

THE GOOD COP

By

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INT. - PSYCHOLOGIST'S OFFICE - DAY

CATHY DONOVAN, a psychologist for the New York City Police Department, sits at her desk. On the other side of the desk is Detective SAM BILLINGS.

DONOVAN takes a digital recorder out of her desk and presses the record button.

DONOVAN:

(even toned, but clearly for
the recorder)

Okay, today is December 17, 2015,
this is the twelveth and final
session between myself and
Detective Sam Billings, as so
ordered by the Detective Billings'
commanding officer, Captain Francis
Davenport, head of the New York
Police Department Homicide
Division. The rationale behind the
directed course of action was
previously stated for the record.

DONOVAN opens BILLINGS' file on her desk. Clicks open a pen.

DONOVAN: (cont'd)

(now looking at BILLINGS)
So detective, how are things?

BILLINGS:

Much better, thank you.

DONOVAN:

For the purposes of the record, can
you walk me through what happened
on the night of November 2, 2015,
specifically when you responded to
the 1013 call that came in at 11:24
pm that evening?

BILLINGS:

I was at the precinct, the 1013
call came in regarding Officer
Jason Black, and the dispatcher
specifically requested that I
respond.

2 EXT. - ABANDONED BUILDING - NIGHT

This flashback occurs as BILLINGS is relaying the story to DONOVAN.

BILLINGS is sitting at his desk, reviewing a case file.

DONOVAN: (V.O.)

Did you receive clarification as to why you were requested?

BILLINGS picks up his radio, answering the call. No sound as he speaks.

BILLINGS: (V.O.)

I was told that Officer Black had requested me.

DONOVAN: (V.O.)

So you responded?

BILLINGS: (V.O.)

That is correct, with my partner, Detective Ben Mullen.

BILLINGS grabs his coat, and motions to his partner, Detective BEN MULLEN to accompany him.

DONOVAN: (V.O.)

And then what happened?

3 EXT. - ABANDONED BUILDING - NIGHT

BILLINGS and MULLEN pull up to the building in an unmarked Crown Vic.

BILLINGS: (V.O.)

Detective Mullen and I arrived on scene at around 11:45 pm

MULLEN:

(into radio)

This is unit 2417, Detectives Billings and Mullen, we've arrived on scene.

BILLINGS and MULLEN exit the Crown Vic, and draw their weapons as they approach the building.

BILLINGS:

Whatever we find up there, finger off the trigger. Assess first.

(CONTINUED)

MULLEN nods, and they enter the building through an old, opened door.

BILLINGS: (V.O.)

I remember giving Mullen some pointers that night. He's a new detective, and I was trying to bring him along a bit.

4 INT. - ABANDONED BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

The building is a piece of shit. Nothing up to code. Middle of the projects.

DONOVAN: (V.O.)

Like a mentor?

BILLINGS: (V.O.)

Exactly. But, what we found that night. Nothing prepared either of us for that.

BILLINGS and MULLEN find Officer JASON BLACK, bloody, lying propped up against the wall. Standing next to him is a scrawny looking caucasian teenager, ZACH LUCAS, scared out of his mind.

BILLINGS trains his gun on LUCAS.

BILLINGS:

(to LUCAS)

Don't move. Step away from the officer-

LUCAS:

I swear I didn't shoot him! It was Davey man, I swear! Please for the love-

BILLINGS:

Calm down, and shut up! We'll get to you in a minute.

BILLINGS motions to MULLEN with his head.

BILLINGS: (cont'd)

(to MULLEN)

Check him.

MULLEN complies.

MULLEN:
He's still breathing! Barely.

BILLINGS:
(into radio)
This is Detective Billings and
Mullen. We have an officer down,
requesting medical assistance
immediately.

BLACK:
(barely audible, to MULLEN)
He...hel...hel...

LUCAS then moves his hand to reveal a gun. BILLINGS
notices.

BILLINGS:
(to LUCAS)
Drop the weapon! Drop it now!

MULLEN notices, and follows suit.

MULLEN:
(to LUCAS)
Drop it now!

LUCAS' gun misfires while it is pointed at the ground.
BILLINGS fires at LUCAS, killing him.

5 INT. - PSYCHOLOGIST'S OFFICE - DAY

Same as before. BILLINGS finishes telling the story.

BILLINGS:
It wasn't until three days later
that I was able to speak to Officer
Black.

DONOVAN:
And what did he tell you?

BILLINGS:
Apparently, the suspect that we
found by Officer Black's side was
trying to help him. Crisis of
conscience kinda thing. The kid
was running with a gang banger
who'd shot Officer Black and got
the hell out of there before we
arrived.

DONOVAN:

Did he ever tell you why he requested that you respond to the incident?

BILLINGS:

I...

(a beat)

I don't think that that should go on the record.

DONOVAN:

Okay, fine.

(DONOVAN turns off the recorder)

Why not?

BILLINGS:

I told Jason I wouldn't report it.

DONOVAN:

Well you could say that backfired on you. You had to know that I.A. would investigate after it hit the media?

BILLINGS:

No, not this incident.

