

First Responders

by

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FADE IN:

INT. AMBULANCE - NIGHT

CHRISTIAN (50s) sits behind the wheel of the ambulance. His arm rests through the open window.

JAVIER (30s) fiddles with the radio dial. Stations nearly come through but elude him.

In the back, a body bag lies strapped to a stretcher.

JAVIER

When are they going to put jacks
in these rigs so we can play our
own music?

CHRISTIAN

Yeah, because I really want to
listen to that ear-bleeding noise
you call music.

JAVIER

EDM is more than music, my friend.
It's a journey.

CHRISTIAN

Journey. Now that's music.
(sings)
Don't stop believin'!

JAVIER

Stop. I'm begging you.

CHRISTIAN

Where are we?

Javier consults his phone.

JAVIER

Still about fifteen minutes from
the highway.

CHRISTIAN

Good thing you have a signal.

JAVIER

Barely. Otherwise I'd put on some
sweet beats for you.

Javier waves his arms in some decent dance floor moves.

Behind him, the body bag jerks.

CHRISTIAN

You get laid with moves like that?

JAVIER

It's about the music, not getting laid.

CHRISTIAN

So that's a no. You should try ballroom. Lead a lady on the dance floor and you can waltz her into your bed.

JAVIER

Don't be creepy, dude.

The body bag jerks again. Something presses against the straps holding it to the stretcher.

CHRISTIAN

I'm just saying women like--

DISPATCH (V.O.)

(over CB radio)

M-34, what's your status?

Javier lifts the microphone.

JAVIER

This is M-34. ETA about twenty-five minutes.

DISPATCH (V.O.)

Copy that. Be ready to roll again when you arrive. We're all hands here.

JAVIER

Roger.

Javier replaces the microphone.

Behind them, the body bag stretches and twists, as if something were looking for a way out.

CHRISTIAN

Sounds like something big.

Javier consults his phone again.

JAVIER

I'll see what I can find out.

The body bag swells at a corner. The heavy duty zipper holding it bursts open and a bloody hand and arm shoot through the opening.

JAVIER

Weird. Google isn't responding.

CHRISTIAN

Maybe there's no service.

JAVIER

No, I'm connected. Twitter's down too. Let me try the radio again.

Static noise floods from the speakers. Javier spins the dial. Behind him, the arm flails around, then starts pulling the body bag opening wider.

A station comes through clearly with the latest dance floor beats.

JAVIER

Oh, shit! This is what I'm talking about!

Javier turns up the volume. He dances in his seat as Christian gives him a dirty look and rolls up his window.

Behind them, a woman with long matted hair sits up on the stretcher. She turns towards the noise. Her eyes are dead, like a shark. Her lips are mashed, her cheek scraped. Cuts and gashes cover her arms and torso. Her chest is barely concealed by the remnants of a nightgown that has been slashed to ribbons.

She reaches for Javier. Her legs are still trapped in the body bag, strapped to the stretcher. She claws at the straps, thrashes her feet.

Javier is bopping and flailing to the music. Christian shakes his head, but his fingers are tapping in time.

The woman thrashes violently. She frees one leg and stops thrashing. She extracts her other leg and rises.

Javier bops his head with the music.

JAVIER

You can't help dancing to that.

CHRISTIAN

This isn't the news, hot shot.

The woman shuffles towards them. She reaches out for Christian.

He turns the wheel, following the road around a bend. The woman loses her balance, falls onto the stretcher.

The music suddenly cuts out. Dead air follows.

Javier tests the dial. Static either way. He returns to the silence.

JAVIER

Where'd the music go?

The woman rises again. She shuffles forward just as the engine revs up, almost causing her to lose her balance again. The emergency lights start to flash.

CHRISTIAN

Screw this. I'm double-timing it.

The woman reaches for Javier.

EXT. COUNTRY HOME - NIGHT

EARL (60s) sits in his favorite chair, smoking a pipe and stargazing. He raises a beer can only to find it empty.

EARL

Figures. Just got comfortable.

He groans as he rises. Flashing lights grab his attention.

An ambulance speeds down the road towards him. It veers suddenly, then veers back too far and plows into a power pole.

Sparks shoot as the pole collapses. Earl's house plunges into darkness.

He shuffles down the steps and across the yard towards the ambulance.

GRETA (60s) emerges from the house holding a partially husked ear of corn.

GRETA

Earl? The power's out--oh my!

EARL

Don't just stand there, call for help!

GRETA
All right, I'm going.

EXT. AMBULANCE - NIGHT

Earl reaches the back of the ambulance. Someone bangs on the doors from inside.

EARL
Hold your horses!

Earl grasps the door handle as hands slap at the windows.

Locked.

He moves towards the driver side door as the pounding continues.

Earl pulls on the door. It groans in protest. He puts his weight into it, finally manages to force it open. He stares inside in dismay.

EARL
Lord have mercy.

He crosses himself, then leans into the cabin, leaving just his legs in view.

EARL
Hey, back there! Are you hurt?

He yells as he's yanked into the ambulance.

