

TREADING ON THE HEELS

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**INT. CAFE - DAY**

An ordinary man with glasses, JOHN (30s), sits alone at a small table, staring out the window. The WAITER approaches the table and hands him the checkbook.

WAITER  
Your check, please.

John is slightly scared.

JOHN  
Huh? Oh, yeah... Thanks.

The Waiter walks away, and John looks after him. A young man in a multi-colored sweat suit, THE STRANGER (20s), sits down in the chair in front of John. He looks him in the eyes and smiles. John notices the Stranger and shudders.

JOHN (CONT'D)  
Whoa... Who are you?

THE STRANGER  
And you?

John looks confused at the Stranger, who has a smile on his face.

JOHN  
What do you mean?

THE STRANGER  
Well, who are you?

John looks around.

JOHN  
What's it with you? Why did you sit down with me?

THE STRANGER  
Just sat down. Just felt like it.

JOHN  
What does that mean? Why me?

THE STRANGER  
Just because.

John looks around again. None of the visitors pay any attention to them.

JOHN  
Just because? Things don't happen just because... Everything has a reason. What do you need from me?

THE STRANGER  
Nothing at all.

JOHN  
Are you the manager?

THE STRANGER  
No.

JOHN  
Then who are you?

THE STRANGER  
Nobody.

John is looking at the Stranger in confusion.

JOHN  
Alright, what do you want from me?

THE STRANGER  
Nothing.

An awkward pause. The Waiter passes by, John waves him over.

JOHN  
Excuse me!

The Waiter hurries to the table.

WAITER  
Yes? Is something wrong?

JOHN  
I don't know, you tell me. Your manager wants something from me.

John points at the Stranger. The Waiter looks in his direction, then back at John, puzzled. Confusion pause. John is nervous, he looks at the Waiter.

JOHN (CONT'D)  
Well?

WAITER  
He's not the manager.

JOHN  
Okay! I don't know his position!  
Your... employee.

WAITER  
(looking at John)  
This man doesn't work here.

The Waiter looks at John suspiciously and walks away. John feels foolish and anxious, looking around.

JOHN  
 (whispering)  
 What the hell's going on here?  
 (to the Stranger)  
 I don't understand... Is this some  
 kind of prank? It's a joke, huh? A  
 social experiment?

John is scanning the room for security cameras. The Stranger continues to smile and looks into John's eyes.

John pulls out his wallet, takes out his money and defiantly puts it on the table under the empty plate.

JOHN (CONT'D)  
 I've paid for everything! Even left  
 a tip. Are you satisfied?

THE STRANGER  
 Satisfied.

JOHN  
 Did I pass the experiment? Can I go  
 now?

THE STRANGER  
 Yes, you can.

John shakes his head in confusion. Stands and puts on his jacket, the Stranger also stands up and looks at John.

JOHN  
 No need to escort me.

The Stranger is looking at John, smiling.

JOHN (CONT'D)  
 (whispering)  
 Madhouse...

John walks toward the exit with displeased expression. The Stranger follows him, smiling. Near the door, John notices the stalking and becomes indignant.

JOHN (CONT'D)  
 What a... Why are you following me?

THE STRANGER  
 I'm not following you.

JOHN  
 I don't understand, what do you  
 want from me?

THE STRANGER  
 Nothing.

JOHN  
Do you have a problem?

THE STRANGER  
No.

The Stranger looks at John with a friendly smile. John rolls his eyes and goes outside.

JOHN  
(whispering)  
Fucking nut.

**EXT. STREET - DAY**

John exits the building and walks down the street. The Stranger follows him, smiling. After a few yards, John turns around and stops. The Stranger approaches him and also stops.

JOHN  
Stop it! Right now! What do you want from me?!

THE STRANGER  
(smiling)  
Nothing.

JOHN  
What does that mean, "nothing"?!

THE STRANGER  
It means nothing.

A stupid pause.

JOHN  
Yeah, very funny. Joker.

John looks around, struggles to contain his frustration.

JOHN (CONT'D)  
Who are you? Private detective?

