

NATE

Written by

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1

EXT. DRIVEWAY - DAY

1

A modest car sits parked in the driveway of a quiet, unassuming L.A. ranch.

2

INT. CASSANDRA'S CAR - DAY

2

Inside, a cute woman wearing an African head wrap, clutches her steering wheel. This is CASSANDRA, 30s, gripped by anxiety. She's on the phone with her boyfriend, DERRICK, 30s.

DERRICK

You still just sitting in her driveway?

CASSANDRA

Yep. Like a total fucking weirdo.

DERRICK

What even is an 'estranged best friend'?

CASSANDRA

It's exactly what it sounds like.

DERRICK

Is this a girl thing? Because for dudes, you have guys you fuck with and guys you don't fuck with anymore. If a guy you don't fuck with anymore calls you out of the blue, you don't drop everything to go to his place.

CASSANDRA

Derrick, do you want me to come back home?

DERRICK

(with a sigh)

No, Cassandra. Just... Call me if there's anything wrong. Text me again before you leave.

CASSANDRA

Babe, I'll be fine.

Off Cassandra hanging up, unsure if she will be...

3 **EXT. HOUSE - DAY**

3

Summoning gumption, Cassandra walks up and reaches for the bell. The door OPENS before she can touch it--

REVEALING Archelle, 30s, beautiful, and currently a teary wreck with mascara-smudged eyes and messy hair.

 ARCHELLE

 You came...

 CASSANDRA

 Yeah.

Archelle embraces her in weepy relief, while a stunned Cassandra awkwardly hugs her back.

4 **INT. ARCHELLE'S LIVING ROOM - DAY**

4

Archelle's living room is pristine and perfect. Tastefully curated photographs adorn the walls and her husband's golf clubs stand by the door.

Archelle sits on the couch, but Cassandra stands, visibly uncomfortable. She breaks the tension.

 CASSANDRA

 What's wrong?

 ARCHELLE

 Nate is gone.

 CASSANDRA

 Like... He left you?

 ARCHELLE

 Yeah.

Cassandra just stares. Then her eyes turn hard...

 CASSANDRA

 That's why you called me here?

Archelle nods absently. Cass takes this in.

 CASSANDRA (CONT'D)

 Wow... That's pretty fucked up.

 ARCHELLE

 I thought you'd be happy. I got my
 comeuppance and you got to be
 right...

CASSANDRA

I didn't want to be right. I don't... I don't want any of this.

ARCELLE

Cass, I know you. You've been dreaming of vindication

CASSANDRA

I'm not mad or bitter or whatever it is you think I am. We've both moved on. But calling ME to pick up the pieces because Nate left you?

ARCELLE

I need you.

CASSANDRA

It's been six years.

ARCELLE

And?

CASSANDRA

The last time we spoke, you told me no one would ever love me and I told you I hoped Nate dies in a fire, so there's that. You have other friends. Family. Why me?

ARCELLE

Because choosing Nate over you is a mistake I regret everyday and I want my best friend back.

It's not good enough for Cassandra. She heads for the front door.

CASSANDRA

I have to go home. I'm gonna call your sister and tell her what's happened.

ARCELLE

Don't tell Avery! She hates me more than you do.

CASSANDRA

You need someone right now, but it's not me. Sorry.

Cassandra is halfway out the front door.

ARCHELLE

Cass, wait! I'm pregnant.

Cassandra freezes, stricken. After a painful pause, she closes the door.

5 **INT. CASSANDRA'S CAR - DAY**

5

Cassandra gets into her car, turns on the engine, and stares straight ahead. Paralyzed. She knows she's supposed to put the car in gear... But she CAN'T.

CASSANDRA

Damn it! God damn it!

Cassandra continues to rage in the driver's seat, knowing it's futile and that her choice has been made...

6 **INT. ARCHELLE'S LIVING ROOM - DAY**

6

Archelle's alone on the couch. Cassandra comes back in unannounced. There is a BEAT... Then an understanding. Archelle stands and Cassandra notices her WRIST WRAPPED in white gauze.

CASSANDRA

What happened to your wrist?

ARCHELLE

I got upset earlier... It's fine.
You're here now.

A million years of their history flash in Cassandra's worried eyes. But she doesn't press further.

CASSANDRA

So what are you going to do?

ARCHELLE

Not much I can do about Nate. But I always wanted kids. I just didn't think it would happen like this.

CASSANDRA

I'm sure Nate will still help raise the baby...

(with a sigh)

If we're doing this, I can't be sober. Stupid question given your condition, but do you have any wine?

Archelle leads the way to the kitchen.

 ARCHELLE
Merlot or Malbec?

 CASSANDRA
Surprise me.

Cassandra's phone starts buzzing. It's Derrick. With Archelle preoccupied, Cassandra searches for a private place to take the call.

7 **INT. BATHROOM - DAY**

7

Of course the bathroom is as immaculate as the rest of the house. Cassandra stares at the lapis lazuli colored shower curtain, while talking to Derrick. We hear her side.

 CASSANDRA
Hey... She's fine, she just needs--
I don't know what she needs...
Okay, I'll text you when I leave.
Love you.

