

Mercy

by
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EXT. DINER - NIGHT

Two rusty old cars sit in the gravel parking lot of a run-down roadside diner.

The weathered neon sign still flickers with life and casts a colorful reflection in the puddles beneath it.

A gentle fog hangs over the road until it is smashed open by a speeding muscle car.

EXT. HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS

The car flies down the country road at a high speeds.

EXT. SHOULDER - MOMENTS LATER

The muscle car stops abruptly. MERCY, 17, a smallish girl with a porcelain face and long brown hair, storms out of the passenger side door.

She can't close the door before the tires squeal and the car is again speeding down the road.

She bends over, finds a rock and throws it with all her might at the speeding car.

Break lights glow in the fog as the car stops short.

A flurry of girls clothes fly out of the passenger side window, followed by an old canvas duffle bag.

With a throaty growl, the car disappears into the mist.

Mercy sighs as she begins to walk towards her scattered belongings. She picks things up as she comes upon them.

A Metallica T-shirt. A pair of girls boxers. Some socks.

She spots her teddy bear in the mud. It's beat up, with stuffing popping out of some of the seams.

She picks it up, smiles and wipes the dirt off it's cheerful plastic eyes.

The mist turns to rain.

EXT. SLEAZY HOTEL - NIGHT

The muscle car pulls into a 1950's style motor lodge that has degenerated into the last stop between hope and oblivion.

INT. SLEAZY HOTEL ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The room is dark save the one light that stands over a worn chair in the corner.

JILLIAN, 24, in men's boxers and a man's Oxford shirt, chain smokes Marlboros as she reads trashy romance novels.

The 40 watt bulb casts a golden glow through the bottle of bad whiskey that sits next to her on a small table.

She does not look up as the door opens.

FRED COLGATE enters. In his 40's, he's moderately built with good hair and a devious smile.

He wears a comfortable Hawaiian shirt and khaki cargo shorts.

JILLIAN
So...Done deal?

Fred ignores her as he heads to the bathroom.

JILLIAN
The deal IS done...right?

FRED
You see her here?

Fred slams the bathroom door.

JILLIAN
Good. I told you I was plenty
enough woman for ya...No need to be
pickin' up these little chicks when
you got yourself a whole bucketful
of this...Ain't that right, Fred?

Fred comes out of the bathroom.

FRED
Yeah. Whatever.

He flips on the TV. An old black and white movie plays.

He grabs a cigarette from Jillian's pack on the table and flops on the messy bed.

FRED
Light me up, will ya?

Jillian tosses the lighter at him.

JILLIAN
Light it yourself. I ain't your
fuckin' in wife.

Fred gets up and walks towards a beat up fiber board dresser.
The dresser is pressed tightly against the wall.

FRED
Shit! God damn it!

Fred picks up the dresser and tosses it aside with one swift
movement.

JILLIAN
You stupid fuck! I told you!

FRED
Just shut up, alright?! Jesus
fuckin' Christ!

Fred fumbles with his belt, grabs his car keys and runs out
of the room as fast he can.

Jillian puts down her book and pulls back the nicotine
stained curtains to see the muscle car fly out of the parking
lot. She sighs deeply.

JILLIAN
...Stupid fuck.

EXT. DINER - NIGHT

Mercy approaches the diner. She carefully steps over the
large puddles in the mud, like it would make a difference.

Her dirty bag is slung over her shoulder.

She is soaked from the rain.

INT. DINER

It's classic. A luncheon bar with stools.

Coin-operated jukeboxes mounted in the Formica booths.

Menus encased in scratched, yellowed plastic with prices that
have not been changed in years.

THEO JOHNSON, 40's, sits at the far end of the counter,
slowly nursing a cup of coffee.

He appears badly hung over and wears a blue, wrinkled U.S. Post Office uniform.

DEBORAH HART, 30's, tends the counter. She is attractive in her name embroidered work shirt and sensible shoes.

Her soft blonde hair is in a ponytail with a leather embossed eagle wrapping around it.

Her arms are covered with tattoos and she polishes the counter top like it was the chrome on her Harley Soft Tail.

Above the door, a friendly brass bell chimes as Mercy enters from the rainy night.

The young woman grabs a stool and drops her muddy possessions under her feet.

DEBORAH

Well, good mornin' sweetheart.
Looks like you are out waaaay past
your bedtime.

Mercy frowns and digs in her pocket for some change. She pulls out a few quarters and a damp dollar bill.

MERCY

Coffee, please. Black.

She plops the money on the counter.

DEBORAH

No problem, sugar. Anything else?
Bagel? Home Fries? Grits? Ernie
makes the meanest grits this side
of Franklin Parish.

MERCY

No, thank you. Just coffee.

DEBORAH

You got it. It'll be a few minutes
for a fresh pot.

MERCY

Fine.

Deborah turns and begins to prepare a fresh round of java.

Johnson looks up from yesterday's newspaper and notices the attractive Mercy a few stools down. He glances at her slightly, then returns to his paper.

Deborah approaches with a cup of ice water and places it in front of Johnson.

JOHNSON
Huh? I don't want that.

DEBORAH
(Quietly)
Recognize her?

JOHNSON
Nope. Lost track of all the pretty young girls when I turned forty. Or rather, they lost track of me. Don't matter which. End results the same.

DEBORAH
Well, I don't like it. Something is wrong here. I can tell.

Johnson picks up his coffee and downs the rest.

JOHNSON
Something is always wrong. Is it coffee yet?

Deborah sighs and gives a quick wipe where a coffee circle was left under Johnson's cup.

She picks up the fresh pot and serves Mercy a steamy hot cup of the good stuff.

Mercy says nothing as she fiddles with a sugar packet.

DEBORAH
See that guy? Used to be a cop before Jack and Daniel started running the shop...Ain't that right, Johnson?

Johnson grunts from behind his paper.

Mercy manages a faint smile as Deborah pretends to be drunk as she pours Johnson's coffee.

Deborah pulls a cheese danish out of the pastry case. She places the plate in front of Mercy.

MERCY
What is this?

DEBORAH
It's part of the three a.m.
Special. Coffee and danish for...

Deborah notices the amount of change that Mercy left on the counter.

DEBORAH
Seventy three cents.

Mercy smiles.

DEBORAH
So why are you out here in the
middle of nowhere, takin' advantage
of the three a.m. Special?

Mercy simply shrugs her shoulders.

DEBORAH
I see. Do you have anyone you'd
like to call? Friends? Family? A
ride home, perhaps?

Mercy frowns.

DEBORAH
Ernie! Can I get a Number Six back
there? How do you like your eggs,
honey?

MERCY
I'm fine, really.

Deborah is not about to take no for an answer.

MERCY
Scrambled. I like scrambled,
please.

Deborah smiles as she yells into the kitchen.

DEBORAH
Scrambled on Number Six! Got that
Ernie? Ernie?

INT. DINER KITCHEN

Ernie, 20's, snoozes on a web lounge chair while a small TV plays reruns of Spanish soap operas.

Deborah looks into the kitchen and tosses a towel at Ernie's head. No response.

She enters the kitchen and nudges his shoulders. Out cold.

DEBORAH
Come on, sleepy head. I got orders
out there!

Deborah finds a metal bowl and wooden spoon. CLANG!

Ernie wakes up with a start, swearing in Spanish as he takes the damp towel off his face and throws it to the ground.

ERNIE
Christ, Debbie...

DEBORAH
I need a Number Six scrambled
Ernie. And good morning.

Ernie just frowns, brushes off his greasy apron and gets to work.

INT. DINER

Deborah brings out a stack of napkins and begins to refill the holders on the counter as she chats.

DEBORAH
So what's your name, kiddo

MERCY
Mercy...Mercedes.

DEBORAH
That's nice. Mercy. I like that.
I'm Debbie.

Debbie pours herself a cup of coffee and refreshes Mercy's cup.

DEBORAH
So let me guess. It was about a
guy, right?

Mercy smiles slightly.

DEBORAH

Been there, done that so many times-
I got me a closet full of broken
promises, tell you what...You want
to talk about it?

Mercy stares into her coffee and sighs.

MERCY

I met him online. I know, I know.
But he seemed different. Handsome,
smart, rich...

DEBORAH

Yeah, I know the drill. What did
your folks think about this guy?

The younger woman tears up a little.

DEBORAH

Figured that, too.

A plate of scrambled eggs, bacon and home fries appears in
the kitchen window. Ernie dings a silver plated bell.

ERNIE

Order up!

Deborah smiles and picks up the hot plate, setting it in
front of Mercy.

DEBORAH

I took off when I was fifteen. Met
this boy from Cathedral Springs.
Oh, he was handsome, strong. Cooler
than the Fonz- God, I'm dating
myself now, aren't I? He smooth
talked me into meeting him down in
New Orleans...So I took what I
could from the old man's wallet,
took a bus from Port Wallace- that
was a colorful experience in
itself. Course, in the end, I wound
up angry, broke and heart-broken.

Deborah refills the napkin dispensers as she talks.

DEBORAH

Well, I met some nice people down
there. Helped me get back on my
feet.

(MORE)

DEBORAH (CONT'D)

Never made it back to Port Wallace,
but I did get to make peace with my
Dad before he passed away. I'm
grateful for that opportunity.

Mercy nibbles casually at her breakfast.

MERCY

Was he like, you know...mad?

