

SECONDHAND STORIES

Written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. THRIFT STORE - DAY

A grey, cloudy day. Squeezed between two larger department stores is a quaint little thrift shop, the kind you see all over. There's nothing special about it, not a remarkable feature to be found.

People filter in and out through its doors, a relatively slow day.

ACROSS THE STREET

Sitting on a bench scribbling in a pocket-sized, leather-bound notebook labeled "STORY IDEAS" is a disheveled, scruffy-looking man in his late 30s. His hair is matted and unkempt, the unruly facial hair splattered across his face a lost cause he's all but given up on. This is THE DRIFTER.

He scratches out whatever he was writing and rips the page from the notebook, crumpling it into a tight ball before tossing it at a nearby trash can, missing by a mile.

He sighs heavily before bringing his eyes back to the blank canvas of the page -- "STORY IDEAS."

Suddenly, the pages of the notebook are rifled by a cold breeze. The Drifter wrings his hands together for warmth, blowing into them. His gaze falls on the thrift shop across the street.

CUT TO:

INT. THRIFT STORE - CONTINUOUS

A little bell rings as The Drifter enters the store. Looking around, there's a handful of customers grouped together towards the back of the store and one OLD LADY taking her time at checkout.

It only takes him a few moments of idle browsing before he finds what he's looking for -- a pair of navy blue, hand-sewn wool GLOVES. They appear tattered and well-worn, but also cozy and warmly inviting as they rest forgotten on a pile of discarded clothes in the discount section of the store.

A dangling price tag puts their value at fifty cents.

The Drifter snatches the gloves and stuffs them in his coat pocket before proceeding to checkout.

He gets in line behind the Old Lady, who appears to be chatting with a rather bored-looking CLERK.

The Drifter brings out his notepad and begins clicking his pen impatiently as he stares down the daunting, void-like space beneath "STORY IDEAS." Then, he looks up to see a sign leaning against the register that reads: "CASH ONLY!"

His eyes widen as he jams the notebook in his back pocket and trades it for his wallet. Opening it reveals its contents to be as barren as the pages of his pad.

Silently, he exits the line, and ducks behind a clothes rack. Peering over the row of coats, no one seems to have taken notice of his departure. Desperately, he begins searching the floor for loose change. All he comes up with is a penny, face-down.

Then, a lightbulb goes off, and The Drifter smiles devilishly. Quietly, covertly, he slips on the pair of gloves and begins making his way out the store.

Suddenly, a worker passes by, causing him to dash behind another clothes rack where his gloved-hand accidentally brushes up against one of the hanging jackets.

FLASH!

CUT TO:

EXT. DINING PAVILLION - NIGHT - VISION

Hanging lights illuminate a charming scene between a man and his date. They converse inaudibly, laughing at one another's jokes.

FLASH!

CUT TO:

INT. THRIFT STORE - CONTINUOUS

The Drifter emerges from the vision, breathing heavily. He looks around, frantically ascertaining his surroundings, but everything appears to be normal. People carry on with their shopping as if nothing out of the ordinary has happened.

Slowly, The Drifter returns his attention to the JACKET he was just gripping. Upon closer inspection, it looks to be the same jacket that the MAN in the vision was wearing.

Tentatively, he brings his hand closer to it. Then, squeezing his eyes shut, he warily touches its sleeve.

FLASH!

DINING PAVILLION - VISION

The same scene as before continues to play out. The man and woman chatter affably as they sip from half-full wine glasses. They bring the glasses together and clink just a little too hard, causing some wine to spill out and stain the right sleeve of the man's jacket.

With a dismissive laugh, he pulls off the jacket and slings it over his shoulder. Then, both he and the woman call out "Check please!" at the same time, resulting in another fit of tipsy laughter.

FLASH!

THRIFT STORE

The Drifter lets go of the sleeve and gasps, as if emerging from underwater. After taking a moment to collect himself, he yanks the jacket off its coat hanger and turns it over to its right sleeve where a big, red wine stain can be found.

THE DRIFTER

AHA!!

