

ExT. drainage ditch - day

CAMCORDER FOOTAGE - Two BOYS and a GIRL pretend to HUNT MONSTERS outside of a DESERT TOWN.

YOUNG TRENT (12)

stands in front of the DRAINAGE PIPE running under the road. He talks to the camera, acting like an intrepid cryptid hunter.

YOUNG CHARLIE (12)

has a BIG STICK that he has sharpened at the end
. He faces the pipe, waiting.

In the background is

EDEN (6)

. She holds her hands up over her mouth, nervous, watching the pipe.

Young TRENT

We're here outside of Odessa, Texas,
where we may have cornered the
elusive Grunly!

Young charlie

Your time is up, monster!

YOUNG TRENT

The Hyper Team Monster Slayers once
again have located a mysterious
urban legend and will protect the
families of this area from
Grunly's
menace!

YouNG chARLIE

Dude! That's really good.

YounG TRENT

Shh! Just get ready!

Eden

Guys! Let's go home.

Young CHARLIE

Shut-up, Eden! We have to say the
thing first.

Eden

I don't want to. It's creepy.

YouNG CHARLIE

Then you can't hang out with us any
more!

EdEN

(sighs)
Fine. But I'm telling Dad you're
trying to scare me.

YOUNG CHARLIE
Just say it, dummy.

The kids chant together, a haunting nursery rhyme.

Kids
Grunly, Grunly, 123.
Grunly, Grunly, can't catch me!

The camera slowly ZOOMS IN on the darkness of the drainage pipe.
The KIDS giggle with fear and excitement. They wait.

Young CHARLIE
Come on out, Grunly!

Their laughter fades. It's drowned out by the roar of cars
passing on the highway.

Ext. Coffee shop - day

A quaint coffee shop in the suburbs of Austin. The area is busy,
full of charm and life.

Int. Coffee shop - day

TRENT (30s)
is khaki pants and a fragile smile. Corporate life has ground
him into a fine, polite powder.
He sits at a table and fidgets with a coffee stir, twisting it
into knots.

Trent
So yeah, you know. I guess if I play
my cards right, I can split my time
between Japan and Portugal.

MELANIE (30s)
sits across from him. Blonde. Professional. Kind. She nods and
smiles in a way that almost hides her pity.

Melanie
But first, the exotic desert city of
Odessa!

Their laughs are bitter.

Trent
Ugh. Not looking forward to going
back there, but ...

MELANIE
Do you need me to go with you?

TreNT

No. No

no

. You don't have to do that. It's just going to be paperwork and going through mom's stuff. Just a lot of boring estate business.

MeLANIE

Okay. Just worried about you after ... all this.

Trent

Sure. Yeah. Sure.

(a beat)

But I'm gaining momentum, you know?

I Marie

Kondo'd

a bunch of my crap already. Just ballast. Ready to rock.

MeLANIE

And the gun?

Trent

(coughs)

Yeah. Yes. Sold the gun. First thing, actually. Right after our talk. The police ... recommended it. After. You know.

MeLANIE

Okay. Good. I'm glad. Well ...

Something outside catches Trent's eye.

Through the window and across the street is a BUS STOP. A MAN sits there, wearing an EXPRESSIONLESS MASK. He seems to be staring right at Trent.

MeLANIE

Trent? Where'd you go?

Trent snaps back to reality. She nods down at PAPERS sitting in front of him.

Trent

Oh! Right! Sorry.

He grabs the pen and starts to diligently

look over everything, but we can tell he's not really reading. He starts signing.

At the end he smiles, slaps down the pen, and slides it all across the table.

TreNT

So that's done then I guess.

MELANIE

Paperwork will take a few days. I'll send you the confirmation.

TrenT

Sure. Okay. Yeah. Great. That's great. That's just ... that's perfect.

He smiles. Melanie stares into him, through his facade.

MELANIE

Did you get your car fixed? That ... junker you traded the Tesla for?

Trent

The
Shaggin
' Wagon? Yeah. We're good to go.
Heading out in the morning.

MELANIE

Oh you did? Wow. Okay. That's good.
I'd prefer death to breaking down in
West Texas.

TreNT

Oh, she's ready to go drift racing.
Off roading. Maybe a monster truck
rally.

She regards him again.

MELANIE

I guess you do seem better.

TrenT

I'm great, honey -

He catches himself.

TreNT

Sorry. Habit.

MELANIE

It's okay.

She grabs her purse, but pauses.

MELANIE

You sure you don't need money?

TRENT

Mel! I'm good! Seriously. I sold a few stocks and some crypto. Moved some things around. And I borrowed a bit against the 401K. I'm flush! You've ... you've done enough. Thank you, though. I'll have to send you some pics when I get to Japan.

MELANIE

And Portugal.

