

DARKNESS BEFORE DAWN

By

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Working Draft #1

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FADE IN:

EXT. AERIAL SHOT: DOWNTOWN OF A CITY -- LATE EVENING.

Lightning arcs flash in the horizon, the streets rumble after every lightning strike. All the main streets are barricaded with barrier rails and police cruisers as torrential rain splashes over them. Enforcing this perimeter are policemen in th dozens who send any incoming civilians back.

TITLE CARD -- DOWNTOWN PITTSBURGH

CLOSE ON a police Sergeant who sits inside a police cruiser. He is TRAVIS GREER, in his early 40s and in great shape. He sits, reclining in his seat, his eyes closed as soothing jazz music plays concurrent with the rain that ricochets hard on his vehicle. He seems disheartened, tired, alone.

POLICE OPERATOR (O.S. RADIO FILTER)

This is post from Precinct 2,
requesting status from unit 9.
"Over".

SERGEANT GREER

(monotone)

This is sergeant Greer from unit 9.
We're still standing by in zone 2,
as requested. "Over".

EXT. DOWNTOWN PITTSBURGH/SUBWAY STATION ENTRANCE -- NIGHT.

Emergency medical personnel pace through the scene, setting up all manner of equipment. They are all suited in the highest degree of chemical protection as they begin to make their way into the subway station.

FADE OUT:

EXT./INT. BEEKMAN'S DINER -- NIGHT.

The lights are dim as a sign at the door reads: "CLOSED". Through the diner's window, two women sit at the bar area, staring at a flashing TV screen.

INSERT OF A TV SCREEN

A news reporter delivers the 10 o'clock news to fellow Pittsburghers.

(CONTINUED)

NEWS REPORTER

Friday night in Pittsburgh has disintegrated into chaos. Reports of toxic fumes in a subway station began at approximately 8:45 pm. This situation has quickly escalated into a mass casualty incident. According to Pittsburgh police, as many as two-hundred people have been hospitalized. And as many as six-hundred people are believed to have been killed, but at this time no death toll has been confirmed.

WIDER ANGLE of two women who sit at the bar watching the TV with great concern. They are: A drop-dead gorgeous waitress, she is SHIRLEY ULRICH (23). And the proprietor of Beekman's Diner, MRS. CHRISTINE SANDS (54).

MRS. SANDS

God. . .this is just awful, this is too much. The world just keeps falling apart within each day.

SHIRLEY

I can't believe this is happening.

Mrs. Sands pulls out a pack of Marlboro Lights from her purse. She pulls out a cigarette and places it in her mouth. She begins to search in her purse for her Zippo lighter.

MRS. SANDS

(cigarette in her mouth)

How much longer 'till he gets here, hon?

SHIRLEY

What?

Mrs. Sands takes a drag from her cigarette after she lights it up.

MRS. SANDS

I said, how much longer until your boyfriend gets here. I really need to get back home.

(CONTINUED)

MRS.SANDS (CONT'D)

The weather's not getting any better, it seems like it's getting worse by the second. And all this shit in the news is scaring the living hell out of me.

SHIRLEY

Sorry 'bout that, he should be here any second.

MRS.SANDS

Don't be. I don't mean to be a mean o' cunt. . . I guess you can say I'm nervous. You don't expect any of these things, no one does. I don't feel safe anymore with all these recent attacks. About two weeks ago a guy in California blows himself up in a supermarket, and now this. I don't get what they're trying to prove, killing all those people, so senselessly.

Shirley stares at Mrs. Sands who seems to be lost in her own mind. Shirley sighs, not knowing what to say. We see their concerned faces as they listen to the enveloping circumstances.

NEWS REPORTER (O.S.)

The cause of this evening's disastrous incident continues to be one of mystery and intrigue, with a late-night statement that the incident was caused by "a random mass attack" perpetrated by an "unknown person or persons". Few other details were released a few minutes ago by official sources, except another statement that the FBI and Pittsburgh Police were treating the incident as a "multiple homicide investigation". But at this point no group has claimed responsibility for this heinous act.

(CONTINUED)

Mrs. Sands checks her wristwatch. She moves to the counter by the kitchen where she pours herself a cup of coffee, no cream, no sugar.

MRS.SANDS

Maybe I should sell this place and move to Canada. I've already got some money saved up.

SHIRLEY

Sell it? But you love this place. You've got enough people working the shifts, yet you're always in here --

MRS.SANDS

(jokingly)

-- That's because you're all a pair of fuck ups. Trust me honey, If I weren't around, I'd be out of business.

SHIRLEY

You're lucky to have me.

Mrs. Sands takes a small sip from her cup as she sits down, next to Shirley.

MRS.SANDS

Sure do. I can't entirely depend on all these new girls, they always use school as an excuse. I have a term paper due, giving me all that shit. They can never stay as late as I want them too, and they make far too many mistakes as well. Like that blond-haired skank, what's her name?

SHIRLEY

Uh, Cindy! She's the one who broke a whole stack of plates. I hate her, she thinks her shit smells sweeter than others.

MRS.SANDS

Don't even go there.

(CONTINUED)

SHIRLEY

See, you still care. You're just a bit shaken up, a whole lotta people are. But in time things will get better.

MRS.SANDS

You're optimistic, but I'm pessimistic.

Short silence, as the TV reporter continues.

NEWS REPORTER

The exact nature of the chemical involved has also remained a mystery until the time of this report. An ERRI analysis of the incident (to the time of this report), suggested that the symptoms reported by unofficial sources, thus far, are not consistent with any chemical or biological agents in any nation's stockpile. . .

The entire diner is suddenly illuminated by a flash of lightning.

KABOOM!

The entire diner goes dark as the power is momentarily down. Shirley and Mrs. Sands scream simultaneously.

MRS.SANDS (O.S.)

Oh, damn weather! I think I'm about to have a heart attack.

The power comes back on again. They both look startled, a bit on the edge.

MRS.SANDS

That young man of yours is sure taking a long time - -

BANG! BANG! BANG!

They both scream again.

(CONTINUED)

They turn to see a man, standing outside by the glass door, who is being hammered by the cold rain. He is DAVID WELLEMEYER (25).

DAVID
(muffled)
Open up!

Mrs. Sands moves toward the door with her keys to open up. The entire News report plays out in the background as the action progresses.

NEWS REPORTER (O.S.)
. . .firmly establish the chemical
that was involved. . .

SHIRLEY
It's David.

MRS.SANDS
What's he thinking poundin' my door
like that!

David, who is completely drenched, starts inside, but is suddenly stopped by Mrs. Sands.

MRS.SANDS
What in god's name? Don't take
another step, I just finished
mopping my floor a few minutes ago.
Don't you own a raincoat or
somethin'.

DAVID
How are you tonight?

NEWS REPORTER
. . .Additionally, a chemical
analysis of the scene should
confirm the actual chemical used,
after the proper tests have been
run at a lab. Stay tuned as we now
take you to one of our
correspondents who is standing by ,
near the epicenter of this
devastating attack. . .

MRS.SANDS
I don't recall being this terrified
in my life, so I guess not so good.

Shirley gathers all her stuff as she begins to move toward the door.

DAVID

I'm sorry to hear that, you go ahead and take it easy for tonight.

SHIRLEY

Goodbye Mrs. Sands, thank you for waiting, I really appreciate that.

MRS.SANDS

Don't mention it. And stay out of trouble you crazy kids.

Shirley kisses Mrs. Sands on her cheek as she exits.

CUT TO:

EXT. BEEKMAN'S DINER PARKING LOT -- NIGHT.

They run as heavy rain pours over them until they reach a black Suburban, where they enter.

INT. BLACK SUBURBAN (PARKED) -- NIGHT.

In the back are a few briefcases and camping equipment. David reaches in the back and grabs a couple of towels, he hands one to Shirley, who begins to dry her hair.

SHIRLEY

Did you see what was on the news, so frightening.

David starts the engine.

DAVID

A lot of people were rushing out at work, I'm glad my parents live out of town.

SHIRLEY

Mrs. Sands was freaking out, I've never seen her like that. She was thinking about selling the place. Shirley looks outside the window, disturbed.

(CONTINUED)

David sees her, they embrace.

