

Coma
By
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INT. NURSING HOME CORRIDOR - DAY

Black screen, then a quote from Pablo Picasso appears,
"Everything you can imagine is real."

We hear the lead-in drum licks from the LEONARD COHEN song,
In My Secret Life. The song begins. Show title and roll
credits.

Slam cut to: Two pairs of feet walking side by side on a
tile floor in a corridor. On the left, a pair of white nurse
shoes and white stockings. On the right, brown wingtips and
dress pants.

Credits roll and the camera begins to pan up as Cohen begins
to sing. Throughout this scene, there is no dialog, only
song.

LEONARD COHEN (V.O.)

(singing)

I saw you this morning. You were
moving so fast. Can't seem to
loosen my grip on the past. And I
miss you so much. There's no one in
sight. And we're still making love
In My Secret Life....

Song continues as credits roll and camera pans up to reveal
DR. PETER ZITTERAAL and NURSE 1 walking down the hallway.
Nurse is dressed in standard white nurse's dress and
Zitteraal is wearing dress clothes and a neatly pressed
white lab coat, carrying a clipboard. Zitteraal, early 30s,
is tall with a crewcut, clean shaven, wearing tight wire-rim
glasses. He has flinty green eyes, pale skin, looks rather
like a fish of some sort.

They pass an old woman struggling along with the assistance
of a walker. She seems to be chattering angrily, points an
accusatory finger at Zitteraal as he passes. They ignore her
and pass on, turn a corner.

LEONARD COHEN (V.O.)

(singing)

I'll be marching through the
morning, marching through the
night, moving cross the borders of
my secret life

Zitteraal and Nurse 1 pass an old man sitting alone in a
chair. He seems almost like a statue. Close in and hold on
the vacuous stare in his eyes as they pass him without
stopping.

(CONTINUED)

They pass an old woman having a pleasant conversation with herself. She is smiling and laughing, gesturing in an animated way.

They come to another turn and go to the right.

LEONARD COHEN (V.O.)

Looked through the paper, makes you want to cry. Nobody cares if the people live or die. And the dealer wants you thinking that it's either black or white. Thank God, it's not that simple in My Secret Life....

The two of them come to a door with a sign that reads SECTION 7 COMA WARD. They press a button and the door slowly opens. Credits end, song fades.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE INTO:

INT. ROOM IN A NURSING HOME - DAY

A spartan room in a nursing home, dimly lit, sterile white walls, a crucifix on one wall, an adjustable hospital bed against another with an empty nightstand to one side.

JOHN WEST, about 40, lies in the bed, covered to his waist by a sheet. His robust frame shows he was once muscular, but now his arms are emaciated, his chest wasted away, his cheeks hollow.

Equipment on a second nightstand on the other side of the bed beeps occasionally, monitoring his heartbeat, blood pressure and other vital signs. A bit of sunlight streams in through some ratty, beat-up blinds hanging in front of a window opposite the equipment.

The door to the room swings open lighting the room briefly. Zitteraal flips on the light. Next to him is Nurse 1. John does not move, does not open his eyes.

Zitteraal stands next to John's bed, looks through some papers on his clipboard, turns his head halfway to the nurse behind him.

ZITTERAAL

And this one?

He makes notes on a file.

(CONTINUED)

NURSE 1

(detached)

Six years ago. Head trauma. Hit by a car on the Santa Monica Freeway. He was at St. Marks for a month or two.

A beat. The nurse inspects one of her fingernails.

NURSE 1 (CONT'D)

No ID, no money ... nothing. No one ever came to ask about him. They sent him to us about the time I started working here.

Zitteraal puts the file down on the empty nightstand, takes out a small penlight, bends over John, opens one of his eyes, takes a brief look.

Cut to John's POV: We vaguely see the penlight, then the light from the penlight grows in size until we can see nothing else, then, suddenly, darkness again.

Cut back to: Room in nursing home. Zitteraal turns off the penlight, stands up straight, takes out a hospital lancet from his coat pocket, opens the package, starts to gently prick the ends of John's fingers. John doesn't move. He tries another spot. No response.

Zitteraal drops the lancet in a nearby waste can, picks up the clipboard, makes a notation. He takes a final look at John.

ZITTERAAL

No one knows anything about him?

The nurse shakes her head.

NURSE1

No, doctor. After the accident, no one came to ask about him. That's why they brought him here.

Zitteraal cocks his head quizzically.

ZITTERAAL

A human being disappears from the face of the earth. Strange.

He turns to look at the nurse. The nurse shrugs, obviously not interested.

(CONTINUED)

NURSE 1

(flat)

After a few hundred ... you get
used to it.

Zitteraal nods, turns back to John.

ZITTERAAL

(back to business)

OK, see that he gets 50 milligrams,
twice daily.

NURSE 1

Yes, Doctor Zitteraal.

He flips the papers on his clipboard back into place and the two leave, turning out the dim light just before closing the door.

John opens one of his eyes slightly.

John's POV: We see sunlight streaming through a blind, then John closes his eye.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

INT. A BEDROOM - MORNING

A large, airy, well-lit bedroom with pastel blue walls and a white, vaulted ceiling, tasteful antique furniture, a canopy bed in the center of the room on a small dais. On one side of the bedroom, white lace curtains flutter lazily in the open doorway to a balcony, where a wind chime tinkles softly in the breeze.

John, lying on one side of the bed, wakes with a start. His eyes shift nervously about, then he relaxes, puts his hand on his forehead. Next to him is CLARISSE, late-20s, her long raven hair spilling over her pillow and John's arm on which she is resting. She stirs, mumbles sleepily, snuggles against him. He runs his fingers down her arm, then her thigh, pulls her closer to him, inspects her hair, kisses it.

He removes his arm gently, turns away, rubs his face, props himself on one arm, looks around the bedroom. The sun is streaming through the doors leading to the balcony. Outside he sees the tops of some palm trees.

(CONTINUED)

He pulls off the sheet covering him, sits on the edge of the bed, puts his feet on the dais, stares at the wall in front of him.

Cut to: John again sees the light of the penlight approaching, the light growing in size until he can see nothing else.

Cut back to: The bedroom. John rubs his face again, shakes his head, tries to forget it, rubs his arm, then looks at it. He is muscular. He feels his bicep, lets his hand slide across his well-developed chest, gives a small smile of satisfaction.

CLARISSE

(sleepy)

Hey, looking good, Superman.

John turns back to her. She is smiling. He scoops her gently into his arms.

JOHN

You're not so bad yourself,
Wonderwoman.

She runs one hand across his chest, lets it linger there, sighs.

CLARISSE

Do you really have to fly over to
Texas today?

JOHN

Back tomorrow, baby.

She pouts.

CLARISSE

Yeah, but what about tonight?

She pats her hand softly on the bed.

JOHN

Maybe you can get a guest husband.
This is LA, you know.

She gives his chest a playful slap.

CLARISSE

(teasing)

Maybe I will. That would shut you
up.

JOHN

You could kiss me and that would
shut me up.

She kisses him on the lips, a little peck, lets her head
fall back on her pillow.

CLARISSE

(teasing)

Shut up.

He leans down, gives her a good kiss, pulls away slowly.

CLARISSE (CONT'D)

(still teasing)

I said, "Shut up."

She takes his face in her hands, gives him a long passionate
kiss. He holds her close and covers them both with the sheet
with his free hand as they continue to kiss.

INT. BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

A spacious master bathroom just off of the bedroom from the
last scene.

John and Clarisse are in the bathroom, she in the shower, he
in front of the mirror, dressing, adjusting his tie. The
bathroom door is ajar, but the room is a little steamy. He
pushes the door open some more, wipes the mirror with a
small towel. He turns to look at Clarisse's body through the
frosted glass of the shower door, watches her a few moments
as she washes her hair.

CLARISSE

Who did you say you were going to
interview?

