

CLOSING SHIFT

Rebecca Buckle

2023

Reb.buckle@gmail.com

INT. BOOKSTORE - EVENING

Large store decorated for Christmas. Bookshelf aisles fill the space. Festive music plays from speakers.

Customers browse bookshelves and wait in the cash line. Employees hurry between aisles, arranging books and helping customers.

BEEP. ROBIN (29) is crouched beside a sparse bookcase and a cart piled with books. She scans a book with a SMALL SCANNER and arranges a stack on the shelf.

She reaches for the next book laid on the shelf. SARA (19) enters the aisle.

SARA  
(nervous)  
Robin?

ROBIN  
Hey Sara.

BEEP. Robin scans the book and moves another stack.

ROBIN  
What's up?

Sara rubs her neck.

SARA  
Is it okay if I head out early? My  
dad just called the store.

Robin looks up at Sara.

ROBIN  
Is everything alright?

SARA  
Y-yeah. Well, I don't really know.  
He didn't say.

ROBIN  
Oh. Okay, yeah that's fine.

Robin stands and places her scanner in the cart's open compartment. A yellow-handled BOX CUTTER and price gun are inside the cavity.

Robin takes out her PHONE and turns it on. It DISPLAYS 7:48 pm, DECEMBER 24. The BATTERY is 8%.

ROBIN  
You head on home. I'll sign you  
out.

Sara grins wearily.

SARA

Thanks.

Sara walks to the end of the aisle. She looks over at Robin.

SARA

Merry Christmas, Robin!

Robin nods and turns to the cart. She grabs the price gun.

ROBIN

(quiet)

Merry Christmas.

Robin clicks the number dials and prints out price stickers. She glances absently around the store, sticking tags to her fingers.

A tall, lanky HOODED MAN stands and stares at Robin across the store. His eyes are covered, his skin is pale and his mouth is tinted blue.

Robin furrows her brows and bends back down. She sticks price tags to the back of books, flipping and placing them on the shelves.

Hooded Man appears beside her. Robin jumps, dropping a book. It tumbles and hits his BLACK BOOTS.

ROBIN

Oh! My gosh...

Robin laughs.

ROBIN

You scared me.

She straightens and smiles. Hooded Man stares. His eyes are hidden, his face is bony and translucent.

ROBIN

Do you need help finding something?

Hooded Man doesn't move. Robin's smile falters. She looks between him and the book.

Robin opens her mouth to speak.

The speakers BUZZ and the music pauses. Robin looks towards the store front. BRANDON (25) holds the store's wall-mounted phone to his mouth.

BRANDON

Good evening customers! We will be closing in ten minutes.

(MORE)

BRANDON (CONT'D)

Please bring your items to the front where one of our associates will happily check them out. Thank you for shopping with us and have yourself a very merry Christmas.

The music resumes. Robin turns back and Hooded Man is gone. She looks around her, her jaw tense.

She releases a shaky breath and picks up the book.

INT. BOOKSTORE CASH OFFICE - LATER

Music plays in the distance. The wall clock TICKS loudly.

Robin sits at a desk with a pile of full cash drawers. Her PHONE is plugged into an outlet. She thumbs through piles of bills from an emptied cash drawer.

She taps the stack on the table and places them in a money counter. They flick through the machine and count the amount.

Brandon steps into the propped open office door.

BRANDON

Hey. Mind letting us out?

Robin looks up to the clock. The TIME is 8:15 pm.

ROBIN

I suppose I can.

She smiles and stands, stretching her back as she exits the office.

INT. BOOKSTORE

Robin and Brandon walk behind the row of cash registers. The store's lights are off. A central, fluorescent light strip illuminates the center.

Robin passes her jacket and purse on the back table. Six employees gather at the door.

BRANDON

Did you find your key?

ROBIN

No. Not yet. I have the regular key but I haven't seen the fob since yesterday. It's fine though. I just can't warm the car up.

BRANDON

Hopefully it shows up soon.

Robin nods as they join the group. GRACE (20) gazes at the dark store.

GRACE

Are you sure you don't want one of us to stay back? I don't mind waiting until you're done.

Robin walks past them to the exit.

ROBIN

Nah, it's okay. I'll just be a few more minutes. Plus, Janine's somewhere in here.

Robin twists the dial and unlocks the first set of doors. She pushes it open and approaches the second set. Through the surrounding windows, snow drifts and coats the cars.

BRANDON

Is she still here? I haven't seen her in hours.

Robin glances out at a car on the left.

ROBIN

Her car's here. She probably waiting for us to leave so she can deep clean the store. You know how she is.

