

SMILE

by

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FADE IN:

EXT. STREET - DAY

A run-down building towers above the deserted street.

A car pulls up to the curb, the driver's door OPENS, the DRIVER, late teens, gets out, leans into the car, pulls out a brown paper bag filled with groceries.

The driver CLOSES the door with his foot, walks into the building...

INT. BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

...The driver walks up a flight of CREAKING stairs, down a cluttered hallway, he stops in front of a wooden door with peeling paint.

He sets the bag down next to a newspaper, POUNDS on the door, walks away.

The CLICKING of the locks is heard through the door, it slowly CREAKS open.

HARMON, early forties, African-American, wearing pajamas, robe and a scarf around his lower face and neck, peeks his head out of the doorway, scoops up the bag.

He looks down the hallway longingly, nervously, kicks the newspaper into the loft, hurries in after it.

INT. LOFT, KITCHEN AREA - DAY

Harmon CLOSES the door, LOCKS it, carries the bag into the kitchen.

The kitchen is distinguished from the rest of the loft by the presence of a two-burner stove, sink, small refrigerator and a dirty, linoleum floor.

Harmon sets the bag on the counter, begins to put the groceries away. ACHILLES, a black cat with a white spot on the back of a hind leg, MEWS loudly, nuzzles Harmon's leg.

HARMON

Hold your horses, Achilles.

Harmon pulls a bowl out of the cupboard, sets it before the cat, pours milk in it. Achilles LAPS at the milk.

INT. LOFT, MAIN AREA - DAY

One side of the loft is covered with large windows that look like chess boards - some sections are clean, some so dirty they're almost black.

The walls are covered with paintings of mouths - all smiling, easels and painting supplies are scattered about, a computer and printer sit on a desk.

The main area is partially separated from the sleeping area by a makeshift wall of cork boards, photos of a smiling blonde woman from a high angle pepper the boards.

Harmon walks the length of the boards, runs his fingers across the photos. He stops at a yellowing newspaper clipping, the headline reads: RENOWNED ARTIST SURVIVES FIERY PLANE CRASH

He removes the scarf to reveal that his neck and the lower half of his face are covered with scar tissue; he throws the scarf on the bed.

He leaves the board, sits at an easel picks up a brush. Startled by the ALARM on his watch, he presses a button to stop it.

HARMON

Achilles. Lunch rush.

Harmon goes to the windows, picks up a camera with a long lens, points it through a clean section of the window, CLICKS a few shots.

Through the camera he sees the blonde woman from the photos - GOLDIE, early thirties, white apron. She talks with CUSTOMERS at a table, with a big smile on her face.

EXT. RESTAURANT, OUTDOOR SEATING - DAY

The tables are filled with PATRONS, they are all CHATTING and LAUGHING. Goldie stands over a table, taking an order from from a couple.

GOLDIE

I'll be right out with your drinks.

She smiles, heads into the restaurant.

INT. RESTAURANT - DAY

The inside of the restaurant is just as busy as the outside, NOISIER.

Goldie makes her way to the bar, flashes the bartender, SAM, thirties, a smile.

GOLDIE
Two iced teas, Sam.

He grabs a couple of glasses, fills them.

INT. LOFT, MAIN AREA - DAY

Harmon pulls the camera away from his eye, his face shows no emotion, but his eyes are filled with joy.

He turns the camera over, removes the memory card, walks over to the computer, leans over the desk.

He moves the mouse around, CLICKS a button, the printer HUMS to life, he SHUFFLES to the bed.

He takes a small pouch from the nightstand, removes a syringe and a small bottle, holds up the bottle, the label reads: MORPHINE.

He inserts the needle into the bottle, pulls the plunger, fills the syringe with the clear liquid; he pulls the needle out, holds it up, flicks it.

Harmon SMACKS his arm to find a vein; he injects himself, flops back on the bed.

The sound of the printer fades away.

EXT. PARK - DAY (DREAM)

Birds CHIRP, children LAUGH and play, the sun beats down on a park bustling with activity.

Goldie sits on a blanket, picnic basket at her side. Harmon sits across from her - his face no longer scarred, a huge smile stretches from ear to ear.

She flashes him a little smile, pulls a bottle of wine and two glasses from the basket, fills the glasses, hands one to Harmon.

