

UNIQUE

Written By  
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FADE IN.

OVER BLACK

HARRY (V.O. CONT'D)  
They don't tell you... In the  
beginning... That the world hates  
you.

INT. HARRY'S CUBICLE - DAY

Under the greenish lights of the CALL CENTER, HARRY WEISS (41) sits at his desk. He wears a light grey dress shirt. If it wasn't for his red tie, he might appear to fade into the grey background. A black nameplate reading HARRY WEISS is perched on the top edge of the cubicle wall. A framed photo of his wife MELODY sits on the desktop, along with a phone, keyboard, mouse and computer screen. Beneath the desk is a small gym bag, the computer tower and a trash can.

Harry stares blankly, straight ahead. He does not blink.

HARRY (V.O.)  
Four years and a king's ransom was  
the price I paid to graduate at the  
top of my class... with all the  
promise of a superstar, I was  
headed for Wall Street... the Big  
Apple... I was going to chase down  
my version of the 'American Dream'.

SUPERIMPOSE: Digital dollar signs raining down

SOUND: The CHA-CHING of a cash register

HARRY (V.O. CONT'D) (CONT'D)  
I studied international business...  
I was going to take on the world  
and make a lot of money doing it.  
(beat)  
I was gifted... a prodigy... They  
called me  
(beat)  
unique.

Harry chuckles slightly, with a hint of disgust at the word.

HARRY (V.O. CONT'D)  
Unique.  
(beat)  
(MORE)

HARRY (V.O. CONT'D) (CONT'D)

Fast forward to the present,  
seventeen years later, as I sit  
here desperately clinging to the  
seventh rung of my own personal  
hell... my 'American Dream'  
ruthlessly downsized to a similar,  
but less lofty Canadian version.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Harry and his wife MELODY come out of a nondescript townhouse in the middle of a long row of cookie-cutter townhouses. He walks behind of his wife as the two head toward her car. In his hands, a travel mug and his briefcase.

MUSIC: Harry's walk

HARRY (V.O. CONT'D)

Every evening the missus and I  
leave our open-concept designed,  
slightly overpriced starter home  
having a pleasant discussion on our  
lives and our future together.

INT. MELODY'S SEDAN - DAY

As Melody drives, a Hummer passes them. Harry stares out the window vacantly.

HARRY (V.O. CONT'D)

She shuttles me to work in her well  
used, early '80's, five-star,  
government crash-rated station  
wagon with its slightly  
underpowered two-point-four liter  
engine, where she, in her well  
honed passive-aggressive way,  
instantly corrects my taste in  
music.

Melody taps the dial on the radio. The music changes from Harry's preference to her own. It is a complete divergence.

MUSIC: Melody's salsa music

HARRY (V.O. CONT'D)

We head across the same bridge,  
following the same streets...  
(beat)  
waiting at the same spot, without  
fail...

The car stops at a corner. From the passenger seat of his wife's car, Harry waves at Jim, a homeless person.

HARRY (V.O. CONT'D)

... for JIM to shuffle on by...  
With no responsibilities, nowhere  
specific to be at any given moment,  
he still manages to be here at this  
exact time, everyday.

(beat)

I'm still trying to decide if he is  
taunting me by throwing caution to  
the wind and living totally, truly  
free... or if he is fate's ill  
reminder that my lot in life could  
be far worse.

Jim, complete with his overflowing shopping cart, waves back. He too, knows this exact routine by heart and starts shuffling in front of the car.

Melody barely enters the completely empty parking lot before turning the car around to make a quick escape.

HARRY (V.O. CONT'D)

As per usual the wife dumps me off  
at the entrance to the parking lot  
in order to make her escape that  
much quicker. She wouldn't dare be  
thirty seconds late for her newest  
distraction... Sorry, passion...  
salsa dancing.

She stops the car, leaning toward Harry. He plants a 'goodbye' peck on her cheek.

INSERT: Salsa Dancing

HARRY (V.O. CONT'D)

... and so, left with the mental  
image of some virile fella firmly  
entrenched in his twenties sweating  
and thrusting as he explores my  
wife under the guise of an innocent  
dancing lesson...

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

Harry exits the car. Putting his coffee on the roof, he fumbles with the locked back door. Finally getting it open, he collects his briefcase from the rear seat.

As soon as the door is closed again, Melody peels away leaving Harry to lunge for his coffee resting on the roof before it topples over. He turns around and stares dejectedly at the full length of parking lot between him and the main doors of the building.

