

'Block'

by

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EXT. OFFICE CAR PARK - NIGHT

Silence. Midnight.

HIGH ANGLE SHOT

We watch as a white Polo passes the security gate and snakes into a parking position.

WIDE

The car in a large open space.

CLOSER

MARCUS gets out of the car holding a black portfolio and heads for a two-storey office block, looking around as he goes. It's late, it's creepy. Before he enters, he turns from one side and then to the other, nodding his head, conceding a private thought.

MARCUS
(almost a whisper)
Baseball bats, boogeymen--beautiful.

SOUNDS from the OFFICE creep OVER the soundtrack--

CUT TO:

INT. OFFICE - DAY (FLASHBACK)

WE DOLLY on track past working desks, MALE and FEMALE OFFICE WORKERS are busy doing something or another. A FEMALE OFFICE WORKER walks INTO FRAME carrying a file. We stay with her as she drops it on Marcus' desk and walks away. Marcus notes the file casually. He's sat across from MARTIN, the office moron.

MARTIN
Nobody works late. You know why?

Marcus remains head down, at work, his dialogue "at a distance", half paying attention.

MARCUS
Enlighten me.

MARTIN
Because your social life starts after five o'clock.

MARCUS

What can I say, a writer needs space and an office worker--

MARCUS/MARTIN

--Needs something more--

MARTIN

-- I know I know, but I'd take a blonde and a bottle of bubbly over poetry and a dictionary any day.

MARCUS

It's not poetry, it's a novel.

MARTIN

What's the difference, lots of big words and bullshit postering--

MARCUS

--Sounds like my M.O.--

MARTIN

--But after hours? Why after hours? Why at work? Why don't you wax lyrical somewhere else?

MARCUS

Too many distractions.

MARTIN

There's something very wrong with you.

MARCUS

Well, let's just agree to disagree.

Martin's not getting to him. He tries another approach. Story-teller tone engaged, he starts:

MARTIN

You remember a guy called Frederick Francis?

MARCUS

(shakes head)

Nope.

MARTIN

Neither do most people.

A beat. Marcus stops working and looks up at Martin.

MARCUS
(expectant, sarcastic)
You have to keep talking.

Martin rolls his eyes quickly and launches straight into what he wants to say.

MARTIN
Alright, so Freddy's like the model work-a-holic, he sets the standard, first in, last out, hardly speaks-- but there's one occasion when it goes wrong for him. He falls behind with a report, no-one knows why, but he does. He comes back after work-- clocks in . . . but, get this, he never clocks out

A beat, Marcus considers, letting out a half-smirk, he's on the defence.

MARCUS
You're tryin' to scare me and that's the best you can do?

Martin leans in.

MARTIN
No, no, that's not the scary bit. Freddy walks into front reception, CCTV camera picks him up and then something weird happens.

INTERCUT:

CU - SECURITY FOOTAGE CCTV (FLASHBACK)

FREDERICK FRANCIS, 40s, thin, unassuming, is signing in within a small reception area. We are in a HIGH ANGLE SHOT. Frederick pauses and turns to look at the CCTV camera. He glares at it.

CLOSER - FREDERICK

looking at us with doll's eyes.

INTERCUT:

INT. OFFICE - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Marcus is now fascinated, Martin has a hold.

MARTIN

No one knows why he looked into that camera but it was the last time he was ever seen again.

He's finished up playing story-teller. He exhales, breaking the suspense, leans back and considers.

MARTIN

If you wanna write and be all creative, book yourself a ticket and find yourself a beach, that's all I'm saying.

Marcus considers, his imagination over-active. Martin's indifferent, he's finally got one over on Marcus. He goes for a cigarette.

MARTIN

Smoke?

MARCUS

No.

MARTIN

No? What do you mean no, you're a writer, you've gotta have vices.

Marcus has broken out of being spellbound by the story, he gets back to reality and *back to work*.

MARCUS

Coffee, yeah, cigarettes? No, not anymore.

MARTIN

A writer's gotta smoke, all the good writers smoke you know--
(considers, shrugs, more to himself)
--and all the bad ones too.

Marcus shakes his head ('Idiot.') Martin considers something, then grins mischievously. He removes a single cigarette from his packet and leans forward.

