

---G E T T I N G Z O N E D---

written by

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Inspired by "The Twilight Zone "
by Rod serling

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FADE IN:

INT. KAVINSKY BEDROOM - LATE MORNING

Dim light seeps through blinds that haven't been opened in weeks. An alarm clock displays red digits. MICHAEL KAVINSKY (46) sprawls diagonally across the bed in a PLAID BATHROBE, paired with slippers - one navy, one gray - flattened with age.

Outside: a lawn mower hums. A NEIGHBOR calls to his dog. Ordinary life, distant.

Michael stares up, hollow. He tightens the belt of the robe like armor and rises.

CUT TO:

INT. STAIRCASE - CONTINUOUS

He shuffles down. Halfway he deadweights the last four steps, thudding to the bottom.

CUT TO:

INT. KAVINSKY LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

He collapses onto the couch. Channel-surfs past talk shows, soaps, a cowboy show, a cardboard UFO.

CLICK

THE TWILIGHT ZONE THEME whistles from the TV.

Michael exhales, almost smiles.

The FRONT DOOR OPENS. LAURA KAVINSKY (43) enters in nursing scrubs, groceries in hand. She freezes - robe, slippers, blank stare.

LAURA

Almost noon.

MICHAEL

Twilight Zone marathon. They're running the classics.

LAURA
You just woke up.

MICHAEL
I- no. I was up earlier.

She sets the mail down, studying him.

LAURA (SOFT)
You've been in that robe so long
it proba
bly has squatters' rights.

MICHAEL
I'm comfortable.

LAURA
You're stuck. (beat) It's like I
lost you and you're still standing
here. I can't find the you that
looks back.

MICHAEL
I'll start looking. Right after the
marathon.

LAURA
Right after. Always after.
(barely holding it
together)
I don't want to be the ad that nags
you to buy a life, Michael. I want
a husband I can reach.

She turns for the door.

CUT TO:

EXT. KAVINSKY HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Michael follows and freezes. The outside world is gone. A 1960s TV STUDIO stretches in stark BLACK AND WHITE. Klieg lights hang. Painted suburb backdrops. Michael spins - his house is now flats and props that don't quite meet. Crew signs are visible.

MICHAEL
What the-- no, no, no.

He bolts to an EXIT door. Opens it and stumbles right back into the same set from the opposite side. He tries another EXIT. Same result. A looping maze.

Slippers slap hollow plywood. Lights glare. His breathing climbs.

MICHAEL (PANICKED) (CONT'D)
Okay. Stop. Wake up. Wake up!

He shoves through one more EXIT and lands exactly where he started.

Smoke curls. A VOICE cuts through it - calm, amused. ROD SERLING steps into frame - immaculate suit, cigarette ember glowing.

SERLING
Michael Kavinsky has unlocked his door with the key of imagination. Beyond it lies a dimension of sound, of sight, of mind - a land of shadow and substance, of things and ideas. He has just crossed over... into the Twilight Zone.

Michael, shaking, presses against a false wall.

MICHAEL
You're dead. You can't be here.

Serling's smile is small and private. He gestures to a door stenciled: STAGE 2.

MICHAEL (TO HIMSELF) (CONT'D)
Follow the ghost. In a bathrobe.
Totally sane.

He forces his legs to move.

CUT TO:

INT. STAGE 2 - AUTOMOBILE SET "NIGHT"

A '59 SEDAN sits on painted asphalt. Behind it, a REAR PROJECTION HIGHWAY loops forever. The image flickers at the edges. Michael yanks his robe hem free of the door and slides in. The steering wheel doesn't turn, but the "car" lurches anyway. The tire hum is wrong - hollow, recorded.

KNOCK KNOCK.

On the projected roadside a HITCHHIKER stands far off, arm raised. The film hiccups - he's closer.

MICHAEL
Don't love that.

Hitchhiker REAPPEARS by a projected gas pump, closer still - the eyes glint, inhuman. Another lurch - the HITCHHIKER is suddenly at the driver's window, now on the outside the screen.

HITCHHIKER
Going your way.

MICHAEL
My way's... circular.

HITCHHIKER
That's how I catch up.

The rear projection melts and heals like burning celluloid. Same two poles. Same road.

MICHAEL
You're what - fate?

HITCHHIKER
Habit.

He taps the glass. The TAP is real. Michael flinches. A finger brushes the ROBE through the open vent window - a gentle, accusing touch.

HITCHHIKER (CONT'D)
Heavy, isn't it? Not in pounds. In what it carries.

MICHAEL
I thought it protected me.

HITCHHIKER
It preserved you. There's a difference.

The screen TEARS. Through the rip glows an EXIT sign in red.

HITCHHIKER (CONT'D)
That door opens. Then it closes.

Michael kicks the robe hem free again, throws the door open, and runs for the EXIT.

CUT TO:

INT. TRANSITION HALL - CONTINUOUS

Black void. Floating cue lights. Cigarette smoke drifting like weather. Serling steps out blocking his path.

SERLING

A man who lived life on delay takes
his first step into Now. But the
Zone is fond of detours and of
companions who don't tire.

