

HE ' S NEAR

Written by

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An old CRT television screen CRACKLES to life -- it's a commercial break --

BOY
(through TV)
Buy Nesquik!

The screen cycles through different advertisements. From food commercials to film trailers. Suddenly, we're hit with a PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT.

NARRATOR
(through TV)
It's mental health awareness month,
and the USA has reportedly one of
the highest disparities in
unwellness this year alone.

The footage cycles through different B-ROLL shots of a park, the sun shining onto the lens with a beautiful glare.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)
(through TV)
It is crucial to understand that
problems can significantly impact
society as a whole.

The footage CROSS-DISSOLVES to a person, who we will see later, walking through a patch of grass in slow-motion.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)
(through TV)
There's a feeling captured within
these troubled individuals. The
feeling that there is someone
there... watching your thoughts,
your fears, controlling every
moment within your reality.

The screen cuts to a CLOSE-UP of SPENCER GRAY, 17, as he looks at the camera. Worry is written all over his face, fear emitting from the screen. The PSA cuts to another close-up of him, this time he's sitting down in his bedroom.

PUSH INTO the TV screen, till it expands across the frame. Spencer manages a smile as we settle onto his face.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)
(through TV)
They're simply puppets on a string.
Being controlled at every moment.
(MORE)

NARRATOR (CONT'D)
They must cut the strings that are
connected to their limbs.

The narrator's voice fades out, Spencer's smile vanishes and is replaced by a worrisome frown.

2 **INT. SPENCER'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS (EVENING)** 2

WIDER: Spencer sits beside his desk, worksheets sprawled out all over the surface. He zones out, staring at the wall, his expression unreadable.

TIME CUT -- EARLY MORNING.

PAN to Spencer, now lying in bed, sleeping. The alarm at his bedside blares, he wakes up, shutting off the sound. He sighs, mentally preparing for another day.

3 **INT. SPENCER'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER** 3

He washes his hands, then uses the faucet to dampen his toothbrush. He brushes his teeth, studying his reflection as he does so.

4 **EXT. STREETS - SIDEWALK - LATER (MORNING)** 4

Spencer walks on the sidewalk, headed to school. He looks around at his surroundings, taking the environment in.

5 **INT. SPENCER'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT** 5

Paperwork is scattered around his desk. He sits at his desk, writing furiously onto the pages. The sound of the pencil writings stay with us --

6 **INT. SPENCER'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - DUSK** 6

As he brushes his teeth.

7 **EXT. STREETS - SIDEWALK - MORNING** 7

Walks to school.

8 **INT. SPENCER'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT** 8

Can't sleep. The sounds of pencil strokes stay with us.

9 **INT. SPENCER'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - MORNING** 9

The faucet runs consistently, the sink overflowing. Spencer stares at his reflection, unresponsive.

10 **INT. SPENCER'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - EVENING** 10

The pencil, making furious contact with the worksheets -- the lead breaks into two.

11 **EXT. STREETS - SIDEWALK - THE NEXT DAY** 11

Spencer, walks on the sidewalk, heading home. The intense sounds of the pencil are now gone, replaced with the peaceful quiet of the walk.

SNAP. A twig is fractured into two. The sound came from behind -- Spencer slowly turns... seeing a tall, looming MAN, staring at Spencer 40 feet away.

SUPERIMPOSE TITLE:

HE ' S N E A R

Spencer stares at The Man, who remains stationary. Spencer takes two steps back. The Man takes two steps forward.

SPENCER

Shit.

(to The Man)

What do you want!? Why're you back!?

The Man continues to stare. Spencer continues walking backward. The Man walks forward, with the same amount of steps, mimicking Spencer's movements. Spencer does an about face, turning 180 degrees.

He sighs, then BREAKS into a sprint. He runs for a short burst of time -- heading directly forward. He stops for a moment, turning back, seeing that The Man hasn't moved an inch.

Beat. The Man continues to stare... Spencer looks at him, confused. Then -- The Man DASHES into a charge, directed right towards Spencer. *SHIT* --

Spencer continues to run -- the heavy footsteps of The Man are advancing closer and closer --

Spencer reaches his front door. He fumbles with the keypad, pressing the wrong combination on accident -- but he finally unlocks it, heading inside --

12

INT. SPENCER'S HOUSE - ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

12

He SHUTS the door, locking it. He takes deep breaths, still shocked from the situation. He closes his eyes, steadying his breath.

His phone vibrates. He takes it out of his pocket, reading a message from THOMAS BURTON (17):

Hey dude we're otw to ur house rn be prepared :)

Spencer sighs, and pockets his phone. He heads into the kitchen, grabbing a mug from the cupboard. He fills it with water.

