AFTER HOURS

Written by

Roland Cartagena
FADE IN:

INT. CAFE - DAY

Cold coffee. An unfinished bagel. Above, a MAN blankly stares at them. Below, his feet are partially out of his shoes. A glass wall just adjacent occasions him to look at the events in the world outside... only to return his gaze to the forlorn contents on the table. There are bits of sugar on the surface. An ant or two. The man presses his finger on the bits of sugar and inspects them. He rubs them off. The tiny crystals fall back to the table.

The man shifts his gaze to the people around him. They all seem busy, preoccupied. He, on the other hand, seem to have all the time in the world. He looks at his watch. The hands do not move. He takes it off. A figure clad in black arrives outside and stands close, its back opposite the glass wall. The man looks at the figure, but sees himself reflected on the glass behind the figure’s black silhouette. He stares at himself...

A waiter arrives. He sets down the order. Hot coffee. New bagel. The waiter takes away the previous serving. The man begins to stir the cup and takes a hesitant sip.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROAD - DAY

The man steps out of the cafe and surveys his surroundings. Around him are people from all walks of life. Before him transactions unfold: an ice cream vendor sells; a store owner gives change; a peddler begs; jeepney drivers drive. The many ways to make a living reveal themselves to the man. He walks.

A moderate gait. Head tilted downwards, the man takes notice of the pattern on the pavement--a repetition of lines. He begins to avoid stepping on the lines and gradually maintains a rhythm. Left, right, left, right, left, right...

The pavement abruptly cuts into grass. The man stops and raises his head. Before him is a field of green. He takes a moment before slowly stepping on the new terrain. He continues to walk.

CUT TO:
EXT. ROAD - DAY

The man arrives at a waiting shed. He waits. There is no one with him. Behind is a large bulletin board. Crucified are an assortment of job postings. With no approaching public vehicle in sight, the man idles. He opens his bag and takes out an object: a lanyard, attached to an ID case. The latter is empty. It finds itself back inside the bag. The man holds the lanyard between his fingers. No trash cans in sight. He looks behind him. Pulling out two or three staple wires from one of the postings, the man sinks them into the lanyard, pinning it in place on the board. With still no public vehicle passing by, the man moves on.

CUT TO:

INT. PLATFORM - DAY

A high-pitched beep. The turnstile rotates. The man sits at a bench, waiting. There are but a few passengers. Not for long the train arrives. The man aboards.

CUT TO:

INT. TRAIN - DAY

The man is seated and almost alone. His eyes are squinted. His ears take in something—a voice, trickling out of the intercom, but muffled and indiscernible. His thoughts meander... as the segmented divisions of the train rumble along the rails, their movement, altogether, resembling that of a winding snake. From time to time, flurries of sunlight would pass through the window. They flicker and dance on the man’s face, skipping by as fast as the train would go. The man stares at the blurry events whipping past outside the window. He closes his eyes.

Moments later, the train pulls to a stop.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROAD - DAY

The man walks to a quiet neighborhood. There is no one around. Before he has traversed a long distance, the man pauses. His expression reads discomfort. He bends over, partially removes his left shoe and takes a look. A wound in his heel. Decidedly, he undresses both of his feet, shoe and all. As he kneels there on the sidewalk, a very faint sound of an engine wafts through the air. The man looks up to the sky. A passing airplane.
The man rises and picks up his shoes. He walks, bare-footed, with the shoes softly clattering against each other, dangling from his fingers. Not for long, the man arrives at his home. The door briefly opens as he enters, and closes.

FADE OUT.