

Good Neighbors

by
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FADE IN:

EXT. LOS ANGELES - ESTABLISHING - DAY

The skyline is shrouded in a red haze -- smog lit by the setting sun. DRY LIGHTNING CRACKLES across the sky.

SUPER: LOS ANGELES, 2066

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET - BUS STOP - DAY

A RICKETY BUS belching black smoke grinds to a stop at an intersection. The door jerks open and DELLA RUIZ steps down. She waves her thanks at the driver.

Della (22) is attractive despite the scar on the left side of her face. She's wearing paint-stained coveralls that conceal a trim but powerful physique.

HER POV - THE STREET

The long block is lined with four- and five-story apartment buildings. The street and sidewalk are spotless. The cars lining the curbs are mostly old but all are clean.

WITH DELLA

As she walks down the sidewalk, a slight limp in her left leg. She takes note of the many home-made HALLOWEEN DECORATIONS on the doors and windows.

MRS SCALZI

Hi Della!

The middle-aged WOMAN waves from a third-floor window. Della waves back.

From the other side of the street, in a doorway, a young MOTHER holding a baby in her arms calls out:

YOUNG MOTHER

Afternoon, Miss Ruiz!

DELLA

Afternoon!

(sotto voce)

Whoever you are...

An elderly woman carrying a plastic bag, MRS CARILLO, appears ahead of her and stops to talk.

MRS. CARILLO

Hello, Della. Just got the candy to hand out tonight.

DELLA

Oh, Mrs Carillo, you already baby-sit everyone's kids on the block. You shouldn't be spending your money to treat them, also.

Mrs Carrilo looks around nervously before answering.

MRS. CARILLO

Well, you know, you can never do enough for your neighbors.

Della nods sympathetically and walks on.

KIDS' VOICES

Happy Halloween Miss Ruiz!

THREE CHILDREN wearing masks wave at her from a second-floor window. Della waves back. The window above them opens and a YOUNG MAN sticks his head out.

YOUNG MAN

You're the most beautiful girl on the block, Della. How 'bout a date?

DELLA

Will your wife be joining us?

YOUNG MAN

(laughing)
Spoilsport!

Della laughs, keeps walking, until she comes opposite a one-armed man working under the hood of an old car. JIM TANAKI (25) straightens up.

DELLA

Did you get that gasket you ordered, Jim?

JIM

Yep. I'll have this rusty baby back on the road tomorrow.

DELLA

Not trading it in for an electric?

JIM

You can't recharge an electric in a blackout. Or haven't you noticed?

DELLA

Not a problem. I read by candlelight.

Jim smiles, eyes her overalls.

JIM

You have something clean you can wear?

DELLA

Maybe. What do you have in mind?

JIM

I was hoping we could go for a drive tomorrow in my gasoline-powered automobile. I'll even put on my other arm.

DELLA

Good. You'll need it.

They nod and finish with a well-worn exchange:

JIM

Death from above.

DELLA

And a grave down below.

They share a brittle laugh and Della walks on.

The car behind Jim's is a BRAND-NEW CAR that looks like a fat teardrop, all dark-tinted window and black composite plastic.

Della eyes it distastefully, then stiffens when BRET PERKENS (45) comes up from behind. Bret is overweight, overbearing, and his suit iridesces like an oil sheen on water.

PERKENS

Well, hello, Della. Just getting home from work?

Della meets his big grin with a thin smile of her own.

DELLA

Yes, Mr Perkins. Had to get home in time for the show. Just like everyone else.

Perkens eyes her with undisguised interest.

PERKENS

If you ever need a ride home from work, Della, just let me know.

DELLA

I'll keep it in mind.

She moves around him and walks up to the entrance behind him. He follows.

PERKENS

You know, Della, I've just renovated a fourth-floor unit in this building--bigger than your current one. I can let you have it for the same rent.

DELLA

That's very generous, Mr Perkins.

PERKENS

Call me Bret.

DELLA

Okay. Bret. But the rolling blackouts make the elevator inoperable a lot of the time. That's why I wanted the ground floor--my leg, you know.

Perkens uses his own card to key the door open and lets Della precede him.

PERKENS

I hadn't thought about that. Sorry.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - LOBBY - DAY

There's bank of mail boxes by the entrance and an elevator beyond it.

DELLA

It is what it is.

PERKENS

Uh-huh. I'm surprised the military didn't see fit to fix up your face while they were working on your leg.

Della bites back a response, but picks up her pace as they walk past the elevator and continue down the hall.

DELLA

I guess the surgeons were too busy trying to save lives and limbs to worry about my beauty mark.

PERKENS

Well, I know a Beverly Hills face-and-boob man who can make you pretty again. I'll talk to him.

DELLA

That's really not necessary.

PERKENS

Not a problem. The least I can do for a hero.

They stop at the door marked "1G."

DELLA

Thanks for the offer, but-

PERKENS

It may be cruel to say so, but you'd stand a better chance of landing a quality husband, have babies...

She pulls out a key card and unlocks the door.

DELLA

Have babies? No. I have a scar that says I can't.

PERKENS

Another scar?

There's a predatory edge to the smile she gives him.

DELLA

Appalling, isn't it?

She pushes the door open, enters, and closes the door on Perkins, who's suddenly unsure he wants to know her better.

INT. DELLA'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Della turns the light on, revealing a small room with a couch, a desk and chair, a TV screen on one wall, and a bullet-riddled Chinese PLA flag hanging on the opposite wall. Two doors lead to the bedroom and kitchen.