They raise their glasses in a toast, CLINK the glasses.

A woman's SCREAM is heard, a car engine REVS; Goldie and Harmon's attention is drawn elsewhere.

A car tears through the park, people SCREAM and scatter, the car hits a trash can with a CRASH, sends trash flying.

INT. LOFT, MAIN AREA - EVENING

Harmon bolts up in bed, it's dark, streaks of light shine through the clean window sections, Achilles sits on the ledge looking out.

Harmon strolls over to the cat, scratches his head.

HARMON

What have we got here, Achilles?

He looks through the window, sees a car in the alley below, trash can lying on the hood, driver's door open.

KURTIS, thirties, drunk, disheveled clothing leans on the fence. Goldie is in front of him, hands on hips.

Harmon grabs for his camera without taking his eyes off the action below, lifts it to his eye, twists the lens, SNAPS pictures.

Through the camera he sees Kurtis and Goldie arguing, their lips move, their gestures are animated, but no voices are heard.

EXT. RESTAURANT, OUTDOOR SEATING - EVENING

Kurtis and Goldie stand between the crashed car and the dining area, ARGUING loudly.

The tables aren't as full as during the lunch hour, the patrons are gawking at the fighting couple, WHISPERING amongst themselves.

KURTIS

(slurring)

I'm sorry baby, I shouldda waited up for ya, huh?

GOLDIE

Damn it Kurtis! Drunk again? You could have killed someone. Killed yourself!

Kurtis lets go of the fence, reaches for Goldie, nearly falls, grabs the fence again.

KURTIS

(slurring)

But I didn't. Besides, you can drive us home now anyway. Let's blow this popscicle stand.

GOLDIE

I'm not going anywhere with you. Where the hell were you last night? Let me guess, working late. Again.

KURTIS

(slurring)

Yup. We have this project, clients
that --

GOLDIE

(angrily)

Bullshit! I went by the office to
surprise you. It was our anniversary,
don't you remember?

Goldie begins to WEEP. In the distance a police siren WAILS.

Kurtis tries to stumble back to his car, Goldie grabs his
arm.

GOLDIE

I saw you with her. How long has it
been going on?

Kurtis struggles against her grip.

INT. LOFT, MAIN AREA - EVENING

Harmon stares intently out the window, camera still lifted
to his eye, no longer taking pictures.

Through the camera he sees Kurtis pull away from Goldie,
head toward his car.

A police car pulls into the alley, a POLICE OFFICER leaps
from the car, Kurtis tries to run, the cop throws him to the
ground, cuffs him.

The cop pulls Kurtis to his feet, shoves him toward the police
car. Goldie steps forward, the cop turns Kurtis to face
Goldie.

She pulls a ring from her finger, throws it at Kurtis, runs
back to the restaurant, crying.

Harmon puts the camera down, turns away from the window, no
emotion on his face, his eyes filled with dread.

Slowly he makes his way to the cork board, pulls down a
picture, looks longingly at the smiling face of Goldie.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LOFT, MAIN AREA - DAY

Harmon lies motionless, face down in the bed, doesn't
acknowledge Achilles kneading the pillow next to his head.

His watch alarm BEEPS, he doesn't move, the BEEPING gets louder and more insistent, suddenly it is silent.

Harmon rolls out of bed, SHUFFLES to the window, looks out.

EXT. RESTAURANT, OUTDOOR SEATING - DAY

Goldie stands at a table, notebook in hand, a MAN looks up from the menu.

MAN

I'll have the club, hold the mayo.

He closes the menu.

MAN

And an ice tea... You get that?

Goldie is lost in thought.

MAN

Hello?

GOLDIE

I'm sorry. The club and an ice tea.

MAN

Hold the mayo.

Goldie writes on her notebook.

INT. LOFT, MAIN AREA - DAY

Harmon SHUFFLES to an easel, sits in front of a painting of Goldie minus the mouth, it's from a high angle, standing by the restaurant's back door.

He picks up a brush, readies himself to paint, lets out a long SIGH, stands, throws the brush against the wall.

Achilles nuzzles his leg, Harmon looks down sadly.

HARMON

Why won't she smile? Make her smile.

The sadness in his eyes changes to thoughtfulness, he hurries to his computer, CLICKS away at the keyboard.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. RESTAURANT - DAY

The restaurant is busy from the lunch rush, mostly well dressed PROFESSIONALS. Goldie slides up to the bar, no enthusiasm at all.

