

IMPRINT

by

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Based on, an original story.

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OVER A BLACK SCREEN:

A VHS tape is removed from its cardboard sheath and clumsily loaded into a VCR, which whirs into life.

A weight drops and rope snaps taught. Twists, swaying.

FADE IN:

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

INSPECTOR DAVIS (O.S.)  
'That'll do 'er... Fire it up.

LED worklights click on, harshly lighting a sparsely furnished, blood-soaked living room.

There's a TV & VCR, armchair and rickety stool, lying on its side, near swaying, bloody feet. A naked adult male, with signs of 4-day bloat, hangs from the light fitting.

Hazmat-suited CSI squelch around, while dusting for prints.

Swaying feet, are reflected on the TV screen which clicks on, blaring out flickering static.

INSPECTOR DAVIS (CONT'D)  
'Kill that?

The TV is turned off. The swinging feet halt abruptly, as the CORONER (50s, sallow and corpse-like), stays a hanging leg with one gloved hand.

CORONER (O.S.)  
Judging by the discoloration of the flesh and the pooling, he's been hanging here for quite some time.

His other gloved hand waggles a rectal thermometer.

CORONER (CONT'D)  
I'll know more once I've taken his vitals.

INSPECTOR DAVIS enters (30s, unshaven and world-weary). Hunched over the notebook in his gloved hands.

INSPECTOR DAVIS  
Cause of death?

CORONER  
Are you kid-?

Twigs. Sighs.

CORONER (CONT'D)  
A bit too early for that.

INSPECTOR DAVIS  
Yeah sorry.  
(Clears throat)  
The blood. Human, right? - But not  
the Vics'. From more than one?

Before the Coroner can answer - Davis toe-taps an empty,  
blood-smearred VHS case.

INSPECTOR DAVIS (CONT'D)  
(To the room)  
Hey! 'Anyone check this out?

No response.

He turns the TV back on; filling the room with static and  
flickering light; turns down the volume. Presses buttons.

He notes the hanged man's reflection, behind him, as the  
Coroner reaches around to insert the thermometer.

CORONER  
Ah yes, the blood. Very astute.

Checks his watch.

CORONER (CONT'D)  
I suspect you're right... No  
obvious lacerations. I think we'll  
find that it's human, but won't  
know for sure for a while.

Davis check behind the unit. It's connected.

He flinches, catching a glimpse of movement on his periphery -  
was there something in the screen reflection?

He looks behind. Just the Coroner checking the thermometer.

CORONER (CONT'D)  
Definitely too much for one.

Movement in the reflection again - a naked form in the  
armchair, aiming a remote at the screen and screaming  
silently. Davis turns. Cricks his neck, wincing.

He relaxes. Just tired. He imagined it.

## INSPECTOR DAVIS

Odd.

His delusion forgotten, he looks for the remote, doesn't see it. Hits a few buttons, but the TV picture doesn't improve.

He gives it a love tap -

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

- A DVD case slaps onto the floor of a homely, but chaotically messy and more furnished version of the same living room; with picture frames facing the wall.

Three men watch a bad horror movie: GARY (20s, gaunt and intense) in his armchair and FRIENDS #1 and #2 on the sofa. His friends laugh at the awfulness of it; Gary's gripped by the flashing images. Totally absorbed. Smiles creepily.

FRIEND#1, yawns and nods doorwards. FRIEND#2 grins: 'sure'.

Gary sees they want to make a move.

GARY

One more?

Already standing, looking at watches, they um and ah.

FRIEND#1

It's kinda late.

FRIEND#2

Sorry mate. Busy day tomorrow.

GARY

C'mon. Just one?

They're not having it. They yawn and stretch. Gary realizes he's onto a loser.

FRIEND#1

There'll be other nights mate.

FRIEND#2

Look. She'll come back mate. You'll see.

- LATER

Alone. Gary turns his wedding ring around and around his finger, bathed in the pinkish glow from what sounds like a violent and degrading porn scene, playing across the screen.

He watches without emotion as a bound woman receives a gob of spit on her teary-eyed, mascara smudged face. Rough dirty fingers push into her mouth.

He hurls the ring at the averted picture frame -

INT. OFFICE - DAY

- a filing cabinet slams shut(O.S.).

