

Bitter Angels

written by

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Made in Highland

CUT IN:

INT. BATHROOM, MOTEL ROOM - DAWN

TIGHT on faucet. DRIP, DRIP. DRIP. A WOMAN'S HANDS gripping the edges of the sink. WEDDING BAND scraping the porcelain.

BITTER_ANGEL_43 (female, 28, black) stares into the mirror. Face wet. Shaking. Breathing erratic. *Why am I doing this?*

FREEZE FRAME. Angel is a person who has played by the rules her whole life, acting now only because she's been pushed too far.

SUPER: darkforum.web user name: bitter_angel_43

GREENCRICKET (male, 30, black) enters behind her. Angel's eyes snap to his reflection in the mirror.

CRICKET

Go ahead and get dressed. I'll be right out.

Angel turns to face him. CAMERA ARCS AROUND so we see him outside of the mirror for the first time. She nods, still in her daze. Slips out of the room.

INT. MOTEL ROOM

Angel finishes dressing. Jeans. Flannel shirt. Boots. Puffy jacket. She ties her short hair back into a pony tail and pulls on a knit hat.

She goes to the door and rests her hand on the knob. She takes a look back at Cricket, leaning in the bathroom door frame. He nods to her.

FREEZE FRAME. Cricket is determined. Resolute. Sure of what they need to do.

SUPER: darkforum.web user name: greencricket

She turns back toward the door. Deep breath.

EXT. MOTEL PARKING LOT - SUNRISE

WIDE SHOT. Angel exits her room. Wreaths on all the doors. Parked several spaces away is a BMW. Trunk open, VENOMVIDIVICI6969 (female, 23, white) with a greasy FAST FOOD BAG, gleefully throwing bits of sausage patty into the trunk.

TRUNK SHOT CLOSEUP. FREEZE FRAME.

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Venom wears GOTH MAKEUP, combat boots, a faux leather jacket, dyed black and red hair, and a very big COWBOY HAT, severely clashing with the rest of her look. Totally in over her head, confident nonetheless.

SUPER: darkforum.web username: VenomVidiVici6969

Angel rushes over to Venom.

ANGEL

What the hell are you doing??
Someone might see.

Venom giggles.

VENOM

The man's gotta eat.

Angel huffs. Slams the trunk closed.

ANGEL

You didn't even take the gag off.

VENOM

So he could yell for help? HELLO?

Angel huffs. Facepalms. Cricket walks up. Jeans. T-shirt. Windbreaker.

VENOM

I'm ready. You ready?

Without waiting for a response, she crumples the food bag and gets in the driver's seat.

ANGEL

Babe, I can't. We gotta get out of here.

Cricket puts her arms around her.

CRICKET

No. We have to see this through.

Angel closes her eyes, breathes. Reluctantly goes toward the passenger seat.

INT. BULLPEN, STURGEN ALL RISK OFFICES - EARLY MORNING

NOTE: ALL scenes featuring DINKINS (and only those scenes) will be BLACK AND WHITE, FILM NOIR STYLE until otherwise noted.

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Empty cubicle farm, dark. Holiday decorations. One desk lamp burns. Open files everywhere. Bottle of PEPTO BISMOL. Pencils and pens at the ready. We see his name plate amidst the clutter:

SHANNON DINKINS, JR (male, 37, white). WALRUS MUSTACHE. Brown suit. Jacket slung over the cubicle wall. Sleeves rolled up. Tie loose. Lips, teeth, and tongue STAINED BLACK from all the pepto.

A young office assistant, TIMMY SQUIBBLES (male, 22), staggers into the cubicle with a stack of files. Nervous. Intimidated by Dinkins. Eager to please. Bow tie, Ugly Christmas Sweater.

TIMMY

Good morning, Mister--

DINKINS

What's so good about it, kid?
Don't you pay attention to what's going on?

Timmy swallows hard. Flustered.

TIMMY

Uhh, uh, I'm sorry, sir.

DINKINS

You sure are.

Dinkins sips some pepto and continues going through the files. Timmy stands, unsure where he should go or what the should do now. Dinkins glances up at him.

DINKINS

You wanna be a claims investigator some day, son?

TIMMY

(stammering)
Yes, sir!

DINKINS

Early riser. That's a good start. They say New York is the city that never sleeps. But I do my best work before anyone wakes up. Go figure.

He flips closed a file, we see its label: ZEBULON MAYTOS LIFE POLICY. He opens one from Timmy's stack, slugging back some pepto in between.

DINKINS

Zebulon Maytos has been missing for 48 hours now. Imagine that. A billionaire kidnapped, snatched from his own ranch. All the security and muscle money can buy and it didn't help one iota.

Dinkins slams back some more pepto. He tosses the empty bottle in his trashcan, full of other empty bottles of pepto. He pulls a fresh bottle out of a drawer full of bottles of pepto. Opens it and sips a little off the top.

