

Rescued

By

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EXT. DEATH VALLEY ROAD SIDE - DAY

The sun simmers at its highest point in the sky. Ripples of heat radiate off the lonely desert road, creating the illusion of water puddles.

A snake slithers under a dry bush. Not a single car in sight - except for an EXPENSIVE one with its hood propped open on the side of the road.

ADAM, late 20s, saunters around the side of the car. He wears a tuxedo - shirt unbuttoned, sleeves rolled up; the bow tie hangs around his sweat-drenched neck line.

He holds a cellphone to his ear as he looks under the hood.

ADAM

Come on...come on.  
Hey! Hello? Can you hear  
me? You're breaking up- Hello?

Adam looks down at his phone. The display reads: SERVICE LOST.

ADAM

Of course.

Adam pockets his phone and stares down into the running car's insides.

He sighs and pulls back from the hood to direct his attention to the road. He squints: Nothing in either direction - or is there?

Adam shields his eyes from the sun as he looks down the road. In the distance a blur wobbles back and forth. Slowly, focusing harder, Adam makes out what looks like a person, walking in his direction.

The figure takes shape - an OLD MAN, with what looks like a sandwich board around him. The old man drags something behind him, but Adam can't make it out yet.

Finally, the old man comes into view. He wears a sandwich board with a message printed boldly on the front: THE END IS NEAR.

ADAM

(noticing the sign)  
Oh no.

The old man's dark, leathery skin glistens with sweat as he comes to a stop near Adam. Adam reluctantly waves.

ADAM  
Hey, over here. Help!

OLD MAN  
Help? I don't need any help.

The old, sun-dried man drops the handle of an empty wooden wagon behind him and walks to Adam

ADAM  
No, help me. Please, sir. I don't understand why this thing won't move.

OLD MAN  
(crabby)  
You out of gas?

ADAM  
No, car runs fine. Hear it?

Adam opens the driver-side door and gets in.

ADAM  
I can give it gas, too.

Adam pushes down on the accelerator. The engine roars as the old man holds back his sandwich board to look into the engine.

ADAM  
(over the noise)  
Parking brake is off.

OLD MAN  
Huh?

ADAM  
(louder)  
I said the parking brake-

The old man holds his hand up to his ear. Adam shuts off the car and rolls around to the hood.

OLD MAN  
Did you check the parking brake?

ADAM  
No, it's off. I put the car in drive, and nothing.

They stare into the engine for the moment.

OLD MAN  
 Maybe a loose gear. Something not  
 catching right.

ADAM  
 Transmission?

OLD MAN  
 What makes you think I'm on a  
 mission?

ADAM  
*Trans-mission.*

OLD MAN  
 Oh, thought you meant my board  
 here. Old sign I found. Makes a  
 nice mobile shelter, eh? Look  
 here, it's faded, but you can still  
 make out the full message. The end  
 is near *for high prices.*

The old man chuckles to himself.

ADAM  
 High prices?

OLD MAN  
 May I?

The old man motions toward the car.

ADAM  
 Please. Poke around.

OLD MAN  
 Hold this for me.

The old man removes the sandwich board gives it to Adam.

ADAM  
 You want me to put this in your  
 wagon?

OLD MAN  
 Won't fit. Wagon's full.

Adam does a double take to the empty wagon as the old man  
 enters the drivers side.

ADAM  
 Right...

Adam returns his attention to the engine.

ADAM  
(to self)  
Maybe the oil?

The suddenness of a blaring car horn sends Adam's head into the hood.

ADAM  
Ow!

OLD MAN  
(from car)  
Horn works.

ADAM  
(rubbing head)  
Thanks, Grandpa.

The old man twists the keys, and the car beeps and starts. He looks around the wooden dashboard. It's full of switches, knobs and readouts. The old man looks overwhelmed.

OLD MAN  
(to self)  
Oh heavens.

The old man hits a switch on the dashboard - a window rolls down. Adams rounds the car's hood, still holding his head.

The old man tries another button - the washer fluid sprays all over the windshield.

