

The shop of frozen souls

written by

Rubar shareef sabir

E-mail
rubarshareef98@gmail.com

FADE IN:

EXT. STREET - DAY

A city under a thick veil of ash. The sky has a dead, bruised color.

People walk through the streets, their movements mechanical and soulless; no one looks at anyone. The atmosphere is heavy, suffocating, and completely devoid of warmth.

On the edge of the street, a man sits on an old wooden chair. He holds a newspaper; its pages are completely white, without a single line of writing.

Beside him, two passersby sit rigidly. Their lips move rapidly in conversation, but no sound comes out.

A low, eerie wind hisses through the concrete canyons.

A long row of dark, closed shops stretches down the block. At the very end of the row, a solitary shop appears. The glass of its front door glows with a warm, pulsing orange light.

A young man approaches the shop. His face bears a wide smile, but it looks entirely forced, like a painted mask.

He pushes the door open.

INT. SHOP - CONTINUOUS

The room is lined from floor to ceiling with old wooden shelves. Neatly arranged across the shelves are hundreds of square glass boxes.

Inside each box, a bright orange butterfly beats its wings against the glass, trapped in an endless loop of frantic motion.

The SHOPKEEPER, a middle-aged man with graying temples, sits behind a heavy wooden desk. His eyes are entirely motionless, locked in a blank stare.

The young man approaches the desk.

The young man places his right hand flat over his heart. His fingers grip firmly into the fabric and the flesh of his chest, as if physically anchoring a deeply buried memory.

With agonizing slowness, the young man pulls his hand away from his chest, drawing it toward his shoulder, and finally extends it toward his open mouth--as if physically extracting a breath, a piece of his soul, from within.

He opens his hand and places it directly into a vacant glass box sitting on the desk.

A thick, swirling orange mist pours from his palm inside the box. It thickens, churns, and instantly transforms into a fluttering orange butterfly.

The shopkeeper silently closes the glass lid. Without a word, he pulls a stack of cash from a drawer and places it on the desk.

The young man snatches the money. The forced smile instantly vanishes from his lips. His facial muscles slacken, turning his expression into a cold, hard stone mask.

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

The young man exits the shop and passes the storefront window.

From inside, the newly trapped orange butterfly slams violently against the glass.

A sharp, abrasive scratching and tapping sound--glass against a hard object, dry and metallic--cuts through the air. The butterfly strikes the pane again with a harsh, dry tap.

The young man continues walking down the ash-choked street, entirely unaware of the sound behind him. The silence of the street deepens, heavier than before.

INT. SHOP - CONTINUOUS

The shopkeeper slowly rises from behind the desk. His leather-soled shoes make a muffled, dragging sound on the worn wooden floorboards.

He walks slowly toward the front window. He gently places his fingertips against the cold glass, reaches into the shelf, and picks up the orange butterfly box. He places it carefully among the thousands of other boxes.

The shopkeeper pauses, staring out through the window for thirty long seconds. Absolute, deafening silence fills the room--except for the heavy, rhythmic thud of the shopkeeper's own heartbeat, echoing like a distant drum.

Outside, the street looks like a black-and-white painting; the passersby remain frozen like statues against the ash.

The shopkeeper turns back and returns to his desk. With a stubborn, sharp motion, he yanks open the bottom drawer and pulls out a single photograph: old, faded, and rendered in stark black and white. It is a portrait of a woman wearing a simple dark dress.

The heavy drawer closes shut with a harsh metallic slide.

INT. SHOP - CONTINUOUS

The front door swings open with the hollow thud of wood striking frame.

A WOMAN enters. It is the exact woman from the faded photograph.

The shopkeeper snaps his head up. His hands freeze flat on the desk surface. The muscles across his jaw tighten, and his eyes lock deeply, intensely into the woman's eyes.

The shopkeeper's lips begin to tremble, slowly, as if remembering how to move, breaking his ragged, intermittent breathing.

SHOPKEEPER
(whispering)
Lisa?

The word hangs in the air, echoing like a distant, trembling bell inside the quiet shop.

The woman stops dead in her tracks. She takes a deep breath, her warm air forming a brief cloud of steam against the chilly indoor glass.

Slowly, deliberately, the woman places her hand over her heart.

She retrieves a glowing entity from within and places it with a trembling hand into an empty glass box on the counter.

The trapped butterfly begins to flap its wings. Suddenly, its color begins to shift, transforming entirely from orange into a brilliant, luminescent sky blue.

Both stand completely frozen in absolute shock. The woman's eyes drift to the towering shelves behind the desk. Among thousands of orange butterflies, one single blue butterfly begins to glow.

The shopkeeper turns around slowly. His eyes alternate between his own hidden blue memory and the woman's blue butterfly.

They lock gazes across the counter. In that exact fraction of a second, the profound weight of true recognition hits them both.

INT. SHOP - EVENING

The woman turns and exits through the door. The sound of the latch clicking shut breaks the silence.

The shopkeeper, his hands shaking visibly, reaches out and picks up the woman's blue box from the desk. He carries it over and places it gently beside his own.

He steps away from the desk and walks slowly down the narrow aisles between the towering shelves, scanning the boxes row by row like a forgotten graveyard. He lets out a long, trembling sigh.

The shopkeeper reaches out and lifts an old orange box from the shelf. He runs his thumb across the dusty glass, pausing for a beat, then very slowly lifts the lid.

A soft, reassuring click echoes. The shopkeeper waits. The orange butterfly inside does not move; it remains dormant.

He gently closes the lid and places the box back, then begins opening other boxes, one by one, methodically and without haste.

He reaches the very top shelf, straight to the two blue boxes.

With immense care, he lifts the lid of the first blue box, then the second.

The two blue butterflies lift into the air, their wings beating in unison as they begin to swirl and dance around each other in a graceful spiral.

At that exact moment, across every shelf in the shop, thousands of dormant orange butterflies suddenly burst into motion. The entire room transforms into a roaring, magical whirlwind of color.

The shopkeeper closes his eyes, a faint, genuine smile of deep longing breaking across his face.

EXT. STREET - EVENING

A massive, dazzling storm of orange and blue butterflies bursts violently through the glass door, flooding out into the darkening street.

Within the swirling orange vortex, the two blue butterflies separate. One flies calmly through the ash-filled air toward the woman standing down the block.

The blue butterfly passes directly into her chest. The woman closes her eyes, and her natural, vibrant eye color instantly returns.

The second blue butterfly arcs through the air toward the shopkeeper, landing softly against his chest and melting inside.

The shopkeeper's eyes fill with warm, genuine tears of complete revival.

The woman and the shopkeeper begin to move at the exact same moment, stepping forward through the parting crowd toward the center of the street while everyone else remains frozen for a beat, watching.

In the absolute center of the colorful street, surrounded by a swirling storm of vibrant butterflies, they finally meet face to face and stop.

Slowly, their hands reach out toward one another.

The exact second their fingers touch, a pure, blinding, and magical blue shockwave radiates outward, instantly stripping the ash and death away from the city as if the world is being completely reborn.

A WIDE DRONE SHOT elevates rapidly into the sky.

The entire dead city transforms below into a lush, radiant garden of vibrant orange and blue light.

FADE OUT.