

A Scar to Talk About

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FADE IN:

Morse code for SOS repeats three times, then fades into the patter of rain painting the night black.

INT. A TAXICAB, REAR SEAT POV - NIGHT

The driver, RD, naps. Mid-40's, four days of stubble, shoulder length hair needing a cut, yet handsome beneath it all.

A cigarette burned to the filter clings to his fingers. A scrungy Styrofoam cup holds a few ounces of stale coffee.

A rabbit's foot and something like a piece of dried jerky hang from the rear-view mirror. The wipers thump randomly.

Snippets of dispatcher crosstalk burst from the two-way radio.

The rear passenger door jerks open, waking RD. TWO MEN, one THIN, one BALD, push into the cab in a hurry.

RD eyes them in the rear-view mirror as he shifts into drive and starts the meter all in one Zen motion. The men argue.

THIN MAN

Don't have the money.

BALD MAN

I need it now.

THIN MAN

Ain't got it.

The thin man glances to RD. The bald man takes the cue.

BALD MAN

Hey, cabbie, can you break a Franklin?

RD pulls out ten singles. He speaks with a Cajun lilt.

RD

Just came on. This is all I have.

RD turns on the stereo to the dulcet tones of classical music. The bald one looks to the other shaking his head, unconvinced.

The bald one nods and puts a handgun to RD's ear.

BALD MAN

Don't believe you.

RD

Then pull that bad boy and search my empty pockets.

The bald one leans back to consider his next move. The music, screeching violins, disturbs his concentration.

BALD MAN

What the hell is that?

RD, brow furled, cocks his ear as if to listen.

RD

Chopin's Piano Sonata in A minor.
Outstanding piece of music, no?

The bald one thinks some, then holsters the gun, laughing.

BALD MAN

Drive, you crazy bastard.

AT THEIR DESTINATION

The bald one throws a crumpled ten over the seat as they exit. RD swigs the coffee and grabs the mike in one silky motion.

RD

Six o six, clear.

He pulls a smoldering butt from the ashtray and takes a drag.

Late 60's guitar music filters behind the dispatcher's voice, blending seamlessly with the violins from the car stereo.

DISPATCHER (VO)

You been out fourteen hours. Ready
to come in?

RD counts a fist-size wad of twenty-dollar bills and inserts the ten. He glances to the time, 3:30 am. Taking the mike,

RD

Sun'll be up in a few hours.

He taps the gas gauge. The needle moves from E to half tank.

RD

I'll hang around for a while.

He reaches to turn off the stereo, but not before,

RADIO DJ

That was the lovely sound of Brahm's
Violin Concerto in C major.

RD

Concerto, sonata. Potato, potata.

He grabs his pencil and idly taps it against the meter.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

RD's tail lights fade into the rain-glossed night.

INT. A PHONE BOOTH - NIGHT

A gloved hand, could be male or female, dials 911.

911 OPERATOR

Nine one one emergency.

The other hand, also gloved, taps Morse code for SOS, three times against the receiver, with a pencil.

INT. RD'S CAB, PARKED - DAY

RD's cab sits atop a cliff, the ocean below. He reclines in the seat, eyes to the east. He taps a pencil waiting for,

THE SUNRISE

Driving guitar music precedes the dispatcher's inquiry.

DISPATCHER (VO)

Six o six, RD? The Children's Shelter.

RD grabs the mike without taking his eyes from the sun.

RD

Six o six, copy.

He pencils the address in his log.

INT. A DARK ROOM - DAY

A rack contains several radio scanners. Teeny bopper music pines in the background. A MYSTERY WOMAN'S hands, with nails polished, tunes a scanner to eavesdrop on RD's conversation.

DISPATCHER (VO)

Six o six, RD? The Children's Shelter.

RD (VO)

Six o six, copy.

An audible inhalation, as one might smell a rose.

MYSTERY WOMAN

(imitating his Cajun)

RD, Mister Sex o sex.

Another inhalation and a moan as she exhales, her arousal palpable. She pushes a button to replay his response.

RD (VO)

Six o six, copy.

INT. A BEDROOM - DAY

A bedroom murder scene. An ATTRACTIVE WOMAN lies naked on the bed, wrists and ankles tied. Scarlet colors her throat.

The MEDICAL EXAMINER (ME), mid-60's, seen it all, checks her vitals and listens through a stethoscope placed to her chest.

NIKI SANTANA, late 30's, ice cold Latin looks, examines the body. Her partner, KELLUM, mid-40's, one French fry from a heart attack, enjoys the view from the foot of the bed.

