

THE PASSENGER

by

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TEASER

EXT. BUS STOP - DAY

THOMAS MASON steps out of a bus and looks across the street to a used car lot. He is a clean cut, clean shaven gentleman ready to take on the world.

EXT. JERRY'S USED CARS - DAY

As Thomas enters the used car lot, he is immediately accosted by KEVIN, a used car salesman desperate to make a sale.

KEVIN

Good afternoon, sir, I'm Kevin.  
What are you in the market for  
today?

THOMAS

I'm looking to buy a car.

KEVIN

Anything in particular?

THOMAS

Just something to get me around.

KEVIN

Well, how much were you looking  
to spend?

THOMAS

I have a couple thousand dollars  
in cash, so less than that?

KEVIN

I think I can hook you up.

Kevin steps back to reveal a late model coupe in good shape.

KEVIN

How's fifteen hundred sound? It  
run good, and the previous  
practically gave it to us.

THOMAS

Perfect.

EXT. SHERMAN'S SHOE SHACK - NIGHT

Thomas parks in front of the Shoe Shack. It's an old store made over in the small town's vain effort's to modernize their downtown area. The old paint job is starting to peek through the new one on the store's sign.

Thomas gets out of his car, looks at the store marquis and sighs. He glances back at his car. For an instant, the green glow of someone in the front seat catches his attention, and then it's gone.

He stares for a moment longer before turning his attention to the store and entering.

END OF TEASER

INT. SHERMAN'S SHOE SHACK - NIGHT

The old door bell tinkles as Thomas walks through. Assisting an attractive female customer is a man about Thomas's age - JOSEPH VON TIEZEL, but he goes by PORTER - it's a long story.

Porter has about twenty shoe boxes around him and frequently strokes the calf of his customer and steals glances up her shorter-than-knee-length skirt while trying shoes on her.

PORTER

Okay, how does that one feel?

CUSTOMER

Still good. What about the orange pair? Wasn't it good?

PORTER

It might be. You want to try it on again?

CUSTOMER

Wouldn't you rather just ask me out instead of playing around all night?

PORTER

Where's the fun in that?

CUSTOMER

I wouldn't be so frustrated when you're doing my legs like that.

PORTER

I see.

Thomas clears his throat. Porter stands quickly, as if busted.

PORTER

Can I help you?

THOMAS

Hello, Porter.

Porter looks closely for a moment, and then recognizes his old friend.

PORTER

Thomas Mason?

THOMAS

The same.

Porter rushes forward and hugs Thomas.

PORTER

My goodness, Thomas, it's good to see you again. How are you doing?

THOMAS

Good.

PORTER

Good.

A moment passes where Porter tries to gather words. Thomas beats him to it.

THOMAS

Am I interrupting something?

PORTER

What? Oh, no, no, no...

Porter holds his hand out to his customer. She takes it and draws close to him.

PORTER

Thomas, this is my girlfriend, RAMONA JEFFRIES. Ramona, this is Thomas Mason. We've known each other since grade school.

RAMONA

Nice to meet you. Joseph told me all about you.

THOMAS

(to Porter)

Everything?

Porter looks at him.

PORTER

No one knows everything.

Another beat passes between them. Ramona looks uncomfortable.

RAMONA

Say, do you want to get together  
when Joseph gets off?

PORTER

Yeah, that way I can properly  
introduce you two.

THOMAS

Sounds good. Still off at 8?

PORTER

Nothing changes.

RAMONA

So what are we waiting for?

Porter glances at the clock, which reads 8:05.

PORTER

Wow, time flies when you're having  
fun.

RAMONA

(laughing)

Oh, shut up.

EXT. SHERMAN'S SHOE SHACK - NIGHT

Thomas exits first and glances towards his car.

For another split second, it looks like someone is in the front  
seat. Someone glowing like the ghost of a girl. The apparition  
flits out almost instantly again, making it impossible to know  
what happened.

Porter touches Thomas on the shoulder, making him jump.

PORTER

You ok?

THOMAS

Yeah.

Thomas looks back at the car but sees nothing.

THOMAS

Porter? Did you see anything in my car there?

PORTER

Oh, is that your car?

THOMAS

Yes, by the way, I bought a car today.

PORTER

Very nice.

THOMAS

Thank you.

PORTER

Run good?

THOMAS

Not too bad.

