

NEW PATRONS

Written by

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EXT. CITY STREETS - NIGHT

VIVIAN FRANK (25) exits a SEDAN passenger's side and steps into the light.

The street is dead silent and empty, save the silhouette of an homeless guy drinking from a bag near a streetlight.

Ahead, her boyfriend ASHTON HAVERTON (24) plods forward with his head down, dragging a baseball bat along the sidewalk. He's tall and very well dressed. Ashton stops at the curb as Vivian closes in on him.

They both look up at a CONVENIENCE STORE. A neon sign with several faded letters says EVERYDAY GOODS.

ASHTON

Here.

Ashton flashes a pistol, mean and black, in his waistband to Vivian. He's sweaty and pale.

ASHTON

You've got your gun too?

Vivian nods hastily.

ASHTON

I'm gonna need you to have my back in there, alright?

VIVIAN

Ashton, I can't.

He swallows, then grits his teeth.

ASHTON

You don't even have to do anything. Just be there and look pretty while I do my thing.

CUT TO:

INT. CONVENIENCE STORE - NIGHT

Bossa Nova plays over the speaker. Teenage MIKE WU sits nonchalant on behind the cash register, his feet on the counter as he sketches a self-portrait. It's quite well done. He's tuned out with ear-buds on.

The door swings open with a loud crash as Ashton stomps in, hunched over and his hands in his pockets. Vivian follows with her hand squeezing her elbow, looking all around.

Ashton leans over the counter and sits a burlap sack on top. He locks eyes with Mike and motions for him to take out the headphones.

Mike pulls out his ear-buds, and looks up, his brow furrowed.

MIKE

Sir?

ASHTON

You know the fucking drill kid,
don't act dumb.

Mike freezes, eyes wide.

Ashton picks up his baseball bat, then swings it into a display of chips, spilling them all across the floor. He turns and pulls out his gun and points in directly at Mike.

ASHTON

THE MONEY GOES IN THE BAG, JACKASS!

VIVIAN

Ash!

Mike hastily piles money from the register into the bag.

Vivian pulls out her gun and inspects it in her trembling hands. She focuses on Mike, who stuffs in money so fast, he spills several dollar bills over the counter and onto the floor.

Next, she looks at Ashton, who yells incoherently while waving his gun.

FADE TO:

SUPER: 2 YEARS AGO

INT. SHRINK'S WAITING ROOM - DAY

Vivian exits the Shrink's office and locks eyes with Ashton in the waiting room. He looks off, then glances back at her.

As she waits in the chair for her ride, Ashton moves over next to her and peeks at her discharge forms.

ASHTON

Prozac? I swore one day I'd make it
past that stuff.

VIVIAN

Fuck off.

ASHTON
You say that like I want to be
here.

Vivian avoids eye contact.

ASHTON
You know they wall off the real
stuff. DMT, Ketamine, speed.

VIVIAN
You one of those assholes that
thinks self-medicating is cool?

She turns back to him.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)
No wonder you're still here. The
hell you want?

ASHTON
Why are you always staring at me?
What if I was one of those psychos?

Ashton gestures towards the other patients. Behind the
welcome desk, a nurse looks at him funny.

ASHTON (CONT'D)
There's no pill substitute for raw
thrills. I can show you.

He opens his wallet, showing a wad of one hundred dollar
bills.

CUT TO:

INT. CLUB - NIGHT

With a one hundred dollar bill, Vivian snorts up a line of
cocaine.

Beyond her, Ashton sits lazily and watches with a smirk.

He stands up and approaches her, then clasps a DESIGNER
NECKLACE around her neck. Their conversation obscured by the
blaring music. Ashton gestures to the door.

With her under his arm, they walk out into the...

EXT. DOWNTOWN - NIGHT

Ashton steps into the driver's side of his corvette. Vivian
follows into the passengers seat.

I/E. CORVETTE/DOWNTOWN - NIGHT

Ashton slams on the gas and makes it several hundred feet down the street, before careening right into a parked car, totaling both.

CUT TO:

INT. CONVENIENCE STORE - NIGHT

Holding her gun with both hands, Vivian awkwardly points it between Ashton and Mike.

ASHTON
Faster! You want your brain all
over the wall?

A door behind the counter slams open. Standing in the doorway is MIKE'S GRANDMA, aiming a BIG SHOTGUN.

Ashton gasps, then turns his pistol to her and pulls the trigger.

Nothing happens.

Mike's Grandma returns fire, sending a fat slug into Ashton's stomach.

He flies back, spiraling out along the ground through the spilled chips.

Startled, Vivian, throws her own gun to the floor and holds up her hands.

Mike's Grandma locks eyes with her.

A beat. Bossa Nova continues to play.

As the old lady reloads, Vivian snaps out of it, and runs to Ashton.

Grabbing him by his arms, she drags Ashton out of the store, leaving a trail of blood.

Mike's Grandma fires into the ground in front of her as Vivian manages to drag him out into the...

EXT. CITY STREETS - NIGHT

Grunting, Vivian hefts Ashton into the passenger's seat of the SEDAN and climbs into the driver's. He moans while bleeding out all over the upholstery.

I/E. SEDAN/CITY STREETS - NIGHT

Vivian steps on the gas and peels off.

ASHTON
My gun! What happened!?

VIVIAN
Ash, I-. I wanted to protect us.

ASHTON
From what!?

He groans and writhes in pain.

ASHTON
I thought we were ready to do it,
oh FUCK!

She pulls out fast over a turn, grinding the tires along the street.

ASHTON
What are you doing? Fucking leave
me!

VIVIAN
You need the hospital!

ASHTON
They'll arrest you. I'd rather die.

Ashton lays back on the passenger's seat. The color of his eyes are fading to black.

CUT TO:

INT. STARRY FOREST CLEARING - NIGHT

Ashton and Vivian lay side by side on the grass, staring into the sky. She creeps over and embraces him.

ASHTON
They fucking loved it. Soon, I'll
be published.

Vivian points up at the stars.

VIVIAN
Check it. Gemini's in full bloom.

ASHTON
We all just need our better half.

She smiles at him, moonlight illuminating her face.

VIVIAN
I really think we could make it.
Work and put away some money.

Ashton nods and tenderly kisses her on the forehead.

He picks up a flask and stands up.

Pouring its contents over his hands, he washes them.

Ashton tomahawks the flask into the distant trees.

CUT TO:

I/E. SEDAN/CITY STREETS - NIGHT

ASHTON
(hoarsely)
I thought you were ready to do it
together...

Vivian hyperventilates, leaning into the wheel.

VIVIAN
We're almost there!

Police sirens get louder. Vivian screams and slams her hands on the wheel.

VIVIAN
(Teary)
No...

ASHTON
I need the gun.

Vivian cranes her neck back. Ashton's abdomen is totally hidden by blood spilling out his shirt.

VIVIAN
What are you saying?

Ashton's words dissolve into incoherent mumbles.

VIVIAN
Hey!

CUT TO:

INT. FANCY RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Ashton closes an empty wallet.

ASHTON
My fund's dry. I need you to cover
tonight.

Vivian rolls her eyes.

A beat.

VIVIAN
You're serious? You know I've got
nothing.

ASHTON
And my parents hate me. We're being
thrown out of the apartment if we
can't scrounge money together.

VIVIAN
We'll just get jobs.

Ashton shakes his head like she's stupid.

ASHTON
Look, I'm almost done the novel. A
few more months. I just need new
patrons.

Ashton leans forward.

ASHTON
I know this will sound crazy, but
I'm going to rob this store. I've
cased it. Thing gets held up once a
year, and the cops don't give a
shit cause of where it is. It's
like the Quicken Loans of the
ghetto.

VIVIAN
What? Ash, I thought we --

ASHTON
I want your help. Tonight.

Ashton looks around to make sure nobody is watching, then
slides a PROP PISTOL in front of Vivian.

Her eyes widen and she turns white upon seeing it.

Ashton looks down, not giving her the satisfaction.

ASHTON
It's fake. You can't catch a case
that way. Only mine's real.

He places a REAL PISTOL on the table near himself.

VIVIAN

I thought you were past this psycho
shit. Things were getting better,
things --

ASHTON

Look, Viv, the salad days always
end. I'm robbing it with or without
your help. So meet me in the car,
or go home on foot.

EXT. RESTAURANT PARKING LOT

Vivian gets in the passenger seat of the sedan, next to
Ashton.

I/E. SEDAN/RESTAURANT PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Ashton stashes his gun in the glove compartment.

The car drives out of the parking lot.

While he's driving, she pretends to place her PROP PISTOL
inside, but instead switches it for the REAL PISTOL.

CUT TO:

I/E. SEDAN/EMERGENCY HOSPITAL ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Vivian slams on the breaks as police cars close in around
her, sending Ashton's limp body spilling against the
dashboard.

She crawls over to the passenger seat and hoists Ashton
outside, and emerges into the...

EXT. EMERGENCY HOSPITAL ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Vivian leaves car with Ashton in her arms. Her face is
illuminated by the red and blue of sirens to reveal her
reddened eyes. Ashton coughs up blood over her shirt.