THE STRANGER  
No.

JOHN  
Tax bailiff? I don't owe anyone anything! You must have the wrong person.

THE STRANGER  
I'm not a bailiff.

JOHN  
(nervous)  
Criminal?

THE STRANGER  
No.

JOHN  
Then who are you?

THE STRANGER  
Nobody.

JOHN  
Why are you following me?

THE STRANGER  
Just... because-

JOHN  
(serious)  
All right, all right! Stop it! Stop it... Okay? I got you... Listen, if this is some kind of experiment or prank, I didn't give you my consent to participate! Do you understand?

THE STRANGER  
Understand.

JOHN  
Good. It was funny, we all had a laugh, ha-ha... Now stop it, please.

THE STRANGER  
Stop what?

JOHN  
(rolls his eyes)  
The experiment!

THE STRANGER  
What experiment?

JOHN  
Are you kidding me?

THE STRANGER  
Nope.

John points his finger threateningly at the smiling Stranger, his tone changes to a more aggressive one.

JOHN

Listen, you jerk! If I see myself  
in any video, you'll be in trouble!  
I'll sue you! Do you understand?

The Stranger doesn't answer.

JOHN (CONT'D)

I have a friend, he is a serious  
lawyer. He'll find you wherever you  
go! You got it??

The Stranger looks at John, smiling silently.

JOHN (CONT'D)

You think I'm joking?

THE STRANGER

I don't know. Are you joking?

JOHN

That's it!  
(hands in pocket)  
You've gone too far, son.

John takes out his phone and takes a picture of the Stranger.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Now you can't hide. He will find  
you in the database. See you in  
court, asshole!

The Stranger doesn't move, looking at John and smiling. John  
tries to put his phone back in his pocket, but struggles.  
Passersby stare at him.

John looks around nervously. The Stranger smiles at him  
friendly. Finally, the phone is in John's pocket.

JOHN (CONT'D)

You're crazy!

John turns around and continues walking down the street,  
while the Stranger stands still, watching him.

**EXT. BUS STOP 1 - LATER**

John stamps his foot nervously. The Stranger stands aside,  
smiling and watching him. John occasionally turns around,  
displeased, to look in the Stranger's direction. An empty bus  
approaches, and people board.

**INT. BUS - CONTINUOUS**

John gets on the bus and stands by the window. The passengers take their seats.

The Stranger stands next to John and smiles at him kindly. The bus leaves.

JOHN

There are plenty of empty seats on the bus. Why are you standing next to me?

THE STRANGER

Just because.

JOHN

How long are you going to follow me?

THE STRANGER

I don't know.

JOHN

What have I done to you? Why do you need this?

THE STRANGER

Um, just because-

JOHN

(angrily)

Stop saying that bullshit! I'm so sick of it!

John is angry, and the other passengers look at him worried. The Stranger smiles even wider and continues to look at John.

JOHN (CONT'D)

I'm warning you! If you don't leave me alone, I'll call the police. And they will arrest you.

THE STRANGER

Okay.

JOHN

Okay? Really? All right... I'm getting off in two stops. If you come out with me, I'll call the cops. And I'll tell them everything.

THE STRANGER

Okay.

John looks angrily at the Stranger and turns away to the window.

A beat later. The bus passes the first stop. John nods menacingly, the Stranger smiles back.

Soon, the bus passes the second stop, John is nervous. He points two fingers up in the air and nods.

Finally, the bus passes the third stop. John notices two men in police uniforms outside, who are standing next to a patrol car at the bus stop.

JOHN

Oh, great! Look outside! They're right at the bus stop!

The Stranger doesn't pay any attention to the police officers, looking into John's eyes and smiling.

JOHN (CONT'D)

This is your last chance. I'm getting out. And my advice to you is to stay in the bus and keep going! If you follow me, I'll tell the cops everything, just like I promised! Do you understand?

THE STRANGER

Understand.

The bus comes to a stop. John stands near the door, looking at the Stranger.