Cassandra hangs up and looks in the mirror. After considering herself for a beat, she washes her hands. Then she opens the door to:

8 **INT. HALLWAY - DAY**

8

Archelle standing with a glass of red wine, anxious. Cassandra jumps, startled.

 ARCHELLE
(edgy)
Were you on the phone just now?

 CASSANDRA
Yeah, checking in with my
boyfriend.

 ARCHELLE
(relaxing)
Boyfriend? Well clearly, we need to
get caught up.

She hands Cassandra the wine and shepherds her out.

9

INT. ARCHELLE'S KITCHEN - DAY

9

Cassandra guzzles the red as she looks around the high-end kitchen. Archelle puts on some music with her phone.

ARCHELLE

So...?

Cassandra rolls her eyes and rummages through the fridge.

CASSANDRA

His name is Derrick. He's not my usual type. We met in the craziest way... I ran a red light and- Yes! You have chicken!

Archelle jumps out of her seat.

ARCHELLE

Are you going to make fried chicken!?!

CASSANDRA

I'm going to make fried chicken!

ARCHELLE

YES.

Archelle dances in celebration. Cassandra laughs while pulling out the other necessary fixings.

ARCHELLE (CONT'D)

You make the best fried chicken in the world. Derrick is so lucky.

Cassandra starts to season and flour the chicken.

CASSANDRA

Actually, I haven't made it in a while. Derrick's vegan, so...

ARCHELLE

Oh. I guess you're vegan now too.

CASSANDRA

...What does that mean?

ARCHELLE

I'm just saying. Pretty sure you lived on Baconators senior year.

CASSANDRA

People change.

ARCHELLE

(scoffs)

Nobody changes. Except you. When you want to impress a man. Their thing becomes your thing.

CASSANDRA

Girl. Are we really talking about **my** dysfunction with men?

ARCHELLE

I was just pointing out that you kind of have a pattern. You go from basic bitch sew-ins to -- what is this on your head even? Derrick into earthy, motherland chicks? Does he call you "queen"?

CASSANDRA

Allow me to point something out. My boyfriend is at home. Your husband is gone.

Archelle is momentarily struck... But she relaxes with a small smile.

ARCHELLE

I can't even imagine how good it must feel for you to say that. I like this! Let's say all the things we've been dying to say to each other for the last six years. You can tell me how right you were about Nate being a sadistic prick and how glad you are that he's gone.

CASSANDRA

I **am** glad that he's gone! Who's going to smack you around and break your nose now? Who is going to nearly break your best friend's ribs when she tries to help you?

ARCHELLE

I knew what I was getting into with Nate and I told you to stay out of it. Not come riding in on a white horse and get your ass kicked for being stupid.

CASSANDRA

The only stupid thing I ever did was not press charges!

ARCHELLE

Just so you could feel good about saving me? I'm not your drugged up mother.

Cassandra takes a floured chicken thigh and THROWS it at her. Archelle ducks and snaps back.

ARCHELLE (CONT.) (CONT'D)

Jesus, don't take it out on the chicken.

CASSANDRA

What the hell am I even doing here?

A cell phone RINGS... Not Archelle's or Cassandra's. It's plugged in on the far end of the kitchen counter.

Archelle's eyes grow WIDE. The two women stare at each other, Cassandra confused by Archelle's reaction. The cell keeps ringing until the call goes to voicemail.

CASSANDRA (CONT'D)

Are you... going to get that?

We see Archelle's world shrink down to the length and width of that phone. In a melancholy manner Archelle walks over to silence the phone.

ARCHELLE

It's his.

CASSANDRA

(chuckling)

Nate skipped town and forgot his phone?

Archelle is still for a moment... Her face unreadable. Then she takes Cassandra's hand and leads her out of the kitchen, down the hallway... To the bathroom.

10

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

10

Archelle and a confused Cassandra stand before the beautiful lapis lazuli shower curtain.

Archelle pulls back the curtain to reveal a very battered, very DEAD Nate slumped over in a pool of blood and water. His bloodshot eyes stare out into nothingness. For a moment, there is silence...

And then Cassandra SCREAMS. She flees from the room, but Archelle is right on her heels.

11 INT. HALLWAY - DAY

11

Archelle grabs Cassandra to stop her from leaving, but Cass pushes her off.

CASSANDRA
Did you kill him??

ARCHELLE
Cass, you left me with a violent,
sadistic monster.

CASSANDRA
I'm not falling for your Jedi mind
tricks again. Did you kill him?!?

ARCHELLE
...Yes.

Cassandra makes a beeline for the front door, but Archelle blocks Cassandra from exiting.

ARCHELLE (CONT'D)
He hit me for years. Broke my arm.
Fractured my collar bone. Are you
really surprised something like
this happened?

CASSANDRA
If it was so bad, why did you stay?
Why didn't you call the police?

ARCHELLE
He'd buy me gifts, take me on
trips, just be so sweet and nice.
He would treat me like I was his
whole world. Until I wasn't. I was
just trying to get away from him.
Make him stop. I didn't mean to
kill him.

Cassandra can't help but to help.