The group chuckles. Robin unlocks the last door and pushes it open.

EXT. BOOKSTORE PARKING LOT

Robin holds the door open as the group exits.

ROBIN

Now get, you bunch of hooligans. I've got work to do.

Grace is last. She smiles and steps aside.

GRACE

Have a good Christmas.

ROBIN

Yeah, yeah. Happy holidays.

Robin kicks the snow. Grace jumps out of the way.

ROBIN

Get home safe!

The employees smile and wave as they walk to their cars. Robin closes the door, locking it shut.

INT. BOOKSTORE

Robin turns back to the store. Another Christmas song begins.

She walks behind the counter and turns her back to the store. Robin grabs an iPod plugged into a grey stand. She clicks the stop button.

The music turns off. The store is silent.

Robin glances back at the store as she walks to the office.

INT. BOOKSTORE CASH OFFICE - LATER

CLANK. Robin pours coins into a cash bag. The clock TICKS. She zips the bag closed and plops it into a plastic drawer.

She picks up the drawer and pushes her chair. She wheels across the office to the open safe and places the drawer in an empty shelf. She closes the safe. The lock CLICKS.

Robin shivers and shakes her head.

ROBIN

It's cold.

She gazes up at the clock. It's 8:36 pm.

CRASH. A loud noise comes from the store. Robin flinches, wheeling her chair to the door.

She looks out into the dark store.

ROBIN

(shout)

Janine? You okay?

She listens. There is no response.

Robin stands.

INT. BOOKSTORE

Robin steps out and squints. The back employee door swings on its hinges. Light pours out from the back, illuminating the corner.

ROBIN

Hello?

The door slows to a stop.

Robin shakes her head and flicks up four large light switches. The store's lights flicker on.

Robin speed walks across the store towards the back. She passes a section of tall bookcase aisles.

Hooded Man stands between the towers. He is visible for a moment. Robin doesn't notice him.

Robin opens the employee door. A hallway with doors, carts, and display stands fill the space. The janitor closet is open. Its bare light bulb is on.

ROBIN

Janine? Are you back here?

Robin listens and clicks her tongue. She flicks the switch off.

She turns back to the store. The employee door shuts behind her.

Robin walks towards the other back corner. A bathroom sign sits on the far wall. She passes aisles, looking between them as she walks parallel to a long, sectional tower.

ROBIN

If you can hear me, I'm heading out. Don't stay here too long. The weather's getting ba-

SLAM. Three books hit the floor in front of Robin. She jumps.

She glares at the books short, thick books. She huffs, annoyed.

ROBIN

God I hate these.

She bends down and returns them to their spots. They stand unsteadily.

A figure passes between the aisles behind her. Robin freezes and looks back.

A pair of legs lay motionlessly out from an aisle.

ROBIN

(panic)

Janine!

Robin runs to the aisle. JANINE (54) lays on her stomach, her eyes wide and mouth open. She is pale with purple discolouring her skin.

Robin shakes Janine's arm and looks at her face. She jams her fingers into Janine's neck, checking for a pulse.

Robin pats her empty pockets and straightens.

ROBIN

Shit.

She looks around the floor. Blood droplets trail to the end of the aisle. A tip of a BLACK BOOT peeks out from the corner.

Robin looks up the shelf's edge. Hooded Man's head is tilted out, staring. He smiles widely with rotting teeth. His eyes are wide open, grey and bloodshot with dark bags underneath.

Robin stands and swallows. His eyes follow her movement.

Hooded Man shifts behind the shelf and out of view. Robin looks at the tower with fear. Tears pool in her eyes.

She BREATHES HEAVILY as she looks towards the front door.

Robin takes one more breath.

She sprints towards the front of the store.

BANG. BANG. Unnaturally fast footsteps barrel after her. They get closer and louder.

Robin grabs a display and swings right. CRASH. The display falls apart from an unseen impact. Robin swerves into an aisle. Her previous cart is there.

Robin flicks the compartment open and takes out the BOX CUTTER. She pushes the tab up. There is no blade. She clenches the handle and hits the cart.

ROBIN

(mutters)

Damn it.

The store's light turn off. The fluorescent strip illuminate the center with a cold light.

Robin crouches, leaving the empty box cutter.

FOOTSTEPS. Robin grabs a thick hardcover book and moves between the aisles. She looks around the store.

Another cart sits at the corner of the raised level. Its compartment door is broken open. A yellow-handle peeks out.

Robin glances around the corner of the aisle and prepares to sprint.

BANG. A book falls behind her. Hooded Man stands smiling behind her. He holds up a LARGE BUTCHER KNIFE.