Della crosses to the bedroom.

DELLA

Idiot. Rule number one: don't piss
off any of the neighbors.

The light comes on in the bedroom, followed a few seconds later by the sound of the SHOWER turning on.

EXT. THE STREET - NIGHT - 20 MINUTES LATER

Police cars move to block both ends of the street. A police drone moves into position over the middle of the block. A bright spotlight shines straight down from it.

DELLA (V.O.)

Sergeant Crazyfuck always said
not to wait until the chicom
are jumping into your hole to
lock and load.

INT. DELLA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Della, dressed in heavy-duty camouflaged gear and combat boots, peeks out the curtain at the street below. She steps away from the window.

DELLA

He also said to stop talking to
myself.

She chuckles as she steps to the living room.

LIVING ROOM

Della crosses to the flag and takes it down, carefully folds it up, and sets it on the desk.

Then she opens the door hidden behind the flag, revealing a small closet. She pulls out a backpack and sets it on the desk.

She opens the pack and pulls out a pistol, extra mags, a Ka-Bar knife, and a black canister the size of a beer can. She puts everything but the canister back into the pack, including the folded flag.

KITCHEN

Della pulls a beer out of the refrigerator, opens it and downs it in one gulp. She throws the empty into the sink.

LIVING ROOM

Della picks up the backpack and positions it by the open closet door. A PING from the monitor draws her attention.

ON MONITOR

A countdown from "05 seconds" suddenly appears. When it hits "00 seconds":

THE DOOR

A big dead bolt slams shut with a loud THUNK.

ON MONITOR

The timer is replaced with the friendly face of EDMOND GRACE (60). He flashes a big smile.

CHYRON: "Edmond Grace, Sector Administrator, SoCal".

LIVING ROOM

Della sits on the couch and picks up a remote control/pointer. She moves the cursor arrow around Grace's face as he speaks.

GRACE

Good evening, citizens of Southern California. Right now, every adult in this country is about to participate in one of our most important traditions: selecting your neighborhood's Good Neighbor of the Month. Since this is Halloween, the unofficial beginning of the holiday season, we'll be choosing three times the usual number of Good Neighbors, so that we don't interrupt your enjoyment of the coming holidays. Everyone please do your duty. And keep our brave soldiers, airmen and sailors in your prayers. Please remember to conserve, contribute, and buy war bonds. We have those Chicom bastards on the ropes and this is no time to let up. Good luck and God bless. Happy Halloween!

The screen goes black for a few seconds.

DELLA

Those Chicom bastards have very long ropes.

ON MONITOR

Appear rows of PHOTOS of the neighborhood's adult inhabitants. As Della rolls the arrow over the photos, they enlarge and their names appear at the bottom.

PHOTO: JEREMY SITZER (47)

Bearded, glasses, smirking.

DELLA (V.O.)

Sleazy.

PHOTO: KRISTA BARTOS (32)

Tight smile, frightened eyes.

DELLA (V.O.)

Needy.

PHOTO: RONNY TODD (27)

Handsome and confident.

DELLA (V.O.)

Greedy.

PHOTO: BRET PERKENS

Smugly earnest.

DELLA (V.O.)

Sleazy, needy, and greedy. We have a winner!

LIVING ROOM

Della clicks on the photo, and it enlarges to fill the screen.

CHYRON: "Your Choice For Good Neighbor. Thank You!"

DELLA

Yeah, like a rich guy's going to be chosen Good Neighbor. But you don't stand a chance with me, Bret.

She closes her eyes.

DELLA (CONT'D)

Corporal Blue Eyes once got his head in my lap. Too bad it wasn't connected to his body.

She laughs and there's a hysterical tinge to it.

The monitor PINGS: HER PHOTO fills the screen.

CHYRON: "Congratulations Della Ruiz! You've Been Selected Good Neighbor Of The Month!"

DELLA (CONT'D)

How 'bout that.

There's a KNOCKING on the door. She smiles grimly.

DELLA (CONT'D)

That didn't take long.

(stands up)

Well, no one's going to soylent-green
my ass.

She picks up the canister from the desk and steps to the door. She pushes a button next to the lock and a screen on the door lights up.

ON DOOR SCREEN

SIX COPS in riot gear in the hallway stare at the door camera.

LEAD COP

(on door speaker)

Open up, Della Ruiz. We're here to escort you to the selection ceremony.

DELLA (V.O.)

I just stepped out of the shower, boys. I'll need a minute to slip into my little black dress.

The Cops exchange WTF looks.

LIVING ROOM

Della flicks off the video feed then sets the canister next to the dead bolt and it locks on magnetically.

LEAD COP (O.S.)

(on door speaker)

Miss, in 30 seconds the dead bolt opens automatically.

Della crosses to the closet and pulls up a hatch set into the floor.

DELLA

You can't access the basement from the fourth floor, Bret.

She tosses the backpack through the hole, then pulls down an assault rifle and a bag of ammo from the top shelf. She tosses the bag through the hole, then slings the rifle around her chest.

KNOCKING on door again.

LEAD COP
(on door speaker)
Ten seconds.

DELLA
Gonna be a night to remember, boys!

She reaches into the closet again, pulls out a Halloween mask, and puts it on. CINDERELLA.

DELLA (CONT'D)
Am I pretty now, Bret?

She drops through the hole.

THE DOOR

The dead bolt slams open, smashes into the canister and it EXPLODES in a BLINDING FLASH.

FADE OUT.