

BECOMING
By
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EXT. VICTORIAN HOUSE - DAY

In the backyard, sturdy and shirtless, PETER chops wood.

PETER (V.O.)
It was a way to earn funds for my
next term at university.

A shadow watches from an upper storey window.

PETER (V.O.)
He was a kind employer, but a
strange one, an unseen one.

As he throws more logs on a small pile of chopped wood,
Peter looks askance at the window. The figure slips back
into the darkness. Peter smiles slyly.

PETER (V.O.)
He might have been paying me just
to watch.

Sweat drips down Peter's smooth chest.

PETER (V.O.)
But I didn't care -- I needed the
money.

Peter brings the axe down hard against a log, he lets go of
the handle leaving the axe where it is. He wipes his brow.

PETER (V.O.)
When midsummer was its hottest he
supplied me with lemonade.

A door closes. Peter spies a jug of lemonade on the porch.
It glistens with condensation, an empty glass stands by its
side. Peter scans the backside of the house as he moves
toward the porch.

PETER (V.O.)
But one question burned hot
inside of me -

Peter takes a long sip of lemonade. Then he glances toward
a lower story window. The curtain falls back.

PETER (V.O.)
One that could not be quenched by
a cool anonymous drink. Who was
this odd man?

Peter's eyes narrow.

PETER
It was another fortnight before I
received my answer.

The pile of chopped wood grows.

PETER

It was a day I can never forget.

INT. HOUSE - A FORTNIGHT LATER

The open porch door throws a distorted rectangle of afternoon light which reaches far into the dark house.

PETER (V.O.)

He was a consistent employer,
always left my pay packet outside
of the closed porch door. But
this week things were different.
My pay packet was missing and the
porch door was open.

A person-like shadow grows inside the rectangle of light.

PETER

Hello?

Silhouetted, Peter stands in the doorway, trembling slightly.

PETER (V.O.)

It was his way of inviting me in.
If I knew what was inside then I
would have turned and run, pay
packet or not. But I was
curious...foolish...

Peter walks into the house.

PETER

Sir?

PETER (V.O.)

I was trespassing, any first year
law student would be able to tell
you that, but somehow this felt
right, like I belonged.

KITCHEN

Peter inspects the dim but tidy kitchen. He rubs a finger along the clean counter.

PETER (V.O.)

Or maybe I just didn't care.
Either way I had made my choice --

DINING ROOM

Peter enters a large ornate dining room. An open door emits a warm orange glow.

PETER (V.O.)
Even if it was the wrong one.

SITTING ROOM

Peter enters the richly decorated room. A fire crackles in the fireplace.

A dancing worm of smoke slithers up from behind a tall wing back chair. It meets a cloud of smoke that obscures the top of the room.

The chair faces away from Peter hiding the MAN occupying it. Peter moves closer for a better look.

PETER
Sir? I'm sorry but I --

MAN
You are as intelligent as I expected.

PETER
Pardon?

Another step closer; Peter sees the shadowed side of the man's face, a shock of his grey hair, his forearm and hand holding a rosewood pipe.

MAN
Come no closer. I've a story to tell first.

Peter stops. The man waves his pipe as he drones. The cloud of smoke drifts lower.

PETER (V.O.)
He told the story of his origin.
One full of distant exotic lands
I could never hope to visit.

Between them, in the smoke, iconic landscape images flash like an around the world travel brochure. Peter's eyes widen.

PETER (V.O.)
He told me everything and I listened. I could not have moved had I wanted to, but I didn't want to.

Wisps of smoke curl around Peter, he breathes them in.

The floating images change to portraits. He stares at the them with glazed eyes.

PETER (V.O.)

His knowledge washed over me like
waves from a fresh sea and I
wanted to drink the entire ocean.
Then suddenly I was full.

Peter takes staccato breaths, panic. The last image he sees
before his vision blurs is a bare chested wood-cutter.

PETER (V.O.)

My overburdened brain felt so
heavy that it took every ounce of
my energy just to hold it up.

A blurred man leans over the armrest of the wing back chair
and stares at Peter.

MAN

Come here boy. It's time.

Peter sways forward, then back. His eyes close then he
falls forward to the ground.

BLACK

FADE IN:

INT. ELEGANT BEDROOM - DAY

Light streams in from a slender part in the drapes. At the
bottom corner of the bed there is movement under the
quilted satin comforter.

PETER (V.O.)

The next morning I awoke in a
more luxurious bed than I could
ever imagine. It was a challenge
to exit that bed that morning.

The sheet turns up and Peter's bare legs reach to the
floor.

PETER

Sir?

PETER (V.O.)

My employer was not be found,
neither were my clothes. Had my
employer removed them?

From behind and from the neck down, Peter walks across the
floor toward a vanity.

PETER (V.O.)

What revolting act might he have
forced me to perform while I was
in such a vulnerable state?

(MORE)

PETER (V.O.) (cont'd)
I thanked the stars that I could
not remember.

He stops, gasps, and covers his privates. A shock of grey hair and a naked shoulder visible in the mirror.

PETER (V.O.)
Then I caught sight of him --
only it wasn't him. It was me.

Peter raises his hand to his face, and the mirror image follows. Peter screams as runs out of the bedroom door.

PETER (V.O.)
Somehow, in some way, I had
become him, and he was hideous --

HALLWAY

Peter runs in a panic along the hallway, his face in shadow. He opens doors, looks in each room, screams out for his employer.

PETER (V.O.)
I was hideous.

The hallway ends at a curtained window. Peter throws open the curtains, the sun streams in. Peter recoils, covers his face with his hands. He drops to his knees and weeps.

PETER (V.O.)
His revolting act, it had nothing
to do with sex. No, his kink was
far more intimate and violating.
How could he do this to me?

DINING ROOM

From behind, Peter eats alone at the dining room table.

PETER (V.O.)
I stayed in this house. Where
else could I go in my condition?
No one asked me to leave,
everyone assumed I belonged here.
Maybe I did.

STUDY

Peter sits at a roll top desk and scribbles in a ledger.

PETER (V.O.)
Everything I could possibly need
was left in obvious places. There
was enough money so that I could
live comfortably for many years--

SITTING ROOM

Peter sits in a wing top chair but only the shadowed side of his face, a shock of grey hair, his arm, and rosewood pipe in his hand are visible.

PETER (V.O.)
 Without ever having to leave the house. Yes, my benefactor provided for of all my needs. Except companionship, he hadn't done anything to provide me that.

Peter sighs. The fire in the fireplace crackles and dances.

PETER (V.O.)
 The flames of the fire were my only friends and we spent endless nights discussing cures for my affliction. Then one night, we found the answer. I understood what I needed to do, what I was meant to do.

INT. UPPER CORRIDOR - DAY

Outside is the sound of wood being chopped. Peter pulls aside the curtain and peeks out the window.

PETER (V.O.)
 I hired a university student. One who was young and foolish but thought himself intelligent.

The curtains fall closed as Peter quickly steps back.

PETER (V.O.)
 Then one midsummer day I withheld your pay packet and left the porch door open.

INT. SITTING ROOM

The room is thick with smoke. Suspended in the smoke is the image of a bare chested wood-cutter. Then it blinks out.

Peter leans over the armrest of the wing top chair and turns showing his horrible face full on. He looks directly at us and smiles a creepy smile.

PETER
 Come here boy. It's time.

BLACK

FADE OUT.