

Orange

By

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EXT. PLAYGROUND - DAYTIME

A LOVELY FALL DAY. CHILDREN are running, screaming, laughing. PARENTS are supervising. Life is idyllic, and mundane.

A DAD, mid-40s, stands to the side, ignoring his SON on the swing set while he pokes at his smart phone.

SON

Dad! Watch me! See how high I can go!

ROSIE, 6, sits nearby in the sandbox, making bucket shapes over and over with her orange PLASTIC BUCKET, and watching.

DAD

Yeah, that's great, buddy.

From behind, we see SLENDERMAN (age indeterminable) step in beside the dad. Slenderman is UNNATURALLY TALL AND THIN; he wears a PRISTINE BLACK SUIT and has the complexion of the dead.

Throughout, we never see all of Slenderman's face at once, only the reactions of the people around him.

Slenderman watches the kids on the swings.

The dad glances at Slenderman, gives a casual, fake smile and glances away.

Then he slowly raises his eyes back to Slenderman, his expression horrified, although he doesn't seem quite sure why. Still, he can't seem to look away...

The dad puts the phone in his pocket, still staring at Slenderman.

He swallows.

DAD

So... you... uh... you got a kid out here?

Slenderman's voice is casual, but strange. Almost as if it's been slightly auto-tuned.

SLENDERMAN

No.

DAD  
 (eyes on Slenderman)  
 Time to go, buddy!

The dad manages to pull his eyes away from Jimmy, and he hustles toward his son. He pulls the kid off the swing gracelessly, in a panicked hurry.

Slenderman stands and watches.

SON  
 But I don't want to go yet! You  
 said we could stay a whole hour!  
 Why are we leaving now?

The dad glances in Slenderman's direction and seems a little confused himself.

DAD  
 I... uh... I gotta work, buddy.

The dad hustles the kid away.

Rosie glances up at Slenderman, who continues to watch all the other families. She dusts off her hands and picks up her orange plastic bucket, then walks over to Slenderman and stands next to him.

ROSIE  
 You don't got a family?

Slenderman turns toward her a bit.

SLENDERMAN  
 No. I don't.

Rosie stands there a moment, in silence, thinking.

ROSIE  
 I don't got a dad.

SLENDERMAN  
 I'm sorry to hear that.

ROSIE  
 Yeah. He ran off like a goddamned  
 dickless wonder.  
 (beat)  
 That's what my mom says.

SLENDERMAN  
 It's his loss.

ROSIE

Yeah. That's what my mom says, too.

Rosie points toward the neighborhood homes visible nearby.

ROSIE

I live in that house over there.  
The one with half the roof is  
green. You see it?

Slenderman takes a moment, shielding his eyes from the sun to look.

SLENDERMAN

Ah. That looks like a nice house.

ROSIE

It's a piece of goddamned crap.

SLENDERMAN

Is that what your mom says?

ROSIE

No.

SLENDERMAN

Okay.

(beat)

It must be nice to have a house and  
a family.

ROSIE

I guess. I have a brother. I don't  
like him. He bosses all the time.  
You don't have a house, even?

SLENDERMAN

No.

ROSIE

No brothers or sisters? No mom?

SLENDERMAN

No.

ROSIE

Xbox?

Slenderman chuckles, charmed.

SLENDERMAN

No.

ROSIE  
Well, hell, mister, what do you  
got?

SLENDERMAN  
I have... a job.

ROSIE  
Oh. What's your job?

SLENDERMAN  
I watch.

ROSIE  
Sounds boring.

SLENDERMAN  
Well, I'm supposed to be better at  
it. I'm supposed to talk to people,  
to connect. To understand them. But  
people seem to be afraid of me.

He brushes off his jacket sleeve.

SLENDERMAN  
Does this suit seem off-putting to  
you?

ROSIE  
Yep.

Slenderman nods.

ROSIE  
Knock knock.

SLENDERMAN  
I'm sorry?

ROSIE  
You say, "Who's there?" I say,  
"Knock Knock," and you say, "Who's  
there?" and I say, "Apple," and you  
say, "Apple who?" Don't you even  
know how a joke works?

SLENDERMAN  
I think I can follow your  
instructions.

ROSIE  
Okay. Knock knock.

SLENDERMAN  
Who's there?

ROSIE  
Apple.

SLENDERMAN  
Apple who?

ROSIE  
Knock knock.

SLENDERMAN  
Who's there?

