

The Silence of Walter Sheltin

By

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EXT. HOUSE - DAY

A POSTAL CLERK stuffs mailbox number 429, lowers the flag, then continues down the sidewalk.

WALTER, 40, a slender man with neat hair and icy features, opens the front door. He exits, walks to the mailbox, grabs its contents and returns inside.

INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Walter shuts the front door, sifting through junk mail, sales fliers, bills... until he finds a plain manila envelope addressed to: WALTER SHELTON.

There is no return address, but on the back he finds the calligraphic words: *Salus per virtualamen*.

Walter moves to the couch, sits, opens the envelope. Inside, a single white piece of paper.

At the top, a bold line of text: INSTRUCTIONS. Under which is a list, too small to make out, but at the very bottom in bold: Allegiance Passcode: X73#N9-G34K

INT. HOUSE - OFFICE - DAY

Walter clicks the print icon on the computer screen. A printer spits out a page, on which is a row of crudely drawn archaic symbols, but all neatly lined in a column.

MONTAGE - WALTER COLLECTS

Walter moves through various rooms collecting items:

- a photo of Walter and his wife on their wedding day
- a long strand of hair from a her brush
- a colorful scarf from her dresser

EXT. HOUSE - BACKYARD - DAY

Onto a charcoal grill, Walter places the opened manila envelope, the white page of paper that was inside, and the collection of items that he gathered from the house.

He squirts the pile with a thick stream of lighter fluid, then pulls a match from a box of matches.

INT. HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

A wooden match is struck against a matchbox. It touches a candle's wick, then another, and another...

A dining table is set, dressed, and bedecked with a gorgeous spread of roasted chicken, veggies, rolls and trimmings.

Walter, now dressed in a tidy shirt for a special occasion, lights one last candle then waves the match out.

His cell phone rings. He answers.

WALTER

Tell me you're not in traffic.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

SHERRY, 35, speaks into a hands-free device.

SHERRY

Tell me you didn't already start.

WALTER

There's still a few rolls left.
Should I reheat them for you?

SHERRY

Don't be cruel. I'm starving.

WALTER

That makes two of us so hurry up.

Sherry's car speeds down the highway.

INT. HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Walter and Sherry finish their meal. The candles are much lower and the table is not nearly as full of food.

SHERRY

I'm so lucky I married a man who
can cook.

WALTER

I'm so lucky I married a woman who
can eat.

Sherry finishes off what's left of her wine.

SHERRY

And drink.

WALTER
And then some!

SHERRY
Then bring on dessert!

WALTER
Oh. That's in the bedroom.

SHERRY
Really.

WALTER
Best hurry while it's still hot.

Sherry stands, wobbles a bit, steadies herself, then blows out all but one of the candles, which she picks up.

SHERRY
Then, my good chef, lead the way.

WALTER
Very well, my dear. Very well.

INT. HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

The couple make love by candlelight. Sherry moans in pleasure, of which Walter delivers a fair amount. The couple climax and crash into the sheets.

Wrapped in embrace, they relax in the afterglow.

SHERRY
Happy anniversary, sweetie.

Walter kisses his wife and holds her tight.

INT. HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Sherry is asleep, alone in bed. The room is still and quiet.

INT. GARAGE - NIGHT

A single bulb clicks on, illuminating a row of organized tools: hand saws, screwdrivers, files, wrenches.

A bare arm reaches for a long-handle wood ax, removes it from its place on the rack. The light clicks off.

INT. HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Walter now stands in the corner of the bedroom, the ax slung over his shoulder. He is shirtless, only in jeans.

He studies Sherry, his beautiful wife, asleep in their bed. He contemplates, watches, then steps forward.

Walter dips his index finger into the small glass bowl of ashes, then carefully draws a SYMBOL onto Sherry's forehead.

After intense consideration, Walter lifts the ax high above his head then swings it swiftly down toward the bed.

EXT. HIGHWAY - CAR - DAY

Walter, now behind the wheel with sunglasses and a cigarette, cruises along the interstate highway.

The radio blares some brand of commercial rock while he drives and takes in the scenery.

EXT. GAS STATION PARKING LOT - DAY

Walter exits with a bag of ice, pops the trunk and lifts the lid of a blue cooler. He rips the bag open, dumps ice into it and closes the lid.

Before closing the trunk, he notices a tuft of hair dangling outside the cooler's lid. He reaches down, caresses it, then gingerly folds it back into the cooler and replaces the lid.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Back on the road, his cell phone beeps a text alert. He reads it: *ETA?*

Walter replies: *17 miles*

He flips the phone shut, turns the music up and drives onward into the bright day.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

Walter's car slows near a dirt road. He inspects a hand-painted wood post that is etched with runes.

He opens the paper printed from the computer and compares: the symbols match up. Walter turns down the road.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

Through his windshield, Walter spots a black Escalade parked a ways off from the road. He veers toward the vehicle.