CASSANDRA
Then it's self defense!

ARCHELLE
They'll just say what you said.
"Why did I stay?" Why would I put
myself in this situation?

CASSANDRA
I didn't mean it like that.

ARCHELLE
 (breaking down)
 If my own best friend doesn't
 believe me, why would the police?

CASSANDRA
 You had to protect yourself and
 your baby. They'll understand.

Archelle continues to weep. Cassandra consoles her for a moment, but then something occurs to her...

CASSANDRA (CONT'D)
 Wait... How did he come after you
 while he was in the shower?

Archelle stares at her, annoyed. The water works are GONE.

ARCHELLE
 (Flatly)
 See, this is why I didn't call the
 police.

Cold. Shock. Cassandra backs away.

CASSANDRA
 Did you...? Did you just make all
 that up?

ARCHELLE
 It's the fucking shower. I could
 have killed him anywhere else in
 this stupid house except the
 bathtub and it would have been
 fine. But I wanted to get him when
 he'd be most vulnerable.

12

INT. BATHROOM - EARLIER THAT DAY

12

FLASHBACK TO:

We watch Archelle in the bathroom as she beats Nate with the golf iron while he is standing in the shower. Her eyes are wild with rage as his blood splatters across her face.

CUT TO:

Archelle methodically wipes down the blood spray on the bathroom walls with bleach and paper towels, wearing rubber gloves. There is no panic in her movements, just the efficient scrubbing of anyone who keeps a pristine house.

CUT TO:

She starts to rinse the 6 iron off in the sink, but then looks up and finds herself in the mirror.

She considers her blood spattered face in the reflection, then pulls her cell phone out of her pocket and makes a call.

CUT TO:

The bathroom is spotless, minus the corpse of course, but Archelle closes the shower curtain on that. She wraps her perfectly fine wrist in an ace bandage. Her face is serene now, her eyes totally dry.

She SLAPS herself. And slaps herself. Until the tears come...

13

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

13

BACK TO PRESENT

ARCHELLE

It was sloppy. I didn't think it all the way through to be honest.

CASSANDRA

Why?

ARCHELLE

Honestly, I was kind of over it. The cheating, the beatings, the drama. It was just a lot after awhile.

CASSANDRA

Not why did you kill him! Why did you CALL ME?

ARCHELLE

Because this is the worst moment of my life and you're the only one who can get me through this.

CASSANDRA

Are you even pregnant?

ARCHELLE

...No.

Cassandra darts around Archelle to escape. But Archelle grabs her by the elbow and yanks her back.

Automatically, Cassandra slaps her with a hard crack across the mouth. It's an accident born of panic. Cass opens her mouth to apologize-

But Archelle punches Cassandra in the stomach, HARD. Cass crumples to the floor. She sobs while Archelle watches. Archelle kneels down to touch her, but Cassandra recoils.

CASSANDRA
GET AWAY FROM ME! Don't touch me!

Archelle ignores her protests. She lays down on the floor beside her and pulls off Cass's ruined head wrap. Then she begins to stroke Cassandra's hair. Cassandra is too stunned to pull back again.

ARCHELLE
You're so good, Cass. You try to save everyone in your life who fucks you over. You bend yourself into whatever shape they like best so that they'll stay. But the difference between me, and your mom, and all those boyfriends, is that I love you. Just the way you are. I'm the only one who does.

Archelle kisses her crown, maternal. Then she gets up, heading to the kitchen. The clanging of pans brings Cassandra's eyes back into focus.

She weakly rises to her feet and makes her way to the kitchen. Cassandra peaks in through the doorway.

14 **INT. ARCELLE'S KITCHEN - DAY**

14

Archelle has pulled down a small saucepan that is absolutely not up to the task of frying chicken. She then takes out olive oil(?) and starts pouring it in the pan.

By the time she grabs some Italian bread crumbs out of the pantry and starts pouring them over the seasoned chicken, Cassandra has had enough.

She walks over, yanks the bread crumbs away, and goes to get the big frying pan and some peanut oil from the pantry. Archelle smiles and gets out of her way.

CUT TO:

15 **INT. ARCELLE'S LIVING ROOM - DAY**

15

Cassandra and Archelle sit on the couch eating fried chicken. Archelle smacks happily and noisily. The chicken is delicious.

Cassandra's chewing is a bit more somber. She pauses to take a long look at Archelle...

Then she SLAMS her fist into Archelle's NOSE. Blood pours out as Archelle pulls back in protective shock.

ARCHELLE

OW!!! BITCH, what the fuck is wrong with you?

CASSANDRA

The police will ask fewer questions if you have more obvious injuries. Nate came home, you argued, he beat you. Goes to shower it off - tells you that if you're still there when he comes out, he's gonna kill you.

ARCHELLE

Do you really think they'll believe that?

CASSANDRA

My Derrick is a cop... He'll believe me.

Archelle is dumbfounded. She takes this in, pondering for a beat. And then... A small smile...

ARCHELLE

If we're really gonna sell it, you should hit me again.

Cassandra smiles.

CAMERA ON her fist as she rears it back. And with a PUNCH we-

SMASH TO BLACK

THE END