

COVERT-19

by

Detective Bluto Mindpretzel

FADE IN:

INT. LAB - DAY

CLOSE ON a butterfly needle jabbed in a male arm. Blood creeps up the thin tube.

JULIE (30s), masked and bespectacled, retrieves a clipboard from the counter and exits.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Plush and ornate decor dominates the windowless room.

It's the office of a hunter. Rifle cabinet. Crossbow. The requisite mounted moose head... next to a Himalayan Ibex.

STEPHEN (40s), sits at his desk, hands folded in front of him. He reads the contents of his computer screen.

Julie enters. Stephen waives his hand dismissively.

STEPHEN
Take that silly thing off.

Julie hastily removes the mask and shoves it into her coat.

STEPHEN (CONT'D)
What do you have for me?

Julie ever-so-slightly shakes her head from side to side.

JULIE
We just don't know at this point.

Stephen raises his hand into a fist... and then releases it before pounding the desk.

STEPHEN
What are our numbers now?

JULIE
Most of the team is still recovering. Lethargy. Unable to move about for any length of time. Everyone is pretty much vulnerable at this point. Can't sleep. Exposed.

Stephen wipes his hands from his brow to his chin.

STEPHEN
What about equipment? What can we get? What's the lead time?

JULIE

Everything's still being diverted to hospitals. Including filters. We're still not completely sure what we'll need, or how much. Or even if it will be effective. I hate to tell you that this is guess work, but that's exactly what it is.

Stephen twists his head to one side in utter frustration... he violently grabs a remote from his desk and angrily snaps the wall-mounted television to life.

ON the muted SCREEN, an armed protest. Rural farmers yell MOS at a REPORTER and a POLICE OFFICER.

Stephen rises from his chair. He slowly crosses the room until he's positioned nearly under the monitor.

STEPHEN

You idiots. All you had to do was stay inside for a couple of months.

Stephen snaps his head toward Julie.

STEPHEN (CONT'D)

And now none of us can hunt.

Julie shakes her head quizzically.

STEPHEN (CONT'D)

What?

JULIE

Forgive me, but what we're dealing with... that's your main concern?

STEPHEN

Yes.... And?

JULIE

I think as an organization? We have bigger problems right now. We need a leader. Shouldn't you be more concerned about survival?

Stephen beams her a tight-lipped, conceited smile.

STEPHEN

Julie... your husband hunts, yes?

Julie frowns, and throws a hip to one side.

JULIE

You know he does.

STEPHEN

Yes, I know. And he uses every part of the animal, I'm sure. The meat, of course. And you can boil the bones for soup. I'm sure he stitches your children some winter coats with the skins as well?

JULIE

Stephen, I have a lot of work to -

STEPHEN

Are you starving, Julie?

JULIE

You know I'm not starving.

STEPHEN

So your husband is not a hunter gatherer? He's not foraging for you?

JULIE

I'm not participating in this.

STEPHEN

It took humans quite a bit of time to escape the food chain. And now you can go to your local market and buy regret-free meat. You would hope that there would be some regret in killing, wouldn't you? Oh sure, it's necessary. But you would hope that the poor worker in the slaughterhouse would at least pause and think about the lives he takes every minute. And not relish it.

JULIE

Stephen, what is your point?

STEPHEN

Your husband enjoys killing. All hunters do. It doesn't matter how you treat the creature after it's killed. Or if you are culling the herd. It doesn't make it done any less for sport. You plan a trip. Buy your gear. Make reservations for you and your buddies. A nice cozy lodge. Then sit in a blind. Or in a tree stand. And wait. The anticipation is palpable. And then?

Stephen mimics stalking a target with a pretend rifle.

STEPHEN (CONT'D)

When the target is within reach?
The excitement. The adrenaline.
BANG! Got 'em! It's quite a rush, I
have to tell you. Then you trade
stories over steaks and scotch and
cigars. Victory. Bloodlust is
satisfied. Approved by society.

Stephen points, directing Julie's attention to the monitor.

STEPHEN (CONT'D)

Do you believe these fools?

Stephen gets even closer to the monitor, and addresses it.

STEPHEN (CONT'D)

Do you really think you're free?
You're not in charge! You're under
control. Oh, yes, you might have
the illusion of freedom. On your
social platforms. At your job.
Because that's what we want you to
believe. But you are not free. We
control you. I control you!

Julie shuffles impatiently.

JULIE

Anything else? I have more work.

STEPHEN

Yes. I don't pay you two hundred
thousand dollars a year to fail me.
Why have we been so particularly
hard hit? Why have we as an
organizaton been crippled? This is
what I need you to find out. This
is what I PAY you to find out. I
don't need anyone on staff who
doesn't have answers.

JULIE

Look, we have gone over this. This
is uncharted territory. For
everyone. The best I can tell you
is that we seem to be the perfect
hosts for this thing. And if I knew
why? I would be in charge of this
organization instead of you.

Stephen bristles at the perceived threat to his authority.
He whirls from the monitor, and strides past Julie.

JULIE (CONT'D)
Stephen, this is a bad idea!

INT. LAB - DAY

Stephen enters.

On the table, a MAN lies unconscious.

Julie stops at the doorway. Mask back on her face.

The blood-filled tube winds its way to a piece of conduit, which connects to a machine, which is mounted atop a basin.

Over top of the basin, stretched like cheesecloth, is a HEPA filter, filled with blood. The filter is a sieve. The crimson liquid slowly drips into the basin. Clean. Pure.

Stephen leans over the prone body.

STEPHEN
You poor, deluded bastards. You have no idea. How could you? You don't understand how much we enjoy what we do. How we manipulate the economy. We decide how much you're going to make at that pathetic nine to five, or what you're going to get for that boring little Cape Cod with the white picket fence. And every so often? We wipe out your retirement portfolio. But not before we take our money and put it in a safe place, of course.

JULIE
He can't hear you.

Stephen whirls toward the door.

STEPHEN
Shut up!

The man's face grows more ashen as he's slowly drained.

Lining the shelves of the lab are mason jars. Filled with blood. Filtered blood.

STEPHEN (CONT'D)
Poor and obedient. That's how we like you. But? It wouldn't be worth it if we didn't get to finish the job. See, the thrill of the chase is long in our rear-view mirror. We conquered you long ago. Now? It's all about the kill.

Stephen's eyes grow red. He turns to Julie.

JULIE

Don't. He's contagious.

STEPHEN

And why is that MY problem? Huh?
Why are we incapacitated by their
stupid little virus?

JULIE

He's a test subject. Do not wreck
my experiment! This is what you
asked me to do. So let me do it!

Stephen turns to face Julie.

STEPHEN

Go. Now. Preserve your safety. I
need a moment here.

An exasperated Julie leaves.

Stephen turns back to face the man.

STEPHEN (CONT'D)

We WILL hunt you again. And it will
be sweet. Even sweeter than before.

Stephen's eyes blaze red... and he bears his fangs.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Julie taps her cell phone.

JULIE

Hi, it's me... yeah. I'll be home
in about a half hour... I'll pick
something up... Ah, nothing. Just
his usual shit... this thing is
driving him crazy... yeah, I know.
I know. Nothing worse than dealing
with a neutered vampire.

A blood-curdling, human SCREAM from the next room.

FADE OUT.