Eventually, Walter's car rolls to a stop in front of the Escalade, followed by plumes of dust.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

The front doors of the Escalade open, out of which step a DRIVER in a crisp three-piece suit and a WOMAN dressed in a white flowing robe. Both wear sunglasses.

They meet Walter between the two vehicles.

WALTER

I never thought we'd meet.

WOMAN

Yet here we are.

WALTER

I know, it's just... like a dream.

WOMAN

And the offering?

WALTER

Of course. I'll go get it.

The Woman and Driver exchange glances.

Walter walks to the back of his car, pops the trunk, pulls out the blue cooler, and returns.

WALTER

I added some ice to keep it fresh.

Walter lifts the cooler for the Woman to see. The Driver takes it from Walter, opens it. The Woman peers inside, seemingly pleased with its contents.

WOMAN

She was totally unaware?

WALTER

Completely. I made sure of it.

The Woman nods to the Driver, he closes the cooler and takes it inside the Escalade. She and Walter are alone.

WOMAN

Walter, I have no doubt that your offering will please the Queen. She does have high hopes for your advancement within the ranks. After all, being vetted by the High Council helps pave the way for certain... privileges.

WALTER

I'm glad.

WOMAN

Still, there are some Council members not entirely convinced that your commitment to our ways is, how to put it... genuine.

The rear doors of the Escalade open. TWO FIGURES step forth, both wear an odd mix of ancient and futuristic clothing, their faces shrouded in dark cloth.

WALTER

Wait. You can't be serious--

WOMAN

Keeping our secret is serious, Walter. Until you realize this, our future, and yours, is at stake.

The Two Figures approach Walter.

WALTER

I did what you said. You have the offering! What more do you want?

WOMAN

Absolute certainty will suffice.

The Two Figures flank Walter, grab his arms, shoulders, and thrust him to his knees.

WALTER

Please. Just tell me... I'll do anything. Please!

The Woman removes her sunglasses to reveal stark white eyes. Her voice changes to a deeper, more bombastic tone.

WOMAN

Then look upon me, Walter! Look upon my eyes and gaze deep, deep into the past, the future, and the dawn of infinite resonance!

Walter, transfixed, in shock, stares intently at her eyes. The Two Figures continue to hold him down.

WOMAN

Good. Very good. Now, tell me, what is it you seek?

Walter stares, mesmerized. He attempts to form words, but his voice escapes him.

WOMAN

Do you seek the truth, my child? Is this the very knowledge you had hoped to attain? Is it?

The Woman moves closer to Walter and holds his face.

WOMAN

Speak or be silenced for eternity!

Walter, stunned, a deer in headlights, does not reply. The Woman slides her sunglasses on, her voice returns to its original timbre.

WOMAN

(to the Figures)
He's done. We're done.

The Two Figures step away from Walter and move to the Escalade. The Woman lingers, then leans down.

WOMAN

I won't tell your wife you weren't ready for the Enlightenment. But who knows? You may just get the chance to tell her in person, unless the Queen doesn't already have other plans for you.

She reaches forward and shoves Walter to the side, his body slumps to the ground.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

The wooden post of symbols bursts into flames as the Escalade rolls past it, then away into the vast desert.

EXT. DESERT HIGHWAY - DAY

The Escalade roars down the highway... the camera tilts upward to frame the clear sky and continues tilting...

EXT. SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

CHILDREN zip by DOG WALKERS down an idyllic street lined with cookie-cutter homes.

Headlines in a newspaper dispenser claim BEHEADING OF CONGRESSWOMAN STUNS COMMUNITY, HUSBAND REMAINS IN COMA.

EXT. MODEST HOME - DAY

A POSTAL CLERK stuffs mailbox number 10102, lowers the flag, then continues down the sidewalk.

VERONICA, 50, slowly opens the front door, just wide enough to slip through, then beelines to the mailbox.

She retrieves her mail and finds a plain manila envelope addressed to: VERONICA BASCOM. On the opposite side are the Latin words *Salus per vitualamen*.

Veronica's face melts with relief, as if a great weight was lifted from her shoulders.

She embraces the envelope, along with the other mail, with both arms.

FRANK (O.S.)

Paul back from his trip?

Victoria jumps a bit, surprised by her neighbor's voice.

FRANK

Whoa. Sorry, Vic! Didn't mean to sneak up on you like that. Thought you heard me trimmin' the hedges.

VICTORIA

No... no, Frank, I didn't.

FRANK

He's away on business, yeah?

VICTORIA

Yes. Gets back this evening.

FRANK

Then you must be happy.

VICTORIA
(pawing the envelope)
Ecstatic.

FRANK
You tell him he owes me at least a
nine hole on Sunday. That is, if
you two aren't busy.

VICTORIA
I'll pass it on, Frank. But you
know Paul. Busy, busy bee.

FRANK
Too busy if you ask me.

VICTORIA
(turns to leave)
Well, between you and me, he might
get that extended vacation sooner
than later.

FRANK
Mum's the word.

The two trade smiles. Frank continues his trimming.

Victoria drifts up the driveway, back inside, gently closing
the door behind her.

TO BE CONTINUED