

The Fall of Civilisation

written by

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INT. A CINEMA. PRESENT DAY. AFTERNOON.

THEO, a fortysomething, is watching a film. There aren't many people in the audience. From the sound, the film is an action packed comedy. Theo's face is tense and he's not moving. One teardrop runs down slowly on his cheek. Then another. The audience laughs. Theo is crying. We hear explosions and chasing cars. Someone is eating popcorn nearby.

CUT TO:

INT. A SUPERMARKET. LATER THAT DAY.

Theo is in the fruit and veg section. He carries a shopping basket. He contemplates the tomatoes. There are cherry, beef and other sorts. He chooses the vine tomatoes and puts the pack in his basket. It already contains eggs, rice and other items.

He walks to the household section. He looks annoyed. He hesitates, takes a deep breath and quickly goes to the laundry detergents, puts his preferred brand in his basket before leaving the section. He breathes again.

He goes to the checkout area, puts his groceries on the conveyor belt. THE CASHIER smiles at him.

CASHIER

Hello, sir, do you need a bag?

THEO

(smiling back)

Hello...erm... yes, thanks.

The cashier gives a paper bag to Theo who packs his groceries as they come. He puts the tomatoes on top.

CUT TO:

INT. THEO'S KITCHEN. LATER THAT DAY. DAY.

Theo is in his kitchen. It's a small kitchen with a sink, a hob, a tiny fridge, cupboards, a microwave. The grocery bag is on the counter. Theo takes his groceries out of the bag and puts them away. He looks at the tomatoes, opens the pack and brings it to his nose. He closes his eyes as he smells the scent of the vines.

FADE TO:

EXT. A GARDEN AT THE BACK OF A HOUSE IN THE COUNTRYSIDE. DAY.

A ten year-old Theo walks amongst the tomatoes in the garden, crouches, picks the ripest. He eats some of them right away.

THEO'S MUM (O.S.)

Theo, honey, don't eat all the tomatoes, keep some for dinner this time!

YOUNG THEO

Yes, mum. They're very good!

He eats another tomato and walks across the garden towards the house.

FADE TO:

INT. THEO'S KITCHEN. SAME (PRESENT) DAY.

Theo opens the fridge and puts the tomatoes on the lower shelf. He closes the fridge.

CUT TO:

INT. THEO'S LIVING ROOM. SAME DAY. EVENING.

Theo is now in the living room, which is full of bookshelves. He browses his collection, picks one book "Running with Scissors" by Augusten Burroughs, puts it back. He picks another, a collection of plays by Harold Pinter, puts it back. He picks another one, "Uzumaki" by Junji Ito, puts it back and sighs.

He sits on his sofa, looks around, stares at the books, then takes his phone out of his pocket and starts scrolling. He's looking at funny cat videos on Instagram. His face remains blank. Time passes, it's getting darker outside. It's fully night now. Finally, a video makes him laugh.

CUT TO:

INT. A GYM CLUB. ANOTHER DAY. DAY.

Theo is at the gym (e.g. Puregym). He's got earbuds in his ears. He's running on a treadmill. The phone is in the item/bottle holder with his water bottle. He's been running for quite some time, judging by the screen that displays the time, speed and distance.

Other people are in the background, using other equipment. Theo ignores them and look straight ahead at the wall.

FADE TO:

EXT. THE STREET NOT FAR FROM THE GYM. LATER THAT DAY. DAY.

Theo is walking back home. He looks tired from the exercise. His face changes expressions from tiredness to worry. He starts breathing quicker. He stops walking, closes his eyes and tries to calm down.

There is traffic and people around, they're oblivious. Theo start walking again, takes the street uphill.

THEO

Fuck. Fuck fuck fuck.

He runs up to a crossroads and sees himself being run over by a car. He stops running. He blinks. He's standing by the traffic light waiting for his turn to cross the road. He passes his hands on his face and through his hair. His eyes still express intense worry.

He crosses the road when the light turns green.

FADE TO:

EXT. A WHEAT FIELD. A SECOND LATER. DAY.

Theo is walking straight ahead, still carrying his gym bag. The sun shines brightly overhead but the horizon is murky. As he keeps walking, his progression is getting more difficult with each step.

He looks down and notices he's walking in the mud. His breath gets quicker and heavier again. He picks some ears of wheat on his way and put them in his mouth. He chews them and swallows them.

