

My Time on Cleveland Street

By

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Based on Dramatized Events

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EXT. EAST NEW YORK 1932 - CLEVELAND STREET - DAY

We open on a bleak city block in East New York. The sun beams down in stark contrast to the cracks that litter the sidewalk. A man with an unkept beard and tattered clothing saunters by a pile of garbage lazily throwing his half-eaten apple next to it.

The SHOUTS and CHEERS of little children running in the street playing stick ball echo down the block.

UNNAMED CHILD
(Angrily)
THAT'S NOT FAIR, C'MON.

The child trips over the pile of garbage as he darts for the ball. He immediately springs back up with a large grin on his face.

We follow the boy down a row of eroded brownstones stopping hard on JAKOB NOWAK, a stocky seventeen-year-old Polish immigrant with short blonde hair and a hardened face.

He peaks around a corner razor focused on the local grocer. His fingers TAP on the red brick with anticipation while his right foot bounces getting ready to take off at any moment.

SMASH CUT:

EXT. EAST NEW YORK - CLEVELAND STREET - DUSK

Jakob stands dejected leaning on the side of the building for support. His eyes flutter, struggling to stay open.

JAKOB
(Muttering to himself)
What the hell is taking so long. Get
inside. He never takes this long.
Gotta be any second now.

Two large unassuming men, one with a dignified mustache and the other with a unique scar across his cheek, walk by Jakob. He begins to trail them, bending over as to not be seen.

CUT TO:

EXT. EAST NEW YORK - ELTON STREET - CONT.

Jakob turns the corner onto Elton Street sneakily creeping behind the two men as they move towards the grocer.

Jakob has an intense glare in his eye, fixating on the grocer, a short man with a botched combover, stocking the outdoor stands with fruit and bread.

JAKOB
(Muttering to himself)
Come on, get the hell inside.

Jakob's eyes widen as the grocer wanders into his shop. Pushing through from behind the men, Jakob hurls his body towards the stands.

MAN WITH MUSTACHE
(incensed)
Kafin kup! Watch yourself!

Jakob quickly whips his head back and forth analyzing the stands. He violently reaches for several loafs of bread and a few apples.

MAN WITH SCAR
What do you think you're doing! He's
stealing! He's stealing!

Startled, Jakob drops a loaf of bread as he takes off down the street with vigor.

The grocer sprints outside watching as Jakob becomes smaller and smaller.

LOCAL GROCER
(Indignant)
You Shmuck! Don't ever come back!

QUICK CUT:

EXT. EAST NEW YORK - CLEVELAND STREET - DUSK

Jakob hunches over HEAVING, clutching the stolen goods against his chest. Catching his breath, Jakob moves forward steadily towards his home.

Grandmother's and Grandfather's sit in front of their homes with blank expressions as they stare onward with the sun continuing to set behind them.

Jakob approaches Levi, an old man from his block with a long unkept grey beard and leathery skin.

JAKOB
(Playfully)
How ya doin' Levi. See anything
interesting out there.

Levi stares at Jakob, turns back, mutters in Yiddish and continues to stare into space. Jakob shrugs his shoulders and approaches his family's apartment.

Jakob rams his shoulder into his front door, forcing the stubborn iron door to open.

CUT TO:

INT. JAKOB'S HOME - NIGHT

Jakob shuffles into his small dingy home. portraits of his parents and Grandparents back in Poland cover the grey peeling paint.

The musk of an unidentifiable mold fills the air, while his parents sit begrudgingly at their poorly made dining table.

Jakob approaches the table and proudly drops the stolen goods in front of them without saying anything.

His Father SYZMON, a large grizzled forty-five-year-old with a thick black beard and a receding hair line, gives him a piercing glance.

Jakob walks past his parents to the bedroom he shares with his three siblings while whistling an upbeat tune.

CUT TO:

INT. JAKOB'S HOME - SHARED BEDROOM - CONT.

Jakob peeks his head into the room to see his two little brothers, AREK (age 9) and JEDRICK (age 10), Both with dirty blonde hair and notably thin frames. The two wrestle while his little sister, BRYDA (age 6) with big cheeks and blonde hair like her mother, sleeps.

Sighing, Jakob watches the two boys engulf the whole room with their movement. They trip over the large mattress on the hard wooden floor that takes up more than half the room.

