

SKIPTRACE

Written by

Steven E. De Souza

FADE IN:

EXT. THUNDERBIRD INN - SECOND FLOOR - NIGHT

One man, RICHIE TOWNSHEND (37), tan overcoat and matching slacks, runs along the balcony, searches for a specific room.

Rain pours down with interspersed nickel-sized hail.

Richie comes to a stop at room 212, drops a duffel bag at his side, hastily unlocks the door.

PETRIC RIJKER (42), black buttoned shirt and dark navy jeans, lags behind without a care in the world.

Petric's hands are cuffed behind his back.

INT. ROOM 212

Richie gets the door open, grabs the bag, looks for Petric.

RICHIE
Get the hell in here!

Petric walks in the room as Richie slams the door.

Richie looks outside at the downpour then closes the blinds.

Petric casually takes a seat on one of the matching twin-sized beds, sits Indian-style.

Richie looks out at the room; two beds, tube TV, kitchenette with dining table and a small bathroom.

He pulls out his cell phone. No signal.

RICHIE
Figures.

Richie sets the bag on his bed, grabs the receiver on the old rotary phone, dials a number.

The phone rings several times before being answered.

RICHIE
Hey, it's Richie... We, uh, got hung up in Savannah 'cause of the hurricane... What do you mean, "What hurricane?" You know, the one that's a couple hours south of you?...

Richie pulls the phone away from his ear, flips it off.

RICHIE

Whatever, man. Listen, I got Rijker here but I won't make it to you 'til morning.

Richie glances at Petric who stares straight ahead.

RICHIE

Oh, nothing. He's still givin' me the silent treatment.

(Laughs)

Nah, man, Jack said to deliver him in one piece and I ain't fuckin' that up... Yeah, I'm about four hours outta Fayetteville... Definitely. I'll have him in by noon. No prob. Hell yeah, in my mind, I'm already spendin' it... Alright, see ya bright and early.

Richie hangs up the phone. He takes off his jacket, tosses it on the bed, revealing a shoulder holster and handgun.

Petric glances over at Richie.

PETRIC

My name is pronounced "Ryker".
Petric Rijker.

RICHIE

Like the prison? Gotta see the irony in that, Petric.

Richie strolls over to Petric, undoes his cuffs then cuffs one wrist to the bedpost. He hands Petric the TV remote.

RICHIE

Put on whatever you want. I'm gonna hop in the shower real quick.

Richie grabs the bag, makes his way to the bathroom.

PETRIC

May I have something to eat?

Richie turns to Petric with a smile.

RICHIE

Sure. Call up room service and have them send something up for you.

Petric looks to the ground, visibly saddened.

RICHIE
 Petric, learn to take a fuckin'
 joke, man.

Richie opens the bag, tosses a small bag of Doritos to him.

RICHIE
 Best I can do for now. Tell you
 what. I'll buy you breakfast
 tomorrow morning. Whatever you
 want. My dime.

Petric looks Richie in the eye, hints a smile.

PETRIC
 I would very much like that.

Richie walks into the bathroom, leaves Petric by himself.

PETRIC
 (Sighs)
 If only.

BATHROOM

Richie pushes the door shut. He pulls out a prescription pill bottle labelled Lanoxin, pops two of them.

He sets the bottle on the counter, tosses his wallet on the sink, next to it.

The wallet opens. The ID inside reads "BAIL ENFORCEMENT AGENT: RICHARD TOWNSHEND".

Richie makes his way to the closed shower curtain, pulls it back to reveal a visibly pregnant MARIA TOWNSHEND (29), naked, wrists sliced open, in the filled bathtub.

He backs against the sink at the sight of her.

Maria slowly turns her head to look Richie in the eye. Tears stream down her eyes.

MARIA
 (Sobs)
 I miscarried, Richie.

Richie can't believe his eyes. He snaps out of it, runs to Maria and kneels at her side.

RICHIE
 Is it... really you?

Richie wraps her arms around him, holds her close as he tries to lift her out of the tub.

RICHIE
Come on, Maria, help me out here.
Come on!

MARIA
(Whispers)
It's okay. It's going to be all right. You're a good man, Richie.
If only you could see what I see.

RICHIE
Don't you dare talk like that. I'm gonna get you help.

Richie turns away, grabs a towel off the rack.

When he turns back, Maria is gone and the tub is empty.

Richie's hands and clothes are still covered in her blood. He stares at the empty tub in shock.

Finally, Richie comes to and hastily makes his way over to the sink, splashes water in his face.

Richie looks at himself in the mirror.

The blood is still there.

Richie flings the bathroom door open.

ROOM 212

Richie sees Petric sitting exactly how he was before, staring straight ahead.

