convoy.

One-by-one they enter, parking in front of a dull, grey COMPOUND.

The gate creaks and groans as the men SLAM it shut.

INT. APARTMENT - NEXT DAY

Orson awake with a jolt. Catching his breath, reaching for his phone. It's 10.20am.

ORSON  
(under his breath)  
Bollocks.

He jumps out of bed. Running over to the bathroom.

Grabbing his brush, toothpaste.

He's brushing his teeth, checking his phone. He opens his emails. Refreshing constantly.

He spits out the toothpaste. Eyes glued to the screen.

Still trained on his phone as he wipes his mouth.

Then -

An email pops up, the subject reads:

'Effective Immediately, Termination of Partnership'

He stops in his tracks. His face drops, eyes GLAZE.

A flash of ANGER. Orson throws his phone across the room.

ORSON (CONT'D)  
FUCK FUCK FUCK FUCK!

His face contorting in rage.

Orson's phone THUDS and CRACKS.

Coming to his senses, he immediately rushes over to pick it up.

We see his reflection on the smashed black screen.

Instead of anger, he's holding his head in his hand.

A beat.

He inhales sharply, standing up. A few TEARS escape.

KNOCK, KNOCK, KNOCK.

Quickly wiping the tears away, fixing his hair, he heads for the front door. His poker face is on.

Sharp inhale, composing himself. With that he swings the door open.

It's Orson's LANDLORD. His face stern.

LANDLORD

I don't want to have to keep doing this.

Orson looks down, avoiding eye contact.

ORSON

I know, I-

LANDLORD

Rent. Monday.

A brief standoff, Orson is rustled.

Conceding, he nods in acknowledgement.

ORSON

Alright. No problem.

He closes the door before the Landlord can reply.

Orson leans on the door with one hand, staring through the floor.

RINGRING, RINGRING.

He rushes to his phone. Picks it up, slowly moving it to his ear.

ORSON (CONT'D)

(on the phone)

Hello?

LADY'S VOICE (V.O.)  
We need you. Haven needs you.

I/E. ORSON'S CAR/HILLCRASH - DAY

Fields of grass dancing in the gentle breeze.

At the top of the hill, Orson's crappy car rolls to a stop. He's looking down on Haven below.

On the seat next to him is his VOICE RECORDER, PHONE, WALLET. He snatches them up, shoving them into his pocket.

Stepping out into the open air. The sunlight on his face. Orson basks in it for a moment.

He locks his car.

Eyes scan as he cautiously heads down the hill towards the village.

EXT. HAVEN VILLAGE CENTRE - MOMENTS LATER

VOICE RECORDER IN HAND, Orson strolls lazily. Passing by boutique shops, VILLAGERS.

They smile at Orson, a quick nod of acknowledgment.

Subtly, he brings the recorder to his mouth.

ORSON  
(into voice recorder)  
Cute. Quiet. Not sure where to start.

He pockets it. Continues his walk.

Hands in pockets, he comes into the Village Square proper.

Orson looks on in awe at the FACELESS STATUE. He slowly reaches for his voice recorder, eyes fixated on the towering statue.

He hesitates.

ORSON (CONT'D)  
(into voice recorder)  
There's a statue. It evidently has no face. Not worn away. It looks purposeful. Strange.

Click.

Back in his pocket.

He continues, scanning, head down.

He BUMPS INTO AN OLD LADY.

OLD LADY  
Oh dear. Excuse me.

Orson laughs awkwardly.

ORSON  
No. No. I'm sorry.

She mumbles as she continues on her way.

ORSON (CONT'D)  
Wait! I'm sorry, really sorry to  
keep you. But... in Haven. People  
are going missing. Is that right?

The Old Lady's smile turns to CONFUSION.

OLD LADY  
I'm sorry dearie. I- I have no idea  
what you're talking about.

She shuffles off quickly.

He stops himself from calling out to her. Heel turns,  
starting to walk off.

He's dazed, pondering-

WOOFWOOFWOOF!

A DOG on leash jumps at him.

Orson falls back. Arms against his chest.

The OWNER doesn't say anything, but locks eyes with Orson as  
he passes.

