

**DARK PASSENGER**

Written by

Kathy Cranford

FADE IN.

**EXT. - A LONELY RURAL HIGHWAY -- DAY**

An SUV snakes its way along the curvy two-lane road, as snow covered mountains loom.

DOUG (V.O.)  
I will call myself Doug. Doug Graves. Only those who knew me before would understand the irony. It isn't my real name. You have to keep changing them when you're running. Running from what you may wonder? From a lot of things actually. But mainly...from myself.

**CLOSE ON THE DRIVER OF THE VEHICLE - CONTINUOUS**

DOUG GRAVES, 40s, graying at the temples, middle-age handsome.

DOUG (V.O.)  
So I am Doug. My third name, actually. After my second death.

A small chuckle from Doug.

DOUG (V.O.)  
Or at least everyone thinks I'm dead. That's a good starting point for someone like me. Someone with no apparent soul to form conscience...or regret.

A beat

DOUG (V.O.)  
(more somber now)  
I've been trying for more than ten years to escape the compelling darkness within me, but it remains...waiting. I've come to the conclusion that if I can't overcome it, perhaps the answer is to redirect it. A fresh start, a new town, somewhere that needs my...talent.

**EXT. DAY - SAME ROAD - A WHILE LATER**

The SUV pulls slowly into a small mountain town.

**EXT. - MOUNTAIN TOWN - DAY - SOMETIME LATER**

Doug walks through the idyllic streets of the town. Its peaceful quiet, a stark contrast to his previous life on the city streets.

DOUG(V.O.)

Some might call me a vigilante. Actually, I prefer to think of myself as a kind of Robin Hood. Not taking money from the rich, but stealing justice where it is lacking, and bestowing it upon those who...deserve it.

FADE TO:

**INT. SMALL COFFEE SHOP - DAY**

Doug sits alone at a table studying a newspaper in front of him. From Doug's POV we...

**CLOSE ON:**

A HEADLINE

*"SECOND YOUNG WOMAN FOUND MURDERED IN RESORT TOWN"*

DOUG (V.O.)

I call myself a freelance journalist now. So of course this headline caught my eye. I can't help myself. Who could be killing young women in this little town? And why? Is it a visitor? Or maybe a local? A homegrown predator hiding in plain sight? Worth finding out...just for the story of course.

A WAITRESS approaches, pretty, early 30s.

WAITRESS

Can I get you anything else?

DOUG

No, thanks. One coffee is my limit.

WAITRESS

Okay, I'll just leave this with you then.

She lays a ticket on the table and then notices the newspaper headline. She pales a bit. Nervous. Doug notices.

DOUG  
Are you okay?

WAITRESS  
Yeah, we're all just a little jumpy  
I guess.

Doug sees that she has spied the article.

DOUG  
Do you know who I could talk to  
about this?

He holds up the paper bearing the headline. A look of concern crosses the Waitress' face.

WAITRESS  
Are you a cop?

DOUG  
No. I'm a reporter. Just trying to  
get a story.

The Waitress is still a little wary, but smiles hesitantly, breathing a small sigh of relief.

WAITRESS  
Maybe the Police Chief here. Chief  
Waters. The station is just down  
the street.

DOUG  
Seems like a good place to start.  
I'll talk to him. Chief Waters you  
say?

The Waitress nods, still a bit apprehensive, but then adds:

WAITRESS  
Yes, but it's not him, it's her.  
She's a female.

DOUG  
Oh, okay, right. I shouldn't have  
assumed.

He nods and starts to rise, but the Waitress continues on, her fears spilling out.

WAITRESS

We're all scared to death. Nothing like this has ever happened here. We're just a little ski town. People come here to have fun, not be murdered. And besides, they were locals. I knew both of them. We were...friends.

DOUG

I'm sorry. I'm sure the police will get to the bottom of it and find the killer.

The Waitress nods and dabs at a tear that has formed.

WAITRESS

I hope so. We all do.

Doug rises, lays some money on the table. Nods to the waitress and heads out the door.

**EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY - LATER**

The Police Station. A small building with a single, marked SQUAD CAR parked outside.

Doug approaches and enters through the door as we open to...

**INT. - POLICE STATION - DAY**

A FEMALE OFFICER, early 30s, uniformed, sits at a desk.

DOUG

Hello, is Chief Waters available?

CHIEF

I'm Chief Waters, can I help you?

Doug takes her in, she's strikingly pretty.

DOUG

Yes, my name is Doug Graves. I'm a reporter. I was hoping to talk with you about the recent murders in town.

She eyes him suspiciously as she rises from the desk. We now see that she has a contusion to her cheek and the beginnings of a black eye.

CHIEF

This isn't an entertainment item,  
Mr...Mr..

DOUG

Graves. Doug Graves. And no, I was  
actually hoping to do an  
investigative piece.

CHIEF

And what is your interest in this,  
Mr. Graves?

DOUG

I actually have somewhat of a  
background in law enforcement.  
Retired now. I just have an  
interest in writing the story.

CHIEF

Well, there is no story to write.  
So far we have no clues and no  
suspects. I'm afraid I have nothing  
to offer you.

She stares directly at him for a moment. Doug takes in her  
injured face.

DOUG

On the job injury?

A beat as the Chief considers him.

CHIEF

No, I fell on the ski slope. That's  
all.

Doug nods.

DOUG

Looks like you've been in a fight.

The Chief, uncomfortable with his summation, pauses for a  
moment then takes the opportunity to turn the conversation  
from herself. She rises and extends her hand.

CHIEF

I'm sorry Mr. Graves, I didn't  
properly introduce myself. I'm  
Police Chief Waters, but please,  
it's a small town, most everyone  
just calls me Deb.

