

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

by
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Shooting Draft
(revised dialogue)

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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 PRECISE PRICKLY LAUGHTER.

(CONTINUED)

CELLULAR VOICE

This is Simms. You left before I had a chance to finish.

(he gasps excitedly)

You know, I don't even know where to start, I just...I just wanted you to know, that you were the highlight of my day, today.

M's mouth finds its own way closed.

CELLULAR VOICE (CONT'D)

That finally getting rid of you was the best thing that could have happened to me today. It was perfect. Terminating your employment was perfect.

M shudders trying to shake it off.

CELLULAR VOICE (CONT'D)

I mean, there's no way you could know this, but, uh...I almost creamed myself when that asshole Barney Cox came down and told me we were expelling you today. I begged him to let me do it.

M finally begins pulling the phone away from his ear.

CELLULAR VOICE (CONT'D)

It's gonna cost me a month's rent, but, uh...like I said, it was perfect. Those big, butterball tears; that little whimper when I tore up the lease on your corporate condo, your mad little dash to the elevator. I haven't felt that good in a long time.

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.

CELLULAR VOICE

(continuing)

So anyway, take care. Don't worry about the stuff in your desk. You won't need it. Ciao

(CONTINUED)

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 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. Mother and daughter, hand in hand, making their way from the elevator atrium.

In a half-step, the line of professionals has done its work on Marla. She breaks her tether, and forces a hesitation -- a contemplative moment to assess her options.

MOTHER,

discerning the breach, turns, kneels and addresses her charge. A beat. Two. Marla bolts, right-round her Mommie-dearest, and straight to her awaiting audience.

Her plea ignored, Mother gives chase.

A HAND

reaches, and connects. Mother again tethers daughter and the pair move to stand directly behind M.

DISSOLVE 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.

Step. Two. Three. Marla frolics back toward her Mother, taking with her the notice of an affectless, solitary soul. A smile -- indeed, this man has noticed her, and in so doing has lost himself, and his mastery of the line's pace.

Step -- stumble -- from behind. The SMILING SOUL loses his momentary pleasure, as an affectless soul from the rear thrusts him into an affectless soul at the front.

For Marla, this is has a particular savor. Step.

CUT TO:

THE END OF THE LINE,

where daughter again connects with Mother. Tiny hands clasp about a missing lap to embrace. A blessed instant, as Mother looks down and accepts the gift of a calculating child's semi-blind devotion.

Step. Marla heads out again.

Step. Two. The smiling soul waits for her, a reply at the ready to her cherubic appeal. She passes, and with only a moment of reservation, the smiling man reaches to the ANNOYED SOUL ahead of him.

A HAND ON A SHOULDER,

becomes a finger pointed, and a message delivered. A turn, and annoyance is transformed into something far more pleasant -- the smiling man has cloned himself. Taking hold of his newfound happiness, the once annoyed man reaches to the soul ahead of him. Step.

The chain of reaction exceeds the line's forward ebb, meeting Marla when she reaches the security desk. Feeding the flow, she dances. Another hand, another shoulder, another transformation: the chain's FINAL LINK shares in the sublimity of Marla's girly-jig.

SHE SPINS,

a pirouette, almost perfect. An exasperated breath betrays Marla's effort. It's not easy being this cute.

(CONTINUED)

A twist, and Marla's back on her way down the line.

Step. Step. Step. Bump. All of this carrying on has completely disrupted the line, and more importantly, has started to annoy M, whose MURMUR is GROWING LOUDER. He stumbles into the SMILING CHAP ahead of him. Turning, the chap attempts in good faith, to share his good feeling. M dissuades.

One big step, and the chap resumes his place in line, just as Marla begins her approach. Smile remaining, he can't help but watch her.

SHE PASSES,

leaps into a spinning, 3-4 hopscotch jump, and heads back up the line again. Step. Step.

Something is wrong. Marla moves back to the end of the line. Step. Step. It's M. He is the only one not caught up in her game.

She steps to him and smiles, a blinding, little girl gesture. M's face doesn't move, he continues facing forward.

Step. Marla catches up, offering her lollipop. M's face turns to the lollipop, and turns away again.

Step. Marla catches up again, this time taking 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. Angry now, she draws a hand back and gives M 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. Well met by a bulky and altogether jocular SECURITY GUARD, he hesitates. A bonding moment is attempted; the guard has seen everything: the smile, the lolly-lick, even the slap. It's all very funny, isn't it? No.

M'S HAND

reaches for the pen, and stutters. Home is only a signature away. He picks up the pen. SMACK!!! -- a sudden jerking reflex -- the pen drops, and in the time it takes for the pen to reach its ultimate destination, the world changes: M's ambivalence has turned to fury, and the guard's jocularism has blossomed into a full-throated, eye-popping, belly laugh.

(CONTINUED)

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.

With the guard still bursting with fitful laughter, 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.

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.

MARLA

bursts into tears, slowly unraveling as she crumples to the floor.

THE GUARD,

hearing her wail, interrupts his hilarity. The little authority he can still manage, joins Marla in descending to the floor. Mouth agape, the guard watches as,

M,

smile complete, silences his MURMUR and spins to the desk. Picking up the pen, M signs his name in the register: "M." He drops the pen and with a flourish, steps away from the desk.

Moving to the building's revolving doors, M is still wearing the smile. It's nice to take control for once, isn't it?

FADE OUT:

FIN