DINKINS

We've had a few quarters of less than expected growth in a row; the payout on his life policy would cripple the company forever. You think the whole staff would be working day and night. In the city that never sleeps. But it's left to me. That's okay. I can carry the weight. I can save this company.

TIMMY

Yes, sir. I believe in you.

Dinkins gives him the stink eye. Sips Pepto.

DINKINS

No loopholes in the policy.

He sets down the file and wakes his computer. Window open on a website called SPASM. A VIDEO PLAYS. Shot on a webcam against a black sheet, a young woman in a PIG MASK and BOILER SUIT talks to camera. The Username: VenomVidiVici6969.

DINKINS

This video is the only clue to Maytos's whereabouts.

TIMMY

It could be a hoax. Someone farming for engagement.

DINKINS

I don't think so.

TIMMY

Well, streams from Spasm are dark web encrypted. Untraceable, they say.

Dinkins's eyes narrow.

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DINKINS

We'll see about that.

He angry chugs his pepto.

INT. BAR - EARLY MORNING

Quiet. Garlands. Christmas tree lights. Tinsel. Mistletoe. Bartender STU (male, 30s) leans on the bar cleaning a glass. ERNIE (male, 50s) and two or three other DRUNKS are scattered round the bar, off the overnight shift. Staunch alcoholics.

JOE (male, early 60s) enters. He pulls off his SAFETY VEST and HARD HAT and hangs them on the coat rack.

STU

How's it hangin' Joe?

JOE

Lucky it's hanging at all after that shift. Set me up.

Joe sits. Stu gives him a shot and a beer. Joe throws back the shot and takes a sip of the beer. Ernie leans over.

ERNIE

You talk to Novak about me getting some of them holiday hours?

Joe glares at him and sips his beer. He turns away and takes out his phone, scrolling through the FODDER APP. Ernie huffs. Taps his fingers on the bar. Wants to keep the conversation going.

ERNIE

You hear the latest on the Maytos kidnapping?

Joe gives him the stink eye.

JOE

They don't know anything since that pig lady video stream came out.

Ernie shakes his head.

ERNIE

I keep telling you, you gotta listen to Moe Logan. He's got the real scoop. It's a deep state caper. Maytos was gonna run for office, Moe says.

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ERNIE (CONT'D)
*They had to find a way to stop
 him.*

Joe looks at Stu. Stu shrugs. *He's a paying customer.* Joe shakes his head and turns back to his beer and Fodder.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - MORNING

Trees, trees, trees. LAKE HOUSE at the end of the road. A SECLUDED AREA with no neighboring houses in sight. Venom's CAR pulls up to the lake house GATE.

Venom pops out of the car, shadowboxing with a BUTTERFLY KNIFE out of pure excitement. She opens the gate and runs back to the car and drives through, leaving the gate open.

INT. CAR

Venom can barely contain her excitement as she drives.

VENOM
 God, you don't know how long I've been planning this. To actually be here, doing it. UGH! I am so jazzed up. Can you feel it? Can you feel the energy?! It's palpable. I CAN PALP IT!

Angel looks back at Cricket. *What the fuck??*

EXT. DRIVEWAY, LAKE HOUSE

Venom parks the car and gets out. She punches the air.

VENOM
 Woooooooooooo!

Her scream ECHOS out into the wilds.

INT. CAR

Angel looks out at Venom wide eyed.

ANGEL
 She's crazy. You know that, right?

CRICKET
 We're here too, aren't we?

Angel huffs and gets out of the car.

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EXT. DRIVEWAY

Venom dances, her excitement bubbling over. Angel walks up and puts a hand on her shoulder.

ANGEL

Are you sure about doing this on the internet?

Venom gives her a devilish smile.

VENOM

The Revolution will be streamed.
(jerks head toward car)
Come on.

The three of them go over and open the trunk. Bound, gagged, drenched in sweat, ZEBULON MAYTOS (male, 65, white). Little bits of sausage all over the trunk. He struggles against his bindings. Venom tips her hat at him.

VENOM

Hope you don't mind I purloined your Stetson, pad'ner. Gotta say it, looks much better on me.
(to Angel)
Don't you think?

Angel looks over at Cricket. *Let's get outta here!* Venom pulls a BLACK BAG out of her pocket. She reaches down and puts the bag over Matyos' head. BAG COVERS CAMERA.

OVER BLACK

VENOM (O.S.)

Happy Holidays guys and welcome back! It's me, your fiercest freedom fighter VenomVidiVici and with me again is the Bitter Angel! I told you on the last stream that I had big, HUGE, news on the Zebulon Maytos kidnapping. Nobody has seen him, nobody knows where he is, RIGHT? RIGHT?

