

THE RED CENTER

Written by

Praneel Nand

FADE IN:

EXT. WAR ZONE - DAY

A suburban neighbourhood, laid bare and broken. The once sprawling oasis is now reduced to the sum of its parts.

Entire houses split in two, like some sort of destructive cross-section.

Rubble and debris litter what would've been the street that connected the houses.

In the distance, successive bursts of gunfire ripple through the air, a WW2 era Sherman tank burns from within, slow guttural groans escape the metal carcass, filling the air with deathly vigor.

Amidst the destruction, a house no more worse for ware, stands with a few more walls intact, a few more steps identifiable and a few more windows within windowpanes.

INT. BOMBED OUT HOUSE - DAY

The house itself is barren and desolate, a faint visage of what might have been. Haunting shadows of couches and paintings are blasted into the blistered, alabaster paint.

But within a room, a room no different from the rest of the house, sits something peculiar and out of place.

A giant oak chest, so ornate and intricate, you would think it belonged to a great king of the past.

Varying shades of the wood painstakingly glued together in a manor that highlights the beautiful subtleties of shade and angles. Multiple layers of varnish finish the piece, giving the oaken chest a deep, almost liquid finish.

But the oddest thing about it, is that it seems untouched by time, no dust or ware make itself known upon its perfect surface.

With a click, the lid lifts, ever so slightly and a pair of beady eyes dart about.

MAN (O.S.)
Is it clear?

WOMAN (O.S.)
Looks like it.

A moment more and the WOMAN opens the lid and steps out.

CONSTANCE NOBLE (30) tall and slim, her striking features are hidden beneath layers of dirt and lack of sleep, she wears a dirty tank-top that hugs her feminine features along with faded denim jeans.

Reaching into the box, she helps TIMOTHY NOBEL (33) to his feet.

He's a bit short with a receding hairline, a pair of round bifocals hug his face, he wears a dirty T-shirt, and his face is also covered in dirt.

The pair slowly creep towards a covered window, dots of sunlight stream into the dusty room.

Constance slowly moves the tattered drapes to one side and peers into the street.

TIMOTHY

What do you see?

CONSTANCE

Same as yesterday.

TIMOTHY

Do you think they're gone?

CONSTANCE

Maybe, maybe not.

TIMOTHY

I'm hungry.

Constance shoots Timothy an angry glare.

CONSTANCE

It's the same damn thing with you everyday...

TIMOTHY

What?

CONSTANCE

The complaining, everyday, the first thing I have to listen to is your incessant whining, it's so pathetic!

Timothy looks wounded by the words.

Constance softens her features and manages a small smile.

CONSTANCE (CONT'D)
 I'm sorry, I didn't mean to... I'm
 hungry and tired and I just don't
 know what...

TIMOTHY
 I know.
 (beat)
 Being stuck in a war zone is no
 picnic... So what's the plan of
 attack?

Constance goes back to the chest and retrieves a makeshift
 map. She lays it down and traces her finger across it's
 surface.

She stops and taps her finger against the page.

CONSTANCE
 Here.

Timothy follows her hand and looks stunned.

Held under her finger the word "*church*" stares back.

TIMOTHY
 The church?

Constance shakes her head in agreement.

TIMOTHY (CONT'D)
 I thought we said no more church.

CONSTANCE
 I said no more church, for now.

TIMOTHY
 You're nuts.

CONSTANCE
 We've searched every square inch,
 the church is the only place left;
 the only place that might have
 supplies.

TIMOTHY
 Did you forget about last time?

Constance gets up and stuffs the map in her back pocket.

TIMOTHY (CONT'D)
 Did you forget about those things?

Constance starts to rummage through the oversized chest.

TIMOTHY (CONT'D)

Those things aren't even human!

Constance pulls out two wooden staffs, each one sharpened to a fine point.

She tosses one through the air and it thumps against Timothy's chest.

CONSTANCE

Last time we didn't have these.