ROSIE  
Apple.

SLENDERMAN  
Apple who?

ROSIE  
Knock knock.

SLENDERMAN  
(hesitating)  
I don't see where this is going.

ROSIE  
Banana.

SLENDERMAN  
Banana... what?

ROSIE  
(harsh whisper)  
Banana *who*... say, "Banana who?"

SLENDERMAN  
Oh. Yes. Certainly. Banana who?

YOUNG MAN'S VOICE  
Rosie!

Both Rosie and Slenderman look up to see FRANK, a lanky fifteen-year-old kid who's all bones and length, rushing toward them.

FRANK  
I swear to God, I turn my back for one minute--

ROSIE

Mom says I can come out here to play when I want to. Long as I can see the house from where I'm at, I can play. And there's the house.

He grabs her hand and looks up at Slenderman. Frank's older than his years, and even when he looks directly into Slenderman's face, he fights the fear and puts a tough expression on.

FRANK

You stay the hell away from my sister, you hear me?

ROSIE

Shut up, Frank. He's my friend. His name is... what's your name, mister?

Slenderman looks at her, his head cocked. Name? Huh. He doesn't seem to have thought about that.

ROSIE

His name is Jimmy.

Slenderman gives a slight nod of acceptance; he is now JIMMY.

ROSIE

And he's coming for dinner. He doesn't have no family.

FRANK

Any family.

ROSIE

You know how Mom likes to invite people with no family.

FRANK

That's at Thanksgiving.  
(to Rose, but looking at Jimmy)

Say goodbye, Rosie.

He pulls Rosie away, and she turns back, tossing her orange bucket at Jimmy, who catches it easily.

ROSIE

You can bring it back when you come to dinner!

Frank pulls on Rosie even more, moving faster, and Rosie fights him to look back at Jimmy.

ROSIE

We eat at six o'clock, every night.  
It's taco night! I'll tell Mom  
you're coming!

Frank yanks her, not hurting her, but making his point clear.

Rosie angles herself stubbornly to wave at Jimmy.

From behind, we see Jimmy's hand rise. Five unnaturally pale fingers extend and then curl, one by one, back into his palm.

In the other hand, he clutches the handle of the orange plastic bucket.

INSTRUMENTAL music begins...

EXT. VILLAGE - AFTERNOON

Jimmy wanders through the village, carrying the orange bucket.

When PEOPLE ON THE STREET look at him, they are shocked, horrified, and then confused once they look away, as though they don't know why they're feeling upset.

Jimmy continues down the street.

EXT. SIDE STREET - AFTERNOON

A side-shot, direct on a GRAFFITI-COVERED BRICK WALL. PEOPLE hurry past, focused on their destination. Jimmy moves more slowly, standing out, head and shoulders above the rest of the crowd, taking in everything.

He stops. He turns to the graffiti. He studies the swirls and loops in the paint.

This is art; this is beauty.

Rain starts pelting down. Around Jimmy, umbrellas shoot up, people moving down the street, still not seeing anything around them.

Jimmy turns his face to the sky, the wetness covering his skin. He closes his eyes and feels it.

INT. JIMMY'S APARTMENT - AFTERNOON

Jimmy sits at a small dining room table in a small apartment. The apartment looks like a hotel room; neat and uninteresting.

MUSIC continues; classical, beautiful.

Jimmy sits typing at a laptop computer, which looks normal, except that the screen is black.

Jimmy types, his graceful fingers moving with the rhythm of the music.

He types. He waits. He types again. He waits.

His eyes grow sad, as if he's received bad news. The music grows sad, too.

He closes the laptop, and right in his line of view is the orange bucket.

He sits, perfectly still, for a long moment.

EXT. ROSIE'S HOUSE - DUSK

The worst house in the neighborhood; just barely middle class, but hanging in there.

Jimmy stands on the porch, orange bucket held gingerly by the handle in front of him, and he presses the DOORBELL.

The doorbell makes a SAD, PLAINTIVE SOUND, as though it has recently been stepped on by something very heavy.

The door opens and GLORIA (40s) stands in the doorway. Her hair was probably done up nicely that morning, but now is half-pulled out of the bun. She has an apron on over a well-worn but still respectable blazer, and she has a cellphone tucked between her ear and her shoulder.

GLORIA

Yeah, I'm sure I sent the file.  
Tell Susan to get her head out of  
her bridal magazines and check her  
email.