**EXT. BUS STOP 2 - CONTINUOUS**

The doors open. John gets out and steps back from the vehicle, looking back. The Stranger is standing on the bus, holding onto the handrail, looking at John while smiling.

John looks at him, smirking. He turns and looks around, the bus doors close behind him.

JOHN

(smiling)

Good boy.

John walks away from the bus stop in a good mood. Soon, the Stranger appears behind him. John hears footsteps and turns around. They both stop and lock eyes.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Are you an idiot?! Don't you understand what I'm telling you?!

THE STRANGER  
(smiling)  
I understand.

John tries to hold back his emotions, but he can't.

JOHN  
That's it, you bastard! Come on,  
follow me like you enjoy doing!

John walks briskly toward the officers. On the way, he makes sure that the Stranger follows him.

JOHN (CONT'D)  
Police!

The OFFICER 1 turns around. The OFFICER 2 stands nearby, looking in his phone.

JOHN (CONT'D)  
Officers, help me!

OFFICER 1  
Yes? What happened?

John points at the Stranger standing next to him.

JOHN  
This man! He's chasing me! Please  
help.

OFFICER 1  
What do you mean by "chasing"? Are  
you talking about your friend?

The Officer 1 looks at John. The Stranger smiles and also looks at John.

JOHN  
(shouting)  
My friend?! I've never seen him  
before in my life!

The Officer 2 takes his eyes off the phone and looks at John.

OFFICER 2  
(sternly)  
Sir, sir, there's no need to shout.  
Okay?

John tries to calm down.

JOHN  
I'm sorry. I just-

OFFICER 2

Tell me, have you consumed any alcoholic beverages recently?

JOHN

(confused)

What? No, I haven't had anything.

OFFICER 1

Sir, please calm down.

JOHN

I'm not... Please, listen to me... I was sitting in a café, having lunch. This man sat next to me, didn't introduce himself, didn't say what he wanted from me. He just started following me everywhere, like a maniac!

The officers look at each other in confusion. Then they look at John.

OFFICER 1

Sir, what's your name?

JOHN

Me? I'm John.

OFFICER 2

What, just John? Do you have a last name?

John becomes nervous, not understanding why they're questioning him.

JOHN

Pearson... I'm John Pearson.

OFFICER 1

You're John Pearson?

JOHN

(confused)

Yes... Is something wrong?

OFFICER 1

(smiling)

No. It's okay. Don't worry...

OFFICER 2

(smiling)

You're safe.

JOHN

I... listen, you have to believe me. This person is stalking me-

OFFICER 1  
 (smiling)  
 Okay, okay. We got it... relax.

A strange pause. The officers are looking at John suspiciously. John looks back uncomfortably. The Stranger looks at John, smiling. John gets nervous. The Officer 1 turns his head sharply and looks at the Stranger.

OFFICER 1 (CONT'D)  
 (to the Stranger)  
 And what is your name, sir?

John breathes a sigh of relief.

THE STRANGER  
 (looking at John)  
 No name.

OFFICER 2  
 Sir, please say your name.

THE STRANGER  
 I have no name.

OFFICER 2  
 Please show your ID.

THE STRANGER  
 (turns to the Officer 2)  
 ID?

OFFICER 2  
 Yes. ID, driver's license,  
 passport, some papers. What do you  
 have?

THE STRANGER  
 I have nothing.

The officers looks at the Stranger suspiciously. John resolutely joins the conversation.

JOHN  
 (to the Officers)  
 See, you see! He's sick! He's  
 crazy! He's been tailing me  
 everywhere. He sat next to me in  
 the café, then followed me on the  
 street, and even on the bus. I  
 warned him that I would involve the  
 police if he didn't stop! But he  
 didn't listen to me!

The Officers look at each other and turn to the Stranger.

OFFICER 1  
Sir, come with us to the car,  
please.

JOHN  
What about me?

OFFICER 2  
You may go.

JOHN  
Shouldn't I sign some kind of  
protocol or statement?

OFFICER 1  
No need, go about your business.  
We'll handle it.

JOHN  
But maybe I am- ?

