

PIECING TOGETHER

Written by

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OVER BLACK

FADE IN:

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

Bare white walls, immaculate and adult, not a hint of humour.

SID STICKLER rises from his slumber. Mid 40's, rake thin, faraway look in his eyes, this is a man striving for perfection.

He slides his feet into his slippers and glances to the photo on the cabinet.

SID STICKLER  
What are you looking at?

His mother, ROSALIND, displays a disapproving expression.

Mid 60's, devil red lips and flared nostrils, neck bursting with veins, Lady Muck in a lavish coat and fur hat.

INT. LANDING - LATER

Soft cremes, plants and paintings.

Sid Stickler makes his way to the bathroom. He glides his hand across the staircase pillars, counting each one.

He switches the light on outside the bathroom. On, off, on. He removes his slippers and fixes his gaze to the tile floor, wary of entering.

INT. BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Pristine and gleaming. Carbon Black tiles. A window sill reminiscent of a surgeon's table, grooming tools arranged methodically. Health books and another photo of Rosalind occupy a shelf.

He tiptoes cautiously to the sink, avoiding the cracks.

A spider creeps onto his foot, he loses balance, steps on a crack.

SID STICKLER  
Damn it.

He tears off a piece of tissue, disposes of the spider and leaves the bathroom.

MOMENTS LATER

He repeats his steps, this time slippers on.

He picks up a pair of tweezers, magnifies his flip mirror and removes every trace of sleep from his eyes. He collects the pieces on a tissue.

He then consults one of his health books.

SID STICKLER

Let's see...

He studies the pictures and his own samples. He's satisfied with the results and places the book back on the shelf.

He continues to inspect himself thoroughly: tongue, jaw, neck for lumps and bumps.

He then checks his pulse and gasps. He's discovered a black spot on his palm. He clutches his hand and falls back onto the edge of the bath.

SID STICKLER

No no no it can't be. I-I did a mole count yesterday!

He reaches for a pair of scissors, hands trembling and psyches himself up.

SID STICKLER

Alright, just a quick snip, come on Sid, nice and easy...aahhh I can't!

He reverts back to his book, skimming through at lightning speed.

SID STICKLER

Come on, come on give me an answer!

He arrives at skin cancer and starts to bawl.

SID STICKLER

Oh I knew it. I knew this day would come!

He turns to mother on the shelf.

SID STICKLER

I swear I followed all your stupid skin routines, I-I stayed out the sun, I applied cream rigorously!

Then to God.

SID STICKLER  
Why me, huh?

Then back to mother, pointing at her.

SID STICKLER  
Why not h--

He pauses. The spot has vanished. He wipes his brow and turns to the ceiling.

SID STICKLER  
Don't ever do that again.

He stares into space, pondering, then remembers the previous day.

INT. FRIDGE - FLASHBACK

He opens a tupperware box and takes out a chocolate chip muffin.

INT. BATHROOM - BACK TO PRESENT

He laughs. Then a switch flicks in his mind.

SID STICKLER  
Actually, that reminds me...

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

A sleek and modern haven of Ivory Blacks and Titanium Whites.

He rushes down the stairs in his dressing gown and almost tumbles. He heads straight to the fridge and removes the muffins. He takes a magnifying glass from a drawer and checks them for mould.

He's interrupted by his phone. He takes it from his gown pocket and answers.

SID STICKLER  
Mother, this really isn't a  
good...n-no I'm not in danger...no  
you don't need to come over I'm  
fine...

He puts one of the muffins in his gown pocket.

He walks to the window and pulls down the blind cord, the blind rises and the sun bursts in, it's far too bright so he brings it back down.

SID STICKLER

...I don't wanna watch The Wizard of Oz with you, I'm forty...I don't care if you do have it on VHS!...

He starts pacing, getting increasingly agitated.

SID STICKLER

...what do you mean raising my voice I'm not raising my voice!...alright l-listen, I've gotta go okay? You just...go on your journey with Dorothy okay?

He angrily swipes end call, gestures stabbing the phone and puts it back in his pocket.

He places the muffins back in the fridge, stomps over to the radio and switches it on. An urgent swarm of violins fill the kitchen.

BREAKFAST MONTAGE

He opens a cupboard, clanks two glasses together and takes one out.

He tears off a piece of kitchen paper, places it on the counter and puts the glass on top.

He takes out a carton of juice from the fridge and straightens the magnets which read...

*Healthy fridge healthy life.*

He pours his juice with precision, as though serving a guest of the highest authority.

He adds milk to his bland cereal, pouring once clockwise, twice anticlockwise, and taps his spoon on the rim of the bowl.

He counts down on his watch, determined to beat the toaster. He mouths three, two, one and quickly pushes cancel. The toast pops, perfectly golden.

END MONTAGE

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

He sits at his marble island, absorbing the orchestra, eyes closed. But he's restless, heels bouncing off the floor.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

Warm and cosy, mint greens, faint greys, minimalist art.

He pokes his hand through the curtains and opens the window a crack.

He sits down, places his orange juice on the corner of the coffee table. A five hundred piece jigsaw is laid out.

He stares at it as if under a spell, it's almost complete.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Four magnets fall to the floor...

*H. E. L. L.*

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

The wind catches the curtains which flap aggressively, but Sid Stickler is unfazed by the chill, completely immersed in his jigsaw.

His phone breaks his concentration, he pulls it from his pocket.

SID STICKLER

Will you get out of my head woman!

He firmly pushes decline, flicks the volume to mute and tosses it to the sofa beside him.

He rubs his hands together.

SID STICKLER

Right. No more distractions.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

A smoker passes by the window. Sid Stickler splutters, reaches for his juice and knocks it over staining his slippers and the carpet.

SID STICKLER  
Ssshhhhhhit.

He races to the kitchen barefoot, glass in hand.

He fails to spot the magnets, treads on them, drops the glass and hops over to the island gritting his teeth.

The orchestra in full swing.

He sits on a stool and bites down on his fist. The word 'hell' imprinted in his foot.

MOMENTS LATER

He gathers the shards into a dustpan, throws them away and fixes the magnets back to the fridge.

The music is much softer now.

He grabs a cloth and with a slight limp leaves the room.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

He mutters and strains, trying his best to erase the marks.

The roar of the wind, yappy dogs and an ice cream van blaring it's merry tune are just the ingredients to pop a blood vessel.

He storms to the window, knocks the curtains out of the way and violently shuts it.

His phone vibrates. He picks it up and launches it across the room.

SID STICKLER  
Yaaahhhh!

He knocks a photo of mother off the mantelpiece and onto the carpet.

He puts on his damp slippers and sits down when...

SID STICKLER  
Oh no. Please no.

...he discovers the last piece of the puzzle is missing.

He clenches his fists, rocks back and forth, legs banging into the carpet like he's trying to start a car.

SID STICKLER  
This isn't happening, this can't  
be...

He gets on his hands and knees, checks the box.

SID STICKLER  
...first the remote now...

He turns to face the sofa, moves the cushions to one side,  
finds it. He breathes a sigh of relief.

MOMENTS LATER

The puzzle piece is sucked down the back.

SID STICKLER  
What the?...

He digs his arm down.

SID STICKLER  
Come on where are ya?

He digs deeper and catches a scent.

SID STICKLER  
Where's that coming from? Smells  
like pine.

The temperature decreases significantly, his breath visible.

He views his surroundings, trying to make sense of the drop  
and then panics, something has hold of him.

SID STICKLER  
Gah!

He wriggles and gets pulled further down.

SID STICKLER  
L-let go of me!

The leather rips and the sofa rattles.

SID STICKLER  
Wh-what is this?!

There's a sickening crack. He clutches onto a cushion.

SID STICKLER  
Gaaaaaahhhhh!



MOMENTS LATER

He's swallowed whole, taking the cushion down with him.

INT. FOREST - NIGHT

Putrid green haze, crooked trees, the eerie hum of white noise accompanied by cackling crows.

