

THE SUSPICIOUS ATTENDANT

by

David Koepp

January 25, 1994

revised:
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3 CONTINUED:

3

-- and SMACKS right into a guy, an INNOCUOUS GUY standing right next to her car, so close it seems impossible she didn't see or hear him until she bumped into him. (X)

She steps back and composes herself.

INNOCUOUS GUY
Sorry. Thought you saw me.

WOMAN
No, I -- excuse me.

She turns and heads into the restaurant. Quickly. She looks back over her shoulder, rattled.

4 INT TRUCK STOP NIGHT

4

In a booth now, the Woman attempts to regain her composure. She has a menu. She lifts it, and notices a GUY in the booth across from her is looking at her.

He smiles. She returns a semi-polite grimace and looks the other way.

She looks around. THREE GUYS over at the counter are looking at her too.

COOK
What can I get you?

She looks up. A COOK/WAITER stands over her, an order pad held in front of his grease-stained apron. (X)

WOMAN
Hi, um -- the hamburger looks good. (X)
And a coffee. No. Coffee's a bad idea. Juice? Like a nice -- juice?
A smoothee? Something smooth?

COOK
You want juice? (X)

She looks back over at the Three Guys at the counter. The Cook follows her gaze. The Guys avert their eyes, slowly, as if chastised by the Cook. The Cook looks back to the Woman.

COOK (cont'd)
Most of 'em are harmless.

His manner was friendly, but that comment unsettles her more.

WOMAN
Great. So -- juice. (X)

4 CONTINUED:

4

COOK
Comin' right up.

He turns and walks away. Curious now, the Woman looks around the place. There are eleven men. There are no other women.

All at once, they all seem to be looking at her. As she slowly scans the room, they look away quickly, one by one. The one across from her. The three at the counter. Two by the cigarette machine. One at a newspaper box. She turns all the way around -- (X)

-- and almost bumps forehead with a GUY in the booth right behind her, his head craned around to look at her.

GUY
Hi. How are ya? (X)

Last straw. She grabs her bag, she's out of the booth, calling over her shoulder to the Cook, who's coming out with a glass of nice smooth juice -- (X)

WOMAN
Sorry, never mind, my fault, forget it, I'm good -- (X)

-- and she's out the door.

5 EXT TRUCK STOP NIGHT

5

Way too freaky in there, the Woman strides quickly to her car, fishing her keys out of her purse. She yanks the door open, slips inside and jams the key in the ignition.

The radio practically BLASTS her out of her seat. She jumps a mile, then snaps it off, pulls out of the parking lot in a hurry, and hits the road again. (X)

6 INT CAR NIGHT

6

Back on the road, the Woman tries to shake off the willies she's picked up. She looks in the rear view mirror, bidding good riddance to the truck stop as it recedes in the distance. She flips on the radio, then flips it off again immediately, unable to concentrate.

Her eye is caught by the gas gauge again. It's still on an eighth.

WOMAN
Oh, shit. (X)

On the dark road ahead of her, a speck glows in the distance.

6 CONTINUED: 6

She squints at the speck. It grows into the glowing orange ball of a gas station. She smiles in relief.

7 EXT GAS STATION NIGHT 7

The Woman wheels into this empty gas station, "Larry Bob's" by name. Larry Bob's is a surprisingly modern place, all gleaming fluorescents and clean cement. (X)

The Woman pulls up to the full serve pump furthest from the office and shuts off her engine. She looks over to the office. There's only one guy in there, head down, watching TV. Eager to be done with people and get back on the road, the Woman taps her horn.

The guy looks up, drags himself out of his chair, and steps into the doorway.

This ATTENDANT is not a small man, he nearly fills that doorway.

He heads toward her, wiping his hands on a rag, all the time in the world. He's smiling, friendly enough. She rolls down her window as he approaches.

WOMAN
Can you fill it with unleaded,
please?

ATTENDANT
Sure.

WOMAN
(smiles)
Thanks.

She rolls the window back up as the Attendant veers over toward her tank.

8 IN THE CAR, 8

the Woman sighs, turns the key backwards in the ignition, and turns the radio on again. She's starting to come down when --

-- a sudden RAP RAP on the window next to her sends her through the roof. She turns. The Attendant is there, signalling for her to roll it down.

He's staring at her. You know, his demeanor isn't so friendly, when you think about it, it seems he's staring at her in a much more hostile way now. Or is he? She rolls the window down, but much less than last time.