INT. BASEMENT

Venom pulls the bag off Maytos. He looks around, bug eyed and freaked out. Plastic sheets on the wall and floor. The room is bathed in RED NEON LIGHT.

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Angel and Venom stand on either side of Maytos wearing PIG MASKS and BLACK BOILER SUITS. There's a WEBCAM on a cheap tripod filming them, connected to a LAPTOP and some GYROSCOPES and WHIRLIGIGS. Some kind of DARKWEB GIZMO. Cricket stands back, off camera.

VENOM

Wrong! Haters in the comments have called me a keyboard coward... who's the terminally online lamebrain now?

Venom gives the finger to the webcam. Does a celebratory dance. Angel shoots a look over at Cricket. He looks back, resolute as ever.

Venom settles herself. Smooths her boiler suit.

VENOM

Now. To the matter at hand:
(clears throat)
Imagine having enough money to single handedly end world hunger or homelessness, and choosing not to.

INT. BAR

Joe is still scrolling on Fodder when he comes across the link to a SPASM LIVE STREAM.

He stops, brows furrowed. Opens the video.

RED LIGHT. Maytos. Pig masks.

VENOM

Zebulon Maytos, Capitalist Overlord, makes that choice every day.

Joe looks up at Stu and the drunks.

JOE

Yo, it's that pig lady again.

Stu, Ernie, and the Drunks look over at Joe in confusion.

VENOM

...day of reckoning is finally here. Not just for Maytos but for all of the ownership class.

(MORE)

VENOM (CONT'D)

Those who make that same choice every second of their lives and horde resources...

JOE

Yo, you gotta check this out. They got Zebulon Maytos tied to a chair.

Stu is the first one to pull out his phone. He finds the video and plays it. His jaw drops. Ernie and the others follow suit.

INT. BULLPEN, STURGEN ALL RISK OFFICES

The office is alive now with workers. Every computer in the room, playing the stream. Timmy and the other office assistants running about with urgency.

Dinkins stands in his cubicle watching the video, arms crossed.

VENOM

The cost of living continues to rise, jobs don't pay enough to cover rent, groceries get more expensive everyday, and yet corporate profits are at an all time high. I say no more. No more will we tolerate obscene opulence and wealth for the few while the many suffer.

INT. SUBWAY CAR

Morning commuters, all watching on their phones, mouths agape. CONNOR (35), a stock bro type, is horrified.

In the video, Maytos struggles against the ropes. Venom continues her oration:

VENOM

I say the time has come for us to do something about it. Now's our chance. And I do say our chance. For my comrade and I are neither judge nor jury. We are merely the executioners.

INT. BULLPEN, STURGEN ALL RISK OFFICES

Dinkins watches, slugging down Pepto.

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VENOM

So it's up for you, The People, to decide. Two donation streams. If you think we should let Zebulon Maytos go free, unpunished for his myriad crimes against humanity, donate to the SPARE HIM stream and we let him go. If you think he should pay for what he's done, donate to the PUNISH HIM stream.

INT. BAR

Everyone watches their phones, rapt.

VENOM

To make it fair, Spare Him needs the entirety of ole Zebby's 987 billion dollar net worth to win, while Punish Him only needs 100 million dollars. All proceeds donated to medical payment assistance programs and clean water initiatives. Your anonymity guaranteed by the Dark Web.

Venom walks out of frame for a moment and returns with a cart that has a PHONEBOOK, a BOWIE KNIFE, a BRAND with an ANARCHY SYMBOL, and a HAMMER.

VENOM

And, to make it a little more fun--

INT. SUBWAY CAR

VENOM

--when we reach certain milestones along the way of the Punish Him stream, we'll fuck Maytos up a little bit.

Horrified, Conner looks up from his phone. He looks at the other COMMUTERS. Gripping their phones. Eyes wide. Licking their chops. Etc.

VENOM

First donation, any amount, I'll hit him with this phonebook. When we get to 25 million, I'll cut him with this big ass knife.

(MORE)

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VENOM (CONT'D)

Fifty million I'll brand him on his forehead with an anarchy symbol. Yeah. You wanna see that, right? And if we get the whole enchilada--

(picks up hammer)

--I bash this fucker's head in.
Live and in beautiful 4K.

Venom goes off camera again and as she returns, a GRAPHIC showing the two donation streams appears. SPARE HIM or PUNISH HIM.

A BAG LADY looks up from her phone. Makes eye contact with Conner. *You're next.*

Conner shudders and looks back to his phone. He donates \$100 to SPARE HIM.

VENOM

BOOOO! You bootlickers really wanna save this scumbag??

INT. BAR

Joe throws back another shot. A few more donations jump up for SPARE HIM, but none for PUNISH HIM.

JOE

Man, I at least wanna see him get phonebooked.

STU

She said any amount. Send a dollar. What the hell?