Timothy looks over the solid piece of carved Ash.

TIMOTHY

A stick?

CONSTANCE

Not just any stick, a sharp stick.

Pushing past him, Constance exits the skeletal room.

TIMOTHY

I'm not going.

She calls back, almost out of ear shot.

CONSTANCE

If I get eaten, that's on you.

She exits out a flight of stairs, and begins wading through the piles of rubble

Timothy waits for a moment and shakes his head.

TIMOTHY

(under his breath)

Wait for me.

EXT. CHURCH - DUSK

The pair stand on the outskirts of the church's dilapidated property.

The paint is peeled and the wooden boards seem to bleed a dark brown sludge. The metal gate that surrounds the property is rusted and worn, an upside-down depiction of Christ adorns the wrought-iron and tombstones pepper the dead properties lawn.

TIMOTHY

I can't.

CONSTANCE

We don't have options, either we die out here or we try in there.

Timothy looks over the haunting church and relives himself of a frustrated sigh.

Constance puts her hand onto the iron gate.

CONSTANCE (CONT'D)

You ready?

TIMOTHY

No, are you?

Constance shakes her head.

CONSTANCE

But we need this.

The gate groans as she pulls it open and they walk onto the ground.

As they ready themselves they wait for something to happen, but nothing does.

TIMOTHY

Maybe they're dead tired?

Constance rolls her eyes and they start to shuffle towards the entrance.

Halfway to the doors, the ground starts to rumble, from one of the tombstones, a ghastly hand rips through the dirt.

From beneath the sacrilegious land an undead ghoul rises to its feet.

It's flesh peels from the strain of rising, the hollow eyes lock onto the pair and starts to hobble towards them.

Timothy starts to scream as Constance readies her staff.

As the decrepid corpse approaches, it lunges towards them, Constance drives the pointed end of her staff deep into the head of the monstrosity.

A splatter of blackish red, sinew sprout from the wound and the demonic form crumples into a heap at their feet.

TIMOTHY (CONT'D)

Holy shit! That was awesome!

But before they can relax another rumble, much stronger than the last, causes them to almost lose their footing.

This time numerous zombies sprout, like an out of control fungal infection.

TIMOTHY (CONT'D)

Constance!

CONSTANCE

Quick, get to the door.

As the pair reach the front door they pull on the handle, the door won't budge.

TIMOTHY

It's locked!

CONSTANCE

Try to get in, I'll hold them off.

Timothy starts to ream on the door, pulling as hard as he can.

Constance, taking a low stance, starts driving her staffs pointed tip into one after another.

She tries to nail another one, but it grabs her staff. Another one lurches towards her and she has to let go of her weapon.

As she stumbles back, she trips and falls, a ghoul falls on top of her, his teeth chomping towards her face.

CONSTANCE (CONT'D)

Timothy!

Timothy looks back, he's almost frozen in fear, but he grits his teeth and propels himself forward.

Throwing himself, he bowls into the group of undead.

Finding some leverage, Constance rolls on top of the zombie and starts to bash his head into the ground, until the head is nothing more than unrecognizable pulp.

Timothy grabs Constance and hoists her up.

Cornered between the doors and the horde of zombies, they slowly start to backup. As the distance between them evaporates, their backs are forced against the doors.

A ghoul lurches towards them and they close their eyes and press firmly against the door.

But before they're caught in their clutches, the doors give way and they fall onto the wooden floor of the church.

INT. CHURCH - NIGHT

Constance quickly scrambles to her feet and slams the doors shut.

The dead bodies pile up, banging and scraping against the flimsy doors.

Constance pulls the wooden latch, effectively locking themselves in.

CONSTANCE
Push? The doors were a push, not
pull?

Timothy shrugs.

CONSTANCE (CONT'D)
I could fucking kill you right now!

TIMOTHY
I panicked.

CONSTANCE
We almost died!

