

EXT. A DOWNTOWN STREET - MIDDLE MORNING

TITLES

Over a grainy beige blur. We descend to a surface, which comes into focus only as we get very close.

It is a sidewalk. We linger on it a moment. From the left of the frame a thin scrap of paper tumbles across until it hits a black man's hand.

INSERT: THE MAN'S HANDS

They straighten the paper, a fortune-cookie fortune, which says "Look Before You Reap".

THE MAN, PROFILE, FROM THE ARMS UP.

An aged black man in brown hat and trenchcoat. He looks up. A man in devil costume walks by, complete with red cowl and horns.

THE MAN FROM BEHIND, MEDIUM-LONG

The old man watches as the devil walks down a few doors and into an office building on the block. We leave the old man, absorbing his POV, and follow the devil down the street and through the same door, which we recognize as a coffee shop, a Corner Bakery or similar metropolitan coffee and baked goods chain.

CUT - INT. COFFEE SHOP

We are in line behind the black man. A few people ahead is the devil, still in full regalia. The devil reaches into an unseen "pocket" (none are visible in his costume) and pulls something out.

INSERT: DEVIL'S HAND

A dollar and several dimes, nickels, and quarters are visible against his red palm.

WOMAN AT COUNTER

Can I help you?

DEVIL

Coffee. (beat) Black.

THE COFFEE LINE

The devil takes his coffee and walks out of the coffee shop, using the exit that leads back into the office building. After he passes, the old man subtly leaves the line and follows.

INT. OFFICE - A CUBICLE

A man's foot. Nice brown loafers and slacks; someone sitting at their cubicle. A brown parcel is in the foreground on the floor. The man reaches down and lifts up the parcel. We stay on the foot. Sounds: a drawer opens, closes. Slicing.

MAN (O.S.)
Oh fuck.

An exacto penknife, fallen, sticks into the ground right next to the man's foot.

INT. ELEVATOR

The devil and the old man, both silent, standing still. The old man is behind the devil.

INSERT: THE FLOOR INDICATOR

2...3... Red numbers, other aspects of red in the frame. In a different shot, a pan down, perhaps, the emergency door is open, revealing its red phone handle.

INT. OFFICE - THE CUBICLE

Milquetoast office muzak plays softly. The man at the desk, Bob, in a medium shot, has his parcel open. From it he pulls a red sports car that someone has taken a hammer to. Bob gets some inside joke and happily mulls the gift, sets it on his desk. On his desk are various personal items: a clock, a family photo (nothing ostentatious), a pencil holder. His desk is neat. A coworker passes, lays a hand on Bob's shoulder going by.

COWORKER (VO)
Congratulations, Bob.

Bob nods.

INT. OFFICE RECEPTION

RECEPTIONIST, CLOSE

A pretty young lady. Looks up at us with a bewildered 'Can I Help You?' expression.

DEVIL, CLOSE

Breaks into a wide smile.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM

We dolly sideways down a conference table, where Bob and various coworkers are dealing with an uncomfortable silence. At the end of the table is a tight stack of blandly festive paper cups and plates, party hats and blowers, a box of donuts, liters of soda and juice, and an empty punchbowl.

EXT. CONFERENCE ROOM - THE DOOR

The old man stands behind the devil, who stands in front of a door labeled "Conference Room".

THE DEVIL'S BACK, OLD MAN'S POV

In a medium shot, red helium balloons fill and protrude from the side of the devil's figure. (This is accomplished with a small helium tank and several balloons at the ready. We don't see the tank or the uninflated balloons.) The balloons fill and bob up on strings. The devil raises a fist.

INSERT: THE DOOR

The devil's hand: *knock* *knock* *knock*

THE DEVIL'S BACK

The doorjamb is in the frame. It cracks open and a black woman's face, big and friendly, lights up when she sees the devil.

WOMAN
Ooooh, my!

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - THE DOOR, MEDIUM

WOMAN
(turning back to room)
He's here!

The devil bursts in with a flurry of balloons and red streamers. He prances, high-stepping.

DEVIL
Who's ready to party!?

OFFICE FOLK

They are visibly disturbed, but obviously not unwilling to think about partying.

THE DEVIL

He scurries over to the paper plates and gathers them. Facing the camera, he flings the stack of plates frisbee-style at the lens. They fan out as they leave the frame.

THE TABLE, LONG SHOT

The office partygoers. Their plates have landed, one directly in front of each.

THE DEVIL

(he grabs a party hat, and scampers over to Bob)
You're Bob, aren't you Bob? Lovely.

He places the hat on Bob's head. We see that Bob is wearing a noticeable but not ostentatious gold cross on a necklace. The devil looks to the end of the table and picks someone out at random.

THE DEVIL (CONT.)

(ceremoniously, to officeworker)
YOU! Pour the punch!

INT. CONF. ROOM - MED.

The office partygoers begin to lively up, conversing, passing out donuts. A man pours a concoction of various sodas and juice into the punchbowl. From his jacket comes a large flask of bourbon, which he not-too-discretely empties into the bowl.

THE DEVIL, CLOSE

Silently sniggers, wringing his red hands.

CUT- THE OFFICE CORRIDOR ADJACENT BOB'S DESK, MED.

A man in a grey tailored three-piece suit walks up the aisle, stopping at Bob's desk. He carries a white business envelope in his hand. He looks around, wondering where Bob might be.

INT. CONF ROOM, WIDE

The party is winding up but straining for momentum. People are now standing and talking, drinking punch. The devil is talking to two of the more attractive women, a cup of punch in his hand. Someone in another clique yawns. The devil pretends not to notice, looks over his shoulder.

THE OLD MAN, MEDIUM

He sits in a chair against the wall in the conference room, basically unnoticed. He takes in the scene, then reaches into his trenchcoat and produces a harmonica.

CONF. ROOM

At the first notes of the old man's raucous harmonica, all look up, surprised, musically aroused.

From somewhere unseen, a band drops into a celebratory gospel two-beat along with the harmonica. The partygoers begin to dance. The devil, ecstatic amongst this scene, gyrates and grooves, the most lively.

Various shots of partygoers getting down (no particular order), mixed with close shots of the Old Man playing his harmonica:

Bob, doing the twist; his nametag says "Hello, I'm 40"

The man who had the flask dirty dancing with a lady in the office

The large black woman getting loose to the music

An assortment of charleston-esque dances and shots of drinking.

THE DEVIL

In mid-dance.

CLOSE

Suddenly, he freezes, looking up to the right, his hand cupped to his ear. His eyes go wide.

EXT. CONF. ROOM

The three-piece-suit man opens the door to the conference room to find all the office partygoers seated somberly around the conference table. No music is heard.

MAN

Uh, is Bob here? Can I speak with Bob please?

CUT - THE OFFICE CORRIDOR ADJACENT BOB'S DESK, MEDIUM-LONG, LOW ANGLE

Silence. We see the suit man hand Bob an envelope, which Bob happily opens, expecting a gift. It is a slip of pink paper. Bob realizes he's been fired on his birthday. He brandishes the pink slip and begins excitedly questioning the man, who can only shrug and mumble. Bob grabs the picture of his family from his desk and gestures to it. The man puts a sympathetic hand on Bob's shoulder. Bob shrugs it off angrily. The man in the suit mouths "I'm sorry Bob" and walks away.

BOB, CLOSER

Anger, fear, confusion.

BOB'S DESK

The exacto is in the pencil holder.

EXT. CONF. ROOM

The conference room door opens and we realize a mild red filter has been added. The party is in full swing, the devil leading a party train, others dancing, the music back. We follow Bob to just inside the door.

DEVIL, IN REVILRY, BOB'S POV

He is wildly carousing. His mirth is now strikingly misplaced. Bob's anger is focused upon him; he is now a very bad omen.

CONF. ROOM, MEDIUM

Bob cannot contain himself. He rushes the devil and pins him to the wall. The music is derailed abruptly. We can hear the gasp of the coworkers when Bob produces his exacto and puts it at the Devil's chin.

THE TWO OF THEM - CLOSE

The devil is scared shitless, looking left and right for help. Bob is shaking, red-faced and terrified himself. He doesn't know what he will do. Finally, the moment deflates and Bob puts down the small blade.

THE DEVIL
Good god, man.

CONF. ROOM

As the devil makes a hasty exit from the room, Bob slumps over to a chair and sinks into it. Someone politely takes the exacto from his hand. The reaction of the coworkers is to a well-liked friend who has lost it. They are not scared of him. Bob sighs and tosses the now-crumpled pink slip on the table, eliciting another gasp and some muted but appalled commentary.

BOB
After twenty years...on my birthday...

He shakes his head angrily, then rises and rushes out of the conference room. After a beat, the old man gets up and follows.

HALLWAY TO RECEPTION AREA, MEDIUM

Bob walks quickly and stiffly out, running his hands through his hair. He passes the devil, sitting bewildered and shaken on a chair in the reception area. The devil's horns and cowl are gone; he is just a costumed party actor who hadn't signed up for a near homicide.

Bob loudly opens a stairway door and goes through. The old man follows.

INT. STAIRWELL

Bob rushes down below us. We follow from the old man's perspective, almost on top of Bob, as if we're floating down.

EXT. DOWNTOWN STREET, LOW SHOT

A door to the building opens and Bob runs out, wildly, towards the street. He rushes past a red sports car almost into the street.

BOB, LOW SHOT

The old man behind him reaches a hand to Bob's shoulder and grabs him, turning him.

A bus loudly passes through the space in the street that Bob was running into. It takes up the background of the frame.

OLD MAN, BOB'S POV

Arm still outstretched. For a brief moment, we half-see glowing wings and an aura about his head. These flicker very briefly and are gone.

BOB, HIGH ANGLE, CLOSE

Crouched at the curb, he is amazed - in the religious sense.

SIDEWALK, LONG

The old man walks away into the populace on the sidewalk until he disappears.

THE STREET - FROM ABOVE

We rise away.

INT. A HOME FOYER HALLWAY, EVENING

OVER CLOSING TITLES:

Two young children play with toys. Keys in the lock are heard. The children look up. The door opens and Bob steps through, wearing a hat and trenchcoat. The children rush him.

They embrace his legs.

END