OFFICER 1  
(angrily)  
Sir, I said we'll handle it!

John is slightly scared. The officers look at John threateningly.

JOHN  
I just-

OFFICER 2  
(pulls out his gun)  
Hey! Are you fucking stupid?!

John gets scared and steps back.

JOHN  
Okay, okay... Sorry.

OFFICER 1  
What is your fucking problem, man?  
Get the fuck out of here... Please.  
Don't interfere with us doing our  
job.

JOHN  
All right, I'm sorry... Thanks for  
your... service.

OFFICER 1  
(smiles kindly)  
No problem, sir. Have a nice day.

The officers escort the Stranger into the car. John exhales with relief, turns around, and walks away, looking back.

The officers get into the car with the Stranger. John takes a few steps and turns around again, realizing that nobody is following him anymore.

JOHN  
 (sighs)  
 Oh, God... Finally.

**EXT. COURTYARD - EVENING**

John walks along the sidewalk next to his apartment building, feeling down. He takes out the keys from his pocket and fiddles with them in his hand.

The Stranger appears behind him and follows John, smiling. A LITTLE GIRL walks up to them.

LITTLE GIRL  
 Good evening!

JOHN  
 Good ev-

John coughs in surprise. The Girl passes on.

LITTLE GIRL (O.S.)  
 Good evening!

THE STRANGER (O.S.)  
 Good evening.

John hears a familiar voice behind him and turns around in horror. The Stranger stands in front of him, smiling.

JOHN  
 What?! You again?!

The Stranger smiles friendly and looks at John.

JOHN (CONT'D)  
 How did you... Why did they let you go?! Did you escape from them?!

THE STRANGER  
 From them?

JOHN  
 No, stop. It can't be... They were in a car. They would have caught up with you... Ah, you paid them off!

THE STRANGER  
 Whom?

JOHN

That's right! This is how you have fun, I understand! Rich, with lots of money. Mocking poor people, huh?!

THE STRANGER

I'm not mocking anyone-

JOHN

Stay away from me! I'm asking you nicely! Do you hear me?!

THE STRANGER

I hear you.

The Stranger continues to look and smile. John takes a small step back. The Stranger takes the same step forward. John becomes angry and loses his temper.

JOHN

Well, you bastard! Don't you want to be nice?! All right!

John looks around and notices a stick on the ground. He picks it up and looks threateningly at the Stranger.

JOHN (CONT'D)

If you follow me, I'll whack you with this stick! I swear! You got it?!

THE STRANGER

Got it.

John turns around and starts walking. The Stranger follows him. John snaps and swings the stick. The Stranger stands still and smiles.

John swings again and hits him in the torso with the stick. The Stranger staggers, straightens up, and looks at John, smiling.

JOHN

(shouting)

Want some more?!

THE STRANGER

What?

JOHN

I can hit you again!

THE STRANGER

Why?

JOHN  
Maybe it'll make you smarter!

THE STRANGER  
Why?

JOHN  
What do you mean, "why"? What do you want from me, asshole?!

THE STRANGER  
Nothing.

JOHN  
Why are you stalking me?!

THE STRANGER  
Just because.

John gets angrier and hits him again. The Stranger skillfully grabs the stick with his hand, snatches it away, and hits John in return with the same blow.

JOHN  
Ahhh!

John falls on the ground from the blow. The Stranger stops smiling and looks at John menacingly. He steps closer, takes a swing. John covers his face in terror.

The Stranger freezes and tosses the stick aside. He looks at John and smiles kindly. John is lying on the ground, looking at him. He cautiously gets up, and dusts himself off. Tears well up in his eyes.

JOHN (CONT'D)  
What... What do you want from me?

THE STRANGER  
Nothing.

JOHN  
Why are you bullying me?!

THE STRANGER  
Just because.

John looks at the smiling Stranger with a pleading gaze.

JOHN  
Do you want money?!

John pulls out his wallet. He takes out the money and hands it to the Stranger.

JOHN (CONT'D)  
 Take it... Come on. Just leave me  
 alone, please!