Gary's head snaps back and up. Startled, yawning and drooling. His eyes are red-rimmed, with dark bags beneath.

Surrounded by accountancy hell - an overly large calculator and a stack of files to process almost dwarfs him.

Movement in the hallway outside. He's transfixed by the stockinged legs of a passing woman.

SERIES OF SHOTS

Gary licks her shoe heel and stockings.

WOMAN IN HEELS digs her heels into his bare chest, as blood pools around the tip.

END SERIES

A set of files is dumped noisily on the table before him - interrupting his view - waking him from his reverie.

INT. FILM MEMORABILIA CONVENTION - DAY

Gary walks through a hall full of tables, stalls and milling COLLECTORS. The largely male audience paw over a plethora of collectables and queue for star autographs.

Tired bags around Gary's reddened eyes are sore looking.

SERIES OF SHOTS

Gary walks by lurid Detective mags, depicting scantily clad women under the threat of sexual murder.

He browses through deviant Horror and sexualised DVD covers; taps one DVD cover thoughtfully, idly considering it.

Grabs a Japanese Guinea-pig / snuff-type DVD case which claims "30 Seconds more footage than ever seen before".

Gary puts it back, yawning.

END SERIES

A DEALER (40s, corpulent, seedy and unwashed), hefting a large bag, catches his eye. Signals Gary to follow. Limpes to the exit.

Gary looks around. No one noticed the exchange. He follows.

EXT. BACK ALLEY - CONTINUOUS

A gloomy rubbish strewn alley, off a busy street.

The Dealer kneels with difficulty and roots through his bag.

DEALER  
 (nondescript accented  
 throughout)  
 I couldn't help but notice that  
 yer... a discerning collector. Not  
 easily pleased by the run-of-the-  
 mill fare.

GARY  
 And...?

DEALER  
 Ye find the selection inside to be  
 lacking?

Gary nods.

DEALER (CONT'D)  
 Everyone comes to me eventually...  
 This time, I come to you.

Snickering, Gary thrusts his hands into his pockets.

GARY  
 Yeah? Why's that?

The Dealer pauses, sensing he's being mocked.

DEALER  
 Ye'll want more. Because ye always  
 want more.

It lands. Gary blushes, feeling 'seen'.

The Dealer takes out a few DVDs to make space in the bag.

Japanese torture porn releases, and various uncut Nasties, sit atop black VHS cases bearing only serial numbers, typed Russian Cyrillics - and hand-written English names and ages.

Gary shudders. Sickened by what they might contain.

DEALER (CONT'D)

There's someone fer everything...  
One man's poison an' all that.

AN ENGINE backfires in the street nearby panics Gary; suddenly aware of discovery. He's ready to leave.

GARY

(fidgeting)  
Hurry up.

DEALER

Ye don't want to rush this...  
You've already crossed that line.

GARY

Shut it.

DEALER

My, ye've got it bad.

Gary turns to leave. The Dealer clears his throat.

Gary stops. Turns and sees a plain VHS in the Dealer's grubby hand. A peeling sticky label, on a plain card sleeve.

There's nothing written on either. Some blood spatter stains.

GARY

No one uses VHS anymore.

The Dealer laughs and shrugs.

DEALER

This has been around fer a while  
now I grant ye... But its not lost  
its power.

Gary laughs.

DEALER (CONT'D)

Oh well.

The Dealer shrugs and begins to lower his hand, moving the cassette back towards the bag.

DEALER (CONT'D)

I's wrong about ye. No 'arm done.

GARY

Wrong about me being gullible...  
There's nowt written on it. How do  
I know it's even Kosher?

DEALER

Better ye don't know the details.

Gary looks unsure, as the Dealer moves to thrust the tape  
back deep within the bag.

GARY

Wait!

The Dealer stops.

Gary lunges and snatches the cassette from his grasp.

GARY (CONT'D)

If I find that this is-is... some  
run of the mill crap...

The Dealer outstretches his filthy hand. Smiles: 'ye won't'.

GARY shakes his head, momentarily light-headed. Tries to  
clear it as the Dealer merely smiles enigmatically.

Gary considers handing the tape back. Then grudgingly covers  
the Dealer's palm with notes.

The Dealer magics the money away, out of sight, without  
counting it.

Without looking, Gary quickly pockets the cassette inside his  
jacket.

DEALER

It'll give ye what ye seek!

Gary walks back to the street.

GARY

Sure, whatever. 'Just better  
deliver.

DEALER

Oh it will... It'll go as far as ye  
want it to.

Gary turns, obviously puzzled. The Dealer's vanished.

Confused, Gary walks back and looks for a hiding place; sees  
there's no possible place of concealment.



He laughs at the theatrics; checks he still has it. And hears the cassette as he pats the pocket.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Gary pops the tape in; drops onto the sofa, with a beer. He looks pleased with himself and relaxes as the tape begins.

An opened, cobwebby VCR box lies open nearby.

The image is barely recognizable, shredded by static, with fleeting glimpses of: bare walls and cheap furnishings, an endless selection of seedy locales and glimpses of badly shot, writhing bare flesh, as if on fast forward.

His smile fades.

He fiddles with the tracking, with no visible improvement and slams the remote down in irritation.

GARY

Mother-fu-!

Spies the averted picture frame, as it moves slightly from the vibration.

Suddenly lost in angry abstraction, Gary is unaware that the picture on the screen improves; it's unclear, a composite of many images at once; as if 'ghosted' - of moving writhing figures, those in ecstasy and pain.

The static decreases; he hears a slap and a female groan.

Gary turns to see twisted visions of sex and murder on the screen; a constant flicker of pulsing violence and spraying claret. No plot. Bloodshed. Sex. Violent hunger.

SERIES OF SHOTS

Black leather gloved hands circle a woman's throat.

Trouser-clad legs kneel astride female hips.

Static takes over briefly.

Painted nails claw at the wrists of gloved hands, drawing blood.

A woman's mouth opens in an orgiastic moan.

More white noise.

END SERIES

Gary clutches his head, pained. The interference returns.

He thumps the off button on the remote; breathing heavily, sickened and unsteady as he spills his beer.

INT. BEDROOM - LATER

His sleep is fitful. His dreams violent as he thrashes under the sheets. Sweating, fevered.

In his mind, we see...

SERIES OF SHOTS

Chunks of flesh and buckets of gore wash over a carpet.

A woman in pain, her body jerking as she's choked.

We hear MALE SEXUAL GRUNTING SOUNDS (OVER).

END SERIES

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Dark bags under his eyes. Gary absentmindedly hunts through the clutter on his desk; knocks a cup of coffee over.

GARY  
Fuck!.. Shit!

BOSS (O.S.)  
In here! Now.

Gary mops at his wet lap; enters the boss's office.

Gary's Boss has a go at him behind the closed door. (N.B.: We only hear snatches of it, due to surrounding office noise).

BOSS (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
(Muffled)  
This is the third time this week...  
you are continually late... lack of  
concentration... a disgrace!....

Gary snaps and replies - matching his volume.

GARY (O.S.)  
I'm not gonna take this from  
you!...- your job!... Up your  
friggin -!

Gary throws the door wide open and storms out.

GARY (CONT'D)  
-bum!

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Wearing boxers, Gary rummages through his DVDs, restless.  
Nothing appeals.

A torn-up "Termination of contract" letter litters the floor.  
He glances at it.

GARY  
Whatever...

Gary pops the tape in; sits back on his haunches to watch.

The image fills with static.

GARY (CONT'D)  
C'mon!

Enraged, Gary punches the floor. The picture clears slightly  
as he shakes off the pain. He smiles. Almost gets it.

His smile falters as the picture turns to static again.

Gary punches his leg, this time, hard. The image clears a  
little while longer.

Gary's grin opens wide. 'So that's it'. 'Pain'.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Gary lies awake, eyes open and haunted.

He turns over restlessly; reveals a leg, covered in bruising.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Unshaved, in T-shirt and shorts, he puts the VCR on.

Curtains are drawn. Red (final demand) letters lies unopened.

Most of his furniture and decor is gone. Even the carpet. Only the TV unit and VHS, a pile of DVDS and armchair remain.

The photo lies smashed in its frame, face down on the floor.

Gary sits in the semi-day-gloom, drinking. The image flickers from static to bloodshed, as quickly as his mental states and expressions fluctuate.

#### SERIES OF SHOTS

Gary paces back and forth, in his shorts.