Gloria looks up at Jimmy.

Jimmy looks back at Gloria.

Gloria's brow quirks. She's not horrified, but he's definitely gotten her attention.

GLORIA  
I'll call you back.

She tucks her phone in her pocket.

GLORIA  
Can I help you?

JIMMY  
Yes.

He holds up the bucket.

JIMMY  
I believe this belongs to your  
daughter.

Gloria, without taking her eyes off Jimmy, shouts over her  
shoulder.

GLORIA  
Rosie!

Awkward silence.

Rosie appears next to her mother.

ROSIE  
Jimmy!

JIMMY  
(gentle surprise)  
You remember me?

Rosie takes Jimmy's hand to pull him inside, but Gloria puts  
one hand on her shoulder, stopping the child where she is.

GLORIA  
Baby, this man has your bucket. How  
does he know where we live?

ROSIE  
He's my friend. The one I met at  
the park. Jimmy. He's here for  
dinner.

GLORIA  
I thought that was an imaginary  
friend.

JIMMY  
(to Gloria)  
I only came to return her toy...

ROSIE

He's got no family. And we have to feed him because you always say be kind to people who don't have no one.

Gloria keeps her eyes on Jimmy, seeming confused.

GLORIA

Who don't have *anyone*.

ROSIE

Come on!

Rosie tugs on Jimmy's hand. Gloria holds her ground for a moment, then steps back.

GLORIA

It's tacos tonight. Nothing special.

JIMMY

It smells terrific.

He allows himself to be pulled inside.

INT. ROSIE'S HOUSE - NIGHTTIME

Gloria, Rosie, Frank and Jimmy are sitting at the table. It's a modest table in a modest home, but it's clean and kept up. The plates all match, and there's a clean, if old, tablecloth on the table.

Gloria sits up straight, dignified. Her hair has been tucked back into her bun.

Rosie squirms around in her seat, attacking her taco with gusto, the orange bucket on the table at her side.

Frank sits up straight like his mother, eyeing Jimmy with extreme suspicion as he stabs at his dinner.

Jimmy sits pleasantly, occasionally leaning over his food and breathing it in.

GLORIA

So, what do you do, Jimmy?

ROSIE

He watches.

GLORIA  
You watch? Watch what?

JIMMY  
People.

Frank huffs, annoyed. Gloria gives him a stern look, then looks back at Jimmy.

GLORIA  
And that's a job?

JIMMY  
It's an assignment. I'm here to watch, to observe, and to report. I enjoy the work.

GLORIA  
You don't look happy.

JIMMY  
I was just notified that I am to return home. I was not successful.

GLORIA  
Yeah? And what were you supposed to do?

JIMMY  
I have tried to connect with people, but they are afraid of me. I do not know why.

ROSIE  
It's the suit.

Both Frank and Gloria look at the suit, then back up at Jimmy.

GLORIA  
(polite)  
Yeah. I'm sure that's it.

FRANK  
(muttering)  
It's not the suit.

Gloria gives Frank a stern look. Frank huffs again.

GLORIA  
So, where's home for you?

JIMMY

Far away. You have never been there.

GLORIA

Do you miss it? Will you be glad to go back?

Jimmy shrugs. As he does, there is a faint hint of the SOUND OF GRINDING METAL.

JIMMY

There are no tacos there.

He leans forward and sniffs.

Frank can't take it anymore; he throws down his fork.

FRANK

I want this freak out of here! I found him talking to Rosie earlier. Alone. At the park. Near a windowless van.

Gloria's eyes widen, and she looks at Jimmy.

JIMMY

(to Gloria)

I have no van. And we were not alone. There were twenty-seven other people there, fourteen of them adults. Three of those adults were watching me very carefully. I would not have harmed your daughter, but in addition, they would not have let me.

Jimmy leans forward and sniffs the tacos, then closes his eyes. Heaven.

FRANK

Freak.

ROSIE

You're a freak!

Gloria puts her hand down flat on the table. It's a small gesture, but both kids go quiet and straighten up quick.

GLORIA

Jimmy is a guest in our home.

Frank lets out a sigh, but doesn't argue. Gloria picks up her fork.

GLORIA

So. You watch people, then?

JIMMY

I observe. I report. I cannot connect. Most people don't remember me once I've left their line of sight. Rosie is very special.

FRANK

I remembered you.

JIMMY

Yes? Before I returned tonight?

FRANK

Yeah.