DEBORAH

Hell yeah, he was ripped. But, as I
got older I know it was just that
he was more worried and upset that
something might happen to me...All
that anger stemmed from the simple
fact, that despite all wind and
bluster that he really did...

MERCY

Love you?

DEBORAH

You bet, kiddo. Why don't you call
them. Let them know you're alright.

MERCY

It's too late...

DEBORAH

Nonsense! Wake them up...Trust me,
they won't mind.

MERCY

No, it's not that. You don't
understand...What I did.

DEBORAH

Yeah, I think I do. Like I said, I
got a closet full of promises,
remember?

Mercy has tears welling up in her eyes. She sits for a moment
and, glancing down at her filthy clothes, she frowns.

Deborah refills Mercy's coffee and walks over to Johnson.

JOHNSON

Were you right?

DEBORAH

Always am...

Johnson sighs...

DEBORAH

So...do you think you could?

JOHNSON

I dunno, Deb...Let me think about it in the office for a little while.

DEBORAH

Do unto others, you know...

JOHNSON

Yeah, yeah...Christ, just what I need. Another one of your strays.

Deborah smiles as Johnson heads to the bathroom. She opens the cash register and takes out three twenties.

EXT. DINER - NIGHT

The muscle car pulls into the gravel parking lot at high speed, sending a fan of debris in all directions.

Fred jumps out of the drivers side, pulls a gun from his pants and runs inside.

INT. DINER

Fred fires one shot and hits Deborah. She falls backwards immediately behind the counter.

As she falls, she knocks over several stacks of dishes, which shatter around her with a mighty crash.

Before Mercy can react, he jams the gun hard into the base of her skull.

FRED

Where is it, you fuckin' bitch!!!

MERCY

I-I...Don't...

Fred pulls hard on Mercy's hair. She falls off her stool onto the checkered tile floor.

FRED

Don't bullshit me, you little bitch!

Mercy cries hysterically as Fred stands over her.

MERCY

I...Don't know what you are talking about!

FRED

Bullshit!

INT. BATHROOM

Johnson peers out of the door and closes it. Instinctively reaches for the gun which is no longer at his hip.

JOHNSON

Fuck!

There is a rap on the window. It's Ernie. He's got a gun.

JOHNSON

Thank you Jesus.

Johnson opens the window, grabs the weapon. Cocked and loaded.

JOHNSON

Did you call 911?

Ernie nods and shows him his cell phone.

JOHNSON

Good! I'm goin'.

INT. DINER

Fred has mercy in a choking headlock, moving towards the door. The smaller woman is struggling with everything she has.

The gun is planted in her temple.

FRED

Either you tell me right now or you are going to have to explain this to...

The bathroom door opens a crack.

Johnson, sweaty but still, takes aim on Fred.

Fred swings his weapon towards Johnson.

Blam!

Fred rears back. Direct hit to his head. Blood and material spatter all over the vinyl booths.

Mercy screams and lunges forward as Fred slumps to the floor.

Johnson stands silently outside the bathroom door, still smoking gun held tightly in his right hand.

Mercy runs towards, her stool, grabs the duffle bag...

JOHNSON

Hey...Wait just a minute!

Johnson tries to stop her, but she escapes his grasp, but not before she gives him a big kiss on the cheek.

EXT. DINER - NIGHT

She runs across the parking lot, opens the drivers side of the muscle car with practiced ease and tosses her duffle into the passenger seat.

Seconds later, the engine roars to life and it tears out of the parking lot like a bullet.

Sirens are heard in the distance.

INT. DINER

Ernie and Johnson tend to Deborah. She is bloodied and barely conscious.

DEBORAH

Oh, Mercy, Mercy...Mercy...

Johnson wipes her brow with a wet cloth while Ernie tries to move away the broken plates.

JOHNSON

The guys at the Post Office are never going to believe this...

EXT. DINER - DAWN

The sun rises in the distance as PARAMEDICS load Deborah's stretcher on to the ambulance. Johnson and Ernie talk to several POLICEMAN, one of whom is taking photos.

An attractive NEWSWOMAN stands outside with a single CAMERAMAN.

NEWSWOMAN

...Witnesses say that forty four year old Frederick Colgate of Cathedral Springs stormed into this local diner and critically wounded Deborah Hart and another woman whom police desperately want to talk to.

INT. SLEAZY HOTEL ROOM

The hotel television shows the rest of the broadcast.

NEWSWOMAN

Officer, can you tell us anything about this potential witness...

POLICEMAN

Yeah, well, we are still trying to sort of the details, but best we can tell...

Jillian sighs.

JILLIAN

Stupid, stupid fuck.

The cop is still on TV.

POLICEMAN

Her name might be Mercy.

She turns the TV off, extinguishes her cigarette in a half empty shot glass, grabs her keys and walks out the door.

FADE TO BLACK