

Same Time Tomorrow

written by

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EXT. STREET IN FRONT OF BELLEVILLE BOWLING & SPORT - NIGHT

Rain pours down onto an empty street where ALEX slowly pulls his car in front of Belleville Bowling & Sport Shop, he puts his car into park. The lights in the store are still on, the "We're Open" sign hanging in the window is flipped to instead show "Sorry We're Closed". Alex looks down towards his phone, looking through previous messages from THE MANAGER. The last message he received states "Arrive at 11:00pm, I'll be sure to let you in." Alex looks up from his phone to the dashboard of his car where the clock reads 10:59pm. The clock ticks to 11:00pm where nearly in sync Alex's phone goes off. He looks back down at the phone with a new message from The Manager, "Come on in." Alex looks up and is startled by the silhouette of a man standing in the window of the store front waving at him.

ALEX
Jesus Christ.

Alex, startled, realizes who he is looking at and awkwardly waves back at The Manager. He shuts off his car, and reaches the front entrance using his hands to cover his head as he walks through the rain.

INT. STORE SALES FLOOR - NIGHT

Alex enters into the store triggering a loud buzzer sound that can be heard throughout the store. The Manager greets Alex and the two shake hands.

THE MANAGER
Alex?

ALEX
Yes sir. You must be who I spoke
with over the phone for my
interview right?

The Manager nods his head and continues to shake Alex's hand, not saying anything but instead just looking at Alex with a near blank expression. Alex attempts to cut the awkward moment short.

ALEX (CONT'D)
I guess I was here right on time,
yeah?

The Manager doesn't speak back, instead pausing his hand shake and gestures to Alex to follow him. The two begin to walk through the store, slowly but with purpose.

They pass racks of shirts, sportswear and trophies as they walk through the store, completing a lap of the sales floor during the conversation.

THE MANAGER

I'm really glad you were able to make it here tonight Alex.

Alex is confused by the wording the manager is using. But politely responds.

ALEX

Yeah... me too. I'm ready to get started.

THE MANAGER

And we are certainly ready for you as well. You'll be a perfect fit I'm sure.

ALEX

Thank you, that's really great to hear. So what's the plan for tonight? Is anyone else working or is it just us?

THE MANAGER

You'll be on your own tonight, actually.

ALEX

What do you mean?

THE MANAGER

I'll need to get going soon, I'll probably be gone for just a couple hours. There's some customers for the store that I need to meet with.

The lap around the main floor of the building ends as the two have made their way to an entry way into the back area of the store.

ALEX

You have to meet with customers this late at night? I didn't think that was something you guys really did?

The Manager stops and turns from the entry way towards Alex, staring straight into his soul.

THE MANAGER

It's not.

(pause)

But, we tend to make exceptions
when there is an opportunity that
will help the store.

A moment of silence holds on for an uncomfortably long amount of time. Alex does not hide his expression well, clearly distrusting of The Manager. To try and keep things light he changes the subject.

ALEX

So what should I expect to be doing
tonight?

The Manager, not totally paying attention now, looks quickly towards him slightly surprised as if he had forgotten all about the orientation he's giving.

THE MANAGER

What?

ALEX

During my interview you never
really mentioned what all I'd be
doing while on the job. And if
you're leaving soon I was just
wondering what you need from me
tonight?

THE MANAGER

Right. Well tonight is really about
getting you ready for what's next.
I trust you'll hold things down.
Plus I prefer to keep the store
staffed at all times. Helps me keep
em' happy.

ALEX

Keeps who happy?

There's a pause, The Manager looks genuinely confused by Alex's question. He reluctantly answers with an expression on his face that reads "obviously".

THE MANAGER

Our customers.

ALEX

We're not open this late are we?

THE MANAGER

No... but what you're doing tonight
will help guarantee our customers
keep coming back trust me.

Alex can't think of anything to say in response. But he quickly brushes it off and stays silent. The manager looks down at his watch.

THE MANAGER (CONT'D)

Well it's about that time, I need
to get going. Don't worry though I
left everything you need, plus our
training tape for you in the back.
That should be everything you need
to get started.

The Manager gestures to the backroom, then starts to walk away. Alex asks one more question, searching for further clarification.

ALEX

Did you say a tape?

Alex's questions causes The Manager to stop and turn back towards him.

THE MANAGER

Yes. We've used the same training
tape since before I started here.
And you know what they say. If it
ain't broke...

