

* SHINE ON *

by
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FADE IN:

EXT. UNKNOWN - UNKNOWN

A black vacuous space. A PAIR OF HANDS, with a white, celestial glow around them, manipulating a set of marionette rod-and-string over a GLOBE. A deep, convincing VOICE appears with instructions:

VOICE 1 (O.S)

Let their wills be tested by
freedom. They must find the Truth
for themselves.

VOICE 2 (O.S)

But, what is to become of man?

VOICE 1 (O.S)

Enlightenment must be first,
discovered within. Then the destiny
of humanity will manifest.

A moment of thought.

VOICE 2 (O.S)

This is for everyone to understand.

VOICE 1 (O.S)

Witnessed in your own, merciless
experience, there is only one way
to teach.

VOICE 2 (O.S)

Pain.

VOICE 1 (O.S)

It is the Will of the Good, that
will shine on in the hearts of men.

The pair of hands drop the marionette strings. They descend toward earth.

EXT. LANDSCAPE - DAY

SHOT IN CLASSIC B/W

A desolate landscape. FREEMAN, fifty, wears a slight grin, beneath a steely, unflinching glint. This man is a survivor. Behind him, in the distance is a TOMBSTONE.

FREEMAN

Looking in the mirror and accepting
it, is the explanation for your
entire life.

FADE TO:

EXT. ABANDON BARN - DAY

SHOT IN CLASSIC B/W

Unbearable hot and humid day. The barn is old and teetering, built in the early twentieth century. A dry, splintered, wooden frame, based by a rising stone wall, with cut-out iron rod windows.

A heavy, reinforced oak door -- Juggernaut worthy. Oddly, it is dead-bolted on the outside, instead of the inside. A do-not-disturb-type of SIGN hangs on the doorknob, it reads: "LIFE IN PROGRESS." Beside the door is a HORSE TROUGH brimming with dark, murky rain water.

INT. BARN - DAY

Impermeable stone walls, hay strewn all over the ground. It is stifling in here. Freeman, in his early thirties, shirtless, is standing underneath the hot lamp of the sun, squinting out the barred-window, beads of sweat sticking to his face.

FREEMAN

(distraught)

What's the meaning of all this?

He holds up a picture of a little boy. This pains him deeply.

A cold, inhuman, WHISPER appears:

VOICE (O.S)

Come here.

The sun fades. Enter the shadows. PAN over: THE REAPER, 8 feet tall, cloaked in a midnight gown, stonecold, skeleton face, long, bony, white fingers holding a scythe. It is standing in front of an opaque, BLACK ABYSS.

FREEMAN

Who'r you?

THE REAPER

Life personified.

With Its free hand, It is offering Freeman a GAME of chess, sitting atop a rickety, wooden table. Freeman takes a second to ponder. But before he can decide, he is pulled in by an unseen force. Such is life. Freeman and the Reaper are sitting at the table.

FREEMAN

What are we playing for?

THE REAPER

Your soul.

The Reaper points to the BLACK ABYSS behind him. It quickly FLASHES IN, showing an infinite amount of tallies depicting victories, and then quickly FLASHES OUT.

FREEMAN

How do I win?

The Reaper, in his slow, deliberate ways, responds by sliding a PAWN forward. Freeman follows, by sliding his first PAWN into battle.

TIME ELAPSING
DISSOLVE:

The Reaper moves his KNIGHT, taking Freeman's KNIGHT, the first kill of the match. Suddenly, out of thin air, a LITTLE BOY'S voice cries out in great distress:

LITTLE BOY (O.S)

Mommy, where are you!?

An acute, PIERCING attack into Freeman's psyche. His eyes dilate -- instant fear. All of a sudden, from beneath his skin, charred, burning, black letters surface on the inside of his forearm: ABANDONMENT. Freeman winces in pain.

The Reaper, unsympathetically PUNCHES the timeclock. Freeman refocuses, all of a sudden this game just got way more serious.

Freeman moves his BISHOP diagonally across the board, taking the Reaper's KNIGHT. He is anticipating some sort of retribution. The Reaper just stares at him hollowly. Then moves Its ROOK to take one of Freeman's floating PAWN'S.

A hateful FATHER'S VOICE appears:

FATHER (O.S)

I kicked the shit outta ya before,
I'll kick the shit outta ya again!

Freeman is jolted internally. He grits his teeth, trying to squeeze out the bad memories. He falls off his chair to one knee. Fighting the pain. Charred, black letters surface across his sternum: HARDENED.

FREEMAN

Fuck!

He climbs back into his chair, haphazardly moves his next piece. He SLAMS the clock in distaste. The Reaper rebuttals by moving his dormant QUEEN into the battle.

TIME ELAPSING
DISSOLVE:

Bony white fingers sliding Its QUEEN into Freeman's ROOK. Freeman braces himself for the pain. A moment passes and nothing happens. He looks across the board into the Reaper's always-void expression... *where's the hurt?* Still, nothing happens. Freeman eases. Silly boy.

Freeman's body tightens painfully, as the charred, black letters surface on the apex of his back: BLIND-SIDED.

FREEMAN (CONT'D)

(writhing in pain)

You tricked me!

WHAM! The Reaper punches the clock. *Fuck you and play bitch.*

Without really thinking, and just going on a traumatic impulse Freeman foolishly moves his BISHOP to take a PAWN. The Reaper quickly counters with his awaiting QUEEN, killing his BISHOP. Remorseless WIFE:

WIFE (O.S)

I want a divorce, I've been fucking
your best friend, sorry.

Freeman SCREAMS as the charred, black letters burn their way to the surface. Branded across his stomach is: BETRAYED. Freeman hangs over the side of his chair, spit dangling from his mouth, looking very much like he might vomit.

FREEMAN

(exhausted)

Please... stop.

TIME ELAPSING
DISSOLVE:

Freeman's HAND is shaking feverishly. His hand picks up his QUEEN. We notice the severe depletion of Freeman's pieces.

The QUEEN moves very slowly across the board, placing it to where he thinks it should go. His fingers don't let go, unsure.

PULLBACK: He's nervously looking at the Reaper... is this a bad move? We see all the bad moves he's made since; his entire body engraved in sorrowful experiences: MANIPULATED; BAD LUCK; REGRET; BANKRUPT; EMBARRASSED; CURSED; DISILLUSIONED; INSECURE.

He lets go of the QUEEN.

FREEMAN (CONT'D)
(fatigued)
Check.

He gingerly punches the clock with his shaking hand. The Reaper slowly and methodically slides Its BISHOP across the board. Freeman sees the error of his ways:

FREEMAN (CONT'D)
(begging)
No, please.

The Reaper takes Freeman's second ROOK. The sterile, clinical voice of a DOCTOR appears:

DOCTOR (O.S)
I'm sorry sir, he was just too
little to survive something like
that.

Freeman's eyes hollow. The mental anguish paralyzes him; he doesn't flinch as we hear the letters burn their way to the surface. Muted tears stream out of his eyes. Across his right pectoral is the word: ALONE.

The Reaper SLAMS the timeclock. Still in the daze of this memory, Freeman absently moves his QUEEN. His last soldier other than his KING.

Remorselessly, the Reaper slides his PAWN into Freeman's QUEEN. A very saddened LITTLE BOY'S voice appears:

LITTLE BOY
Daddy, why did I have to die?

Freeman falls out of his chair to the ground. The sound of SHATTERING GLASS. Black, charred letters surface on the left side of his chest: HEARTBROKEN. Freeman begins to weep in the hardest pain.

FREEMAN
 (to his son)
 I don't know...!? I don't know!?

The Reaper smugly taps the button with the tip of his finger to stop the clock.

FREEMAN (CONT'D)
 (pleading)
 No more. I'm done!

REAPER
 In exchange for your soul, I will
 numb the pain.

FREEMAN
 Anything.

The Reaper offers him the BLACK ABYSS. A STILL PICTURE illuminates, previewing a glimpse of the future -- Freeman, sitting in a rocking chair, bottle in hand, staring vacantly out a glass window, past his REFLECTION. His eyes blackened, not much going on in there. Souless.

The picture dissolves into the blackness. Freeman takes a long moment to decide his fate. He concedes, and tips over his KING... no more pain. It rolls listlessly on the board.

The heavy, oak door unlocks and opens. Freeman releases from his chair, walks his way to the exit. The ultimate walk of shame. Charred, black letters surface on his forehead, he has been numbed to feel anything. It reads: COWARD. He exits the door.

EXT. BARN - CONTINUOUS

Freeman is peering into the HORSE TROUGH. Intensely staring at his REFLECTION in the water. He stares for some time, battling internally -- a fucking coward.

INT. BARN - CONTINUOUS

Empty, the Reaper is gone. The Chess game is re-aligned. Off screen we hear the heavy, oak door close. PAN over: Freeman has re-entered. He walks over to the table, deciding to reenter the battlefield. The Reaper steps out of the BLACK ABYSS.

REAPER
 More?

Freeman responds by moving a PAWN into battle. The Reaper sits down, and enters the field. He moves his first PAWN.

Across both of Freeman's hands, charred, black lettering surface on his knuckles: GOOD WILL.

FADE TO:

CREDITS over a picture of the tattered TOMBSTONE in the barren landscape. If we look closely it reads: "Here lies the weak-willed."

CUT OUT