The Stranger pays no attention to the money, looking at John with a friendly smile.

JOHN (CONT'D)  
 Why aren't you taking the money?!  
 Take it!

THE STRANGER  
 I don't need it.

JOHN  
 (pleadingly)  
 Take it and leave me alone!

The Stranger is standing motionless. John sits down, places the money at the Stranger's feet, stands up, and backs away. The Stranger continues to stand with the money in front of him. John steps away, turns around and runs to the entrance.

He opens the door and enters, fear evident in his eyes. He looks at the motionless Stranger and steps backward into the building, closing the door.

**INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - CORRIDOR - DAY**

John walks quickly down the corridor, approaches the front door, looks around, trembling hands insert the key into the lock. He looks around again, opens the door, and steps inside quickly.

**INT. JOHN'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

John closes the door and turns on the lights. He locks the door and pulls the handle, double-checking to ensure the door is securely locked. He turns around and lets out a relieved sigh.

JOHN  
 Oh my God... What a madness?

John takes off his shoes and jacket, putting everything away in the closet. He moves to another room.

**INT. JOHN'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS**

John turns on the light and looks at the window. He turns off the lights and slowly walks to the window. Carefully, he stands by the windowsill and looks outside.

**EXT. COURTYARD - CONTINUOUS**

There's no one where he last saw the Stranger. On the ground nearby, a stick lies. No money.

**INT. JOHN'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS**

John breathes heavily and turns back sharply. There is no one else in the kitchen.

**INT. JOHN'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER**

John enters the living room and tiptoes towards the front door. He cautiously looks through the peephole. No one is in the corridor. John turns around abruptly.

There's no one in the apartment. He checks the locks and the door again, making sure everything is securely closed. John covers his face with both hands and breathes heavily.

JOHN

Fucking freak... What has he done  
to me?

John goes into another room.

**INT. JOHN'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER**

The lights on. John enters the room and stands in front of the sink with a mirror above it.

JOHN

Rich jerk. Completely lost his  
mind.  
(looking at reflection)  
Why can't some people just live in  
peace?

John turns on the water and washes his hands.

JOHN (CONT'D)

They've completely lost their  
shame... They have everything...  
And they still want to take away  
our last bit...

John closes his eyes, splashes water on his face, leaning over the sink. He hears the sound of a door creaking and freezes. His breathing quickens as he looks through his cupped hands up at the mirror.

He stands abruptly and looks at his reflection. There is no one behind him. John quickly turns around. It's just him in the bathroom.

John calms his breathing, turns off the water, and dries his hands with a towel. He exits the bathroom, closing the door. The lights off.

**INT. JOHN'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM/KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER**

John goes to the kitchen room's direction and notices something at the doorstep. He comes closer. On the floor is his money, which he left outside. John is scared, he looks up.

In the darkness of the kitchen, against the backdrop of the window, stands the black silhouette of a man.

John turns on the light with trembling hands. In front of him, under the chandelier, is standing the Stranger. He looks into John's eyes. John looks at him in terror.

JOHN

What the hell are you doing here?!  
How did you get in?

The Stranger smiles and takes a step forward. John panics and runs towards the entrance door. He tries to open it, unlocks the door, looks back in fear. The Stranger approaches him slowly.

**INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS**

John rushes out of the apartment and runs along the corridor, looking back. The Stranger exits the apartment, smiling, and casually chases after John in a leisure pace.

John, terrified, turns around and rushes to the elevator, quickly pressing the button, looking back. The Stranger is nowhere to be seen.

The elevator arrives, and the doors open. Inside is the Stranger. He smiles and looks at John.

JOHN

Ah! No! That's impossible!

John escapes to the stairwell, opens the door. The Stranger ascends the stairs.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Oh, shit! How many of you are  
there?!

John turns around and runs back down the corridor into his apartment, rushing inside and closing the door.

**INT. JOHN'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

John locks the door, backs away slowly and turns around abruptly. There is no one behind him.

He turns on the light in the kitchen. There's no one here either. John hears the door creak in the back and turns around.

