

EITHER SIDE OF LIMBO

Written by

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EXT. INDUSTRIAL PARK - NIGHT

Quiet. No sign of life.

In front of a run down garage, a gloomy street lamp casts a sad light across a lone taxi. Head lights off.

The street lamp starts to flicker as we move closer to the taxi...closer...until we're inside--

DOUG'S TAXI

--DOUG, 65, a slob with greasy hair, lies back in the driver's seat, snoring. Around his neck is a worn scarf.

The inside light flicks on. Doug's eyes bolt open.

DOUG

What! Oh, not again. I mean--

CLICK - the rear door flies open and in dashes, LANCE, 45, corporate lawyer type, expensive suit. Seems in a hurry.

Doug turns round, puts up a hand to stop Lance.

DOUG

Out! I'm not doing this.

LANCE

Take me to hospital, now!

Doug points at the door.

DOUG

Don't shut that.

Lance ignores him and slams the door shut.

DOUG

Damn.

LANCE

Quickly.

DOUG

(under his breath)
Bastard.

LANCE

Come on. I need your help.

DOUG

Look, I don't help anybody, don't like anybody, or care for anybody.

LANCE
Then just drive. I'm not leaving.

DOUG
So true.

Reluctantly, Doug starts the engine and heads off.

Lance gazes down at his hands - they're covered in blood.

DOUG (O.S.)
OK, we're here.

Lance's head snaps up in surprise - that was quick. Out the window is the front gates to a school.

LANCE
I said Hospital!

DOUG
Look, your journey in here can go
one of two ways. Either you--

LANCE
Don't you get it, I need help.

A wry smile creeps across Doug's face.

DOUG
Actually, you don't.

Doug starts to unwind his scarf.

DOUG
There's no point fighting...
(Pauses to remember)
...Lance. It worked.

LANCE
What? How do you know my...?

DOUG
Let me guess, slit wrists in the
bath after a packet of pills.

Lance looks on as though he's been slapped.

Doug finishes taking off his scarf.

Lance's jaw drops. Doug's neck is heavily bruised with rope
burns around his throat.

DOUG

Me, I hanged myself. I was bleeding when I arrived, but as in real life it soon stops. The rest remains.

(reflects)

Glad I only did it once.

Lance grabs the door handle, but it doesn't work.

DOUG

Well, I told you not to shut it. It won't open, not yet. You have to be at the right place, and that's clearly not here. Is it?

Lance slumps back, a thousand-yard stare within his eyes.

Tentatively, his focus drifts down toward his wrists. They drip blood onto the floor.

He turns to the window - outside is a normal world.

LANCE

I...I don't get it. Why this?

DOUG

'Cos you fucking killed yourself. And don't go all 'pity me'. You chose it. And no, I don't want to know your shit story.

LANCE

Oh no. I just wanted it over. The shame, the pain.

DOUG

I'm touched. Now, whilst I don't care, I do have to drive you around. Think of it as my orders. This is your first stop.

LANCE

My old school.

DOUG

Let me guess, someone fucked you up the ass?

Across the window, condensation has clouded the view of the school. With tender care, Lance wipes it so he can see.

LANCE

Err...no. I liked school. They looked after me.

DOUG
So they sucked as well.

LANCE
Stop it! It was a good school. I got the 'most likely to be successful' award when I left.

DOUG
Beats my, 'most likely to be abused by your step father' award. Bet your parents dined out on that one.

LANCE
(bows his head)
It was never enough.

DOUG
Whatever. Here's your next stop.

Lance, head still bowed, registers the comment.

LANCE
(not looking up)
Where are we?

Doug gazes back at his passenger.

DOUG
Look, Blood Bath, I go where I'm told. But don't worry, soon it'll be your turn.

LANCE
Do you do many of these? Drive sad bastards, like me, who cocked up?

DOUG
If it makes you feel better I've seen worse. But, I still don't care.

Lance sits up, stares Doug in the face.

LANCE
Who said I want you to care?

DOUG
(flustered)
Well, most do. This place can take a person by surprise.
(beat)
Remember this place?

Lance turns to the window. Towering above, a glitzy skyscraper. Corporate power on display.

He closes his eyes with pain.

LANCE
I'd rather not.

DOUG
Don't tell me, they fired you? You should've jumped. I haven't had a jumper for a while. Mind you, never a pretty sight.

Lance gazes up at the building.

LANCE
I thought of it as my real family. But, after the wife ran off with my asshole boss, I was no longer needed. I thought of jumping to say, 'fuck you', but I didn't have the balls. I just wanted to hide.
(Shows his wrists)
You were right. Not sure why, perhaps it felt private, like...
(gazes at Doug)
...a garage hanging would.

They lock eyes, share a look. Doug nods agreement.

DOUG
No one ever gave a toss about me. Alone felt better.

LANCE
Yeah. What's your name? I think I'm allowed to know who my driver is.

Doug turns away, thinks. Lance gives him time.

DOUG
Doug. That's all you're getting.

Lance reflects. Something jogs his memory. His face crumples as he struggles to stifle a laugh.

Doug notices, turns round.

DOUG
What the fuck?