Kneeling, using a piece of glass he carves a line into his arm. A slow line of fresh blood blooms. The picture clears.

Gary masturbates, with bloody hands; the screen fills with gory naked flesh and moans of ecstasy and pain. And then static.

On his knees, he carves a new line.

The image blinks off. The screen dies.

#### END SERIES

Gary sits in his chair seething, unshaven and unkempt.

GARY

Fuuuuuck!

INT. CUPBOARD UNDER STAIRS [PART OF LIVING ROOM] - DAY

Gary tries the fuse box. They're on, but there's no power.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

In a rage, Gary punches the wall. The pain is so intense that Gary almost passes out.

The VHS unit springs to life and the TV clicks on.

Gary turns and smiles, holding his damaged hand. He watches blood drip from the knuckles, laughing.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Gary, naked and grimy, straddles the partially clothed body of a WOMAN, choking the life out of her. Nearby a can of mace and the spilled contents of a handbag.

Within the smashed photo frame, we see the woman being choked is the same as in the picture.

The unplugged TV is on in the background; on, despite the lack of electricity.

A red, recording, light on the Tape deck. The signal appears to be that of static, until it clears slightly revealing...

A SERIES OF IMAGES

Gary raining blows down with bloody fists.

Gary throwing the kitchen drawer on the ground, spilling knives everywhere.

Gary's knife-wielding hand stabbing down.

Blood soaks the carpet. Spreads. Pools. Covers everything.

END SERIES

Daylight, a blood soaked Gary wakes, witnesses the carnage around him. Shocked by the blood that covers him. He sees the body. He's sick, vomiting. Almost passes out.

The image on the TV is steady now; it shows him only - as if a hidden camera films him.

GARY

No!

As he clocks it, occasional static interference shows a quick flash of a hanging pair of legs; and then reverts back to the current image of Gary.

GARY (CONT'D)

Nooooooo!

He snaps, seeing his deranged and bloody visage.

Gary raves and drools, crying, snot pooling on his upper lip. He grabs a knife and holds it to an exposed wrist. But casts the knife away.

He notices the body is gone. The knife is gone too; a rickety stool now sits beneath a rope noose, in front of him.

- LATER

As the dining chair topples over, the rope snaps taut and feet swing and sway, the VHS unit stops recording.

The swaying stops. The unit switches off - power light fades.

INT. INSPECTOR DAVIS'S OFFICE - DAY

A small cramped municipal office with a filing cabinet, desk and chair. Davis roots through a large 'evidence' box.

A whiteboard behind him bears the details of many active case files. The Status of: 'The Hanged Man' is: 'closed' and verdict: 'murder-suicide'.

Inspector Davis, tape now in hand, checks his Police Issue combi TV/VCR unit, but again, all he gets is static. He drops the empty case on the desk and reads the forensics report.

INSPECTOR DAVIS

'Recorded over many times... no image is legible. This material has no validity as evidence....

(beat)

'Kin great.

He stares intently at the screen trying the tracking on the VCR. Bumps his knee.

INSPECTOR DAVIS (CONTD) (CONT'D)

Dammit!

The image clears momentarily and seems to show the room behind him covered in gore - a flash of Davis, gun in mouth, brains everywhere - it's gone too quick for him to make out.

Angrily he pounds the desk and turns away in frustration.

Again, a small clearer hint of an image behind the static of a pair of hanging feet, unnoticed by Inspector Davis.

The toes in the image twitch. The VCR light glows - pulsing.

The tape is ejected and Davis tosses it into the evidence box.

INSPECTOR DAVIS (OVER) (CONT'D)  
Bleeding useless.

FADE TO BLACK:

INT. INSPECTOR DAVIS'S OFFICE - MORNING

Davis, brooding over a coffee. He's unshaven, dressed in the same crumpled clothes as if he's been there all night.

He turns, as an assortment of mail is dropped onto his desk by a passing CLERK, next to the 'Hanged Man' evidence box.

Atop the pile of mail, an evidence bag, containing a thumb drive, attached to a printed evidence label: FORENSIC DUPLICATION.

The drive is pushed into a USB slot.

FADE TO BLACK:

OVER A BLACK SCREEN:

We hear VHS whirring, static, a piercing female scream and a gun shot.

**THE END**