The manager does not finish his thought. Instead, he pauses expecting Alex to understand and move on. But Alex remains confused and slightly bothered.

THE MANAGER (CONT'D)

So you're good to go?

ALEX

Yeah... sure.

THE MANAGER

Fantastic! I will see you in a few
hours.

ALEX

(quickly)
Alright.

At this point Alex is trying to move the conversation along so The Manager will leave. He's beyond trying to understand him.

The Manager reaches his hand out and points behind him to his left, towards a dark doorway that sits behind the register.

THE MANAGER

One last thing, just make sure you
don't go down to the basement. We
had some flooding last month and
we're still working on repairs. So
just don't go down there
(emphasized)
No matter what.

Alex stands silent and nods subtly, something The Manager doesn't seem to notice.

THE MANAGER (CONT'D)

Got it?

ALEX

Got it.

The Manager nods his head quickly then starts to walk out of the store. He says his final remarks before reaching the exit.

THE MANAGER

Alright I'll leave you to it. And
make sure you watch that tape
closely, there's a lot of great
stuff in there.

The Manager reaches the front door of the store and starts to wave towards Alex as he leaves.

THE MANAGER (CONT'D)

Good luck tonight. You're gonna be
great.

The Manager exits through the front door. Alex is now left to himself in the silence of the store. The buzz of the fluorescent lights is the only sound that fills the space. He looks left and right from his position in the center of the store before making his way into the back of the store.

INT. BACK ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The back of the store is dimly lit and partially unfinished. The walls are covered in notes and the space is cluttered. Along one wall is a long work bench area. Sitting on this bench is a CRT Television, VHS Player, black polo, and a plastic name tag. Finally, placed in the center of the work bench is a VHS tape with a label reading "ALEX" in bold black lettering. Alex looks over the items.

ALEX

Guess he wasn't kidding about the whole training tape thing.

Alex throws on his uniform and name tag and looks around the backroom. He spots old computers, telephones, and items covered in dust. He tracks back to the work bench grabbing a chair from another area and he rolls it over before sitting down. He takes a long look at the items.

ALEX (CONT'D)

(to himself)

Just get this done and you can probably just hang around all night and wait for him to get back.

Alex takes the tape and pushes it into the VCR. The light from the television fills the office. Static fills the CRT screen continuously. The sounds of static are mixed in with what sounds like screams or groaning, unnoticed by Alex. Instead, he's more annoyed at the long amount of time it's taking for the tape to start. He knocks the side of the TV a few times.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Come on.

The static on the TV suddenly goes to black. Alex sits worried, he doesn't want The Manager to get back and see him doing nothing.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Shit.

Suddenly the screen flashes into a color image. It shows Belleville Bowling & Sport's sales floor. In the center of the screen, stands a single person wearing the same employee polo as Alex. Alex leans back into his chair and watches.

INT. STORE SALES FLOOR (TRAINING VIDEO) - CONTINUOUS

SAM stands center frame, wearing the store's uniform in perfect condition. They keep their arms to their side while holding a blank expression, like an actor waiting for a cue. Their silence is covered up by the same static sounds from before. The tape constantly glitches showing different expressions from Sam.

Alex sits at the work bench watching Sam, confused.

Sam's blank expressions shifts to a fake corporate smile as the camera cuts much closer to Sam's face, startling Alex. They nod and begin to speak in a standard corporate tone.

SAM

Hello! My name is Sam and if you're watching this that means you've just become the newest member of the Belleville Bowling & Sports family. And we are so glad you're here.

Alex is more relaxed now, leaning back in his chair as the tape continues.

SAM (CONT'D)

As a member of our staff you play a vital role in keeping this business afloat. The work you do here, even the smallest of tasks, is extremely important.

Alex rolls his eyes, the corporate-talk from the video causes him to lose interest quickly.

SAM (CONT'D)

Throughout this video I'll be showing you the steps you'll need to take in order to have success here at Belleville Bowling & Sports. And by night's end I guarantee you'll be ready for anything.

Sam pauses, expression blank and empty. They hold in this position before the training video cuts to them with a big smile once again as they start their next talking point.

SAM (CONT'D)

You'll quickly find out that our beloved store has a lot more to it than meets the eye. Belleville Bowling and Sport is made up of three levels.