He peeks outside the window to see -- THE MAN, standing there, eyes unflinching. Spencer makes direct eye-contact with The Man, unsure what to do.

His body remains stationary, feet practically planted on the ground. The Man stands completely still, unblinking, his eyes are as sharp as knives. A car pulls into the drive-way, blocking Spencer's view of The Man for just a split second.

Exiting the car are Spencer's buddies, THOMAS BURTON, and THEO PORTER (18). They head up to the front door, knocking on it.

Spencer comes to, he walks to the foyer, opening the door -- revealing Thomas and Theo's bright faces.

THOMAS

Hey man!

THEO

How's it going?

SPENCER

Hi.

The two enter, but Spencer's gaze is fixated onto The Man, who is standing in the same spot, unmoving. Theo and Thomas look concerned.

THOMAS

You alright? What're you staring at?

SPENCER

Nothing.

Spencer shuts the door, locking it.

MOMENTS LATER

SLOW-MO -- Spencer, follows closely behind his two friends as they make their way to his bedroom. They enter first, jumping onto his bed. Spencer enters last, but is caught off-guard at the sight of something --

AT THE WINDOW -- The Man stands outside, eyes peering through the horizontal blinds.

THOMAS

(indiscernible)

Spencer, Spencer...

(now heard--)

Spencer!

Spencer shivers, looking at his two friends, who're sitting on his bed.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

You okay?

Spencer shakes his head, he points up at the window.

SPENCER

You guys see that?

Thomas and Theo turn their heads to the window. From their perspective, nothing is SEEN.

THEO

You're trying to scare us, huh?

THOMAS

(with a laugh)

We're not buying it man.

Off Spencer's worrisome facial expression --

13

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

13

He keeps that same expression while sitting at a table, eyes glued to the wooden surface. Thomas fidgets with baseball cards, Theo fidgeting with Playstation discs.

THOMAS

I mean if I saw a gigantic spider,
I'm out of there. I hate spiders.

THEO

Don't ever visit Australia, man.

Spencer sets down a baseball card.

THOMAS

What 'bout you Spencer? What's your greatest fear?

Spencer looks up to his friends, he gulps.

SPENCER

Um... probably the dark.

THOMAS

'The dark?'

THEO

'The dark?'

SPENCER

Yeah.

THEO

Still?

THOMAS

I mean, I don't think anyone is scared of the dark necessarily, they're scared of what could be hiding in it.

Spencer nods.

SPENCER

Yeah.

Beat. Moment of silence.

THEO

Alright. Here's another question: what object would you guys use to defend yourself from your worst nightmare?

THOMAS

With spiders? A flamethrower.

SPENCER

What about you Theo?

THEO

Alright, serial killer babies. Let's say they invade my home, I gotta use something sharp. Not a knife, that's basic. Scissors.

THOMAS
(in disbelief)
Scissors?

Spencer smiles with the same amount of incredulity.

SPENCER
I don't know what's sillier,
scissors as a weapon or the
irrational fear of serial killer
babies.

THEO
(referring to the
scissors)
You guys haven't seen 'Us?'

THOMAS
Alright -- shut up before I get a
headache. Im bored as hell right
now, who wants to get ice cream?

Spencer, who was previously aloof in this conversation,
brightens at the idea --

SPENCER
Sounds awesome.

His stomach grumbles, clearly upset.

SPENCER (CONT'D)
One sec. Be right back.

14

INT. SPENCER'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

14

Spencer sits on the toilet, zoning out into space. He coughs--

KNOCK. KNOCK. KNOCK. Coming from the door. Spencer looks up,
caught off-guard.

SPENCER
I'm in the bathroom, man.

Moment of silence.

Spencer sighs, reaching for the toilet paper, onto to see he
just used the last two squares.

SPENCER (CONT'D)
Shit --

KNOCKKNOCKKNOCK. Three faster, hurried knocks. Spencer looks
up at the door, clearly irritated.

SPENCER (CONT'D)
Theo, I'm in here man. There's
another bathroom in the guest room.

Eerie quiet. Then -- a force begins HAMMERING the door in from the other side. The door is being smashed, and it seems like the hinges might break off --

Spencer pulls his pants up and rises. He OPENS the door -- nothing's there. *The f---?*

He hears laughing come from the living room area.

15

INT. SPENCER'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

15

Spencer walks up to the two, who are still laughing.

SPENCER
Did you guys do that?

THEO
What?

SPENCER
Don't play with me, that wasn't
funny, man.

THOMAS
What're you talking about?

SPENCER
The knocking. You guys were
knocking on the bathroom door.

Thomas and Theo look at each other, genuinely concerned.

THOMAS
We didn't --

SPENCER
Guys. I am not in the right mood
for this bullshit. Please, just
stop.

