

Rid Of Guilt

By

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EXT. CITY - MORNING

A bright, clear, morning sky stretches out beyond the urban backdrop. The pale, yellow beam of the rising sun washes over the surrounding buildings.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - PLATFORM - CONTINUOUS

Passengers disembark a train. It accelerates slowly, pulls away.

DANIEL (mid 20s) stands at the other side, waits. He is dressed in an expensive suit, carries a briefcase, his hair neatly styled -- A few others wait on his side of the platform also.

He peers down the track...nothing coming.

An attractive woman, LINDA (early 30s) and her son JOSEPH (6), with a small school bag strapped to his back, pass behind him.

The kid drops something--

A TOY TRAIN hits the ground. It bounces and rolls along the platform before hitting Daniel's right foot.

Daniel picks it up.

Joseph trots up to him tentatively, Linda follows.

Daniel studies the train; it doesn't appear to be damaged.

DANIEL

(winks)

I think you'll get a few more
journeys out of it.

Daniel hands the train to Joseph who takes it. He turns back to his mother. She holds his hand, smiles at Daniel before looking down at her son.

LINDA

Say "thank you", Joseph.

Joseph stays quiet, timid -- He leans into his mother, she holds him.

LINDA (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, he's a little shy.
Thank you.

DANIEL
(flashes a smile)
You're welcome.

She replies with a quick smile, turns away, leads her son down the platform. Daniel admires her slim figure for a moment before looking down the track...again, nothing coming.

PATRICK (early 50s) roughly shaven, dressed in clothes that have seen better days, approaches Daniel. He stands a few feet from him and sneaks a look at the other people waiting, then glances down the platform.

He focuses his attention on Daniel momentarily before staring straight ahead.

PATRICK
(inhales deeply)
God, I love these mornings...don't
you?

Daniel takes a second to realise Patrick is talking to him.

DANIEL
Yeah...looks like it's going to be
a good one.

PATRICK
(nods, smiles)
Yes, it is...I was up at half six
this morning, rose with the sun.
Kinda' gives you a feeling it's
gonna be a nice day...It's the
tranquillity, that early in the
morning, you know. Ideal
opportunity to take a walk...out
in the country that is, away from
all this...Where you can really
appreciate.

Daniel isn't sure how to reply. He smiles awkwardly in response.

DANIEL
I rolled out of bed twenty minutes
ago. Not bad, huh?
(looks at himself,
smiles)
But I can imagine what you're
talking about.

PATRICK

Patrick Taylor, nice to meet you.

DANIEL

...Daniel, nice to meet you too.

Awkward silence. Both men peer down the platform.

PATRICK

Public transport, huh? Fuckin' despise it. I used to drive myself till I got pulled over...goin' in the wrong direction down a motorway.

Patrick chuckles to himself.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

The half bottle of gin sitting between my legs didn't help my case. I was so smashed, it didn't even occur to me to hide it when the pig came pulling me outta the car...Hell of a night that was.

Daniel smiles, then looks away, raises his eyebrows in bemusement -- Patrick scans him up and down as if only noticing his formal, well-prepped attire for the first time.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

Say, what do you do? -- Wait! Don't tell me, let me guess...downtown somewhere? A bank, or solicitor or something?

DANIEL

Ah, no, I'm an actuary. I do risk assessment, based on statistics and--

PATRICK

I know what it is.
(wry smile,
quietly)
That's funny.

DANIEL

Funny?

Patrick's cheery smile returns.

PATRICK

Pays well I bet? Got a nice warm office, comfortable chair, benefits to beat the band...cute secretary?

DANIEL

I think you've just listed all the perks of my job right there. That's about as good as it gets.

Patrick looks past Daniel at the people nearby.

PATRICK

I used to work down at the docks.

He holds out two hardened, callused HANDS, palms up.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

That's why I didn't shake your hand just then.

He looks down at Daniel's hands, smiles.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

I wouldn't want to damage those pretty things.

Patrick laughs. Daniel forces a slightly bewildered smile. He looks at his hands before glancing down the platform again, frowns to himself.

Brief silence. Patrick looks at Daniel, his expression turns serious.

PATRICK

You see that woman down there? She's the furthest away from us, on this side...with the young boy?

Daniel looks down along the line of people. He spots Linda from earlier waiting at the end with Joseph who still clutches the toy train. She leans down, wipes something off his face with a tissue.

DANIEL

Yeah.

Patrick looks at Daniel, wistfully. Daniel still watches Linda and Joseph.

PATRICK

She's had to raise that kid by herself.

DANIEL

Oh, you know her?

PATRICK

They take the eight o'clock train to school, she teaches there...

(long pause)

I killed her husband, Joe Gibson...that boy's father. Though they never actually got a chance to meet each other, I made sure of that.

Daniel stares at Patrick as if waiting for him to give up the act. He clears his throat.

DANIEL

Excuse me?

PATRICK

That time I was going the wrong way, remember? Knockin' back gin, The Doors turned up to eleven...I had just caught my wife, a woman who I had been married to for twenty two years, mind you.

(shakes his head)

Twenty two years...Sittin' on some guy's dick, in our very own bed. Do you know what that feels like...? She was fifty three. We hadn't had sex in over two years. I assumed it was that...fucking menopause thing they go through.

Daniel looks around nervously to see if anyone is listening to this. Nobody is within earshot.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

So I got pissed and drove my car as hard as I could on the wrong side of the road...Not the smartest thing I've ever done.

Patrick breaks into a stuttered laugh, contradicted by his sad, weathered facial expression.

Linda is on the phone, she holds Joseph in close.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

He tried to swerve...I clipped him, sent his car into the barrier...he died instantly. I went for four fuckin' stitches...four! I barely even remember getting them...He was an actuary too.

(smiles, shrugs)

I got eight years, let out after five for good behaviour, our glorious system, eh...? But it's only fair, I've served my time haven't I? Five years is enough for anyone...right, Daniel?

Patrick looks pleadingly at Daniel to reassure him. Daniel, put on the spot, is slow to respond. He jerks his head, nods.

DANIEL

Yeah, yeah...you did, you did. You know, things have happened, or will happen to all of us we wish we could take back...I'm sure she knows you're sorry.

Patrick is unconvinced. A TRAIN approaches faintly in the background.

PATRICK

She and all her family waged war outside the court when I was being released...They wanted me to rot in there.

Silence. Daniel, uncomfortable, clears his throat.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

My family hasn't talked to me since. Friends...? I don't have any. My wife moved away with her new man...Thankfully we never had children.

Patrick looks down the track.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

I deserve everything I get, and more.

The train gets closer, WHISTLES its impending arrival.

Patrick takes a deep breath, braces himself. Daniel avoids eye contact, welcomes the train's intervention.

Linda crouches down by Joseph as he points at the train in wonder. He holds up his own miniature model.

PATRICK (O.S.) (CONT'D)

She has to know how sorry I am. I need her to see...If I jump in front of that thing...What are my chances of survival?

Daniel turns to Patrick, a growing look of fear creeps across his face -- The train becomes louder -- Daniel sets down his briefcase.

DANIEL

Hey, Patrick, c'mon, don't even think about this. You can't--

PATRICK

It's like what you do for a living, isn't it? I wanna hear some figures, Daniel...estimates, percentages. Tell me my odds here?

DANIEL

Look, just--

PATRICK

Pretty fuckin' long I bet. Somewhere in the millions, yeah?

Patrick smiles, seemingly at peace.

PATRICK

Good.

The train is right before the station. The brakes GRIND as it slows down. Linda and Joseph watch it go by.

DANIEL

Hey--

Patrick shouts something at Daniel but it's drowned out by the sound of the nearby train.

Patrick makes a move towards the edge of the platform.

Daniel is quick to react, takes a few steps, reaches out to grab him.

He GRASPS Patrick for a split second -- Loses his grip.

Patrick gets to the edge and jumps, a loud THUMP sounds as he makes contact with the passing locomotive. He disappears underneath it.

Surrounding people look on, stunned, try to process what has just happened.

It registers -- Some of the onlookers scream, some look away, others are frozen to the spot -- Daniel looks on, mouth open, paralysed with shock.

The train SQUEALS, SCREECHES and GRINDS, coming to a stop.

Amid the confusion and hysteria, Daniel looks over at Linda and Joseph. One hand covers her mouth, the other grips her son, who faces into her, shielded from the scene.

Some of the surrounding people turn to look at Daniel.

Daniel gazes down at his hands, then back at the train, before resting on Linda who stares back at him.

FADE OUT.

THE END