

STRANDED

Written by

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FADE IN:

INT. PARKED 1967 FORD BRONCO - DAWN

JOHN, 50, typical blue collar guy with buzzed short dark hair, wears a faded flannel shirt and jeans. He sits in his old truck under a tree parked down a long dusty driveway leading to his house which sits about 300 feet away. He has a mostly empty half-size bottle of Jack Daniels in his hand.

The house is a beige mid-century minimal traditional style that is reminiscent of prosperous times for the middle class. There are two late model sedans in the driveway. One of them belongs to John's wife, Julie. He doesn't recognize the other car.

He stares at the house, taking a long swig, emptying the small bottle of Jack Daniels. He tosses it down on the seat next to a stack of papers. The top page reads "Original petition for divorce."

He leans over and opens the glove compartment. He pulls out a .38 Colt agent snub nose revolver. He flips it open, ensuring that all six cylinders are loaded. He flips it back closed as he opens the door of the truck. As he gets out, John slips the gun into his right hip pocket.

EXT. TREE LINED PROPERTY IN THE COUNTRY - DAWN

He quietly closes the door and walks along the tree line leading to the house. He is careful to remain as hidden from view as he can, keeping a layer of trees between him and the house until he gets close enough to approach without much risk of being seen.

When he's about 50 feet away, he crouches down and sneaks toward the front door.

EXT. FRONT PORCH OF JOHN'S HOUSE - DAWN

John slowly attempts to turn the doorknob. Locked. He takes the keys from his pocket and tries to unlock the door with his house key.

It doesn't unlock.

John scowls.

He can hear a muffled television program playing from inside the house.

He puts his keys back in his pocket and turns to his right. He moves to the side of the house and examines the windows.

EXT. SIDE OF THE HOUSE - DAWN

He stares up at a set of double windows. He takes a deep breath and attempts to open the window on the left.

It doesn't budge.

John huffs quietly to himself.

He steps to the right and puts both hands on the window. At first it doesn't move, but then it starts to raise, flakes of old paint falling to the sill and onto his arms. Slowly, he is able to get the window open far enough to climb through.

He quietly moves the curtain aside, checking the room to make sure it's empty.

With a satisfied look, John hoists himself through the open window and enters the room as quietly as he can.

INT. SPARE BEDROOM - DAWN

The room is a bit dusty. Boxes are stacked along the walls. The mattress is bare and there are cobwebs in the corners. A few folding chairs lean against the wall next to a bookshelf that is bare save for a paperback copy of "Ghost Story" by Peter Straub.

Quietly, John moves to the opposite side of the room to the closed door, the dirty old carpet silencing his careful steps. He slowly turns the knob and peeks out.

John hears a rustling noise from behind him and sees one of the folded chairs beginning to slowly slide.

He nimbly darts over to the chair, catching it with one hand before it hits the floor. His heart races as he places the chair back in a secure position.

John silently moves back toward the door. Looking to his left, the hall leads to the living room where the noise from the TV can be heard but not seen from this angle. He turns to his right and sees the closed door to the master suite at the far end.

He opens the door all the way and walks into the hallway.

INT. HALLWAY - DAWN

John creeps down the hallway toward the sound of the television. As he gets to the end of the hall leading to the living room, the TV sits on the console facing him as a news anchor delivers the local news.

About twelve feet in front of John sits his favorite recliner.

John scowls as he sees that his recliner is currently occupied by another man.

DAN, 40's, mostly bald, whose scalp is all that is visible from where John stands, sips coffee while watching the television.

John slowly approaches the back of the recliner.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAWN

He stops about three feet to the rear of the recliner and pulls the pistol from his back pocket. He takes a breath and pulls the trigger.

POP

Blood splatters across the television as the top of Dan's skull is pulverized.

Blood squirts from the top of Dan's gaping skull a few times before it stops suddenly as Dan slumps in the chair.

Blood begins to DRIP from the ceiling.

John quickly turns and rushes toward the master bedroom.

INT. HALLWAY - DAWN CONTINUOUS

John rushes down the hall and slams the bedroom door open.

He looks at the bed, whose bedding has been tossed aside. It's otherwise empty. The door to the attached bathroom SLAMS shut.

He rushes into the room toward the closed door.

INT. BEDROOM - DAWN

John rattles the doorknob, but it is locked. He KICKS the door but it doesn't budge.

John leans against the door and listens.

He can hear breathing and soft whimpers coming from inside the bathroom.

John tilts his head back and closes his eyes, his heart racing. His breathing gets faster.

From the other side of the door, John hears the bathroom window sliding open.

He turns quickly.

John SLAMS his right shoulder into the door.

It doesn't move.

He winces.

John inhales and holds his breath as he SLAMS the door with his shoulder again. This time the latch breaks and he stumbles into the bathroom.