THEO
What's your problem man? Are you
good?

SPENCER
I'm fine! I'm fine. Just... get out
of here.

THOMAS
Dude, the ice cream...

SPENCER
Go. Please.

Thomas and Theo rise. They file out of the living room, exiting his house. WIDER angle shows Spencer standing in the empty room, alone.

16 **INT. SPENCER'S BEDROOM - NIGHT**

16

Later in the night, Spencer lies in bed, still awake. Suddenly, someone is repeatedly BANGING on his bedroom window. He lies there, unmoving, enduring the unnerving sounds.

He can't take it anymore, he reaches into his pocket, pulling out his earbuds, he puts his left headphone in --

17 **EXT. STREETS - SIDEWALK - THE NEXT DAY**

17

Spencer puts his right headphone in. He's on the walk home. Behind him, following closer than yesterday, is The Man, who is slightly out-of-focus. Spencer stares at the ground, trying to ignore his ominous presence.

18 **INT. SPENCER'S BEDROOM - EVENING**

18

Spencer sits at his desk, overwhelmed with the large amount of homework on the table. He sighs...

TIME CUT: AN HOUR LATER

Spencer's sleeping with his head down on the table. His overhead lights suddenly shut off, leaving only the desk lamp as the sole light source.

Oblivious to the event, Spencer continues to sleep.

In the darkest corner of the room, the area behind Spencer, we could slightly make out a tall, lanky, humanoid figure, hiding in the dark. The figure reaches out its HAND -- it slowly creeps towards Spencer's unconscious body.

The hand gets closer... and closer...

ECU of the hand wrapping around the back of Spencer's neck. It pulls Spencer's head back, cocking it like a pendulum --

WIDER: from a wide angle, the HAND is no longer seen, as if some supernatural spirit was interacting with his body. Spencer's head continues to cock back continuously. Then SUDDENLY -- his head THRASHES towards the table, crashing onto the surface --

Spencer JOLTS AWAKE with a scream! He instinctually covers his nose (which took the blunt of the impact) with his hand. **Blood** is dripping from his nose, and it is now smeared on the back of his right hand.

19 **INT. BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER**

19

Spencer rinses the blood off his face. He plugs his nostrils with a tissue. He looks back up to see his reflection, only to see THE FIGURE behind him -- it's The Man.

Caught like a deer in headlights, The Man pantomimes a giggle, not drawing a sound from his action. It's taunting him.

Spencer quickly turns behind him to catch The Man with his own eyes -- only to see that he's gone. Spencer gasps, taken aback. He closes his eyes, trying to recollect himself.

20 **INT. SPENCER'S BEDROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT**

20

Spencer lies in bed, still awake like the last night. BANGING can be heard on both his window and bedroom door. PRE-LAP PENCIL WRITINGS.

21 **INT. SPENCER'S BEDROOM - AFTERNOON**

21

CUE MONTAGE -- Spencer writes onto a blank piece of paper:

"It's killing me... slowly. Every day. Can't sleep."

22 **EXT. PARK AREA - DAY**

22

ZOOM IN on Spencer, dressed for outdoors, as he stares at something in the distance. His eyes glaring... REVERSE TO REVEAL -- The Man, standing 80 feet away, responding with the same stare.

23 **INT. SPENCER'S BEDROOM - SAME**

23

Back to Spencer's notes. He writes down another sentence:

"I must get rid of the feeling. Get rid of the lingering presence."

He tilts his head up, thinking.

SPENCER (V.O.)
I've dealt with him before, I can
do it again.

He quickly draws a map, it contains his route when he walks back home.

SPENCER (V.O.)
As the days get worse, he gets
closer. He followed me about 80
feet away at first, but now he's
closer.
(draws a shorter line)
More like 20. As soon as I get out
of school, he's there.

24 **EXT. SIDEWALK - AFTERNOON**

24

Spencer, walking out of school premises, looks around, no sight of The Man.

SPENCER (V.O.)
But where? Where does he come out
from?

25 **EXT. STREETS - SIDEWALK - EVENING**

25

Spencer walks home, watching his back, not seeing anything.

SPENCER (V.O.)
I must encounter him. Last time I
did, he backed off. I gotta cut off
all the strings attached.

26 **EXT. PARKING LOT - EVENING**

26

Thomas, in his car, sits in the driver's seat. Considering something. He looks up, seeing he's parked near a BASKIN ROBBINS store. He sighs, taking out his phone, calling THEO.

THEO (O.S.)
(over phone)
Hello?

THOMAS
Have you talked to Spencer?

THEO (O.S.)
*What? No. Dude, you saw how he was
 acting. If he wants to be like
 that, let him.*

THOMAS
 He's obviously going through
 something. We need to talk to him.

