

Somebody Help Philip!

written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

Flat on his back in the wet grass, arms flailing, his raincoat streaked with mud, PHILIP WATSON (70s) cries out.

PHILIP
Help! I need help!

The entire neighborhood sleeps. Not a single light shines from any window. No night owls or insomniacs around here.

PHILIP
I can't get up!

Philip absurdly clutches a plastic bag full of semi-runny dog poop, but there's no pet nearby.

He tries to roll, but he's like an overturned turtle, helpless, stuck, topsy-turvy.

PHILIP
Please!

Drizzle makes its way down Philip's nostrils. Harsh coughs.

A lamp snaps on from a nearby house. Somebody heard Philip.

Moments later, disheveled JEFF LOOPER (30s) rushes out of his front door and over to Philip.

JEFF
Whoa, buddy. You hurt?

PHILIP
I fell. Thank God you heard me.

Jeff wears flip flops, cargo shorts, and an unzipped hooded sweatshirt that exposes his soft belly. He's got bed-head: tufts of his hair stick up towards the dark sky.

JEFF
You need an ambulance?

He reaches into his pocket for his phone, but it isn't there.

JEFF
Shoot. I'll have to go back inside.

PHILIP
Just help me up. I'm okay.

Jeff carefully pulls Philip to a seated position.

PHILIP

I was picking up after my damn dog
and I fell over. I let go of the
leash.

JEFF

Oh, crap. You lost your dog?

He scans the block for the wayward pet.

PHILIP

She ran home. She knows the way.

Jeff frowns with doubt. Philip points to the block's end.

PHILIP

I live over there. Not far.

JEFF

Is there someone I can call?

PHILIP

No. Just help me to my feet, I can
walk home myself. My wife is there.

JEFF

Listen, I'll go with you.

Jeff squats behind Philip, gets under his armpits, and lifts.
Philip stands, but wobbles, his legs like Jell-O.

PHILIP

Sorry. My knees...

JEFF

Just take it slow, buddy. Hold onto
me. My name is Jeff, by the way.

Jeff takes the poo bag from Philip, drops it on the grass.

JEFF

Don't worry about the dog crap,
man. Fuck that shit, right?

Jeff keeps his arms under Philip's armpits. Their progress is
agonizingly slow, but eventually they get to the end of the
block. Confusion spreads over Philip's face.

PHILIP

Wait. This isn't my house.

He blinks rapidly. His wet lips tremble.

PHILIP

I thought...uh...This isn't my block. I got turned around.

Alarm spreads over Jeff's face. The old guy is lost.

PHILIP

I thought...Oh, no...Which way?

JEFF

Okay, Let's go back to my place. I left my cell phone there, but I can call someone. The police maybe.

PHILIP

But I'm just one block over. I remember now.

Jeff shakes his head.

JEFF

Do you have an address? A street?

Lots of processing time for Philip.

PHILIP

Hamlin Avenue. Forty-two sixteen.

Jeff searches.

JEFF

Sorry, I don't know where that's at. I just moved in a month ago.

PHILIP

It's just one block over...I think. Maybe two.

Jeff winces. He rubs his belly as he considers the options.

JEFF

Okay. You lead the way. We can always come back if we need to.

EXT. WARREN AVENUE PARKWAY - NIGHT

Jeff supports Philip as they shuffle down a different block. Philip looks confused. None of this seems right.

JEFF

We should keep an eye out for your dog, right? It might be out here?

PHILIP

No, she made it home, I'm sure. Her name's Sadie. She knows the way.

JEFF

Great. Perfect. I'm sorry, buddy. I didn't catch your name.

PHILIP

Philip Watson.

JEFF

Cool. Cool. Philip, you don't happen to have a cell phone to call your wife?

PHILIP

I have a landline. That's it. I don't like to talk to people anymore.

Philip grunts, squirms.

PHILIP

My damn pants are falling down. They're soaked.

JEFF

Okay. We'll stop for a minute. Hike them up.

Philip tugs at his belt loops.

PHILIP

Getting old is exhausting.

Jeff nods.

PHILIP

I used to be a philosophy professor. Can you believe that?

He adjusts his pants some more.

PHILIP

Now look at me. Got mud in my ass. Can't remember where I live.

JEFF

Philosophy? That's the smartest thing anyone can study. Maybe we should take a break for a second and get our bearings. Lay a little philosophy on me, Philip.

PHILIP

Now? Here? For what purpose?

JEFF

Maybe your surroundings will become a little more familiar if you take a moment to settle.

Philip sighs.

PHILIP

Well, there's Immanuel Kant and his Critique of Practical Reason, of course. And Epicurus had a lot to say about happiness.

He frowns.

PHILIP

But here's what I've learned recently: If your dog shits on a wet lawn in the middle of the night, leave it for someone else.

Jeff nods in agreement.

JEFF

Or carry a cell phone if you leave the house. We both have learned that lesson the hard way.

PHILIP

I guess.

JEFF

Let's keep moving. Hamlin Avenue has to be around here somewhere.

They continue their slow progress, arm in arm. Philip yanks at his pants every three or four steps.

Lights. A car approaches. Muffled techno music from inside.

The driver slows down, pulls over alongside Philip and Jeff.

Stepping out of the car: GORAN WISE (30s). He wears a red track suit with a thick gold chain around his neck. Blond highlights in his hair. Around his neck is a glowing neon necklace. He looks like he just came from a rave.

Techno music screeches from his sound system.

GORAN

What's goin' on, guys?

JEFF

Oh, man. You came just in time. We need some help.

GORAN

I can see that. You guys comin' back from a party or something?

JEFF

No. We're looking for Hamlin Avenue.

Mischievousness shines in Goran's eyes.

GORAN

There's party on Hamlin Avenue? Let's go. Fuck yeah. I'll take you.

Jeff approaches Goran and whispers.

JEFF

Listen, this guy fell and got a little disoriented. He lost his dog. We need to get him home. Can I use your cell phone?

A sly smile from Goran. His techno music thumps in the night.

GORAN

Aw, hell. I just saw a dog on the other street. You guys get in the car. I'll bring you there.

JEFF

No thanks. We don't need a ride. Just point us in the right direction. That's all.

Goran calls out to Philip.

GORAN

Hey there, friend. I saw your dog. Get in the car. Let me take you.

Philip's eyes widen.

PHILIP

Sadie? She didn't make it home?

GORAN

C'mon. Let me show you. Get in the car.

JEFF
Stay away from the car, Philip!

GORAN
(to Philip)
Get in, brother! I can help!

Jeff gets nose to nose with Goran.

JEFF
You need to fuck off.

GORAN
You don't want no help? I thought
that's what you wanted?

While Jeff and Goran stare each other down, Philip wobbles to Goran's car and gets in the driver's seat.

It takes them a minute to realize where Philip has gone.

GORAN
Hey, brother. I'm driving, not you.

Too late. Philip slams the door and puts the car in drive. It lurches halfway down the street. Both Goran and Jeff chase after it.

Goran catches up, opens up the driver's side door, and tries to pull Philip out.

GORAN
Get out my fuckin' car, old man!

Philip exclaims.

JEFF
Let him go!

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Philip removes a small container of mace from his pocket and sprays it into Goran's face.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Goran collapses in pain. Jeff tumbles over him. His flip-flops fall off.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Philip trembles with shock as Jeff pulls himself into the passenger's side seat.

JEFF
Drive, Philip!

PHILIP
What?

JEFF
Drive!

Philip puts the car into gear and speeds off, leaving agonizing Goran behind. Techno music still pumps absurdly.

Philip is unsteady behind the wheel and nearly sideswipes some parked cars. He approaches an intersection.

JEFF
Turn!

Cutting the wheel hard, Philip zooms onto another street. He turns once again.

JEFF
Stop, okay! Let me drive!

Philip keeps going. Pedal to the metal.

JEFF
Philip!

A sudden hard stop. Philip and Jeff lurch forward.

JEFF
Jesus Christ. Okay, let me drive.

Philip shakes his head.

PHILIP
No.

JEFF
You're not listening...

PHILIP
But I'm home!

He points.

PHILIP
That's my wife!

EXT. PHILIP'S FRONT YARD - NIGHT

Sure enough, ELIZABETH WATSON (70s) stands in front of her house with a worried look. She holds a dog leash. Sadie tugs at it. She made it home independently, as Philip claimed.

Philip pulls himself slowly out of the car.

ELIZABETH

Philip! Oh my god, I was so scared!
Where were you?

She hugs him. Sadie jumps on his leg.

Jeff gets out of the car, but nobody pays any attention to him. Elizabeth guides Philip and the dog inside the house and shuts the door. She doesn't even notice Jeff.

Jeff waits sheepishly outside until it becomes clear that nobody cares that he's out there. He walks toward the porch, but stops. Time to go home.

He whispers in the direction of Philip's door.

JEFF

Good night, Philip. Nice meeting
you. You're welcome.

Jeff turns off the ignition to Goran's car and goes home.

INT. JEFF'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Jeff trudges wearily into his place and snaps on a lamp. He cries out in shock because Goran sits on his sofa with a strange look on his face.

JEFF

Get the fuck out!

He grabs the first "weapon" he can find--a potted plant and throws it at Goran, but the visitor is unfazed. Goran stands and stares at Jeff with such power and conviction that Jeff is rendered speechless.

GORAN

This will be nearly impossible for
you to understand, but I have taken
over the body of this flawed soul
to deliver a message to you. I am
the creator. The highest power in
the universe. I saw your act of
kindness tonight and I've selected
you because of it.

Jeff stares in disbelief.

GORAN

In three hours, a madman will gain access to a stockpile of nuclear weapons and use it to destroy the planet. It's not my way to directly intervene into your affairs, but on rare occasions I bestow certain gifts upon humanity. That way, the ultimate decision falls upon one of your kind. So, Jeff Looper, you get to choose. You can spread kindness into the hearts of the depraved tonight, or you can enjoy your own personal eternal paradise.

JEFF

My own personal paradise?

GORAN

Your choice. Three hours. Thank you for helping Philip tonight. I enjoyed watching that.

JEFF

Can you define personal paradise?

GORAN

If you happen to choose to spread kindness, don't forget to pick up the bag of dog shit in the morning. It'll still be out there.

Jeff begins to respond, but Goran is gone. So Jeff collapses onto the couch in exhaustion.

JEFF

This has been...the weirdest night.

He falls instantly asleep, indifferent to his crucial power. But at the last minute he mutters in his dreams.

JEFF

Okay fine. I'll spread the kindness. You're welcome, Philip.

FADE OUT: