

"A Bit of Malevolence"
Part I -- The Bad Day
a short film

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A Bit of Malevolence:

Part I -- "The Bad Day"

FADE IN:

INT. CORPORATE ELEVATOR -- EVENING

An empty elevator comes to life, obliterating what history of SILENCE it contained in moments previous. Engage. A low HUM accompanies upward motion -- wheels turning, cables straining, belts rolling out to be gathered up elsewhere.

1...2...3...all the way to the 7th floor. LEDs announce although there is no one to see them.

DING! The elevator doors SLIDE OPEN, revealing a disgruntled face, eyes rolled upward, face slack. Meet M. M for Middle Manager, M for "Meat Puppet," M for MURMUR -- an INTESTINAL GRATING that now fills up the elevator.

M steps in; M blocks out everything. DING!!!

SMASH CUT TO:

TAP-TAP-TAP,

a thrice-jammed finger attempts to coerce the elevator to a new destination: the first floor.

M'S HEAD

lifts up to the overhead LEDs. They seem a little brighter now, having found themselves an audience. The elevator LURCHES and M's head falls.

HIS EYES

droop closed, his head drifting left, toward the cool, scoured aluminum walls of the elevator. The MURMUR FADES as we...

FADE TO:

INT. CORPORATE ELEVATOR -- EVENING

The big black, and still the elevator INCHES DOWN. A beat. Two. Then BRRRING!!! BRRRING!!! A cellular telephone. BRRRING!!!

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. CORPORATE ELEVATOR -- EVENING

An agitated finger taps at a flip-phone. The MURMUR is back, and M brings the phone up to his ear. Lips parted, he never gets to say a word. The voice on the phone is at once HEARTY and soul-crushing, peaking with PRICKLY LAUGHTER.

(CONTINUED)

CELLULAR VOICE

This is Simms. You left before I had a chance to finish. Ha! I just had to call you, to tell you just how pleasurable terminating your employment was for me.

M's mouth finds its own way closed.

CELLULAR VOICE (CONT'D)

I almost creamed myself when word came down that you were to be...expelled, and then...I won. Barney Schrader auctioned off your exit interview and I won. Asshole's gonna cost me rent this month, but honestly, it was worth every penny.

M closes his eyes.

CELLULAR VOICE (CONT'D)

Just seeing those stupid, butterball tears well up in your eyes...well, let's just say that uh...that it was apt payment for your rampant ineptitude, your inability to follow the simplest instructions, your inappropriate behavior, and...and your embarrassing, no, ridiculous appearance.

M shudders, trying to shake this off. His eyes squeeze closed.

CELLULAR VOICE (CONT'D)

But the best part, the best part for me anyway, was seeing you whimper when I tore up the lease to your corporate condo. No, that's not true. Cutting up your club card was better. Yeah. Yeah, I think so.

M finally begins pulling the phone away from his ear.

CELLULAR VOICE (CONT'D)

So anyway, take care. Don't worry about the stuff in your desk. We'll send out anything that doesn't make it to the bonfire. Ciao.

DING!

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. ELEVATOR ATRIUM -- EVENING

An invisible bell CHIMES, and an empty, faux-stone atrium plays host to DRAGGING DOORS. A body emerges from behind a facade -- M, still holding the phone, still MURMURING.

M takes a second to compose himself, closing the phone and depositing it in his coat pocket. It almost looks like he might be harboring a little bit of hope. It withers, and it only takes two steps. He looks up as...

...BEFORE HIM,

a line of similarly attired professionals wait in line to sign out at the building's security desk. It's a long line. Men and women, suits all, participants in an ass-backward, rat-race to credit card oblivion.

M gets in line. He looks to his watch. It's 8:30.

MATCH DISSOLVE TO:

A CLOCK,

hung at the front face of the security desk. It's 8:45. Bodies file past the clock face, slowly urging the line forward. M. checks his watch again. 8:46. The WATCH FACE ROTATES 90° to become...

MATCH DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ELEVATOR ATRIUM -- EVENING

...A WOMAN'S WATCH,

resting above the wrist of a blond woman, a MOTHER, whose hand tethers a little, dirty blond hellion. Let's call the little girl MARLA, and throw an influence a bone.

Marla is dressed in red, the kind of silly red dress that only a little girl can get away with. In her free hand, Marla handles a similarly red lollipop. Daughter leads Mother away from the elevator atrium to stand directly behind M.

CUT TO:

INT. ATRIUM PROPER -- EVENING

Step. The line moves forward, bodies moving in cattle-call-unison.

Step. The line moves again.

Step. And again.

Step. Marla breaks free of her Mother's grip and spasm-skips to the head of the line.

(CONTINUED)

Step. Two. Marla frolics back to her mother.

Step. Marla heads out again, this time catching the notice of some of the bystanders, who can't help but smile.

AT THE HEAD OF THE LINE,

she turns, a pirouette, almost perfect. Her trip back to Mother draws smiles from the remaining bystanders. Needless to say, all of this carrying on is annoying M, whose MURMUR is starting to GROW LOUDER.

Step. Marla runs to the head of the line again. Upon her return, she stops beside M. He is the only one not caught up in her game. She smiles, a blinding, little girl gesture. M's face doesn't move, he continues facing forward.

Step. Marla offers her lollipop. M's face turns to her, and turns away again.

Step. Marla takes a long, loving LICK of her lolly. M simply DRAWS A BREATH and keeps waiting.

Step. Marla, all wide-eyed-attention-glutton, POPS her lolly into her mouth and steps up closer to M. She draws a hand back and gives him a great big SMACK in the butt.

M'S FACE

doesn't betray anything. Mother shocked, grabs daughter and SCOLDING ensues.

Step. M overhears mother's berating. You'd think this would brighten him up a little, it doesn't.

Step. Now at the security desk, M moves to take up the sign out pen.

HIS HAND

stutters, then picks up the pen. SMACK!!! -- a sudden jerking reflex -- the pen drops.

M turns to face a pouty-mouthed Marla. She's hit him again. Mother looks on embarrassed as defiantly, Marla removes her lollipop, looks M in the eye, and licks a long, lingering, Lolita lolly-lick.

M looks again to the Mother; she can only shrug.

M looks at the girl -- pure infantile satisfaction.

The lolly -- a glistening symbol of everything that is wrong with the world. A bad idea never crossed a twisted mind so fast.

(CONTINUED)

THE GIRL.

THE LOLLY -- THWACK!!!!

It goes sailing. It spirals end-over-end as M, Marla, and Mother watch its trajectory.

FLIP -- a smile grows slowly over M's features.

FLIP -- Mother looks on appalled.

PLAP -- the lollipop hits the stone floor.

M:

his smile is complete; his MURMUR STOPS. Marla sides to the floor in tears.

A spin, and M is back at the security desk, picking up the pen and signing his name in the register -- "M." He drops the pen with a flourish and steps away from the desk.

CUT TO:

EXT. CORPORATE ATRIUM -- EVENING

THROUGH A WINDOW PANE IN THE ATRIUM'S REVOLVING DOORS,

M can be seen approaching. He is still wearing the smile. It's nice to take control for once, isn't it?

FADE OUT:

FIN