TIMOTHY
It's okay, we're okay.

Constance embraces Timothy and gives him a passionate kiss.

CONSTANCE
Sometimes I wonder why I married
you.

TIMOTHY
Ouch?

Taking in their surroundings the church is adorned with a few rows of pews, numerous candles illuminate the crypt-esque interior.

Ungodly murals decorate the north and south aisle. Depictions of bloody deaths and inhuman torture, decorate the rotten walls.

As they approach between the lectern and pulpit, a massive stone statue depicting an upturned crucifixion of Christ floats in midair, blood draining from each eye into a golden chalice.

CONSTANCE
Oh my god, what is this place?

TIMOTHY
Looks like hell.

Timothy sits on a pew and notices the ceiling.
He taps Constance on the shoulder.

CONSTANCE
What is it?

Timothy points up.

Following his direction, Constance peers through the darkness.

Painted on the ceiling is a beautiful mural, depictions of angels, flying birds, soft clouds and the pearly gates fill the vaulted ceiling with its splendor.

CONSTANCE (CONT'D)
I recognize that.

TIMOTHY
It was from our church...

Constance looks around, coming to a grim conclusion.

CONSTANCE
This is our church.

TIMOTHY
That's right. But this whole place
is wrong.

CONSTANCE
Do you remember the last time you
ate?

Timothy thinks.

TIMOTHY
I can't remember.

CONSTANCE
What about drinking anything?

TIMOTHY
We had water...

CONSTANCE
When Timothy?

TIMOTHY

I don't remember.

CONSTANCE

I just remember always being hungry, always being thirsty.

TIMOTHY

What about the war? How did it start? Who started it?

CONSTANCE

I don't know.

TIMOTHY

What's the last thing you remember before this place?

CONSTANCE

I don't know. I can't remember.

TIMOTHY

Think..

CONSTANCE

I said, I don't know!

She rises in frustration and begins to pace.

But before long, a ghostly apparition appears before her.

An old, DISEMBODIED WOMAN, her face is worn and wrinkled, her simple white dress flows into the nothingness around her.

Startled, Constance jumps back and almost tumbles over.

Timothy stands, shocked at the sight.

The woman does not move, nor does she make a sound.

Constance slowly examines her features.

CONSTANCE (CONT'D)

I know you...

She turns to Timothy.

CONSTANCE (CONT'D)

I know her.

Timothy moves in for a better look.

TIMOTHY

She looks familiar.

CONSTANCE
Mrs. Fletcher.

TIMOTHY
That's right.

Peering around the decrepid church Constance wrinkles her face.

CONSTANCE
We didn't just go to this church
did we?

TIMOTHY
No we didn't, I was the pastor
here.

Timothy rubs his neck, the place where his clerical collar would've been.

CONSTANCE
What happened?

Another apparition appears beside the old woman, and then another and another.

Before long, twenty or so floating, DISEMBODIED SOULS surround the pair.

TIMOTHY
What the hell is happening?

The pair are forced together, their backs firmly pressed against one another.

DISEMBODIED SOUL
Hell.

One of them speaks.

DISEMBODIED SOUL (CONT'D)
You used us.

DISEMBODIED SOUL (CONT'D)
You took us.

DISEMBODIED SOUL (CONT'D)
You used god as a front.

DISEMBODIED SOUL (CONT'D)
Your soul will rot.

DISEMBODIED SOUL (CONT'D)
This is of your own doing.

The twisted souls all clamor together, yelling and clawing their way closer to the pair.

Constance winces, their hungry arms growing closer.

As they descend upon them, their arms harmlessly pass through them.

They move out of the circle unharmed and start to back away.

CONSTANCE
Why are they so angry?

TIMOTHY
I don't know.

CONSTANCE
At least they can't hurt us.

TIMOTHY
We should get out of here.

Constance shakes her head in agreement.

The pair start to head for the back entrance, the ghostly souls only stare, their hollow eyes locked on them.