(a beat)

This was the second time that I'd saved Jason's life.

DONOVAN:

When was the first?

BILLINGS:

A few years ago.

DONOVAN:

(a beat)

Care to elaborate?

BILLINGS:

It was a domestic disturbance call. Went bad. The husband drew a gun, and Jason froze. He was a rookie at that point.

DONOVAN:

And you shot the husband?

(CONTINUED)

BILLINGS:

Yeah. The situation was escalating. Guy had his finger on the trigger.

DONOVAN:

Why didn't Jason want you to report it?

BILLINGS:

Isn't it obvious? He didn't want people to know he froze up. That kind of reputation can follow you around your entire career.

DONOVAN:

So what happened afterwards?

BILLINGS:

Jason and I got our story straight. We told I.A. the same thing. Open and shut.

DONOVAN:

Okay. We'll deal with this later, but for right now, I want to circle back to the November 2 shooting.

(DONOVAN turns the recorder back on, once again, SHE is more formal in her speech)

Detective, what was Internal Affairs' ruling on the November 2 incident?

BILLINGS:

(confused)

Don't you have all of this in my file?

DONOVAN:

I do, but I want the timeline of events, from your perspective, recorded. It's for the archives.

BILLINGS:

I.A. ruled that it was a justified shooting based on the fact that, in the moment, neither Detective Mullen or I could determine the suspect's intent. We had to assume life-threatening danger was imminent, which justified the use of deadly force.

(CONTINUED)

DONOVAN:
And you agree with that assessment?

BILLINGS:
(are you out of your mind?)
Of course I agree with the
assessment. Let's me keep my job.

DONOVAN:
And you feel that you're ready to
return to active duty?

BILLINGS:
I don't think I needed this in the
first place-

DONOVAN:
Yeah, well, your captain does. And
I gotta clear your before you
return to work.

BILLINGS:
So. Do I have a clean bill of
health?

DONOVAN:
One more thing.

DONOVAN opens her desk drawer and removes a small remote.

DONOVAN: (cont'd)
I want you to close your eyes, and
listen to this track.

BILLINGS:
(skeptically, but complying)
Okay.

DONOVAN presses play. Crickets can be heard on the
recording, along with a light wind, and leaves scraping
across pavement.

A gunshot rings out, causing BILLINGS to jump and reach for
his sidearm, which isn't there.

BILLINGS: (cont'd)
Jesus, you gotta warn me.

DONOVAN:
Detective, your file states that
you've been with the homicide
division for fifteen years, is that
correct?

BILLINGS:

Yeah. I joined the division in 2000.

DONOVAN:

You know, it's not uncommon for a detective to change divisions a couple of times in their career--

BILLINGS:

(I don't have time for this)
Are you suggesting that I be reassigned?

DONOVAN:

That's exactly what I'm suggesting--

BILLINGS:

Absolutely not! I will not accept reassignment--

DONOVAN:

It's not your call to make, Detective!--

BILLINGS:

Doctor, I respect you, I really do, but I am two years--

DONOVAN:

Just listen to me--

BILLINGS:

I am two years away from a promotion to the head of Homicide. I will not be reassigned when I'm that close!

DONOVAN takes a deep breath. This is harder than she thought.

DONOVAN:

Can I continue?

BILLINGS:

(I'm not going to listen)
Go ahead.

DONOVAN:

First of all, just because your captain is retiring in a couple of years does not mean that you're

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

DONOVAN: (cont'd)
guaranteed a promotion. I've been
around this department long enough
to know that good detectives like
you get passed up all day long.

BILLINGS:
Davenport loves me. He said so
himself. I'm his best detective.

DONOVAN:
Yeah, you know what else he said?--

BILLINGS:
What's that?--

DONOVAN:
He also said you need to be
reassigned.

This hits BILLINGS unexpectedly, like a freight train.
Totally out of the blue.

BILLINGS:
(incredulous)
What the hell?

DONOVAN:
(to BILLINGS, but also for the
recording)
I am clearing you for active duty,
however, I am recommending that you
be reassigned to the Cold Case
Division--

BILLINGS:
Cold case divison?!

DONOVAN:
(speaking the words slowly,
deliberately)
and promoted to Division Captain.
Effective immediately.

DONOVAN turns off the recording. She too is now off the
record, and speaks more freely.

DONOVAN: (cont'd)
Sam, please--

BILLINGS:
(pissed)
Oh, so we're on a first name basis
now that we're off the record?

(CONTINUED)

DONOVAN:

Sam, how the hell can you expect this to turn out any other way?!

BILLINGS:

What the hell is that supposed to mean?

DONOVAN:

You're a fucking hero cop! But instead of reporting it to Internal Affairs, which is what you should have done, you tell me? You know that I can't tell anyone!

BILLINGS:

That's a fucking excuse and you -- (know it).

DONOVAN:

It's basic Doctor/Patient confidentiality, Sam. Jesus Christ, if I tell Captain Davenport what you just told me, he'd have my license to practice revoked. Then he'd tell the FOP, and they'd fucking sue me!

