

Alexandra

*The Manager*

He's what specialists call a residual spirit. He does the same exact thing every Friday night, totally unaware of any change that has occurred. He walks as though everything is as it was over three decades ago.

His night starts at the front doors, where he immediately notices that the candy machine is freshly filled, and thus one less thing he would have to do that night. He continues on to the screening room, walking down aisles, finding a single piece of balled up paper to toss away.

As he leaves the room and appears at the snack counter, he sees that the popcorn machine was empty and that the glass jugs holding soda are low. With a groan, he turns to go down to the basement, which he hated because the dirt floor always dusted up his shoes. Grabbing a bag of kernels and a few soda pop bottles, he leaves the dimly lit cellar. Upon reaching the snack counter, he places the items down before turning to go upstairs.

He enters the men's bathroom, the wooden floorboards creaking under his weight. He wipes down his leather shoes before looking in the mirror. He pulls a comb from his pocket and brushes back a few dark strands. Smoothing his over coat as he replaces his comb, he admires his thirty-something year old self. He leaves the restroom, preparing to greet his patrons.

But there are no patrons. The theater has been closed down for years. The doors have been locked up, giving entrance to none. The old candy machine is rusted, Cowtail caramels still sitting, dusty, inside. The screening room aisles are muddy, chairs are degrading, and that one paper ball has turned into fifty.

The popcorn machine has been unused for ages, and no longer works. The drink pitchers are still filled, holding Orange Soda with a thin film glazing over the top. The basement cannot be entered—there are no lights, and the condition of the stairs is questionable. The dirt floor is sludge, and tickets are confetti remnants of former homeless inhabitants.

But he is oblivious to all of this change—he eternally walks the same path each Friday night. Every shift ends at about one a.m. Saturday morning, when the spirit walks back up the stairs to the projector room. He looks through the open window to gaze out at the dark seats, content. Sighing, he pats the movie projector next to him absentmindedly. Unfortunately, it isn't secured properly, and loosens, toppling towards the ground, fifteen feet below. Without thinking he clumsily makes a grab for the equipment, only to lose this balance and fall out from the projection box window as well.

Before he can hit the ground, however, he disappears.

The Strand Theater was his home; it's where he lived his life, and where he lost it. Some say *The Manager* can still be glimpsed, in the right light and the right atmosphere, his film reel continuously playing only his ending.