

Supply and Demand

written by

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EXT. WOODLAND TRAIL - DAY

A teddy bear's arm hangs over the rim of bag decorated in randier. It sits on a trail covered in a mix of autumnal color and filthy liter. A hand stuffs it back in, hoists the bag up.

JACK (early 40's, rings under the eyes, red faced) carrying two other bulbous bags, sighs and begins to plod foreword. The wind rips off leaf's from withered trees, a grey sky loom's above.

After a few steps, a phone vibrates in his trouser pocket.

Jack grinds to a halt, letting out a deeper sigh. Walk's over to a tree near the trail and dumps two bags beside it, but gently puts down the Christmas bag.

Jack brings the phone to his ear.

JACK

Hay, son. I'm going be late home...
I'm sorry... look I've apologized.

He rolls his eyes, picks up a leafy branch and stats shaking it next to the phone

JACK (CONT'D)

(Muffled)

Hang on, the wind's picking up, oh
man, there's going be thunder here
soon.

He repeats the same movement, walking back onto the trail, his back to the bags, to the way he came on the trail, and to a FIGURE (20's, wearing old hoodie, thin,) carefully creeping towards the bags.

JACK (CONT'D)

I'll catch you later.

He turns back, the figure is crouched beside the tree.

Before he can react, the figure snatches up the Christmas bag and bolts off the way Jack came.

Jack slides his phone back into his trousers and sprints after the man, but then stops, doubling back over to the remaining bags, scooping them up before resuming the chase.

The figure in the hoodie speeds down the trail zooming past the world around him, clutching the bag tight to his chest.

Jack tries to keep up, his bags swingeing to and fro, clattering against him.

JACK
Of all the days.

The thief disappears behind a bend on the trail.

Jack makes the same turn and is confronted with a steep decline on the trail. The thief has slowed down.

He carefully shimmies his way down, his feet become closed with dirt and mulch.

He clears the descent, still close behind to the thief. A relieved smile crosses his face.

JACK
I'll get soon you pal. I run every morning.

The thief vanishes behind another bend.

Jack makes the turn again and is confronted with a particularly horizontal incline on the trail the thief is already halfway up.

He advances upward, his legs bend and almost buckle while taking big strides. He raises the bags to his chest, like weights.

He makes the incline and reaches level ground, his breathing heavy and irregular. The thief is still on the trail, but has gained distance. Jack resumes running, his face is scared with frustration.

He tightens his grip on the bags, his hands are red raw.

Jack grimace's and releases his grip of both bags. They crash onto the ground, letting out an awful crunch. He flinches, but speeds up.

The gap between them begins too close, the two men move at equal speeds.

Jack's arm snap's out, it's hand wide open

The thief takes a glance behind him, his eyes widen.

Jack moves closer, his hand inches away from the thief's hood.

The thief takes a sharp turn as Jack clenches his hand shut on their hood, he runs off the trail into the undergrowth.

Jack barrels ahead for a second before slowing down and redirects himself, disappearing into the growth.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

The laughter of crows echos through the trees, a mass of orange leaves sits above the ground, beside the bodies of once mighty trees. The thief jumps over a trunk, lands, and keeps on running, still clutching the bag.

Jack approaches the trunk but stops before taking the jump. His breathing is heavy and his hands are shaking.

JACK
Just buy a toy!

Jack puts one leg over the trunk then begins to raise the other but he stays put. Jack looks down.

His foot is submerged in fiascos mud.

Jack looks back up, the thief's nowhere to be seen, only the call of crows breaks the stillness.

He tries to yank himself from the mud. No luck. He gives it another go, still nothing.

JACK
Okay then.

He sits on the log, grabs his trapped leg, leans backwards and pulls.

The foot stays put.

He grits his teeth and leans back further, until he's practically vertical.

His foot pops out, sending him careening backwards off of the log onto his back.

He spits out a pained laugh tinged with anger.

He gets back to his feet and resumes running, zooming past the world around him.

Jack leaps over logs, ducks under branches and strides over ditches. He's man possessed.

INT. LIVING ROOM- DAY

A pair of small trainers sit on a mantelpiece beside a football, both in pristine condition.

Two tiny hands try to wrap them-self's around the ball. After a second, a large hand scoops up the ball.

EXT. CLEARING IN THE WOODS- DAY

Jack emerges into a clearing, the husk of a building sits as still as death ahead of him. The bricks are green with moss, the roof and doors have shrunk with age, patches of singed grass and crunched cans litter the space.

His gaze darts about until it settles on a distinctly human footprint pressed into the earth. A crazed smile crosses his face.

He creeps forward, periodically peering behind walls until something red and green catches his eye.

On the ground is the bag decorated with reindeer. He glides over to it, snatches it up and takes a look inside.

There's nothing in it.

Jack crumples the bag into a ball, and lets it drop to the ground. Rage contorts his face.

A twig snaps, Jack's body swings around.

The thief, only a few feet away from Jack, is crouched beside a wall. He holds the teddy bear in one hand. His expression dire

Jack sprints over and grabs hold off the thief by the scurf of his neck

JACK
(viscous)
Merry Christmas.

He forces him to his feet, rips the gift from his hands and shoves him back. He tumbles onto a cardboard box, squashing it flat.

Jack steps back, brings the bear to his chest and begins to breath normally again.

The man painfully crawls off the cardboard and drags it away, reviling a bottle of water, an old Parker jacket a split tin off beans.

Jack frowns, his body relaxes and his grip loosens.

A tube of festive wrapping paper lies rolled out. "To Tommy, from dad" is written out in black felt.

Jack stops breathing, all the color in his face is drained out with white.

INT. LIVING ROOM- DAY

A framed picture of a young boy with a toothy smile stands on a drawer, he's holding a football under an arm. The frame combusts into flames, which cling to the photo and slowly render it into ash.

EXT. CLEARING IN THE WOODS- DAY

Jack drops the bear. His hand is quivering that much.

The man slowly organizes his things, separating everything into two piles. The split beans and burst bottles go into a pile while the jacket and pepper are clumped together.

His face carries a grave expression.

He approaches the man and places the beer next to him, it's oversized head slumps down to it's side who continues sorting out a few belongings.

Jack slowly stumbles away from the man leaving him alone in the ruined building.

The man picks up the bear and carefully begins to wrap it up.

EXT. WOODLAND TRAIL - DAY

Jack walks back onto the trail, a red sun is there to greet him. He pulls out his phone types on it and then brings it to his ear.

JACK

Hi Justin. Let's talk.

A tear rolls down Jack's face.

Int. LIVING ROOM- DAY

A pair of hands sweeps away the ashen remains with a dustpan, yellow warm sun illuminates the space.

THE END