

The Silence He Keeps

By

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BLACK SCREEN:

SUPERIMPOSE: "A man is known by the silence he keeps" -
Oliver Herford

FADE IN:

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - EVENING

GREG CHURCH, 29, walks down a street as the sun sets. He's almost at a bridge/overpass. He's tall, but with a pitifully weak frame, sunken cheeks, yellow teeth, and dark, beady eyes. He clutches a small bottle, wrapped in a paper bag.

He groans wretchedly as he heaves his drink at the base of a nearby tree. The bottle falls short, landing on a bed of leaves. Greg stares at the bottle for a moment before he retrieves it, walks back to where he stood before, and throws it again. This time, it hits the tree and shatters.

He pumps his fist and stumbles into the street. There's an oncoming car. Greg doesn't see it, but the car swerves in time. The horn blares. Greg throws up both middle fingers. The car disappears down the street.

He gets to the bridge. A large, built, OLDER MAN with a briefcase crosses the bridge ahead of him. Greg takes him by surprise. From a distance, we see them but hear nothing. Greg, on the attack, makes a quick motion. The man recoils.

Greg stumbles. The man fights back. He hits Greg with his briefcase. They cross the bridge as they grapple. The man shoves Greg, who stumbles back, off the side of the bridge.

The man rushes to the side of the bridge and looks over. We see him better. He is past middle age, with a weathered and stressed face. What he sees below shocks him. He takes off.

Close Up - On Greg, lying next to the road that runs under the bridge. He bleeds from the back of his head, eyes open. Not moving. After a few seconds, we hear a dog bark, as if he's alerting his master of what he's just found.

INT. JERRY'S TRUCK - DAY

SUPERIMPOSE: ONE DAY EARLIER

JERRY WALKER, 50s, the large man from the bridge, drives a pickup truck down a long rural road. His 12 year-old son, MICHAEL, sits next to him in a grass-stained football uniform. There is distance between them.

(CONTINUED)

MICHAEL

Dad, can we pull over?

JERRY

Pull over? Where?

MICHAEL

Just... over. I gotta piss.

JERRY

You can't hold it for five minutes?

MICHAEL

No.

Jerry sighs. They pull into a parking lot outside the two stores, one a Vitamin Shop, the other a Liquor Store.

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

Jerry and Michael get out of the car. They're closer to the Liquor Store, but Jerry heads to the Vitamin Shop. He pulls on the Vitamin Shop doors. Locked. He looks in the window.

MICHAEL

It's not open.

JERRY

Let's just see --

Michael rolls his eyes.

MICHAEL

(pointing to the Liquor Store)

I'm going next door.

INT. LIQUOR STORE - DAY

Walls are lined with wine and hard alcohol. Michael rushes to the back. Jerry follows and approaches a SALES ASSOCIATE.

JERRY

If you don't mind, he needs to --

The Sales Associate nods "Fine." They both stand for a moment. They're the only ones there.

SALES ASSOCIATE

Well, while you're waiting, mind if I tell you about some of our deals?

Jerry says nothing.

(CONTINUED)

SALES ASSOCIATE
(persistent)
It's just we have a sale on Pinot Noir that's too good to pass up.

Again, no response.

SALES ASSOCIATE
You look familiar. Been in before?

The store's phone rings. The Sales Associate picks it up. Jerry walks across the store, behind a gaudy display.

SALES ASSOCIATE
(into the phone)
No, he's not here today. Jury duty, yeah, bummer. Should be back by the end of the week. When you placed the order with him, did he...

Michael exits the bathroom. We hear the toilet still flushing. Jerry raises an eyebrow and holds up his hands. Michael rolls his eyes and heads back into the bathroom. The Sales Associate hangs up. Michael exits again. They walk to the counter. Jerry waits for Michael to speak up.

MICHAEL
(put upon)
Thanks.

SALES ASSOCIATE
Not a problem.
(to Jerry)
You really do look familiar.

Jerry lowers his head as he and Michael head for the exit.

SALES ASSOCIATE
Jerry! Jerry Walker, that's it!

JERRY
Sorry, someone else. Take care.

They keep walking. Michael looks up at his father, confused. Jerry says nothing.