MARTIN

How about one for the road?

Marcus looks off Martin annoyed, then off the cigarette, then back at Martin. He reluctantly takes it.

MARCUS

You're a real prick you know that?

MARTIN

It's hereditary, what can I say?

(off cigarettes)

And start smoking again, these things
cost a fortune.

CUT TO:

INT. RECEPTION - NIGHT

Back to the present and Marcus approaches the front desk of the office block. We're in a small open reception area. A wall-mounted TV provides background atmos. The SECURITY GUARD, a well-meaning man in his fifties, puts down his newspaper and greets Marcus.

SECURITY GUARD

Good afternoon, good evening, good
night.

Marcus goes to sign in.

MARCUS

How we doing Mike?

Security Guard looks off himself and exhales deeply.

SECURITY GUARD

Job'll be the death of me.

The Security Guard picks up on the anomaly.

SECURITY GUARD

What's your excuse?

Marcus offers a polite smirk and holds up the folio.

MARCUS

Extra-curricular activity.

SECURITY GUARD

(furrows eyebrows)

You're either really smart or very dumb.

MARCUS

I get that a lot, boss knows about it,
office for the evening and all that.

The Security Guard concedes being impressed.

SECURITY GUARD
(acknowledging)
Live fast, die young kid.

The Security Guard gets up, turns around and goes for the key cabinet which is wall-mounted in a concealed side cupboard. Marcus takes a beat while waiting, looks around and then SPOTS something.

MARCUS'S POV

looking up at a CCTV camera. WE PUSH IN.

HIGH ANGLE SHOT

of Marcus, looking at the camera, he wanders towards it, staring up.

CCTV FOOTAGE

eerily mirroring Frederick's, Marcus looking up, blank stare.

BACK TO SCENE

The Security Guard interrupts Marcus' musings.

SECURITY GUARD
All night long?

The Security Guard chucks a set of keys with a fob. Marcus catches it awkwardly, not as cool as he thinks he is. He looks off the keys then off the Security Guard.

MARCUS
(uncertain then small smile)
Yeah, all night long.

INT. MAIN OFFICE

At Marcus' desk, we watch his portfolio slam down in front of us. We go wider and find ourselves in a large gloomy office.

Marcus wastes no time as he preps himself. He arranges his desk and is about to leap into what he's come to work for but the namesake of the story becomes apparent, he's got writer's block.

He puts his hands behind his head, elbows on the desk and looks downward, exhaling deeply.

We hear SOUNDS from a restaurant. Clattering cutlery, the distant sound of the kitchen, inane chatter, and then we:

CUT TO:

INT. RESTAURANT - EVENING (FLASHBACK)

A bottle of red wine complements candle-light. Marcus sits across from a pretty brunette, ANGELA, 30s.

ANGELA

You always do this, if it isn't bothering, it's not telling.

MARCUS

I'm not good with words, *my* words, never sounds right.

ANGELA

How can you be a writer if you can't tell people your ideas?

MARCUS

(more confident)

Because there's a difference between a writer and a story-teller. One writes, the other interprets, I don't interrupt.

ANGELA

Alright, what if you write and I interpret.

Marcus relents, sits back in his chair, looks downward and shakes his head, managing a half-smirk.

MARCUS

Oh, no, no, no--

ANGELA

Why not?

Beat. Marcus looks down, settles, then up.

MARCUS

It's private.

Angela gives up trying to understand her "creative" love interest--

ANGELA
Yeah, right.

--Marcus realises and relents light-heartedly.

MARCUS
(faux-explanation, hand gesture)
Curse of creativity.

She isn't serious, but she isn't beaming either.

ANGELA
Lack of imagination more like it.

Marcus looks on at Angela, to him, she's almost pouting. He hasn't given away his true love--his writing. He smirks, the light-hearted stuff with Angela is more fun. He reaches across the table and takes her hand.

MARCUS
Well maybe we could do some interpreting of our own.

She's receptive.

ANGELA
I really hope your writing's better than your wordplay.

She smiles and so does Marcus.

CUT TO:

INT. MAIN OFFICE - NIGHT

A sharp contrast to what is in the here and now--no longer flirty, no longer seemingly cool. He looks up from his desk and looks around. He spots A LIGHTER. Looks off it, he lights it, clips it off. He looks off the cigarette Martin gave him--can't do it. He puts it down and grabs some pocket change from his desk, gets up and exits the office, as he does, we spot GHOSTLY FREDERICK stood in the shadows.

INT. STAIRWELL/RECEPTION

We follow Marcus down a stairwell and into the reception area. The television is still on as a background hum. The Security Guard is engrossed in his paper, WE STEADICAM (or near enough) with Marcus as he asks a question and heads for the canteen.

MARCUS

Getting a drink, you want anything?

SECURITY GUARD

Surprise me.

MARCUS

(more to himself)

I'll surprise myself.

Keeping with Marcus, we STEADICAM with him through reception's double-doors and to the right, down a--

INT. CORRIDOR TO CANTEEN

Eerily quiet. Marcus walks down a barren corridor. At the far end is a double-door entrance to the canteen area. We follow him into the--

INT. CANTEEN

To his immediate right is a line of vending machines-- two close together, one apart. GHOSTLY FREDERICK stands, in the shadows, between two of the machines, his face blank, we may see him, we may not. Marcus heads for the furthest machine - a soft drinks machine, rubbing the back of his head as he goes.

OUT OF THE STEADICAM and into the scene, Marcus slots money in for two cans of coca-cola.

SOUNDS from the restaurant return and we go back to:

CUT TO:

INT. RESTAURANT - EVENING (FLASHBACK)

Marcus has loosened up. His first true love is about to get vented.

MARCUS

Ok, alright, alright.

Marcus shuffles in his seat, prepping himself for explanation. Angela shoots him a placated smile, he's conceded and she looks on, expectant.

MARCUS

Ghosts.

ANGELA

(wide-eyed)

Ghosts?

MARCUS

(regretting his admission)

See this is why I don't bother telling anyone--

ANGELA

--No, c'mon, tell me.

MARCUS

I wanna . . .

(looking around, no one's listening)

. . . I want to write about ghosts haunting the wrong kind of people. You know, why a nice old couple or a good looking girl, why not a killer or a--

ANGELA

(raises eyebrow, winding him up)

--A good looking girl?

MARCUS

Basically someone who's done no wrong.

Marcus pauses and ponders. Angela has other concerns.

ANGELA

Well as long as you keep the good looking girls to a minimum, I think we'll be ok. Why not stick to the nice old couple?

Is he stumped? Marcus looks on at Angela, she gives him a "Well?" look. He pauses, considers, then, cheekily:

MARCUS

Well nudity and the supernatural do go well together and the last thing anyone wants to see is a naked old couple. That'd be true horror.

Angela looks on at Marcus, is he serious? Straight-laced Marcus finally being playful? She looks on inquisitive. He gives her a "what do you think" look? She gives him a faux "not impressed" look and throws her napkin at him.

MARCUS

Alright, I'll keep their clothes on--
promise.

Angela beams a smile, playful silly Marcus--at last.

CUT TO:

INT. CANTEEN - NIGHT

No longer cool, no longer flirty, Marcus thanks God Angela can't seem him in the state he's in. We are in an extreme close-up of Marcus whose head is against the can machine. Blue neon illuminates the scene for us, he's got serious block. He grabs the *two coke cans* he's placed on the roof of the vending machine and heads out.

INT. RECEPTION

Same scene as before. Television's ON, newspaper's on the desk, security radio's on the table but the Security Guard is NOT THERE. Someone's goofing around. Marcus has work to do. He puts the Coke can down on the Security Guard's desk and leaves the scene.

INT. MAIN OFFICE

Back in the office and Marcus sits down at his computer, can of coke to his side. He takes a beat, closes his eyes--

INTERCUT:

INT. RESTAURANT - EVENING (FLASHBACK)

We see quick subliminal flashes of ANGELA, smiling--

INTERCUT:

INT. MAIN OFFICE - NIGHT

Marcus opens his eyes, is Angela his muse? Maybe, maybe not, he takes a moment to think and then begins

"something". We shoot coverage of Marcus getting into his groove . . . and then all of a sudden--nothing. He looks on, dejected. Lost, no Angela, no story.

THEN, we hear a THUD.