THEO (O.S.)
We? Nah, man. I'm good.

THOMAS
 Fine, I will talk to him, you dick.

He hangs up. He pulls out the parking lot, driving en-route
 to Spencer's place.

27 **EXT. SPENCER'S HOUSE - PORCH - SAME TIME (EVENING)** 27

Spencer reaches his porch. He looks around, not seeing any
 sign of The Man. He smiles to himself. He's gone. He unlocks
 the front door, stepping inside --

28 **INT. SPENCER'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER** 28

Spencer walks towards his bedroom, eyes half-lidded. He
 celebrates an internal victory. Once he reaches his door-
 frame, he TRIPS on something. He looks down to see -- BEIGE
 BOOTS. It's the pair of shoes that belong to The Man.

Soon after, GLASS SHATTERS in the kitchen/dining area. He
 turns 180 towards the end of the hallway -- where the lights
 are still on.

The Man's shadow is seen looming around the corner. The
 lights turn off, masking his current position.

PETRIFIED, Spencer backs into his room. He stares into the
 dark hallway, waiting for a cue.

THE MAN'S POV -- Evil Dead Sam Raimi-like shot, we RUN
 towards Spencer, who shuts the door in time before we reach
 him --

29 **INT. SPENCER'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS** 29

He locks the door, backing away from it as loud BANGS shake
 the barrier. Scared, Spencer looks for a weapon, clocking a
 pair of SCISSORS on his desk. He grabs it, and holds it up to
 the door, prepared to defend himself.

He takes a deep breath, then he UNLOCKS the door, about to twist the handle. With one more breath, he SWINGS the door open, SLICING THE AIR --

The Man isn't there. Spencer hasn't done any damage. Confused, Spencer backs into his room yet again, looking around for a sign. He's oblivious to the same HAND reaching out from the darkness behind him --

It extends to the back of his neck, tightening it's grip around his skin -- the hand THRASHES him into the wall. Spencer crashes towards the ground, blood running down his face.

Spencer coughs, catching sight of The Man, approaching him from the darkness... his sheer height is intimidating. He grabs onto Spencer's collar, lifting him up. Just in time, Spencer's grasp around the scissors.

He slices The Man's right wrist, to which blood GUSHES -- but The Man doesn't let out a single sound, it enrages him further. He pummels Spencer back onto the ground, disarming him.

The Man kicks Spencer into the lower stomach, making him COUGH violently -- The Man leans down about to hammer-fist him --

Spencer coughs once more, voice raspy --

SPENCER

No... I don't wanna go. Not anymore.

The Man, for the first time, lets out a noise -- the slightest WHIMPER. He nods, understanding Spencer's words. He rises, walking back into the darkness -- disappearing.

All that's left is Spencer, beaten, lying on the ground.

30

INT. SPENCER'S HOUSE - FOYER - SAME TIME

30

Thomas opens the door.

THOMAS

Spencer?

He approaches Spencer's room, catching a glimpse of the mess in the bedroom.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Oh shit.

He runs up to the bedroom -- seeing Spencer, resting his back on a wall. From his perspective, he doesn't see the bruises and blood that Spencer had previously received during the beating.

THOMAS
Spencer? What happened in here?

Beat. Moment of silence, then --

SPENCER
Something's been haunting me for a while. There's this feeling that stays with me every day.

Confused, Thomas can't help but hear his friend out. He sits beside him, seeing that Spencer is holding the pair of scissors (which from his perspective, has no blood on it).

SPENCER (CONT'D)
I thought I got rid of it. But, some strings are hard to cut.

THOMAS
Spencer... I came here to apologize, for whatever I did.

SPENCER
Nothing's your fault. It's no-one's fault...

Thomas nods, feeling a bit relieved.

THOMAS
Let go of the scissors, man.

Spencer (bruises and all) looks down, not realizing he was still holding onto it. From his perspective, blood, shed from The Man, is stained on the scissors. He tosses it aside.

He realizes the implication he could've made while holding the scissors --

SPENCER
I wasn't trying to --

THOMAS
I believe you. I get it.

Thomas rises. Offering his hand.

THOMAS (CONT'D)
Let's get ice cream for real this time, yeah?

Spencer smiles at that.

SPENCER
I'd like that.

He takes the hand, and stands up --

31

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

31

Spencer follows Thomas as he heads towards the front door. Spencer catches a glimpse of his reflection from the kitchen mirror -- he turns his attention to it, seeing that the bruises that he had received from the beating, has now VANISHED.

A soft, gentle smile creeps onto Spencer's face. A moment of comforting acceptance. He sighs, then heads out the front door --

CUT TO BLACK.

CREDITS.

THE END.