He finally arrives at destination.

FADE TO:

INT. THEO'S LIVING ROOM. A MINUTE LATER. DAY.

Theo crashes on his sofa and stares at the ceiling.

CUT TO:

INT. THEO'S WORKSHOP. ANOTHER DAY.

Theo is seated at a reclining desk, drawing on a thick piece of paper. His workshop is a small room with drawing equipment and drawings pinned on the walls. It's part of a building comprising of collective areas and workshops for local artists.

JANE, a thirtysomething, pops her head by the door. She is smiling.

JANE

Hey, Theo, are you joining us for lunch?

THEO

(hesitating)

Oh, Hi, Jane... coming in a minute.

She leaves and he looks at his drawing. It's a comic-like character with giant holes for eyes. He makes a ball of the paper and throws it in the bin. He takes his packed lunch from his bag and leaves.

FADE TO:

INT. COMMON AREA (WORKSHOPS). A FEW MINUTES LATER. DAY.

A few other artists are in the common area. There's a lower table at the centre surrounded by comfy chairs. There are also a fridge and some cupboards along the walls. A bay of windows allows the sun to shine in.

Theo sits next to Jane and opens his Tupperware to take a sandwich out of it. The others are already having conversations.

FELLOW ARTIST 1

...Yes, and it's defo a bargain.
Can't wait to be there!

FELLOW ARTIST 2

You're lucky... I'm constantly broke, can't go anywhere!

JANE

What are your plans for this weekend, Theo?

THEO

I don't know. Maybe go to a gig or read a book.

JANE
Oh yeah? What gig?

THEO
Not sure. One of those downtown.

He starts eating and looking around. Jane joins another conversation.

JANE
By the way, have you heard from Frances?

FELLOW ARTIST 1
No, what news?

FELLOW ARTIST 3
She's got her baby.

Theo zones out. He keeps eating in silence. Suddenly, there are glass walls around him. He stares at the others, in turn. They are still talking. Theo doesn't hear what they say. The sound is muffled, like faint distant echo.

CUT TO:

INT. COMMON AREA. A SECOND LATER. DAY.

Theo is in an giant inflatable bubble, eating his sandwich. The others are on the other side of the table, laughing and talking about how cute France's baby is. Jane is showing the picture around on the phone. She shows it to Theo. He doesn't say anything.

CUT TO:

INT. COMMON AREA. A SECOND LATER. DAY.

Theo stands up and go to leave the room. The other look at each other. Jane follows him to the door.

JANE
Hey, Theo... are you alright?

THEO
Yes. Yes.

JANE
Okay. You know I'm here if you need me.

THEO
I don't need anything.

She stares at him.

JANE
Just in case.

He leaves. She goes back to the table.

CUT TO:

INT. A STUDENT HALL. YEARS AGO. NIGHT.

Theo is at a Halloween party at his student residence. The hall is decorated with skulls, witches and other horror themed elements. It's packed with students dressed up as monsters, vampires, superheroes.

Theo is wearing black jeans, a checked black and red shirt with a badge on the chest pocket that says "Human Being". He's holding a bottle of beer.

A STUDENT dressed as Frankenstein's monster comes to him, drinking a beer. The student points at the badge.

STUDENT
What's it about?

THEO
Human beings are scary enough.

STUDENT
...okay...Have you met many?

THEO
They're everywhere, haven't you noticed?

Theo takes a sip of beer. He's standing by the wall, watching the others having fun. The student holds out her hand.

STUDENT
I'm Iwona.

Theo shakes her hand.

THEO
Theo.

IWONA
I'm Polish.

THEO

I thought you were Frankenstein's monster.

IWONA

(laughs slightly)

And I thought you were an ordinary guy.

THEO

Ordinary enough I guess. I breathe and speak.

IWONA

You wanna go somewhere else?

THEO

What for?

Iwona sighs and stares at Theo. She points out to the crowd dancing to 90s dance music and EDM.

IWONA

Too crowded and noisy here.

THEO

Why did you join, then?

IWONA

Just following my friends...

(she points at a girl dressed as a witch with a pointy hat)

That's Agnieszka.

(She looks for and points at another girl, dressed as a Jesse from Pokemon)

And that's Sarah.

THEO

Okay.

He sips some beer again.

IWONA

You're not a party monster.

