

Count Your Blessings

By

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FADE IN

INT: BUS ADMIN BUILDING - DAY

The bright morning sun glares through the office windows of the Wallace County Community Transport building.

SAM, early 40's, tall, built, walks in through the side door, employee entrance. He wears the company uniform, dark green trousers and jersey.

He looks tired, detached from the world, his walk heavy, burdened. His short dark hair un-brushed, face unshaven.

DAVE, 30's, tidy, people pleaser, sits at a desk filling out a time sheet.

Sam walks over to Dave, grabs a set of keys off a large board hanging on the wall.

Dave looks up at him.

DAVE

Hey Sam, how's it going?

Sam doesn't respond. He walks across the room to his locker and gets out a work folder.

DAVE

Everything okay?

He shuts the locker door and walks out.

Dave shakes his head and turns back to his writing.

CO-WORKER walks in, male, 30's, Dave turns to him.

DAVE

You know what's up with Sam? He seems bad today. He totally ignored me.

Co- worker shrugs, walks off.

INT: KITCHEN - DAY - LATER

JULIE, 30's, neatly presented, attractive. Talks on her cellphone.

JULIE

Yeah I'll remember, just make sure

JULIE (CONT'D)

to get Jerry after school. And don't forget you're picking me up. I don't want to take that stupid bus home. Yeah. Me too.

Hangs up, collects her hand bag, heads outside and waits on the porch.

EXT: HOUSE - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

A small 14 seater county community bus, large square windows for all to see into, pulls up alongside the curb.

Julie rummages through her bag looking for something, finds it.

INT: BUS - DAY

She climbs the bus steps.

JULIE

(smiling)
Good morning.

SAM turns his head toward her. Stares past her avoiding eye contact.

SAM

(detached, flat tone)
Morning

She sits in the front row, isle-seat, on the right hand side of the bus. Close enough to make conversation.

JULIE

Isn't this cooler weather fantastic?
I'm so sick of the heat.

The seatbelt CLICKS, she tightens the strap across her lap.

JULIE

The humidity has been unbearable.

SAM

Yeah

Julie looks at his reflection in the rear view mirror.

He stares ahead, withdrawn. She senses he must be having a bad morning.

JULIE

So how are you this morning?

He answers with the same detached, flat tone.

SAM

I'm fine thanks. How are you?

The bus pulls out into the street.

JULIE

(leans forward)

I could be better.

(quick laugh)

My son ruined the transmission in the car. That's why I've been taking the bus.

Sam glances at her through the mirror.

JULIE

I don't know what it is with him. He just doesn't want to take responsibility for anything. He has such a bad attitude, I wish he would hurry up and grow up.

(sarcastically)

My husband spoils him.....

She looks at Sam waiting for a response or some kind of gesture that he's even listening. He stares ahead.

JULIE

Do you have any kids?

Sam slows the bus and makes an unexpected U-turn.

She grabs hold of the hand rail on the door partition in front of her to keep from falling.

The wheelchair lift at the back BANGS and RATTLES.

Bus straightens.

She leans forward, confused.

JULIE

Are you picking someone else up?

SAM

No

JULIE

(concerned)

If you don't mind me asking,
why did you turn around?

No reaction.

JULIE

Um... I'm just letting you know
my drop off is a work one, I
can't be late.

He looks up into the mirror. His haunted eyes stare into hers. A hint of sadness cuts through the detached tone in his voice.

SAM

Do you know what it's like too
lose your family?

Julie leans forward more, confused.

JULIE

What?....No.

A voice suddenly crackles over the CB radio.

DISPATCH (O.S)

467, are you there?

(radio crackles)

467, where are you, we need to
know your whereabouts.

Please respond...

Sam, are you there?

Julie looks down at the radio attached to the panel by his leg.

She looks up, waits for him to answer.

He reaches down, grabs the mic and pulls it up to his lips.

SAM

(detached)

Yeah Dave..... I'm here.

DAVE

Sam, finally.
Look everyone's worried
at the office. A woman rang in
and said that her husband hadn't
been dropped off at his job and
another woman ---

He reaches down and CLICKS the radio off.

The hint of sadness has gone. His eyes watch the road
ahead, empty.

SAM

I found my wife and son dead
this morning.
(a beat)
She shot him.
Then killed herself.

INT: BEDROOM - DAY - FLASHBACK

A WOMAN early 40s, slim, in her nightclothes, lay's with
her arm draped over a 7 year old BOY, small gun in her
hand.

Blood saturates the pillow. Both have a gunshot wound to
the head.

INT: BUS - DAY

Julie sits back in her seat. She can't believe what
she's hearing.

He suddenly throws the bus around a corner.

It tips to the right as it hugs the curb.

She grabs the hand rail and SCREAMS as she sees a parked
car sitting in its path.

The bus just misses it.

SAM

(staring ahead, flat tone)
My daughter went missing two
months ago..... the police
found her body last night....
in a dumpster.

He turns and looks out his window.

SAM

They put my angel in a dumpster.

We can just hear him. He can barely say the words.

SAM

In pieces.

