DARKENED SKIES

Written by

Luke Anthony

5717 NW 162nd st. Edmond, OK 73013
(405)589-5343

JOSH
Just be fair and remember to-

Daryl pushes past him.

DARYL
Just shut up and organize your tools.

It takes everything inside Josh not to lash out.

INT. FRONT OFFICE - LATER

A bell rings as the shop door opens. JOSH walks through.

In the corner, the Old Lady sits. She peers over to see who came in. Josh waves at her with a smile.

He then walks back behind the counter and washes his hands in a sink.

The bell rings again, followed by Daryl’s booming voice.

DARYL
JACKSON, BERTHA?

Josh turns and watches as the lady struggles to get up. She makes her way over to the counter.

He overhears Daryl as he talks to the lady behind him.

DARYL (CONT'D)
Welp, it looks pretty rough in there.

OLD LADY
Oh no...

DARYL
Oh yes! I have a list of things we need to take care of, starting with new brakes, a set of tires, and those are just the major things...

OLD LADY
I don’t have much money. Is all of that really necessary?

DARYL
Of course ma’am. You’ve been driving a death trap!

OLD LADY
A death trap?

DARYL
Don’t worry, I worked up an estimate. We can always get you on a payment plan or-

Josh can’t hold back anymore.

JOSH
Daryl.

Daryl stops.

DARYL
Uh... yes?

JOSH
You know good and well she doesn’t need all of that.

Daryl laughs nervously.

DARYL
Are you trying to tell me how to do my job?

Josh shuts off the sink and whips around to Daryl.

JOSH
It‘s about time someone did...

DARYL
(To Josh)
Why don’t you just let a professional handle this.
(To Old Lady)
Sorry about this ma’am.

Josh darts over to Daryl and points a finger in his face.

JOSH
The only thing you care about is your own damn commission!

Daryl chuckles and pulls Josh aside.

DARYL
All you care about is making your boss happy. Ain’t that right, kiss ass?

Josh then lunges forward and tackles Daryl to the ground.

The Old Lady gasps.

Josh starts throwing punches at Daryl who cowers in fear.

The fight is quickly interrupted by Clark’s booming voice.

CLARK
What the HELL is going on in here?

Clark exits his office to see Josh beating Daryl to a pulp.

CLARK (CONT'D)
Josh! Get off.

He moves over and pulls Josh off of Daryl.

CLARK (CONT'D)
What are you thinking, son?

DARYL
Mr. Clark, Josh was trying to *KILL* me!

Clark looks to Josh for an explanation.

JOSH
He... He was trying to sell this customer maintenance she doesn’t need.

There’s a moment of silence between them all as they catch their breaths. Clark stands and motions the lady out to resume her seat.

CLARK
I apologize for this greatly ma’am. Have a seat and we will be right with you.

Clark turns back to his office.

CLARK (CONT'D)
Daryl, go clean yourself up. Josh, a word in my office. NOW.

Josh, still worked up, looks back to Daryl, who wipes blood from his face.

DARYL
Good luck getting yourself outta this one.

INT. CLARK’S OFFICE - DUSK

Clark enters and plops down in his huge leather chair.

CLARK
Sit, boy.

Josh sits across from Clark and they both wait a long time for someone to speak.

JOSH
Mr. Clark I-

CLARK
I don’t need to hear it.

Mr. Clark leans forward and puts his hands together.

CLARK (CONT'D)
I told your father that if anything happened to him, that I would look after you. And I have...

JOSH
I’m very thankful for that but-

CLARK
Let me talk. You’re a good kid, I know you are. But this isn’t like you at all.

JOSH
I couldn’t see him do that to another customer. I’m sorry...

CLARK
I wish I’m sorry could cut it. But punching up a coworker right in front of a customer? Did you see the look on her face?

JOSH
I can apologize to the customer, work extra hours, I’ll do anything.

CLARK
I don’t think there’s much you can do. I’ll probably have to comp her repairs, that is if she hasn’t run away already... Do you know what it would look like if I kept you on?

There’s a long silence as Josh comes to terms with what’s happening.

JOSH
Clark...

CLARK
I can always help you out with money.

JOSH
I can’t accept that. You’ve done plenty enough for me...

They sit in silence for a long moment.

CLARK
Why don’t you stay in here for a bit and cool off. I’m gonna go talk to Daryl.

Clark gets up and puts his hand on Josh’s shoulder.

CLARK (CONT'D)
Maybe you just need some time off... It could be a good opportunity for you.

Clark exits. Josh is left in the office all alone.

CUT TO:

INT. JOSH'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Josh enters and opens a cabinet to reveal a stack of mugs, all reading: “Employee of the Month”. He grabs one and winds back to throw it across the room. He stops himself.

He grabs a six pack of beer from the fridge, pops one open, and pours it into the mug.

INT. JOSH'S APARTMENT - LIVING AREA

Josh is now on the recliner. He opens a bear and takes a sip.

Silence.

Thunder rumbles as lightning flashes onto his face through his tiny window.

He notices a photo on his coffee table:

INSET - PHOTO OF JOSH AS A KID HUGGING CLARK

He cries as the memories flood back to him.

A flash of lightning brings him back into reality.

He sits the photo back down, defeated.

Beside it he notices something: the 20 that Elaine gave him.

Through his tears, he manages a soft smile.

He thinks for a long moment, then abruptly grabs it and gets up.

EXT. STREET INTERSECTION - NIGHT

CRAKOOM!

Lighting blasts through the sky above a deserted street intersection. A red light illuminates the falling rain. JOSH approaches.

He looks up to the stoplight, his face lighting up red.

The gentle rain then quickly becomes a ferocious downpour.

Josh runs through the intersection towards a glowing beacon in the dark.

A large neon sign reads “CAFE”.

Josh runs towards the brightly lit windows, and throws open the door.

INT. CAFE - NIGHT

The modest restaurant is unremarkably undecorated. A few sun faded photos of flowers and trees dot the walls. Booths fill up most of the space.

Harsh florescent lights make the place feel like a hospital.

Not a single soul is there.

Shaking off all the rain, JOSH scans the cafe in disappointment.

He slowly makes his way over to a booth. He slumps down onto the worn seat and puts his head in his hands.

A hand lays a coffee cup onto the table, filling it with steaming black coffee.

WOMAN (O.S.)
Cream or sugar?

Josh looks up to the voice.

Elaine stands beside him with a pot of coffee.

The lamp above her head provides a halo of light around her brown hair, which is pinned up into a bun. She wears a pair of round glasses and a huge smile.

ELAINE
Oh my gosh... Of all the diners on 34th and Broadway, you walked into mine!

JOSH
I heard you guys had good coffee.

Elaine eyes her pot.

ELAINE
If you like liquid mud.

JOSH
Maybe I do. Two creams and two sugars please.

ELAINE
Geez. You can’t even taste the coffee!

JOSH
Exactly.

Elaine shrugs.

ELAINE
I don’t think I ever got your name.

JOSH
Josh.

Elaine puts her hand out.

ELAINE
Elaine Marie Bedford, at your service!

Josh shakes her hand.

JOSH
Couldn’t fit all of that on the nametag?

Elaine rolls her eyes.

ELAINE
I'll be back.

INT. CAFE - LATER

Elaine returns with the cream and sugar. She sits down another mug, and then pours coffee into it.

JOSH
Are you joining me?

ELAINE
I guess so. Not much else to do right now.

They both scan the diner: it's completely deserted.

Josh notices the clock: 2:24 am.

JOSH
I guess your boss still put you on graveyard shift?

ELAINE
Oh no, I just decided to come here and serve people coffee at 2am on my own volition.

Josh scoffs.

ELAINE (CONT'D)
Sorry, It's the lack of sleep. Causes me to be more sarcastic.

JOSH
What do you do to pass the time?

ELAINE
I mostly just work on my writing.

JOSH
Are you a writer who's stuck being a waitress, or a waitress who aspires to be a writer?

Elaine taps her ring on her mug.

ELAINE
Bit of both. I went to school for it.

JOSH
USC?

ELAINE
Chapman.

JOSH
Sheesh. You must have deep pockets!

ELAINE
I'm working on it...

JOSH
Have I read anything of yours?

ELAINE
Um... Have you ever been to Sunnyside Dental?

JOSH
I can't say that I have.

ELAINE
Well I did their pamphlets. "How to maintain healthy plaque", that kind of stuff.

JOSH
Wow, sounds riveting. I'll have to go by and check it out. You think I can get an autographed copy?

ELAINE
Okay it's not a NYT best seller, but I've been here for years and I haven't had a single chance to write about something I actually care about!

JOSH
Tooth pamphlets aren't your thing?

ELAINE
No... I really want to write a novel. I have a bunch of ideas for one inspired by a couple of my favorite classics: Lord of the Flies, 1984-

JOSH
Oh! Like the Van Halen album?

Elaine almost spits out her coffee.

ELAINE
You're kidding...

JOSH
Not the Van halen album.

Elaine chuckles in disbelief.

ELAINE
Maybe one day I can actually start writing it, but right now, I'm working all week and I still end up broke.

JOSH
Well, for what it's worth, things aren't going much better for me.

ELAINE
Oh no! Did you break a tool? Car talk back to you? Or was it a-

JOSH
I got fired.

ELAINE
Oh... Sorry.

Josh drinks nervously.

JOSH
I just have no idea what I'm gonna do...

Elaine notices how upset he is and moves in a bit.

ELAINE
You know... My car is still making that hideous screeching noise.

Josh perks up.

JOSH
You want me to take a look at it?

ELAINE
As long as you don't rip me off.

JOSH
You won't have to worry about that.

ELAINE
I'm off tomorrow. Maybe you can take a look at it then?

JOSH
Sure. My schedule is clear now.

ELAINE
Yikes.

The front door opens and a group of COLLEGE STUDENTS walks in.

ELAINE (CONT'D)
Ah, looks like the bars have closed.

She picks up the coffee.

ELAINE (CONT'D)
I'd better go get their orders in. See you tomorrow?

Josh nods.

JOSH
Can I borrow your pen?

ELAINE
Sure.

Elaine hands Josh a pen from behind her ear.

JOSH
Oh, and how much for the coffee?

ELAINE
On the house. Thanks for the company.

She turns and leaves.

INT. CAFE - LATER

Elaine pours coffee for the College Kids. She notices Josh exit.

She sits down the coffee pot, and pulls out her pad. She feels for her pen in her hair: gone.

ELAINE
Excuse me for one second.

She goes over to Josh's table and notices the pen with a note reading: Thanks for the chat, bring your car - 135 N 12th Street.

Next to the note is her twenty dollar bill. Elaine smiles.

INT. JOSH'S GARAGE- DAY

A light peers down through a mess of tubes and metal. Josh flicks off his flashlight.

Elaine is messing with Josh’s tools as he leans onto her hood.

He clears his throat, startling Elaine, and causing her to drop a tool she was holding. She puts it back nervously.

JOSH
Just the belt. I can go pick up a new tensioner and have it back up in a few hours.

ELAINE
Sounds good. I just need her in top notch shape for when I head back home.

JOSH
Where’s home?

ELAINE
You’d never guess... Oklahoma.

JOSH
The one above Texas?

ELAINE
Some would say...

JOSH
I think I’ve seen it on the weather channel. *Tornado Alley?*

ELAINE
Oh yeah. Every may we get plenty of them little devils.

JOSH
I don’t know how you could live in a place with those things tearing everything up all of the time.

ELAINE
You know at literally any moment, an iconic southern California earthquake could level this garage.

Josh gulps.

ELAINE (CONT'D)
We often suffer more in our imaginations than in reality.

JOSH
Fancy words. Did you write that?

ELAINE
I wish! That’s Seneca.

Elaine waits for Josh to react. Nothing.

ELAINE (CONT'D)
Do you read anything?

Josh points to a stack of magazines in the corner of the garage. Elaine eyes them.

ELAINE (CONT'D)
Popular Mechanics?

JOSH
They’ve got good reviews.

Elaine looks over to Josh who is already starting to take the car apart, removing parts with extreme care.

ELAINE
You really like doing this, don’t you?

JOSH
It’s all I know...

Elaine thinks, then an idea comes to her.

ELAINE
You know... I might know somebody who could use your skills.

JOSH
It had better not be Jimmy G. Down the road, that guy is an asshole.

ELAINE
Well... It’s not that kind of thing exactly.

JOSH
What is it?

ELAINE
I don’t know if you’re gonna like it...

JOSH
Oh, come on. How bad could it be?

Josh’s smiling face cuts to:

INT. JOSH'S APARTMENT - LATER

Josh and Elaine are sitting at the kitchen table sipping on coffee. Jos’s face is now in stunned silence.

ELAINE
Like I said, you don’t *have* to go. But things are really tough at the farm right now.

JOSH
Would I be... Farming?

ELAINE
Obviously you would help fix Pa’s John Deere... And possibly help with other manual labor.

JOSH
Like farming?

ELAINE
Fine, nevermind. Maybe I can find someone else.

JOSH
I might be able to learn some farming... How long would I be there?

ELAINE
Until the harvest is over. A few months? We will house and feed you too as long as you earn it.

JOSH
It sounds nice... But I might just try and patch things up with my old boss.

ELAINE
Oh... Okay.

Josh leans back in his chair.

JOSH
Are you coming back after the harvest?

ELAINE
Uh... No. I’m kind of moving back for the foreseeable future.

Josh freezes.

JOSH
Wait... You’re-

ELAINE
Anyways, sorry to bother ya, you can get back to-

Josh stops her.

JOSH
When are you leaving?

ELAINE
Next week.

Josh thinks, does he really want to do this?

JOSH
Count me in.

He holds out his hand. Elaine shakes it with a smile.

ELAINE
You’re in for one heck of a summer!

MUSIC IN:

AEROSMITH - BACK IN THE SADDLE

EXT. FIELD - DAWN

Josh’s Truck drives down a two lane road slicing between large yellow fields. The orange glow from the rising sun floods through the rows of wheat.

INT. JOSH'S TRUCK - DAWN

JOSH and ELAINE sit in the front seat of Josh’s truck. Josh bangs his head to the music as Elaine looks out the window.

Josh notices Elaine and turns down the music.

JOSH
What’s wrong?