RAMONA

What did you see?

THOMAS

Huh?

Thomas looks back at his car again, troubled and confused.

THOMAS

Oh, I don't know. Trick of the lights perhaps. It was nothing I guess.

PORTER

What are we waiting for then?

The three walk down the streets towards a neon sign advertising the Fleet Street Bar & Grill.

INT. FLEET STREET BAR & GRILL - NIGHT

Thomas, Porter, and Ramona sit in a booth with half-eaten burgers and fries on the table before them. They are laughing amongst themselves.

RAMONA

No, I've never called him Porter.

THOMAS

Why not?

RAMONA

Well, for one thing, I don't understand why. I mean, his name is Joseph von Triezel. Where do you get "Porter" out of that?

THOMAS

Well...

PORTER

Oh no.

RAMONA

Come on, tell me.

PORTER

Go ahead, Thomas.

THOMAS

Well, we were 12 and at an airport picking up my aunt who was staying with us for a week. While we were standing next to the porter outside, who had to be 100 years old, Little Joe, here, saw a spider and screamed.

RAMONA

Screamed?

PORTER

It was a very big spider. Like this!

He holds up his hands to circle the size of an impossibly huge spider. Thomas smiles and shakes his head. Ramona pats his head.



RAMONA

Poor baby.

THOMAS

So anyway, he scares this old porter who falls over and knocks himself out.

RAMONA

Oh my!

THOMAS

Well, now Little Joe thinks he's killed the guy and proceeds to do the old guy's job. I guess he wanted to have his sentence commuted for good deeds or something. Anyway, after the second round of bags, the old guy wakes up and sees his little helper. He laughed, and we've never forgotten have we, Porter?

PORTER

No.

RAMONA

Do you like the nickname?

PORTER

It kind of grew on me ... after 3 years or so.

RAMONA

I see...

THOMAS

What do you do, Ramona?

RAMONA

DMV. One of the jugheads who takes bad pictures of people on a daily basis.

THOMAS

I'm sorry...

PORTER  
That's what I tell her.

RAMONA  
Ah, it's a job.

THOMAS  
True...

EXT. RAMONA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Porter kisses Ramona good night. He waves at her as he walks down the sidewalk to where Thomas is standing by the street.

THOMAS  
You still live close enough to walk to work...

PORTER  
Yeah. I moved out of my parents' house, but only a few blocks away. The walking is good for me.

THOMAS  
I'm in a small apartment in the newer part of town, so I need to drive.

PORTER  
Cool.

Thomas gestures back to Ramona's house.

THOMAS  
So, how'd you manage to hook up with her?

PORTER  
I was working in the shoe store, and she needed some pumps. I don't know; we just clicked.

THOMAS  
You stroked her legs, didn't you?

PORTER

Darn straight. I actually was doing it absent-mindedly. I looked up and she was smiling at me. I apologized and she said it was ok, and would I like to do it outside of business hours. I agreed and that was only a month after ... well ... after the incident with you.

THOMAS

So, you've known her 2 months?

PORTER

Yeah.

A beat as they walk through the neighborhood back towards main street.

THOMAS

Porter?

PORTER

Hm?

THOMAS

What did happen that night? It's all so vague. I know I had to have been stupid, but the PCP messed with my memory.

PORTER

Drugs will do that to you. I haven't touched them since then.

THOMAS

You avoided the question.

PORTER

I really don't know enough to tell you. You ended up in rehab. Let the past go.

THOMAS

It's just- I've had these weird dreams sometimes.

PORTER

Like what?

THOMAS

Oh, the party mostly, and the people in it. It's all very fuzzy.

Porter stares at the ground as they walk. He looks profoundly sad and troubled.

THOMAS

Porter?

PORTER

Don't worry about it.

THOMAS

Did I do something?

Porter stops walking and looks up at him.

PORTER

Let it go.

Porter walks away. After a moment of consideration, Thomas follows. They continue onward in silence.

EXT. SHERMAN'S SHOE SHACK - NIGHT

Thomas walks up to his car, still parked where he left it. He is alone and looks at his car from a distance momentarily. The car is dark and nothing unusual is happening with it. Thomas takes a deep breath.

THOMAS

(to himself)

It's okay. Just a trick of the lights. Nothing more.

He opens the car door and gets in.

