

Noir #1

written by

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INT. LAUNDROMAT - DAY

A jazz playlist trickles out of the speakers hidden in the blue ceiling. The modern laundromat displays a lilting scene of locals and transients getting their undies cleaned for the weekend. The singular TV in the corner pipes a news anchor on the popular news channel.

RAYNARD MCCOY

..and the President today has
issued a self-quarantine mandate
that states social distancing is a
must-

In the Folding room, two middle-aged African American women are hard at work; one brushing a rug clean and the other putting away a folded dry cleaning bag on the shelf.

FEMALE WORKER #1

It's getting worse. They just
closed all the schools in LA
county.

FEMALE WORKER #2 turns from the bag she just put down.

FEMALE WORKER #2

No they didn't. I gotta look it up.

FEMALE WORKER #1

You don't have to, I just told you!

FEMALE WORKER #2

No, this can't be that ser- oh my
god, I gotta call my mom. I will be
back.

FEMALE WORKER #1

Trying to tell me I don't know what
I'm talking about.

CUT TO:

INT. LAUNDROMAT - CONTINUOUS

MIDDLE-MAN ED

Achoo!

DAVID CLARESE (43) flinches as the slobber from the transient's mouth misses him by mere centimeters. He gives the guy a hard side-eye and sees his physique for the first time. The transient seems mixed, skinny beyond belief, wears a dirty wife beater with some flimsy basketball shorts.

He could see him bob back and forth like he was cold, though it was rather mild inside the space and was muttering inane words. David scratches his cheek and side steps away from him as far as he could and continues pulling out the whites from a washer. The TV continues to drone behind the smooth jazz. David takes out the last of his whites. The transient begins to murmur to himself even louder.

MIDDLE-MAN ED (CONT'D)

Man, we are fucked. Man, we are fucked!

The sliding doors at the entrance whoosh open and a slim, 5' 2" raven haired ingenue with thick 50's make-up piled on rushes in with pink fuzzy slippers. She whips around the corner in search of someone. As soon as her and David lock eyes, she makes run for him.

SUSIE DUKES

Oh you're not running from me.

DAVID CLARESE

Shit!

David tries to dodge out of her way but he crashes into the transient that still holds a conversation with himself. Susie brings her bag and whacks David over the head.

SUSIE DUKES

The hell is wrong with you, I called you five times and you ignore me like I can't find your ass. You fucking moron, a deal's a deal!

MIDDLE-MAN ED

Get this White Satan off me! By the power invested in me!

DAVID CLARESE

Susie! How the hell- get the hell off of me!

Female Worker #1 comes around with a broom in one hand and a phone in the other.

FEAMLE WORKER #1

Do I need to call the cops on all of you?

Susie looks back as David swats both her and the homeless guy away from him.

DAVID CLARESE

No, it's fine. We're just leaving.
Susie- let's talk outside.

SUSIE DUKES

Yeah, we fucking are. You told me
to come to you when I see Jimmy
again and I fucking did, I swear!

FEAMLE WORKER #1

You guys, need to get the hell out
of here before I get someone to do
it.

DAVID CLARESE

Yeah, yeah, we're moving. Susie,
let's go!

He grabs her and pushes her out with his laundry cart of damp
whites. The homeless guys still reels nonsense on the floor.

EXT. PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

David stops just outside the sliding doors and shakes Susie.

DAVID CLARESE

You want me to help Jimmy, you
gotta calm the hell down! How the
hell did you find me?

SUSIE DUKES

I will if you get the hell off of
me.

David lets go. Susie rubs her arms.

SUSIE DUKES (CONT'D)

I saw Tasha on the way over.

David groans. His hand goes to the bridge of his nose.

SUSIE DUKES (CONT'D)

She told me to tell you to see her
anytime you want if you're ever on
Fountain again.

DAVID CLARESE

Okay, enough of you let's go back
to my office and talk about Jimmy,
yeah? Sounds good? C'mon, you
psycho, coke-head of a junkie.

CUT TO:

INT. CLARESE'S OFFICE - MIDDAY

David Clarese leans on his elbows on his wooden table in a tight office. Susie kicks up her legs on the desk and pops a cigarette into her mouth.

DAVID CLARESE

No smoking. Why are you even outside? Isn't there a virus going around?

SUSIE DUKES

You smoke all the time in here and look who's talking, Mister I gotta get Clean Undies Before the World Ends.

DAVID CLARESE

No cigarettes. Besides..... I kind of ran out of the essentials. Now get on with it.

SUSIE DUKES

I think I'm gonna smoke this.

DAVID CLARESE

You know what I mean. Now get to the point before I kick you out, Susie.

SUSIE DUKES

Fine, I saw him. By Fountain and Wilton.

DAVID CLARESE

And nobody's followed-up with the missing person's report you had done-

SUSIE DUKES

You of all people know they don't care about low-class fucks like us. Plus, I don't think this is right. Jimmy hasn't been acting normal.

DAVID CLARESE

We've been through this, whatever he may have gotten himself he most likely deserves-

SUSIE DUKES

You don't know what I saw that night.

DAVID CLARESE

What do you mean 'saw that night'?
I thought you told me and the cops
everything?

SUSIE DUKES

Not this. I couldn't.

DAVID CLARESE

Susie, do you know- you know what,
no screw it. You're taking this to
LAPD.

David reaches for his cell but Susie leaps and catches his
hand and swipes it back.

DAVID CLARESE (CONT'D)

Susie, give me-

She quickly presses the lock button. The faint click of it
being turned off can be heard. David's eyebrows go up.

SUSIE DUKES (WHISPERS)

Don't get any closer! There's a
reason I'm not going to them.

David stares at her hard, eyes going back and forth between
one and the other. After a beat he lets go. He retreats to
his seat and Susie, with caution does the same.

DAVID CLARESE

I don't do pro-bona work.

SUSIE DUKES

I mean considering the times it's a
little unsafe for blow-jobs but I
guess something can be arranged.

DAVID CLARESE

And I'm not talking that.

SUSIE DUKES

I forgot you don't like 'real
girls'. Oh well, worth a shot.

He looks at her and then straightens back.

DAVID CLARESE

I'll tell you what, we'll call this
even if I find him. But that
requires you to tell me the whole
truth and nothing but the truth.
You understand?

Susie nods her head. David leans in again.

DAVID CLARESE (CONT'D)
Now where did you see Jimmy?

CUT TO:

EXT. FOUNTAIN AVE. - NEXT MORNING

The sky pours as the overcast darkens and is reminiscent of a stormy painting. David Clarese leans back against a storefront, avoiding the pour from the awning. The same transient from the Laundromat does his hobble down the sidewalk, but this time carries two wheels from bikes on his back. He watches him take them to where two bikes are parked on the sidewalk, chained to a rail purposely placed for bikers. With ease the transient slips out pliers from his billowy pockets and clips the locks off. He grabs both wheels off his back, places them on the floor and switches them out. As soon as he was finished, he got back up and turned back the way he came, muttering to himself. Nobody even bothered chasing him. David waits a few more moments before following the path where the guy had left.

David watches and follows a guy until he slips off to one of the back alleys. David shoulders against a corner and watches the scene unfold. The homeless guy joins three other guys of varying races and ages. He shoulders off the bike wheels and leans them against the back door of whatever building was on the other side. The other guys didn't seem to take notice of the guy at work.

SUSIE DUKES (V.O.)
You remember how I told you Jimmy was a coke dealer?

DAVID CLARESE
Not in those exact words but go ahead.

The guy takes out a hunter knife and wedges in between the leather of the wheel and the metal Fram.

SUSIE DUKES
Well, he worked for a guy named Tito and I think he did something to Jimmy because he told me a secret.

DAVID CLARESE
From a guy like Jimmy?

The leather pops open and something white pokes out of the frame.

SUSIE DUKES

Well, you could say it was something like-

DAVID CLARESE

Plainly, Susie.

The guy pulls out a dime bag and flick it with his other hand.

SUSIE DUKES

He said Tito killed a guy and he couldn't get the picture out of his head.

The other guys take notice now but they don't bother to help or reach for the stuff. Instead, a figure opens the back door and smiles and the guy.

SUSIE DUKES (CONT'D)

He said he was scared that he would do something if anybody found out. I thought he was joking though.

The new guy, who appears to be caucasian and in his early fifties helps the man up to his feet. David watches their lips move. The gentlemen moved inside. David walks away.

CUT TO:

INT. 7 11 PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

David walks across the lot to get inside the 7/11. A peddler opens the door for him, he nods to the guy and enters the ratchet scene that lay before him. A couple of truckers rustle their way through the fast with their coffee cups, more transients pick their corners and bodies to follow, and David waltzes next to an extra he spots from the front door. He's about to swipe it until - thwack!

David looks up and sees one of the locals swat his hand away.

DAVID CLARESE

Excuse, does this cup have your fucking name-

MIDDLE-MAN ED

Tito says he wants to see you.

David realizes that it is the same man he was tracking carrying those wheels.

DAVID CLARESE

He caught on to me that quick? He must be the Wizard-

MIDDLE-MAN ED

10pm sharp.

Middle Man Ed saunters away into his deranged walk most pedestrians are afraid of. They move out of his way, afraid to make physical contact. He exits the scene and David is left, jaw slack and incredulous eyes following him outside. He shakes his head out of it and slams a cup down.

CUT TO:

EXT. FOUNTAIN AVE. - NIGHT

David stands under the same tree as earlier only this time the rating pelts down even harder.

SUSIE DUKES (V.O.)

I know he was a coke dealer but something about their operation I think got the Feds on them. Jimmy got scared and kept talking about shit hitting the fan. And I don't mean him fucking up type of bad nutlike he was gonna get killed if he got caught with this.

David begins to cross the street slowly with no umbrella.

DAVID CLARESE (V.O.)

You mean, he faked his kidnapping?

SUSIE DUKES (V.O.)

Well, after seeing him on the street, I think so!

DAVID CLARESE (V.O.)