DAVID

I can't tell you that everything
will be okay; but just know that
things happen for a reason, good or
bad, its life, we just have to deal
with it in some way.

Shirley sobs quietly, trying not to burst out in tears.

SHIRLEY

Yeah. . .let's get out of here,
spend the entire weekend at the
cabin. I'm so tired, I just want to
sleep. You can make the drive,
right?

The vehicle begins to pull out of the parking lot and into
the empty street.

DAVID

The rain's pissing down pretty
hard, but I can make the drive.

FADE OUT:

INT. SUBWAY STATION -- NIGHT.

CLOSE UP OF FLUORESCENT LIGHT FIXTURES

Lights blink on and off as muffled thunder rumbles every
other second. Below are a unit of medical personnel who are
suited in the highest degree of chemical protection. They
use blankets to cover the myriad of corpses who lie on the
floor.

Two men from the unit begin to approach the subway cars.

INT. SUBWAY CAR 1 -- CONTINUOUS

From behind, an empty car. Only, a person who is seated in
the front beside a gritty window. The body is stagnant.

Then. . .

BROOM!

(CONTINUED)

The sound of lightning that has struck very near. The lights flash and go off. Darkness, until the dim emergency lights spring on. The body settled by the window appears again, now shrouded in mere darkness. Footsteps begin to clang on the subway's metal surface.

They begin to settle closer to the body settled by the window. A flashlight is turned on. The flashlight's beam is concentrated to a noise that emits from the body's hands, which firmly grip a cell phone, it vibrates.

INSERT -- CELL PHONE SCREEN: "MOM CALLING. . ."

Medical Personnel #1 swings the flashlight upwards as we slowly begin to discern the facial details of this person. The corpse's face is no longer distinguishable. Large patches of skin have melted off, which reveal muscle and ligaments. His eyes rolled back, white. Medical Personnel #1 looks away in repulse as he advances toward. . .

INT. SUBWAY CAR 2 -- CONTINUOUS.

POV OF MEDICAL PERSONNEL #1

Its dark. But the profiles of several corpses are discernable, some are slumped in their seats as others lie flat on the floor. There are at least fifteen bodies. He slowly begins to approach a corpse that is several inches from him.

CLOSE UP

We see the gaunt, skull-like face of an old man whose skin has also deteriorated. As the flashlight is focused, we see rivulets of a dark, shining liquid that seeps from the corpse's mouth. He produces a sample kit, where he extracts the dark liquid and places it in a container.

CLANK! The power to the subway station is restored. The lights come on.

He jolts as. . .

Fear begins to course through him as he sees faces, all of them dead.

Of a young girl, who is a bloody mess.

A small infant child.

(CONTINUED)

There are countless more bodies, all of them mutilated, mere shadows of their former selves. Blood and the same dark liquid smeared on the floor, seats, and windows. He moves back, feeling like he's about to throw up. He retreats.

A hand reaches over his shoulder and grabs, he lets out a faint scream, startled, only to find his partner behind him.

MEDICAL PERSONNEL #2
 Sorry to sneak up on you like that,
 sir. The first two cars in the back
 are empty.

MEDICAL PERSONNEL #1
 (annoyed)
 Take this sample, have it run at a
 lab as soon as possible.

MEDICAL PERSONNEL #2
 Right away, sir.

Medical Personnel #2 retreats as Medical Personnel #1 regains his composure. He begins to move out --

TAP! TAP TAP!

There is banging in the next train. He stares back, his breathing labored, his mind racing.

TAP! TAP TAP!

The sound grows louder, until. . .

A bloodstained hand begins to slowly open the sliding door. He remains motionless, taken aback. It might be an injured civilian. The sliding door opens. . .

A few feet in front of him stands a woman. She has a white blood-stained dress, a missing arm, where the bone protrudes. Her body mutilated like the rest, she murmurs incoherently, a black liquid seeping from her mouth as she opens it. Her eyes begin to shift into a glowing white like a monster from "The Horror Express".

MEDICAL PERSONNEL #1
 (terrified)
 Oh -- no!

He runs out of the 2nd train and into the 1st, where he is greeted by