EXT. CITY ROAD - NIGHT

Thomas drives his car towards his apartment. His headlights illuminate the dark road ahead.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

The radio plays softly as Thomas drives. He quietly studies the road ahead.

Suddenly, a soft green glow issues from the passenger side of the vehicle. Thomas's eyes grow wide. His knuckles turn white as he subconsciously grips the wheel tighter.

Slowly, he turns his head to see what has appeared next to him. He sees-

-a girl of about 20. She looks down, sad. She turns her head up to him. As she looks at him, he expression turns to anger and she jumps on him!

Thomas screams as the spirit passes through him.

EXT. CITY ROAD - NIGHT

The car swerves all over the road, tires squealing and turning a 360 until it settles on the shoulder.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Thomas is hyperventilating. He is alone in the car. Sweat streams from his brow.

He closes his eyes ... takes a deep breath to regain his composure.

EXT. CITY ROAD - NIGHT

Slowly, Thomas pulls the car off the shoulder, turns it around, and resumes his journey home just a little more slowly than before.

EXT. THOMAS' APARTMENT - NIGHT

A 2-story cookie cutter design of a building allowing 4 units on both sides. Thomas lives on the first floor, his bedroom window facing the parking lot, where his car is. The light in his bedroom comes on.

INT. BEDROOM, THOMAS' APARTMENT - NIGHT

Thomas stands at his door, hand on the light switch. Wearily, he looks about his room. He walks over to his bed and sits.

He stares off into space for a moment before glancing to his window. Slowly, he stands and walks to his window. He pulls back the curtain.

OUT IN THE LOT

his car sits, unattended.

He continues to stare at his vehicle.

IN THE FRONT SEAT OF HIS CAR

the glowing shape of the girl appears again. She is looking down at her feet.

He continues looking at her, somewhat frozen with trepidation.

She slowly looks up at him. Her expression changes to anger.

He gasps. Quickly, he closes the curtains and backs away from the window. He trips on the edge of his bed and topples to the floor.

Fearfully, he rises to his feet and turns out the light. He pulls the covers back on his bed preparing to crawl in. He looks up at the window again.

He walks around his bed back to the window and slowly pulls back the curtain.

The girl stands outside his window! He stands unable to move, the curtains still in his hand. The light from her spirit bathes the room in a sickly green light.

Thomas releases the curtain and falls over the bed onto the floor. He passes out.

INT. THOMAS' DREAM - NIGHT

The dream is viewed as if looking through Thomas' eyes... there is a sort of fuzzy film that distorts the images.

Inside someone's house, there is an enormous crowd resembling some kind of stereotypical college drinking party. There is bottles of alcohol everywhere as well as a large bowl filled with what appears to be pills of all varieties and colors.

Porter is there and shakes Thomas' hand. Thomas finds another guy, DRUGGIE, who hands Thomas a syringe.

Colors swirl before Thomas' eyes...brief glimpses sneak through...other party guests... the girl...laughing... debauchery...outside...front lawn...the car...bugs... roaches...demons...blood...screaming...

INT. BEDROOM, THOMAS' APARTMENT - DAY

Still on the floor from the night before, Thomas gasps as his eyes snap open. He looks around, breathing heavily. His breathing slows back to normal.

He slowly raises his head. He groans from the uncomfortable night's sleep but manages to raise himself to his feet.

He looks over to the window. A low noise sounds from outside. He walks over to the window.

He pulls back the curtain and gasps, stumbling back. Outside the window-

A MAINTENANCE MAN

trimming the lawn. The Maintenance Man looks up a moment, and then continues his job as the curtains waft closed.

Thomas stumbles to his feet, breathing hard.

EXT. JERRY'S USED CARS - DAY

Thomas drives into the lot perhaps a little too fast. He parks as a SALESMAN accosts him.

SALESMAN

Good morning, sir. Looking to trade in your car today?

THOMAS

No, I bought this yesterday, and I need to return it.

SALESMAN

Sorry, sir, sales on used vehicles are final. If you want to trade it in, we can-

THOMAS

I can't afford anything else!

SALESMAN

Then I can't help you.

THOMAS

Come on, I don't want this car anymore!

Another car drives into the lot. The Salesman spots it.

SALESMAN

That would your problem, sir. We can't help you.

He runs off to attack the incoming carload. Thomas watches him go. He does not look happy.

