

STATION 18

Written by

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FADE IN:

INT. STATION 18 - NIGHT

A man, NORM (late 40s), walks into Station 18.

The station is bleak but functional, old benches line the far wall, a small yellow line indicates the edge of the platform, and a small digital clock above the rails shows that it's 7:00 exactly.

Norm looks down to check the time on his watch, a tan line stains his wrist, but his watch is missing.

NORM
Must've left it at home.

He rubs his wrist as he sits on one of the benches.

Looking around, Norm sees three other men, men we will come to know as:

WALTER (23), a tall, tan man, pacing back and forth with a small bag at his feet.

RABBI AKIVA (73), a short man with a beard almost as low as his knees, holding a Siddur and silently praying.

A HOMELESS MAN, fully cloaked in a blanket, sleeps against the far wall.

A loud TRAIN HORN is heard approaching. The three men all stop what they are doing and walk towards the yellow line. The homeless man stays asleep.

WALTER
Seven minutes late... Typical.

As the horn gets LOUDER, Walter cranes his neck to see if it's close, he sees nothing.

The train horn is getting LOUDER and LOUDER until it SLAMS past the men and is heard getting fainter on the other side, no train is seen, and the three men look at each other.

Norm looks at his watch, 7:07, he blinks hard before looking up at the station clock.

It reads 7:00 exactly, and Norm is somehow sitting on the bench again, Rabbi Akiva is praying to his left, and Walter is again pacing in front of him.

He shakes his head hard then checks his wrist. No watch.

NORM
Must've left it at home.

He rubs his wrist.

The routine continues again, at 7:07, the train horn is heard, all three men stand up and walk to the yellow line.

WALTER
Seven minutes late... Typical.

Norm looks confused at Walter as he cranes his neck to look for the train. Again, the train horn gets LOUDER and LOUDER, until it is right on top of the men. When the horn is heard getting distant again, Norm looks up at the clock. 7:00 exactly, he is back on the bench.

NORM
What the?

He checks his wrist. No watch.

NORM (CONT'D)
I must've--

WALTER
-- left it at home.

Norm looks up at Walter as he rubs his wrist.

WALTER (CONT'D)
Rabbi?

The Rabbi looks up.

WALTER (CONT'D)
Did it take us this long to figure it out, or are they sending stupider ones now?

RABBI
I recall it took you fifteen loops to figure it out, Walter.

WALTER
Fourteen.

RABBI
(smiling)
Who's counting?

NORM
Wait? What do you mean loops? Are you telling me--

WALTER

Yeah. You're dead. Welcome to
Station 18.

NORM

I'm dead?

RABBI

Don't rush to conclusions. You're
no less alive than the rest of
us... That is to say: not very.

Norm stands up, his legs are shaking. The clock reads 7:05.

NORM

There has to be a way out. A door.
A tunnel. Something.

WALTER

Tried 'em all. Doors don't open.
Tracks don't go anywhere. I once
jumped. Just woke up back on the
bench. Broke both of my legs.

RABBI

Spiritually speaking.

NORM

Why seven minutes?

WALTER

We don't know. Probably a joke.

RABBI

Seven is sacred. Creation. Shabbat.
Cycles.

WALTER

Or maybe God just has a sick sense
of humor and a stopwatch.

NORM

So what... we just sit here?
Forever?

WALTER

You get used to it. Loop resets.
You start losing track of time,
then thoughts, then... pieces of
yourself.

RABBI

Some meditate. Some reflect. Some shout into the void. I pray. He paces. You'll find your rhythm.

NORM

This is hell.

WALTER

Hell has fire. This is just... waiting.

RABBI

And what we do while we wait is everything.

The train horn is heard, the same routine. Rabbi Akiva packs his Siddur away, Walter picks up his bag, and all three men walk to the yellow line.

Again, as Walter cranes his neck, the train horn comes and goes. Norm looks at the clock, 7:00.

He rubs his wrist but doesn't look down.

Then... He stands up quickly, turns towards the tracks and jumps.

WALTER

Here we go.

NORM

(to himself)

There's got to be a way out.

RABBI AKIVA

Careful. That way leads nowhere.

WALTER

Let him run.

NORM

I'm not waiting.

He starts walking down the tracks. Then he starts to jog, then sprint. He loses track of time as he tries to steady his breath. The rails stretch endlessly ahead. The tunnel mouth stays just out of reach.

Suddenly. A faint HUM behind him. The sound of the train horn.

NORM (CONT'D)

No. No!

He runs faster, breath ragged. The sound builds, roaring toward him.

He stops. Turns around. Braces. The horn BLASTS as if right on top of him.

WHOOSH. A surge of wind, a shadow, and then...

The clock reads 7:00 exactly.

Rabbi Akiva is quietly praying. Walter is pacing again.

WALTER
How was the run?

NORM
(stunned)
It went through me.

RABBI AKIVA
As it always does.

NORM
I felt it. I thought I was going to die again.

WALTER
That was my sixth loop.