JOE

Yeah. Bastards have been robbing us at every turn. Why shouldn't he at least get phonebooked?

There's a smattering of agreement. Ernie shakes his head.

ERNIE

I don't know, Zebulon Maytos is a brilliant man. A renaissance man you might say. He's created a lot of jobs over the years.

There's a smattering of--

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JOE
Shut the fuck up, Ernie, you
haven't held down a job in 20
years.

Everyone laughs.

JOE
I'm gonna do it. One dollar. What
the hell?

Joe presses the donate button and gives a dollar.

INT. BASEMENT, LAKE HOUSE

Venom sees the dollar come in.

VENOM
A dollar? Well, well, well. Now we
can get this show started.

Venom picks up the phonebook. She does a big dramatic practice
swing like a cartoon baseball player.

VENOM
Here we go.

WOMP! She hits Maytos in the stomach. He strains against the
ropes and gag in reaction. Venom winds up for another blow and
this time hits him in the chest.

INT. BAR

WOMP! WOMP! Joe watches, eyes wide. Visceral enjoyment.

INT. BULLPEN, STURGEN ALL RISK OFFICES

WOMP! Dinkins crushes his pepto bottle.

INT. SUBWAY CAR

Connor winces, but still can't look away as Venom hits Maytos
again: stomach, chest, stomach, chest. All the while, PUNISH
HIM donations start FLOODING IN.

INT. BAR

Joe wipes some beer dribble off his chin, saucer wide eyes
locked on his phone.

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Venom rears back and wallops Maytos in the head, knocking over the chair. Venom turns to the camera theatrically.

VENOM

Oops.

Venom drops the phone book with a thud. Everyone in the bar exhales. *Woah.*

INT. BASEMENT, LAKE HOUSE

VENOM

Anyway, besties, we're gonna take a little break until we get to the next milestone. Keep donating! It's for a good cause. Like and share to spread the word. See you in the comments!

Venom goes to the computer and trips, knocking the webcam all over. She recovers and resets the frame.

The stream switches to an ANARCHY SYMBOL with the two status bars still displayed.

INT. BAR

Joe signals to Stu who pours him a fresh shot and puts down a new beer. He throws back the shot immediately.

ERNIE

I fuckin' told you. No one listens. It's always shut the fuck up Ernie. But I told ya.

Unable to resist the bait, Joe looks over at him.

JOE

What did you tell us?

ERNIE

It's a Deep State job! They're probably putting you and everyone else who donates to kill him on a list.

Joe waves him off.

JOE

Get the hell outta here. It's a couple of chicks in their basement.

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ERNIE

No. No. I'm telling you. This is a highly sophisticated, government funded psyop. These are real pros.

INT. BASEMENT, LAKE HOUSE

Venom pulls off her mask, practically vibrating.

VENOM

I thought that went great. I mean before I tripped anyway. I'm like ENERGIZED from how well that went. What did you think? Too much? Not Enough?

CRICKET

Worked for me. What do you think, babe?

VENOM

Ooh! I gotta check Fodder.

Venom opens FODDER on the laptop. INSERT CUTS: think pieces, opinion posts, angry right wingers, liberals denouncing political violence, etc. The internet is blowing up. Venom's eyes LIGHT UP.

VENOM

This is it. THIS IS THE REVOLUTION.

Angel finally takes off her mask, dazed, rigid.

ANGEL

You sure they can't trace the stream?

VENOM

Positive.

ANGEL

How?

VENOM

I got all this shit off the dark web. I traded my NFTs for it.

CRICKET

Oh, well if you traded your NFTs for it...

Angel gives him a look. *Not Helping.*

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VENOM

It was back when they were worth something, okay? Look, if they could trace us, don't you think they'd be here already?

Venom gives a look. *Well?* Angel grimaces, not comforted by this at all.

INT. BULLPEN, STURGEN ALL RISK OFFICES

Dinkins is still staring at the video stream, watching the Punish Him donation counter rise toward the next milestone. Timmy rushes over.

TIMMY

Mr. Dinkins--

DINKINS

Subversives. Punks. Communists. And it seems people are on their side. What is this world coming to? This is a man's life at stake. More than that it's this country's soul. Not to mention the shareholders of The Sturgen All Risk Insurance Company--

TIMMY

Mr. Dinkins?

Dinkins turns toward Timmy. Throws back some pepto.

TIMMY

Um, sorry to interrupt you, sir, but Mr. Hardacre wants to see you in his office.

Dinkins smiles. Black teeth. Pepto dripping from his mustache.

DINKINS

I'll bet he does.

INT. HARDACRE'S OFFICE

JACK HARDACRE (male, late 50s) sits behind a mountain of paperwork on his desk.

Dinkins enters.

DINKINS

Eat shit, Hardacre.

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