HARRY (V.O. CONT'D)  
 ... I head toward my McJob... My little corner of the big business world.

EXT. HARRY'S OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

Harry approaches the door, coffee mug and briefcase in hand. Setting his briefcase down, he pulls his electronic key card from his pocket and waves it in front of the sensor. The sensor light changes from red to green. Harry picks up the case, moving it closer to the door, then gives the door a tug. It remains locked.

HARRY (V.O. CONT'D)  
 The powers that be have recently upgraded our security system, which sounds great unless you are MR. COLE, our recently excused, former doorman... A victim of what is innocuously termed 'downsizing'...  
 (beat)  
 Just what every man needs... something to make him feel even smaller while he deals with the shattering blow to his ego of being told 'thirty lines of computer code can do your job'.  
 (beat)  
 Then of course, those of us left behind get to utilize this modern marvel of technology. And as with any new technology, they are always way too expensive and there are always glitches.

Harry returns to the sensor with his key card. Again the little light changes from red to green. Again, he shuffles to the door and gives it a tug. Still, the door remains locked.

HARRY (V.O. CONT'D)  
 And glitches.

Harry tries and third time, earning the same result.

HARRY (V.O. CONT'D)  
 And glitches.

Harry, frustrated, glances through the glass doors. Seeing nobody capable of helping him inside, he spins on his heels and heads around the building to the service entrance.

EXT. RIVERSIDE EMBANKMENT - DAY

Harry traverses the rocky embankment along the river beside the building.

HARRY (V.O. CONT'D)  
Sometimes I feel like the Universe  
is mocking me.  
(beat)  
Other times however, I feel like  
I'm simply the entertainment for a  
group of overpaid, overweight  
security guards camped out behind a  
row of monitors at some remote  
location, watching every corner of  
their little domain.

From below, Harry lobs his briefcase over the ledge. Slowly he appears, dusty and dishevelled.

HARRY (V.O. CONT'D) (CONT'D)  
Controlling who goes where like a  
live action video game.

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING, REAR DOOR - DAY

Harry trudges toward the rear door of the building. He finds the rear door locked.

HARRY (V.O. CONT'D)  
Oh, if only somebody would make the  
kill-shot and allow me to respawn  
at my desk.

Harry turns around, heading back the way he came.

EXT. RIVERSIDE EMBANKMENT - DAY

Harry stops at the top edge of the slope heading down to the waters edge. He pauses long enough to take his frustration out on his briefcase, lobbing it over the edge before slowly making his way down after it.

HARRY (V.O. CONT'D)  
There comes a time when you just  
have to ask yourself, 'Is this it?  
(MORE)

HARRY (V.O. CONT'D) (CONT'D)  
Is my life going to consist of  
trekking off the map for the sole  
purpose of finding a way back onto  
it again?'

INT. HARRY'S CUBICLE - DAY

Harry continues to stare straight ahead. Emotionless.

HARRY (V.O. CONT'D)  
Everybody, at some point reaches  
the crossroads. Do I stay and try  
to counter the monotony of my life  
with the distractions of modern  
civilization?... or do I just make  
a break for it, blazing new trails  
until every bush has been whacked?  
(beat)  
(beat)  
I've tried joining a gym... which  
as it turns out, is a great deal  
for them because with three weeks  
left of a two year contract that is  
more bulletproof than an Abrams  
tank, I've yet to re-enter the  
building.  
(beat)  
And *in* a few short weeks, I'll  
probably renew my membership while  
continuing to tell myself in my  
most affirmative voice, 'Next  
week... Next week, I'm gonna start  
working out'.  
(beat)  
(beat)  
I've tried getting a tattoo.

INT. TATTOO PARLOR - DAY

Harry's eyes go wide and he SCREAMS IN PAIN as the tattoo  
ARTIST touches needle to skin. A generic Celtic pattern is  
stenciled on his shoulder waiting to be filled in.

INT. HARRY'S CUBICLE - DAY

Harry at his desk.

HARRY (V.O. CONT'D)  
(mockingly)  
Nothing screams 'originality' like  
Celtic ink.

MONTAGE: numerous tattoos peak out of hems and cuffs of the drab office attire worn by the other employees.

INT. CALL CENTER, LUNCH ROOM - DAY

Harry stands with his mug in his hand. He's being coy, looks over his shoulder. Clear, he pulls a flask from his back pocket, pouring the contents into his coffee mug.

INT. HARRY'S CUBICLE - DAY

Harry takes a sip from his mug.

HARRY (V.O. CONT'D)  
For a while, I nurtured a  
wonderfully torrid affair with the  
bottle... Trying to water down the  
job during the week, and outright  
drown it on the weekends.  
(beat)  
(beat)  
Then, of course, there were the  
paintball days... I, was a *man*.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Harry in full paintball gear ducks in and out of the trees, scanning the distance for enemy combatants.

HARRY (V.O. CONT'D)  
... and as a man, I desperately  
struggled to protect my manhood...  
my warrior instinct.

Harry steps out from behind the cover of a thick tree and is immediately hit in the groin by a paintball. He freezes, slightly hunched over. The barrage continues as he is peppered by various different colored spots. He spins around, trying to dive back behind the tree but all he ends up doing is giving the shooters a blank canvas to paint on. He arches his back in agony as again, various different colored paintballs liquify on impact, from his shoulder to his backside. Falling to the ground, he curls up into the fetal position. This does nothing to cease the onslaught of incoming paintballs. The paint rains on.

INT. HARRY'S CUBICLE - DAY

Harry stares disengaged.

HARRY (V.O. CONT'D)  
 But every 'rebel weekend' was  
 followed by a Monday.  
 (beat)  
 Every week a new one comes, like  
 the first line of attack in some  
 ancient epic battle.

SUPERIMPOSE: A single date calendar. Sunday slides away to Monday. Roman Phalanx storms across the bottom of the screen.

SOUND: The SOLDIERS YELL, metal armor CLINKS, trampling FEET

HARRY (V.O. CONT'D)  
 Five nights a week I sit here, just  
 praying that our inept management  
 team...

INT. CALL CENTER, COPY ROOM - DAY

Two MANAGERS, DALE and BETH, are trying to get the photocopier working, seemingly with little luck.

HARRY (V.O. CONT'D)  
 ... can keep my little hamster  
 wheel spinning long enough for me  
 to reach that final party...

INT. CALL CENTER, LUNCH ROOM - DAY

Wearing a cone shaped celebration hat, the retiring ROGER (65) sits at the lunchroom table behind a large cake. The cake reads: CONGRATS ROGER! ENJOY WHAT'S LEFT OF YOUR LIFE! Beth holds a tacky gold pin in black felt box up for the staff to see before placing it on the table in front Roger

INSERT: tacky gold pin.

Dale holds his hand out to congratulate Roger. When Roger doesn't move, Dale gives him a simple pat on the back. A half dozen random office employees CLAP.

HARRY (V.O. CONT'D)  
 ... with the cake, the  
 commemorative gold pin...  
 (MORE)

HARRY (V.O. CONT'D) (CONT'D)  
 the handshake, and, barring a  
 global economic collapse, a  
 pension.

A few moments pass. Dale checks Roger for a pulse. Roger has died while sitting there.

INT. HARRY'S CUBICLE - DAY

Harry, still sits at his desk.

HARRY (V.O. CONT'D)  
 What then, exactly, do I do with my  
 formidable education you ask? I  
 live my working life as one of many  
 cogs in the over-hyped marketing  
 machine that is late night  
 infomercial sales.

INT. INFOMERCIAL SOUNDSTAGE, KITCHEN - DAY

With perfect hair and perfect tans and perfect smiles, ROBERT (40) and SALLY (35) stand in their pitching kitchen.

SALLY  
 So Robert, what do you have for us  
 today?

Robert turns and replies to the camera rather than his co-host.

ROBERT  
 Well Sally, I'm glad you asked  
 because we've got something that no  
 kitchen should be without...  
 (beat)  
 ... the totally new 'Wilson's  
 Wonder Wok'

SALLY  
 Oooooo... Why don't you tell us  
 about it?

ROBERT  
 Sally, I thought you'd never ask!

INT. HARRY'S CUBICLE - DAY

Seemingly dazed, Harry finally blinks. Once.

HARRY (V.O.)  
Boiled down to it's essence... I  
answer a phone.

INSERT: SLOW MOTION An analog wall clock ticks past 2:04.

INT. INFOMERCIAL SOUNDSTAGE, KITCHEN - DAY

Robert and Sally stand in their kitchen. A phone number  
appears at the bottom of the screen.

SUPERIMPOSE: ORDER NOW! 1 800 555-1975

ROBERT  
Call the number at the bottom of  
your screen right now, and we'll  
send you a 'Wilson's Wonder Wok  
Mini' as a bonus gift, absolutely  
free!

INSERT: SLOW MOTION An analog wall clock ticks past 2:05 with  
a heavy CLICK.

Phones RINGING all over the office. The staff gets to work.

Harry ignores his own RINGING PHONE getting louder. He takes  
a slow drink from his mug.

HARRY (V.O. CONT'D)  
I answer a phone after two-oh-five  
a.m. and sell MARY WHITE from  
Armpit, Michigan...

INT. MARY WHITE'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Mary (70) pulls a small felt jewelry box out of a brown,  
cardboard shipping box. She opens it and pulls out a broach.

HARRY (V.O. CONT'D)  
... one of one hundred and fifty  
thousand 'Special Collector's  
Edition' cubic zirconia broaches...  
(beat)  
I sell DOUG MATTHEWS the 'Smitty  
Super Sprayer'...

EXT. DOUG MATTHEWS FRONT YARD - DAY

Doug (67) stands in front of a small bush on an overcast day. The 'Super Sprayer' head is attached to his garden hose. The device is splitting the water stream into a 'V' shape, rather than directly onto the bush in front of him.

HARRY (V.O. CONT'D)  
 ... for that one day that it  
 doesn't rain in the perpetually wet  
 Pacific Northwest... a must have  
 for the truly obsessive gardener.

INT. HARRY'S CUBICLE - DAY

Harry sits still. The employees around him are deep into their jobs, taking calls, taking orders. His phone continues to RING, even louder than before.

HARRY (V.O. CONT'D)  
 I answer a phone and speak with  
 insomniacs all over the country...  
 selling them things that they don't  
 need, for just four easy payments  
 of twenty-nine ninety-nine,  
 automatically billed to their  
 already overextended credit cards.

Harry takes another long, slow sip from his mug.

His face twitches as the incessant RINGING of his phone becomes almost deafening. Harry seemingly breaks out of his daze.

Harry snaps. In an almost maniacal state he stands, raises his keyboard over his head and WAILS as -

CUT TO BLACK

SOUND: Phone RINGING. Harry SCREAMS and SMASHES. PLASTIC PIECES explode.

FADE IN

The RINGING gone, Harry is disheveled but eerily calm as he sits in his chair.

Finally, Harry speaks.

HARRY (CONT'D)

(smirking)  
 So I sit here... night after  
 night... totally... unique.  
 (beat)  
 Just like everybody else.

Recomposed, he straightens his tie.

FADE TO BLACK

OVER END CREDITS

AN AUTOMATED RECORDING

Answers the call. The cheesy salesman's voice starts in on the preamble.

AUTOMATED VOICE

Thank you for calling TV'S BEST  
 PRODUCTS INCORPORATED, your  
 supplier of top quality merchandise  
 at low, low prices!  
 (beat)  
 For service in English, please  
 press one.  
 (beat)  
 Pour service en Francais, presse  
 numereaux duex.

A DIGITAL PHONE KEYTONE signifies that the number one digit has been pressed.

AUTOMATED VOICE (CONT'D)

Please select the product that you  
 are most interested in.  
 (beat)  
 For the Smitty Super Sprayer,  
 please press one on your digital  
 phone now.  
 (beat)  
 For our limited collector's edition  
 broach, please press two, now.  
 (beat)  
 For the Wilson's Wonder Wok, please  
 press three, now.  
 (beat)  
 For a list of all of our current  
 products, please press four on your  
 digital phone now.

The number three button KEYTONE is heard. There is a digital click on the line as the inhuman operator directs the call.

AUTOMATED VOICE (CONT'D)

You have selected the Wilson's  
Wonder Wok.

(beat)

Please select your method of  
payment.

(beat)

For credit card, please press one.  
For all other payment types, please  
press two.

The number one KEYTONE is heard.

AUTOMATED VOICE (CONT'D)

Please enter your credit card  
number and expiry date, followed by  
the pound key, now.

A series of KEYTONES - TWENTY numbers, followed by the POUND  
key - are heard.

AUTOMATED VOICE (CONT'D)

We're sorry, it appears that your  
credit card has been declined.

(beat)

Thank you for shopping at TV'S BEST  
PRODUCTS INCORPORATED. Good bye.

The call is terminated, and we are left with a dial tone.

FADE OUT