Graphics and quick images flash on the screen matching the different locations that Sam mentions. The images appear more recent than what the age of the tape would suggest.

SAM (CONT'D)

We have the main sales floor, where we keep our merchandise and you'll spend most of your time working. The loft, an area upstairs used primarily for storage, and finally the basement.

The tape starts to act up more than before as soon as the words "the basement" leaves Sam's mouth. No graphic accompanies this portion, instead Sam's expression cuts between the corporate smile and a look of dread.

SAM (CONT'D)

As of right now all employees are to stay out of the basement. The space is currently under repairs. Management are the only members of our team that are allowed in the-

The glaze over Alex's eyes lifts as he sits up in his chair and looks right at the screen, speaking to himself over the "explanation" Sam is providing.

ALEX

What?

The explanation from Sam is suddenly cut off as if the recording had been taped over. Now Sam has once again been reset to their blank expression.

SAM

Now that we've gone over the layout of the store let's get into your daily duties.

Alex looks at the TV puzzled, unsure if he's missed something important from the tape's apparent skipping.

SAM (CONT'D)

As part of the night crew your tasks are focused on organizing and cleaning the store outside of our normal hours of operation. All supplies needed for this can be found in the bas-

The tape skips again, appearing stuck as Sam stutters continuously showing a wide variety of expressions with each cut. The entire frame of the video starts to break up. Alex gets up from his chair and looks behind the TV to see if something is unplugged or broken.

ALEX

You've gotta be kidding me. Come on. Shit.

Alex hits the side of the TV while releasing more expletives. Sam's face shifts, followed by their body before resetting straight upward and returning to the corporate smile, now with one tear sliding down their cheek. The screen flashes into static before cutting to black.

The only image in the screen is the reflection of Alex's shocked reaction. He stands in silence for a moment before being broken by the ear piercing door chime. Alex practically jumps out of his skin.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Fuck me.

Alex is startled but recognizes the sound of the faulty chime. He peaks his head around the doorway looking out to the sales floor, no one is there. He pulls himself back into the backroom and looks around, dejected. Alex massages the bridge of his nose, feeling as if his late night has gotten even later. He looks around the room before spotting a broom and dustpan in the corner across from him. He exhales.

ALEX (CONT'D)

(to himself)

I'm sure I can just figure it out.

Alex grabs the broom from the corner before making his way to the sales floor to get to work.

INT. STORE SALES FLOOR - LATER

Alex is shown in a montage going throughout the store, exploring more than actually cleaning. He looks through the racks of shirts and jackets that line the walls. He cleans the windows at the front of the store, with little purpose. He sweeps along the aisles, checks the bathroom before quickly walking away.

Alex continues his walk through the store now in one continuous shot, he starts near the backroom where he enters back into the sales floor, he sweeps as he goes. As he passes one aisle in the center of the store there is a shadow that goes unnoticed. Alex, believing he may have seen something come back to the aisle to find nothing there. He remains in the aisle.

SAM

(whispers)

Alex

Sam's voice is overlayed with the sound of the door alarm blaring once again. Alex hears his name clearly through the alarm and turns his head back to the door.

ALEX

Huh?

He looks at the door, still shut, then around the entire store before continuing to sweep.

SAM
(whispers)
Over here Alex.

Alex head turns towards the entryway into the backroom and it remains empty. However, the lights start to flicker Sam's whispers grow louder, calling out to Alex with desperation. The lights in the back fully shut off except for a small light at the very back of the store. Sam's silhouette walks out from the light. Alex squints to try to make out who the figure is.

ALEX
What the...?

Sam's silhouette turns and screams at Alex. As it opens its mouth the door chime continues, now screaming Alex's name rather than whispering. The chime speeds up rapidly, growing louder. Alex covers his ears in pain. He groans as he turns towards the door. He slams his body into it, attempting to get the chime to stop. This attempt fails and the chime continues to grow louder. Alex looks around trying to find something to stop it. He grabs a bowling ball from the counter behind him and lifts it over his head before tossing it towards the top of the door. The ball strikes the sensor and falls to the ground. The sound of the ball clicking onto the floor fills the now empty space. Alex hunches over, his ears still ringing. He looks up toward the now damaged sensor. Suddenly the backroom fills up with light from the television. The training video begins to play once again. Starting the same as before.

SAM
Hello! My name is Sam and if you're watching this that means you've just become the newest member of the Belleville Bowling & Sports family. And we are so glad you're here Alex.

