

Machinehead

By

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Inspired by
Hard Boiled, by Frank Miller

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PROLOGUE - MACHINEHEAD

The sound of GEARS WHIRRING and the CLICKING of computer parts is heard over the image of a program beginning to run. A MAN'S VOICE is heard in the machine, coming across a great distance.

MAN (V.O.)

Your name?

An image of city lights receding in the distance falls into view. A soothing song plays quietly over the image as the sounds of a BUSY OFFICE begin to fade into earshot.

MAN (V.O.)

Your name is...

Another voice responds, monotone and weary, swallowed in the cityscape.

NIXON (V.O.)

I know my name...

CUT TO:

SCENE 1 - LICENSE AND REGISTRATION

INT. BUSY POLICE STATION - DAY

A haggard man, NIXON HAYES, is sitting blank-eyed and staring into the distance. Nixon is a troubled individual, stuck in an identity crisis while struggling with frequent migraines and episodes of memory loss. Across from him, a police commissioner, EDGAR RHODES, is trying to get his attention.

EDGAR

Hey--

Nixon snaps from his daze.

NIXON

Yeah?

EDGAR

Your name. First and last.

Nixon rubs his face.

NIXON

Nixon.

(CONTINUED)

EDGAR
First and last.

NIXON
Hayes.

Edgar eyes him briefly, and returns to his paperwork.

NIXON
Hey, listen--

EDGAR
Well, Nixon Hayes--

BEAT.

Edgar stares at Nixon, flustered.

EDGAR
What's that?

NIXON
I just--well, I was wondering...

Nixon rubs his face again.

NIXON (CONT'D)
This is free, yeah?

Edgar places his papers on his desk, and clasps his hands.

EDGAR
You've seen the reports?

NIXON
Well--yeah.

EDGAR
Free for any citizen that wants to help.

Edgar resumes writing out the forms.

EDGAR (CONT'D)
And you're an American, right?

NIXON
Yeah, yeah. Born and raised.

Edgar abruptly stamps a form several times, and hands it to Nixon.

EDGAR
Welcome to the force, then.

Nixon grabs the form, looking it over. It reads "CITIZEN'S VIGILANTE LICENSE".

EDGAR (CONT'D)
And God bless America.

CUT TO:

EXT. POLICE STATION - DAY

Nixon exits the building with his forms in hand. There are droves of people along the street. Nixon attempts to light a cigarette as an INCONSPICUOUS MAN calls out to him from a distance.

INCONSPICUOUS MAN
Hey! Wait up!

Nixon pauses, searching for the source of the call. The man catches up with him.

INCONSPICUOUS MAN
Hey, man--you got a light?

Nixon pauses momentarily, handing him his lighter.

INCONSPICUOUS MAN (CONT'D)
Thanks.

He lights his cigarette as Nixon looks him over. The man turns to him, handing him the lighter. He gestures towards a string of binary on Nixon's wrist.

INCONSPICUOUS MAN
That a number?

Nixon grabs the lighter and lights his cigarette.

INCONSPICUOUS MAN (CONT'D)
You get an operation, huh?

NIXON
Replacement.

The man takes a long look at Nixon.

INCONSPICUOUS MAN
Have I seen you before?

NIXON
Can't say.

(CONTINUED)

INCONSPICUOUS MAN
What's your name?

NIXON
Fuck off.

Nixon storms away. The man has a realization.

INCONSPICUOUS MAN
I know who you are.

Nixon ignores him as he keeps walking.

INCONSPICUOUS MAN (CONT'D)
Hey--Carl, right?

Nixon stops abruptly, his ears ringing. He turns in anger.

CUT TO:

SCENE 2 - SCENIC DRIVE

Code appears.

FORMAT ERROR. Load redistributes. Reload...

INT. CAR - MIDDAY

Nixon is driving his car haphazardly, weaving in and out of traffic. Nixon smokes a cigarette, rambling incoherently as the radio blares BIG BAND MUSIC.

NIXON
Me, I'm a family man. Nixon Hayes
is my name; a man's man.

