

NEWSPAPER ROUTE

Written by

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FADE IN:

INT. SHED - NIGHT

JEAN and CHARLES, a young married couple, wrap newspapers amidst the midnight atmosphere.

Ominous, winding spiderwebs trickle down the rusty walls, and several roaches scramble across the floor.

After Charles grabs a stack of papers, Jean reads through the list of deliveries.

JEAN
Got a new one.

He groans as she circles the address.

CHARLES
Really?

She forces a smile.

JEAN
Yeah--

He shakes his head.

CHARLES
Gonna take us forever--

JEAN
14 Irena Lewton Road.

Jean's curious eyes notice the paper's splashy headline:
LOCAL MURDERS BAFFLE POLICE.

EXT. SHED - NIGHT

Smoldering summer night.

A full moon shines bright and illuminates Jean and Charles's battered green car sitting by the shed's graffiti-covered exterior.

Off in the distance, a mysterious silver SUV lurches closer and closer like a skulking predator sniffing out its prey.

Headlights switch off once it parks behind a closed car wash.

Charles, oblivious of the SUV's appearance, carries papers to their car.

EXT. SHED - NIGHT (LATER)

Now finished with their preparations, Jean and Charles step out.

Jean squeezes herself in amongst the stacks of newspapers covering the backseat.

Charles pulls away, and soon after, the silver SUV's headlights switch on.

INT. JEAN AND CHARLES'S VEHICLE - NIGHT

A few hours later.

Only a handful of newspapers are left, all of them scattered in the back.

Jean and Charles stay focused on the route; neither one of them paying any attention to the SUV's headlights reflecting through their back window.

CHARLES

Know where the new one is?

She smiles while he pulls up next to a red, Caligari Times mailbox. He reaches toward her.

During the stop, the SUV goes still, and it's headlights shine on in a stationary mode.

JEAN

Not really.

She slams a paper in his grasp.

JEAN (CONT'D)

No directions or anything.

Like a trained act, he sticks it in the mailbox.

CHARLES

(sarcastically)

What a shock.

Jean laughs, and he pulls away again.

JEAN

Yeah babe, sorry.

The SUV, not as discreet as it once was, trails after them and nears closer.

It's headlights catch Charles's eye who glances at them through the rearview mirror.

CHARLES

Think they're following us.

Jean uneasily turns and looks out the window.

JEAN

What? Who?

CHARLES

That car. Pulled over on the last one.

Jean faces him.

JEAN

Maybe they like live here or something.

He pulls over into a remote, closed gas station. It's dark exterior's highlighted by a few neon beer signs and a busted phone booth.

The weathered sign out front swings back-and-forth by the late breeze and reads: Happy's.

CHARLES

I don't know, just noticed it.

A crumbling Caligari Times newspaper stand waits by the entrance of the convenience store. Countless cobwebs cover it and its stained display case.

JEAN

Well, we're almost done.

She grabs a few papers and opens the door.

JEAN (CONT'D)

Then it's home sweet home.

CHARLES

Yeah, whatever.

He turns off the ignition, leaving them in a seclusion of silence.

With nervous eyes, he watches her approach the stand.

After taking out some quarters, Jean methodically puts them inside the relic machine and opens it.

Charles glances out the rearview mirror and looks on in horror toward the sight of the silver SUV pulling up.

CHARLES

Shit!

The oblivious Jean snags the old papers out and puts new ones in; a memorized routine.

Charles steps out just as the SUV stops right behind him. It's engine runs with calm malevolence.

CHARLES

Jean, come on!

She turns and notices the SUV. Its silver color hypnotizes her into a state of speechless fear.

JEAN

Charles.

CHARLES

Jean, let's go!

Her trembling hand struggles to close the stand.

CHARLES (CONT'D)

Come on, don't worry about it!

She closes the latch and runs off.

Papers fly everywhere from her grasp, and she hops into the safety of their clunker.

JEAN

Charles-Charles, who are they?

Like it's his sanctuary, Charles gets behind the wheel faster than a 16-year-old.

CHARLES

I don't know.

He turns the key, but the car sputters and refuses to crank.

CHARLES (CONT'D)

Fuck!

JEAN

Charles!

CHARLES

Fucking piece of shit!

Tempted, Jean steals another look out the back window and sees the SUV's just sitting there like it's waiting for their next move. Almost like it wants to give them a chance.

CHARLES
Shit, come on!

Jean can now make out the SUV's occupants: a strange couple. A MAN sits in the driver's seat and a WOMAN right next to him.

Both of them wear black clothing and pale masks. The Woman's also adorned in a slick, red raincoat that glares in the moonlight.