Marcus takes a moment to turn around. He does so and looks across the office to the doorway. It came from beyond the doors, on the corridor. He goes to investigate.

He looks out beyond the doorway, in the distance at the end of the corridor is GHOSTLY FREDERICK, Marcus doesn't notice him as, all of a sudden, the lights go.

MARCUS

Fuck.

INT. BREAKER ROOM

LIGHTER in hand, Marcus opens the breaker room door, stumbles past a broom, mop and bucket and swings open the wall-mounted breaker panel. He scans down the column of switches with his finger, locating the one isolated "wrong-facing" breaker. He flicks the switch. The POWER TURNS BACK ON.

INT. CORRIOR OUTSIDE OFFICE

The lights kick back to life from dark to light, GHOSTLY FREDERICK is peering out from one of the office doors.

We cut back to Marcus as he exits the breaker room and calms himself down. HAND-HELD we walk in front.

MARCUS

(quietly mimicking Martin)
This is why no-one works late,
(then to himself)
jesus christ.

Suddenly there is another loud THUD. Marcus stops dead in his tracks. He looks back and forth on the corridor. His breathing quickens and he looks off his office door.

MARCUS

Get back,
(close his eyes)
Get back to work.

He takes a calm breath and walks forward.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MAIN OFFICE - NIGHT

WE PUSH IN on Marcus sat at his desk making notes. He cross-references material, his Coke is to his side, as he goes to turn a page over, we hear the LOUD THUDDING SOUND, but this time, it's coming from inside the office. Marcus drops his pen.

WE PUSH IN on where the noise is coming from - one of the interior offices. He stares. WE PUSH IN on him and then PUSH IN on where the noise is coming from, the lighting goes off again. His breathing intensifies.

INT. CORRIDOR OUTSIDE OFFICE

We see Marcus, pacing, determined, towards the breaker room. He's carrying something with him as well as his lighter.

INT. BREAKER ROOM

Agitated, Marcus, breaks open the breaker panel, finds the switch, flicks it.

INT. CORRIDOR OUTSIDE MAIN OFFICE

The lights come to life.

INT. BREAKER ROOM

Marcus tapes down the switch with packing tape.

MARCUS

(whispers)

Just for tonight, just for tonight.

He nods his head, exhales, exhausted, it's over. He tries to recompose himself, does so and EXITS FRAME.

INT. TOILETS

Marcus is at a urinal. He's talking to himself.

MARCUS

If she's going to say what I think
she's going to say, she should do
it within a few lines, makes sense.

He turns around and goes for the wash basin, he's
looking down, soap and hot water, and guess what--in
the mirror reflection behind him is GHOSTLY FRDERICK,
grimacing.

MARCUS

(quietly, to himself)
It's not about plot, it's about
motivation--

All of a sudden the lights GO. Marcus is now PISSED.

MARCUS

Oh, Jesus Christ, come on!

INT. RECEPTION

Marcus comes down the stairs, prepping his words--

MARCUS

Mike, I don't care if it's work-men
or if someone's taking the--

and is about to launch into a loud rant at the Security
Guard until he realises everything is QUIET and he
isn't there. The television's OFF, reception is
seemingly closed for business. Marcus looks around, his
temper momentarily curbed. A beat. THEN: LOUD SOUND OF
STATIC. He jumps out of his skin, and looks off the
radio on the guard's desk. It's a two-radio dock. One
radio is in its holder, there's an evident vacant spot
for the other radio. The Security Guard must have his
radio with him. Marcus calms down and goes for the
radio

MARCUS

Mike, can you hear me?
(pauses, realising he should have
said something else, sweet, endearing)
Over.

No reply.

MARCUS

Mike, I need you at reception. Over.

Marcus turns to look, the can of coke is on the table, unopened. He looks outside reception's window. Nothing. Marcus tries his radio again.

MARCUS

Mike, over.

Nothing.

MARCUS

Mike, receiving, over?

Nothing. Beat. The radio then COMES TO LIFE. It sounds like a voice but it's shrouded in static. Marcus picks up the pace.

MARCUS

Mike? Mike, over?

The static replies: *"Mike? Mike, over?"*

MARCUS

C'mon you lazy bastard, get back to reception--

(puts radio down, realises, radio back up to mouth, sweet, endearing)

--Over.