Sid Stickler plummets down into the sludgy earth. The jagged forest floor stabs every inch of him.

He rolls onto his back, writhing in agony, caked in dirt. His shoulder dislocated.

He uses his cushion as a 'life ring' and crawls to a log close by. He leans against it, touches his shoulder ever so slightly, wincing, panting.

SID STICKLER

Oh my god. Oh my god.

He touches it again.

SID STICKLER

Daaahhh!

He surveys the forest, just makes out the puzzle piece in the distance. He smiles, lip quivering.

A gust of wind blows it further into the forest.

He reaches out.

SID STICKLER

N-agghh!

He whimpers, realises what he must do.

He closes his eyes, bites down on his cushion and musters up the courage to pop his shoulder back into place.

SID STICKLER

Deeuugghhhh!

He stuffs the cushion inside his gown for warmth, makes a double knot in the cord.

He holds onto the log for support and manages to get back on his feet.

INT. FOREST - LATER

He trudges through the bitterly cold conditions, arms crossed, legs ready to snap, slippers torn at the sides.

The trail leads him to a memorial bench and a photo in a muddy frame resting on top. He reads the message on the brass plate.

*In memory of Rosalind, who should have stayed at home.*

He lowers himself down onto the bench and removes the picture of mother from behind the broken glass.

SID STICKLER  
Just when I bloody well need you!

The wind dies down, rumbling echoes throughout the forest, the ground shudders.

SID STICKLER  
What do I do now, huh?

He clings onto the bench and brings his legs close to his chest.

SID STICKLER  
You never prepared me for this!

The rumbling stops, the forest calms.

He scans the area, madly, prepared for the worst.

The bench begins to shake, he drops the photo and leaps off.

He watches, horror-struck as the bench and mother sink beneath the forest floor.

INT. FOREST - LATER

He drags his feet, coughs into his sleeve. The haze gives off an appalling stench.

His stomach cries out, he takes out his muffin, shakily brings it to his cracked, purple lips.

His grip is too weak, a gust swoops in and snatches it.

Another thrusts him against a tree, the impact so severe it wrecks his spine.

SID STICKLER  
Gaaahhhhhhhh!

He slides down into the pool of mud below.

The muffin is merely a few feet away.

A crow lands beside it and starts pecking.

He throws leaves at the crow and slithers towards his food.

SID STICKLER

Hey, get away ya vermin that's my  
only source of sustenance.

The rumbling returns, he picks up the pace, each movement more painful than the last.

The muffin and the crow are pulled underground, leaving behind a few crumbs and feathers.

He pounds his fists into the ground, enraged.

INT. FOREST - LATER

He continues on with the trek, places his hands on his hips, stretches, fixes his posture.

The forest makes another din.

He stops in his tracks and hears the sound of something rocketing to the surface.

MOMENTS LATER

He climbs a small embankment and is perplexed at what he finds at the top...

...his kitchen fridge.

He plods towards it and opens the door. Everything is where it should be, even the perfectly preserved muffins.

He peels the lid off the box and dives into the baked goods.

He shuts the door to find the magnets now read...

*if you only had a brain.*

He tries to make sense of the information, then slowly looks down at the box. It's swimming with maggots. The muffins covered in mould.

He turns deathly white, tosses it to the ground, hunches over and vomits.

Green smoke seeps out of the fridge and into the sky.  
Something growls.

MOMENTS LATER

The door flies open and knocks him down the embankment. He lands in another mucky pool. He lifts his head up and finds his flip mirror right in front of him.

A grotesque image stares back, a face oozing with pus, moles and lumps. Eyes crusted over.

The mirror cracks and he continues to vomit.

He stands up, pauses. He can hear water.

INT. FOREST - LATER

He stumbles towards a bridge and stream, drops to his knees, drinks and drinks and rids himself of filth.

A furry object bobs up to meet him, he jumps back.

On closer inspection it appears to be a fur hat.

He grabs a nearby stick and fishes it out.

The growling noise returns, louder.

