

ASYLUM

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EXT. Street - NIGHT

An uncomfortable staleness. A Gotham night. The narrow streets are a scant littering of cabs and cars that pass... a sparsely lit street, way downtown, Chinatown. The year is sometime around 2009.

A camera flickers digital noise on a wide angle bird's eye view of a quiet dark street. Digital overlaid grids are seen on the screen with a government seal in the upper right hand corner. A cursor pulsates but remains in place. The camera stays fixed, alert, patient, like an animal stalking its prey.

CUT TO:

Another wide angle view of the same street from another static street camera. We feel the same intensity from it's gaze as the first. This time, through the distorted eye of video surveillance, a shadow comes into view preceding the man behind it. The screen awakens as hairpin cross hairs jump to it's location on-screen and scan the silhouette identifying it as ADAM CHRISTOPHER : MALE : 38 YEARS OF AGE : ID# 223-95-5554 : THREAT:PASSIVE 3 (and other vitals). Another figure, evading the camera's scrutiny is barely seen in the street's distant haze: **dark**, smokey, indistinct, transparent. He lurks in the shadows or is he a shadow.

ADAM walks swiftly and cautiously. He enters a diner and disappears from the street camera's view.

CUT TO:

INT. DINER FOYER: CAMERA VIEW: EMPTY FOYER

Adam seems to have disappeared having entered the diner and not passed the foyer camera. This camera is different, bootleg, there are no digital overlays. Where did he go?

CUT TO:

INT. DARK SUBWAY PLATFORM (OMINOUS POV)

One-shot. The platform is barren except for a young Asian girl in a light colored dress standing alone. She is far away. There is wind blowing on the tracks. A train is nearing but we don't see it yet. Her silhouette is outlined by the lights behind her, her hair blowing. She doesn't move as the camera begins to slowly approach her. It is silent, the sounds are muted. We barely get close to her when...

CUT TO:

INT. DINER INTERIOR - NIGHT

A gritty diner's interior. The fluorescent lights cast a greenish-yellow hue across faces and tables complimenting the row of red booths. The low hum of hollow, echoed, dampened machinery accompanies the feeling of space, separation and emptiness in the diner.

The camera enters from the front and we pan past a Latin woman at the door behind a makeshift search table going through a patron's bag before he is allowed to enter the dining area. The patron shows the woman an ID card and is given a sign-in sheet on a clipboard.

A few other patrons sit in other booths. The diner is quiet of conversation but people's eyes and posture speak of their state of mind.

In a side booth, sitting, staring is ADAM casually dressed in a collared shirt and slacks, clothes that seemed like they would've been neat and ironed a few days ago. He has a wide build. His shoulders appear wide enough to shoulder the many thoughts running through his head. Or, maybe not.

On his hardened face, hidden behind days of 5-o'clock shadows, the look of distress, expecting, waiting, anxious and vulnerable.

He searches his mind for explanations as he struggles to make sense of his situation.

He sits, fondling a nearly empty coffee cup and fidgeting with unused silverware on the table. Long dark streaks of black coffee line the bottom of his cup as Adam tilts it from side to side.

The sound of continuous processing. Music that is the churning of a mind.

ADAM'S attention is focused on his thoughts so intently, he looks through all those that pass his gaze: New Yorkers who sit with bags under their eyes also staring, waiting for something: detached. He doesn't notice the city-worn waitress approaching.

The waitress is holding a pot of coffee, swaggering nonchalantly up the aisle inspecting people's cups to refill. She stops at Adam.

WAITRESS
More coffee?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ADAM
 (looks up half lost in
 thought)
 ahhh.. yeah...

She pours slowly and deliberately.

Adam watches the pour, hypnotized by the black stream.

WAITRESS
 (contemplating her own
 answer to this question)
 Long night huh? You coming or
 going?

Dark, black piping. The steam rises slowly and thick,
 collecting in the static air above the cup.

ADAM
 (thinks hard on his
 response)
 I'm not sure.

He lifts his cup and drinks the coffee with no regard for
 it's heat or its bite. He remains detached, staring ahead of
 him. He puts the cup down, it's still steaming.

The waitress offers an empathetic nod.

A SOUND, an alert. Large, but part of the sonic verb that is
 the night. No one seems to care about what it signifies. It's
 part of the city. It blends in. An announcement is heard in
 the distance from a loud speaker outside corresponding to the
 SOUND but it is mostly incoherent. Lights flash from outside.

WAITRESS
 (talking mostly to
 herself)
 Can't even get away these
 days...damn restrictions....

The lights in the diner change quality slightly. They dim. We
 understand this to correspond to the announcement outside as
 well.

WAITRESS (CONT'D)
 (sighs)
 ..oh I so need to get away to
 somewhere...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Adam gets lost in a memory...

TRANSITION TO:

INT. SUBWAY CAR (MEMORY)

Blurs and moving flashing lights are overlaid suggesting a subway passing, the station and the platform. A man in a suit sits alone suspiciously looking around. An image of Adam sitting alone reading a paper. Images of the scene swim in and out of each other, melting perspectives and POVs.

ADAM's memories rush in, forward then reverse, blurry. They come and go in a flash.

CUT TO:

INT. DINER INTERIOR

The waitress is still standing over Adam at his table. She picks up the menu from in front of him.

WAITRESS

Can I get you something else hun?
We're closing in 30...this
curfew...no extensions anymore you
know...

(she rolls her eyes)

He's here.

ADAM shakes his head for the waitress, "no thanks".

The waitress leaves to tend to other customers.

ADAM sees his partner, SYL SANTOS, Asian American, 38, medium build, dressed in a suit, looking like the product of a hard day's work, about to enter the diner.

The diner door bangs closed when SYL enters. SYL shows his badge to the man at the door and walks past without being checked.

Eyes turn. His presence as an officer of the law is noted.

SYL isn't smiling. He seems rushed.

SYL sits across from ADAM. They acknowledge each other.

The waitress swings back and turns to grab a place setting from another table and places it in front of SYL.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She offers him coffee. SYL just nods to her, nudges over his cup and she pours.

The waitress leaves with a curiosity.

As they sit, Adam's anxiety reads as a need for Sympathy. *Syl has the answers. Answers to make him feel better about things. Syl will help him settle his mind.* Adam is anxious and hesitant at the same time, hoping that the longer he waits for his fate that perhaps his fate will change.

SYL goes to pick up his cup but recoils at it's heat. He then reluctantly starts the conversation.

SYL
How are things?

ADAM looks up as a non-response.

SYL (CONT'D)
What's going on with you and Faye?

ADAM's eyes dart.

ADAM
(avoidant)
Not great... I don't think she's coming back this time.
(Beat. Approaching the subject with trepidation)
Syl, I'm fading, man. I'm not sure of things anymore...

Views of the diner as they visually outline their space. A bulb stutters in an overhead fluorescent light mirroring the conversation's pace. Metaphors of light and dark.

SYL
(still hesitant)
Adam...

ADAM
(interrupts)
...something about that night, I get to a point where everything is clear..
(Syl cuts him off here)
...I remember clearly him pulling out a gun..

SYL
(cuts him off. Blurts)
Adam, they're letting you go.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

The words fall on Adam like cement blocks. Adam is immediately silenced. His shoulders are no longer wide enough. He looks up at Syl.

SYL (CONT'D)
I'm sorry but... this last
incident... it's **not** good... your
losing your focus Adam. I'm seeing
you deteriorate...

CUT TO:

INT. DARK SUBWAY PLATFORM (OMINOUS POV)

One-shot. Continuation of first platform shot. Camera gets closer to the little girl, wind blowing, the train is now approaching.

CUT TO:

INT. DINER INTERIOR

Adam feels ashamed and embarrassed having just been fired. His gaze is to the other people in the restaurant who have no clue of the devastation going on inside him.

ADAM
I've been doing this 15 years Syl.

Long beat.

Syl feels sorry for his friend. He sees Adam struggling with the news so he reminds him of what he did.

SYL
(serious)
You killed a man...

ADAM is struck by a feeling... A memory. There are flashes, blurry visions of...

TRANSITION TO:

INT. SUBWAY CAR (MEMORY)

There is a struggle, more distinct, Adam and the mystery man are in a close grapple, blurry, slow motion, lights, angles. Moving images criss-crossing, incoherent.

Syl's voice 'narrates' the visuals we see.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SYL

...shot him unprovoked. You can barely remember what happened.

(beat)

IAB is calling it derelict of duty.

(STILL IN BLURRY MEMORY)...Adam kneels over the slain mystery man. We see Adam frantically looking around an empty subway car. Is it empty? Is there someone else there? An ASIAN HIPSTER is seen standing eerily in the subway doorway window of a train passing by. Lights going past. We see this overlain onto the scene.

(ADAM) He is tortured by the memory, the images.

ADAM

IAB? 3-day investigation?

(needing to defend himself)

Syl. That little girl...his hands were around her neck, what was I supposed to do?

CUT TO:

INT. DINER INTERIOR

SYL's comforting tone begins to turn to frustration.

SYL

No ONE, not ONE other person on that train saw a little girl!

SYL gathers himself. He is careful with his words. He knows the fragility of the man across from him.

SYL (CONT'D)

Adam...

(beat)

What happened to your daughter three years ago, maybe that's all coming back now.

ADAM is in the present now. It's what SYL has said.

ADAM

(quietly, almost to himself)

It can't be. I'm a good cop. There **was** a girl there, I'm NOT losing my mind.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ADAM (CONT'D)
 (he realizes that this may
 be the case.)

Can Adam deny anymore?

SYL
 It's the stress of the Job, the
 break up...this shooting,
 everything's coming down on you
 now.
 (beat)
 The psych said it, things are mixed
 up in your head. You're confusing
 events, cases, fusing them all into
 one.

Adam feels that blow. There it is right there. The logic for
 his mania. His derangement. All the correlations of what
 happened to his daughter and this case are at the front of
 his mind.

Beat.

SYL (CONT'D)
 Losing a child is a hard thing. You
 haven't allowed yourself to deal
 with that.