EXT. VILLAGE - DAY

CIGARETTE hanging off his lips, Orson is less attentive. He  
takes a drag, glancing around as he blows smoke.

Villagers SMILE when he makes eye contact. He barely  
reciprocates.

He takes out his phone. Checking the time.

It's 6.07pm.

On the phone screen, the SIGNAL BAR is noticeably empty.

He sighs deeply.

Taking another drag, he takes out his recorder.

ORSON  
(into recorder)  
No luck. It's getting late. I'm  
heading home.

He STOMPS ON HIS CIGARETTE.

EXT. HAVEN HILLTOP - NIGHT

The sun set. A cold brisk air makes Orson retreat into his coat.

Approaching his car, reaching for his keys, when -

HIS TIRES ARE FLAT.

ORSON  
Goddamn it. What the fuck!?

He crouches, looking around at the tires one-by-one.

First, popped.

Second, popped.

Third, popped.

He stands up, the other clearly popped.

Grabbing his phone, it's 8.45pm now.

He sees the signal bar again. BITES HIS FIST in anger.

EXT. VILLAGE - NIGHT

Now devoid of anyone, Orson walks through Haven. He mumbles to himself.

He's taking the opportunity to re-visit the Faceless Statue.

Orson takes out his phone, using the flashlight to examine it. He's touching the statue itself.

At the bottom, a SMALL PLAQUE. Orson shines the light over it, it reads:

"The Man who purges his soul, purifies, will sit alongside Him forevermore. Be Purified!".

ORSON  
(leaning)  
What the fuck.

He hurriedly tries to take a photograph.

MAN (O.S.)  
(slurring)  
You should get going.

Orson jumps out of his skin.

ORSON  
What? Huh.

The Man is a DRUNKARD, holding a bottle of vodka in his hand.

DRUNKARD  
(slurring)  
You shouldn't have come here.  
(walking off)  
Shouldn't have... come here... be  
purified! Hahahaha!

Orson scurries away from the statue.

Briefly looking over his shoulder, taking out his WALLET,  
it's bare. NO CARDS. NO PHOTOS.

He checks his cash, the only thing in there. Counting a few  
bills.

Catching his eye, a SIGN. A B&B!

Promptly he heads for the door.

In the shadows way behind him the DRUNKARD IS SNATCHED INTO  
AN ALLEYWAY.

Orson enters the B&B bashfully.

INT. B&B RECEPTION - CONTINUOUS

A quaint rustic interior. Wood and carpets. A FIRE crackling  
in the background, filling the silence.

Orson is scanning the place, but it's deserted.

Looking back to the desk -

Standing behind the desk is a YOUNG LADY.

A DARK MASS dashes into the room behind, GLINTING like a  
shard of glass before vanishing.

Orson's brow furrowing, he approaches the desk. The Young  
Lady SMILING.

YOUNG LADY  
Need a place for the night, Orson?

Orson takes out his cash.

ORSON  
More than anything, thank-

He pauses.

Looking at her NAME TAG, which reads: SAM.

ORSON (CONT'D)  
Sam...

She's grabbing a KEY from the rack.

SAM  
Yes Sir.

ORSON  
Have we, have we met before?

Her brow creases. Grabbing documents for him to sign.

SAM  
No, I don't think so.

Orson places the cash on the desk. She pushes it back to him instantaneously.

ORSON  
Oh. I only ask because-

She offers him the key abruptly, along with the cash.

SAM  
Upstairs. 2nd door on the right.

She's smiling big. He takes it, but confusion plasters his face.

ORSON  
What about the uh, the paper?

SAM  
You can do it tomorrow. You must  
have driven so far today...  
(blankly)  
So fast...  
(snapping back into  
reality, smile gone)  
Enjoy your stay.

He nods in appreciation, but eyes her as he's heading upstairs.

INT. ORSON'S B&B ROOM - NIGHT

Orson rolls over in bed. Reaching out for his phone.

It's 12.21am.

In the light of the phone, FORMLESS SHADOWS surround him.

Orson is none the wiser.

He drops the phone on the sideboard.