8 CONTINUED:

8

ATTENDANT

Need the keys to open the tank.

WOMAN

Oh. Right. Sorry.

She takes the keys from the ignition and hands them through the crack in the window. He takes them.

She rolls it back up.

With no radio to distract her now, she watches the Attendant in her side view mirror while he works. He goes to the tank, unlocks it, takes the gas cap off, and shoves the hose in. Normal enough. She adjusts the mirror to look up at his face.

He's staring at her.

And he doesn't look away when she catches him. She stares back for a moment, then backs down and looks away from the mirror.

She glances to make sure the doors are locked. They aren't.

She risks a look over her shoulder.

He's still staring at her.

Her finger thumbs the door lock button while she debates offending him. As softly as she possibly can (as if that makes a difference), she presses the button.

The doors lock with a CHUNK. She doesn't want to look in the side view again, so she reaches up and adjusts the rear view to get a look at him.

He's still staring at her. And now he seems pissed.

She shifts the mirror away again and now the two of them wait for the tank to fill. The Woman sweats. The Attendant stares. The numbers roll on the pump.

9 BACK AT THE TANK,

9

with a loud CLUNK, the hose shuts itself off. The Attendant replaces the cap, puts the hose back in the pump, and turns to the Woman, wiping his hands on his rag again.

ATTENDANT

(approaching her window)

That'll be fourteen sevent-

She cuts him off, shoving a credit card through what is now a tiny slit at the top of the window, a smile forced on her face.

9 CONTINUED:

9

WOMAN
Visa okay?

ATTENDANT
Fine.

He takes the card and heads for the office. But as he walks there --

-- he never takes his eyes off her.

10 IN THE CAR,

10

the Woman is just freaking out.

WOMAN
-- he's just weird -- doesn't mean
he's violent -- it's okay -- calm
down --

(X)

She lays her head back against the headrest and sighs, pulling herself together. It seems to help.

She sits up straight again and looks over to the office.

Through the window, she sees the Attendant. He doesn't seem to be running her card. He doesn't seem to be doing much of anything, really, just standing there, framed in the window --

-- and staring at her.

Now she panics.

WOMAN (cont'd)
All right, it's not okay. A
fucking huge, major problem is what
it is --

(X)

As if hearing that and enraged by it, the Attendant turns and walks back to the car, very fast this time. He comes around the hood and really BANGS on her window.

She jumps, startled and angry.

WOMAN
I'm right here!

(X)

He gestures for her to roll down the window. She won't. He waves her credit card at her, agitated.

(X)

ATTENDANT
Card's no good!

WOMAN
What?!

10 CONTINUED:

10

ATTENDANT

Your card's no good, they wanna talk to you on the phone. Come into the office.

WOMAN

Oh, don't give me that, there's nothing wrong with my --

She stops. She's panicking now. She thinks -- anything to get out of here.

She grabs her purse and rips a twenty dollar bill out of her wallet. She opens the window a crack, less than before if possible, and shoves the bill halfway out.

WOMAN (cont'd)

Here's twenty dollars. You can keep the change. Take it!

ATTENDANT

What about your card?

WOMAN

Just give it back to me.

ATTENDANT

Can't do that. Supposed to put you on the phone.

WOMAN

Okay, fine, keep the card, just take the money!

He does, reluctantly. She ZIPS the window back up.

WOMAN (cont'd)

And good bye.

She reaches to turn the ignition, but of course her keys are gone. She turns slowly to look at the Attendant, who is watching her every move. The Woman smears her face with as close to a normal smile as she can approximate and rolls the window down a generous three inches.

WOMAN (cont'd)

May I please have my keys?

ATTENDANT

(pause)

I left 'em in the office.

She just looks at him. He just looks at her.

WOMAN

Will you please go get them?

ATTENDANT

(thinks)

You really oughta talk to those credit card people. I can't leave the phone just sittin' off the hook like it is, you know? I mean, what if we get a call? Why don't you just come in?

(X)

WOMAN

(pause)

Look. I will call them later. I promise. Will you please, please just go get my keys?

He thinks about it again. Finally:

ATTENDANT

I gotta insist. See, I got this responsibility --

(X)

Wild with panic, the Woman takes a moment to strategize. Finally:

WOMAN

Okay, I want to tell you something. The way you're -- your behavior right now is alarming me. It's nothing personal, I don't know you, but --

ATTENDANT

I'm sorry.

WOMAN

Don't be sorry. Just -- I want you to go stand over there, by the sign at the edge of the parking lot. I will go in the office, get my keys, and talk on your fucking phone. Okay?

ATTENDANT

What are you, kidding?

She SLAMS her hand down on the horn, holding it an unnaturally long time. He waves his arms for her to stop and backs off.

ATTENDANT (cont'd)

OKAY, OKAY, I'M GOING, I'M GOING!!

He backs away from her, all the way to the edge of the parking lot, under the sign.

ATTENDANT (cont'd)

(shouting)

Happy now?!

10 CONTINUED: 3

10

The Woman takes a deep breath. She rummages through her purse for a weapon. The most dangerous thing she can come up with is a bottle of sleeping pills. Then a nail file. She takes the nail file.

And she unlocks the doors.

11 FROM ABOVE THE PARKING LOT,

11

the situation looks grim. The Woman's car is about twenty feet from the office door, which hangs open, light spilling from the office. The Attendant is at the edge of the parking lot, maybe twice as far from the office as she is.

But he's probably quicker, in spite of his size.

The Woman steps gingerly from her car, leaving the door open. She walks toward the office, slowly at first, then faster.

The Attendant stays where he is. The Woman covers the last few steps quickly.

12 INT OFFICE NIGHT

12

Inside now, the Woman doesn't dawdle. She scans the counter. She sees the phone, which is still in its cradle, the liar, and next to it are her keys.

She grabs them, turns back to the door, and sees --

-- the Attendant running towards her as fast as he can.

She SCREAMS and heads for the glass door to the office. She gets there just before he does and SLAMS it shut. She fumbles where the lock ought to be, and it is there, but you'd need a key to lock it.

The Attendant BANGS into the door from the other side. She strains to hold it shut but he's stronger and she gives up, backing away, holding the nail file up in self-defense.

The Attendant explodes into the office, she SCREAMS again, he stops her flailing arm from digging in with the nail file, he SLAMS her up against the wall, covers her mouth with one hand, and SHOUTS in her face:

ATTENDANT
YOUR CAR, LOOK IN YOUR CAR!

Hysterical, the Woman turns, her eyes racing out the door, across the parking lot, and toward her car. As she looks, the Attendant SHOUTS:

12 CONTINUED:

12

ATTENDANT (cont'd)
THERE'S A GUY WITH AN AXE IN THE
BACK SEAT!!!

The Woman's eyes smash into the rear window of her car, where the INNOCUOUS GUY she bumped into outside the truck stop sits bolt upright, his face contorted with crazy rage, the light glinting off the double-sided axe he holds in his hands, as big as catcher's mits.

CUT TO BLACK.

Based on the Urban Myth.

THE SUSPICIOUS ATTENDANT

by

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January 25, 1994

1 EXT HIGHWAY NIGHT

1

A speck of light shines far in the distance and slightly below our vantage point on an overpass, looking down on a lonely stretch of highway. A legend comes on screen:

"BASED ON THE URBAN MYTH"

MUSIC, faint at first, grows louder too as we realize the light is a car's headlights approaching.

Fast.

The car ZOOMS below the overpass.

2 INT CAR NIGHT

2

The MUSIC is deafening in the car, somebody is taking their speeding seriously, the radio cranked all the way up. A WOMAN, the car's driver and only occupant, sings along, bellowing, determined.

And crying. She dumps her purse on the seat next to her and rummages through the contents while she drives, searching for a Kleenex. She finds one and applies it to her eyes. The song goes on without her.

She tries to jump back into the tune, but she mangles the words terribly and gets frustrated. She SNAPS the radio off.

WOMAN

Fuck it.

She drives, angrily, shaking her head. Something's on her mind. We only catch fragments.

WOMAN (cont'd)

Go by myself. Take this shit.
Perfectly capable. Much, much,
much better off. Think I scare
easy?

Up ahead, she sees the neon glow of a truck stop's sign, the word "GAS" prominent. She looks down at her gas gauge. About an eighth of a tank left.

3 EXT TRUCK STOP NIGHT

3

The Woman pulls off the highway and into the truck stop. She passes the pumps and parks in front of the glass-enclosed restaurant, her car dwarfed and surrounded by enormous semi rigs.

She kills the motor, grabs her purse, opens the door --

3 CONTINUED:

3

-- and SMACKS right into a guy, a SCARY GUY standing right next to her car, so close it seems impossible she didn't see or hear him until she bumped into him.

She steps back and composes herself.

SCARY GUY
Sorry. Thought you saw me.

WOMAN
No, I -- excuse me.

She turns and heads into the restaurant. Quickly.

4 INT TRUCK STOP NIGHT

4

In a booth now, the Woman attempts to regain her composure. She has a menu. She lifts it, and notices a GUY in the booth across from her is looking at her.

He smiles. She returns a semi-polite grimace and looks the other way.

She looks around. THREE GUYS over at the counter are looking at her too.

COOK
What can I get you?

She looks up. A COOK/WAITER stands over her.

WOMAN
Hi, um -- the hamburger looks good.
And a Coke.

She looks back over at the Three Guys at the counter. The Cook follows her gaze. The Guys avert their eyes, slowly, as if chastised by the Cook.

COOK
Think they'd never seen a woman before.

She manages a polite chuckle.

COOK (cont'd)
Most of 'em are harmless.

His manner was friendly, but that comment unsettles her more.

WOMAN
Great. Thanks.

4 CONTINUED:

4

COOK
 (of her order)
 Comin' right up.

He turns and walks away. Curious now, the Woman looks around the place. There are eleven men. There are no other women.

All at once, they all seem to be looking at her. The one across from her, the three at the counter, two by the cigarette machine, one on the phone. Making a decision like that, she grabs her bag, she's out of the booth --

-- and she's out the door.

5 EXT TRUCK STOP NIGHT

5

Way too freaky in there, the Woman strides quickly to her car, fishing her keys out of her purse. She yanks the door open, slips inside and jams the key in the ignition.

She pulls out of the parking lot in a hurry and hits the road again.

6 INT CAR NIGHT

6

Back on the road, the Woman tries to shake off the willies she's picked up. She looks in the rear view mirror, bidding good riddance to the truck stop as it recedes in the distance. She flips on the radio, then flips it off again immediately, unable to concentrate.

Her eye is caught by the gas gauge again. It's still on an eighth.

WOMAN
Shit, I forgot.

She looks in the rear view again, but the truck stop is just a spot of light.

WOMAN (cont'd)
 I am not going back there.

But the road ahead of her is dark, except for a glowing speck in the distance.

She squints as the speck grows closer. It grows into the glowing orange ball of a gas station. She smiles in relief.

7 EXT GAS STATION NIGHT

7

The Woman wheels into this empty gas station, past a "Last Chance Gas" sign.

7 CONTINUED:

7

The station is a modern place, all gleaming fluorescents and clean cement.

She pulls up to the full serve pump furthest from the office and shuts off her engine. She looks over to the office. There's only one guy in there, head down, watching TV. Eager to be done with people and get back on the road, the Woman taps her horn.

The guy looks up, drags himself out of his chair, and steps into the doorway.

This ATTENDANT is not a small man, he nearly fills that doorway.

He heads toward her, wiping his hands on a rag, all the time in the world. He's smiling, friendly enough. She rolls down her window as he approaches.

WOMAN

Can you fill it with unleaded, please?

ATTENDANT

Sure.

WOMAN

(smiles)
Thanks.

She rolls the window back up as the Attendant veers over toward her tank.

8 IN THE CAR,

8

the Woman sighs, turns the key backwards in the ignition, and turns the radio on again. She's starting to come down when --

-- a sudden RAP RAP on the window next to her sends her through the roof. She turns. The Attendant is there, signalling for her to roll it down.

He's staring at her. You know, his demeanor isn't so friendly, when you think about it, it seems he's staring at her in a much more hostile way now. Or is he? She rolls the window down, but much less than last time.

ATTENDANT

Need the keys to open the tank.

WOMAN

Oh. Right. Sorry.

She takes the keys from the ignition and hands them through the crack in the window. He takes them.

8 CONTINUED:

8

She rolls it back up.

With no radio to distract her now, she watches the Attendant in her side view mirror while he works. He goes to the tank, unlocks it, takes the gas cap off, and shoves the hose in. Normal enough. She adjusts the mirror to look up at his face.

He's staring at her.

And he doesn't look away when she catches him. She stares back for a moment, then backs down and looks away from the mirror.

She glances to make sure the doors are locked. They aren't.

She risks a look over her shoulder.

He's still staring at her.

Her finger thumbs the door lock button while she debates offending him. As softly as she possibly can (as if that makes a difference), she presses the button.

The doors lock with a CHUNK. She doesn't want to look in the side view again, so she reaches up and adjusts the rear view to get a look at him.

He's still staring at her. And now he seems pissed.

She shifts the mirror away again and now the two of them wait for the tank to fill. The Woman sweats. The Attendant stares. The numbers roll on the pump.

9 BACK AT THE TANK,

9

with a loud CLUNK, the hose shuts itself off. The Attendant replaces the cap, puts the hose back in the pump, and turns to the Woman, wiping his hands on his rag again.

ATTENDANT
(approaching her window)
That'll be fourteen sevent-

She cuts him off, shoving a credit card through what is now a tiny slit at the top of the window, a smile forced on her face.

WOMAN
Visa okay?

ATTENDANT
Fine.

He takes the card and heads for the office. But as he walks there --

9 CONTINUED:

9

-- he never takes his eyes off her.

10 IN THE CAR,

10

the Woman is just freaking out.

WOMAN

You're misinterpreting -- he's just
weird -- he's not violent -- it's
okay -- calm down --

She lays her head back against the headrest and sighs, pulling herself together. It seems to help.

She sits up straight again and looks over to the office.

Through the window, she sees the Attendant. He doesn't seem to be running her card. He doesn't seem to be doing much of anything, really, just standing there, framed in the window --

-- and staring at her.

Now she panics.

WOMAN (cont'd)

All right, it's not okay. A total
fucking nutcase is what it is.

As if hearing that and enraged by it, the Attendant turns and walks quickly back to the car. He holds her credit card in his hand.

He gestures for her to roll down the window. She won't.

WOMAN (cont'd)

Where's the slip?

ATTENDANT

(raising his voice)
Card's no good.

WOMAN

What?!

ATTENDANT

Your card's no good, they wanna talk
to you on the phone. Come into the
office.

WOMAN

Oh, don't give me that, there's
nothing wrong with my --

She stops. She's panicking now. She thinks -- anything to get out of here.

10 CONTINUED:

10

She grabs her purse and rips a twenty dollar bill out of her wallet. She opens the window a crack, less than before if possible, and shoves the bill halfway out.

WOMAN (cont'd)

Here's twenty dollars. You can keep the change. Take it!

ATTENDANT

What about your card?

WOMAN

Just give it back to me.

ATTENDANT

Can't do that. Supposed to put you on the phone.

WOMAN

Okay, fine, keep the card, just take the money!

He does, reluctantly. She ZIPS the window back up.

WOMAN (cont'd)

And good bye.

She reaches to turn the ignition, but of course her keys are gone. She turns slowly to look at the Attendant, who is watching her every move. The Woman smears her face with as close to a normal smile as she can approximate and rolls the window down a generous three inches.

WOMAN (cont'd)

May I please have my keys?

ATTENDANT

(pause)
I left 'em in the office.

She just looks at him. He just looks at her.

WOMAN

Will you please go get them?

ATTENDANT

(thinks)
You really oughta talk to those credit card people. Why don't you just come in?

WOMAN

(pause)
I will call them later. I promise. Will you please, please just go get my keys?

10 CONTINUED: 2

10

He thinks about it again. Finally:

ATTENDANT

I'm afraid I have to insist. See, I have a responsibility.

Wild with panic, the Woman takes a moment to strategize. Finally:

WOMAN

Okay, I want to tell you something. The way you're -- your behavior right now is alarming me. It's nothing personal, I don't know you, but --

ATTENDANT

I'm sorry.

WOMAN

Don't be sorry. Just -- I want you to go stand over there, by the sign at the edge of the parking lot. I will go in the office, get my keys, and talk on your fucking phone. Okay?

ATTENDANT

What are you, kidding?

She SLAMS her hand down on the horn, holding it an unnaturally long time. He waves his arms for her to stop and backs off.

ATTENDANT (cont'd)

OKAY, OKAY, I'M GOING, I'M GOING!!

He backs away from her, all the way to the edge of the parking lot, under the sign.

ATTENDANT (cont'd)

(shouting)
Happy now?!

The Woman takes a deep breath. She rummages through her purse for a weapon. The most dangerous thing she can come up with is a bottle of sleeping pills. Then a nail file. She takes the nail file.

And she unlocks the doors.

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ATTENDANT
THERE'S A GUY WITH AN AXE IN THE BACK
OF YOUR CAR!!!

The Woman GASPS, she turns, her eyes race over to the back window of her car, where suddenly the SCARY GUY she bumped into outside the truck stop sits up, his face contorted with crazy rage, the light glinting off the double-sided axe he holds in his hands, as big as catcher's mits.

CUT TO BLACK.