Adam's reaction is to fight it, defend his sanity. But there
 are too many questions, questions only he can answer. SYL is
 right.

Beat.

Syl waits for a response but after not getting one he gets up
 to go to the bathroom leaving ADAM in his confusion. ADAM
 doesn't want to give in, it's too real for him.

CUT TO:

INT. SUBWAY PLATFORM (OMINOUS POV)

One-shot. The train is at the platform. The young Asian girl
 boards the train and the doors close. We never see her face.

CUT TO:

INT. DINER INTERIOR

He starts to look around the diner, checking out his
 environment.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He notices the waitress who is looking at him between taking orders. He summons her for.

The waitress approaches.

ADAM'S senses are up.

There is a man-- the same ASIAN HIPSTER from the memory-- sitting in another booth. We see him in a mirror reflection suggesting he is sitting somewhere behind Adam.

He is looking in ADAM's direction.

He forces himself to alertness.

CUT TO:

Syl sits back down at the table blocking the view of the mirror reflection.

Beat. As ADAM settles back on SYL.

ADAM

The man I shot, who was he?

ADAM begins to really see SYL, into SYL. His eyes adrift, moving. His fingertips rubbing.

SYL

(beat)

Nobody wants to get near this anymore.

Again the man sitting in that booth. Adam sees him now, but he is now in the booth in front of them. He is an Asian hipster, night-crawler type. Leather coat cut nice, black, jet black hair, cigarettes on the table. An empty coffee cup. He is reading the paper: ADAM takes him in with one glance. It's his instinct, his job; ADAM'S job, to pay attention. ADAM takes control of his senses now.

The man in that booth. Does he look familiar? How did he appear there?

SYL (CONT'D)

Too many people got hurt behind this. You lost Faye...

Beat. Adam comes back to Syl.

ADAM

Did they tell **you** who he was?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Adam looks back up at the Asian Hipster. They make eye contact this time. A moment. Adam is taken by his gripping stare. A shadow passes in front of the Hipster into freckles of rippling light that move across his face. There is a familiarity there and Adam feels it.

Something isn't right.

SYL
 (elusive)
 The Feds came. Took everything with
 them the next day.
 (beat)
 Sit with psych and don't go to
 jail. It's the best you're gonna
 get.

Beat.

Syl looks at his watch.

A customer passes. ADAM flashes back to the booth. The Asian hipster has moved on. He exits through the door as ADAM's eyes follow him out.

SYL (CONT'D)
 (confident)
 That's all I know.

Adam sits with his response. He is through arguing with SYL. There is no point but a point of no return. As much as he tries to forget it. His daughter is gone. Faye, his wife, is gone and now his partner and/or his mind. He shot and killed a man because he was protecting himself and a little girl.

There is no other option but to find out what happened and why there are secrets.

Adam fishes through Syl's eyes searching for something, anything.

Beat. The (SOUND)chime from outside goes off again accompanied by a red light that goes on and off in the diner. Lights flash from outside the diner

ADAM
 (referencing the
 chime/alert)
 Threat level's red again?

SYL
 Yeah, well...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

LONG BEAT as ADAM's mind churns to a halt. He knows what he has to do.

ADAM removes his badge from his pocket places it on the table, looks at it and slides it over to SYL.

ADAM gets up and stands over SYL, still seated.

SYL doesn't look up.

ADAM throws a few dollars on the table and leaves.

CUT TO:

EXT. DINER AND STREET- NIGHT

ADAM exits diner, stands with a new resolve, he is left with no choice but to find out what is happening. He knows what he has to do. The streets are empty. The night is clear. Adam lifts his head a bit to breathe, preparing himself for whatever is to come next. He then notices the Asian hipster from the booth standing across the street looking directly at him. In a blink he falls into the shadows. He loses him.

ADAM rushes to get across the street. The man is gone. He stops, turns, looks. Was it a dream, what is real? He has not escaped the questions of his own sanity.

Then:

Adam is thrown violently up against a wall. His face flush on the bricks. This is no dream.

The ASIAN HIPSTER whispers directly into ADAM's ear.

ASIAN HIPSTER

The moment you question your
instinct is the moment you become
an instrument in others motives.

A long beat.

Adam is released. He turns fumbling for his gun. He pulls it, points, no one is there. He feels his face, there is pain.

CUT TO:

INT. DINER INTERIOR

It's closing time, the lights are mostly off, no one is left but the staff cleaning and closing up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A TV is on in the background as the camera moves past it following one of the staff walking by. On it's screen "15 category 3 or higher storms predicted for upcoming Hurricane Season" ----"Bethany Ng, 11 years old. Last seen Nov. 27th 2009, wearing a white dress. please call...."----

CUT TO:

INT. SUBWAY CAR: SURVEILLANCE CAMERA (OMINOUS POV)

Subway surveillance camera view. The mystery man approaches the screen and fills the frame while he reaches up the side of it. We see the edge of a badge inside his jacket. The monitor goes blank, but not before a small movement unblocks a view of the little Asian girl in a dress sitting in one of the seats.

BLACK.

END.