

MR. GLOOM

By

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EXT. CITY PARK - DAY

It's a beautiful day. The sun shines brightly in the clear blue sky, and the birds chirp in melodious harmony.

An OLD MAN, 75, sits on a bench. He wears a fishing hat and a cane rests against the bench next to him.

He tosses crumbs to a group of pigeons at his feet until two teenagers, one BOY, one GIRL, both 17, approach.

TEENAGE BOY

Boy, this sucks.

TEENAGE GIRL

No kiddin'. There's nothin' to do around here. I swear we've got the worst luck in the world.

The two teenagers walk past the old man.

OLD MAN

Oh, I wouldn't say that.

The teenagers stop and look back at the old man.

TEENAGE BOY

Oh yeah? Why not?

The old man looks to the sky and takes a deep breath.

OLD MAN

Because the sun is shining, the birds are singing, and the sky is blue. What more could you ask for?

TEENAGE GIRL

Somethin' to do would be nice.

TEENAGE BOY

Or should we just walk around and smell the flowers? You old folks sure got it made. You can sit around doin' nothin', and think it's the best thing ever.

OLD MAN

I'm just saying that you shouldn't think you've got it so bad is all.

TEENAGE GIRL

Well, we do.

OLD MAN

What would you say if I told you that there's some people out there who ain't so lucky as you and me? People with a constant dark cloud over their head, that bad things just keep happening to?

TEENAGE BOY

Bad things? Like what?

The old man picks up his cane and motions to the empty spots on the bench.

OLD MAN

Have a seat. I've got a little story to tell you.

The two teenagers look at each other and shrug.

TEENAGE BOY

What else we gonna do?

They take a seat on the bench next to the old man.

TEENAGE GIRL

What kind of story?

OLD MAN

A story bout a fella named Malcolm Gloom.

INT. MALCOLM'S BATHROOM - DAY

MALCOLM GLOOM, 39, stares at himself in the mirror.

He wears boxer shorts, a stained white t-shirt, and his face is covered with tiny bits of toilet paper to combat shaving cuts.

The pattern baldness on top of his head is only outdone by a large patch of unruly hair that hangs off to the side.

OLD MAN (V.O.)

You see, Malcolm Gloom, was a very unlucky man. On the surface, he's no different than you and me, an everyday, average person, with everyday, average routines. He would groom himself.

Malcolm picks up a comb and swoops the unruly hair over the top of his head.

After a few strokes, the comb is full of clumps of hair.

He shakes his head, puts the comb down, and looks at a toupee on a nearby table.

INT. MALCOLM'S BEDROOM - DAY

Malcolm sits on his bed with the bad toupee now perched unevenly on top of his head and a pair of black socks in his hand.

He attempts to put one of the socks on, but his foot tears right through it.

He holds his foot in the air with both hands on the elastic and sighs.

OLD MAN (V.O.)  
Dress himself.

INT. MALCOLM'S KITCHEN - DAY

Malcolm sits at a table with a box of corn flakes and a quart of milk in front of him.

He pours cornflakes into a bowl, grabs the milk, and pours.

The milk oozes out in ghastly chunks.

He sets the quart of milk down and sighs as flames and smoke shoot out of the toaster on the counter behind him.

OLD MAN (V.O.)  
Eat breakfast.

EXT. MALCOLM'S APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Malcolm closes and locks the door to his apartment.

He stands on the steps in a gray suit, white shirt, black tie, and his toupee.

He takes a deep breath and looks around.

OLD MAN (V.O.)  
He would commute to work, not only because of the bus stop located right in front of his apartment, but because he's also a friend of the environment. Only problem is

OLD MAN (V.O.)  
that sometimes the environment  
chose not to reciprocate.

A splatter of bird droppings hits Malcolm on the shoulder.

Two YOUNG LADIES at the bus stop see it and chuckle.

Malcolm takes a handkerchief from his pocket and cleans himself up, but a stain remains.

Malcolm looks at the two ladies, nods, and walks down the steps.

He gets down two of them when a bird swoops in and steals his toupee.

The ladies burst into riotous laughter.

He desperately swipes at the bird and his toupee, and jogs off after them as the bird flies off.

His bus arrives and leaves without him.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Malcolm approaches an ATM.

OLD MAN (V.O.)  
He goes to the bank.

He inserts his card into the machine and types in his PIN.  
The machine ejects his card.

He removes it and tries again two more times before the machine eats his card.

He uses another card, and this time, gets his money.

He places it in his jacket pocket and proceeds down the street.

Moments later, money shoots out of the ATM.

A small crowd gathers around and scoops up the stray bills.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Malcolm stands at the register. A female BARISTA walks up and places a cup of coffee on the counter.

OLD MAN (V.O.)  
He stops for morning coffee.

Malcolm reaches into his jacket pocket for money.

He fishes his hand around the pocket for a moment before he pulls it out to reveal a large hole in it.

OLD MAN (V.O.)  
Uh oh, no money. So, what would  
any other red blooded American do  
at a time like this?

TEENAGE GIRL (V.O.)  
Steal it?

Malcolm takes out his wallet and removes a credit card.

OLD MAN (V.O.)  
No. You charge it, of course.

The barista takes Malcolm's card, and runs it through the machine.

She raises an eyebrow and runs it through again.

She apologetically shakes her head at Malcolm and gives the card back to him.

OLD MAN (V.O.)  
Although it's probably not the best  
idea to use a card that's over its  
limit. I wonder if that dastardly  
A-T-M had anything to do with it?  
Try again, Mister Gloom.

Malcolm reaches into his wallet and pulls out a crusty, folded up, two dollar bill.

He looks at it, sighs and gives it to the barista.

TEENAGE GIRL (V.O.)  
A two dollar bill? Are those even  
real?

OLD MAN (V.O.)  
Sure, they just don't make them  
anymore. Most people carry them for  
luck.

TEENAGE BOY (V.O.)  
With his luck he shoulda got rid of  
it a long time ago.

Malcolm takes his coffee and exits. As he walks through the door, he takes a sip and burns himself.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Malcolm walks down the street with his coffee in hand.

OLD MAN (V.O.)  
And just like us, at one time or  
another...

Malcolm looks at his watch. It says 9:07.

OLD MAN (V.O.)  
...he's late for work.

Malcolm jogs down the street, but only gets a few feet before he trips, falls, and spills coffee all over himself.

He sits up, and his suit is now covered with coffee stains to match the bird droppings. He lets out a deep sigh.

OLD MAN (V.O.)  
Yep, Mister Gloom had it pretty  
bad, but he couldn't be bothered  
with it then. He had a big day at  
work ahead of him.

Malcolm gets up from the sidewalk, brushes himself off, and continues onward.

INT. MALCOLM'S OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

Malcolm stands in the office of his BOSS, 42, who points at his watch and gives Malcolm an angry look.

OLD MAN (V.O.)  
Probably, not the best day to be  
late for work. You see, Mister  
Gloom is scheduled to give a big  
marketing presentation today. He's  
been working on it tediously for  
months, and if all goes well, he'll  
be sure to get that big promotion  
he's been seeking.

Malcolm nods at his boss, puts a finger in the air to gesture that he needs a minute, and leaves the office.

INT. OFFICE, MALCOLM'S CUBICLE - DAY

Malcolm takes a seat at his desk and turns on his computer.

OLD MAN (V.O.)

Now, if you've been paying any attention at all to my story, you should have a pretty good idea of what's about to happen.

The computer monitor lights up, and the screen dissolves.

Once it's finished, a skull and crossbones flashes on it.

OLD MAN (V.O.)

Yep, a computer virus. Months of work down the drain.

Malcolm stares at the computer screen and sighs.

The monitor smokes and bursts into flames.

Malcolm looks around briefly and runs from the cubicle.

EXT. CITY PARK - DAY

The two teenagers look at the old man in disbelief.

TEENAGE BOY

C'mon, a bird stealing his toupee, bad milk, and a computer virus? You gotta be makin' all this up.

OLD MAN

I'm telling you the truth.

TEENAGE GIRL

Then this guy's a dork. There's no way all of this stuff could happen to somebody in one day.

OLD MAN

Not just this day, everyday. Everyday, Mister Gloom would have a string of bad things happen to him.

TEENAGE BOY

If that were me, I wouldn't even leave the house.

OLD MAN  
I'm getting to that. Now, where was I?

EXT. STREET - DAY

Malcolm walks along the street dejectedly.

OLD MAN (V.O.)  
Ah yes, there we are. With no job,  
no prospects, and the worst run of  
bad luck this old man has ever  
seen, what's a guy to do?

Malcolm walks past a lamppost in the street.

A few steps beyond it, he stops and goes back to it.

On the lamppost is a flyer that says "SUICIDE?" on it. He slowly moves his head up and down.

OLD MAN (V.O.)  
Well, I don't know what you would  
do, but ol' Malcolm decided he was  
gonna end it all.

TEENAGE GIRL (V.O.)  
He's gonna kill himself?

OLD MAN (V.O.)  
Yep, and the only thing left to do  
was to figure out how.

INT. MALCOLM'S APARTMENT, GARAGE - DAY

Malcolm stands and looks at his car, a run down little compact with no two parts the same color.

OLD MAN (V.O.)  
So he did a little bit of research  
and came to the conclusion that  
carbon monoxide poisoning would be  
a nice way to go. He'd start his  
car, leave the engine running, and  
eventually go to sleep, never to  
wake up.

Malcolm nods his head, walks to the car, and gets in.

He sticks a key in the ignition and turns it. Nothing.

OLD MAN (V.O.)  
But it's usually a good idea to  
make sure your car has a  
functioning battery before  
attempting it.

Malcolm turns the key with vigor, and quickly moves his body back and forth in desperation.

INT. MALCOLM'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM - DAY

Malcolm stands on a chair with a rope around his neck. The other end of the rope is tied to a lighting fixture on the ceiling.

OLD MAN (V.O.)  
So he tried to hang himself, but  
that didn't work out so well  
either.

Malcolm steps off the chair and immediately plummets to the ground.

The lighting fixture rips from the ceiling and falls on top of him.

INT. MALCOLM'S APARTMENT KITCHEN - DAY

Malcolm sits at the table and reads a newspaper.

OLD MAN (V.O.)  
With his first two attempts ending  
in terrible failure, he decided to  
try something a little more  
creative.

Malcolm picks up the paper and slaps it with his hand. He throws it back on the table, nods in approval, and exits.

The headline reads "MAN SHOT BY POLICE IN BANK ROBBERY ATTEMPT".

INT. BANK - DAY

Malcolm confidently storms through the revolving door with a gun in his hand.

A nylon, with a large run near his right eye, covers his face.

OLD MAN (V.O.)  
But somebody beat 'em to it.

Two MEN in black ski masks stand near the teller windows, each with a canvas bag and gun in hand.

Malcolm's shoulders slump in defeat as he watches the scene.

A third MAN, also in a black ski mask, sneaks up from behind and hits Malcolm over the back of the head with a gun.

Malcolm falls to the ground like a stone.

INT. CAR TRUNK - DAY

Malcolm lies in the trunk with a blindfold over his eyes.

He bounces around lightly from the car's movement.

OLD MAN (V.O.)  
As luck would have it, Mister Gloom  
turned out to be a rather nice  
hostage for the bank robbers.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

A car pulls up to the curb.

The three men exit, and walk back to the trunk.

They open it, take out Malcolm, and leave him on the street.

They quickly get back in the car and speed off as Malcolm removes the blindfold.

He stands perfectly still and stares out into the street.

OLD MAN (V.O.)  
Guess his luck isn't so bad after  
all. I mean, the robbers did let  
him go unharmed, and things  
couldn't possibly get any worse  
right?

JANE, 37, with her arm in a cast, and a big bandage on her head, rapidly approaches Malcolm on a set of rollerblades.

She waves her good arm frantically in an attempt to get Malcolm to move.

She collides with Malcolm and they tumble to the ground.

EXT. CITY PARK - DAY

The two teenagers laugh.

TEENAGE BOY

I knew something bad was gonna happen to 'em.

OLD MAN

Oh you did, eh? Well what would you say if I told you that you were wrong?

TEENAGE BOY

I'd say you're crazy.

TEENAGE GIRL

Yeah. The woman ran into 'em and knocked 'em down.

OLD MAN

Well it just so happens that Jane, the woman that ran into Malcolm...

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Malcolm and the woman slowly sit up, both in a daze.

They hold their heads briefly, and slowly turn toward each other.

They make eye contact.

OLD MAN (V.O.)

...was his soulmate.

Jane smiles at Malcolm, and he stares at her like she is the most beautiful woman in the world.

For the first time, Malcolm smiles.

EXT. CITY PARK - DAY

TEENAGE BOY

Oh, lemme guess. They met each other, their bad luck ended, and they lived happily ever after, right?

OLD MAN  
Well, not exactly.

Malcolm and Jane get up and walk down the street hand in hand.

As they venture on, bad things happen around them.

A piece of scaffolding falls, two cars crash, robbers loot stores, and a man on fire runs past them.

They ignore everything and only look at each other.

OLD MAN (V.O.)  
You see, the two of them put together were a natural disaster, and bad things happened wherever they went. The difference now, is that they had finally found what they were missing.

TEENAGE GIRL (V.O.)  
What?

OLD MAN (V.O.)  
Someone to share their experiences with, good or bad.

INT. MALCOLM'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Malcolm and Jane enter the apartment.

Malcolm flips on the light and tosses his keys on a nearby table.

The keys hit and the table collapses.

The two look at each other, smile, and kiss.

The light bulb pops and the room goes black.

EXT. CITY PARK - DAY

OLD MAN  
And that, young ones, is why you shouldn't be so upset on a day like today, because there's always somebody out there who has it much worse than you.

The two teenagers ponder the old man's statement for a moment.

TEENAGE BOY

What a load of crap.

The two teenagers get up and walk away.

TEENAGE GIRL

Yeah, let's go hang around the construction site. Maybe something bad'll happen and we'll fall in love.

The teenagers laugh and the old man shakes his head.

An OLD WOMAN, 73, walks up to the bench.

OLD WOMAN

You were telling that story again, weren't you?

OLD MAN

Yep, and just like every other time, it never sinks in.

OLD WOMAN

Oh well, what can you do? Ready to go?

OLD MAN

Sure.

The old man gets up, and the two walk through the park hand in hand.

OLD MAN

Some people just don't realize how lucky they are.

A bird swoops in and steals the old man's hat.

A splatter of bird droppings hits the old woman on the shoulder.

The teenagers scream in terror as they run past.

A big, angry, dog follows closely behind in hot pursuit.

OLD WOMAN

If you ask me, Mister Gloom, I'd say we're the lucky ones.

The two share a brief laugh before they kiss.