The static replies: *"C'mon you lazy bastard, get back to reception--over."*

Marcus looks off the radio, then to himself:

MARCUS

That doesn't even sound like me.

BAM--STATIC. He jumps, closes his eyes and is almost annoyed at himself for getting scared. Marcus thinks on and turns to the CCTV camera.

CCTV - MARCUS

He looks up at the camera, isolated, alone.

WIDER

and back to scene, before Marcus can do what he should (check CCTV, find out what happened?)--the radio clicks. It's the Security Guard or is it? *"Good afternoon, good evening, good night."* A repeat of the

first words the Security Guard said to him. He goes for the radio.

MARCUS

Mike, Mike, over? Can you hear me?

The static repeats been and gone dialogue: *"Job'll be the death of me . . . what's your excuse?"*

Marcus looks off the radio--something isn't right. The signal starts to go, he moves, it's stronger towards the stairs. Uh-oh. He goes for it.

INT. STAIRWELL

We watch as Marcus climbs the stairs with the radio.

The radio goes: *"You're either really smart or very dumb."*

It becomes apparent, this is repeated dialogue. Marcus goes for the radio.

MARCUS

Mike?

The STATIC goes. *"Live fast, die young kid."* Marcus turns off the radio and looks around, up and down the stairwell. Nothing. He turns the radio back on.

The static goes then: *"All night long?"* Pause. The static goes again: *"Surprise me."*

And THEN--LOUD STATIC, Marcus turns the radio off, the hairs on the back of his neck standing on end. His breathing quickens.

MARCUS

(eyes closed, whispers)

Just your imagination, just your imagination.

SECURITY GUARD (O.C)

(monotone, distant)

Marcus.

He opens his eyes, hyperventilating, mouth explodes with a gasp.

MARCUS

Mike?

SECURITY GUARD (O.C)
(monotone, distant)
Marcus.

It's coming from upstairs, Marcus looks upwards and then follows the voice. We're now on the first floor landing. Marcus goes to explore the first floor corridor, past a set of double-doors. He opens them up. He looks left, then right, nothing.

MARCUS
(exasperated)
If this is your idea of a joke, guess what I'm gonna say next you fat fu-

SECURTIY GUARD (O.C)
(monotone, distant)
I'm up here.

Marcus whips around and looks up to the second floor, he goes for the stairs.

INT. SECOND FLOOR LANDING

Marcus looks around, nothing. He takes small guarded steps towards the main double-doors to the second floor.

SECURITY GUARD (O.C)
(monotone, distant)
I'm right here.

He sounds like he's behind the double-doors.

Marcus closes his eyes and opens them.

INT. CORRIDOR OUTSIDE MAIN OFFICE

Nothing. He looks down the corridor, lights on. He looks up in amazement.

MARCUS
Lights on.

He turns and looks to his office. Safest place to be. He moves quickly and enters his office.

INT. MAIN OFFICE

Marcus enters, starts walking forward and then all of a sudden STOPS.

CU - SECURITY GUARD'S RADIO ON MARCUS' DESK

He can't believe what he's seeing. He looks off the radio in his hand.

MARCUS

What? Can't be, can't be.

He looks behind him and then around, no answers, no clues. He closes his eyes and takes a deep breath. As he edges forward, the radio on his desk emits low-level white noise.

He paces slowly towards his desk, looking off the radio, half in awe, half in terror.

He reaches his desk. Picks up the rogue radio and looks off it. It's real. He looks off his own radio. He's incredulous.

We hear a THUD, coming from inside the office, and then another louder THUD, then another LOUDER THUD.

And then the lights GO.

MARCUS

No . . . no . . . no!

He drops both radios. He's started to hyperventilate.

MARCUS

No, no, no, no!

He tries to calm himself, he tries to slow down his breathing. He's got a plan, he gropes his desk for his LIGHTER. He grabs it and flicks it on. As he does he illuminates himself and who's standing behind--GHOSTLY FREDERICK. He's grimacing. We see GHOSTLY FREDERICK's mouth move but hear the Security Guard's voice instead.

GHOSTLY FREDERICK

(Security Guard's voice)

I'm right here Marcus.

Marcus turns around and as he does we CUT TO BLACK