RICHIE
What the fuck was that?

Petric doesn't respond or acknowledge Richie.

RICHIE
I said, what the hell was that, you mute bastard?!

PETRIC
Your wife. Maria. She was a wonderful woman.

RICHIE
Don't you dare talk about her, you
son of a bitch.

PETRIC
Fair enough.

RICHIE
This is... You couldn't know about
that. It happened six years ago.

PETRIC
It seems like so much longer to me.

Richie glares at Petric with a fury in his eyes. He draws his
pistol, holds it down at his side.

RICHIE
What did you say?

Richie lifts his gun up, aims it at Petric.

A CLAP of thunder as the power in the room dies. The entire
room is pitch black.

A candle on the far side of the room lights which gets
Richie's attention.

In the reflection of the light is MARIA (27), no longer
pregnant, at the dining table.

MARIA
Kinda spooky when the lights go
out, huh, Richie?

Richie lowers his gun, makes his way over to her.

MARIA
It reminds me of our first date. We
just spent the whole huddled
together under a blanket.

A smile overcomes Richie's face as he takes a seat.

RICHIE
I remember. It was two days before
Christmas and we had no heat.

MARIA
So, we made love all night, just to
keep warm.

They each chuckle at the fond memory.

MARIA

I was so nervous, waiting for you
to answer the door. I was like a
little girl.

They look at each other in silence for a moment.

MARIA

Richie, there's something I've been
wanting to ask you.

RICHIE

What?

Maria holds her hand out.

Richie takes hold of hers, stares into her eyes.

MARIA

Will you marry me?

Just then, the power flips back on.

Maria and the lit candle are gone with Richie sitting alone
at the dining table.

Richie looks over at Petric with the gun at his side.

RICHIE

Why are you doing this to me?

Petric slowly looks over at Richie. They lock eyes.

PETRIC

You're doing it to yourself.

Richie jumps out of his seat, goes into the--

BATHROOM

--where he stops at the sink, clutches at his chest. His face
is visibly pained.

Richie takes several deep breaths, composes himself. He grabs
the pill bottle off the sink, pours several into his mouth.

He checks over his shoulder at the bathtub.

The tub is still empty.

Richie walks to the tub, rips the shower curtain off, drops
it on the floor.

ROOM 212 - MOMENTS LATER

Richie comes out of the bathroom, makes his way to the window, peeks out the curtains at the storm.

He checks his cell phone.

Still no signal.

Richie throws the phone against the wall, shattering it into a thousand pieces.

He looks at Petric who seems disinterested in Richie.

RICHIE

Petric, listen to me very carefully. If I let you go, will you make this all stop?

PETRIC

It's out of my hands.

Richie walks over to Petric, unlocks the handcuffs.

RICHIE

There. Go. Just leave me the fuck alone.

Petric stays right where he is.

PETRIC

Richie, I'm sorry but I can't do that. Not yet.

RICHIE

Well, when?

Just then, a knock at the door.

Richie turns sharply, aims his gun at the door.

RICHIE

W-who is it?!

No response.

Richie slowly walks up to the door, keeps his gun at his side as he opens it.

MARIA (22), holding an umbrella, sporting an accommodating smile, waits out in the rain.

MARIA

Hi. Are you Richie? I'm Maria.

Richie stares at her, about to break down.

MARIA

You think I could come in? It's raining cats and dogs out here.

Richie slams the door in her face, leans against it.

PETRIC

Richie?

Richie pants heavily, clutches his chest tight. He drops to one knee, barely holds himself up.

RICHIE

Please... help me.

Petric casually looks in Richie's direction.

Richie drops the gun, uses his bed to slowly make his way towards Petric.

He collapses onto his back, on Petric's bed.

Petric gazes down upon him with sympathetic eyes. He holds his hand out for Richie.

PETRIC

Take my hand, Richie.

A tear rolls down Richie's cheek.

PETRIC

It's okay.

Richie grabs Petric's hand as Petric offers a friendly smile.

Just then, the rain stops.

Richie stands up, looks around the room.

Petric stands next to him, puts his arm around his shoulder.

Richie turns, sees his dead body on the bed. He looks to Petric who gives a slight nod.

Petric walks to the door, opens it, stands to the side.

MARIA (29), waits outside with a smile on her face.

The sky is a perfect shade of blue. There's no hint that a storm ever happened.

Maria slowly makes her way over to Richie as the two embrace in a hug.

Richie kisses her once on the cheek then looks up at Petric. He gives Petric a quick nod.

Petric leaves room 212, closes the door behind him, leaving Richie and Maria in their embrace.

FADE OUT.

THE END.