Jakob steps in-between them.

JAKOB
Alright, Alright that's enough. Stop

messing around you're gonna wake up
Bryda.

AREK
He started it, that jerk.

JEDRICK
No, you did you-

JAKOB
(Controllingly)
Stop it I said!

The two boys separate and begrudgingly walk to opposite sides of the room. Jakob sits on the edge of the bed staring blankly at his small dingy room.

A glimmer of despair washes over his face before the growling of Jedrick's stomach snaps him out of it.

JAKOB
You two hungry? I brought home some
bread.

A look of sheer excitement overtakes the two boys as they smile ear to ear and instinctively head towards the front of the apartment.

They are met with the bedroom door as Syzmon swings it open, charging in and grabbing Jakob by the collar. A look of frustration and sheer anger comes over Syzmon.

SYZMON
(Menacingly)
Come with me!

CUT TO:

INT. JAKOB'S HOME - CONT.

Dragging Jakob by the collar, Syzmon keeps his head straight away, yanking Jakob to the front room. With one swift movement, Syzmon throws Jakob on the ground.

Jakob's Mother, Manka, a forty-year-old with tired eyes and platinum blonde hair, looks on with ambivalence.

A look of fear coinciding with defiance overtakes Jakob's face as he gets up off the dusty wooden beams. Syzmon stands three feet away from him with a vice grip on a loaf of bread.

SYZMON
(Fiercely)
Where did you get this?

JAKOB
(Quickly)
At the store where else? Why are you
throwin' me around huh?

SYZMON
You don't think I know how you got
this? I am a proud man. I'm not
stupid. I support this family! I did
not come to America to have my son be
a common thief.

Syzmon throws the loaf of bread on the ground in disgust.

JAKOB
A thief? I'm no thief. I'm a survivor.
Where is all our food huh? Our money?
I don't see anyone else trying to help
out.

Syzmon stands silently with his fists clenched.

JAKOB (CONT.)
You lost your job! This is it. This is
what needs to be done. I'm hungry.
We're all hungry! We need to survive.
This is no time to be proud! Your
pride will kill us!

Syzmon rushes towards Jakob like a bull grabbing him by the
collar.

SYZMON
I'd rather starve than eat this way. I
will find a way! Don't ever tell me
how to support my family.

Syzmon SLAPS Jakob across the face as Manka simultaneously
runs towards them with a perturbed grimace on her face.

MANKA
Stop! Stop! let him go!

Manka grabs at syzmon's forearms in an effort to pull him
away. Syzmon pushes Manka away and then releases Jakob with a
shove.

Jakob wells up, his whole body tensing. The veins in his neck and forearms are clearly visible.

JAKOB

I am. I'm gonna save us. You'll see ya
shmuck!

Syzmon charges towards Jakob yet again as Jakob scurries towards the door yanking it open and quickly SLAMMING it behind him.

Syzmon opens the door peeking out to see Jakob running down the street.

SYZMON

(Smugly)

Go, go save us by being scum!

CUT TO:

EXT.EAST NEW YORK - DUMONT AVENUE - CONT.

Jakob slows down, his face pale with hues of red from a mixture of anger and exhaustion. Jakob moves forward steadily with demoralized poor posture. A black stray cat with protruding ribs darts out in front of Jakob.

The cat run into an alley, a look of confusion and distress comes over his uneased face. A car SCREAMS by, the headlights blinding Jakob.

He sits on a stoop, staring up at the sky exhaling aggressively. His eyes are hollow but painfully wide.

Jakob rises slowly, sauntering over to a pile of trash kicking it swiftly in frustration.

He aimlessly walks forward towards the store where he works. The convenience store is worn and disinviting. Jakob eyes the front door and gently pulls it open.

CUT TO:

INT. MELTZER'S CONVENIENCE STORE - CONT.

Jakob enters the store to see ABE MELTZER, a middle-aged man with pale skin and a bothered demeanor, standing behind the counter while Jakob's best friend JAN, a tall dark haired eighteen-year-old with a crooked smile, leaning against the counter talking to Abe.

The inside of the store is dimly lit with a mish mosh of items arbitrarily disbursed.

ABE

(Cheerfully)

How ya doin' Jakob? Why the long face?

JAN

(Snidely)

You look terrible.

JAKOB

Thanks. The old man is being a Kelev again.