Lance bursts into laughter.

DOUG

You wanker. I have to drive your
sad ass around and you--

LANCE

You're not Doug anymore...
(off Doug's look)
...you're Doug...less.

Doug gets the joke - doesn't find it funny.

DOUG

The world must feel like a barren
desert without you. Twat.
(under his breath)
Douglas...less.

Doug calms and a reluctant smile appears.

LANCE

Is that why we're here, 'cos nobody
misses us? Just sad losers who took
their lives. The unworthy.

DOUG

Could be. Nobody would miss me. I'm
probably still rotting in my garage
ten years after pushing the chair.

LANCE

Ten years!

DOUG

Yup. It seems I need something else
to move on. Story of my various
lives.

LANCE

Well, as much as I enjoy your
warmth and compassion, I'd rather
be elsewhere. How do I get out?

DOUG

Not pissing me off helps.

LANCE

That sounds like it was easy to do.

Doug sighs, Lance has a point.

DOUG

Yeah, probably. You know what I
wrote for whoever found me?

(MORE)

DOUG (CONT'D)
(Lance frowns)
"I'm gonna haunt you fucker".

LANCE
That made someone's day.

DOUG
As I said, I don't like anybody, or
help anybody.

LANCE
But you have to help me.

Doug fires up the engine.

DOUG
No, it's simple, I drive. It's your
journey, not mine.

LANCE
Ok, where next?

DOUG
It's your choice. Find the right
place and you're out. Off to the
next stage. That's how it works.

LANCE
But what is next?

DOUG
Don't fucking ask me, I haven't got
there. Anyway, if it's full of
people, well...

LANCE
Did you try? Did someone drive you?

Doug reflects.

DOUG
Yeah, for a while. Nowhere seemed
to matter. Nothing felt good. The
door never opened. Then, one day, I
woke up as driver. That's the way
it is. Never had much of a choice.

LANCE
Seems funny that we have no choice
here, because of our choice there.

DOUG

Funny! You're sick. But if it's choice you want, then choose a bloody place to go to. I'm tired.

Lance peers out the window, frowns.

LANCE

But where? I mean, how did the others get the door to open?

Doug sighs.

DOUG

I don't know. It varies. I've never seen a pattern. Everyone's story is different. Just has to be something that solves their mystery.

LANCE

Mystery?

DOUG

Why you're in limbo? This place. You need to work it out to leave. Perhaps it's how things could've been different? Or you need to learn about yourself? Or remember what you left behind? But sometimes change is not always easy to see.

LANCE

Behind...behind. Oh god! That's it.

Lance bolts up, panic across his face.

LANCE

Ellie! I've left...my girl. She's only six. Went to her Granny's when it all kicked off. How could I? How could I? I can't leave her with that asshole, she needs me.

DOUG

Sorry, it's too late, Lance.

Lance goes berserk. He smashes the taxi with his fists, his feet - everything. Pure rage.

He stops mid punch - a thought.

LANCE

Hey, when I got in, you said this could go one of two ways.

Doug throws his hands up as if surrendering.

DOUG

Whoa, don't get your hopes up. I've only had one return and I've driven a lot of dead in my time.

LANCE

But it could happen?

DOUG

Lance, you're dead. Accept it. Maybe that's your challenge.

Lance looks at his wrists - blood still drips. He smiles.

LANCE

No, I have to try. You see...
(lifts his wrists)
...I'm still bleeding.

Doug shrugs - thinks it's pointless.

DOUG

That's all very well, but you got to get to the right place, and in time. So where to? Granny's house?

LANCE

For Ellie, yeah, sounds good.

Lance touches a bloodied wrists. His eyes widen.

LANCE

No! Stop. Doug, take me to hospital.

Doug nods agreement.

DOUG

Ok, here we are.

Lance gazes outside. The taxi sits outside a hospital emergency department.

He reaches for the door handle...pauses. His hand shakes - there's a lot riding on this.

LANCE

What if it doesn't work?

Doug studies the desire in Lance's face.

DOUG
One thing I know, Lance. Your clock
is ticking. Don't waste it.

CLICK - the handle works and the door opens.

Lance jumps out. He stops halfway through the door, places a
bloody hand on Doug's shoulder.

LANCE
Thank you, Doug.

DOUG
For what?

LANCE
For helping me get here.

As Lance runs off we hear the sound of a patient flatlining.

DOCTOR (V.O.)
Clear.

WHOMP - the sound of a defibrillator.

DOUG'S POV - Lance runs through the hospital doors.

BEEP BEEP BEEP - a pulse returns.

DOCTOR (V.O.)
Good work team, he's back.

Doug smiles. He shuts the door, drives off to the same
industrial park and pulls up.

DOUG
(Chuckles to himself)
Doug...less. Arsehole.

Doug leans back and closes his eyes. He drifts off to sleep.
Slowly, he begins to...fade away.

DOUG (V.O.)
Why you're in limbo? You need to
work it out to leave.
(beat)
It seems that I need something else
to move on.

Doug fades...fades...until the drivers chair is empty.

DOUG (V.O.)
But sometimes change is not always
easy to see.