You don't even know-

SUSIE DUKES

What does that matter? He's going to be killed, and I know I may be a junkie and I key your car every Friday, but that doesn't mean I don't deserve this ounce of hope.

DAVID CLARESE

Dammit, Susie.

David faces the same backdoor he saw the drugs and guy pass through. No longer are there any bike wheels or other beings crowding the space. He lifts his arm and drops it on the wood. Raps it a few times. He hears shuffling in the background, a knob twist, a latch unlock, and the door swings open and reveals the same stout, balding man with a receding hairline and a pair of glasses slipping off the end of his nose.

TITO

Come in.

David slides in, his eyes never leaving and Tito vice versa. David moves his eyes forward and sees the room widen into a backroom area that looks like it used to be a kitchen but most of the fixtures are ripped out. In the space, a couple of men he sees from earlier now crowd in around him. Some wear surgical masks, others stare and hold crowbars and pipes in their hands.

TITO (CONT'D)

So here's how's it going to be, David. You listen to me and we can get out of this, worry-free. But if you think a 'no' can be said to all of us here, then you're outta ya damn mind.

David eyes the crowd with Tito still behind him.

DAVID CLARESE

What you guys offering?

TITO

We need you to deliver for us. We lost one of our boys recently. Sad to say.

DAVID CLARESE

Not enough coke wagons in the streets?

TITO

Times are tough. This virus is rampant. I think you and me both know you are a very capable man with some sullied connections of his own. Doomsday is upon us, I think you'll want to make a little extra cash while you can.

One of the guys pass a Postmates bag, zipped and sealed. David eyes it, Tito shoves it in his arms. The weight of it catches David off-balance but he yields and shifts.

DAVID CLARESE
Just this? That's it?

TITO
Oh, there will be more. I just want you to get used to the weight of it. Feel the granules through the plastic. I want you to be a part of this operation, David.

DAVID CLARESE
I guess I have no choice.

TITO
Sure you don't. Now I have a list of addresses that need to be delivered.

Tito pushes his spectacle back up the bridge of his nose. One of the guys hands him a notepad.

TITO (CONT'D)
Here you go.

He passes to David and he looks down. The notebook has "The Address Book" scrawled all over it.

DAVID CLARESE
Uh, do I have time to be done by?

David chuckles but Tito keeps a serious face. One guy pushes off the wall and escorts David out of the place.

CUT TO:

INT. CLARESE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

David face palms as Susie drops her cigarette in front of him.

SUSIE DUKES
You've got to be shitting me.

DAVID CLARESE
Nope. Not even once today.

SUSIE DUKES
How the hell are we gonna frame him then?

DAVID CLARESE
Susie, can you keep it down?

SUSIE DUKES
And he says he lost a worker, I bet you that's Jimmy. Oh Jimmy, I tried to save you.

David put up a hand.

DAVID CLARESE
I have an idea.

SUSIE DUKES
We were supposed to run to Mexico together-

DAVID CLARESE
Susie, I got an -

SUSIE DUKES
David, you're interrupting my obituary for Jimmy.

DAVID CLARESE
That's not even-! You know what, you stay here and I will be back!

SUSIE DUKES
But it's not safe to be outside. You might get sick.

David stops in his track, gristles with his back turned, and continues out of the office.

SUSIE DUKES (CONT'D)
He's gonna get himself killed.

EXT. SOMEWHERE BETWEEN SUNSET AND SANTA MONICA - NIGHT

David chills with a transgender prostitute on the corner.

TASHA
You really have to get rid of that much?

DAVID CLARESE
Yeah, don't know what I got my self into but they definitely killed the kid I Was looking for.

TASHA

Shit. I guess I could help. I do know those areas.

DAVID CLARESE

That's what I was thinking, plus you owe me for last time.

TASHA

You know you liked it.

DAVID CLARESE

I don't know what you're talking about. Here.

He swings over the Postmates bag with the drugs and a \$100 bill. Tasha side-eyes him and takes the stuff. The weight of the bag surprises her but she maintains her own weight.

DAVID CLARESE (CONT'D)

Thank you, Tasha.... I owe you-

TASHA

Save it. Whatever you gotta say don't interest me no more.

She shuffles with a little pride until one of her heels gets caught in the cracks and she stumbles. She catches herself and the bag and her stride. David rubs his eyes then turns and makes his way over to HIDING SPOT #A.

EXT. FOUNTAIN AVE. - MORNING

David stands face to face with Tito. They stop midway in exchanging money.

DAVID CLARESE

I just gotta say Tito, you're one hell of an entrepreneur.

TITO

Oh? What's the vote for confidence suddenly?

Tito squints, eyes darting from one to the other. David keeps his cool, he relaxes his gaze, and stands steady.

DAVID CLARESE

Nothing.

Beat. A huge rapping bangs on the door. Both Tito and David look at the door behind them.

POLICE

Open up! This is the LAPD. You're
under arrest.

David smiles Tito fumes.

TITO

What the?

DAVID CLARESE

Never trust the delivery boy.

FIN.