INT. BATHROOM - DAWN

Regaining his balance, John scans the room. His heart races and his breaths are fast.

The vanity has all the usual paraphernalia that one would expect. A hairbrush, hair dryer, some perfume, toothpaste and a glass holding two toothbrushes.

He checks the window. As he moves the curtain aside, he hears a noise from the tub as a razor falls to the tub floor.

The shower curtain is closed, but John's attention is now focused on what's hiding behind the shower curtain.

A single whimper.

John takes a deep breath, calming himself.

He raises the gun slowly, a pained look on his face.

He fires two shots at the shower curtain.

POP

POP

A clumsy THUD.

John slowly steps over to the shower and pushes the plastic curtain to the left. Blood is splattered all over the back wall of the shower. JULIE, 40's, her dark brown hair now soaked with blood, wears black shorts and bloody t-shirt. She lies on the floor of the tub, bleeding from her belly and chest.

John stares at Julie, tilting his head slightly. His soul has been crushed and you can see it on his face.

Julie gurgles as she chokes on her own blood.

A single tear appears in the corner of his left eye.

John aims the pistol.

POP

He shoots Julie in the head, ending her misery.

He pauses, slowly lowering the gun.

John takes a long, final look at his wife then turns and exits bathroom through the now broken doorway.

INT. BEDROOM - DAWN CONTINUOUS

John leaves the bathroom and walks through the bedroom and down the hall to the living room as he tucks the gun back into his hip pocket.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAWN CONTINUOUS

John opens the drawer at the bottom of the blood splattered console. He reaches toward the back and from behind a box, he grabs a bottle identical to the one he had in the truck. This time, it's full of Jack Daniels.

A DRIP of blood falls from the ceiling onto the recliner below.

John looks over, taking notice of his handiwork.

He stands up, watching the body. He SPITS on the corpse in the chair as he walks past and exits through the side door.

EXT. TREE LINED PROPERTY IN THE COUNTRY - DAY

The sun breaks past the horizon as John walks to his truck and pulls the gun from his pocket.

He opens the door to the Bronco and tosses the pistol which lands on the passenger seat as he gets in.

INT. PARKED 1967 BRONCO - DAY

He sits in the driver's seat, grabs the empty bottle and tosses it out the window into the grass. He places the new, full bottle on the seat next to the gun, which lies on the divorce papers.

He slams the steering wheel with both hands and screams in anguish.

He grabs the bottle, opens it and takes a long drink. As He gulps, he winces from the burn in his throat. He recaps the bottle, drops it back into its most recent resting place, and turns the ignition key.

The engine turns over a few times but doesn't start.

John scowls angrily as he turns the key again.

The DJ on the radio screams excitedly about an upcoming concert.

The engine misfires as it cranks a few times.

POP

The truck backfires loudly and belches smoke from the half-rusted tailpipe.

A series of sputters and pops.

The radio blares.

John frowns as he SLAMS the radio OFF button.

He cranks the key again.

This time, the engine starts.

With a frustrated grunt, John puts the truck into gear and speeds down the dusty driveway.

At the end of the driveway, John makes a left turn onto an old two-lane county road.

Miles later, John turns onto a desolate highway. He takes another drink from the now half-empty bottle.

A car is parked on the side of the road a little ways ahead. Crouched next to the driver's side of the car is a silhouette of a person. John squints to make out details, but he can't tell if it's a man or a woman.

Suddenly the car radio BLASTS on, and at FULL VOLUME, the radio plays an emotional, melancholy, yet upbeat rock song.

FEMALE VOCALIST

And I know I'd only let you down -
and I know you won't stick around -
but I'll make sure, I'll keep you
coming back.

Startled, John turns the knob on the radio in desperation. The knob does nothing. He slams his fist into the radio, breaking the faceplate.

John grimaces in pain, opening and closing his hand to try and ease the pain.

John's glances back up toward the road a few seconds too late.

His truck has drifted toward the right shoulder and is aimed directly at the silhouette of a woman.

BAM

John's eyes grow wide and he quickly inhales as the woman's body SLAMS into the front end of his Bronco. A thin figure in YELLOW flies over the hood of the truck with a heavy THUMP, before it exits his view and lands in the road.

Simultaneously, John slams on his brakes while turning the wheel to the left, forcing his truck into a 90 degree screeching halt about 150 feet from the point of impact.

Both of John's hands grip the steering wheel so tightly that his fingers and knuckles are a pale grey color. He breathes heavily, just short of hyperventilating.

As his senses clear, John gets out of the truck and looks around for the woman in yellow.

EXT. DESOLATE HIGHWAY - DAY

Farmland, fences, telephone poles every hundred or so feet, and more road. That's all he sees.

John's eyes dart from one thing to another.