ADAM  
That's not suppose to do that.

OLD MAN  
What's it suppose to do?

Adam sets the sets down the board.

ADAM  
Turn the radio on. Try that button on the left.

The old man complies and presses the button. The windshield wipers run furiously.

ADAM  
Odd.

The old man presses a button in the center console and both rear doors spring open, including the trunk.

ADAM

Whoa.

Adam's eyes widen and he quickly makes his way to the trunk, closing it.

ADAM

The knob on the right of the wheel should stop the wipers.

OLD MAN

Huh?

Adam glides back to the driver side.

ADAM

See that knob, by the wheel.

OLD MAN

This?

ADAM

Twist it. It should stop the wipers.

The old man twists the knob. The trunk pops open again.

OLD MAN

Wipers aren't stopping.

ADAM

I see that. Sit back.

Adam reaches in and twists the knob himself. They both jump as the car alarm goes off.

ADAM

(over the noise)

Turn off the car!

The old man twists the key. The car cuts off and he steps out. Everything calms down.

OLD MAN

Enough. I'm going to have a heart attack.

The old man makes his way to the back of the car and notices the open trunk.

Adam sits in the car looking around for a culprit. In the rear view mirror the old man opens the trunk. Adam doesn't notice.

ADAM  
(to self)  
What is going on?

The old man speaks from the behind the car.

OLD MAN  
What's this box in the trunk?

Adam's eyes widen.

ADAM  
(to self)  
Oh no.

Adam quickly rushes to the back of the car and closes the trunk.

OLD MAN  
Why'd you do that?

ADAM  
Cause it's nothing.

OLD MAN  
Sure looked like something to me.

ADAM  
Yeah, well, it's nothing.

The trunk pops open. Adam quickly closes it. After a moment the trunk opens again! They glance at each other. Adam tries in vain to close the trunk, but it keeps opening.

OLD MAN  
I think it wants out. Open it.

Adam glares at the old man.

ADAM  
How about no.

The old man looks down the road. His eyes widen.

OLD MAN  
Is that a car coming down the road?

ADAM  
Where? I don't see it.

Adam leaves the trunk to look for the car, but the roads are empty. The old man uses the opportunity to open the trunk.

ADAM

Hey!

Before them a mysterious black box sits in the center of an otherwise empty trunk. The object neither shines nor reflects; it has no noticeable openings.

OLD MAN

Where'd you find this?

ADAM

None of your business. You seen enough?

They stare into the trunk for a moment; the box seems to stare back.

OLD MAN

Let me try an idea out on you. Your car won't move, but it starts. Nothing works right. The trunk keeps popping open. Maybe, just possibly, it's this.

ADAM

You suggest I get rid of it? Sorry, not an option.

OLD MAN

Just take the thing out. You don't have to get rid of it.

ADAM

Why does it matter? How does this explain what's wrong with my car. It's just sitting there.

OLD MAN

Look at it. Don't you think it's a little out of place?

ADAM

It's not going to help.

OLD MAN

How do you know? Have you tried?

ADAM

No, but-

OLD MAN

Then do it! Geez, you're more stubborn than an ostridge.



Adam pauses, squinting at the old man.

ADAM

Alright, but just to prove you  
wrong. And if you even dare try  
and run off with it so help me...

The old man raises his hands in innocence. Adam turns toward the box, his eyes widen momentarily as he reaches for it. He grabs it from both sides and lifts the box, but it doesn't move.

Adam tries harder, exerting all his strength. The box doesn't budge as if held down by some invisible force.

ADAM

What the-

OLD MAN

Let me help.

ADAM

Back off, old man!

Adam pulls again and again and again at the box - nothing!

ADAM

Not one word!

He pulls with all his might, squealing and struggling for several moments. Finally he backs off. The box sits there in the same position, mocking him. Adam closes the trunk and rests against the car - defeated.

The trunk pops open.

OLD MAN

Can I try now?

ADAM

No! I don't want your  
help. You've done enough  
already. How about you get on your  
merry way?

Adam motions toward the road and makes his way to the car's front. The old man stands still.