The couple's cold eyes stare at Jean and zero in on her.

JEAN
Charles--

Charles's anger intensifies after several more failed tries.

CHARLES
Won't fucking start!

Jean notices a blood-stained knife in the Woman's gloved hands.

JEAN
Shit Charles, she's got a fucking
knife!

CHARLES
Fuck!

Another attempt provokes him to hit the steering wheel.

CHARLES (CONT'D)
Goddammit!

The SUV's wheels turn, and it creeps forward. Jean watches in horror as it pulls up right next to them and waits.

The masked couple continue to observe them like they're lab rats.

Jean confronts Charles.

JEAN
Charles, come on!

She trembles and glances back at the couple again while Charles still turns the key.

JEAN (CONT'D)
Charles, please!

The SUV's window rolls down, and the masked Man and Woman eye their prey in silence.

JEAN
Hey, what the Hell y'all want?

The Woman raises her blood-stained knife.

JEAN
Shit!

In a sadistic, deliberate motion, the Woman traces the knife all along her pale mask, an act that sends shivers down Jean's spine.

JEAN (CONT'D)
No, leave us alone! Leave us alone!

CHARLES
Come on!

One more try, and he finally cranks the car. He puts it in drive and takes off faster than a motivated bootlegger

The elated Jean pressures him.

JEAN
Go!

The SUV follows after them in hot pursuit like it enjoys the challenge.

Charles nervously eyes its impending attack through the rearview mirror.

CHARLES
The Hell's their problem?

The SUV's bright lights shine and hone in on them like a spotlight on a prison runaway.

The beams nearly blind Charles who shields his sight as the masked couple get closer.

CHARLES
Aw, fuck!

JEAN
Charles.

He sharply turns left onto a dirt road, the shift causing Jean to fall to the side.

JEAN

Shit!

Undeterred, the SUV follows after them and scatters clouds of dirt and dust everywhere.

Charles mashes the pedal further, yet the masked couple match his velocity and draw in on them.

Jean glances at Charles.

JEAN

Don't get us killed!

CHARLES

Won't fucking stop!

Just as the SUV's about to ram into their hanging bumper, it REVS its engine like a taunt and passes them in a frenzied flourish. Off into the night it goes.

Jean, puzzled by the anti-climatic scene, watches it drive out of sight.

JEAN

Fuck.

She smiles in relief.

JEAN (CONT'D)

We made it.

She looks down and nervously laughs.

JEAN (CONT'D)

I was so scared.

Charles relaxes and slows down from his frenetic pace.

CHARLES

Yeah-yeah, so was I.

A smile overcomes his stressful state.

CHARLES (CONT'D)

Pretty crazy. Fucking idiots--

They pass a green road sign: Irena Lewton Road. Jean notices it whiz by.

JEAN
Hey, this is it!

CHARLES
What?

She points toward the sign like a scout.

JEAN
Irena Lewton Road! This is it!

He intently looks ahead.

CHARLES
What's the number?

JEAN
14.

Soon, he spots an old mailbox up ahead on the left. The number fourteen's displayed on its surface for all to see.

A new, red Caligari Times mailbox stands right next to it and awaits its first delivery.

CHARLES
Shit, there it is!

He pulls over, excited and ready to end this long night with one final stop. Jean smiles and hands him a paper.

JEAN
Wow, can't believe it!

CHARLES
Yeah, no shit.

Right when he sticks his hand out, the SUV's headlights flick on and startle him. The silver monster sits there parked in the dilapidated driveway like a beast awaiting in its lair.

JEAN
What the fuck?

The Woman yells and grabs Charles's arm, the shock of her cold grip causing him to drop the paper. He looks on, paralyzed by fear, at her eerie, pale mask.

Jean screams, and the Woman raises the knife.

JEAN
Charles!

One quick thrust after another go into Charles's face and throat, splattering his blood all over the Woman's once-clean mask.

His stabbed corpse slumps onto the steering wheel and BLARES the horn on impact, shattering the engulfing rural silence.

The Woman turns and stares at Jean with silent menace.

Jean hears Charles's blood flow and drip off the dashboard, window, and air conditioning vents; the noises all sending her into a state of petrified shock and sadness.

JEAN

Charles, no Charles, no...

The Woman leans down and grabs the paper. Her blood-stained gloves smear the plastic wrapping in vivid redness, yet the headline remains untouched.

Quiet laughter emerges from behind the mask, and she holds up the headline for Jean to see. The bold font screams at her: LOCAL MURDERS BAFFLE POLICE.

The Woman's unrestrained chuckles die off into a lingering echo through the dark night. She raises the knife, ready to make sure this delivery will be Jean's last.

FADE OUT.

THE END