

Distress

By

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INT. FAST-FOOD RESTAURANT - DAY

A register closes as, DANA, 32, removes her hat and exhales.

MANAGER

Don't forget to clock out, Dana.

Dana heads to the backroom.

GUEST

Hey, would you be able to take our order?

Dana stops and looks back to see two tall men standing before the counter. She stares at them like a deer in headlights.

DANA

(shaky)

Uhh... Yes. Um, hold on one moment please.

Dana continues into the backroom. She searches around desperately. The walk-in cooler opens as the restaurant manager walks out.

DANA

Hey, Georgia?

GEORGIA

How can I help you, Dana?

DANA

We have a few guests, and my register's closed.

GEORGIA

Sure, honey. I'll help them. You go ahead and clock out. Great job on your first day.

DANA

Thanks.

EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY

A neighborhood bus rolls to a stop at the sign as Dana stands talking with a CO-WORKER. Her bag and water bottle in hand.

The door opens and the co-worker steps up into the bus. She pauses and looks back to see Dana standing in the same place.

CO-WORKER  
Are you coming?

Dana scans through the windows of the bus. Her eyes, skeptical.

DANA  
I think I'm going to walk. Do you want to come with me?

CO-WORKER  
My apartment is like fifteen miles from here.

DANA  
Okay. You go ahead. I'll see you tomorrow.

CO-WORKER  
Are you sure? Come on it's too far to walk.

DANA  
I'm only a few blocks away, I'll just walk.

CO-WORKER  
Alright, you stay safe. See you tomorrow.

DANA  
See ya.

The bus doors close as it takes off. Dana stares over the road to her home. She looks around at the passing cars. A busy, public road. She heads along the sidewalk.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

On the quiet neighborhood street, Dana looks around for sight of others out. The silence seems to unsettle her. She walks at a quicker pace.

Dana comes closer to the corner of the street when she immediately hears A MAN GROANING. Dana stops and looks up to see a SHADOW moving closer along the perpendicular fence in the yard.

She freezes. Looks around panicking. THE SHADOW FALLS OVER at the fence corner. Dana quickly turns and heads back in the other direction.

Her water bottle slips from her grip onto the sidewalk. Her eyes widen in fear.

MAN  
(strained)  
Hello? Is anyone there? Please help  
me.

Dana stands completely still. Her frightened eyes dance around with uncertainty. She slowly lowers to pick up her bottle.

MAN  
I need to get to a hospital.

Dana slowly turns. She stares at the shadow laying on the ground on the other side of the fence.

MAN  
Please, if you're there.

Dana closes her eyes and exhales. She begins to hyperventilate as she takes reluctant steps forward.

The man groans as he tries to sit up, but fails. Dana walks around the fence from the far edge of the sidewalk as the man comes into view.

MAN  
Can you help me, please?

The man looks at Dana upside down. He appears to be in his thirties. Wearing a dress shirt and jeans.

DANA  
(shaky)  
W-What happened?

MAN  
(wincing)  
I've been shot. I can't tell how  
bad. But every time I try to stand  
up or walk it hurts bad. What's...  
What's your name?

Dana stares at him.

MAN  
I understand. My name is Grayson.  
Could you help me get to a  
hospital?

Dana remains silent and petrified.

GRAYSON

Please. I can't walk any further.

Dana slowly moves, and nods her head.

DANA

Y-Yeah. Okay. Um. Okay.

She moves to Grayson and places her hand underneath his head. She helps lift him up to sit as he groans.

DANA

How did... How did this happen?

GRAYSON

(straining)

I was just... going to work. And these guys... probably a gang, they pointed a gun at my window. Told me to get out. They asked me to give them everything I had. Took my money. My phone. I just... couldn't let them get away with this, so I fought back. And then... after they shot me, I ran out here. Trying to hide from them. They're still looking for me.

Dana looks around worried.

GRAYSON

Maybe it's better if you don't help me. I don't want you to get hurt if they come back.

DANA

We should call the police.

GRAYSON

Do you have a phone?

DANA

No. Maybe we can ask someone. Can you stand?

Grayson strains as Dana attempts to help him to his feet. She pulls his arm over her shoulders.

GRAYSON

Thank you. For helping me.

Dana looks down. Her eyes uncertain. They step onto the sidewalk together.

As they move slowly towards the main road, they hear a ROARING CAR ENGINE FAST APPROACHING FROM BEHIND.

Dana and Grayson come to a steady stop as the dated vehicle slams it breaks nearby. Dana's mouth drops. Grayson stares with wide eyes.

Several gangsters exit the vehicle and approach them.

GANGSTER

Whoo! I knew we'd find this dude.  
Tryin' to run from us.

GANGSTER 2

Where you goin' man?

GANGSTER 1

Who's this huh? You're wife?

Grayson and Dana stand before the gangsters frozen.

GRAYSON

Please, just leave us alone. You  
already have everything of mine.

GANGSTER 1

You punched me in the face  
remember? You think I forgot about  
that?

GANGSTER 2

Gonna tune yo ass up.

GRAYSON

If you want me fine, just leave her  
alone. She's just trying to help  
me.

GANGSTER 1

What-chyou doin' with him huh? You  
wanna play too huh girl?

GRAYSON

Leave her alone.

GANGSTER 2

Mmm.

DANA

I've got money. Not much, but if  
that's what you want?

GANGSTER 1  
Hmm, you know what I want baby.

DANA  
(tentative)  
Okay then...

Dana reaches into her bag. She fiddles around inside the bag. SHE QUICKLY RIPS OUT A SMALL CANISTER. Already prepared to use, she sprays each of the gangsters directly in the eyes.

They scream and cover their eyes as they turn away.

DANA  
Come on! Hurry!

Dana helps Grayson move with her as he appears in shock. They move to the gangster's vehicle and look inside to see the keys still in the ignition as the music continues to play.

DANA  
Get in!

Dana opens the back door as Grayson falls inside and pulls his legs in. She slams the door and hops into the driver side. She closes the door and stares at the gangsters as they reel from their injuries.

Dana hits the gas and takes off from the neighborhood.

INT. VEHICLE - DAY

Grayson removes his hand from his wound as it continues to bleed. He struggles to sit up.

Dana appears completely frightened. Her hands grip the steering wheel as she sits forward.

DANA  
The hospital is about a mile from here. We're almost there.

Grayson falls back into the seat. Relieved. He stares at Dana's intense eyes in the rear-view mirror.

FADE TO:

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

A nurse finishes talking with Grayson as he sits in the hospital bed with bandages on his abdomen.

The nurse nods to Dana as they pass each other in the room. Dana reaches the bedside. Grayson looks at Dana with soft eyes. She smiles modestly as she touches the bandage on his stomach.

DANA

No major arteries or organs. You're gonna be fine.

GRAYSON

Thanks to you.

Dana gives a soft laugh.

DANA

You don't know me. This... is the last thing I ever imagined myself being involved with.

GRAYSON

Could have fooled me... I never expected you to take their car...

Dana blushes as Grayson smiles proudly.

DANA

It was stolen. They've been arrested as well.

GRAYSON

So I'm not the only person you greatly helped today. Guess that makes you my hero.

DANA

I'm not a hero. The farthest thing from me really.

GRAYSON

What hero ever really calls them self a hero? I don't know you... Maybe we can change that with dinner sometime?

DANA

(laughs modestly)  
Um. I-I'd... like that.

Grayson smiles.

GRAYSON

Oh uh... one thing that might  
really help me get to know you...

DANA

What's that?

GRAYSON

Could you tell me your name?

Dana closes her eyes as she grins.

DANA

Dana. My names, Dana.

FADE OUT: