

Hard Fare

FADE IN:

BLACKNESS

The scrabbling of fingers. An interior light comes on to reveal a car dashboard.

SUPER - NEW YORK CITY OCTOBER 2016

INT.TAXI CAB - DAY

The steering wheel is bent back towards the smashed windscreen, behind which loom massive slabs of broken concrete. The entire vehicle has been encased and reduced to a small space inside.

Bloodied hands tilt the rear vision mirror from it's crazy angle. Eyes glazed with pain and shock blink. This is LARRY(35). He turns his head slowly to survey what his world has shrunk down to. GROANS at the hurt this brings...

LARRY

Oh fuck.

He tenses his body and tries to moves his legs. This time the pain draws a long HISS from his pale lips. He peers down to see his lower body wedged in the crumpled wreckage of the driver's section.

LARRY

Jesus, that hurts...

He sees the slabs of concrete only feet in front of him. Frowns...then remembers.

LARRY

Damn...the overpass. Collapsed out of nowhere.

A GROAN from behind him. Larry tilts his head to listen.

LARRY

Hey, back there. You ok? You hurt?

He adjusts the mirror to its normal spot. The interior light flickers off for a moment, before coming back on. In the back seat - or what resembles it now - a young man, INZIR(20) stares back at Larry. He has dark features and speaks with an accent.

INZIR

My legs...they are pinned beneath your seat. And I think one of my arms is broken.

LARRY

Yeah, my legs are trapped too, man. We're stuck here for now it seems. I don't blame you if you never use my cab again.

He LAUGHS, a gritty sound with little humor. Looking around the cab interior, he notices a backpack on the floor on the passenger side. His cell phone is next to it smashed up. The two way radio is junked as well. And the fare meter.

INZIR

What...what has happened?

He tries to move but his body is wedged firmly. One of his arms is free, the other bent and useless. He emits a short SCREAM of pain.

LARRY

Whoa, stay still! You don't know what sort of damage has been done. Won't do any good panicking.

Inzir continues to thrash and moan.

LARRY

Hey, come on, man, work with me here. Settle down...please.

Sobbing now, Inzir stops moving, slumps his head back.

LARRY

That's it...deep breaths. Keep calm, thats the key. Its what my old man always used to say.

(beat)

Now, what happened you ask? The overpass crashing down on us is what happened. Maybe a truck took out a support, I don't know. Guess you won't make it to Metlife now, huh? Giants are gonna have to win without you!

He watches Inzir in the mirror. The young man seems to be searching in the area around him.

LARRY

Hey, you got a cell phone? Mine's kaput.

INZIR

I...no, I left it at home.

(beat)

Is my...backpack anywhere near you?

LARRY

Your backpack? Yes, its here in the front. Passenger side floor. I remember you had it on your lap just before the crash. Why are you so concerned about it?

Their eyes lock in the mirror before Inzir looks away.

LARRY

If you got drugs or stolen shit in there, hey, I don't really care. Doesn't matter now, does it? We just sit tight and wait for a crew to rescue us. Busy road this so I imagine there is fire trucks and police swarming all over the place out there. We'll be fine.

(beat)

I'm Larry, by the way, in case you didn't see my name tag. Larry the cabbie.

A pause then...

INZIR

Inzir.

LARRY

Inzir? Well, nice to meet you, Inzir. Pity its not under better conditions, but, hey, thats life I guess.

Inzir doesn't answer. His eyes flare for a moment, he leans forward. A strangled cry from his lips.

LARRY

Jesus, man, I told you to sit still. You're gonna do some serious damage to yourself.

He frowns as he notices something. A green light blinks from an object protruding from a pocket on the backpack. Larry fumbles in the broken console, pulls out a small flashlight. Shines it on the back pack.

A timer, a simple device. It reads 3:30, the seconds ticking down even as he watches.

LARRY

What the fuck?

INZIR

What is wrong?

LARRY

Why does your backpack have a
fucking timer on it?

INZIR

I...is...is a green light on?

LARRY

Yes. Please tell me its nothing
to worry about.

He eyes Inzir in the mirror. The young man averts his eyes.

LARRY

Talk to me.

He turns his head as far as he can, SCREAMS into the back.

LARRY

Talk to me, you son of a bitch!
If that is a bomb, you answer me,
goddam it.

(beat)

You seemed like a decent fellow
when I picked you up.

He checks the backpack - the timer reads 3:05 and continues
to count down. Inzir draws a great sobbing breath, lifts his
head.

INZIR

How long?

LARRY

What?

INZIR

How many minutes left?

LARRY

Three. Let me guess...your local
mosque has filled you with hate
for all Americans so you wanted
to kill as many as you can. That
it? What was the plan? Set the
timer, get out at the stadium,
leaving me to be blown up with a
heap of others?

INZIR

I...no, I'm not a radical. I work,
I have a job.

LARRY

So why do this? What the hell will your family think? Unless they are involved. Yeah, thats it. I bet you got the whole family thing going. Worm your way into our society, smile and pretend its all good. Sleeper cells, right.

Silence from the back.

LARRY

Jesus, I was right. What kind of a world are you people creating? Preaching hate and death.

(beat)

Nothing to say? Well, fuck you buddy. Fuck you and all your kind. Murdering scum.

His heads slumps back, resigned. He lowers the sun visor - a small photo is taped to it. A woman and two children. His fingers caress it.

INZIR

(low voice)

All my family is dead. Except for my sister.