He gestures to the next glowing door.

CUT TO:

INT. STAGE 3 - DINER SET "DAY"

A postcard perfect 1960s DINER. Checkerboard floor. Chrome stools. The backdrop is a painted street; clouds roll forward, reverse, roll again, always almost.

CONNIE (30s), a tired waitress, pours coffee with a trembling hand. On the counter: the MYSTIC SEER - a bobble headed DEVIL napkin holder. Sign: A PENNY.

Michael clocks an EXIT. It glows until he looks at it. It blinks out. He tries another door - it closes behind him and he steps right back into the diner from a different angle. His fear spikes. He tries again. Same loop.

MICHAEL (TO HIMSELF)

It's a maze. Every door leads back here.

Connie watches with pity.

CONNIE (HUSHED)

It won't let you leave until you face it.

Michael stares at the Seer. Drops a penny. The devil head bobs. A slip prints.

INSERT SLIP: NOT YET.

Another penny. BOB. SLIP: TOO WEAK.

Another. BOB. SLIP: STAY HERE.

Around them, CUSTOMERS freeze mid sip, mid chew. Glassy eyes. Held breath.

MICHAEL

That's-

He dumps a palmful of pennies. The head bobs faster, coughing slips:

INSERT SLIPS: WHAT IF YOU FAIL? NOT SAFE. ALMOST. NEVER.

Lightning flashes on the projection; thunder misses its cue.

CONNIE

People waste whole lives on that
thing. Waiting for permission.

MICHAEL

It's just a machine.

CONNIE

Then why is everybody afraid to
move?

A patron's tear hangs on his cheek, not daring to fall.

Michael's grip tightens on the robe belt. He suddenly RIPS
the Seer off the counter. Pennies scatter like BBs. The
bobblehead CRACKS. In the shattered faceplate, for a second,
he sees LAURA'S REFLECTION - distant, sad.

A STAFF ONLY door at the back begins to GLOW steady. A lone
slip flutters out from the broken machine:

INSERT SLIP: SEE YOU AGAIN.

Connie exhales. Nods toward the glow.

CONNIE (RELIEVED) (CONT'D)

That way. Before it remembers how
to talk.

Michael hesitates - then goes.

CUT TO:

INT. TRANSITION HALL - CONTINUOUS

Serling falls into step beside him, voice a dry current.

INT. STAGE 3B

SERLING

Superstition is simply fear with a
paper mask. Our traveler will now
meet fear in an elevator, where
every button is a promise he's made
to himself.

CUT TO:

ELEVATOR SET "NIGHT"

A skeletal 1950s FREIGHT ELEVATOR: Scissor gate, bare bulb, chalked floor numbers. The buttons: LATER, SOMEDAY, MAYBE, AFTER. The only other button reads: NOW - its casing is broken.

Michael steps in. The scissor gate CLANGS shut by itself.

A tinny P.A. crackles, voice bland and chipper.

P.A. VOICE

Welcome, passenger. Please select a destination.

Michael pushes LATER. The bulb flickers. The elevator SHUDDERS.

DING. The gate slides. A FLOOR OF LAUGHTER: a studio audience applauding canned laughter in blinding light. They laugh at nothing. At him.

MICHAEL

No thanks.

The gate slams. He presses SOMEDAY.

DING. A HOSPITAL CORRIDOR: fluorescent buzz, unending. A door reads: RESULTS.

He backs off. Presses MAYBE.

DING. His APARTMENT - but empty, a groove on the couch where he sits alone. A ripped photo frame with no photo.

He swallows. Presses AFTER.

DING. A SMALL THEATER. On stage: MICHAEL, in a spotlight, reading from blank pages. The laughs - the sound of a single person pretending to be a crowd.

He faces the broken NOW post. Reaches in, slices a knuckle, and pries it out. The metal cuts his thumb.

MICHAEL (THROUGH TEETH) (CONT'D)

Now.

The elevator DROPS. Bulb swings. Wind roars. The scissor gate rattles like bones.

DING. The gate opens on a glowing EXIT door.

He steps through.

CUT TO:

INT. STAGE 4 - LIVING ROOM SET "EVENING"

A modest mid century living room sits on risers. Outside the walls: black void.

On the sofa: TALKY TINA, the infamous doll. Smile too wide. Eyes glassy and wet.

TALKY TINA
My name is Talky Tina... and I
don't like you. (beat) I don't like
that robe either.

Her head jerks in stuttering increments. Sweet voice with a razor under it.

TALKY TINA (CONT'D)
Act one: say it. Act two - show it.
Act three: prove it.
(a whisper of delight)
Or I'll keep you here forever. I
like the ones who can't change.
They're my favorite toys.

Michael forces himself to move. He STRAIGHTENS a picture, FIXES a tilted lamp. The HUMS louder. Shadows stretch.

A floorboard POPS. A nail juts up. He hammers it down with his palm - skin splits.

MICHAEL
I'm not glass. I don't break if I
move.

In Tina's eyes, for a blink, LAURA stands behind him, lips moving in a whisper.

The EXIT door shimmers and TURN SOLID. Tina's porcelain lips part one last time, barely audible.

TALKY TINA (WHISPER)
We'll play again.

Michael shivers, pushes through the EXIT.

CUT TO:

INT. TRANSITION HALL - CONTINUOUS

Serling leans on a cue mark that isn't there.

SERLING

Our protagonist has learned to act.
Now he will learn to speak truth
where truth is punished.

CUT TO:

INT. STAGE 5 - TOWN SQUARE SET "DAY"

A painted town square beneath a too blue sky. EXTRAS smile and clap on a loop like an old film.

ANTHONY FREMONT (8), the same boy from long ago, stands on a crate, finger raised.

He points. DAY - the sun snaps to blinding. He points. NIGHT - darkness slams. Projected flames roll behind the flats.

ANTHONY

Isn't it wonderful? Isn't it good?

The crowd answers in unison, voices too bright, too desperate.

TOWNSPEOPLE

It's good, Anthony. Real good!

Anthony turns his finger toward Michael's robe. SNAP - the plaid burns. SNAP - the robe screams in neon colors. Anthony's smile never reaches his eyes. He steps close, ghoul lit from below.

ANTHONY

Do you like it? Say it's good.

The crowd's clapping grows frantic. A WOMAN bites her lip till it bleeds rather than stop.

A MAN falters - hands drop from exhaustion.

Anthony WHIRLS, points. The man SCREAMS and VANISHES in a ripple of light. The image shifts to a cornfield under a dead sky. The scream echoes once, then silence.

The crowd explodes into praise, weeping.

TOWNSPEOPLE (DESPERATE)

It's good! It's real good!

Michael's knuckles whiten on the robe belt. His lips half form "It's good-" He stops.

For a flicker in the burning sky, LAURA'S FACE appears - pale, sad, watching.

MICHAEL (VOICE TREMBLING, CLEAR)
No, Anthony. It isn't good. It's
frightening. It hurts people.

The air tightens. Anthony's finger hovers near Michael like a knife.

ANTHONY (DANGEROUS)
That's a very bad thing to say. I
could wish you into the cornfield.
Forever.

MICHAEL
Being told what to say isn't
living. I've been hiding behind
this robe afraid. But lies don't
make life real.

Anthony's face twists monstrous in the hard light.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
You can turn the sky to fire. But
you can't make a lie true.

The EXIT door at the back steadies and glows. The crowd's chant falters into murmurs. Anthony's finger lowers, trembling. For a heartbeat, even he looks afraid of himself. Michael walks past him and through the EXIT.

CUT TO:

INT. LAURA'S DRESSING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Half the room is color, half black and white. A MIRROR splits the line. LAURA's nursing scrubs hang on the chairback.

She turns. She's been crying, but she's steady.

LAURA
You found me.

MICHAEL
After I stopped waiting for the
right mood. The right day. The
right shirt.

LAURA
Still in the robe.

MICHAEL (BARE)
I was afraid that if I tried and failed, it would prove everything I whisper to myself is true. So I didn't move. I let that kill us faster than anything.

Silence hums. Laura crosses to him, touches the robe belt, then his chest beneath.

LAURA
I told you I felt like I lost you - the you that looks back. (soft) I still see him. Right here.

He breaks - small, honest. She holds him; he holds back.

MICHAEL
I don't want to be preserved. I want to be alive. With you. Even if I'm scared.

The set walls CREAK. The dividing line dissolves. Color bleeds into black and white.

LAURA (THROUGH TEARS, SMILING)
Then let's go. Now.

They turn. The EXIT brightens.

CUT TO:

INT. TRANSITION HALL - CONTINUOUS

Serling watches like a proud usher.

SERLING
Michael Kavinsky has learned the only cure for paralysis is the risk of the present tense.

He steps with his wife into color.

CUT TO:

EXT. KAVINSKY HOUSE - DAY (COLOR)

They step into a plain, imperfect street. No cameras. Birds argue in a tree. Michael knots the robe belt one last time... then unties it, folds the robe over his arm.

MICHAEL

Alright. Let's go to work.

Laura threads her fingers in his. They go inside.

CUT TO:

EXT. KAVINSKY HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - MORNING (ONE WEEK LATER)

Michael steps out - jeans, button-up, sneakers. No robe. Over his arm: the plaid robe. Slippers in hand.

MICHAEL

We had a good run. But I've got work now. And pants.

He places the robe and slippers in a DONATION BOX. A faint hint of the TWILIGHT ZONE THEME rides the wind.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Don't try to follow me.

A DONATION TRUCK pulls up. The DRIVER loads the box, climbs in, and pulls away.

INT. DONATION TRUCK - MOVING - CONTINUOUS (TAG)

In the rearview mirror - a few shadows shifts. The HITCHHIKER, ANTHONY holding talky Tina, all of them smile sit atop the donation box, smiling, eyes bright as a match head. He taps the lid twice.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - CONTINUOUS

The truck rolls into the ordinary afternoon.

SERLING (V.O.)

Michael Kavinsky has, for now, left the Twilight Zone. But somewhere, on another stretch of highway, an old companion rides along, looking for the next soul who confuses preservation with life.

FADE OUT.

THE END.