

THE MAN COMES AROUND

Written by

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Based on "The Strength of God"  
From Winesburg, Ohio; a group of tales of Ohio small town life  
By Sherwood Anderson

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FADE IN

EXT. WINESBURG CHURCH YARD - PRESENT DAY, MORNING

A clear and brightly sun-filled day in the cemetery on the grounds of the Winesburg Ohio Presbyterian Church brings a small group of mourners together for a grave-side service.

Standing closer to the casket, a younger man puts his arm around his mother. Both are dressed in black, weeping.

But, standing apart from the rest of the group, is a very different black-clad figure. Wearing a long black coat and thin tie, he stands stiffly upright, with his full, brown head of hair bowed forward.

Reading from the ancient bible she cradles in her hands, a FEMALE MINISTER leads the service.

FEMALE MINISTER

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall  
not want. He maketh me to lie down  
in green pastures: he leadeth me  
beside the still waters. He  
restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in  
the paths of righteousness for his  
name's sake.

EXT. WINESBURG CHURCH YARD - MORNING OF SUNDAY MARCH 10, 1946

Clouds are rolling in overhead, as a sizeable group of mourners gather next to a row of flag-draped coffins.

The grim faces that now fill the field belong to service men and women. With arms draped over shoulders and pulled around waists, each wears a uniform that includes their 148th Infantry designation.

But, standing apart from the rest of the group, is a very different figure. Wearing a long black coat and thin tie, he stands stiffly upright, with his full, brown head of hair bowed forward.

Reading from the ancient bible he cradles in his hands, a WARTIME CHAPLAIN leads the service.

WARTIME CHAPLAIN

Yea, though I walk through the  
valley of the shadow of death, I  
will fear no evil: for thou art  
with me; thy rod and thy staff they  
comfort me.

(MORE)

## WARTIME CHAPLAIN (CONT'D)

Thou preparest a table before me in  
the presence of mine enemies. Thou  
anointest my head with oil.

EXT. WINESBURG CHURCH YARD - MORNING OF SUNDAY JULY 25, 1915

The cracked open sky pours down rain as a group of only two men and three women huddle at a grave-side service.

Standing apart from the rest of the group is the very tall and thin REVEREND CURTIS HARTMAN, age 40.

He wears a long black coat and thin tie, all of it now soaked through by rain. He stands stiffly upright, with his bowed head covered by only a wide-brimmed black hat.

Reading from a now soaking-wet bible he cradles in his hands, he does his best to lead the service. Though he is trying to be heard over the weather, his voice is muted by the rain. Even his brown beard is soaking wet.

REVEREND HARTMAN

My cup runneth over. Surely  
goodness and mercy shall follow me  
all the days of my life: and I will  
dwell in the house of the Lord for  
ever. Amen.

The sullen, older MALE MOURNER in the group turns to shake the hand of the Reverend as soon as he's done speaking.

MALE MOURNER

You did your level best, Reverend.

INT. CLERGY HOUSE MAIN ROOM - LATER

In the mirror, Reverend Hartman stands behind his wife SARAH HARTMAN- a petite, delicate-looking woman who is younger than her husband by at least a decade- as she brushes her hair.

REVEREND HARTMAN

My dear wife, you were missed.

SARAH HARTMAN

I doubt anyone noticed, with all  
the tears in their eyes.

The Reverend bows his head.

REVEREND HARTMAN

It was a difficult service. It felt  
somewhat empty. Dispassionate.

SARAH HARTMAN

How could one expect to inspire  
passion in the middle of a monsoon?

Reverend Hartman looks out the rain-streaked window. But, by now, the rain has stopped.

SARAH HARTMAN (CONT'D)

Never forget that there is no shame  
in being a competent preacher. This  
is your flock, Reverend Curtis  
Hartman. They must be lead by the  
grace of God.

He peels off his wet outer clothes- hat, coat, overshoes,  
shoes- and spreads them out by the fireplace. He places his  
bible on top of the mantle, holding his hand on it a moment.

REVEREND HARTMAN

Perhaps it is God's grace I  
struggle with, at times. Even for  
today's service, I have no sermon  
in my mind's eye yet.

Sarah looks at him, shocked.

SARAH HARTMAN

Then, it is time to go and ready a  
sermon for your flock, Reverend.

So, wearing the still-wet clothes he'd had on under his coat  
outside, his shoulders droop. He slouches to the door in the  
back of the room that leads to the church.