Robin yelps as he lunges down. She blocks the knife with the book as she slams back into the bookshelf. Books toppled around her.



Hooded Man leans closer. He hisses his breath through his teeth.

Robin plunges her heel into his stomach. Hooded Man grunts and stumbles back.

Robin scrambles to her feet and run. Hooded Man watches, his smile widening.

He sprints after her. Robin cries, jumping up the four-step stairs and banding into the wall of shelves.

She sprint along the wall towards the cart.

BANG. CRASH. CRASH. Towers fall into each other like dominoes. Robin looks back at them and runs faster.

She grabs the BOX CUTTER from the cart and dives to the right. Robin disappears under the collapsing bookcase.

Hooded Man stands where the first tower fell. He walks towards the cart, his knife in hand. His neck is unnaturally bent as he looks over the mess.

He reaches for the last fallen tower and lifts it back. The bookcase's wood cracks in the middle.

Only books lay beneath it.

Robin crouches on the underside of the platform. A deep scratch runs through her temple and forehead. She presses her back against the short wall, pushing up the sharp blade.

The tower cracks in half and crumbles at Hooded Man's feet. He straightens, his smile gone. He walks towards the stairs and steps down in front of Robin.

She tightens her grip. Tears soak her face.

Robin screams.

ROBIN

AHH!

Hooded Man turns as she stands and slashes the box cutter across his face. He screams in agony as she plunges the knife into his chest, knocking him backwards and toppling on top of him.

She yanks at the knife. The blade breaks inside of him.

Robin stands and runs to the cash counter, slamming the partial door open. She grabs her purse and runs to the exit.

Robin shakes as she reaches the first door and twists the lock open. She glances over her shoulder. Hooded Man raises to a knee, blood soaking his shirt and hand.

She gets to the second door, unlocks it, and pushes outside.

EXT. BOOKSTORE PARKING LOT

Robin falls on to the snow covered path. Her breath puffs in clouds. She looks at the parking lot. Her car and Janine's are the only ones left.

She runs, slipping on the snow, to her car. She takes out her key and jams it into the keyhole.

The car door opens and she gets in. She shuts the door hard, snow shakes off from the car, leaving visible splotches on her windows. She looks at the store's front doors. They are closed.

Robin flicks the car button over and inserts her key. She twists it. The car whines, rumbles, and stops.

ROBIN  
(distraught)  
No. No no no no.

She twists the key again. The car rumbles and stops. She tries again and the car sputters and stops.

ROBIN  
(begs)  
PLEASE.

Robin slams her blood covered hands on the steering wheel, shaking and sobbing hysterically. She shudders a breath, trying to calm down.

CLICK. Robin flinches as the car's doors unlock.

Robin locks the doors. She looks at the store.

One of the store's doors are open.

CLICK. The car's doors unlock.

Robin locks it again and twists the key. The car rumbles for longer and stops.

She looks around her. The back window is covered in snow.

CLICK. Unlock. Robin locks it. She looks out her left window and at her side mirror.

Hooded Man stands behind her car, his eyes hidden by the hood. His arm extends out and holds a CAR KEY FOB. Blood drips on to the snow around him.

Robin cries in frustration, locking her doors and twisting her key.

Hooded Man tilts his head. CLICK. Robin shakes her head, biting her lip. Blood trickles down her temple and cheek.

The car starts.

CHRISTMAS MUSIC BLARES through the speakers.

She looks in the mirror. Hooded Man sprints towards the car.

ROBIN  
Go to hell.

Robin puts the car into reverse. It flies back and hits Hooded Man.

They crash into a snowbank, crushing him between.

She's thrown around in her seat and clings on to the steering wheel. The car's wheels spin in place, tossing snow and sludge.

Blood soaks into the snow pile and pools on the ground.

Robin looks at her reverse mirror. The back window snow is gone. Blood drips down the glass.

She takes her foot off the gas and presses the break. She puts the car in drive and moves forward. She turns the car.

Hooded Man is crushed in the dirty snow, his limbs twisted in angles.

Robin drives across the parking lot to the road exit. She stops at the red traffic light. She turns down the Christmas music, stretches her fingers and nods to herself.

CLICK. The doors unlock.

Robin looks hesitantly to the body. Hooded Man's hand stretches out from the snow. He shakily holds the key fob.

The traffic light turns green.

Robin flies through the intersection and turns left. She drives down the empty street, blood dripping off her car. It trails behind on the road.

Christmas lights glitter from the posts. A lone streetlight flickers.

Snow drifts down and melts in the warm blood droplets.

FADE TO BLACK