

BECOMING
By
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EXT. VICTORIAN HOUSE - DAY

In the back yard, sturdy and shirtless, PETER chops wood.

PETER (V.O.)
It was a way to earn funds for my
next term at university.

A shadow watches from an upper storey window.

PETER (V.O.)
He watched me from the windows.

Peter wipes his brow and looks askance at the window. The figure slips back into the darkness. Peter smiles proudly.

PETER (V.O.)
He didn't think I knew, but I
did. He was a kind employer, but
a strange one, an unseen one.
When midsummer was at its hottest
he supplied me with the most
refreshing lemonade.

A door closes. Sweaty, Peter looks toward the porch and spies a jug of lemonade that glistens with condensation, an empty glass stands by it's side. Peter walks toward the porch; he scans the backside of the house.

PETER (V.O.)
But one question burned hot
inside of me -

Peter takes a long sip of lemonade. Then he glances toward a lower story window. The curtain falls back.

PETER (V.O.)
A question that could not be
quenched by a cool anonymous
drink. Who was this queer man?

Peter stares thoughtfully.

PETER
It was another fortnight before I
received an answer. And it was a
day I won't forget until my very
last breath.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

INT. HOUSE - A FORTNIGHT LATER

The open porch door throws a distorted rectangle of afternoon light which reaches far into the dark house.

PETER (V.O.)
He always left my pay packet
outside the closed porch door.
But this week was different. My
pay packet was missing and the
porch door was open.

A person like shadow grows inside the rectangle of light.

PETER

Hello?

Silhouetted, Peter stands in the doorway, nervous but expectant.

PETER (V.O.)

No question about it, I was being invited inside. And being the foolish headstrong boy that I was, this was one invitation I was not about to miss.

Peter steps into the house.

PETER

Sir?

PETER (V.O.)

I knew I was trespassing, any first year law student could tell you that, but somehow this felt right, like I belonged here.

KITCHEN

Peter inspects the dim but tidy kitchen, rubbing a finger along the clean counter.

PETER (V.O.)

Or maybe in my determination to meet my peculiar employer, I just didn't care. Either way I was going to meet him --

DINING ROOM

Peter enters a large ornate dining room. An open door emits a warm orange glow.

PETER (V.O.)

Even if I came to harm trying.

Peter turns and exits through the open door.

SITTING ROOM

Peter enters. A fire crackles in the fireplace. Peter stares at it oddly.

Then a dancing worm of smoke slithers up from behind a tall wing back chair that faces away from Peter. Peter moves toward the chair for a better view of the UNSEEN MAN.

PETER

Sir? I'm sorry but I...

UNSEEN MAN
You are as intelligent as I
expected.

PETER
Pardon?

Peter steps closer to the chair. He sees the shadowed side of the man's face, a shock of grey hair, the man's arm, and the rosewood pipe in his hand.

UNSEEN MAN
Come no further. I've a story to
tell you first.

Peter stops. The man waves his pipe as he inaudibly drones.

PETER (V.O.)
And tell me he did. He told me
the story of his origin, of
exotic distant lands.

Images of exotic and distant lands flash in the air before Peter. His eyes widen.

PETER (V.O.)
He told me everything and I
listened, transfixed. I couldn't
have moved if I wanted to, and I
didn't want to. I wanted to
absorb every one of his words as
they washed over me like warm
waves from a freshly learned sea.
And then suddenly I was full.

Peter panics. His vision blurs.

PETER (V.O.)
I could learn no more. My
overburdened brain was blurring
my vision, making my head so
heavy that it was all I could do
to keep it from the ground. I
had to tell my employer to stop
but my mouth felt glued shut.

The blurry man leans over the edge of the armrest of the wing back chair. He turns toward Peter.

SIR
Come here boy. It's time.

Peter's eyes close and he falls face forward to the ground.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

INT. ELEGANT BEDROOM - DAY

Light streams in from a thin part in the drapes. There is movement under the quilted satin comforter at the bottom corner of the bed.

PETER (V.O.)
 I awoke the next morning in a more luxurious bed than I have ever imagined. It was nearly more than I could manage to exit the bed that morning. My employer was nowhere to be seen.

The sheet turns up and Peter's bare legs reach to the floor.

PETER (O.S.)
 Sir?

From behind and from the neck down, Peter, walks across the floor toward a vanity.

PETER
 And where were my clothes? Had my employer removed them? What revolting act might he have forced me to perform while he had me in such a vulnerable state?

He stops and gasps. A shock of grey hair and a naked shoulder in the mirror.

PETER (V.O.)
 Then I caught sight of him -- only it wasn't him. It was me.

Peter raises his hand to his face, and the mirror image follows. Peter screams and runs out of the bedroom door.

PETER (V.O.)
 Somehow, in some way, I had become him, and he was hideous --

HALLWAY

Peter runs in a panic along the hallway, his face in shadow. He opens doors, looks in each room, screams out for his employer.

PETER (V.O.)
 I was hideous --

The hallway ends at a curtained window. Peter throws open the curtains and the sun streams in. Peter screws his face in pain, then covers it with his hands. He drops to his knees and he weeps.

PETER (V.O.)
 I realised then that his revolting act had nothing to do with forced sex. No, his particular kink was far more intimate and much more violating.

DINING ROOM

From behind, Peter eats alone at the dining room table.

PETER (V.O.)
 I continued on in this house.
 Where else could I go? No one
 tried to make me leave. Everyone
 assumed that I was the owner.

STUDY

Peter sits at a roll top desk and scribbles on a ledger.

PETER (V.O.)
 Everything I needed to survive
 was left in obvious places. He
 had left me enough money so that
 I could live quite comfortably
 for many years.

SITTING ROOM

Peter sits in a wing top chair but only the shadowed side
 of the his face, a shock of grey hair, his arm, and
 rosewood pipe in his hand are visible.

PETER (V.O.)
 Yes, my benefactor took care of
 all my needs. Except for
 companionship.

Peter sighs. The fire in the fireplace crackles. It twists
 and turns into almost human shapes.

PETER (V.O.)
 My only company was the ethereal
 flames of the fire. Then one
 night I finally understood, or
 more likely remembered what it
 was that I needed to do. Or
 perhaps what I was meant to do.

EXT. VICTORIAN HOUSE - DAY

A shirtless COLLEGE STUDENT chops wood in the yard.

PETER (V.O.)
 I hired a university student.
 One who thought himself quite
 intelligent. Then one midsummer
 day I forgot his pay packet and
 left the porch door open.

INT. SITTING ROOM

Peter leans over the armrest of the wing top chair and
 turns showing his horrible face full on. He smiles a creepy
 smile.

PETER
 Come here boy. It's time.

FADE OUT.