

In the Dark

By

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Changed by a young boy's fearless love for his mother, Gabriel must decide if he is a villain with his brother, or a hero alone.

EXT. CHEAP MOTEL PARKING LOT - DAY

A rusty pick-up with a rosary hanging off the rear-view mirror pulls into the parking lot of a run-down pay-by-the-hour motel. Both have clearly seen better days. A dozen men of various ethnicities scattered throughout the parking lot notice the truck and perk up.

INT. RUSTY PICK-UP TRUCK

Driving the truck is GABRIEL, a gruff Latino with sad eyes in his 30s. In the passenger seat is LETY, also Latina, who would be beautiful if not for the air of desolation she carries. Gabriel parks.

GABRIEL

This time it's really in and out.
Enrique wants us back by two.

Lety nods sadly.

EXT. CHEAP MOTEL PARKING LOT- DAY

Gabriel and Lety get out of the truck and walk toward one of the rooms, which faces the lot.

EXT. CHEAP MOTEL ROOM - DAY

The men we saw earlier begin to gather in a group near the door.

Gabriel unlocks the room and Lety goes in.

GABRIEL

(to men)

Make a line. *Hagan fila.*

As the men line up, Gabriel enters the room and comes out with a chair, setting up on the opposite side of the door from the line.

He nods to the FIRST CUSTOMER in line, who approaches with a twenty-dollar bill in hand.

GABRIEL

Thirty.

FIRST CUSTOMER

They told me twenty.

(CONTINUED)

GABRIEL
It's thirty.

Gabriel pulls up his shirt to flash the handle of the GUN in his pocket. The First Customer begrudgingly takes out a ten-dollar bill from his wallet and hands it to Gabriel.

In exchange, Gabriel gives him a condom and nods. He enters the room and closes the door behind him as Gabriel sits in his chair and surveys the rest of the group. It's going to be a long day.

In the parking lot, a Latino boy on his bicycle, SAMMY, 12, watches intently. Gabriel meets his gaze, then puts on headphones, leans back, and closes his eyes.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CHEAP MOTEL ROOM BATHROOM - DAY

Lety dries her dripping wet hair with a ragged towel, contemplating her reflection in the mirror.

GABRIEL (O.S)
Come on. We have to go.

LETY
I'm ready.

EXT. CHEAP MOTEL ROOM - DAY

Gabriel stands outside, alone. Sammy hasn't moved.

GABRIEL
(to Sammy)
Hey kid, get outta here.

Sammy doesn't move.

Lety exits the motel room, looks up, and freezes at the sight of Sammy.

GABRIEL
You know that kid?

Sammy races toward them on his bike.

SAMMY
Mom!

(CONTINUED)

Getting closer, he jumps off the bike and onto her with open arms. With tears in her eyes, she embraces him tightly, but looks at Gabriel nervously. Gabriel is moved, but tries to hide it.

GABRIEL

One minute.

Lety kneels to face Sammy and wipe his tears.

LETY

Look at you, Sammy, so strong. Are you good for your *tío* and *tía*?

Sammy nods.

SAMMY

When are you coming home?

LETY

I don't know, baby.

SAMMY

How come you don't know?

LETY

Baby, I've got to go but listen to me. I love you.

She kisses his forehead and stands while pushing him away. She walks stoically toward the truck and gets in, slamming the door as fast as she can. Sammy howls and pounds his hands against the door.

Gabriel grabs Sammy by the arms and throws him on the pavement. Sammy lands hard, but instantly rises, pushing against Gabriel's shoulders. Gabriel grabs Sammy's arms again and pushes him harder. He lands farther away with a violent thud.

GABRIEL

Get out of here. Don't make me tell you again.

Gabriel hurriedly gets in the truck and starts driving.

INT. RUSTY PICK-UP TRUCK

GABRIEL

How'd he know you'd be there?

(CONTINUED)

LETY

One of the regulars, probably. He's a neighbor.

Beat.

LETY

Do you know how long it'll be?

GABRIEL

I don't know about the business stuff. What does Enrique say?

LETY

He owns me til I pay off my ex's debt.

GABRIEL

How much is that?

LETY

You'll have to ask him yourself. He likes to keep us in the dark, but maybe he'd be honest with his brother.

GABRIEL

Where's your ex?

LETY

Dead, I think.

EXT. RUSTY PICK-UP TRUCK - DAY

A car swerves quickly in front of Gabriel's truck, cutting him off.

INT. RUSTY PICK-UP TRUCK - DAY

Gabriel brakes suddenly. The CRUCIFIX OF THE ROSARY hanging on the mirror swings and SLAMS against the dashboard.

Gabriel glances up at the sun visor. Clipped to it is an old picture of two young boys and their beautiful mother.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

They pull up and park outside an older white house on a corner. It has bars on the windows, but that's common in this neighborhood.