Nixon takes a drag from his cigarette. The car lighter lies in his lap, burning a hole in his pants.

NIXON (CONT'D)
I came from the war with scars. I
lost those in my operation. Got
'em replaced with shiny new
skin. Now I got no scars.

Several cars blare their HORNS at him.

NIXON (CONT'D)
No medals, though. I didn't fight
in that great, terrible war. I'm
no fighter, I'm just a tax
collector.

(CONTINUED)

A car flies by.

NIXON (CONT'D)
I do what I can for my
country. It's a citizen's right.

BEAT.

NIXON (CONT'D)
(singing)
Yankee doodle went to town, riding
on a pony. Hmm-hmm... I love
America.

Nixon notices a car pulled over to the side of the street,
its blinker still ticking.

NIXON (CONT'D)
Criminals. Do-no-gooders.

He pulls over behind the car, and examines the scene. The
driver's side door is left wide open; inside, a man is
slumped over the window, dead from multiple gunshot wounds.

Nixon follows a trail of blood leading from the trunk to a
BLOODIED MAN leaned against a tree, clutching a typewriter
in his arms. He is barely breathing, and suffers from
several gunshot wounds.

NIXON
Men aren't s'posed to bleed.

The bloodied man attempts to speak, but can't find the
strength.

Nixon kneels to the ground and takes the typewriter from his
arms.

NIXON
Bum.

Nixon pummels the man's head into the tree.

The SOUNDS of a skull crushing against a tree fade into an
applauding audience of a GAME SHOW.

CUT TO:

SCENE 3 - A SUBURBAN LIFE

INT. LIVING ROOM - DUSK

The program reboots. Lines of code scale the screen.

3... 2... 1...

Nixon is drinking a glass of rum as an audience roars in laughter from the TV in front of him. His wife, ANABELLE HAYES, busies herself behind him. She is a loving woman, if somewhat detached. Nixon switches the TV to the news.

She is preparing food as their CHILDREN play throughout the house.

ANABELLE

You work so hard.

NIXON

Mm.

ANABELLE

My hard-working man. And you already caught a criminal! Just imagine it: my husband, a vigilante!

Nixon groans as he takes a drink. He notices a hole burned into his right thigh.

ANABELLE (CONT'D)

You must be so tired. Fighting so hard for our country like you do... The police, they could use someone like you, you know. That's what I'm always telling Stacey and Julie, and they're always so impressed!

On the TV, a news report explains a murder off the freeway, with police looking into reports of a loose android on the run.

Nixon's head goes white with pain as a migraine flares up.

NIXON

I'm no fighter...

Anabelle perks up.

(CONTINUED)

ANABELLE

Hon?

NIXON

I'm a tax--

Nixon's ears ring. He looks down at his hand.

NIXON (CONT'D)

I've got no scars.

Nixon's children lean from the doorway. They look from Nixon to Anabelle as she begins to let her hair down.

NIXON (CONT'D)

I know my name...

Anabelle takes Nixon to the room as the children follow behind, snickering. The door slams closed.

SCENE 4 - CAR WASH BLUES

Code fills the screen.

FATAL ERROR. Check disk...

EXT. CAR WASH - NIGHT

Nixon is listlessly washing blood smeared off the front windshield and bumper of his car. A slow country song drones from the loudspeaker.

He is staring into the alien green light. Blood trickles down his temple, and he rubs it with his hand to inspect.

Meanwhile, a car with blaring bass pulls into the adjacent wash station. Two FOUL-MOUTHED MEN, one short and one tall, exit the car and take notice of Nixon.

The shorter of the two approaches Nixon.

FOUL-MOUTHED MAN #1

Hey, hey. Yer bleedin' there.

Nixon continues to spray his car as he stares at his bloodied finger.

FOUL-MOUTHED MAN #1 (CONT'D)

Fucker, hear me? You look lost.

(CONTINUED)

FOUL-MOUTHED MAN #2
Musta broke a fuckin' circuit,
goddamn tin can.

FOUL-MOUTHED MAN #1
I seen you before, maybe.

The foul-mouthed man takes a close look at Nixon.

FOUL-MOUTHED MAN #2
He's lost, man.

FOUL-MOUTHED MAN #1
Now, now, you look an awful lot
like the droid on the news, huh,
gadget?

Nixon turns to look at the man.

FOUL-MOUTHED MAN #1 (CONT'D)
Yeah, yer gettin' it now, huh? You
been up to no good, there?

FOUL-MOUTHED MAN #2
Hey, you--that one's gone blue?

FOUL-MOUTHED MAN #1
Dead behind the eyes. No fuckin'
program runnin' in there.

FOUL-MOUTHED MAN #2
Man, that fucker's crazy, I'd get
back--

NIXON
Replacement.

Nixon stops spraying the water.

PAUSE.

FOUL-MOUTHED MAN #1
The fuck did you s--

Nixon pulls a gun from his coat and shoots the man in the
forehead.

FOUL-MOUTHED MAN #2
Oh, fuck!

The foul-mouthed man falls to the ground as the other
scrambles into his car.

(CONTINUED)

NIXON
Criminals!

Nixon fires at the car as it peels out.

NIXON
Do-no-gooders!

CUT TO:

SCENE 5 - BAR FIGHT

Code once again fills the screen. Error messages glitch as strings repeat.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Nixon sits alone at a bar, drinking from a broken glass. He is mangled and bloody. One body lies slumped over the counter, another on the ground behind him.

NIXON
Me, I'm a family man. Carl
Mayweather is my name. Came from
the market district that my pa
worked at. Told me to work for my
living.

Nixon slumps down, his eyes heavy. He takes another drink. The glass cuts his lip.

NIXON (CONT'D)
I'm an insurance investigator. Got
a citizen's duty to uphold.

Nixon stands.

NIXON (CONT'D)
For my country.

He walks to the jukebox, enters money, and selects a quiet, soothing song.

NIXON (CONT'D)
I love America...

Nixon exits the bar.

SCENE 6 - CITY LIGHTS

The program is blank, save for a blinking cursor.

RECOVERY MODE. BOOTING.

EXT. BRIDGE - NIGHT

Nixon stands slumped over the side of a bridge, a trail of blood behind him. He is mumbling incoherently, staring into the distant city.

NIXON

I know my name...

A car passes by him and screeches to a halt, reversing immediately.

Edgar exits the car in a hurry, rushing to Nixon.

EDGAR

Nixon! Nixon, oh, Nixon.

NIXON

I know my name...

EDGAR

What will Anabelle think? You've been drinking again.

Edgar takes a blanket and throws it around Nixon, leading him to the car.

EDGAR (CONT'D)

We'll get you cleaned up real good, alright?

Edgar places Nixon in the back seat.

EDGAR (CONT'D)

A hot shower and a night of rest, Nixon. You'll be good as new.

NIXON

I'm a tax...

EDGAR

I know, Nixon. I know.

The car pulls out as Nixon begins to slip into unconsciousness. City lights recede into the distance.

(CONTINUED)

NIXON (CONT'D)
I know my name...

FADE TO BLACK

EPILOGUE - OUROBOROS

The sound of GEARS WHIRRING and the CLICKING of computer parts is heard over the image of a program beginning to run.

Code fills the screen.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DUSK

Nixon is slouched on the couch, unharmed. He is in only boxers and a large shirt, drinking a beer. The TV plays the sounds of ADVERTISEMENTS and a GAME SHOW. Anabelle is fixing dinner behind him.

ANABELLE
...and Stacy and Julie were telling
me how proud I must be to have such
a loyal husband.

Nixon's children laugh from the other room, as they stop to watch their father. Nixon turns, and they return to playing.

ANABELLE (CONT'D)
But I just tell them, well, you do
it because you're a man.

Nixon notices a burn mark on his right thigh. He becomes confused as his ears begin to ring.

ANABELLE (CONT'D)
A **real** man.

The sound of the TV blares into a high-pitched squeal as the program fails.

THE END