BILLINGS:

So Davenport put you up to this? Did he threaten you?

DONOVAN:

It was his suggestion, yes, but I agree with him!

BILLINGS:

You agree with him?!

DONOVAN:

Yes! Sam, I know you think you're fine, but bottom line, you aren't the same cop you were six weeks ago. This job takes a toll, there's no shame in that!--

BILLINGS:

It's more than a job to me!
(a beat)
I've wanted to run the NYPD's Homicide Division ever since I was a kid watching Law and Order.

(CONTINUED)

DONOVAN:

I get it, Sam. I really do. But you are far too skittish to continue to work Homicide.

BILLINGS eyes start to go glossy. He knows he's done.

DONOVAN: (cont'd)

Sam, this is a gift.

BILLINGS:

(voice breaking)

Some fuckin' gift.

DONOVAN:

You're a good cop. A great detective. But at the end of the day, you shot a teenager, and at the end of the day, the NYPD's Public Affairs Division is still answering questions about it. Questions from the Times and the Post.

(a beat)

Sam, if you told Internal Affairs the truth a few years ago, these sessions would be a formality.

(a beat)

I'm sorry, but I've got to ask what the hell you were thinking when you decided to lie.

BILLINGS:

I was just trying to do the same favor that another cop did for me when I was a rookie.

(a beat)

Cathy, there are good cops, and then there are great ones. I want to be the latter. The type of guy who is not only good at his job, but every now and then, when necessary, breaks procedure to cover for a partner, or fellow officer. It's not written down anywhere, but you ask any off-duty cop at any local bar in the five boroughs, and he'll tell you, that's how you earn respect in this department.

(CONTINUED)

DONOVAN:

Sam, you are a great cop, and you are well respected. But there's no way for me to help you on this one. Believe me I wish I could.

BILLINGS:

This is unbelievable.

DONOVAN:

Sam, do you know what word your colleagues use to describe you?

(a beat)

They all say the same thing. You're tenacious. You don't give up on a case, you keep working it, no matter what. And I gotta be honest with you, in Cold Case, they could use a Captain like you. The victims' families have been waiting for justice longer than anyone.

BILLINGS:

You really think I should take this?

DONOVAN:

I do. Especially because you don't have a choice. It's either this or your shield. This is why it's so frustrating for me to just sit here, doing nothing. You're getting a raw deal, in part because you helped save someone else's pride.

BILLINGS:

So what happens now?

DONOVAN:

You'll need to put in a request to be reassigned to Cold Case. Davenport will grant the request, and recommend you for promotion to Captain, at which time you will be given the reins to the Cold Case Division.

BILLINGS:

You know, I've always found it interesting that when you're trying to move up the chain, and get promoted, the system moves

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

BILLINGS: (cont'd)
incredibly slow. But boy, if you
fuck up, the bureaucrats fall in
line pretty quickly, and you get
moved fast.

DONOVAN:
Believe me, I know. Just be glad
you're still on the city's payroll.

BILLINGS:
Do you think anyone will suspect?--

DONOVAN:
This portion of your file will have
restricted access to me, and only
me. If you ever want to vent about
being moved, let me know.

BILLINGS nods, sniffs. He gets up from his chair and goes
to leave.

DONOVAN: (cont'd)
And Sam, you're not alone.

BILLINGS:
What do you mean?

DONOVAN:
There are plenty of guys in this
department who don't have a choice,
just like you. They're making the
best of a bad situation, and doing
what they have to do to support
themselves and their families.
Plenty of good cops that got a raw
deal, and you're one of them.

BILLINGS:
Thanks.

BILLINGS leaves the office.

6 INT - COLD CASE DIVISION - DAY

There are five desks, two of which are occupied by
Detectives RYAN MITCHELL and HARRY FITCH.

BILLINGS enters the room.

SUPER: Two Weeks Later

(CONTINUED)

BILLINGS:
Is this everybody?

MITCHELL:
Who are you?

BILLINGS:
I'm Detective Sam Billings. I'm
the new CO for this division.

FITCH:
Shit--

BILLINGS:
Yeah, shit's right. Where is
everybody?

FITCH:
I think Charlie's out working a
case. I know Dave and Brock both
took vacation days--

BILLINGS:
Vacation days? On the day that
they'll be meeting their new
Captain?

MITCHELL and FITCH shrug.

BILLINGS: (cont'd)
Alright, get all of them on the
phone. Tell them that we're having
a meeting in an hour, and that I
want a status update on the top
five cases that they're working
right now.

MITCHELL and FITCH pick up their phones and start dialing.

BILLINGS: (cont'd)
You might also want to tell them
that they have a new Commanding
Officer. His name is Sam Billings,
and he's been told that this is the
division where cases go to collect
dust and die. Sam's being a real
hardass right now because he wants
to make this unit one of the best
in the entire department, and he's
got a reputation to uphold.

MITCHELL:
What reputation?

BILLINGS:
I'm a good cop, and my unit is
going to be made up of good cops.

MITCHELL and FITCH wait for their calls to be answered.

FADE TO BLACK.

ROLL CREDITS.

THE END.