The Stranger emerges from the bathroom, looks at John, friendly smiling. John retreats in horror into the kitchen. The Stranger follows him.

**INT. JOHN'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS**

JOHN

Demon! How do you do this?!

John approaches the table, takes out a large knife, and menacingly gazes at the approaching Stranger.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Just come near me! I'll kill you, I swear! Do you hear me?!

The Stranger stops in the doorway and smiles.

THE STRANGER

I hear you.

JOHN

What do you want from me?!

THE STRANGER

Nothing.

JOHN

Who are you?! Answer me!

THE STRANGER

Nobody.

JOHN

Stop bullshitting me! How many of you are there?! What do you need?!

THE STRANGER

No need for anything.

JOHN

Get out of my apartment, you bastard!

The Stranger moves slowly toward John.

THE STRANGER

Why?

JOHN

Enough! Shut up! Get out or I'll kill you!

THE STRANGER

For what?

JOHN

Stop it! Shut up!

THE STRANGER

Why?

The Stranger is getting close.

JOHN

Shut up! I'm not joking!

THE STRANGER

You're not joking?

JOHN

Ah! Die, bitch!

John screams and charges at the Stranger with the knife. The Stranger stands motionless, smiling, and watching him.

John stabs the Stranger in the stomach with the knife and freezes. He releases the handle of the knife and steps back to the table, breathing heavily.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Oh, my God... What have I done?

The Stranger is standing with the knife in his stomach, breathing heavily. John looks at him and cries.

JOHN (CONT'D)

I'm not... Um... Jesus! I didn't want to-

The Stranger takes the knife and slowly pulls it out of his body. John looks at him in shock, covering his mouth in horror.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Oh, God! Oh...

The Stranger withdraws the knife and points its blade towards John. He stops smiling. A tense pause.

JOHN (CONT'D)

No! Wait! No, no, no! Don't do it!

The Stranger attacks John and stabs him sharply in the stomach with the same blow. Steps back heavily. John is standing with the knife in his body.

They both synchronously fall to the floor. John cries as he struggles to pull the knife out of his body, throwing it aside. John and the Stranger are on the floor, breathing heavily.

JOHN (CONT'D)

(crying)

What... what have I done to you?

The Stranger just smiles in response.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Stop torturing me, please... Just kill.

THE STRANGER

Why?

JOHN

Just kill me and go away.

THE STRANGER

Where?

JOHN

Stop it, please... Why me? I didn't do anything. I didn't do anything to anyone.

(beat)

I live peacefully, I don't bother anyone.

The Stranger looks at John, smiling friendly.

JOHN (CONT'D)

No one will even search for me...

(beat)

Is that why you choose me? Admit it. You knew everything, didn't you?

THE STRANGER

Knew what?

JOHN

You planned it all, right? From the very beginning. You've been following me for a long time... I've noticed for a while that someone was watching me... It was you all along...

The Stranger is looking at John, smiling.

JOHN (CONT'D)

It was you... Are you a killer? A  
maniac? Who are you?

(shouts)

Who are you?! Answer me!

John shouts with the last of his strength.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Who are you?!

A brief pause. The Stranger smiles broadly.

THE STRANGER

I'm noboodyyy...

John cries. The Stranger laughs ominously. John stands up, he bleeds and tries to move. The Stranger also bleeds and follows him.

**EXT. COURTYARD - DAY**

John's body falls to the ground, his bones are broken. He didn't die from the fall. He is severely mangled, struggling to breathe as he looks to his right. The Stranger's body lands in front of his eyes. He looks at John, smiling.

WOMAN (O.S.)

Oh, my God! Somebody call 911!

A WOMAN rushes toward the fallen bodies. John and the Stranger are lying motionless, looking at each other. Tears stream from John's eyes. A Woman cradles John's head, carefully examining him.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

Hurry up! He's still alive!

(to John)

Don't worry, sir. I'll take care of  
you. You're safe...

John's lips tremble with fear as he screams through the pain. The Stranger continues to look at John, smiling friendly.

THE END