INT. THOMAS' CAR - DAY

Thomas flops down in his car and slams the door. He hits the steering wheel in anger.

Suddenly, his eyes look up, as if something has just occurred to him. He starts the car and drives off.



EXT. LIBRARY - DAY

Thomas parks in front of the local library.

INT. LIBRARY MICROFICHE AREA - DAY

Thomas looks at a screens scrolling through old newspapers. He centers on a single date.

The headline reads: "Local Party Gets Out of Hand."

Flashes of the article appear:

"...an abundance of drugs and alcohol..."

"...one girl dead..."

"...killer in custody..."

"...names are unreleased..."

"...occurred as a result of being high on drugs..."

A picture from the article flashes on screen: a wide view of the house where the party was held. In the driveway amongst a slew of other vehicles is his car!

Another flash of the article appears:

"...Police responded to a neighbor complaint at 542 5<sup>th</sup> St..."

Thomas stares intently at the address on the screen.

EXT. 542 5TH STREET - DAY

Thomas stands in front of the empty house from the newspaper article with a "For Sale" sign in the yard. The driveway in the article with his car is actually the driveway next door, which was apparently commandeered during the party as well.

Thomas shakes his head. He sits on the porch.

PAUL ROBINSON, a man of about 50, walks out of the house next door. He looks at Thomas.

PAUL

Hey! What are you doing over there?

Thomas stands and looks over to Paul.

THOMAS

Do you remember what happened  
over here a couple of months  
ago?

Paul stiffens. He looks at Thomas and then glances over to the  
car.

PAUL

That your car?

THOMAS

What about it?

PAUL

Come over here.

Thomas walks across the yard to stand next to Paul. Paul looks  
him over.

PAUL

Tell me something. Why do you  
want to know about the party?

THOMAS

Because I was there, and I don't  
remember anything about it. Can  
you tell me anything?

PAUL

Well, I wasn't home at the time,  
but my daughter was. She was  
there.

THOMAS

Can I talk to her, then?

PAUL

No, I'm afraid you can't.

THOMAS

Why not?

PAUL

Because you killed her.

Thomas' eyes grow wide.

INT. 542 5TH STREET - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Thomas and NATALIE ROBINSON laugh with bottles in their hands in a throng of people. The crowds push them together. They kiss.

THOMAS

You wanna get out of here?

Natalie nods with a smile.

EXT. 542 5TH STREET - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Thomas and Natalie stumble out of the house.

THOMAS

I left-ed my curround here  
summares...

He stumbles to the ground. Natalie laughs at him

NATALIE

What's it look like?

He rolls over and looks at her.

THOMAS

Iss got deez round fings on  
it that spin to make it go.

Natalie points.

NATALIE

Oh! There's one.

Thomas rolls over and looks.

THOMAS

Yeah, dere 'tis.

He stumbles to his feet, takes Natalie's hand and walks to the car. He pulls on the handle and she clambers in. He follows.

The car starts and it swerves down the street away from the house.

END FLASHBACK

Thomas stares forward. SOUNDS of squeeling tires, crunching metal, and Natalie screaming penetrate the soundscape.

THOMAS

Oh, my God.

PAUL

Her name was Natalie, and that's her car.

Thomas looks over to the car.

INT. THOMAS' CAR - NIGHT

Thomas sits in the car in front of the house still. The streetlights are on shining a dull light in the windows. Thomas stares downward.

A green glow grows from the passenger side again. Thomas looks up. Natalie sits in the passenger seat, looking at him with an angry expression.

THOMAS

Hi, Natalie.

She doesn't move. Her expression doesn't change.

THOMAS

I hope you can hear me. You know we were both messed up that night, and we probably both should have died. I know I deserved to.

She still doesn't move.

THOMAS

I really can't change what happened, and I'm sure you know that, and I'm sure you also know that if I could go back and change anything...

He looks at her.

THOMAS

We would have totally just made out in the back seat.

She smiles.

THOMAS

I know that this was your car, and although I wanted to get rid of it before, I think I'll keep it. I'll keep it to remember you. I'm sorry for what happened. If you want to stay here, that's fine. But don't hate me. I hate myself enough for both of us.

She maintains her smiling stare.

THOMAS

I'm sorry.

She leans over and kisses him on the cheek and fades out.

THOMAS

Good-bye.

THE END