INT/EXT. COUNTRY HOME - NIGHT

Greta shuffles through the dark house. The ambulance can be seen through the front windows and the open front doorway as she moves.

GRETA
For Pete's sake, where's the damn phone?

She shuffles around in the dark, knocking things over.

A figure rounds the back of the ambulance and moves towards the house, out of focus.

GRETA
I told him we didn't need a cordless contraption. What's wrong with the dial phone we had?

Greta moves into the hallway, the front doorway behind her. The figure shuffles slowly across the yard.

GRETA
Area codes, he says. So it takes a little longer to dial. Is that really the end of the world?

The figure comes more into focus. It's the woman.

GRETA
Aha! Found you.

Greta presses the dial button. No signal.

GRETA
What is the matter with this thing? The battery's fine!

Behind her, the woman reaches the steps.

GRETA
Oh, for Pete's sake.

Greta sets the handset down and takes a cell phone out of her pocket.

GRETA
I hate this darn thing.

The woman shuffles up the steps as Greta dials.

OPERATOR (V.O.)
(over phone)
9-1-1, what is your emergency?

GRETA
Oh, hello! An ambulance drove right off the road and knocked out our power.

The woman bangs the door as she enters the house. Greta holds her hand up behind her for quiet.

GRETA
Just a minute, Earl, I'm on with them now.

OPERATOR (V.O.)
Is anyone hurt, ma'am?

GRETA
Sorry, dear. What was that?

The woman lunges, pulling Greta off her feet. She doesn't even have time to yell.

The phone clatters to the floor. Muffled sounds of struggling ensue.

OPERATOR (V.O.)
Ma'am? Are you there? Ma'am?

INT. POLICE CRUISER - NIGHT

A police cruiser speeds along an empty road, lights flashing.

ARI (30s) grips the wheel as he scans the road for hazards. MARIA (20s) uses the laptop.

MARIA
Fire department's swamped too.
What's going on?

ARI
It's those city suits mucking with
our budgets, that's what.

MARIA
I don't think this is just about
being under staffed.
(beat)
It's just up ahead.

EXT. AMBULANCE - NIGHT

The police cruiser parks across from the ambulance, lights flashing. Both officers climb out, hands on their sidearms.

Maria leads the way with a flashlight. Ari watches the house as they move to the ambulance.

INT. AMBULANCE - CONTINUOUS

Maria flashes her light through the open driver door. The cabin is empty except for all the blood. She flashes her light into the rear.

EXT. AMBULANCE - CONTINUOUS

MARIA
Nothing. Looks bad though.

ARI
Maybe they were brought inside.

EXT. COUNTRY HOME - CONTINUOUS

Ari and Maria round the ambulance and approach the house. The flashlights play across the open door and windows.

ARI
Police! Is anyone there?

Silence is the only reply. Ari presses his radio microphone.

The officers draw their sidearms and approach the open door.

INT. COUNTRY HOME - CONTINUOUS

Ari flashes his light inside from room to room. It settles on a trail of blood on the floor.

ARI
We're coming in!

Ari swings left, Maria sweeps right. They cover corners and doorways quickly, efficiently.

MARIA
Clear.

ARI
Clear.

They follow the trail of blood up the hallway towards the rear of the house. It leads out the open back door.

Ari checks his corners. Maria comes up to check hers. She nods to him and Ari steps through the back door.

EXT. COUNTRY HOME - REAR - CONTINUOUS

The blood trail leads away from the back porch into a corn field.

Ari presses his radio microphone.

ARI
105 to dispatch. We need
additional units.

OPERATOR (V.O.)

(over radio)

All units are on calls, 105. Use caution.

ARI

What do you think?

MARIA

If a little corn scared us, we'd be in the big city.

ARI

All right. Stick to my back. Look left and watch our rear.

Ari follows the blood trail into the first rows of corn.

EXT. CORNFIELD - NIGHT

Ari pushes through the corn, flashing his light ahead and to the right. Maria follows closely, flashing left and back.

They push deeper and deeper, the only sounds the rustle of corn and their rapid breathing.

Maria nearly collides with Ari when he comes to an abrupt stop.

Ari's light shines on the woman's back. Her clothes are dirtier and stained with blood, her bare feet covered in mud.

ARI

Police! Put your hands up!

Maria watches as the woman slowly turns.

ARI

Put them up now!

Ari's flashlight zeroes in on the woman's face. The dead eyes stare back. Blood drips from her mouth to the red soaked rags she wears.

She shuffles forward. Ari fires two shots, center mass.

She takes another step.

MARIA

Ay dios mio...

Hands lunge from the corn next to Maria. She screams as
Zombie Javier tackles at her.

EXT. CORNFIELD - OVERHEAD SHOT

Rising higher, the corn field retreats slowly below.

Two more shots fire. Then, silence.

The cornfield retreats further.

OPERATOR (V.O.)
(over radio)
105, this is dispatch. The
National Guard is here. We're
sending units your way now.

The cornfield shrinks away. We can see edges now.

OPERATOR (V.O.)
105, please respond.

It retreats further, and five figures emerge from it,
each heading in a different direction.

FADE OUT.

THE END