THEO

What makes you say that?

IWONA

I don't know. You're here and not there

(MORE)

IWONA (CONT'D)
(pointing at the crowd
again)

THEO
Okay. Hum. So, you wanna go
somewhere?

IWONA
Yeah. Let's go outside.

THEO
Okay. By the way, why are your
friend and you not James and
Meowth?

They leave the hall.

CUT TO:

INT. THE DINING ROOM OF A HOUSE IN THE COUNTRYSIDE. PRESENT
DAY. DAY.

Theo is at his parents for the weekend. They're having lunch
around the dining table. There's home-made lasagne, some
salad and cheese, as well as a bottle of red wine on the
table. They are eating and talking.

THEO'S MUM
How are thing going with your comic
book?

THEO
Okay. I made two new pages this
week.

THEO'S DAD
Still in that baltic workshop?

THEO
Yep.

They eat in silence. His parents look at each other then at
him.

THEO'S MUM
And everything is fine?

THEO
Yeah, why?

THEO'S MUM

You never tell us anything. We don't even know what's happening in your life.

THEO

Everything is fine. Don't worry. It's not because I don't tell things that they're not fine. You don't need to know everything.

THEO'S DAD

Theo...

THEO

(with some anger in his voice)

What do you want me to say?

THEO'S DAD

Anything you like... We just want to know what's going on, son.

Theo takes another serving of lasagne and eats in silence. His parents do the same. After a few minutes, Theo puts his cutlery down and stands up.

THEO

I'm going in the garden.

FADE TO:

EXT. THE GARDEN. A FEW MINUTES LATER. DAY.

The garden is the same as when he was a child. There are still tomatoes growing at the back, alongside lettuce, courgettes and other vegetables. There is a tree nearby.

Theo picks a ripen tomato and takes a bite. He frowns.

TOMATO

What's wrong, not juicy enough?

Theo stares at the tomato and throws it away with rage.

THEO

Fuck!

Theo walks in the garden, looking at the fields on the other side of the wooden fence.

CUT TO:

EXT. A WHEAT FIELD. A SECOND LATER. DAY.

Theo is in the middle of a field. The ears of wheat are dark blue and black. He walks straight ahead.

TOMATO
(shouting from a distance)
Not juicy enough? Not sweet enough?
Not red enough?

Theo runs away from the mocking tomato's voice until he sees a tree in the middle of the field. It's big and green. Theo sits under it and calms down. He closes his eyes for a moment.

THEO
Fucking tomato.

The roots of the tree grow around him and pin him to the ground. The tree turns black as it buries Theo deeper and deeper into the ground below him. Theo's eyes are open with an blank expression. He remains silent and closes his eyes.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE GARDEN. A FEW MINUTES LATER. DAY.

Theo is lying under the tree in the back garden. He's looking at the leaves. Theo's dad arrives with a look of concern on his face.

THEO'S DAD
Theo, what's going on?

THEO
The tomatoes are shite this year.

CUT TO:

INT. THEO'S WORKSHOP. ANOTHER DAY. AFTERNOON.

Theo is sipping coffee from a mug in one hand and playing with a pencil with the other hand. He stares at the drawings pinned on his walls. Comic characters, actions scenes, but also some quieter landscapes and sea shores. As he looks more intensely into the sea drawing, the ebb and flow of the tide is heard. Theo breathes at the same rhythm. He walk towards the drawing and puts is forehead against it.

FADE TO:

EXT. THE SEA. A SECOND LATER. NIGHT.

Theo is in the water, trying to stay on the surface in a mad sea. It's raining heavily, Theo is soaking wet. The sky is dark. There's only a pale moon reflecting here and there on the surface.

FADE TO:

INT. THEO'S WORKSHOP. A SECOND LATER. DAY.

Theo is walking backwards, away from the drawing. His face is tense. His eyes have a expression of worry. He looks around him, looking for something. He notices the bin under a table, takes it and quickly put the drawings in the bin until all the walls are blank.

He sits back on his chair, drops the bin and takes a deep breath.

CUT TO:

INT. THE WORKSHOPS BUILDING CORRIDOR. LATER. DAY.

Theo is walking towards the exit. He passes his fellow artists' doors and keep walking. He frowns. He sees something.

Right ahead of him, there is another Theo walking straight ahead, ignoring the doors.