Alex's head instantly whips towards the backroom. He creeps towards the backroom as the tape plays on.

INT. BACK ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The tape skips continuously, as if it's fighting against itself. Sam's voice stutters and cuts out from the original video. Fast forwarding through the initial intro, but repeating certain words.

SAM
Alex... Alex. We're so glad you're here. More than meets the eye.
(MORE)

SAM (CONT'D)
The basement... extremely
important. -Mana-

The tape cuts to static. Alex stands silent at the television. He tilts his body from the backroom to look toward the basement. Screams blare through the static as Alex walks away from the TV and now creeps back to the counter in front of the basement.

INT. STORE SALES FLOOR - MOMENTS LATER

Alex reaches the top of the staircase behind the front counter of the store. He leans forward and squints to try to make something out of the darkness. He flips the light switch to his left, but nothing changes. Alex takes a deep breath and takes his first step into the basement. As his foot reaches the step the screams from the static increases drastically. Alex instantly takes his foot back upward and turns around.

ALEX
Nope.

Alex looks around the store and finds a flash light in the backroom and then returns to the top of the stairs. Alex looks into the darkness and turns on the flashlight. He takes a final look at the blaring TV behind him, screaming in agony, before descending into the basement.

EXT. ALLEY WAY - NIGHT

The Manager stands in an empty alley way smoking and counting a small amount of cash before putting it into his pocket. The street in front of him is mostly quiet. The Manager looks down at his watch, checking the time. He holds the tip of the cigarette in his mouth while he talks to himself.

THE MANAGER
(muttering)
Alright.

The Manager finishes the cigarette and stomps it out onto the concrete. In one continuous shot he exits the alleyway and crosses the street and enters his car before driving back towards the store.

INT. BASEMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Alex reaches the bottom of the basement's steps. The space is covered in complete darkness except for a small bit of light from the main level leaking downstairs.

Alex clicks on his flashlight and uses it to sweep the area. The light reveals boxes and loose sportswear items along the floor, clearly storage, but no evidence of flooding that The Manager had mentioned before he left.

ALEX

Figures.

He steps off the stairs and looks deeper. The concrete floor and walls are suffocating to look at. To Alex's right is a small sink and a mirror. Alex inches closer to the mirror and looks at himself. As he stares off Sam's voice calls out to him as light starts to fill the basement.

SAM

(whisper)

Alex.

Alex turns his body to the whisper, The light source fills a now visible passage way. Alex's breathing starts to pick up as he steps towards the light. He creeps through the passage and sees another CRT TV. It blares the same static from the tape upstairs.

ALEX

(to himself)

What the hell?

Past the television is a tall wooden cabinet with a lock on the handles. Alex stands in silence and looks between the TV and the cabinet. He holds the lock in his hand, and attempts to pull it off with no luck. Alex is desperate for a way out and a solution to what is going on around him. He looks back to the TV, the sounds of distorted and digitized screams drive him crazy, they start to call out his name.

SAM

(accompanied by other voices)

Alex, we need you, we want you,
Alex now please. Help. Me.

Alex finds a rack of baseball bats near the cabinet and grabs one off the rack. He turns back to the TV and sets the flashlight on top of it and comes back to the cabinet before swinging the bat at the lock and breaking it. The doors of the cabinet creak open. Alex grabs onto the door and opens it fully to reveal hundreds of tapes are inside.

ALEX

(to himself)

What is this?

Alex analyzes the tapes in the cabinet. Each one labeled with a different name in no particular order. After a few seconds of scanning he finds one tape that looks slightly older than the rest. On the spine of the tape there's a weathered label that reads "SAM". The TV screams louder for Alex.

SAM

Help me, please. Alex! Alex! Alex!

Alex walks over to the television with Sam's tape in his hand. The screaming gets louder as the tape moves closer until it becomes nearly silent as Alex kneels down in front of the TV. He opens the VCR players and brings the tape closer to it. Suddenly a loud thudding comes from the darkness behind the TV. Alex looks up and tries to grab the flashlight from the top of the TV, but the Manager charges at him knocking both of them onto the floor.

THE MANAGER

You had one job Alex. One Job.

The Manager chokes Alex and strikes him across the face. He grabs Alex by the neck of his shirt. The Manager is completely mad, his eyes are red and mouth foaming.