NORM
It didn't even touch me.

WALTER
It's not a train.

NORM
Well, it's not a boat!

RABBI AKIVA
It's judgment.

WALTER
It's just a noise to keep us twitching.

NORM
So what... we just... sit here?

WALTER
Yep.

RABBI AKIVA
 We sit, and we wait.
 (beat)
 The rest is commentary.

Silence.

RABBI AKIVA (CONT'D)
 What were you running from, really?

NORM
 My son's third birthday.
 (beat)
 I missed it. Said I had to prep a
 case file. Said I'd make it up to
 him.
 (beat)
 I died in a break room, clutching a
 turkey sandwich.

Walter looks down, shifts on his bench.

WALTER
 I was supposed to go see my mom
 that night. Yahrzeit.
 (scoffs)
 Told myself I'd light a candle
 later.

He kicks the floor. The bag at his feet slides slightly.

WALTER (CONT'D)
 Never made it home.

Rabbi Akiva closes his Siddur gently.

RABBI AKIVA
 I told a grieving boy once, "Say
 Kaddish and the pain will pass."
 (beat)
 He asked, "What if I don't want it
 to?"
 (beat)
 I said, "That's not the point."
 (beat)
 Perhaps I was wrong.

Silence.

The men sit in a triangle of stillness. The hum of the
 station overtakes them.

The Homeless Man sleeps in the corner.

NORM
Think it's a test?

WALTER
Feels like an echo.

RABBI AKIVA
Sometimes God hides His face so
we'll look for our own.

NORM
You think He's out there?

RABBI AKIVA
I think He's in here.

He taps his chest. A long beat.

The station lights flicker. A slight breeze rolls through.

The digital clock ticks from 7:06 to 7:07.

A low train horn rumbles in the distance. The men all slowly stand.

The clock reads 7:00 exactly.

The station is still. Walter paces. Rabbi Akiva opens his Siddur again, but his eyes don't move across the page.

He closes the Siddur gently.

RABBI AKIVA (CONT'D)
I spent my life teaching people how
to pray.

(beat)

But I never taught them how to
mourn.

(beat)

Not really. I gave them formulas.
Traditions. Like dressing wounds
with parchment.

NORM
(softly)
Did it help them?

RABBI AKIVA
No.
(beat)
But they thought it did.
(beat)
Maybe that was enough.

NORM

And now?

Rabbi Akiva looks out at the tracks. His face is unreadable.

RABBI AKIVA

Now... I just pray someone remembers me kindly.

NORM

That's the only part I ever got right. I never had answers. Not for my wife. Not for my kid. I just... sat there. Pretended I wasn't drowning... But I was there.

(beat)

Until I wasn't.

(a small smile)

But maybe those moments counted for something?

The Rabbi smiles then... Silence. Then the station lights flicker.

The clock reads 7:00 exactly.

The station is quiet again. Walter paces. His bag sits untouched at his feet.

NORM (CONT'D)

What's in it?

Walter doesn't look up.

WALTER

Nothing.

NORM

Doesn't look like nothing.

WALTER

Her scarf.

Norm says nothing.

WALTER (CONT'D)

I took it from her hospital room. Didn't even say goodbye. Just... walked out. I was angry. That she was sick. She still believed, and she wanted me to pray with her.

NORM

Why didn't you?

WALTER

Because I didn't know how. I didn't want her to know that.

Silence. Norm nods.

NORM

You could say something now.

Walter looks up.

WALTER

You think it matters?

NORM

I think it matters to you.

A long silence. Then Walter slowly unzips the bag. He takes out a faded scarf, holds it like something breakable.

Norm doesn't speak. He just sits beside him.

Walter begins to cry.

The clock reads 7:00 exactly.

No one speaks, the clock ticks all the way down to 7:06. The train horn is heard faintly. The three men stand. Then...

The Homeless Man stands as well.

He pulls the blanket from his shoulders. He's clean now. Composed. Radiant, somehow. He steps forward. The others follow, unsure why.

Then...

The Homeless Man raises his hand.

Everyone stops. Dead still.

HOMELESS MAN

One of you has stopped waiting.

He turns toward Norm.

A long beat. Walter and the Rabbi look at Norm, then down.

Norm steps forward. Slowly. As if through water.

NORM

I don't know where it goes.

HOMELESS MAN
You're not supposed to.

NORM
I'm scared.

HOMELESS MAN
So am I.

They step toward the platform.

The horn is close now. A RUSH of wind. Dust. Still no train to be seen.

Norm and the Homeless Man walk toward the edge. Then...

They VANISH.

Rabbi Akiva opens his Siddur again. Walter sits. Quiet. He doesn't pace. They don't speak.

The clock reads 7:00 exactly.

Silence.

Walter pulls out the scarf again, examining it closely.

WALTER
Rabbi?

RABBI AKIVA
Yes?

WALTER
Teach me how to pray.

The Rabbi nods, then begins.

The horn sounds, distant now. Faint.

FADE OUT.