Everyone in the store turns to look at The Drifter following his loud exclamation. The Old Lady and the Clerk pause mid-conversation to stare at him confusedly.

THE DRIFTER (CONT'D)

(beat)

Aha... I knew the price was too good... See? There's a big stain here... on the sleeve.

After a moment, everyone either rolls their eyes or shakes their heads as they gradually return to their shopping. The Old Lady waves him off and continues her conversation with the Clerk, much to the other's apparent dismay.

The Drifter attempts to contain himself but it's obvious he's giddy with disbelief at this newfound development.

He pulls out his notepad to jot something down, but his focus is drawn to the gloves he's still got on. Holding out his hands in front of his face, he appears to connect the dots.

A fresh excitement sparking in his eyes, The Drifter begins searching the place for a new object to test out the glove's powers on. A gaudy, 80s-style WEDDING DRESS with puffed shoulders catches his attention and he eagerly saunters over to it.

He places his hand on one of the poofy frills and--

FLASH!

CUT TO:

EXT. BACKYARD WEDDING - DAY - VISION

CLOSE ON The Drifter's face, as his eyes flash open. He looks before him to see an array of mostly well-dressed people seated in rows of cheap, plastic folding chairs.

Looking behind him he finds a young, nervous-looking PRIEST quietly mouthing words to himself from the Bible as if rehearsing for a school play, his brow furrowed in concentration. Above him, a flimsy altar looms menacingly.

This is clearly a wedding scene. But with guests to his front and a priest to his back, that would make The Drifter...

THE BRIDE!!

PULL BACK to reveal The Drifter wearing the WEDDING DRESS, then brand new, complete with a tacky bouquet that he unwittingly clings to his hairy chest -- openly visible for all to see in the low-cut gown.

Equal feelings of horror and embarrassment worm their way into his expression. Barely mustering the courage to turn to his right, he is met with the sweaty, acne-ridden face of a nerdy-looking GROOM who leans in for a kiss, his lips puckered like a goldfish.

PRIEST
Dearly beloved--

FLASH!

THRIFT STORE

The Drifter screams loudly as he dramatically leaps away from the dress, falling to the floor in the process.

Once again, all eyes in the store fall to him.

THE DRIFTER

(beat)

It's just so ugly.

After another short pause, everyone goes back to their business, paying no further mind to the deranged stranger who keeps making a scene.

The Drifter gets up and dusts himself off, chuckling softly. He whips out his notepad and begins filling out the page labelled "STORY IDEAS."

Suddenly, something new catches his eye -- an antique, porcelain TEAPOT, decorated with a faded floral pattern and riddled with gentle cracks that spread out like wispy spider webs along its fragile surface.

Slowly pocketing his pad, The Drifter hypnotically strides over to the old teapot -- mesmerized by the sight of the dust-coated vessel as if it were the light at the end of some inescapable tunnel.

Reaching out, his hand lingers, the fuzz of the gloves just centimeters from the pot's handle. It hovers there for a moment before being pulled back by The Drifter as he worriedly bites his lip. Feeling the lump of the notebook in his back pocket, however, helps strengthen his resolve.

His mind made up, he firmly grips the handle.

FLASH!

CUT TO:

INT. LIVINGROOM - EVENING - VISION

The Drifter stands in the corner of a cozy little livingroom setup. Outside the window it's raining heavily, thunder booming and lightning crashing.

In a conjoined kitchen, an OLD MAN fills a kettle with water before setting it on the stove to boil. A doorbell rings and he turns around with a smile, grabbing two teacups and setting them down on the kitchen table before moving to answer it.

The Drifter watches as the Old Man crosses the room to the front door. Opening it reveals a drenched LITTLE GIRL sniffing in a yellow raincoat.

The Old Man quickly invites her in, shuts the door, and takes her coat. Handing her a towel to dry off, he motions for her to take a seat at the kitchen table just as the kettle begins to whistle. Leaving to prepare the tea gives The Drifter a moment to study the Little Girl. Despite having mostly dried off, tear streaks still mark her face.

The Old Man returns with the TEAPOT -- all shiny and brand new -- and pours himself and the Little Girl two steaming cups of chocolatey brown tea. Sipping from her cup seems to temper the girl's sadness, and she smiles at her grandfather who warmly returns the gesture.

CLOSE ON the teapot.

FLASH!

Staying on the TEAPOT, though it looks much older now, those familiar cracks having returned.

PULL BACK to reveal:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - YEARS LATER - VISION

The GRANDFATHER lies motionless on a hospital bed, hooked up to various machines. An IV pole occupies one corner, its tendril-like tube burrowing into one of his forearms. In another corner, a heart monitor beeps steadily.

On a side table, the TEAPOT resides next to some uneaten food and a full glass of water.

From the back of the room, like a ghost, The Drifter watches as the Little Girl enters, though she is much older now -- a fully grown woman, in fact. Her cheeks, however, are still stained with tears. She goes to sit by her grandfather, who weakly offers her his hand. She takes it, breaking down some, having to use her other hand to cover her face as she sobs.

Her grandfather smiles sadly before letting go of her hand and pointing one skeletal finger at his favorite TEAPOT.

Understanding his meaning, the granddaughter goes to pour him some tea, but all that emerges from the spout are some cold speckles of tea dust. Just as soon as she finishes pouring the mushy residue, the heart monitor flatlines.

FLASH!

THRIFT STORE - PRESENT DAY

The Drifter abruptly lets go of the teapot, causing it to fall to the floor where it SMASHES into a million pieces.

He barely has time to recover from the emotionally wrenching vision before stumbling back and, reaching out a hand to steady himself on one of the surrounding shelves, accidentally touches the handle of a rusted SWITCHBLADE.

FLASH!

INT. DARK HALLWAY - VISION

A long stretch of ominous hallway. A flickering light coming from an offside bathroom gives the feel of an abandoned insane asylum.

THE DRIFTER'S P.O.V. - A BODY

lies facedown in a pool of blood, its top-half draped in shadow, concealing its features.

Looking down, The Drifter is holding the SWITCHBLADE, dripping with blood. He takes a step back accompanied by heavy breathing. Peering down the length of the hallway has him come face-to-face with the sight of a STRANGER whose reflection replaces that of his own in the bathroom mirror.

The crazed stare of the madman drills into him as the Stranger grins evilly, bloodied teeth gnashing underneath the flickering light.

FLASH!

THRIFT STORE

Shaky breaths sneak their way out of The Drifter's throat as he carefully places the knife back where he found it.

After taking a moment to collect himself, his eyes lock on the GLOVES. He stares at them intently. Something new seems to occur to him.

Slowly, hesitantly, he brings the gloves together so that they are now touching one another.

CLOSE ON The Drifter's eyes as an unreadable expression flashes across his features.

Suddenly, footsteps approach him from behind...

VOICE (O.S.)
I know what you did.

The Drifter, wide-eyed with fear and confusion -- but also somehow the wiser -- turns around to face...

The CLERK.

CLERK
Thought you could get away with it,
huh?

THE DRIFTER
(beat)
Wha-?

CLERK
That.

She points at the shattered remains of the teapot.

CLERK (CONT'D)
Someone's gonna have to pay for
that, you know.

THE DRIFTER
Oh...
(beat)
Would you accept a trade?

CUT TO:

CLOSE UP - GLOVES - SOME TIME LATER

The Drifter sets down the gloves in the same place where he originally found them.

BACK TO SCENE

Without a word, he heads for the store's exit, but stops short at the trash can by the door. He pulls out a crumpled piece of paper and throws it.

SWISH. A perfect shot.

He exits.

CUT TO:

CLOSE UP - SHELF - CONTINUOUS

The shelf where the teapot once rested. The Clerk comes by and places something new in its stead, her body obscuring whatever it is from view.

Moving away we see the item to be none other than The Drifter's leather-bound NOTEBOOK.

A price tag places its value at two dollars.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END