INT. BELL TOWER STAIRWAY - CONTINUOUS

Alone, Reverend Hartman slowly climbs the stairs leading to  
the secluded study in the bell tower of the church.

INT. STUDY - CONTINUOUS

A very small room hidden entirely from view by the robust,  
green trees outside, the study is a sparse affair.

The only light in the room comes from a stained glass window  
depicting Jesus leading a flock of sheep.

The desk, laden with paper, has only a lone fountain pen.

The Reverend bends over the desk in front of the window,  
picking up the pen, his face deep in thought.

As he steps back to eye over the fragments written on the pages, he notices movement outside the window.

Across the way, he sees one of the women who had attended the funeral service earlier. She is just now arriving in her room and, wet with the rain, she begins to remove her clothes.

Instead of looking away, as any gentleman should, the Reverend stares at her, mouth open. He moves closer to the window, even, for an better view of her.

His grip tightens around the pen in his hand.

Suddenly, he turns the sturdy wooden handle of the pen to the window. One hard tap knocks out a small corner of the stained glass, giving the Reverend a clear view of the woman.

But, the pen also breaks. Ink has spewed across all the papers on the desk and covers his hands now as well.

The woman, who cannot see him from her window, has by now stripped down to her underwear. She lights a cigarette.

The Reverend turns his back to the window, eyes clamped shut. His face aflame with shame and anguish, he bows his head.

REVEREND HARTMAN

Give me the strength and courage  
for Thy work, O Lord.

He does not raise his head again. He gathers his papers.

INT. CHURCH - MOMENTS LATER

The Reverend slides in front of the already-assembled congregation. He nervously shuffles his papers.

The group are dressed for the summer heat, and fanning themselves accordingly. Sarah, beaming with fierce pride, is seated in the front row.

REVEREND HARTMAN

Today, I am reminded...

He shuffles through his papers again. There is nothing but an angry-looking series of black blotches staring back at him.

REVEREND HARTMAN (CONT'D)

By the grace of God, I am reminded.

(MORE)

REVEREND HARTMAN (CONT'D)  
 Saint Peter, wrote in his first  
 letter: "Dear friends, do not be  
 surprised at the painful trial you  
 are suffering, as though something  
 strange were happening to you."

With a deep breath, now fully relaxed, the Reverend's voice is full of life. He is careful to keep his ink-stained hands out of view as he speaks.

REVEREND HARTMAN (CONT'D)  
 Out of my own experience I know  
 that we, who are the ministers of  
 God's word, are beset by the same  
 temptations that assail you.

Sarah looks confused, but the rest of the congregation gives the Reverend their rapt attention.

INT. BACK OF CHURCH - LATER

After the service, the Reverend stands at the back of the church to greet his parishioners on their way out.

For no reason, he puts his arm around Sarah's waist.

INT. VARIOUS ROOMS IN CHURCH/CLERGY HOUSE - LATER

MONTAGE

Reverend Hartman runs up the stairs to the study.

He kneels near the window, clutching his hands in prayer.

Now, he stares out the window, but still clutching his hands.

REVEREND HARTMAN  
 You see that a person is justified  
 by works and not by faith alone.

Giving another Sunday sermon from the altar, he makes an impassioned plea to the congregation.

REVEREND HARTMAN (CONT'D)  
 I have been tempted and have  
 surrendered to temptation. It is  
 only the hand of God, placed  
 beneath my head, that has raised me  
 up. As He has raised me and so also  
 will he raise you.

Reverend Hartman takes the stairs to the study slowly.

Outside the window of the study, the trees outside have turned color. Leaves are falling.

He prays, turning his back to the window.

REVEREND HARTMAN (CONT'D)  
Lift my eyes again to the skies.  
Stay with me, Thy servant, in his  
hour of need.

He stares out the window.

At another Sunday sermon, in the church in front of the congregation, he is close to tears. His eyes are closed.

REVEREND HARTMAN (CONT'D)  
Do not despair. In your hour of sin  
raise your eyes to the skies and  
you will be again and again saved.

Reverend Hartman sits on stairs in front of the study door.

Inside the study, he immediately stomps to the window.

Looking out the window, it's now winter. A light snow is falling. The Reverend wipes furiously at the small, frosty panes of glass with his sleeve.

As soon as the glass is clear of frost, the Reverend sees the woman is there. Completely naked. She is in obvious despair, clutching a photo to her chest as she weeps.

Not moving his eyes from the woman, still, he prays.