THE MANAGER (CONT'D)

Don't go in the basement. That's
all you had to do! Watch the tape
and wait!

Alex is barely conscious, he gasps for air as he catches his breath. He tries to reach for the bat that's just a few feet from him.

THE MANAGER (CONT'D)

Honestly I thought you'd be smart
enough to get this done yourself.
But you just had to go snooping
around. It's just a shame you were
going to be grea-

Alex strikes The Manager with the bat. He falls over and grabs at his face in pain. Alex sits back up and starts to run upstairs. The Manager moves back onto his feet, holding his now swollen face.

THE MANAGER (CONT'D)

You're not getting out of this
Alex! You really are a perfect fit!

He follows Alex upstairs, limping as he chases.

INT. STORE SALES FLOOR - MOMENTS LATER

Alex rushes upstairs past the register, breathing heavily he surveys the sales floor while checking behind. He runs towards the front door again. He attempts to knock it down with no luck. The faulty sensor goes off continuously as he tries this.

ALEX

Dammit.

Alex gives up on the front door and runs towards the backroom of the store. As he reaches the backroom The Manager finally makes it up the stairs and taunts Alex.

THE MANAGER

Come on Alex. There's no where you
can go.

INT. BACK ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Alex runs through the backroom knocking over chairs and items as he runs. He passes by the tv set on the workbench, it blares screams and static continuously that fills the entire store. Alex reaches the back of the store and finds a stair case leading to the upstairs that the training tape had mentioned. The Manager comes closer, tripping and stumbling through the room, clearly affected by the blow to the head he suffered. The Manager reaches the bottom of the stairs just as Alex reaches the top, he takes a moment of breathing before running upstairs. Alex looks down the narrow hallway at the top of the stairs. He finds a door near the end of the hallway leading to the roof. He grabs at the handle, it takes a moment but eventually gives allowing Alex to reach the outside. The Manager is close behind, still moving slowly.

EXT. ROOFTOP - SUNRISE

Alex reaches the roof of the store, running quickly. He has to stop himself before nearly falling off the edge. He turns around to see the Manager limping towards him.

THE MANAGER

Come on Alex. Why don't we just go
downstairs and talk this whole
thing out. I'm sure it's all just a
misunderstanding.

ALEX

What is going on here and who the
hell is Sam?

Alex is desperate for answers. Exhaustion has completely left his mind, he's running purely off adrenaline.

THE MANAGER

(deep breath)

Sam was just like you. They were the first.

ALEX

First?

(pause)

The first what?

THE MANAGER

There's no point in me explaining this to you Alex. It's so much easier if you just trust me... trust us!

The Manager is out of breath, possibly losing consciousness. Alex keeps the bat high in front of his body ready for any attack.

ALEX

Why are you doing this? What did you do to Sam? The other names on those tapes?

THE MANAGER

I didn't do anything Alex! Everyone wants to find their role, something to make them feel useful. They started this, they played their tapes just like you. And now they're finally useful. This is what's next!

The manager slowly starts to walk towards Alex, attempting to appear friendly.

THE MANAGER (CONT'D)

Now listen to me Alex! You are worth a lot more to us alive. So for the last time let's just go down stairs and figure this-

Alex swings the baseball bat as hard as he can. Knocking The Manager over as he tumbles across the edge of the rooftop and falls onto the street below. Alex's momentum knocks him over his body lies on the edge of the roof. He's exhausted and sore, catching his breath he moves he looks over the edge of the roof and finds The Manager's body, he's dead. Blood leaks onto the street. Alex now turns over onto his back and looks up at the sky.

ALEX
Jesus Christ.

He turns over and rises to his feet before climbing down from the roof and walking around the building.

EXT. STREET IN FRONT OF BELLEVILLE BOWLING & SPORT - SUNRISE

Alex reaches his car, he uses his keys to unlock the car as he walk towards it and enters the vehicle. He sits for a moment catching his breath, he uses the mirror built into the sunshade to look at himself. Alex's lip is bleeding, he holds onto it and groans before flipping the sunshade shut. Alex's phone goes off again. This time it plays a notification from the Indeed app. Alex grabs his phone and looks at the notification. He's been notified of a new job opening.

ALEX
Yeah... I'm good.

Alex throws his phone into the passenger seat and starts his car. He drives away back to his home. Alex is now exhausted, bruised, and firmly unemployed.

END.