

One Last Stop

by

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Thriller, Switchblade, Diner, Paramedic

Blood is thicker than water.

(2020)

FADE IN:

EXT. DINER - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

A paramedic van pulls in, parks alongside a beat-up Ford pick-up truck and a fancy Lexus.

A neon-sign flashes "*Open twenty-four hours*". *All day breakfast. Famous cherry-pie!* The shades have been pulled, the place in near darkness.

With a worried look on his face, paramedic bag slung over his shoulder, BRYAN, 55, ex-army type, buzz hair-cut, tries the front door - It swings open.

A beefy arm collars Bryan, pulls him inside. A scuffle, then the door slams shut, locks and bolts clicking into place.

INT. DINER - DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

JAMAHL, African American, 30, tall, big build, holds a switchblade against Bryan's throat. A blood-soaked dish-towel is knotted around a stab wound to his upper thigh.

Bryan's eyes adjust to the dim light, he tries to focus.

The diner is old-style. It would be described as quaint -

- if it weren't for the upturned tables and blood pooling on the floor beneath a corner table where a YOUNG GUY, 19, dressed in a designer suit has his head planted in his steak dinner. A dinner fork impales his neck.

JAMAHL  
(to Bryan)  
Sir, just be cool. Let me explain.

BRYAN  
Jamahl...? Where's NANCY!

JAMAHL  
She's fine... Honest.

BRYAN  
Where's my daughter, Jamahl?

Whimpers and sobs can be heard coming from a back room.

NANCY (O.S.)  
Daddy...?

Jamahl digs the switchblade deeper into Bryan's neck, just enough to pierce the skin, draws blood.

JAMAHL  
See to my leg first. Or, I swear  
I'll...

They hobble through to the -

KITCHEN

- past MOE, 60s, slumped over the grill. Cell phone clenched in one hand, his other hand twisted behind his back, in a failed attempt to dislodge a meat cleaver wedged in his spine.

Bryan hesitates...

JAMAHL  
He's dead. I checked.

Bryan uses gauze to soak up the blood from Jamahl's wound, applies pressure then affixes a tourniquet.

BRYAN  
Quarter of an inch to the right  
woulda' nicked your femoral artery.  
You'd have been a goner.

Bryan looks out through the server hatch to the carnage.

JAMAHL  
Young dude over there set her off,  
sir.

BRYAN  
(incredulous look)  
You're saying my daughter did this?

JAMAHL  
Guy was flirting with her... Nancy  
was enjoying it. Until he put his  
hand right up her skirt. Moe  
thought it was funny, started  
laughing. That set her off more.

DINER - OFFICE

A heavy door, deadlocked. The sound of a security chain being released. Bryan throws the door open, Jamahl behind him.

Nancy, a petite figure huddled on the floor, pale and expressionless, rocks back and forth as if in a trance.

JAMAHL

I love your daughter, sir, but you and I both know she can be not quite right in the head sometimes, you know? She just goes off one sir, and -

BRYAN

(to Jamahl)  
Stop calling me sir.

NANCY

Don't listen to him, Daddy.

BRYAN

Come on out of there, darlin'.

JAMAHL

- She got hysterical, all sorry and shit for what she done. Ranting on about how she didn't know why she did it. Screamin': *I'm so sorry.*

Nancy turns from wilting wall-flower to raging spitfire.

NANCY

He's a fucking liar! That is not what happened. Guy at the table started coming on to me and Jamahl went ballistic jealous.

BRYAN

Not three minutes ago you threatened my life, Jamahl...

JAMAHL

I just wanted you to stop the bleeding, man. So I could get outta here. Look around you, none of these guys got switchblade wounds. But how do you think I got this?

He points to his leg.

BRYAN

I dunno... Maybe Moe stepped in -

JAMAHL

Nancy knows I carry a blade -  
(off Bryan's look)  
(MORE)

JAMAHL (CONT'D)

It's for self defense, man! She was scared I'd call the cops on her. We started going at it for the blade and she got one in before I got it back. Then she went screaming off to the back room. I locked her in.

NANCY

That's a fucking lie! I locked myself in there. I was so scared Daddy, that I was going to be next.

JAMAHL

Uh-uh. No way. I was the terrified one. Look at this shit. Office door locks both sides. I put her in there 'cos she gone crazy, man!

BRYAN

You're a big guy, Jamahl. You couldn't stop her?

A cell-phone rings from the other room. Outside a car drives by, its headlights shine into the diner.

JAMAHL

(to Bryan)

Please, man. I gotta get outta' here. If I don't I'm just another dead black man from another small town in the middle of nowhere where nobody cares and never will.

BRYAN

Go on then. Get out. Now!

Jamahl doesn't miss a beat. He shuffles towards the back entrance, door banging behind him.

Nancy rests her head on Bryan's shoulder, looks up at him.

NANCY

You believe me, right, Daddy?

BRYAN

Sure I do, honey. I'll take care of things. Let's go now, okay?

INT. PARAMEDIC VAN - MOVING - NIGHT - LATER

Bryan glances over at Nancy in the passenger seat, bruised knuckles, blood soaked fingernails. Her left hand taps a beat and she sings along to the music on the radio.

BRYAN  
Sweetie, is Jamahl left-handed?

LIGHTNING-QUICK FLASH TO:

The YOUNG GUY facing the diner window, his back to the countertop. Blood spatter predominantly to one side.

BACK TO SCENE:

NANCY  
No. Why?

BRYAN  
Nothing. Doesn't matter.

A pause.

NANCY  
(pouting)  
Why did you help him?

BRYAN  
What...? It's part of the EMS code.  
I'm obligated to render assistance  
in any emergency situation.

NANCY  
(laughs)  
Well that's just a load of crap if  
he's a homicidal maniac isn't it?

Nancy laughs again, it's a shrill sound, a little unhinged. Bryan's face suddenly changes, his jaw clenches. He makes a U-turn, puts his foot on the gas.

NANCY  
What are you doing, Daddy? We're  
going the wrong way!

The van speeds up, headed for the town's main street -

BRYAN  
I told you. I'm gonna take care of  
things. I've just got one last  
stop.

A small-town cop station looms in the near distance.

FADE OUT.