REVEREND HARTMAN (CONT'D)  
O lord, I ask you now to help lead  
us both. I am a man awash in sin,  
tho I have prayed much these many  
months. Please, lead us to the  
light in which salvation can be  
found. Please.

END MONTAGE

INT. CHURCH - MORNING OF SUNDAY JANUARY 17, 1916

Reverend Curtis Hartman is again perched to deliver a Sunday sermon in front of the congregation, dressed in their winter finery, many rubbing their hands together for warmth.

Regardless, the Reverend is sweating though his clothes.

## REVEREND HARTMAN

I appeal to each of you! As in Romans 12: Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

## INT. BACK OF CHURCH - LATER

After the sermon, the crowd files out. Sarah stands alone, greeting parishioners. The Reverend is nowhere to be seen.

## INT. BELL TOWER STAIRWAY - SAME

Alone, Reverend Hartman quickly climbs the stairs leading to the secluded study in the bell tower of the church.

## INT. STUDY - CONTINUOUS

The Reverend kneels, very near the window, facing toward it. He looks as though he is appealing directly to the image within the window as he clasps his hands in prayer.

## REVEREND HARTMAN

Please, father, do not forget me.  
Give me power to repair the hole in  
this window.

Tears roll down his cheeks.

He struggles to his feet, still staring at the window itself.

His expression goes from despair to rage to confusion and then, after a long moment, to the serenity of acceptance.

He steps to the window. The sound of glass shattering.

INT. BELL TOWER STAIRWAY - CONTINUOUS

The Reverend staggers down the stairs, away from the study. He clutches his right hand, curled into a fist, to his chest.

INT. CLERGY HOUSE MAIN ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Sarah is entertaining a few parishioners when the door in the back of the room that leads to the church bursts wide open.

Reverend Curtis Hartman stands on the other side of that door. His black robe sleeve shiny with his blood now soaked through and dripping on the floor.

SARAH HARTMAN

Reverend! What has happened?

The group crowd around the Reverend, moving him to lie down as they clear room for him in the middle of the floor.

REVEREND HARTMAN

The ways of god are beyond human understanding. I have found the light. After ten years in this town, god has manifested himself to me in the body of a woman. I did not understand. What I took to be a trial of my soul was only a preparation for a new and more beautiful fervor of the spirit. I am delivered, have no fear. I smashed the glass of the window. Now it will have to be wholly replaced. The strength of god was in me and I broke it with my fist.

He grips his bloody fist tighter. Tears stream the wrong way, across the sides of his face, pooling in his ears. His voice barely audible to the assembled group that includes his wife.

REVEREND HARTMAN (CONT'D)

Friends. Pray with me.

The group barely follow along in stunned murmurs as the Reverend leads them in a strong clear voice... at first.

REVEREND HARTMAN (CONT'D)

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

(MORE)

REVEREND HARTMAN (CONT'D)

He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me  
in the paths of righteousness for  
his name's sake.

His voice grows dimmer and more laboured with every word.

REVEREND HARTMAN (CONT'D)

Yea, though I walk through the  
valley of the shadow of death, I  
will fear no evil: for thou art  
with me; thy rod and thy staff they  
comfort me. Thou preparest a table  
before me in the presence of mine  
enemies. Thou anointest my head  
with oil.

With that, the Reverend's voice fades out altogether.

As his fist unclenches, it is revealed that he'd held the  
image of the face of Jesus from the study window in his  
shredded hand. The glass clatters to the ground, unbroken.

Out of the stunned silence, Sarah starts to weep, quietly.

EXT. WINESBURG CHURCH YARD - AFTERNOON OF JANUARY 24, 1916

A large group of people, dressed in their Sunday best, gather  
together for a grave-side service.

Reading from the ancient, water-damaged bible he cradles in  
his hands, the minister now to be HARTMAN'S REPLACEMENT at the  
Winesburg Ohio Presbyterian Church leads the service.

HARTMAN'S REPLACEMENT

My cup runneth over. Surely  
goodness and mercy shall follow me  
all the days of my life: and I will  
dwell in the house of the Lord for  
ever.

Sarah stands close-by, wiping at her eyes. The woman from  
across the way stands a half-step behind her. A blink.

Reverend Curtis Hartman suddenly seems to be standing behind  
them. He reaches forward, as if to comfort one of the women.

It is unclear, however, which woman he's reaching for.

SCREEN GOES BLACK.

THE END