He reads a note taped to the victim's crotch, eyes lingering on her nakedness.

NOTE

"No rape"

He reaches for the note. Niki reacts lightning fast.

NIKI

That hasn't been dusted.

KELLUM

He never leaves prints.

He snatches the note, exposing her remaining secret.

NIKI

Damn it, Kellum, she's not even dead.

KELLUM

(grinning)

Just looking for signs of forcible entry.

Niki tugs on the women's wrist restraints drawing a glance from the ME. She contemplates the women's naked body then pulls the top sheet to the victim's shoulders.

ME

Vitals are stable. Should I wake her?

Niki shakes her head looking at Kellum.

NIKI

Wait until we're done.

With a tweezers Niki lifts a note taped to the headboard.

HEADBOARD NOTE

"CRIME SCENE DETAIL. Victim: Nora Pena.
Cause of death: Slashed throat." ...

Niki scans each list item and notes it in the crime scene.

NIKI

Thorough.

ME

Yeah, I could use him on my staff.

Niki looks to the 'No rape' note. She covers the 'na' on Pena.

NIKI

Nora Pe. No rape. Coincidence?

Kellum shrugs.

INT. RD'S CAB, PARKED AT THE CHILDREN'S SHELTER - DAY

A woman COUNSELOR, mid 30's, and a GIRL, maybe 10, enter the cab. The girl tries to handle her school supplies and too many books, in obvious need of a backpack.

RD looks to the run-down building. The 'Children's Shelter' sign hangs askew.

COUNSELOR

To Grace Elementary School.

RD shifts into gear, putting his finger to the meter as he looks to the young girl from the rear view mirror. Her left hand and one eye are bandaged.

The woman catches his glance in the mirror. He doesn't start the meter until well down the street.

CURBSIDE AT THE GRACE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

The meter reads \$9.00. The woman fumbles for the fare, then finds a ten. She extends it tentatively.

RD has a one waiting in exchange. She motions him to keep it. He pushes it into the girl's hand.

RD

For that backpack.

The girl fixes one of what must be a pretty set of eyes on RD.

GIRL

Thanks, Mister.

The woman thanks RD in her glance. She offers a business card.

COUNSELOR

Donations are tax-deductible. God willing, we'll have enough money someday to renovate the shelter.

They exit. The young girl turns to wave with the bandaged hand, but can't find a smile. RD flips the card over to read,

BACK OF CARD

"And God so loved the world he gave his only Son"...

He shoves it into the ashtray beside a still lit cigarette.

RD

Right.

Flames slowly devour the card.

INT. RD'S CAB, PARKED AT 148 COLLEGE ROAD - DAY

RD sketches the young school girl waving to him. In the sketch though, her bandages are gone and she sports a smile.

Snippets of radio crosstalk until,

DISPATCHER (VO)

Six o six, your 148 College Road just cancelled. But, oh lucky day, I've got a call for 147 College. Sounds like helluva package. Enjoy.

RD looks across the street to what could only be the PACKAGE, a smart-dressed, slender SHY WOMAN hiding her eyes behind bangs and a striking face below a wide-brimmed hat.

She closes her cell phone and hails RD. He pulls a U-turn.

POV: DRIVER'S SEAT LOOKING TO REAR PASSENGER DOOR

Her leg eases in, her skirt catches the door and slides up her thigh, to reveal a well-turned leg and more.

RD catches her eye, and both know he knows she's wearing nothing under that skirt.

From a lace-gloved hand she extends an address on a scented slip of paper. He savors the perfume as he drives off.

EXT. THE FRONT DOOR AT 148 COLLEGE ROAD - DAY

A MAN emerges and yells for RD's receding cab to stop.

BACK TO THE CAB, DURING THE RIDE

RD glances at her from the rear-view mirror, but she demurely parries his interest.

HER DESTINATION

Over the seat she extends a twenty for a five dollar fare. She holds the bill a little too long, drawing RD's eyes to hers.

She notes the sketch on the front seat, then exits before he can make change.

RD
Ma'am, your change.

In a honey-coated voice, pure New Orleans.

SHY WOMAN
Thanks, RD.

Her accent catches his ear as she strides away. He slides the perfumed note under his nose, inhaling deeply.

From his wallet he pulls out a dog-eared snapshot of a woman in a straw hat and sun dress and holds it beside the receding figure of the shy woman. The resemblance is striking.

He shoves it back into the wallet and presses the perfumed paper into the ashtray, where it catches flame.