No.

JIMMY

Oh, that is special. May we try something?

Frank opens his mouth to say something rude, but Gloria raises her hand he shuts up.

JIMMY

What is my name?

FRANK

Jimmy.

JIMMY

And what do I look like?

FRANK

I don't know. Pale skin. Fake hair. Weird green eyes. Metal teeth.

JIMMY

Now look away and tell me my name and what I look like.

Frank rolls his eyes and looks away.

He struggles. He tries to speak; he can't. When he looks back at Jimmy, he suddenly sputters.

FRANK

Jimmy! Pale teeth! Metal skin!

For the first time, he seems like a kid, rather than a kid trying to be an adult.

JIMMY

If it helps, you are not afraid of me, and that makes you exceptionally brave.

Frank's expression shows that he both appreciates and resents this compliment.

ROSIE

Let me try! Let me try!

Rosie covers her eyes.

ROSIE

Jimmy! Fake hair! Green eyes! Black clothes! White skin looks like a dead guy! Got no family! Smells a little like Gramma's closet!

She uncovers her eyes and giggles.

Gloria and Frank look at each other, their eyes wide.

GLORIA

I'm sorry. Who are you again?

JIMMY

Just Jimmy. That is all I am here.

Jimmy gives them a sad look.

JIMMY

It is a shame I wasn't able to get this invitation to dinner before tonight. It might have been enough to defer my re-assignment. But in payment for your kindness, I'd like to give you each something.

FRANK

I don't want nothing from you.

ROSIE

Anything!

Gloria shoots a look at Frank, and then looks back at Jimmy.

GLORIA

You don't have to give us anything.

There is a moment of silence, and when Jimmy speaks, everyone pays rapt attention.

JIMMY

You are a good mother. Your children have what they need. The things you can't give them don't matter as much as you think they do.

Gloria looks stunned, as though he has reached into her soul and touched it somehow. She smiles, her eyes glistening.

GLORIA

Thank you.

Jimmy looks at Frank.

JIMMY

There are good men in the world. You are afraid there aren't and that you'll grow up weak, like your father, but good men exist, and you are one of them.

The anger leaves Frank's face; he is comforted by what Jimmy said.

Jimmy looks at Rosie.

JIMMY

You are a light.

There is a moment as they all wait, but there's nothing else.

GLORIA

She's a light? What does that mean?

JIMMY

She knows.

Rosie does seem to know. She attempts a wink in Jimmy's direction and is moderately successful.

JIMMY

I'm afraid it is time for me to go. Thank you for this meal, and your kindness, and for giving me a chance to smell your wonderful food.

Jimmy gets up from the table and starts for the door. Gloria and Frank stay seated, seeming confused, as though they are unsure what to do.

Rosie, however, grabs her bucket and follows him to the door. Jimmy is almost out the door when she catches up to him.

ROSIE  
Knock knock!

Jimmy turns, then kneels down to look at her eye to eye.

JIMMY  
Who's there?

ROSIE  
Banana!

JIMMY  
Banana who?

ROSIE  
Banana you glad I didn't say apple?

She breaks into hysterical laughter. Jimmy laughs, too, and the disturbing sound of screeching metal is a little warmer, a little more musical.

She holds the bucket out to him.

ROSIE  
You can bring it when you come back.

JIMMY  
It will be my honor.

He takes the bucket, then turns and walks away.

Rosie stands at the door, staring out into the night.

From behind her, we hear Gloria.

GLORIA (OS)  
Rosie! Shut that door and come in here and eat your dinner! You think I'm made of money, I can heat the whole neighborhood?

EXT. ROSIE'S NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

A lone, dark figure carrying a orange plastic bucket walks down the street.

The front door to Rosie's house closes.

GLORIA (OS)

And how many times do I have to tell you not to put out plates for your imaginary friends? Child, honestly. It's like you never listen.

ROSIE (OS)

Jimmy's not imaginary. He's real.

GLORIA (OS)

Here, you're a growing boy. Eat those tacos.

FRANK (OS)

Fine by me.

ROSIE (OS)

Knock knock.

GLORIA (OS)

Oh, dear god in heaven...

FRANK (OS)

It's *orange*! *Orange* you glad I didn't say *banana*!

ROSIE (OS)

Ohhhhh.

(beat)

I don't get it.

The dark figure turns the corner, and there is a musical metallic screech, sounding almost like laughter.

FADE TO BLACK