Staring up at the ceiling.

In every corner of the room, the Shadows inch closer, a HAND almost reaching out to touch him-

INT. B&B RECEPTION - DAY

Orson GALLOPS down the stairs. Sam greets him with the same big smile.

SAM

Morning! Someone's happy.

ORSON

I realised, there's one place I didn't look at properly. There was this compound, fenced off. Do you know it?

Sam's stapling some papers.

SAM

I do. Nice group runs the place. They do Haven a lot of good.

ORSON

We'll see about that.

Orson rushes out. Sam's watching him leave.

Her face blank.

EXT. VILLAGE COMPOUND - DAY

Again, a cigarette on his lips. A COFFEE in hand.

He's alternating between smoking and drinking.

His eyes are trained on the COMPOUND.

The Drunkard - now upright, smiling - walks calmly inside. The doors closing behind him.

Orson flicks his cigarette, dashing for the compound.

VILLAGERS STOP AND WATCH.

Orson reaching the gates, out of breath.

He climbs the adjacent fence. Immediately crashing down to the ground.

ORSON

God, fuck.

He looks up, through the fence.

A MAN (around 30) stares right back at him. LONG CURLY HAIR, SUNGLASSES. Dressed casual.

The Man smiles at Orson.

Orson looks away for a moment. Back up.

The Man is gone...

More focused on his ankle, Orson gets up.

He LIMPS away.

The villagers who stopped and stared all of a sudden move again. A hivemind.

INT. B&B RECEPTION - DAY

Still limping, Orson enters. Looking around for Sam.

ORSON

(calling out)

Sam? You here?

He walks to the desk. Checking behind. Checking the back room.

No sign of her.

He pulls back, his hand brushing over a HANDWRITTEN NOTE.

Curiously reading it, head tilted.

It reads:

"You know where to find me. Heed his call."

ORSON (CONT'D)

Huh.

He walks away.

We linger on the note.

INT. ORSON'S B&B ROOM - NIGHT

PEN AND NOTEBOOK in hand, Orson is sat on the bed scribbling words.

He looks to the sky for a moment, and then writes some more.

On the notepad - DRAWINGS of the statue, the compound. Some of the villagers.

Surround it, jumbled words and illegible phrases, exclamation marks.

Finally, he flips it shut.

Falling back onto the pillow, hands above his heads, he closes his eyes.

A FAINT CAR HORN in the distance. Orson shuffles uncomfortably.

Closer than ever, the SHADOWS creep.

Up the sides of the bed. From the ceiling. Inches away from his face.

Then everything disappears when -

Orson's eyes shoot open.

INT. B&B RECEPTION - CONTINUOUS

Orson dashes down the stair, straight to the entrance.

He gives a passing glimpse to the desk.

The note is still there. No Sam...

He heads out.

EXT. VILLAGE COMPOUND - NIGHT

Orson keeps low, crouching, as he moves to the same fence he fell from.

Inside the compound, the lights are on. No sign of life though.

He takes a RUNNING LEAP at the fence. Climbing. Groaning.

He reaches the top, and -

THUD!

He FALLS TO THE FLOOR on the other side.

Stumbling to his feet, he sneaks around the side of the compound.

He comes to a SIDE DOOR.

DEEP BREATH.

He pushes it.

Relief, but hesitancy as it OPENS.

He maintains his low position and goes inside...

INT. COMPOUND - CONTINUOUS

Orson's head is on a swivel. He tentatively walks around.

Standing up.

Still nobody.

His footsteps echo on the floor, even with such gentle steps.

PORTRAITS OF FACELESS PEOPLE line the walls. Orson, mouth agape, is distracted by them.

One in particular takes his attention - a DEMON being impaled by a faceless mob.

Orson can't take his eyes off of it. He's drawn to it.

MAN (O.S.)

Orson! I knew you'd join us.

Shocked, lost for words, Orson pivots.

It's the same long-haired Man. No longer donning sunglasses.

The Man smiles, outstretches his arms to the sides.

MAN (CONT'D)

I'm Simeon.

He beckons Orson.

SIMEON

Please. Join us.

