

AGED OUT

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PREVIEW DO NOT COPY

INT. AERO DINER - EVENING, CLOSING TIME

THE WAITRESS (30s) fills a cup of black coffee on the table. The sound is consuming, the steam palpable.

The coffee jiggles.

CUT TO: DIRTY HANDS (age unknown) that are disgustingly dirty. The hands grasp the mug, indulging in the warmth of the coffee.

CUT TO: THE WAITRESS'S hair. Unkempt from its original perfect bun. She is in her full uniform. It is clear it has been a long day.

CUT TO: DIRTY HANDS, each tiny hair and scar visible in crisp detail.

The thumb attempts to dig dirt out of his nail with nervous jitters- Unsuccessful.

THE WAITRESS moves to the fluorescent "OPEN" sign and clicks it off.

DIRTY HANDS tap the exterior of the mug with the thumb. He's nervous.

He doesn't lift the mug. Instead, the fingers rotate the cup slightly. The handle turns just a few degrees to the left.

DIRTY HANDS tenses. Still, as the waitress passes by.

THE WAITRESS moves behind the counter, she stares at DIRTY HANDS. She stacks receipts next to a mug of pens. Aggressively.

Beat.

She taps one nail, once, twice, a quiet, rhythmic beat.

CUT TO: DIRTY HANDS slowly pushing the cup away, not far, just a few inches. Still no sip taken.

BACKGROUND SFX: A SOFT CLATTER OF PLATES IN THE KITCHEN. A FRIDGE HUMS TO LIFE. THESE ARE THE ONLY SIGNS OF ANOTHER PRESENCE IN THE CAFÉ. IT IS CLOSING TIME AFTER ALL.

The other hand slips beneath the table and reemerges with a worn wallet, fraying at the edges, the faux leather peeling like sunburnt skin.

It opens with a limp fold.

No money.

No cards.

Just a creased photograph, barely held together with yellowing tape across the center.

The dirty fingers hesitate, then carefully extract the photo, treating it like something sacred.

The hand places the photo on the table beside the cup.

Face-down.

The thumb strokes the back of it rhythmically, a nervous tick. The paper is soft from handling, corners curled.

Still no sip taken.

THE WAITRESS, from behind the counter, watches.

Only her eyes move as they scan the cup, the untouched coffee, the hands.

DIRTY HANDS drift toward a packet of sugar in the small ceramic container at the far edge of the table.

A packet is slowly, gently lifted.

Instead of opening it, DIRTY HANDS carefully begins to stack the packets and prop them up against each other.

CUT TO: THE WAITRESS moving to wipe a table near the window. The diner is empty except for THE WAITRESS and DIRTY HANDS.

THE WAITRESS's movements are tight, controlled, the kind of routine that masks impatience.

She wipes the surface with a rag that's grown gray from too many washes, scrubbing harder than needed, as though the red laminate has personally offended her.

She pauses, glancing toward DIRTY HANDS' table.

DIRTY HANDS is still there. Still not drinking.

THE WAITRESS clenches her jaw. She returns to wiping, now in small, angry circles.

CUT TO: DIRTY HANDS continuing to stack packets. It is a sugar packet tower. He deliberately avoids the glare of THE WAITRESS as his nervousness intensifies.

DIRTY HANDS moves toward the coffee, finally lifting the cup.

But it stops.

The cup is set back down, untouched.

Suddenly, THE WAITRESS approaches DIRTY HANDS' table. Taking a check out of her apron she slams it down on the table. The sound cuts through the quiet.

CUT TO: DIRTY HANDS. The first time we *really* see him. He wears a dirty hoody and has an unkempt, grimy face. He flinches at the sound.

The sugar packets fall to the floor beside his shoe.

CUT TO: DIRTY HANDS' feet. One shoe is present, the other foot is wrapped in a trash bag.

Long beat.

CUT TO: THE WAITRESS scoffing. Looking at the mess. She leaves to get a broom.

DIRTY HANDS reaches to his side, a backpack emerges, worn to the threads. One strap has been stitched with red thread.

A patched stuffed bear keychain dangles from the zipper. Its eyes are missing.

He rifles through it quickly.

He pulls out a wrinkled envelope.

The hands riffle inside the envelope and pull out two dimes, a quarter, and a single penny.

The envelope is soft from water damage... or tears.

THE WAITRESS returns with the broom and crosses her arms.

DIRTY HANDS gingerly places the coins on the table.

THE WAITRESS taps her foot once, twice.

Then- She gestures toward the door.

DIRTY HANDS' nervous ticks all cease. For the first time he looks up at THE WAITRESS.

Beat.

DIRTY HANDS looks down. Ashamed.

DIRTY HANDS reaches for the backpack. Slowly puts it on.

The stuffed bear dangles as dirty hands pushes off the table to stand up.

CUT TO: DIRTY HANDS in his totality. He removes his hood. He's a man, but still a boy. A dirty hand wipes at his nose, then scratches behind his ear. It is a gesture more childlike than adult.

But his sleeves are too short.

His pants are too big.

His body is too thin.

He looks for a long moment at THE WAITRESS. He opens his mouth to say something, but decides better and hurries to leave.

THE WAITRESS, startled by DIRTY HANDS' sudden movement, turns as DIRTY HANDS passes her. In his hurry, the photograph is forgotten and knocked off the table.

CUT TO: DIRTY HANDS shoe and bag foot running out of the diner. The folded photo slowly falls to the floor. THE WAITRESS notices the fallen photograph.

She calls out:

WAITRESS

Hey.

DIRTY HANDS doesn't notice, he is already gone.

THE WAITRESS picks up the photograph and flips it over.

A snapshot: DIRTY HANDS at maybe 13 years old. Grinning, sand on his cheeks.

Two parents, arms around him. All barefoot on a beach. The photo has been ripped and taped back together.

THE WAITRESS stands paralyzed and alone in the diner, holding the photo and staring out the door.

FADE OUT:

CLOSING TITLE CARD: AGED OUT

63% of foster teens experience homelessness within the first year of aging out of the system.