Trent

Yeah ... and Portugal.

The lies linger in the air.

Awkward hugs. Across the street, the MAN IN THE MASK is gone.

Ext. strip mall - dusk

A half-empty strip mall. Vape shops. Taco joints. Trent walks, red faced and sweat-stained. He clearly doesn't have a car.

Swinging a meager plastic sack of groceries, Trent hurries to catch the BUS.

Trent

Wait
wait

wait
!

The Number 10 grinds its gears and pulls away before Trent can cross the lot. Left in the exhaust, he catches his breath.

TrENT

I hope you get cancer. Sincerely.

He slams his groceries on the ground and immediately regrets it. Chicken salad spills onto the asphalt. Trent just stares at the mess. He can't move.

A cluster of VAPING TEENS under the awning of the strip mall snicker.

Teen

(laughing)

You good, bro?

Trent pulls himself out of it. He takes his bottled water and leaves the rest.

As he looks up, he sees the MAN IN THE MASK. From the alley behind the strip mall, the Mask WATCHES HIM. Silent. Motionless.

Trent
Okay, Michael Meyers.

Trent walks on.

Ext. Parking lot - later

Streetlights push out the dusk.

Nail salons. Storage units. Check cashing.

Trent polishes off his water and drops it into an overfull trash can. He cuts across the sprawling asphalt of an empty BIG BOX STORE.

Halfway across, he hears the plastic bottle fall out of the can. He turns.

THE MASKED MAN IS THERE, sniffing at the trashcan.

TreNT
The fuck?

The Masked Man picks up his water bottle, smells it, and looks at Trent.

Trent spins on his heel and WALKS QUICKLY. He keeps an eye over his shoulder.

The Masked Man watches him leave, but slowly BEGINS TO FOLLOW.

Trent keeps pace, blood draining from his face.

The Masked Man GETS FASTER. So does Trent.

The Masked Man DROPS ONTO ALL FOURS and starts a clumsy gallop across the asphalt.

TRENT
Hey! Hey! Stop!

Trent runs as the Mask CHASES.

Ext. SUBURBAN HELL - later

Trent races through the alley, chest heaving.

He throws a glance over his shoulder, weaving between a GAS STATION and a CVS

.

TRENT SPRINTS THROUGH TRAFFIC. Horns blast. He makes it to the median and turns to see if he can spot the Masked Man.

Across the street, in the sickly white fluorescent of the gas station light, the Masked Man appears.

He points at Trent and holds it. Then, like the Terminator, he marches across the lot.

Trent
You need to back off! I'm not
fucking around.

Trent can't run. The traffic is too heavy.

THE MASKED MAN
STALKS

into the street. A car swerves.

Trent runs down the median, cars honking and flashing their lights. The Masked Man gets to the median and chases. It gets on all fours and lopez after him.

TreNT
Back off! Back the fuck off!

A CITY BUS pulls up. Trent gets on it.

Int. Bus - LATER

Trent shoves past people getting off the bus. They grumble and jostle, laughing at his agitation.

Bus driver
(chuckling)
Looks like you've got a crazy person
after you, sir.

TreNT
Just go!

Shaking, Trent fishes coins out of his pocket.

TreNT
(mutters)
What the hell is wrong with people?
(to the driver)
Please just go.

The BUS DRIVER shakes his head and laughs to himself. The gears grind. The brakes hiss. The bus lurches and leaves the Masked Man on the median.

Bus driver
People get crazy when this city gets
hot, I tell you what. I don't need
that business on my route.

But Trent isn't listening. He's more annoyed than scared, but watches the Masked Man grow small through the back window of the bus.

And the Man in the Mask is watching
him

.

Ext. Apartment - night

Night swallows a rotting Texas apartment complex. Pecan trees cast shadows like slumped, dying men.

Int. Apartment - night

The apartment is bare. A small pile of clothes, a laptop, and the greasy debris of takeout. A blanket and pillow are on the floor in the corner.

Exhausted, Trent closes the front door and just stares at the remains of his life. He staggers to the fridge. Mustard. A few beers. He takes a beer.

With no chairs, he sits in on the floor, sips his beer, and stares at nothing.

Through the sliding glass door to his patio, THE MASKED MAN IS WATCHING.

Trent

Shit!

He jumps. Spills his beer.

The Masked Man is sitting in a plastic chair.

Trent runs to his bedding and pulls a .9mm HANDGUN from under the pillow. He RUNS BACK to the door, but doesn't open it.

On the other side of the glass, the Masked Man only holds up his hands in surrender. It waves at Trent.

Trent

I will shoot you!

The Man slowly REMOVES THE MASK.

CHARLIE (30s)

, a chubby man-child with a beard and cargo shorts.

Charlie

Hey! Calm down. I left my Kevlar vest at home.

TRENT

Charlie?