MOMENTS LATER

He crosses the bridge, all the while focused on the hat, the growling behind him and the number of wooden pillars on the bridge.

He spots a boulder, hides behind it, unzips his cushion and stuffs the fur hat inside.

He hears the sound of twigs snapping, leaves rustling, heavy footsteps and the growl louder than ever. He closes his eyes and holds his nose, the stench stinging his nostrils.

The sound of the footsteps fade. He peers out from the boulder and squints at a brownish humanoid blob plodding through the trees.

He takes one step forward and catches his foot on something. He picks up his TV remote.

SID STICKLER  
Every cloud...

Another object shoots up.

INT. FOREST - LATER

He arrives at another fridge, identical to the first.

He's hesitant but still edges forward, eyeing the magnets.

An indistinct voice sparks his interest.

SID STICKLER  
Hello? S-somebody in there?

He grabs the handle, takes a deep breath and opens the door.

SID STICKLER  
Woah!

On the other side is Rosalind, frozen stiff, eyes darting about, teeth clenched.

She makes a muffled racket.

SID STICKLER  
O-okay j-just shut up a minute!

He looks around, figuring out his next step and is shocked to find...

SID STICKLER  
I don't believe it.

...the missing puzzle piece on a tree stump.

He jumps for joy, albeit awkwardly.

SID STICKLER  
Yes yes yes!

He turns to mother, then back to the piece, and back to mother.

SID STICKLER  
Sorry. I can't.

He takes out her fur hat, pops it on her head, she's frozen and furious, and closes the door.

The magnets read...

*if you only had a heart.*

SID STICKLER

Ah shut up.

He turns around to be greeted by the escaped fridge monster.

An 8ft bready blob covered in razor sharp choc chips, hollow eyes and mouth.

The monster takes a swing. Sid Stickler ducks.

It swipes the magnets off the fridge.

He dives for the puzzle piece when the wind picks up and propels it forward.

SID STICKLER

Oh no you don't.

He dashes after it.

A murder of crows fly down and attack him, halting his pursuit. He waves his arms wildly.

The crows retreat, he turns to see the monster charging towards him, he grabs a piece of log...

Thwack!

...drives it into the creature, decapitating it. It's head smashes into a tree and crumbles into a thousand pieces.

He loses sight of the puzzle piece.

INT. FOREST - LATER

He sits by a tree, shattered, hopelessly lost, whistling songs from The Wizard of Oz.

He removes what's left of his slippers. His feet battered and misshapen. The imprint from the magnets still visible.

A crow appears from behind the tree.

He shoos it away.

SID STICKLER

Beat it.

It won't budge.

SID STICKLER

I said--

He pauses. The crow has the puzzle piece in it's beak.

SID STICKLER  
--alright, now, don't, move.

Slowly and steadily, he removes his cushion and lowers it towards the crow.

SID STICKLER  
Easy. Easy.

A third fridge spurts up sending the crow with it.

SID STICKLER  
No no no!

The crow flies up onto the branch above.

MOMENTS LATER

He opens the fridge which is packed full just like the first. He looks down at his cushion, has an idea.

He fills it with as many items as possible, until it's heavy enough to cause damage.

He shuts the door.

The magnets read...

*if you only had the nerve.*

A look of determination enters his face.

MOMENTS LATER

He piles two pieces of logs up against the fridge, uses them as stepladders and climbs to the top.

Once at the top, he doesn't break his gaze with the crow.

SID STICKLER  
(gritted teeth)  
Come on.

There's a long pause.

SID STICKLER  
Come oooooonnn!

The crow flies towards him, he raises the cushion above his head and knocks the crow to the ground.

He slides down from the fridge, steps on the crow, reaches down and claims his prize.

He admires it, even kisses it, then spits realising where it's been.

The fridge plunges.

He communicates with the forest and holds up the puzzle piece.

SID STICKLER

Alright. This is what you wanted me to do right? Find the missing piece? Well guess what? I found it. Mission complete. What do you say to that?

Rumbling response.

He spots cracks forming in the distance, cracks heading in his direction, fast.

MOMENTS LATER

He weaves left and right like a soldier in a minefield.

Another object presents itself afar...

...a sofa.

He looks behind him, dirty, sweaty, tortured and now elated, the cracking has stopped.

He turns back to look at his sofa when...

...ccccrrracckkk!

Another crack forms seperating him from the sofa.

He stops abruptly, almost falls into the pitch black below.

SID STICKLER

Come on Sid, you've come this far...

He takes steps back, prepares himself for the jump.

SID STICKLER

...just avoid the crack.

He runs for his life, makes the jump...



INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

He wakes up on his sofa. The jigsaw is not on the coffee table.

ROSALIND (O.S.)  
Sidney! Sidney is that you?

Rosalind opens the front door and is disgusted by the state of her son.

ROSALIND  
Oh my god! What in god's name have you been up to?! Where have you been?!

He stares at her, madness in his eyes.

SID STICKLER  
Where's my jigsaw?

ROSALIND  
I gave you strict instructions to remain indoors and what do you go and do?

He rubs his chest, wanders around the room.

SID STICKLER  
I-it's not here, why is it not here?

ROSALIND  
Sidney will you keep your back straight when you pace, I don't want a son with a stoop.

SID STICKLER  
What have you done with it?!

Rosalind wiggles her bony liver-spotted finger.

ROSALIND  
Don't you raise your voice to me.

SID STICKLER  
I had a five hundred piece jigsaw, r-right here on the coffee table and now it's gone!

ROSALIND  
You don't need jigsaws to entertain you that's my job.

He heads for the kitchen.

SID STICKLER  
Ahhh bullshit mother. Bull-shit.

Rosalind's neck gets redder.

ROSALIND  
What did you say?

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

He bangs his head against the fridge door as Rosalind witters on.

ROSALIND (O.S.)  
You better wash your mouth out with soap and water or so help me...

SID STICKLER  
(low)  
Shut up.

ROSALIND (O.S.)  
What is this on the carpet? You've stained the carpet Sidney what are you playing at?

SID STICKLER  
(low)  
Shut up.

ROSALIND (O.S.)  
And what is this?

INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Rosalind picks up her photo off the carpet.

ROSALIND  
Is there a reason I'm face down on the carpet Sidney?!

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

SID STICKLER  
(low)  
Shut up.

ROSALIND (O.S.)

Do I mean so little to you that I  
can't appear on your mantlepice?  
Sidney will you answer your  
mother?! You know your just like  
your father, scurrying away like a  
pathetic little rabbit--

He throws the magnets to the floor.

SID STICKLER

--Shut up shut up shut up!

INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Rosalind's left eye twitches, she rolls up her sleeves.

ROSALIND

How dare you.

She stomps to the kitchen.

ROSALIND

How dare y!--

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

She stops, spots the magnets strewn about the floor.

ROSALIND

--pick them up.

He shakes his head.

ROSALIND

Pick. Them. Up.

He kicks them away.

SID STICKLER

Make me.

Rosalind reaches out to throttle him when...

Gdumpf!

...he smashes the fridge door into her face. She collapses,  
knocked out cold.

MOMENTS LATER

He opens the bin and finds all the puzzle pieces.

CUT TO BLACK.

SUPER: FOUR DAYS LATER.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

He resembles a corpse. He's wheezing, droopy-eyed, the filth of the forest tattooed on his skin and soul.

He's at the finish line. The jigsaw requires the last piece.

SID STICKLER

Finally.

He places the last piece into position.

SID STICKLER

Wait a minute...

But it doesn't fit.

He puts pressure on it, resorts to banging it in.

MOMENTS LATER

The sofa starts to rumble.

He flops off and crawls to the window, stares at the sofa and then...

Pshhhhhhhhhhh!

It erupts thousands and thousands of jigsaw pieces.

He covers his ears and screams.

He grabs the curtains, pulls himself up.

Outside the window, a forest with green haze and muffin monsters patrolling.

FADE OUT.