Silently, eyes on Simeon, Orson follows.

Into the

INT. MAIN HALL

Where a DOZEN PEOPLE sit on the floor. All likewise casually dressed.

There's a SPACE that Simeon gestures Orson to sit.

He does so. Looking around at all the faces around him. They smile at him.

SIMEON  
Get Orson a tea, won't you? Anyone.  
(to Orson)  
These are my... Disciples, so to  
speak.

One of the Disciples jump to their feet, scurrying to bring a small CUP OF TEA to Orson. He takes it, his hand shaking a little.

ORSON  
(meekly)  
What uh, what is this?

Simeon laughs.

SIMEON  
No need to be so anxious, Orson.  
Drink up.

Everyone else TAKES A SIP simultaneously. Orson follows, grimacing before it even touches his lips.

We're up close as Orson takes a drink.

Orson looks at Simeon. Simeon is watching Orson intently.

Behind Simeon...

It's Sam!

ORSON  
(slurring slightly)  
S- Sam, it's...

Without a word, Sam walks over to Orson.

Orson tries to get words out but he can't.

He can only gape in terror as-

SAM'S FACE BLOODIES.

BRUISES AND WELTS.

CUTS ALL OVER.

She's unrecognisable.

She kneels in front of Orson.

He is frozen.

SAM  
You left me for dead, Orson.

SIMEON

(delighted)

Remember that poor lady you hit  
with your car. You didn't stop, did  
you?

Simeon paces, Orson tries to talk, but can only spit and choke.

SIMEON (CONT'D)

And what's worse, Orson, is that  
you left her again. BUT!

Sam backs away.

She disintegrates into the darkness.

Simeon takes her place, kneeling in front of Orson.

ORSON

(spluttering)

Pl- Please.

SIMEON

But, Orson. We are giving you  
another chance.

Simeon taps him on the shoulder.

SIMEON (CONT'D)

Run! Go on, git.

Orson's eyes widen, he's struggling to his feet.

He trips into the wall, hitting his head.

Simeon looks on, a smile still on his lips.

As Orson reaches the door

SIMEON (CONT'D)

Be purified!

DISCIPLES

(chanting low)

Be purified. Be purified.

Orson out of sight, Simeon whistles. The dozen Disciples ALL JUMP TO THEIR FEET. Running single-file out of the room.

EXT. VILLAGE - NIGHT

Orson falls onto the road.

Birds CAW.

DISEMBODIED VOICES OVERLAP.

Everything is closing in.

He's back up, barely. He peeks behind him as he stumbles. The Disciples are on his tail.

Orson trips again, at the feet of  
A YOUNG MAN.

Orson looks up slowly.

The Young Man stares back at him, his eyes WHITE.

ORSON  
I'm, oh my God. I'm sorry. I didn't  
know that you were struggling.

YOUNG MAN  
You knew. You just didn't care.

The Young Man is GONE.

Orson YELLS.

ORSON  
PLEASE. STOP THIS!

The disciples circle him - predators moving in on their prey.

Orson stumbles again, falling to his knees.

VOICES BERATE HIM.

He presses his hands TIGHTLY OVER HIS EARS. Bending down to  
the floor.

The voices continue, DISEMBODIED HANDS hit him, scratch him.

We don't see their faces.

Then --

It stops.

Orson takes his hands from his ears. He's panting.

Warily, he arises to his feet.

He bursts into LAUGHTER.

Hysterically laughing now.

Orson hobbles into the road.

HEADLIGHTS - **BADOOM, THUMP!**

Orson lays, eyes unmoving. The biggest smile on his face.

He continues laughing as the Disciples surround him.

I/E. CAR/HILLTOP - DAY

The sun is at its peak in the sky. Birds chirp and whistle.

A CAR pulls up.

Screeching as it parks.

Inside, a WOMAN.

Her phone RINGS. She snatches it, answering.

WOMAN  
(into phone)  
I'm here.

LADY'S VOICE (V.O.)  
Please, we need you.

Outside, in the undergrowth; rusted and burnt out...

ORSON'S CAR.

FADE TO BLACK.