INT. HOUSE LIVING ROOM - DAY

They enter into a living room. The room is bare except for a large office desk. Behind it sits ENRIQUE, slightly older than Gabriel but much slimier. He smokes a cigarette and reads the paper, an open ledger in front of him.

Lety does not look up, heading straight to the...

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

The floor is covered with old mattresses and blankets. There are women of all shapes and sizes sitting and laying on them, reading, painting nails, looking for any way to pass the time.

Lety does not greet the other women, goes straight to a mattress in the corner and curls up, facing the wall.

INT. HOUSE LIVING ROOM - DAY

Gabriel hands Enrique the cash collected earlier. He counts the bills and records the numbers in the ledger on the desk. Gabriel sits on the floor.

GABRIEL

So Lety, how much she got left to pay off?

ENRIQUE

Look at you...my brother, the accountant.

GABRIEL

Just wondering. She's been with us, what, three years?

ENRIQUE

She's done when I say she's done.

GABRIEL

You know she has a kid? A son. I saw him today.

(CONTINUED)

ENRIQUE
How'd he find out?

GABRIEL
One of the regulars.

ENRIQUE
That's a shame. Find out who.

GABRIEL
It is a shame. It don't seem right,
taking away a boy's mother like
that.

ENRIQUE
No, it's a shame to lose a
customer. I'm collecting what I'm
owed.

GABRIEL
Some of them choose to be here, but
not her.

ENRIQUE
She gave her loyalty to the wrong
man.

GABRIEL
What about her son? Come on man,
you know what that's like.

ENRIQUE
What do you think this is? A
charity? I'm not responsible for
anyone else. Stop being ridiculous.

GABRIEL
It's not right.

ENRIQUE
I don't pay you to tell me what's
right.

Enrique's CELL PHONE RINGS.

ENRIQUE
(to Gabriel)
Take out the trash. It's starting
to stink.

Enrique answers the phone. We hear his conversation as
Gabriel heads to the...

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Another young woman, ELENA, stands at the window with a glass of water, sipping nervously. She doesn't notice Gabriel as he gets the trash ready.

ENRIQUE (O.S)

Yeah. What'd she say? Are you sure?

Enrique runs into the kitchen, grabs Elena by the hair and smacks the glass out of her hand. He drags her to the..

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

and forces her to kneel. He slaps her hard, throwing her to the ground. Gabriel runs in, unsure of what to do. Enrique produces a gun from his back pocket.

ENRIQUE

You wanna talk, huh? You wanna tell them about this too?

He aims the gun at her and cocks it.

ELENA

No, por favor, por favor, no.

GABRIEL

No man, you can't do this. Not here.

Enrique turns and points the gun at Gabriel, pauses, then lowers it.

ENRIQUE

You're right. I don't want a mess to clean up. You take care of it.

GABRIEL

What? You mean you want me to--

ENRIQUE

Make sure nobody sees you.

Enrique takes his seat behind the desk. Gabriel offers his hand to Elena to help her up.

EXT. FRONT OF HOUSE - DAY

Gabriel and Elena walk to the rusty pick-up in front of the house and get in.

INT. RUSTY PICK-UP TRUCK - DAY

Gabriel sits in the driver's seat without turning the truck on. Elena cowers in the passenger seat. Both characters speak in Spanish with English subtitles.

ELENA

Where are you taking me?

GABRIEL

Do you have kids?

ELENA

Yes, in Mexico. One is six, the other four.

Gabriel looks at the picture clipped to the visor.

GABRIEL

How long has it been since you've seen them?

ELENA

Three years.

In the distance, Gabriel sees a boy on his bike -

SAMMY -

EXT. STREET - DAY

Sammy watches Gabriel and gets off his bike. We see his hand drift to his pocket, shaking. It lingers for a moment, darts away, then quickly back. He pulls something out and we see it is

A KNIFE -

that he quickly hides behind his back. Gabriel approaches.

GABRIEL

Look, kid, you can't be here. I don't want you to get hurt.

Sammy lunges at Gabriel with the knife. Gabriel grabs his arms before he can do any damage.

(CONTINUED)

GABRIEL
What are you doing?

SAMMY
I have to save her.

GABRIEL
Does anyone know you're here?

Sammy shakes his head no. Gabriel looks at the house and back at Elena, who stares at them from the passenger seat of the truck.

GABRIEL
I'm gonna give you a number. You call and tell them you know where Enrique is, okay? They'll know what you mean.

SAMMY
Who are they?

GABRIEL
The good guys.

He lets Sammy's arms go, takes out a prepaid cell phone from his pocket and hands it to Sammy.

GABRIEL
But you gotta do it now. Hurry.

Gabriel turns around and heads back to the car. In the background we see Sammy holding the phone up to his ear.

INT. RUSTY PICK-UP TRUCK - DAY

Gabriel gets back in the truck and starts the ignition.

ELENA
(in Spanish)
What's going on?

GABRIEL
(in Spanish)
We're just going to wait here for a little while.

An old, sentimental song plays on the radio.

GABRIEL
(in English)
I love this song.