Julie looks past him toward the road, mouth open, eyes gazing, wide, stunned, horrified.

There is a strange silence between them.

His dead eyes look at Julie through the mirror.

SAM

They made me angry.

She looks at him, not quite sure what he's talking about.

She sits up straight, composes herself. She needs to take control of the situation, pull it together, he needs consoling maybe?

JULIE

(false confidence,
caring)

What do you mean? Who made you
angry?

He continues to stare ahead.

SAM

The ones down the back.

More silence.

She slowly turns and looks toward the back.

Another PASSENGER sits by the window.

A skinny man with short black hair and olive complexion, dressed for something important.

Eyes wide, whites clearly visible. His hands grip the top of the seat in front of him.

His head remains glued to the front as his eyes turn in their sockets and look at her. She sees his terror.

Julie slowly turns her gaze away from him and looks to the back of the bus.

She notices a hole in the window. Red splatter inches from it. Before she can get a good enough look -----

The bus rounds another corner, FAST. Its back wheel runs over the curb. The bus jolts violently as the wheel crashes down onto the road. The access lift BASHES and CLANKS loudly against the metal door.

Roberto holds on tight to the seat in front, as he gets jolted around. At the same time Julie loses her grip and falls into the isle.

With her face on the floor, her line of sight gives her a clear view of the back of the bus.

The body of an elderly woman, lies pushed up against the wheelchair access lift. Feet stretched out under Roberto's seat. Blood smeared on the floor under them.

Another body, a man, 50's, lies in the middle of the floor. He has rolled off the woman's body from the erratic driving. He is now in full.

Julie SCREAMS, throws her hand over her mouth and starts to CRY.

A flow of liquid darkens the groin of her jeans.

She pulls herself up onto the seat. Hunching as if she is about to get a beating.

Tears stream down her face as she WHIMPERS and SOBS.

SAM

Shut up!

Roberto starts to mumble a prayer. He rests his forehead on his hands that still cling to the seat in front of him.

Julie catches Sam's eyes glaring at her through the mirror.

She asks, SNIFFLING, almost too afraid too.

JULIE

Why?

SAM

(annoyed, staring ahead)

They complained.

As he continues to talk she slowly reaches into her bag and takes out her phone. Dials 911, puts it under her bag and leaves it on.

SAM

(louder, angry)

They complained about their stupid lives! Their pathetic lives!

While I sit here in my hell.....

That stupid woman moaning about her

dog pissing on the floor. And that

fat bastard whining, going on and on about his lazy kids.....

Each word out of their mouths was like a fist slamming into my gut.

He lifts his hand up and presses his palm against his forehead, then SLAMS it down hard on the steering wheel.

He drops his head. He's silent, contemplating, thinking.

He looks up at the road then into the mirror at Julie.

Unimaginable pain and overwhelming sorrow, scream out through a flow of heavy tears. His rage, gone.

Julie can't escape it she is drawn to his gaze.

SAM

(emotional, crying)

She was only 5.

Her eyes widen, new tears start to gather and roll slowly down her cheeks. She now fully understands his hell. Her terror subsides. She is in the presence of a grieving father and husband, not a monster.

It doesn't last long.

He looks back at the road.

Suddenly he grips the steering wheel tightly, grits his teeth and rocks back and forth as if he has been taken over by some kind of demon.

SAM

(yells)
SHE WAS ONLY 5!

Julie hunches in her seat, and starts to sob.

The monster is back.

He stops rocking, sits up straight, adjusts himself in the seat. Looks side to side, wipes his eyes.

He stares ahead for a moment, focused.

SAM
(cold)
So I shut them up.

He looks toward the top of the dash board, bringing the butt of a handgun to her attention.

Its end sticks out over the hump, enough to be seen but not instantly recognizable.

She realizes what it is.

JULIE
(louder sobs)
Oh God

Roberto's mumbling prayers become louder.

Sam stares ahead

SAM
(calmly)
Roberto back there, he didn't complain.
He knows.
He knows he's a lucky man.

He looks at her through the mirror, his eyes stab into her. Julie is crying curled up on the set by the window. She is not looking at him.

SAM
But you..... You don't.
You're just like them.

Moves in his seat, agitated, looks at the road.

SAM
What I wouldn't give right now,
(looks into the mirror)

to only have to deal with a

(yells)

**SPOILED - SON - AND A BROKEN
- DOWN - CAR!**

He stops abruptly at a red light.

Police SIRENS wail in the distance.

He turns and looks at the body of the man.

SIRENS get louder.

His eyes glare over her with disgust as he turns his head back to the front.

Julie, still sobbing tries to avoid eye contact.

Police lights suddenly appear in the rear view mirror. Flashes of red and blue reflect off the nearby building windows. The sirens are piercing.

They stop.

He reaches down by the driver door and pulls out a sawn off shotgun.

Men in police uniforms can be seen, guns in hand running towards the bus.

He points it at her.

The roughly cut edges of the gun barrels stare at her chest.

SAM

(calmly)

They are right when they say count your blessings. You just never know when it's all going to fall apart.

FADE OUT