JOHN

(absently)

Marvin Wilcox, one of Bush's
advisers

He watches as she begins to shave her long, sultry legs in
the shower. John turns back to the mirror, feels of his
cheeks.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Marvin Wilcox ... about as exciting
as watching a hedge grow. We're
doing an analysis piece on the war
and we want to get some juicy stuff

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

JOHN (CONT'D) (cont'd)
from a few "unnamed sources close
to the president."

He makes little quotation marks in the air with his fingers.
Clarisse is not really listening.

CLARISSE
Hmm....

He turns, leans against the sink, watches her shave her legs
through the glass. She turns the water back on.

JOHN
Pretty desperate if you ask me.
Wilcox is about as likely to say
something interesting as our couch.

A beat. Clarisse turns off the shower, slides the shower
door back, stands there dripping wet and stunningly naked.
She winks at him, wags her finger.

CLARISSE
Oooh, but if that couch could only
talk

INT. A BMW - A SHORT TIME LATER

John drives on the expressway, a travel mug of coffee in one
hand. He takes a sip, puts the cup in a holder, reaches over
and turns on the radio, catches a NEWS ANCHOR in the middle
of his broadcast.

NEWS ANCHOR
... sunny and 81 degrees.
(a beat)
In Major League Baseball, in the
National League, the Los Angeles
Dodgers edged the Atlanta Braves,
2-1, when Jose Valasquez was beamed
with bases loaded in the 13th
inning to force in the game-ending
run....

John drinks from his coffee cup.

EXT. BMW - MOMENTS LATER

John pulls into a parking garage. He stops the car in front of a parking gate, puts a card into a slot and the gate opens. He drives through.

EXT. BMW - CONTINUOUS

A sign on a wall in front of a parking space reads, "Reserved for No. 287." John finds his parking space, pulls in, turns off his car. He gets out, travel mug in one hand, shuts the door, flips his keys around in his other hand, catches them, pushes the button on his key fob and the car beeps, head lights flash momentarily. John puts the keys in his pants pocket, seems to stumble. He puts one hand on the car to support himself, puts his other hand over his eyes, slumps forward as if he were in pain.

He drops his travel mug.

John's POV: John sees a small round light growing in size and intensity in his field of vision until he can see nothing else. The light fades suddenly.

Shaken, John supports himself against the car. He straightens slowly, then leans back against the car, rubs his eyes, takes a deep breath.

INT. A BUSY NEWSROOM - MORNING

Typical newsroom at a big-city daily. Reporters type away at terminals in individual cubicles, some speak on the telephone, a couple of them shoot the shit and drink coffee in another reporter's cubicle. John walks into the newsroom, travel mug in hand, checks his mailbox, starts leafing through some papers as he walks along. His editor, JAY COBB, grizzled, unshaven, bald and 50-something, glances up from his computer as John crosses the newsroom.

COBB
(while typing)
West!

He motions for John to come over. Cobb watches him as he walks closer, but continues to type.

COBB (CONT'D)
You look like shit. Still having
those headaches?

John nods, Cobb leers at a pretty reporter, TAMMY, as she passes his cubicle. He stands up.

(CONTINUED)

COBB (CONT'D)

Hey, Tammy.

She looks up, smiles.

TAMMY

Hey, Jay.

She gives him a little wink.

COBB

(to John, still watching
Tammy)

You should go to a doctor.

He hands John a piece of paper. John reads it.

JOHN

What's this?

COBB

(looks back at John)

A doctor. Want you to go over and
interview him before you fly down
to Waco.

JOHN

(annoyed)

Why?

COBB

(smirking)

Because I told you to. Also because
he just came on staff at Serenity
East and they've started a new
therapy program.

JOHN

(sarcastic)

Whoa, stop the presses. Can't you
get one of the interns to do this?
That's why they hang around here,
isn't it?

Cobb glances at his screen, starts to type again, looks back
at John while continuing to type.

COBB

What devotion to duty. Look it's on
the way to the airport and ... the
old man wants it.

(CONTINUED)

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