Doug is momentarily stricken, as if he'd been slapped.

DOUG  
(almost whispered)  
Deb?

CHIEF  
Yes.

A beat

CHIEF (CONT'D)  
Is everything all right Mr. Graves?

DOUG  
(snapping out of it)  
Yes. Yes of course. Oh, and please,  
it's Doug.

CHIEF  
Well Doug, this is an ongoing  
investigation, I can't give you a  
lot of information. We have  
Detectives coming up from Denver  
again, now that's there's been a  
second murder.

DOUG  
I understand. It's just that maybe  
I can be of some help, as well as  
getting an outline for my story. I  
do have some experience in cases  
similar to this. Maybe I can give  
you some insight into the killer's  
mind. What type clues he may leave,  
that type thing.

The Chief considers him for a moment.

CHIEF  
I suppose I can go along with that.  
Someone to work along with me.

DOUG  
Great. Can I take you to lunch? We  
can discuss any questions you might  
have. No specifics of the case,  
just general information.

CHIEF  
Ok, lunch it is. Tomorrow?

DOUG  
Tomorrow. It's a date. I'll look  
forward to it.

She looks at him questioningly.

DOUG (CONT'D)  
I didn't mean "a date". You know,  
just lunch, business. Tomorrow.

CHIEF  
I like the sound of date more than  
business. Lunch tomorrow it is.

**EXT. - COFFEE SHOP - DAY - THE NEXT DAY - QUICK SHOT**

FADE TO:

**INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY**

Doug and the Chief, whom we now know as DEB, seated at a table. Deep in conversation. We join them in progress.

DEB  
So you seem to know a lot about the  
ins and outs of murder  
investigation. What type of law  
enforcement were you involved in?

DOUG  
Let's just say I know my way around  
a crime scene. But like I said,  
that's in my past now.

The same Waitress from the previous day approaches. She eyes Deb with apparent disdain.

WAITRESS  
Do you guys want the special today,  
or can I get you a menu?

DEB  
(sarcastically)  
Hey, Courtney. How are you?

They're obviously acquainted and from their interaction, have a history of some sort.

WAITRESS  
(just as sarcastically)  
Living the dream, Deb. Living the  
dream.

She rolls her eyes and sweeps her hand around to indicate the surroundings. Doug takes in the vibe between them.



DOUG  
The special is fine with me.

DEB  
Yeah ok, make that two specials.  
Thanks.

She directs a fake smile toward the Waitress, who doesn't return it.

WAITRESS  
Two specials. Right.

She turns and leaves quickly, not looking back.

DOUG  
Something between you two?

DEB  
What makes you think that?

DOUG  
Don't know. Just a guess.

DEB  
Just high school drama, still hanging on after all these years. Have you ever heard the term "mean girls"?

DOUG  
I have. Which one of you was the mean girl?

DEB  
Well her, obviously. Her and her buddies had it in for me all along. Stole my boyfriend for the grand finale. But I guess time wounds all heels, right? I mean, I'm the Chief of Police and she's still...a waitress. Same job she had back in high school.

Doug is listening, narrowing his eyes as he absorbs the venom in her words. Suddenly, her phone rings. She answers.

DEB (CONT'D)  
Chief Waters.

A beat as she listens.

DEB (CONT'D)  
What? Where? I'll be right there.

Then to Doug.

DEB (CONT'D)  
I'm sorry, I'm going to have to  
skip the lunch.

DOUG  
What's the problem?

Deb is stoic.

DEB  
They found another victim.

She rises quickly and is gone out the door, leaving Doug  
alone at the table until...

**FROM O.S. - A SCREAM**

Doug sees it is Courtney, the Waitress. She falls to her  
knees shaking. She holds her cell phone in her trembling  
hand. Doug rushes to her. From Doug's POV we see the  
message, not intended for his eyes.

CELL PHONE TEXT  
*From: Unknown Sender*

*"You're next, bitch."*

**INT. - DOUG'S ROOM - NIGHT - SOMETIME LATER**

Deb lies gagged and strapped to a table in the middle of the  
room. She struggles in vain against her restraints. Doug,  
dressed head to toe in surgical plastic and gloves busies  
himself methodically taping the last pieces of plastic  
sheeting to the wall. He hums to himself as if he is doing a  
mundane chore.

DOUG  
(to himself)  
And I never thought I'd need to do  
this again...

He shrugs then stretches his arms out as if opening a show.

DOUG (CONT'D)  
...but here we are.

Finished, he turns and approaches the table.

DOUG (CONT'D)  
I really wasn't counting on this  
for our next date.

He smiles menacingly as Deb thrashes and mumbles unintelligibly through the gag.

DOUG (CONT'D)  
So you thought you'd teach the  
"mean girls" a lesson? Well, now  
you've met a "mean guy" who's going  
to teach you one.

He removes the gag from her mouth.

DOUG (CONT'D)  
Any last words?

DEB  
(whispering, scratchy voice)  
How did you know it was me?

Doug allows a small, sinister laugh to escape.

DOUG  
Let's just say I have an inner  
voice that guides me.

He pulls a gleaming, razor sharp knife and holds it in front of her face. Her eyes bulge with terror.

DOUG (CONT'D)  
Here's your final lesson, Deb.  
Crime doesn't pay. It never pays.

He slides the knife smoothly across the skin of her throat, a pool of seeping blood arising quickly behind the blade.

FADE OUT.

**OVER BLACK**

DOUG (V.O.)  
And so my Dark Passenger arises  
once more. I know now that I  
cannot overcome him and that his  
presence will always rule over me.  
A different name or location will  
never change who he is...or who I  
am. For we are one and the same.  
In the end, we will always  
be...Dexter.

THE END