Larry's tortured eyes drift up to the mirror. Inzир stares back with similar pain.

INZIR

They were killed in Afghanistan by a U.S drone two weeks ago.

LARRY

I...I'm sorry to hear that.

INZIR

Our entire village wiped out. Miles from any Taliban forces. Destroyed without warning.

(beat)

I have been in the U.S for six months, working to pay for them to join me here.

He sees the photo on the visor.

INZIR

Is that...your family?

LARRY

Yes. And I want to see them again. Can the timer be stopped? Please, don't let this happen. I can reach it if you...

INZIR

There is a code to disarm it, yes.

He frowns, mind all over the place. The timer reads 1:50...

INZIR

But I don't know if...no, I will
stay true to my family's memory.
Its out of my hands now.

Suddenly, banging noises from outside the cab, muffled voices too.

LARRY

Listen! Hear that? I bet emergency
services are out there, moving
rubble, digging us out. Probably
have cranes.

Even as he speaks, the giant pieces of concrete move slightly. The sound of drilling and cutting cutting tools grows louder.

LARRY

Inzir...please...give me the code.
I can stop this. More innocent
people will die now the concrete
is being moved. People that are
trying to help us. They don't
know who you are or what you
planned!

Inzir's eyes flick to the mirror, lips quivering. Larry holds his gaze.

LARRY

You said you had a sister?

INZIR

(whispers)
Yes. Aatifa...she is only fifteen.

LARRY

How will she feel if you let this
happen?

INZIR

No, no, keep her out of this. It
has nothing to do with her. They
won't know who I was.

Larry keeps his eyes locked on Inzir. 1:00.

LARRY

Oh, but it will have everything to do with her if the bomb goes off. You see, even if there's only little bits of you left, the authorities will identify you. A finger, a couple of teeth...you'll be on a database somewhere. You probably had a red flag against your name when you entered the country. Your passport would see to that.

INZIR

Stop it. I don't want to hear this.

Tears well in his eyes.

LARRY

Too bad. They will identify you, they will splash your name and face all over the news and your sister, your fifteen year old sister Aatifa, who I'm sure is a lovely young girl, she will see it and she will weep at the actions of her brother!

INZIR

No, you have no right to...

He weeps freely now, gasping long breaths.

LARRY

And she will hate you for it, Inzir. Because she has to live with the shame for the rest of her life.

(beat)

She will curse your name.

The sounds of rescue grow louder now.

INZIR

(whispers)

Seven eight four.

LARRY

I...what? Inzir? The code is seven eight four?

Inzir nods, head slumps back.

LARRY

Good man.

He reaches out to the backpack, fingers fumbling. The timer reads thirty seconds.

Suddenly, the cab shifts as outside forces work at freeing it. The backpack tips over to face away from Larry's grasp.

LARRY

Oh you gotta be shitting me. FUCK!

Inzir watches helplessly, arms straining to be free. Larry takes deep breaths, readies himself and...lunges towards the briefcase. He SCREAMS as agony rips into his lower body. His fingers snag the backpack, pull it closer. Fifteen seconds.

LARRY

Oh jesus that hurts.

He claws at the keypad, enters the numbers. There's nothing for a moment - the timer clicks down to five...then the green light blinks off.

Silence as both men hold their breath...just in case. Nothing happens. Both men slump in their seats, drained both mentally and physically.

A sound at the window next to Larry - the scrape of a shovel or crowbar. A dusty face appears, looks in, yells back over his shoulder. The dim light of day is visible back up the 'tunnel' behind him.

RESCUE WORKER

Two people in here. Both alive.

He turns back. Larry smiles wearily. Inzir watches them both.

LARRY

Yeah, alive, only just. Man, its good to see you.

RESCUE WORKER

Glad to help. Now, I need to know how bad you guys are hurt. So the medics out there are prepared.

He looks at Larry's legs wedged under the dash. Then he shines a torch over at Inzir, nods.

RESCUE WORKER

Possible limb fractures...any head trauma? Chest pain?

LARRY

No, nothing like that.

Inzir shakes his head.

RESCUE WORKER

Ok, well you guys won't be doing the NYC Marathon next week but we'll take care of you. Sit tight, we'll get you out as soon as we can. I'll bring some water if you like.

LARRY

Wait...there's something you should know. The backpack on the floor there. We think its a bomb.

RESCUE WORKER

Jesus Christ, how the hell...

LARRY

We don't know for sure. A passenger left it, I didn't even know it was there until the young man in back told me when I picked him up. Before we could do anything about it, the overpass collapsed right on us.

RESCUE WORKER

I'll get a bomb squad right away. Its chaos out there but this will take priority for sure.

LARRY

Do they know what happened exactly?

RESCUE WORKER

Truck was too high for the overpass. Smashed into it, brought the whole damn thing down.

INZIR

How many...how much damage is there?

RESCUE WORKER

Five cars were crushed. You two are the only ones we've found alive so far.

He takes another look at the confined space, shakes his head then reverses back to the outside.

Larry turns his head, ignoring the pain. He looks at Inzir, nods.

INZIR

You could've told him about me. But you didn't. You...lied to him? I don't understand.

LARRY

I told him the truth, Inzir. You
did help me.

He reaches his bloodied hand out. Inzir stares at him before
taking it. A moment between them, then both hands drop back
in exhaustion.

INZIR

Thank you. I was so...confused.

LARRY

The world is a confused place.
Maybe its up to regular guys like
us to try and make a difference?

FADE OUT.

THE END.