ADAM

Did you hear me, old man?

OLD MAN  
Yeah, I heard you.

The old man slowly makes his way to his sandwich board; he picks it up and pulls it on and starts to walk away. He looks back at the frustrated Adam.

OLD MAN  
Trying to get to a wedding?

Adam looks at his dusty tuxedo.

ADAM  
(sarcastic)  
What gave me away?

OLD MAN  
The town of Furnace Creek is about 10 miles back in that direction. But with this heat, I wouldn't recommend the walk right now.

ADAM  
(blunt)  
Thanks.

OLD MAN  
What's your name, city boy?

ADAM  
It's Adam.

OLD MAN  
Well, Adam, I hope you can get your head out of the sand.

The old man walks toward his wagon. Adam stirs.

ADAM  
I don't know what that box is.

The old man turns around.

ADAM  
Or where it came from. I know this won't make sense, but it's always been with me. When I was a kid it didn't used to be that big. Then I just started being stupid, you know? Thought I could find it all in money, women, parties. That box reminds me of it all. And I don't understand why, and I'm angry, and I'm -

OLD MAN  
You're ashamed of it.

ADAM  
Yeah, yeah, I think I am. Never  
thought about it that way. But I  
can't imagine my life without it.

OLD MAN  
(nodding)  
To each his own.

The old man turns to walk away. He glances over his  
shoulder.

OLD MAN  
Oh, and your trunk is smoking.

ADAM  
What?!

Adam steps away from the hood and sees smoke pouring out of  
the slightly open trunk.

ADAM  
Oh no.

OLD MAN  
I'll be on my way then.

The old man walks the rest of the way to his wagon just as  
Adam swats smoke out of the way to lift the trunk.

Adam can barely lift it open.

ADAM  
Why is this thing so heavy?

Adam starts coughing but he manages to lift the trunk over  
his head. But after just a few seconds Adam recoils in  
pain, his hands burning. The trunk slams down but not  
completely as more smoke billows out.

Adam backs off from the car - helpless. He looks over at  
the old man, watching him. Adam's attention is on the old  
man's sandwich board.

Suddenly, an idea occurs to him.

ADAM  
Can I use your board? Please, to  
prop the trunk open.

OLD MAN  
Why should I give up anything for  
you?

More smoke overwhelms Adam. As the car alarm sounds.

ADAM  
(coughing)  
Please, I'm begging you.

OLD MAN  
Let me have the box.

Adam looks at the old man then the smoking car.

ADAM  
Fine. It's all yours.

The old man quickly removes the board while rushing over to the trunk.

ADAM  
The trunk is too hot to touch.

OLD MAN  
I'll lift, you put the board under  
it.

The old man hands Adam his board. Adam nods and coughs as the old man lifts the trunk. Adam manages to wedge the board in to keep the trunk open.

The old man reaches into the trunk, grabs hold of the black box, and as if it weighed nothing, lifts it out.

Adam's mouth opens in shock. The trunk slams shut, shattering the sandwich board just as the car alarm stops.

Silence.

ADAM  
What the...how in the world did  
you...

OLD MAN  
Start the car.

ADAM  
(reluctantly)  
Okay.

Adam climbs in the driver's seat, starts the car.

ADAM  
Please, God.

Adam gently presses down on the gas, and the car rolls forward.

ADAM  
Ha! It works! It worked! I'm  
free!

Adam puts the car in park and leaps out of the car.

ADAM  
Hey, old man I don't know how you  
did that but-

Adam looks around. The old man cannot be found! Adam checks everywhere; nothing but desert.

ADAM  
(quietly)  
Thanks.

After a moment, he re-enters his car, checks his mirror and rolls away. Eventually he passes a sign that reads, "Now Leaving Death Valley."

EXT. DEATH VALLEY ROAD SIDE - DAY

The old man stands in the place Adam's car used to idle. He stares at us. He smiles and turns to his wooden wagon, no longer empty but full of dozens of mysterious black boxes.

He picks up the wagon's handle and begins to walk down the empty road.

**THE END**