Theo stops walking. The other Theo stops walking, too. He closes his eyes and shakes his head, opens his eyes again. The other Theo is still there. He walks again, takes the stairs down and exits the building. The other Theo is still ahead of him.

FADE TO:

EXT. THE WORKSHOP COURTYARD/PARKING SPACE. A SECOND LATER. DAY.

The other Theo is looking at the road, a few meters away. Theo walks around the other Theo and observes him. The other Theo looks like a wax statue from Madame Tussaud. The other Theo walks to the road. Theo vanishes.

CUT TO:

INT. A PUB. ANOTHER DAY. EVENING.

Jane is walking through the room from the bar, carrying two pints of beer and sits on a bench in a booth, opposite Theo.

JANE
Here you are.

THEO
Thanks.

Theo looks around, avoiding Jane's eyes. She sighs and frowns.

JANE
Are you alright? You look like you don't want to be here. We can go somewhere else if you want.

THEO
Hum. No, it's fine. Just a bit tired these days.

He finally looks at her.

JANE
You can talk to me, you know? I've always been here.

THEO
There is nothing to say. But... thanks.

She looks at him fondly and puts her hand on his.

JANE
I didn't want to make things awkward between us.

He doesn't answer right away. He considers her a few seconds.

THEO
You didn't make things awkward. We're still friends... Well... maybe a bit more than friends.

He smiles. She smiles back at him.

JANE
Thanks, Theo. I really care about you.

THEO
I care about you too...

He looks down at his pint of beer, watches the foam and the bubbles disappear. He looks at his right hand, under Jane's left hand. His hands gradually disappears like the foam in his glass.

Jane looks at him, takes her hand off of his and sits back against the back of the bench/wall of the booth. She shivers.

JANE

Theo...

Theo is standing next to the booth. He walks away. Jane gets up and follows him out of the pub.

FADE TO:

EXT. THE STREET OUTSIDE THE PUB. A MINUTE LATER. NIGHT.

There are people walking here and there. Theo is seating on a bench opposite the pub. Jane is walking towards him.

JANE

Can you explain? One second you are speaking to me, the next you are just walking away.

Theo looks away, fiddles with his fingers, scratches the knees of his jeans. He is getting smaller and smaller, the bench is getting bigger, the buildings are growing into menacing figures.

JANE (CONT'D)

Theo... what's going on?

She holds out her hand to take Theo's and squeezes it gently. She sits next to him and holds him in her arms. He burst out crying. Jane cuddles him and consoles him the best she can.

JANE (CONT'D)

I'm here... I'm here.

CUT TO:

INT. A BIG STARBUCKS IN A SHOPPING MALL. EARLY EVENING.

Theo is at the till taking orders. There are a lot of customers.

THEO

Next!

AN OLD COUPLE arrives.

OLD MAN
Hello. What's the difference
between a flat white and a latte?

THEO
The ratio milk to coffee. Flat one
is stronger. Latte's got more milk.

OLD WOMAN
I'll get a hot chocolate.

THEO
What size? We've got short, tall,
grande, venti.

OLD WOMAN
And what's the difference?

Theo points at the cups behind him.

THEO
That's a short, that's a tall,
that's a grande, that's a venti.

OLD WOMAN
I'll take a tall one, then.

THEO
What's your name?

OLD WOMAN
Evelyn.

Theo takes a tall cup and writes the order and the name and
passes it on to his colleague.

OLD MAN
And I'll take a grande latte,
please. I'm Edgar.

Theo takes a grande cup, write the order code and the name.

THEO
Evelyn and Edgar, a tall chocolate
and a grande latte, noted. Sit here
or take away?

Evelyn and Edgar now look like Theo's parents.

EDGAR / THEO'S DAD
What's going on, son.

THEO
What? Nothing. Dad.

EDGAR / THEO'S DAD
Look like you need some rest, son.

THEO
I'm fine.

EVELYN / THEO'S MUM
Honey, we know something's eating
at you.

THEO
Everything is fine. That will be
£9.50.

EDGAR / THEO'S DAD
Speak up son. Tell us what is going
on!

EVELYN / THEO'S MUM.
Tell us. You need to speak, honey.

THEO
(shouting)
Shut up! Shut up! That's enough!

Everyone in the Starbucks fall silent and looks at Theo.
Evelyn and Edgar are confused and shocked.