DISEMBODIED SOUL
Here, the blood, drink the blood.

The group flow about in a frenzy, surrounding the golden chalice, each one grabbing handfuls of blood and drinking it.

From the back door, Constance looks at the horror being created.

As the apparitions drink, their ghostly shells start to shed, and they begin taking form.

Like creatures brought from the very gates of hell. Each one turns into a demonic being, sharp mouths and sharp claws, hulking and monstrous.

Their red eyes lock onto the pair.

CONSTANCE
Run.

Timothy looks back in horror.

CONSTANCE (CONT'D)
RUN!

They burst through the back door and into the courtyard.

EXT. WAR ZONE - NIGHT

The pair run through the street, the hard thumps of their feet echo in the concrete graveyard.

Snarls and scrapes follow close, the vengeful demons in hot pursuit.

TIMOTHY

We need to get into the chest.

INT. BOMBED OUT HOUSE - NIGHT

Slamming the door behind them, they set the dead-bolt and clamor up the stairs.

Smashing through the door a demon gives chase up the stairs.

Another one smashes through the window, almost grabbing them.

Running down the hall, they reach the room with the chest.

Timothy runs and pops the lid.

TIMOTHY

Get in.

Constance stops and looks at Timothy, her eyes fill with tears.

TIMOTHY (CONT'D)

What are you doing, get in.

The demons slowly walk into the room.

CONSTANCE

I can't.

TIMOTHY

What?

CONSTANCE

I remember now, what we did. We destroyed their lives.

TIMOTHY

We did what we had too.

CONSTANCE

Did we really need a house in Bali?
Did we need paintings worth fifty
thousand?

TIMOTHY

It's not our fault, they were looking for answers, we provided one.

CONSTANCE

We took every last cent from these people. We left them with nothing.

TIMOTHY

What are you saying?

CONSTANCE

We deserve this Timothy.

The demons start to move closer, their fangs and claws extend, pulsating with desired vengeance.

CONSTANCE (CONT'D)

They deserve their vengeance.

TIMOTHY

Please Constance, get in the box, it'll be alright.

CONSTANCE

No, it won't be. How many times have we done this, How many times have we woken up in that box?

Muscular and grotesque, a demon grabs Constance by the neck and drags her into the darkness.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

EXT. RED CENTER - DAY

A massive facility stands, hidden in an endless forest. Only a single road goes to and from the sprawling fortress.

Written on a a block of solid granite outside the main entrance reads.

Recognitive Emulation Discovery Center.

INT. RED CENTER - DAY

Through the sprawling halls, DEEPAK CHAND dressed in a white coat and dark pants walks at a hurried pace. A clipboard is held tightly against his chest.

Approaching an office, he stops short and straightens himself.

Taking a deep breath he knocks on the door of DR. MARTIAN SINCLAIR.

MAN (O.S.)

Come in.

INT. RED CENTER - OFFICE - DAY

Entering, Deepak lays the folder atop of the doctors cluttered desk.

The office is big enough for a desk and a couple of chairs. It's a bit of organized chaos. Stacks of files and papers lay on one end, and all manners of disks and thumb drives seem to spill from the other.

Dr. Sinclair is in his late 50's but still has a full head of hair and a strong pronounced jaw. He wears a pair of fashionable glasses and is lost on his computer screen.

DR. SINCLAIR

Morning Deepak, are these the debug reports?

DEEPAK

Not exactly.

The doctor looks away from his computer and gives Deepak his full attention.

DEEPAK (CONT'D)

We've had an inmate breach first objective.

DR. SINCLAIR

Excellent, which inmate?

DEEPAK

Mrs. Nobel.

The doctor grabs the file and rifles to her profile.

DR. SINCLAIR

Constance Noble, sentenced, ten years. Tax evasion, fraud, embezzlement, black mail, extortion. Sounds like a real peach.

The doctor rifles through her file.

