

ACCUSED

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And

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FADE IN:

1

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

1

Desert. A Highway. Heat rises from the pavement, it bends the horizon, causing the landscape to dance in the distance.

A tumbleweed rolls by. Something is coming toward us on the horizon. It's a woman, CARRIE, early 20's. She slowly walks along the highway. She's closer now but we are still unable to make out who she is.

The sun reflects off her glasses, blinding us every few seconds.

Closer now. We see a cigarette BURNING in her hand. She's dressed in a jean mini-skirt, pumps, a camisole with a leather jacket.

She staggers slowly toward us, along the deserted, desert highway. A bag over her shoulder.

Her face appears bruised and a trace of blood is dried on her chin.

A car approaches in the distance, behind her.

CARRIE

Thank God!

She waves her arms frantically, as the car approaches.

CARRIE (CONT'D)

PLEASE STOP! STOP!

The car rolls up and we see a young, clean cut YUPPIE couple, JEFF and SANDY.

SANDY

Are you OK?

JEFF

What happened? Were you in an accident?

CARRIE

There was a man... a hitchhiker...

SMASH CUT TO:

2 INT. CAR ON THE HIGHWAY - FLASHBACK - DAY

2

WE SEE a close up of Carrie's face. Sunglasses on. She *SINGS* along to AC/DC's "Highway to Hell," on the radio. She checks her lipstick in the rear-view mirror. Her shoulder length blonde hair *WHIPS* in the wind.

WE pull back to reveal a pack of cigarettes on the dashboard. She takes one, puts it in her mouth as she reaches for the in dash cigarette lighter and tries to light it to no avail.

CARRIE

Damn it! Piece of SHIT!

She throws the lighter out the window.

CUT TO:

A tight shot of the lighter as it hits and bounces on the highway revealing a *HITCHHIKER*. He's dressed in Jeans, a leather jacket, with a back pack over his shoulder.

CUT TO:

Carrie looks in the rear-view mirror. *WE HEAR* the words of her mother: "Don't pickup strangers".

CARRIE (V.O.)

He... he... attacked me.

SMASH BACK TO:

3 EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

3

SANDY

Oh my GOD!

CARRIE

He took my phone and fucked up my car. Can you just take me to the next gas station or something?

SANDY

Of course sweetie, get in!

Carrie gets in and the car takes off.

4 EXT. DINER - DUSK

4

We see Jeff and Sandy's car pull up to a diner in the middle of nowhere. A few scattered cars parked around the diner. A bell jingles as --

5 INT. DINER - NIGHT

5

The diner door OPENS. Jeff walks in. Sandy follows, leading Carrie by the arm.

We see all the occupants of the diner LOOK UP as the three enter --

MAX, mid-fifties, the large cook peering out from the greasy, smoke-filled KITCHEN. He wears a wife beater, a grease stained apron and a paper hat. He stands by the grill.

BETTY, late 30's, but looks older, the waitress. She wears a pink waitresses dress and has big Flo-like hair. She speaks with a southern accent. She's takes the order of a Russell --

RUSSELL, late 20's, sits at the counter close to the till. He is a black man with dreadlocks, average size and build. He's educated, the smartest person in the room.

JACK, mid 20's, sits at the far end of the counter. He looks clean cut. He's clean-shaven, hair slicked back, jeans and a t-shirt. A backpack sits on the floor under his chair.

BETTY

Country Fried steak and a coffee,
comin' up.

She looks at the door

BETTY (CONT'D)

Evening folks. Have a seat anywhere
you li...

Betty realizes something is wrong with Carrie.

BETTY (CONT'D)

What happened to you HONEY?

Before Carrie can speak, Sandy blurts out.

SANDY

She needs help, she was attacked on
the highway!

MAX

Dressed like that, I can see why.

BETTY

(in a whispering tone)
Honey, that isn't nice.

BETTY (CONT'D)

Oh honey, sit here!

Betty grabs the other arm of Carrie and leads her to the booth.

BETTY (CONT'D)
Do you need a doctor?

SMASH CUT TO:

6 EXT. HIGHWAY - FLASHBACK - DAY 6

Carrie stands over her car, bruised and bloody, spark plug wires hanging from the hood. She fishes through her bag

CARRIE
Shit! He took my cell phone?

She pulls out a pack of cigarettes and her lighter, takes a cigarette and lights it.

SMASH BACK TO:

7 INT. DINER - NIGHT 7

CARRIE
I'm fine. I'm just a fuckin' idiot. I need a phone. He took my cell, and my wallet and he...

Sandy WHISPERS in Betty's ear.

SANDY
I think she was raped!

Carrie COVERS her face with her hands.

BETTY
Sweetie, we're gonna call the SHERIFF.

CARRIE
No. I just want... I just need...

BETTY
You just sit here Honey, we're gonna take care of you! Max, get me a blanket!

Max drops a large pan, making a LOUD sound and RUSHES to the back. Betty GRABS a phone.

Sandy sits in the booth directly across from Carrie. We see the rest of the patrons of the diner looking on, concerned.

The bathroom door FLIES open and a man appears, QUENTIN, mid 20's, dishevelled hair and scruffy beard. He wears a leather jacket, jeans and a T-shirt.

Carrie sees Quentin and her eyes get big. She temporarily freezes in fear.

SANDY

What's the matter Carrie?

CARRIE

(quietly)

That's... that's him!

Carrie's face now transforms from fear to anger!

CARRIE (CONT'D)

I'M GOING TO KICK YOUR FUCKIN' ASS!

Carrie bolts from the booth towards the man, but is grabbed by Jeff.

CARRIE (CONT'D)

You fuckin' Asshole! What the fuck are you doing? I'll kill you...

JEFF

Hey! Calm down.

CARRIE

Shut the fuck up!

JEFF

Carrie, you need to calm down.

CARRIE

(Struggling)

NO! Let go of me!

Betty hangs up the phone, rushing to Carrie's side.

BETTY

Honey, are you sure?

CARRIE

I'll never forget him!

QUENTIN

(looking around the diner
oblivious and confused)

Is she talking to me?

CARRIE
 You just think you are going to
 walk right out of here?

QUENTIN
 Hey Chick, I don't who the hell you
 are.

CARRIE
 What don't you fuckin'
 understand?!?

Max returns with the blanket.

BETTY
 Grab him Max! That's the guy that
 attacked her!

Quentin WHEELS around as --

Max THROWS the blanket over Quentin's head and grabs him in a
 bear hug, as --

They FALL to the ground and --

Quentin starts to WIGGLE free but --

Betty HURRIES behind the cash register and emerges with a gun
 pointing it at Quentin.

BETTY (CONT'D)
 You better hold it right there
 mister!

Quentin looks up to see the barrel of the gun pointing
 directly at his face. He freezes.

Max grabs some twine from behind the counter and ties
 Quentin's hands together behind his back.

QUENTIN
 What the fuck is the matter with
 you people? I just came in to...

SANDY
 (interrupts)
 Where is this Sheriff of yours?

BETTY
 He's on his way.

QUENTIN
 Good, he can help clear this up.

Carrie struggles to free herself from Jeff.

CARRIE

I don't need a Sheriff! Give me
that gun and I'll settle this right
now!

Russell who has been watching and listening to everything
happening finally moves towards the fracas.

RUSSELL

What makes you so sure this is the
guy?

SMASH CUT TO:

8

EXT. HIGHWAY - FLASHBACK - DAY

8

Carrie looks in the rear-view mirror. WE HEAR the words of
her mother: "Don't pickup strangers".

CARRIE

FUCK IT!

She slams on the brakes and screeches to a stop. She pops it
into reverse and speeds back to the Hitchhiker. She leans
down slightly to look at him through the passenger side
window as he approaches the car. We can only see his face
from the nose down.

CARRIE (CONT'D)

You're not a psycho, are you?

HITCHHIKER

My mother doesn't think so.

CARRIE

Where are you headed?

HITCHHIKER

West. I'm trying to get to L.A.

CARRIE

Well, I'm heading that way so ...
Alright ... Get in.

The Hitchhiker gets in and they peel out.

CARRIE (CONT'D)

So, where are you from?

As she turns to look at the Hitchhiker, WE SEE his fist crash through frame, across her face.

FADE TO:

WE HEAR a TRUCK's bull horn blare as WE SEE Carrie sprawled out on the front seat. Blood is obvious on her lip and chin. She sits up and looks in the mirror as she grabs her head in pain.

CARRIE (CONT'D)

Fuck ... What the hell?

CARRIE (CONT'D)

That ASSHOLE, I'll kill him!

She finds the KEYS still in the ignition and tries to start the car, but hears only a CLICK. She grabs her bag and gets out of the car.

SMASH BACK TO:

9

INT. DINER - NIGHT

9

CARRIE

That's the guy! Same fuckin' jacket, same dirty look, SAME GUY!

QUENTIN

This jacket, you kidding me? I just came into get some chow and use the head.

JACK

Yeah, stick with that story!

QUENTIN

I'm serious, if I was running from a crime, do you think I would stop and eat?

RUSSELL

You're telling me you're basing this all on the fact that his jacket looks familiar! Unfucking believable! You know how many times I've been picked up and questioned because I happened to be the black guy that was in the area!

SANDY

I'm sure there's more, right Honey?

CARRIE
His face! That's him. I know it's
him.

RUSSELL
Girl, you need to be absolutely
sure.

Carrie STRUGGLES free of Jeff and KICKS Quentin on his
shoulder.

QUENTIN
Hey! Bitch!

MAX
Shut up pretty boy, and you too,
college boy. We'll let the Sheriff
handle this.

Carrie THROWS her shoulder into Betty, KNOCKING the gun to
the ground.

Carrie grabs the gun, It FIRES, striking Quentin in the
thigh. Quentin SQUEALS in agony.

QUENTIN
FUCK! GODDAMMIT, the bitch fuckin'
shot me!

Max and Betty both lunge at Carrie. She jumps backward,
avoiding capture.

CARRIE
(Shaking)
Nobody fuckin' move! I mean it!

Jack has hardly moved, but turns his head slightly.

JACK
Looks like the little lady's in
charge now.

SANDY
Honey, be reasonable, You don't
want to hurt anybody!

JACK
Let her do it! The sooner she
shoots him, the sooner I get my
Steak.

BETTY
Shut up Mister!

(MORE)

BETTY (CONT'D)

I know you're upset, but let's let the law handle this.

JEFF

Yeah, they'll put you away, too. Listen to them Carrie. If this goes any further, you'll end up doing more time than he will.

MAX

Goddam Commie would probably get off with a slap on the wrist. Fuckin' liberals run the country.

JACK

That's right old man. He'd do less than a year and be right back out on the streets checkin' out his next target.

CARRIE

He's right! I need to take care of this scum or I'll be looking over my shoulder for the rest f my life!

RUSSELL

Wait a minute! The Judicial system sucks, but you just can't take the law into your own hands. You're all acting like a lynch mob!

SANDY

Where the HELL is the Sheriff?

Carrie is still standing over Quentin with the gun pointed straight at him.

CARRIE

You're going to pay for what you did to me!

(she points the gun at his crotch)

You're going to be speaking a few octaves higher when I'm through with you.

QUENTIN

PLEASE... Lady, I really don't know who you are! I have never seen you before. I swear! Please don't shoot me.

SANDY

CARRIE! You can't do this!

CARRIE

Shut up Sandy! You heard them, even if they do find him guilty, he'll get off easy. I won't be satisfied until they hang him dead by his balls! I know how the system works. The fuckin' judge will blame ME for picking him up, or say I deserved it for what I'm wearing, like grandpa over there. I won't go through that. I can't go through that! I can kill this piece of shit and save the next girl he'd do this to.

QUENTIN

You got the wrong guy, I swear!
PLEASE! I just came in ...

CARRIE

... for some chow and to use
the head.

QUENTIN

... for some chow and to use
the head.

BETTY

Honey, if you do this, you'll end
up going to prison. He's not worth!

JEFF

Listen to her Carrie, she's right.
You don't want to do this!

Carrie slowly and deliberately moves the gun closer and closer to Quentin's head and cocks the trigger back.

QUENTIN

(Sobbing)
Pleeease no!

SANDY

Carrie, nooooo!

CARRIE

BANG!

Quentin slumps to the floor.

Carrie slowly un-cocks the trigger and hands the gun back to Max.

JACK

I knew you didn't have the guts!

CARRIE

I'm not going to let you take the rest of my life away as well. I want you to spend time, even if it's a short time, in prison where you'll know what I went through. I'm sure you'll experience it on a daily basis!

WE HEAR the bell JINGLE over the door as the Sheriff enters.

SHERIFF

What the hell we got going on here, Max?

Carrie bends down and whispers into Quentin's ear. Then stands up and turns to face the Sheriff.

CARRIE

Sheriff, this man RAPED me and I'll do whatever it takes to make sure he goes away for as long as possible.

The Sheriff walks over and grabs Quentin's arm, and then realizes he been shot in the leg.

SHERIFF

Seems like we had a little mishap here?

BETTY

He pulled a gun and Max was trying to wrestle it away when it went off!

QUENTIN

MY GUN!?! It was your gun!

The Sheriff turns to Max with a curious eyebrow raised.

SHERIFF

That how it went down Max?

WE SEE the rest of the patrons in the diner. All are stone faced.

MAX

Yup, just like Betty says.

The Sheriff scans the rest of the patrons and everyone nods, even Russell.

SHERIFF

Alrighty then pretty boy. You're comin' with me.

QUENTIN

You believe that BULLSHIT? These people are fuckin' crazy! Tell Him! She shot me! I'm INNOCENT! I just came in to ...

SHERIFF

I've heard it all before, pretty boy. Everyone's innocent!
(turning to Carrie)
I'll need you to come down to the station to make your statement, little lady.

CARRIE

I don't have my car.

BETTY

I'll take you sweetie, We're officially closed for the night. I've had enough excitement for one night!

Betty looks back at Max.

BETTY (CONT'D)

You got a problem with that...

Max shakes his head, realizing he's already lost that argument.

RUSSELL

I guess I'm not getting my Steak.

The Sheriff leads a limping, bleeding Quentin out the door.

SANDY

You sure you're gonna be OK, Sweetie?

CARRIE

I am now. Thanks for picking me up and ... And, I'm sorry I put you through this.

Carrie and Sandy embrace tightly as Jeff gives Carrie a pat on the back. As they head for the door Jack grabs his backpack. WE SEE the sleeve of a leather jacket hang from the top of the backpack.

JACK
 Are you folks headed west? You
 think I could grab a ride with you
 guys?

Jeff looks annoyed and turns to Sandy as she gives him a nod.

JEFF
 Sure, why not?

10

EXT. DINER - NIGHT

10

Jeff and Sandy head to their car as Betty holding Carrie's
 arm lead her in the opposite direction to her car.

Jeff walks around to the other side of the car as Jack opens
 the car door for Sandy and she gets in.

As Jack opens the back door, Sandy turns over her shoulder.

SANDY
 Promise me you're not a psycho like
 that guy.

Jack stops and looks in Carrie's direction.

JACK
 My mother doesn't think so.

The action goes to SLOW MOTION as we see Carrie look back
 over her shoulder in shock, just as Jack is getting into the
 back seat of Jeff and Sandy's car.

WE SEE Jack through the back window with a devilish look as
 the car drives away.

Back to Carrie frozen in terror!

FADE OUT.