

THE LION AND THE WOLF

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EXT. ROAD MOTEL - DUSK

The sun sets among the clouds on the horizon, the orange light scattering across the highway as occasional cars pass by.

A man in his late 20's, JOE, passes by the doors of the numerous rooms, carrying a jug of water. He walks up to the outside facing door of one of the rooms, shuffles through his pocket for the keys, and unlocks the door.

CUT TO

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Joe comes in through the open door, and sets his jug of water on the dresser as the door closes behind him. The room is poorly lit, unadorned, the type of room transients inhabit. The shade of the walls changes with the flickering white light of the television. Joe's feet scuff the worn down carpet; compacted flat and stained.

There are objects strewn about the room. Clothes adorn the backs of chairs and the rumpled surface of the bed. Joe passes by the camera, tossing his shirt onto the edge of the bed, and walks out of frame.

As the camera continues to take in the vista of the room, a running sink can be heard in the adjacent bathroom.

On the dresser, a cell phone beeps and begins blinking up. The running water stops.

After a moment, another beep and another blink.

Joe comes in from the bathroom, picks up the phone, and stares at the screen.

"1 New Message from Unknown" it reads. He pushes his thumb into the center button on the phone and the screen wipes to a white background with one simple sentence standing out in black relief:

"I've found you."

Joe drops the phone on the dresser, noticeably shaken. His eyes dart to the door and he rushes to it, almost slamming against it's wooden build. His fingers snap the multiple locks on the door closed and he lays a cautious eye out of the corner of the window shades; few cars sit in the parking lot and no person can be seen.

His feet barely make a sound as he steps back into the room. All he can hear is his own heartbeat and the sound of the room around him.

His hand, still damp from the sink, glides over to a messenger bag on the bed. With little reservation, he plunges his hand into the bag and pulls out a small pistol. He thumbs the safety on the gun and hops back to the window, pulling the shade back with his left hand, gun in the right.

The phone on the dresser beeps again. Cautiously, Joe walks to the dresser and sees the same new message screen as before. When he goes to the message, it reads:

"Is this what your life is now?"

Angrily, he throws the phone at the bed where it lands face down on the comforter. Joe sits down in a chair in front of the dresser and puts his head in his hands. The phone beeps again.

Joe looks over in the direction of the phone and stares at it with apprehension as it beeps again. He gets up and walks over to the bed, grabs the phone and brings up the new message:

"You can't run from me."

Joe brings his hands up behind his head, the phone still clutched in his fingers, and stands in distress. The phone beeps again.

Slowly, begrudgingly, he brings the phone back down and looks at the new message:

"You know what I want."

Joe's hand pulls the phone away from him, as if he is afraid of it, and for a moment, he just stands there next to the bed, clutching the phone.

A few moments pass as Joe attempts to make sense of the message but his demeanor changes and suddenly, he drops the phone and starts looking around the room frantically, searching for something. The he stops, the gears turning behind his eyes, and he looks over at the phone. He rushes to it, flipping it over instantly, but sees nothing out of the ordinary. Putting the phone back down, he turns and closes his eyes in frustration.

Scared and shocked he starts to gather up his clothes when the phone beeps again. He quickly picks it up and gets to the message:

"You thought you were better than me but you can't even look in the mirror anymore, can you?"

Joe looks up to the bathroom and pulls out his gun. He steadies himself, takes a few deep breaths and walks into the bathroom. The overhead fluorescent lights flood the room, all white tile and no style.

The room is empty save for some towels on the floor, various toiletries strewn about the counter, and two empty pill bottles, one on it's side, sitting next to the sink. He steps up to the mirror but keeps looking to the side.

The phone beeps and Joe cycles into the message:

"What did you think? That I'd just let it go? We're partners."

Joe finally glances up into the mirror, expecting to see someone behind him but all he sees is his own reflection smiling back at him. The smile isn't his.

Joe shuts his eyes tight, puts the gun into his waistband, and leans onto the counter in front of him, shaking his head in disbelief.

JOE (CONT'D)
(to himself)
Not now...

The phone beeps again. Spinning around, away from the mirror, Joe walks out of the bathroom and back into the living room where the phone beeps again. He stops, his body a bundle of tension; he looks at the phone.

"1 New Message from Unknown." He pushes the button again:

"Just do it. Save me the trouble. You know you can't keep me away anymore."

Joe clears the message and places the phone into the pocket of a blazer hanging on the back of the chair.

Standing in the middle of the room, his right arm, shaking and taugth, reaches into the waistband and pulls the gun, and drags it up to his head. Joe looks at the gun almost in surprise, seemingly fighting the situation. Taking a deep breath, he closes his eyes and the tension melts away into resolve.

JOE (CONT'D)
(to himself)
I go away, you go away.

In a quick movement, Joe presses the gun barrel under his chin, and pulls the trigger, eyes shut tight. The hammer snaps forward.

Click. No flash. No crack. Nothing.

Joe opens his eyes and brings the gun back down, looks at it, and grins as his reflection in the mirror did.

JOE (CONT'D)

My turn.

He walks over to the bed and sets the gun down. Confidently, like another person, he walks over to the chair, grabs the jacket and throws it on.

His feet stride with a purpose as he walks over to the window and swings the shade aside, his movements different, more assured; a frightening fluidity in his steps.

Another car pulls into the parking lot at that exact moment. A young woman steps out of the car. Joe smiles.

JOE (CONT'D)

Abashed the devil stood and felt
how awful goodness is.

CUT TO

EXT. ROAD MOTEL - NIGHT

The woman comes out of the hotel check-in, key in hand. She walks back to her car and tosses her purse into the passenger seat as she sits into the driver's seat. Just as the door closes, Joe pops up from the back seat and presses the barrel of his gun to her temple.

WOMAN

(terrified)

Oh my god...Please, please...

JOE

Shhh...No screaming.

WOMAN

Take my purse. I...I've got almost
a thousand dollars...

JOE

It's not about the money. It's
about...

Joe meets her gaze in the rear view mirror, then looks back at her head.

JOE (CONT'D)
Well, let's just say I'm a man of
simple tastes.

In his jacket pocket, the phone beeps. Joe takes it out with his free hand.

"1 New Message from Unknown." Joe furrows his brow a little and presses the center button:

"I'm still here."

Joe smirks at the phone.

JOE (CONT'D)
(to himself)
Well, aren't we resilient.

The woman slowly turns her head to look at Joe.

WOMAN
Who...who are you?

Joe looks up from his phone. Malevolent condescension graces his smile as he puts the phone into his pocket.

JOE
I'm your passenger.

Joe takes his free hand, puts it on top of her head, and turns it back to the windshield.

JOE (CONT'D)
Drive.

The camera looks on at the car as the engine starts up and the headlights come on. With a lurch, the car pulls away from the motel and onto the long, dark road ahead.