DR. SINCLAIR (CONT'D)
Yes, I remember, her and her
husband. It doesn't make any sense.
They've only been here for a month.

DEEPAK
Regardless, she has the new record.

DR. SINCLAIR
What was the old one?

DEEPAK
Nineteen months. Should we send her
back into relapse?

DR. SINCLAIR
No, I think we should move forward
with her.

Dr. Sinclair closes her file and hands it back to Deepak.

DR. SINCLAIR (CONT'D)
Keep me posted.

DEEPAK
Yes, of course.

Deepak opens the door to leave.

DEEPAK (CONT'D)
Oh before I forget, suit's on line
one.

Deepak exits and closes the door behind him.

The doctor stretches out on his chair and lets out a big
sigh.

INT. RED CENTER - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Dr. Sinclair stands inside a dark room, a giant screen pulses
in front of him, it encompasses the entire wall.

On the control panel the doctor strikes a few keys and the
pulsing screen transforms into an old withered face.

BILLING HILLER (80) looks down from his overblown perch.

He is seated behind a dark mahogany desk, he wears a tailored
suit and his face seems to be stuck in eternal destain.

BILLINGS
Dr. Sinclair.

DR. SINCLAIR
Billings, how are things?

He furrows his brow and sighs.

BILLINGS
My granddaughters dog died, it's
been a trying time for her.

DR. SINCLAIR
Tragic. I'm sorry to hear that.

BILLINGS
Likewise, so how are the day to day
operations going?

The doctor opens a digital file on his tablet, and opens a
couple of tabs.

DR. SINCLAIR
We've had two reintroductions this
week, currently on probation but
promising none the less.

BILLINGS
Excellent, but what I'd really like
to know is more about Mrs. Noble.

The doctor smiles.

DR. SINCLAIR
Word travels fast in these parts.

Billings only stares blankly, waiting for the info.

DR. SINCLAIR (CONT'D)
Yes, well, it's amazing really,
most people find it hard to accept
the wrongs that they've committed.

BILLINGS
You think she's ready for the next
simulation?

DR. SINCLAIR
Well Billings, the simulations are
designed to be passed only when the
person is ready, so yes I think she
is.

BILLINGS
Doctor, let me remind you, we are
in the business of punishment.

(MORE)

BILLINGS (CONT'D)

If this woman is released too early, our efforts here might seem a little lenient.

DR. SINCLAIR

We still have inmates on their first simulation, a few from the beginning.

BILLINGS

So what? Do we pat ourselves on the back and throw caution to the wind? We have the public's support on this, the government has written us a blank cheque. And not to mention the military applications being discussed in congress.

DR. SINCLAIR

So is that why we have these weekly discussions? When I first started this endeavor, my goal was to reform inmates, to reintroduce them back to society. And in that five years we yet to have a former inmate re-offend.

BILLINGS

Let me tell you something doctor, back in ancient Rome, when a conquering general would return, the city would receive him as a god, for seven days there would be celebrations, rose petals would rain from the sky, the streets would run awash with wine and whores. But as the General made his rounds, a lone slave would sit next to him and ever so often he would lean over and whisper; *memento mori*.

DR. SINCLAIR

Which means?

BILLINGS

Remember, you are but a man. I am here to make sure we are doing what is best for us, and if that means reminding you that greater men have fallen to their hubris, than so be it. Do you understand?

Dr. Sinclair simply grits his teeth.

BILLINGS (CONT'D)
Good, now tell me, whatever
happened to Mr. Nobel?

INT. BOMBED OUT HOUSE - NIGHT

The chest, gleaming in the soft glow of the moonlight sits in
it's ideal spot.

DR. SINCLAIR (O.S.)
Timothy?

The chest clicks open and a pair of beady eyes dart about the
room.

DR. SINCLAIR (O.S.) (CONT'D)
He's back in the box.

A small whimper escapes from inside the chest and the lid
slams shut.

FADE OUT: