

DEAD TOMORROWS

By
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"Nothing's ever come
from those dead tomorrows
planted yesterday."

--Billy Joe Shaver

FADE IN:

EXT. ALLEY - DAY

A dumpster sits in shadow.

A sign on the side proclaims:

PROPERTY NORTH END BUTCHER SHOP - NO DUMPING.

An older model van pulls alongside and stops.

The van idling, two men step out from either side. Dressed in jeans, work shirts, and caps, they could be construction workers, but they're not.

The older one, JOSEPH COOK, is a bit grizzled and crazy-eyed. Twenty-something years younger, his son, ISAAC, sports a sullen expression on his clean-shaven face.

They move with a purpose, but without any obvious hurry, to the back of the van.

Working together, they toss four heavy-duty trash bags into the dumpster

Wordlessly, they climb back --

INT. VAN - DAY

As the alley recedes through the back window--

JOSEPH
Any thoughts on the next one?

ISAAC
No.

JOSEPH

You best be taking an interest.
One day, the work will be yours.

ISAAC

We have good ones already.

JOSEPH

Don't ever be satisfied, boy, just
leads to decay.

EXT. POOL - DAY

MARISSA (20s) and her boyfriend, JUSTIN, mingle about as --

A PARTY is in full swing --

GIRLS in swim suits --

JOCKS in board shorts --

Drinking --

Dancing --

Couples holding hands --

Couples making out --

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREET - NIGHT

The party is over and the PARTIERS, some stumbling more
than others, head for their cars.

Among them, sober Marissa guides not-sober Justin across
the street.

None of them notice the van further down the street.

EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX - NIGHT

In the parking lot, the van pulls to a stop behind a
particular car.

A SMALL TOOLBOX in hand, Isaac heads for the car.

Ext. BACKROADS - MORNING

The same car rounds a bend.

A beat later the van does likewise.

DISSOLVE TO:

THE CAR

sputters off to the edge of the road.

Marissa, the frustrated driver, gets out and pops the hood.

After a brief look, she pulls out her cell phone just as the van pulls up beside her.

INT. VAN - DAY

A BLACK CLOTH, breathing in and out.

Her head swallowed by a hood that is held in place by a tight circle of duct tape around her neck, Marissa lies on the floor of the van with her hands and ankles bound.

INT. THE PREP ROOM - DAY

A HOOK hangs from the ceiling. Marissa's bound hands are forced onto it.

FLASH TO:

Marissa's heaving chest --

A pair of hands rip open her shirt.

FLASH TO:

Marissa cries and pleads as hands force her face up and roughly scrub away her makeup.

FLASH TO:

Having been spun around, Marissa sobs against the wall.

FLASH TO:

A tattoo on her back.

Blood runs from beneath scrubbing steel wool as the tattoo is removed.

FLASH TO:

Hands cinch a black collar around Marissa's throat.

EXT. COOK HOME - MORNING

The sun rises behind an unremarkable rural house. The yard is well-kept but not immaculate. The people who live here keep up appearances without going overboard.

SUPER: TWO WEEK LATER

INT. COOK KITCHEN - MORNING

Eggs fry in a skillet.

A fork scrambles them as pepper sprinkles down and mixes in.

Up comes the skillet to hover over a plastic, cafeteria-style plate. A third of the eggs are raked out onto successive plates.

The hand returns the skillet to the stove and reaches for the toast that has just POPPED up. One for each plate.

Three plates of eggs and unbuttered toast with no utensils in sight.

Joseph turns to his son, sitting at the table --

COOK

Take these down.

Without a word, Isaac rises from the table where he's been reading and patiently awaiting breakfast.

He gathers the plates, stacking them, and turns away

Cook cracks an egg to add to the skillet.

INT. COOK BASEMENT - MORNING

Dark.

A door opens, shedding brief light on the descending staircase.

When the FOOTSTEPS come to a stop, a light CLICKS on.

The single bulb illuminates three wire cages about the size of a large dog kennel, each with a matting of straw, a plastic bucket, and a GIRL inside.

Besides a layer of grime and ratty t-shirts, each girl wears a leather collar secured by a small padlock. A length of chain, long enough to allow free movement within the cage, extends from the collar to the door.

The boy crosses the floor and sets the plates down atop the first cage.

Taking the top plate, he kneels and uses a key to open the big padlock on the cage's door. Opening it just enough, he passes the top plate through to --

BETSY, 25, though slight of frame, her curt...

BETSY

Thank you.

...as she takes the plate, shows that what she has seen and experienced over the recent weeks has not completely robbed her of who she is.

Without a word, the boy moves to the next cage.

With her fingers, Betsy scoops scrambled eggs into her mouth.

Betsy's neighbor is Marissa. As the most recent arrival, she's not quite as dirty as the others. She sits motionless, hugging her knees.

When she ignores the plate, the boy places it on the floor of her cage and moves on.

In the third cage is ALEX, who has been here the longest, squatting on her haunches in the back of her cage.

ALEX
Where's your daddy?

The boy ignores her and goes about unlocking the cage door.

When he reaches the plate inside, she springs into motion, grabbing his wrist and yanking, scratching and clawing.

The plate clatters to the floor.

Pulled off balance, he almost falls into the cage but catches himself and jerks free, leaving a long, bloody scratch down his forearm.

He slams the cage door closed and sets the lock.

ALEX
You dickless piece of shit.

As her taunts continue, he picks up a water hose.

ISAAC
You made a mess.

The force of the water knocks Alex back against the wall of the cage.

She tries to block it to no avail.

Marissa cowers as far from the splatter as she can.

Isaac's face is calm, showing no hint of anger.

With Alex in a fetal position, he redirects the water to wash the eggs away.

Putting the hose back in its place, he heads for the stairs.

Having been startled by the commotion, Betsy picks her dropped food off the floor.

ALEX (O.S.)
You make me sick.

Still chewing, Betsy looks up.

Alex, on her knees, soaking wet and seething, shakes the side of her cage with all her might, using Betsy as an outlet for her anger.

ALEX
You and your goddamn thank you's.
What the hell are you thanking
them for? Not killing us, yet?

MARISSA
Leave her alone.

ALEX
Fuck you. You haven't seen what
they're going to do to us. First
me then Betsy, no matter how
polite she is, and then you.

Alex's outburst has no effect on Betsy, who knows the truth behind the words, but Marissa is shaken and begins to sob.

ALEX
But don't worry, you won't get
lonely. They won't let our cages
stay empty more than a day or two.

Alex seems to run out of steam and sinks back to the floor.

With Marissa sobbing, Betsy moves as close as she can.

BETSY
Marissa?

She doesn't look up.

BETSY
Marissa.

This time she does look up, tears streaming.

BETSY
Tell me, again, about...

EXT. COOK HOME - TIMELAPSE DAY TO NIGHT

Without windows, the girls can have no idea that another day is done.

INT. COOK BASEMENT - NIGHT

The girls do their best to sleep.

At the CREAK of a loose stair step, the first to look up is --

BETSY

No.

Joseph Cook strides across the room, straight to Alex's cage.

Alex's anger from earlier is gone. Now, there is only fear as she cowers at the back of her cage.

Cook kneels to open the door. Doing so, he also grips the chain.

With the door open wide, he tugs on the chain.

Alex fights but she is too weak.

Cook inexorably pulls her across the distance.

Marissa stares in terror.

Betsy bangs against her cage --

BETSY

No. Take me. I'm ready.

As her pleading continues, Cook drags Alex the rest of the way out of her cage.

She scrambles to her feet and tries to run, but with a yank of the chain, she's on the floor.

ALEX

Please, don't do--

Cook steps forward and ZAPS her with a cattle prod.

She screams.

He smiles.

He ZAPS her, again.

AGAIN.

Alex is conscious, but in far too much pain to struggle, when Cook kneels down beside her and shoves a ball gag into her mouth and secures it in place.

Standing, he drags her by her collar to a nearby table.

He picks her up and dumps her on top of it.

With practiced movements, he cuffs her wrists to the sides of the table.

Then, he moves to the end.

She kicks when he reaches for her leg but too weak and too late.

He secures each ankle to the table.

Stepping back, he admires his work.

He turns away and up the stairs he goes.

Alex turns her head toward Marissa then Betsy.

Tears leak from Alex's eyes as she and Betsy say their silent goodbyes.

FOOTSTEPS. Cook is coming back.

At the sight of him carrying a metal pan loaded with scissors, various sized knives, and other instruments --

Betsy slumps down.

Cook places the pan near Alex's head and raises his arms toward the ceiling. He closes his eyes in silent prayer.

His eyes open and he looks down at Alex --

COOK

Tell them that it does not matter
how many are sent against me,
whether it be ten or ten thousand,
I will send you all back to hell.

Marissa sobs.

Betsy looks on, numb.

Beyond her, Cook picks up the scissors and cuts the t-shirt
from Alex's body.

Alex whimpers and struggles for breath.

Cook selects a knife.

Alex shakes her head frantically and pleads as much as she
can through the gag.

Tears stream down Betsy's face. She buries her head in her
arms as, on the other side of the room, Cook begins
cutting.

Alex screams through her gag. Legs kicking, she fights
against her bonds.

Betsy can't cover her ears hard enough to block the sounds
of what the maniac is doing to this girl that she first
laid eyes on six weeks ago when she awoke in a cage...

...the sounds of what will one day happen to her...

...and to Marissa.

The muffled screams, the awful jangling of unyielding
chains, all seem to go on forever.

Until they don't.

FADE OUT

FADE IN ON:

COOK'S MOVING ARM

casts shadows on Alex's vacant dead eyes.

FADE OUT

FADE IN ON:

BETSY

rocks back and forth, trying to block everything out.

FADE OUT

FADE IN ON:

COOK

washing down the bloody table.

FADE OUT

FADE IN ON:

COOK

leans down to look into Betsy's cage, a self-satisfied grin on his blood-streaked face --

COOK
You're next.

FADE OUT

FADE IN ON:

THE BASEMENT

is empty except for the two girls in cages, both slumped in a mixture of shock and exhaustion.

FADE OUT

FADE IN ON:

BETSY

stares numbly at the plate of eggs and toast sitting on her crisscrossed legs.

Marissa's is untouched in the corner.

FADE OUT

FADE IN ON:

MARISSA

sits looking at Alex's empty cage.

MARISSA

Betsy?

Betsy stares at the floor, her face a blank.

MARISSA

How long will it be empty?

BETSY

(resigned)

Not long.

Marissa turns to face Betsy.

MARISSA

Tell me about...what are you going to do when we get out of here?

Betsy looks up, glares into Marissa's eyes--

BETSY

You still don't get it, do you?
We're not getting out of here.
This is the last place either of us will ever see.

A swift fist to the door of her cage punctuates her statement.

MARISSA

I think we should keep in touch
because--

BETSY

Shut up, please, just be quiet. I
can't--

MARISSA

Betsy...

Marissa's eyes have gone wide --

MARRISSA

...your lock. Look, it-it's...

Betsy looks and her lock is hanging open.

BETSY

(disbelieving)

My God.

Her eyes dart to Marissa's cage door.

BETSY

Is yours?

Marissa SLAPS at her door, but the lock doesn't budge.

MARISSA

No. Shit.

Betsy reaches her fingers through the wire to manipulate
the lock out of the latch.

She stops.

MARISSA

What are you doing? Don't stop.

BETSY

It's a trap. What if it's a trap
and they're just waiting for us to
come up those stairs?

MARISSA

Could it be any worse?

Betsy resumes working at the lock.

Her fingertips work the lock up to where it's sideways.

One good push at its bottom and --

It CLATTERS to the floor.

Betsy pushes her door open.

She looks at Marissa and clambers out of her cage.

MARISSA

Are there keys?

BETSY

I don't know.

Standing upright for the first time in over six weeks, her movements are stiff as she hobbles toward the workbench.

Opening every drawer and cabinet there is --

She finds nothing but a solid piece of pipe.

BETSY

(turning)

I can break it.

Marissa is dejected but still thinking --

MARISSA

No. Too loud. You have to get out of here.

BETSY

He'll kill you.

MARISSA

Not if you get the police here.
Just go. Please.

Hesitant but giving into reason Betsy slips the pipe into Marissa's cage.

BETSY

Just in case.

She hurries for the stairs.

On them, she slows down to avoid creaks.

INT. COOK'S HALLWAY - DAY

Nothing moves. Then a door eases open.

Betsy's head pokes through, looking one way then the next.

She closes the door as gently as she can and starts toward what looks to be the front door.

From the other end of the house, a TOILET FLUSHES --

Followed by a DOOR OPENING.

Joseph Cook appears in the hallway.

Striding toward the same door that Betsy had her eyes on, he doesn't seem to notice anything amiss.

Detouring to a cabinet, he picks up a key-ring.

Behind him, Betsy holds her breath as she hunkers down beside a desk.

Cook sticks the keys in his pocket and turns.

Betsy's eyes go wide as his foot comes to within inches of her.

He heads toward the door.

As he pulls the door closed behind him --

Betsy breathes.

Getting to her feet, Betsy's eyes dart about, expecting a trap to spring at any moment.

Moving with all the stealth that she can muster, she follows Cook's trail to the front door.

Keeping to the side of the window pane, she leans ever so carefully over to peek --

OUTSIDE

Both Cooks are in the yard.

BETSY

steps back from the window. She stares at the floor, debating her options.

Her decision made, she retraces her steps back to the door from which she just escaped.

Her hand goes to the door knob --

Freezes --

A TELEPHONE.

Whispering to herself --

BETSY

No way.

She picks up the handset and hears --

A DIALTONE.

She hits 911.

OPERATOR

What is your emergency?

Betsy's voice is a panic-filled whisper --

BETSY

I-I don't know where we are.
Please, tell me you can--

OPERATOR

Yes, ma'am, I have the address.

BETSY

Thank God. Please, hurry. He's
going to kill us.

INT. COOK'S BASEMENT

At the sound of the door opening, Marissa lays down, pretending to sleep.

BETSY
Give me that pipe.

Marissa's head jerks up --

MARISSA
What are you doing? You're supposed to be--

BETSY
I'm getting you out of here.

FLASH TO:

THE PIPE

BANGS into the lock.

AGAIN --

And AGAIN.

Finally the lock falls open.

Betsy helps Marissa from her cage.

As Marissa tries to get her legs under her, they hear --

The DOOR OPENING.

Coming down the stairs, Cook has his cattle prod in one hand and a big butcher knife in the other.

Low enough on the stairs, he stops and eye-balls the scene before him.

Like a protective mama tiger, only with a pipe instead of claws and bared teeth, Betsy stands in front of Marissa.

She is defiant and ready. Either she or Cook will meet their end.

He advances. A smile spreads across his lips.

He triggers the cattle prod.

Marissa jumps. Betsy does not.

He reaches the bottom step and --

POLICE SIRENS.

The smile drops from Cook's face. He points the knife at Betsy --

COOK
You're still next.

He turns and rushes up the stairs.

Betsy stares after him --

Her eyes, unblinking.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. CLUB - NIGHT

Betsy's eyes dart from one side to the next.

MUSIC FADES UP

THE LIGHT has gone DARKER and MORE COLORFUL

ON STAGE

A BAND plays.

IN THE CROWD

Betsy is near the front, cleaned up and looking every bit the girl-next-door, but very nervous.

She's not handling the crowd well.

She turns to push her way out.

A HAND touches her shoulder but she shrugs it off.

The owner of the hand, JEFF, follows her out, helping her through the crowd as best he can.

EXT. CLUB - NIGHT

Coming out the door, in a panic --

BETSY

We have to go. We have to go.

On her heels, Jeff manages to get a hold of her --

JEFF

Baby, what's wrong. Talk to me.

Betsy leans against the wall, shaking, breath ragged. Her eyes still darting.

Without knowing how, Jeff tries to comfort her.

Betsy twists her fingers around each other, trembling.

BETSY

I saw him. He was in there.

JEFF

Who, baby? What are you talking about?

BETSY

Joseph Cook. I saw him. I saw--

JEFF

But that's crazy. Honey, he's...

She sinks down to the sidewalk as she loses it even more.

BETSY

I saw him. I saw him.

EXT. BUILDING - NIGHT

As Betsy reaches to open the door of her car, Joseph Cook comes up behind her.

With a hand to her shoulder, he spins her around and smashes a fist into her jaw. She drops.

He kicks her.

Over and over, again.

A van stops behind him and the side door slides open.

Cook tosses Betsy inside.

REWIND TO THE BEGINNING

As Cook reaches for her shoulder, Betsy whirls, knife in hand, her arm arcing up then down --

The blade plunges into Cook's chest. As he drops --

Betsy goes to the ground with him.

Astride him, she swings the knife up and back --

Drives it down --

Blood flies --

Betsy, ferocious, repeatedly drives the knife downward until, out of breath, she slumps.

She scoots back and off of Cook's bloody body then drags herself back a few feet from his lifeless corpse.

Her face spattered with blood, she smiles.

Her smile vanishes. Now, it's --

Jeff's body in front of her, lifeless, and covered in gore.

She screams.

INT. BETSY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Betsy awakes with a half-scream carried over from her dream.

JEFF
(groggy)
You okay, baby?

She looks over at him and relief floods her face.

BETSY
Just a dream.

She snuggles against him to try for more sleep.

DISSOLVE TO:

MORNING LIGHT

streams through the bedroom window.

During the night, Jeff has rolled onto his side and moved to the very edge of his side of the bed.

His eyes come open and he attempts to roll onto his back but can't because Betsy is pressed tight against him.

Careful not to wake her, Jeff eases out of bed and stretches as he heads for the doorway.

He stumbles as he tries to avoid stepping on something that caught his eye at the last moment.

The slight commotion wakes Betsy

As Jeff bends down --

BETSY
You okay?

Jeff straightens, holding up a BUTCHER KNIFE.

JEFF
What is this doing on the floor?

Betsy's eyes go wide --