



A HAPP 'E' PLACE

Bernard Mersier

FADE IN:

EXT. THE PARK - AFTERNOON

It's a clear spring day, the kind where sunlight felt like a blessing. A few couples stroll through the park, hands clasped, their laughter carrying on the gentle breeze.

Birds chirp a cheerful tune, and the ducks in the pond look impossibly serene with their feathers glistening.

The air is thick with the scent of fresh-cut grass and the sweet perfume of blooming flowers.

Along the path, Justin appears, a sharp contrast to the idyllic scene. He's cleanly shaved, dressed to the nines in a plum shirt and crisp white slacks that make his rosy skin and baby face stand out, almost unnervingly youthful for his mid-thirties.

Cool, dark sunglasses hide his eyes. In one hand, he carries a styrofoam cup of fresh coffee, and in the other, a folded paper bag.

He stops at a bench, settling down, placing the bag and cup beside him. A genuine smile, pure joy, touches his lips as he slicks back his freshly lined-up black hair.

He watches the ducks glide across the pond, bringing the cup to his lips, taking a slow sip.

JUSTIN (V.O.)

I've been clean for eight years. And I must say, the world truly looks different. Now, I understand what enjoying the simple pleasures of life means. While I was binging, sex, drugs, and carnage were the only things important in my life. My old life was appealing to some, but others viewed me as a worthless addict.

(Soft laugh)

Well, whoever thinks I wasted my life, I could care less. Unless you've been down that road, what makes you think your opinion is relevant? But right now, it's all about inhaling fresh air and enjoying the day.

He picks up the paper bag, rises from the bench, and walks towards the pond's edge.

Opening the bag, he pulls out a handful of soup crackers, tossing them into the water. He keeps smiling, watching the ducks eagerly gobble them up.

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

Intoxication is a gift people abuse as an excuse. 'Well, I was drunk. Or, well, I was high, so I don't remember.' Pure lies. You knew what you were doing. The only time excuses can be used is the very first time. After that, your body welcomes the toxins.

A soft, hollow laugh escapes him, and slowly, his sunglasses slide down his nose.

The vibrant park scene flickers, then shimmers, like a mirage dissolving in heat.

His hand trembles slightly, a genuine tremor in a day filled with carefully constructed composure.

The left lens of his sunglasses crack with a sharp, brittle sound, like shattering dreams.

Suddenly, he wasn't in the park. He's in a messy room, the air thick with stale smoke and the scent of decay.

On a cluttered table lies an array of drugs, various pipes, empty liquor bottles, a .38 special, and scattered condoms.

Sunlight streams in through an open window, a cruel reminder of the world outside, a world he could no longer truly reach.

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

Let me stop lying. Addicts never change. They suppress the demon for so long, but it always resurfaces stronger. The peaceful scenery, clean from drugs, is my dream, because right now, I'm intoxicated. But... I did pray for a change, knowing I had no desire to quit.

He pushes his sunglasses back onto his face.

Through the cracked left lens, he sees the serene park, the ducks, the sun. Through the empty right frame, he still sees his squalid room, the drugs, the gun.

JUSTIN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
You can't combine reality and
imagination, knowing you can't have
both? You attempt to cancel the
greater evil, although the greater
evil is what you truly love, despite
it's killing you.

His hand, steady now with a chilling resolve, picks up the
.38. He presses the cold steel against his temple.

JUSTIN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Why continue hurting the people you
love and yourself when there's a
different solution?

The distinct click of the chamber turning slowly is audible
as he cocks the hammer. For a final, fleeting moment, through
the spiderweb of cracks in the left lens, he sees himself
sitting peacefully by the pond.

A tear slides down his cheek, and then... BANG!

Justin falls over, lifeless. The gunshot echoes through the
empty room, quickly fading into an absolute, suffocating
silence.

JUSTIN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
You move on to your happy place,
praying your people can understand you
couldn't get the monkey off your back.

FADE TO BLACK:

BLACK SCREEN:

"You can't escape reality until you embrace the reality you
created."

~Bernard Mersier~

END CREDITS: