

Dark Storefront

written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Wind whips through a blighted small-town business district.

Deserted storefronts everywhere. Dark windows. Hard times.

Headlights. A car pulls to the curb. Out steps TIM KOHLRUST, 20s, an earnest college kid in an extra-bulky winter jacket.

He squints at the address on the nearest storefront.

TIM

This can't be right.

Leaves skitter along the pavement as he approaches the storefront.

He peers inside the window. The old shop is long-abandoned, filled with shadows.

There's one item in the dark store that Tim can vaguely see: a mannequin with just its head and torso intact. It's on a table near the window.

A monster mask covers the mannequin's face. Holiday tinsel hangs loosely on its torso.

Tim shakes his head and steps away from the glass.

On a wall near the entrance is a 1950s-style intercom/buzzer. Confused and muttering to himself, Tim presses the button.

The wind swirls. Tim stuffs his hands into his pockets.

A blast intercom static fills the air.

A tinny voice emerges from the crackle. It belongs to ERROL LIPSEY, 60s.

MR. LIPSEY (V.O.)

Main office. State your purpose.

Tim holds down intercom button to respond.

TIM

This is Tim Kohlrust. I have an interview scheduled with Mr. Lipsey. It's about the internship.

MR. LIPSEY (V.O.)

Stand by, young man.

A moment crawls by. Too long. Tim presses the intercom again.

TIM
For a minute there, I thought I had
the wrong place.

More waiting.

MR. LIPSEY (V.O.)
(annoyed)
You think you're in the wrong
place, Kohlrust?

TIM
No. I mean...

MR. LIPSEY (V.O.)
You expected something different?

A glance at the freaky masked torso in the window.

TIM
Not really.

MR. LIPSEY (V.O.)
If you're not serious, we can void
your application.

TIM
I'm totally serious, Mr. Lipsey.

MR. LIPSEY (V.O.)
You know, our mission is vital. We
want to restore our town's business
district to its glory days.

TIM
And I can definitely help with
that.

MR. LIPSEY (V.O.)
How? Let's hear it.

Tim shifts his weight from one leg to the other.

TIM
Should I do that, uh, right here?

A nervous glance at the intercom.

TIM
Or inside with you?

No reply.

TIM
Is the interview, like, happening
right now?

He peers into the dark storefront for signs of Mr. Lipsey. No luck. Only the torso.

TIM
Are you interviewing me through the
intercom?

MR. LIPSEY (V.O.)
What do you think, son?

TIM
Yes. Okay. I guess we've started,
so--yeah, I'm a junior. Finance is
my major with an emphasis on urban
planning.

A dim lightbulb pops on inside the shop.

Nobody emerges from the shadows. It's still dark in there.

TIM
Is that you, Mr. Lipsey? A light
came on.

No answer. From the intercom comes pure static: Shhhhhhhh.

Another light pops on inside the storefront, this one much brighter.

Someone steps forward from the shadows--a SHOPKEEPER. Tim raises his hand in greeting, but quickly pulls it back down.

Something's wrong with the Shopkeeper. He wears a ghoulish green monster mask, matching the one on the mannequin. Like the mannequin, he's covered in tinsel.

Tim gasps, steps back, tries to make sense of this.

The intercom sputters to life.

MR. LIPSEY (V.O.)
Let me buzz you in, Kohlrust.

Tim shakes his head. No way.

MR. LIPSEY (V.O.)
Time to meet face-to-face. I want
you to speak with my associate.

The Shopkeeper presses his nose and cheeks to the window.
Fake rubber skin meets dirty glass.

TIM
Is this a prank?

He searches for pranksters hiding in the shadows.

TIM
This is why I had to come in the
middle of the night? A joke? Who is
this?

MR. LIPSEY (V.O.)
No fooling, my boy. We think you're
a perfect fit for us.

Tim tries to make sense of this.

The Shopkeeper steps away from the glass. He pulls a six-inch
hunting knife from a sheath on his belt.

He points it directly at Tim and makes slashing gestures.

Shock. Disbelief. Tim backtracks to his car, but stumbles.

The Shopkeeper dashes away from the window. He's at the door.
He swings it open.

He rushes full-speed at Tim, knife extended.

Tim rushes to his car, but the Shopkeeper slashes him before
he gets there.

A scream. Blood. Tim flails.

The Shopkeeper drags him back toward the old, dark shop. Tim
kicks and resists unsuccessfully.

Mr. Lipsey's voice blares ominously from the intercom.

MR. LIPSEY (V.O.)
It'll take a lot sacrifice to
revive our town's shops and
businesses.

The Shopkeeper pulls Tim through the door's threshold.

MR. LIPSEY (V.O.)
We'll start by sacrificing you, Tim
Kohlrust.

The Shopkeeper slams the front door.

MR. LIPSEY (V.O.)
Let's backtrack. Our ancestors made
blood sacrifices to assure good
crops each year.

Inside the storefront window, the Shopkeeper slashes Tim some
more. Blood splatters. The Shopkeeper dances in glee.

MR. LIPSEY (V.O.)
So why shouldn't we do the same?
It's time to revive old practices.

Tim drops to the ground, death imminent.

MR. LIPSEY (V.O.)
We offer you up, Tim Kohlrust, in
the name of restoring our good
fortunes. Lord, grant us bounty and
success.

The Shopkeeper lifts Tim and sets him in a chair alongside
the mannequin. A grisly storefront display, for sure.

MR. LIPSEY (V.O.)
So congratulations, Timmy, you got
the internship.

The shopkeeper whips out a mask from his pocket and pulls it
over Tim's face. The mask depicts a clown, a fool.

Next, the Shopkeeper sets a sign on Tim's torso. It says
"Open for Business."

Tim's blood drips onto it.

The Shopkeeper does a ritualistic dance over Tim's body. Then
he steps out of sight.

Static emerges from the intercom, but Mr. Lipsey has nothing
else to say. The interview is over.

The static carries on for awhile, then cuts out.

The wind whips through the small business district.

The shops are dead now, but perhaps they're on the dawn of a
revival--one brought on by blood and sacrifice.

FADE OUT: