

Tangents

By

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DRAFT - IN PROGRESS

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EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

A parked car. The trunk slams shut, revealing

CURTIS BISSON (40) a disheveled lug, wipes sweat from his forehead with his dirty shirt sleeve.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Behind the wheel. Curtis speeds down a rural road, reaches for the RADIO, turns it on, spins the dial.

The back of his hand is SLICK WITH BLOOD.

Reception is sketchy, but he settles with AM Talk Radio.

RADIO GUEST

... as the global economic crisis continues, forcing millions around the world to do with less, and many more to do without. NPR's Tess McNally reports from Tokyo...

Curtis fusses with the rear view mirror, notices the blood on his hand. He sniffs it.

Now there's blood on the tip of his nose.

EXT. ROADSIDE DINER - NIGHT

Curtis's car is parked outside.

INT. ROADSIDE DINER / RESTROOM - NIGHT

Curtis washes his hands in the sink, notices his EAR has blood on it. He dabs it clean with a paper towel.

INT. ROADSIDE DINER - NIGHT

Curtis reviews the menu. The waitress, DARLENE (30) pours some coffee.

DARLENE

Any questions?

He looks up, scans her name tag.

(CONTINUED)

CURTIS

Glad you asked, Darlene. Could I get the Interstate Scramble with spinach in place of peppers and American instead of Swiss?

DARLENE

Don't see why not. Grits, fries or tots?

CURTIS

Gimme the grits.

Darlene points to Curtis's neck.

DARLENE

You, uh, ya got a cut or somethin'.

Curtis reaches for his neck. Indeed, there is blood. He grabs napkin.

CURTIS

How 'bout that.

DARLENE

I'll get'cha some extras.

Darlene leaves. Curtis stares at the bloody napkin, red on white.

SMASH-CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Tight on Curtis's face, cell phone pressed to his cheek. While talking, he pops peanuts into his mouth, grabbing more from a nearby bowl.

CURTIS

Now you know that's impossible. There's no fucking way I can make Phoenix by tomorrow. No, it's not reasonable. In fact it's totally un-fucking reasonable. Of course you can tell him I said that. I wouldn't have said it if I didn't think you weren't gonna tell him I said that... oh, don't be such a god damn angel. That's right. Being all fucking coy like that. You know damn fucking well what this means for us... Look, if he doesn't like

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CURTIS (cont'd)
the situation we're in he can deal
with it himself. I'm sick of...
yeah I'm sick of dealing with his
shit. It stinks and he can... I
said HIS shit not THIS shit. No
it's NOT our shit it's HIS shit,
you fucking coward. Don't tell
me... don't tell me he cares what
happens because he could just as
well... I know that just let me...
you know he could fuck us just like
he did with the last job for those
cock... no I don't give a fuck...
if he thinks he can walk away
and... hello? Did you just hang up
on me? Hello? Coward!

Curtis snaps his phone shut, tosses a handful of nuts back
and munches away while staring down at a

LIFELESS BODY, in black slacks, gray shirt and business
shoes, is prone on the floor on top of a blue plastic tarp.

Curtis is sitting on a fancy couch in an overly decorated
and gaudy living room. He leans in toward the body,
inspecting it, scrutinizing...

He reaches into the body's back pocket and pulls out a
wallet. Opens it. Flips through the contents.

He finds a DRIVER'S LICENSE. Studies it. Puzzled.

He kneels down on the blue tarp, checks the license...

LIFTS UP the head of the body. Compares face to picture.

Compares. Inspects. Studies. THEY DON'T MATCH.

Curtis lets the dead man's head THUD to the floor.

He settles back against the couch, stunned, staring at the
body on the blue tarp.

CURTIS
Fuck.

He reaches up, grabs the entire bowl of peanuts and
continues to munch without skipping a beat.

His CELL PHONE rings. Eventually, he checks the incoming ID.

(CONTINUED)

CURTIS

Fuck.

The cell phone rings... and rings... and rings...

INT. ROADSIDE DINER - NIGHT

Darlene leans in with Curtis's order, slides it in front of him. Curtis is still holding the bloody napkin.

DARLENE

You gonna answer that damn thing?

He snaps out of his daydream, looks up at Darlene, then his cell phone. Checks the ID.

CURTIS

Oh. Yeah. Sorry.

(flips the phone open.)

Hello?

INT. HOMEY KITCHEN - NIGHT

RAINA BISSON (40) a desperate mom, is holding the phone against her cheek with a BABY slung along her side and another CHILD tugging a her leg.

In the nearby living hall, TWO MORE KIDS torment one other.

RAINA

What do you mean hello? You know damn well who this is. It's your wife! Don't pretend I'm some fucking stranger.

CURTIS

What do you want, Raina?

Curtis spots TWO POLICE OFFICERS entering the diner. They scan the booths and tables. Curtis stops listening to Raina.

RAINA

What do I want? Jesus fucking Christ, isn't that obvious? I want my stupid shit husband to get his lazy ass back home sometime in the next millennium so he can provide for the mother of his four children is what!

(CONTINUED)

CURTIS

OK, honey. Love you to. Kisses to
the kids. Bye.

He hangs up, clicks the phone OFF and turns his face AWAY
from the Police Officers.

Darlene steps in with ketchup.

DARLENE

Forgot about this.

Curtis is preoccupied.

CURTIS

Hey... you think...

Beat.

DARLENE

Spit it out, pal.

CURTIS

You think-- that was my wife-- I
could get this to go?

Darlene pauses, stares blankly at him. Disgusted.

DARLENE

What's the matter? Don't like cops?

Nervous as hell, his eyes darting around the room.

CURTIS

Whu...? Whatta ya mean? Don't like
cops? Why would you say a thing
like that?

DARLENE

You tell me.

She grabs the plate. Curtis watches her push through the
swinging doors into the kitchen.

A SHORT-ORDER COOK slaps a service bell. The sound beelines
to Curtis... and quickly burrows into his memory.

SMASH-CUT TO:

EXT. SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

DALE BISSON (4) is riding a new bicycle with training wheels. Curtis pushes him along as he RINGS THE BELL on the handlebars. It's a father-son "Hallmark Moment".

CURTIS
You can do it, Dale. You
got it.

DALE
Daddy! No! Push me. It's...
I can't make it go.

CURTIS
Yes you can. Just keep peddling.
The faster you go the easier it is
to stay up. There ya go! Now just
stick around here.

Dale peddles his heart out and moves in circles around the quiet cul-de-sac. Curtis watches from the driveway.

A voice BELLOWS from the front door of his home.

RAINA
Currrr-tissss!!

His eyes roll.

CURTIS
What now?! I'm playing with Dale!--

RAINA
Where the fuck is the checkbook? I
told you a hundred times to keep it
on the fridge and it ain't there!

A NEIGHBOR steps from their garage, overhearing the spat.

CURTIS
Dale! Come on. Ride's over.

DALE
But Daaaad!

CURTIS
No buts. Time to get inside!

INT. THE BISSON HOME - MOMENTS LATER

Curtis pushes Dale, helmet and all, inside then SLAMS the door behind him. Raina stands, waiting, peeved - as usual.

(CONTINUED)

CURTIS

If you can't do me and the entire neighborhood the favor of keeping your mouth SHUT would you at least keep your voice DOWN?!

RAINA

Why do you have to be such a BASTARD!?

CURTIS

Because you're such a BITCH!

RAINA

Watch your language in front of the children. Jesus Christ. Just find the damn checkbook already.

CURTIS

I will! Gimme a second...

RAINA

(reaching out past Curtis)
T-Bone!! No!!

CRASH! RATTLE! YELP!

Curtis SPINS toward the DINING ROOM and finds T-BONE, the family's Golden retriever, tugging a tablecloth and ALL of its contents onto and along the carpet.

Dale erupts in laughter. Raina rushes to pick up the mess and is followed by CONNOR (6) and GAIL (9) who appear from the hallway and jump into the fracas with glee.

ALICE (9 months) rolls around in the baby bumper, bashing her bottle against the food-covered tray, spraying a geyser of formula over the walls, floor, herself.

Curtis, the Man of the House, the Master of Ceremonies, stares blankly at the FAMILY CIRCUS (Freak Show!) from the sidelines as both spectator and participant.

His mouth hangs open, his eyes stone hard.

CURTIS (V.O.)

(sotto voce)

If you told me years ago that by my fortieth birthday I'd wake up in a puddle of cold dog vomit, step in a shit-filled diaper on my way to the john, lose my thankless job as assistant manager at Office:Land,

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CURTIS (V.O.) (cont'd)
cheat on my wife, and kill a
complete stranger to avoid
foreclosure, bankruptcy and total
financial ruin... I'd say without
question you were talking to the
wrong guy. But who could'a known
back then that the world was slowly
spiraling into quiet chaos and the
tenuous stitch holding our species
intact was unraveling right under
our sore, swollen feet. No one saw
it coming. Not even the pros. Not
even the squares, the eggheads, the
pundits, the analysts, the sages,
the preachers, the prophets. No,
this one sideswiped everyone. Times
were tough. The dark storm clouds
that rolled over our heads and
stuck around for what seemed like
eternity were silver lining free.
But as they say, when the going
gets tough, the tough get
desperate, or they just get stupid.
Which is, for the most part, where
I fit in... more or less...