Fencepost.

Telephone pole.

Highway sign.

John looks around with a perplexed look on his face.

He looks back at his truck. The driver's side door is open and it is still running. The bottle of Jack Daniels now lies on the floorboard next to the gun.

John's realization of the absence of another vehicle, and more disturbingly - a body, causes his breathing rate to increase.

He walks about 100 feet in the direction from which he was driving.

Nothing.

Nothing but road.

Confused and scared, John walks back to his truck and gets in.

INT - PARKED 1967 FORD BRONCO - DAY

John grabs the gun from the floor and sets it on the seat beside him. He picks up the bottle, spins off the cap and takes another long drink before he recaps it and sets it down on the seat next to the gun.

John rubs his eyes with both hands before rubbing his palm back and forth across his scalp a few times.

Taking a deep breath, John closes the door and turns back onto the road, headed in the same direction he was before.

A few miles later, John sees a figure standing in the middle of the road. Unsure of what he's seeing, and hoping it's not another hallucination, he squints.

As he gets closer, he slows down and comes to a stop about 50 feet in front of the figure.

Yellow. He sees yellow. It's her.

A YOUNG WOMAN, about 19 years old, is standing in the middle of the road. She has short blonde bobbed hair with bangs straight across her forehead. She is thin, and wears a bright yellow sun dress. She stands there, staring at John with a blank look on her face.

John's mixed expression is one of fear, anxiety, and curiosity. After a few seconds, he honks his horn.

She just stands there, staring.

Completely creeped out, John blares the horn at her repeatedly.

The heat from the road shimmers as the young woman in yellow fades from view.

Looking around, John scans the area to see where she went, but sees only farmland, telephone poles, and miles of road.

Again nervous and confused, John drives on.

A few miles down the road, he checks his rear view mirror.

The young woman is now in the back seat, staring at him through the reflection of the rear view mirror.

He slams on the brakes again, veering to the side of the road, causing the gun and bottle to fall to the floor once again.

Once stopped, John turns around to find the back seat is empty.

Out of fear, confusion, and anxiety, John's hands begin to tremble. He leans down to pick up the gun and examines it closely for a moment before setting it back on the seat.

He speeds off again, driving for several more miles. He approaches a car on the side of the road. The young woman in yellow stands next to the car, staring at him. He floors it, trying to ignore the situation.

Tears begin to form in the corners of John's eyes.

Driving another mile or two, John's emotions begin to take a toll.

He pulls the Bronco over to the shoulder and parks the truck which sputters and pops as he comes to a stop.

POP

John gets out of the Bronco and closes the door. About 200 feet behind his truck, brown sedan is parked on the shoulder.

He walks toward the parked car.

The young woman in yellow is facing him, but crouched next to the left rear tire attempting to loosen a lug nut on a completely flattened tire.

John approaches the driver's side of the woman's car, absentmindedly touching the car as he approaches the woman.

He stands there for a moment, watching her.

She notices John approach, but continues struggling with the wrench.

He goes to speak...

She silently looks down at the lug wrench in her hand and then up at John.

John's look softens, sympathetic.

He reaches out to take the wrench from her hand. As she stands to hand it to him, her hand briefly brushes against his, giving him a chill.

John's nerves calm. His heart rate is about normal now, and his anxiety has subsided.

He bends down and begins to change the flat tire for the woman.

After a few minutes, John has the new tire installed.

The young woman gets in the car and looks back at him with sadness in her eyes. She speaks, but John can't seem to hear the words.

Without waiting for a response, she drives away, leaving him standing on the side of the road.

Once again confused, John walks back towards his truck, only to find that it's not there.

He looks around, becoming agitated to the point that he starts to panic.

About a quarter mile ahead, John sees his Bronco. His expression changes from one of irritation to one of relief.

He runs toward the truck but stops cold when he gets to the driver's door.

He stares at the truck. In the driver's seat is...him.

John's body is slumped and leaning on the door, with blood splattered on the inside of the windshield and driver's window.

The gun, still in his flaccid hand, rests next to the body.

John tries to open the truck's door, but it is locked. He unsuccessfully attempts to break the window, wailing on the truck with his fists, desperate to gain entry, but fails.

Confused, scared, and desperate, John begins walking.

He walks for what feels to him to be hours. Occasionally a car will pass, but his attempts to flag them down are ignored by every driver that passes.

Miles down the road, another car drives past. Waving his arms frantically, John tries to get the driver's attention. This time, it stops. Relieved, John gets in, sitting in the back seat.

As the car drives away, our view is stationary, with the car getting smaller in the distance.

Our view moves in reverse, and John stands in the middle of the road, staring at the car as it drives away. The look on John's face morphs into one of terror.

SUPER: TO BE CONTINUED...FOREVER

FADE OUT.