ABE

Hey, it doesn't matter what you think, you respect your father you hear me? you're just a kid.

Jakob looks off.

JAKOB

(Dismissively)

Yeah, yeah. I know.

Abe shrugs his shoulders and walks to the back of the store. Jakob leans up against the counter next to Jan.

JAN

Old man bustin' ya chops?

JAKOB

(Quickly)

Yeah.

JAN

What's it this time? Home late? Messin' with your brothers? Being a dum-

JAKOB

I took some food from tha grocer on Elton wasn't no big deal.

JAN

(Sarcastically)

Wow, looks at you big time criminal now I see.

JAKOB

Yeah, yeah. I had to do. Old man wasn't brinin' home enough food. What was I gonna do let myself go hungry. The little ones look sickly eatin' expired crap and soup all the time.

JAN

Old man doesn't want help that way eh?

JAKOB

More than that. He doesn't want help at all. He needs it though; I can tell you that.

JAN

You gotta be a bit more subtle. I betcha walked in there all happy, jumpin' up and down and placed it front of him like you just brought home dinner. Am I wrong?

JAKOB

Well not totally, but he was mad boy lemme tell ya. He's a real doylem sometimes.

Jan pushes off the counter and paces back and forth throwing a handball up in the air.

JAKOB

You can't tell me you don't take food sometimes. Your family is way bigga then mine!

JAN

Can I tell you a little secret my dear Jakob.

Beat

JAN

I haven't stole in weeks now.

Jakob stares at Jan perplexed.

JAKOB

How do ya figure that?

JAN
(In a fictitious Eastern European
accent)
Walk with me my comrade.

Jan walks towards the door. Jakob slowly pushes off the counter and follows suit.

CUT TO:

EXT. EAST NEW YORK - DUMONT AVENUE - CONT.

Jan speeds ahead as Jakob stumbles out of the store.

JAKOB
Wait up you bum!

Slowing down, Jan looks back as Jakob catches up to him. The two walk forward slowly with no intent.

JAKOB (CONT.)
So, what's this magical fix huh?

Jan looks around ignoring Jakob's presence. He whistles an upbeat tune as he bounces on his heels.

JAKOB (CONT.)
(Bothered)
C'mon tell me already!

JAN
(Excited)
Alright.

Pausing, Jan looks around turning his head back and forth quickly.

JAN
Gotta make sure no one hears this. Top
secret my dear boy.

JAKOB
Spit it out!

JAN
Well, I've been pickin' up some extra
shifts down at the docks, but why
don't you come down to the docks
tomorrow. I'll introduce ya to
someone. Maybe you can get some work.

JAKOB

I'll be there. Lord knows I need work.
What time? Who are you introducing me
to? your boss?

JAN

Kinda. You'll see he's a good guy.
nine in the mornin'. Be sharp.

The two stand in front of Jan's home. The bricks have begun to erode around a flimsy white grated door. Jakob watches as Jan stumbles up his front steps. Jan pauses on his stoop.

JAN

See you tomorrow fella.

Jan winks at Jakob and SNICKERS as he enters his home. Jakob marches east towards his home.

CUT TO:

INT. JAKOB'S HOME - NIGHT

The door opens as Jakob enters his home. The front room is colorless, cold, and bleak. Syzmon and Manka sleep on the mattress they pull out at night. Jakob stares at Syzmon with malice. He walks past them to his shared bedroom.

He slowly opens the door. The CREAK of the worn door fills the room. His three siblings sleep deeply on the ragged mattress, stains different shades of brown.

Jakob sighs with a blank stare as he moves towards the bed regretfully. He squeezes in a small spot on the end of bed, curling up as to not let his feet hang off. Staring at the ceiling, Jakob shuts his eyes.

QUICK CUT:

INT. JAKOB'S HOME - DAY

Jakob's eyes flutter open, his siblings still asleep. Arek's legs are sprawled over Jedrick's torso. Rising, Jakob eyes his singular pair of shoes. Throwing them on in one swift motion, Jakob slowly creeps through the door to the front room.

Manka is motionless still asleep. Syzmon sits upright staring out the window with empty eyes. Jakob tip toes into Syzmon's view. The two stare at each other with resentment saying nothing. The silence is piercing.

Jakob approaches the door slowly opening it with a dejected expression on his face.

CUT TO: