

Automation

by

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INT. CAR. NIGHT.

The back seat, once stained maroon, becomes a mess of frothed soap water and red leakages - blood. Joey, 20, blonde and scrawny, furiously scrubs the stain, pausing to squeeze the sponge out onto the ground. The radio is at a low hum, he cranks it up to an 11. "Under My Thumb" by the Stones is playing. He smiles. He notices the time, it reads some time well past what he was expecting. There's no longer a smile.

JOEY

Shit. Shitshitshitshit.

Joey pops the trunk to grab a blanket, which he drapes over the backseat. It's patchwork but it passes, with the stain out of sight. He scrambles into the driver's seat and hears a ring. He grips the wheel, hits himself in the head, and flips open the flip phone, receiving the call. There's a rugged voice on the other end. Joey's face denies any opportunity of confidence on this call.

VOICE

I've waiting for your call.

JOEY

Yeah.

VOICE

What happened?

JOEY

Just a few minutes behind, nothing else.

VOICE

I was worried.

(pause)

In the right location?

JOEY

Yeah, there's no one around.

VOICE

You're sure?

JOEY

Yes.

VOICE

I need to make sure this didn't go wrong. This is on you if it did.

JOEY
I got it. It didn't.

There's breathing on the other end of the call.

JOEY
Look, I'm on my way, ok? I'll be
there soon.
(pause)

The call drops. Joey lets loose a heavy sigh. He breaks the flip phone and throws it out the window, into the grass. He begins to drive off, two red blips against the dark night sky.

INT. CAR. NIGHT.

Joey drives through to a clearing, the headlights dancing as a pair in the dark. They brush once, twice, and three times over the lone figure, blended in with the dark. The figure, the VOICE, is wearing muted colors and a mask. Joey cuts the distance and stops the car a few yards from the figure.

JOEY
Just keep cool J. Just keep cool.

He reaches, discreetly into the side compartment, popping it open and grabbing the snub-nosed resting underneath paperwork. Without checking the bullet count, he tucks it into his side pocket and zips up his jacket. He leaves the keys and the car running.

EXT. FIELD. NIGHT.

The headlights illuminate the way in front of the car, giving the two men a spot to convene. Joey's small, stuttered steps are funny to see across from the tall standing confidence of the man.

VOICE
Do you have the money?

JOEY
Ye-yes. It's in the truck.

There's a pause. The man assumes Joey is going to open the trunk. Joey rushes to the driver's seat, pops the trunk, and grabs the bag of cash. He swings it over his shoulder and returns to his spot across from the man.

VOICE
It's all there?

JOEY
I-I didn't count it.

Lengthy pause.

VOICE
Well?

JOEY
(interrupting)
Yeah, yeah I'll count it right
now.

He gets on a knee and zips the bag open. Starts counting aloud.

The man across from him becomes indignant, shifting forward and shoving the kid down, away from the bag. He picks it up, sets it on the hood of the car, and looks at Joey.

VOICE
It looks like it's all there.
(pause)
I guess that's it.

He picks up the bag and walks toward the trunk. Joey, wide eyed,

JOEY
I-I-Don't go back there.

The man turns, dismissive of Joey's remarks, and shines his phone light into the trunk. A body is seen, hooded, lifeless, gone from the world. The man whips his head back to Joey, in front of the hood. He slams the trunk door.

VOICE
The fuck is this?

JOEY
Nobody.

VOICE
I thought you said that no one
saw.

JOEY
Yeah, no one saw.

Joey motions towards the trunk.

VOICE
Then who is this?

JOEY
Nobody.

VOICE
You keep saying that like it's an
acceptable answer.

The man leaves the bag on the ground, walks towards the hood, and grabs Joey's collar. He punches him once in the stomach.

VOICE
Who the fuck is that in the trunk
of my car?

JOEY
Someone saw me leaving the joint
and then came over and starting
whining, the noise was too much
man. There wasn't anyone out there
but this guy just kept running his
mouth-and-and-I had to-

VOICE
Bullshit. You didn't have to do
anything. Cause you had the mask
on.

(pause)
You had the mask on.

Joey's sobs reverberate, his body convulsing violently.

The man drops him. Joey slumps onto his back, surveying the man's motions.

VOICE
He said you were a fucking
professional man.
(pause)
I ain't never had to do this.

The man reaches inside his coat, withdrawing a pistol, and turns to fire. A shot rings off, blinding white light to follow. The man drops his gun, rushing one hand to the left side of his face. Joey, still prone, lowers his gun and begins to scoot away from the scene, shifting in the dirt back into the darkness. The man's screams die down.

VOICE
You fucker!

Joey runs into the darkness. The man fires his gun several times in his direction, til he hears the clicking noise. He rushes to drivers side and slides in, checking for keys - bingo. He accelerates off into the night.

INT. CAR. NIGHT.

The car sways up and down as it passes over the speed hump and into the parking lot. He slows the car to a street parade speed and brightens the headlights. The rays sweep over a number of cars in his view. He lowers the windows, gun in one hand and wheel in the other.

VOICE

We're not gonna make this
difficult for ya kid.

He keeps the car at this slow speed.

EXT. PARKING LOT. NIGHT.

Cat and mouse game is played between the two. The man eventually gets out of the car, after a few sweeps, and begins to look and run for Joey, more agitatedly. Joey tries car doors and hides underneath some vehicles, laying down in the backseat to avoid inspection. When the man believes Joey to have left the scene, Joey accidentally triggers a car alarm, alerting him to his presence. We cut to black here.

FIN.