EDGAR
Well, young man, you know where you
can put the £9.50! Shocking!

The old couple walk away. Theo is livid.

THE MANAGER comes, gets Theo away from the till to the back
house.

MANAGER
Well?

THEO
I don't know what happened...

MANAGER
What happened is that you're not
going to be working here anymore.
What's going on with you? I've been
patient with your lateness and your
slowness. That was the last straw.

THEO
I'm not slow.

MANAGER

(still angry)

That's not the point. It looks like you don't care anymore. We've talked about it. Now, take your stuff and go. I'll contact you for the termination meeting.

THEO

And I'm often early. That should compensate for the times I'm late.

The manager stares at Theo. Theo raises his hands and leaves.

THEO (CONT'D)

Okay...

FADE TO:

EXT. THE SHOPPING MALL PARKING LOT. A MOMENT LATER. NIGHT.

Theo is walking between the parked cars, hands in his pockets. He takes his phone out and dials a number. Someone picks up.

THEO

Jane...? I think... I think I've just been fired?

He hangs up and starts laughing.

CUT TO:

INT. A NIGHT CLUB. NIGHT.

A lot of people are dancing and drinking to loud music and flashing lights. Theo is at the bar, drinking a shot of vodka.

THEO

That's disgusting. How can people drink that?

BARTENDER

(laughing)

You get used to it. Another one?

THEO

Yeah, why not. I've been fired, let's celebrate.

BARTENDER
Fired? What did you do?

THEO
Apparently I'm a shit and rude
barista.

The bartender serves him another shot of vodka and goes serve another customer. Theo drinks it and goes to the dancefloor. He's not a good dancer but dances anyway. He jumps around and goes with the flow. Dances the night away.

FADE TO:

INT. THEO'S BEDROOM. THE NEXT DAY. NOON.

Theo wakes up. He's in his bed and is still wearing the previous day's clothes. He sits and closes his eyes, holding the side of his mattress to help him stabilise himself. After a moment, he gets up, walks to the door (ajar) and bumps into it.

THEO
Fuck...

He opens the door.

JANE (O.S.)
Theo, you're awake?

INT. THE CORRIDOR. A SECOND LATER.

THEO
Jane? What are you doing here?

Jane appears in the corridor, coming from the kitchen. She's holding a mug of coffee.

JANE
You called me last night. It was
like 3am.

THEO
And you came?

JANE
I picked you up in town, you were
totally wasted. I brought you home.
I slept on the sofa.

THEO
Thanks...

They go to the living room.

INT. THEO'S LIVING ROOM. A SECOND LATER.

Jane gives Theo a mug of coffee.

JANE

Here. I thought you'd need it.

THEO

Cheers...

They sit on the sofa. Jane looks at Theo. Theo is staring at his mug.

JANE

It might not be my place to say it but... Theo, you need to see someone.

THEO

I'm kinda seeing you.

JANE

I mean counselling. You're not well.

THEO

I'm fine. I'm just tired these days. I'm just tired.

JANE

And you cry for no reason and get fired, yes, everything is fine. I'm here, Theo. I'm right here. I see you. What do you see?

Theo doesn't answer. He puts his mug back on the coffee table.

THEO

You see those books? I've only read, like 10% of them. I just can't read a bloody book. I just...

Jane takes his hand and puts her other hand on his cheek. She turns his face to her.

JANE

They're only books, no big deal.

THEO

And those DVDs... I can't watch a bloody film.

JANE

They're only films.

THEO

And I can't play a bloody song. And I can't keep a fucking job. And can't talk to my parents.

JANE

You're getting there.

THEO

I just feel like shit. All the fucking time.

(he starts crying)

I've felt like shit all my life. I can't do it anymore.

She cuddles him, holds him tight and lets him cry.

JANE

I'm here. You're not alone. You're going to call your GP and you're going to talk to someone. And you're going to spend some time with your parents.

CUT TO:

INT. A NURSERY SCHOOL. FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL. MORNING.

Parents are accompanying their young children for their first day at nursery school. THE TEACHER is greeting everyone. A very young Theo drops his mother's hand and goes play with some toys at the other side of the classroom without saying goodbye or hello.

THEO'S MUM

Okay... that's typical Theo...

TEACHER

Every kid is different. He seems lovely.

THEO'S MUM

He's lovely. Just very shy. He likes drawing.

END