GOLDIE

Two waters.

She puts her head on the bar.

SAM

Come on Goldie, put on a happy face.
You're bumming me out.

GOLDIE

(muffled)

Not in the mood Sam. I'll get back
to my old self again. Eventually.

Sam looks off, distracted.

SAM

What have we got here?

Goldie lifts her head, follows his gaze.

The hostess, DEB, late twenties, holds a floral arrangement;
she beckons Goldie over.

DEB

Look what you got Goldie.

Goldie just GRUNTS. Deb pulls a card out, hands it to Goldie.

DEB

Here's the card, read it!

Goldie opens it, turns it over a couple of times.

GOLDIE

It just says Smile. There's no name.

DEB

I bet it's Kurtis saying he's sorry.
I thought he was a pretty cool guy.

Goldie just shakes her head, Deb shoves the flowers into her
arms.

INT. LOFT, MAIN AREA - DAY

The loft is a mess, the bed unmade, the only easel still
standing holds the unfinished painting of Goldie.

Harmon sits at the window, camera in hand.

Achilles leaps on the sill next to Harmon, MEWS.

HARMON

Yes Achilles, it will work. It has to.

Through the window he sees Goldie come out the back door, flowers in her arms.

HARMON

Here we go.

Harmon lifts the camera.

Through the camera he watches Goldie walk to the dumpster, struggle to open the lid, throw the flowers away.

HARMON

(angrily)

Smile damn it, smile.

(pleading)

Please smile.

He goes to the bed, gets the small pouch from the nightstand, SOBS.

FADE OUT:

OVER BLACK

GOLDIE (V.O.)

If you don't have a smile, I'll give you one of mine.

FADE IN:

EXT. PARK - DAY (DREAM)

Goldie and a scarless Harmon sit on a blanket, holding hands. She smiles, feeds him a piece of fruit.

HARMON

I'd like that.

Goldie reaches up to her mouth, acts as if she pulls her smile off, reaches over, presses her hand to Harmon's mouth, pulls it away - Harmon smiles.

HARMON

May I have another?

GOLDIE

You're gonna have to come get it.

Goldie gets up, takes off running and GIGGLING, Harmon runs after her, catches her, playfully wrestles her to the ground.

HARMON

Got you now. I'm going to get that smile.

He reaches up to her mouth, pulls his hand away along with her smile, terror fills her eyes, she lets out a muffled CRY. Harmon LAUGHS maniacally.

INT. LOFT, MAIN AREA - NIGHT

Harmon bolts upright in the bed, covered in a cold sweat, looks to the foot of the bed, the unfinished painting stares at him, a single beam of light illuminates it.

Harmon hustles out of bed, grabs a roll of brown paper, pulls out a length of it, begins to wrap the painting.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LOFT, MAIN AREA - LATER

The loft is dark, streaks of light filter through the windows.

Harmon, still in pajamas, throws an overcoat on, picks up the wrapped painting, OPENS the door, peers outside, steps out, CLOSING the door behind him.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. RESTAURANT - DAY

Deb leans on the bar CHATTING with Sam.

DEB

So, I tell him he's going to have to find his own way to get his rocks off.

Sam CHUCKLES.

DEB

Can you believe the nerve of --

Goldie walks in, wearing jeans, big sunglasses.

DEB

Hey Goldie, you're running a bit late aren't ya?

Goldie only GRUNTS.

SAM

You look like crap.

Deb punches Sam in the shoulder.

DEB

Sam!

SAM

I just mean you don't look well.

GOLDIE

Long night.

DEB

Why don't you take the day off? We can manage.

GOLDIE

Thanks, I could use the rest. I've just not been feeling myself lately.

Goldie makes her way to the door.

DEB

Oh, Goldie...

Deb reaches behind the bar, pulls out a package the size of Harmon's painting.

DEB

This was left for you this morning. What is it? Another peace offering?

Goldie grabs the package, inspects it.

GOLDIE

Probably. I'll bring it right to the dumpster.

Deb reaches out, grabs Goldie's arm.

DEB

Wait. Open it, I'm curious. Aren't you?

Goldie shrugs, TEARS off the paper. Deb tries to look at it.

GOLDIE

It's a painting... of... me?

She turns the painting around. Deb grabs it, squints.

DEB

There's no mouth.

GOLDIE

I'm getting rid of it. It's creepy.

Goldie rips the painting away from Deb, pushes past her.

INT. LOFT, MAIN AREA - DAY

Harmon sits at the window staring intently.

Through the window he sees the back door of the restaurant open, Goldie comes out holding the painting, walks to the dumpster, looks at the painting, looks at the back door.

EXT. RESTAURANT, OUTDOOR SEATING - CONTINUOUS

Goldie stands by the dumpster, looking at the painting.

GOLDIE

What the...?

She repositions herself in front of the door to match her position in the painting, looks up directly at Harmon looking down at her.

INT. LOFT, MAIN AREA - CONTINUOUS

Through the window Harmon sees Goldie look up at him.

He dives away from the window, falls to the ground face to face with Achilles, the cat MEOWS.

HARMON

(whispers)

Shit. You think she saw me?

Achilles PURRS, licks Harmon.

HARMON

(whispers)

Yeah, I should look.

Harmon makes his way to the window.

He tentatively looks out just in time to see Goldie enter a door below him.

HARMON

She's coming. She's coming in.

Harmon scurries around the room picking up things, he pushes the cork boards against the wall to hide the picture of Goldie.

There is a loud KNOCK at the door, Harmon looks up. He picks up the scarf, wraps it around his face and neck as he walks to the door, he looks through the peep hole and sees Goldie sans mouth.

He turns the lock, opens the door. Goldie stands in the hallway holding up the painting.

GOLDIE
This yours?

Harmon nods.

GOLDIE
What's the meaning of it? Why's there no mouth? Am I supposed to keep quiet or something?

He shrugs, shakes his head.

GOLDIE
Well, it's creepy. Give me a reason not to call the cops... Say something!

Harmon drops his head.

HARMON
I'm sorry. I have this condition... and I like to see you smile.

He steps back.

HARMON
Come in. Please.

She shakes her head, sets the painting down, crosses her arms.

GOLDIE
What condition?

Harmon shifts uncomfortably.

HARMON
Well, I was in a crash. I was burned--

GOLDIE
Bad?

Harmon nods, he slowly unwraps his scarf, removes it. Goldie GASPS softly.

GOLDIE
I'm sorry, I didn't mean to--

HARMON
It's okay. A normal reaction.

He replaces the scarf.

HARMON

So, as you can see, the scar tissue prevents me from showing, um...emotion.

GOLDIE

Like smiling.

HARMON

Yes. So you can understand my fascination with your smile.

GOLDIE

Why me?

HARMON

You're always happy, always smiling. Until...

He lowers his eyes.

GOLDIE

Yes, until... Kurtis.

She begins to SOB.

HARMON

Don't cry. Please. Let me finish the painting. Come in.

She SNIFFLES, shakes her head.

GOLDIE

I really shouldn't... can't.

She picks up the painting, thrusts it at Harmon.

GOLDIE

Take it back. I need to go.

Harmon reaches out, firmly grips her arm; she looks down at his hand, he releases her.

HARMON

I'm sorry, but this is really important to me. At least come in for a drink. You can look at my work. I'll do you justice.

She mulls over the proposition.

GOLDIE

Okay. I'll look, but no promises.

She steps past Harmon, enters his loft.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LOFT, MAIN AREA - DAY

Harmon sits at an easel, painting, the scarf is no longer around his face.

HARMON

I can't tell how much I appreciate this. I thought I'd never finish you.

Achilles nuzzles around Harmon's leg, MEWS. Harmon looks down at the cat.

HARMON

Yes Achilles, her smile will be immortalized.

He looks up.

HARMON

Why so quiet? Cat got your tongue.

He CHUCKLES.

HARMON

That's ok. Just keep the smile.

A police siren WAILS in the alley below.

HARMON

Wonder what that's all about.

He gets up, walks to the window, looks out to see Deb talking to the police, her hands flailing about frantically.

HARMON

Something bad must have happened. Well, you'll be safe here...

He turns away from the window, looks at Goldie.

She sits motionless, tied to a chair, a chain links her leg to the radiator, her eyes are closed, her mouth frozen in a permanent smile.

HARMON

Forever.

He returns to his easel, paints.

FADE OUT: