

HITCHED

By

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SIRENS.

A red light of an ambulance blinks.

FADE TO BLACK.

A NURSE with a kind face looks down to us. She speaks words we can't hear, then puts an oxygen mask on our face.

FADE TO BLACK.

A cuffed, shirtless MAN grapples with two COPS as they try to shove him into their cruiser. The Man's red face turns to us. The swearing can be read easily off his lips. Spit flies out of his mouth as if he is a rabid dog.

Tears blur our vision.

FADE TO BLACK.

NURSE VOICE (V.O.)
Stay with me, Patricia. Don't you
dare die on my watch, girl. Fight
back. You hear me? Fight back!

The ominous BEEP of a flatline drags for a long moment, --
then a heart BEATS.

FADE IN:

EXT. DESERTED ROAD - DAY

A rattlesnake slithers on the dusty asphalt. It vanishes as a
zooming Camry passes over it.

Doing a 110 miles per hour, alone on the road, the Camry
seems to be fast enough to take off into the hot, dry sky.

INT. CAMRY - DAY (MOVING)

"All the single ladies" blasts away on the speakers. Behind
the wheel, flying solo, PATRICIA sings along.

PATRICIA
Cried my tears
Three good years.
Ya can't be mad at me.

She is in her late 20s. Hauntingly beautiful, eyes full of
craziness, and apparently a lip-sync champion.

PATRICIA
Oh oh oh oh oh oh ...

She dangerously dances to the rhythm while keeping the wheel
steady. The low-fuel symbol lights up and ruins the mood.

PATRICIA

Fuck.

She kills the music, then downshifts gears to slow down.

She picks up her cell cellphone and clicks on the GPS navigation app. The screen loads only half the map, then freezes.

PATRICIA

Piece of shit.

She stops the car, opens the glovebox, and pulls out a map.

EXT. DESERTED ROAD - DAY

Patricia spreads the map on the hood of the car. She weighs it down with her cellphone. Its screen shows a compass. She raises her head up and looks north.

She pockets the map, then clicks her cellphone to record a video.

PATRICIA

(to the camera)

A girl has to know how to read a map. It's essential. You never know when or where the gay positioning system is gonna take a shit on you. The map is saying there is a gas station thirty miles to the north. It's most likely run by a serial-killer-slash-rapist, but I don't have a choice. Wish me luck.

She steps back into the car, unaware that--

-- a piece of black fabric sticks out from under the back door, like the tongue of a hanged man.

EXT. GAS STATION - DAY

The Camry parks next to the pumps.

Patricia gets out. She scans the place.

Clean pumps. Shiny store windows.

A pristine sign spells : " Welcome traveler." All seem odd and out of place like a candy house in the middle of the forest.

INT. THE STORE - DAY

It's even cleaner inside. Organized shelves rife with products. A cutting-edge vending machine.

Still at awe on how great the place looks, Patricia rings the bell on the counter twice. A pack of cigarettes, a music album, cupcakes, and a juice box litter the counter.

She films herself with her cellphone.

PATRICIA

(to the camera)

Look how clean this place is. It's giving me that creepy candy house vibe. The witch hasn't showed up yet though. What do you girls think? Would Gretel have made it on her own? Well let's find out.

She rings the counter bell again.

PATRICIA

Hello!

MAN VOICE (O.S.)

Sorry, I'll be with you in a second.

RAY, 30s, comes out of the office door. Handsome but a little skinnier than average. Red traces smudge his white apron.

Patricia blocks the view with her hand and looks away.

PATRICIA

Whoa! Sorry, I didn't mean to interrupt. I thought you were already done with the previous victim.

The joke catches Ray off guard. He freezes, then laughs.

RAY

Don't worry about it. I can multi-task.

Patricia smiles. She likes him. Ray processes her stuff.

PATRICIA

This is one gorgeous gas station you got here, man.

RAY

Thanks. The cleaning is the only thing keeping me busy and sane in this place.

PATRICIA

I'm Patricia by the way.

RAY

Nice to meet you. I'm Ray.

PATRICIA
You talk like a New Yorker. How did
you end up here?

Ray puts Patricia's things in a bag.

RAY
My daughter needs the dry climate.

As if she is a spirit and his words summoned her, A 6 years
old appears at the door. NANCY, cute as a button, holds a
soccer ball under her arm.

PATRICIA
Ma'am, if this guy is holding you
here against your will, this is the
time to talk. I can get you out of
here, just say the word.

Ray just chuckles.

Nancy, in her confusion, shifts her gaze between Ray and
Patricia for a couple of times, then fixes it on Patricia.

NANCY
Get me out of here.

This unsettles Patricia for a second, then Nancy runs toward
Ray and holds onto his apron.

RAY
She hates the place. I don't blame
her. She only got an old boring man
to play with.

NANCY
You're not boring.

PATRICIA
Awww.

Ray picks Nancy up and kisses her.

RAY
Thanks cupcake. That's really sweet
of you to say.
(to Patricia)
thirty-seven, sixty-five.

Patricia pulls a handful of dollar bills from her back pocket
and counts them.

PATRICIA
Fifty-five twenty for the gas.
That's a...

NANCY
Ninety-two, eighty-five.

Patricia's eyes open wide as she mouths "wow" to Ray.

RAY
I know, right. This smart monkey
gets a lot of practice around here.

Ray tickles Nancy. She lets out a heart-melting giggle.

RAY
She's gonna be cooking my book next
year. IRS won't know what hit 'em.

Patricia smiles at their enviable relation.

PATRICIA
Ok, I don't have enough on me. I
need to get the rest from my car.

INT. CAMRY - DAY

Patricia opens the glovebox and picks up some dollar bills.

Ray walks toward her. He hands her the shopping bag.

He catches the reflection of something in the pump's glass.

His face turns white, --but he hides it quickly.

PATRICIA
I'm sorry, all I got is fifty, but
I'm good for it.

RAY
I'm sorry. But you're gonna have to
pay now.

PATRICIA
Seriously?

RAY
Don't you have like a credit card
or something?

PATRICIA
(fuming)
No I don't, asshole, or I would've
paid you. You know what, take back
the bag. I don't want your shit
anymore.

RAY
You still owe me five for the gas.
I'm sorry, I'm gonna need you to
come to my office to sign a
promissory and give me some
personal details. I'm really sorry.

Patricia looks incredulous. Ray walks back to the store. She opens her door, then pauses. She takes another look at Ray as he walks away. She squints. *Is he trying... ?*

She opens the glovebox and pulls out a well oiled Glock wrapped in a cloth. She pulls its slider back to check if there is a bullet in the chamber. There is.

INT. THE STORE - DAY

Ray, behind the counter, is already filling the form. Patricia approaches him with her ID in hand.

RAY
Whatever I say, don't look back.

She looks back. Ray shakes his head.

PATRICIA
What the hell are you talking about?

Ray keeps his head down while filling out the form.

RAY
(unnerved)
There is a man in the back of your car. I saw his reflection in the glass. He's got a fucking hatchet in his fucking hand.

Patricia looks back again, befuddled.

RAY
I said don't look back goddammit.

PATRICIA
Is this some kind a joke? Cause I'm failing to see the humor here.

RAY
Do I sound like I'm fucking joking.

He doesn't. Without saying a word Patricia walks out.

RAY
(whispers)
Where the hell are you--

EXT. GAS STATION - DAY

Patricia walks toward her car. Ray follows her.

RAY
I called the cops, just stay the fuck inside. I'll lock the door.

Without as much as slowing down,--

-- Patricia opens the back door of her car.

No one is there.

She pops the trunk open. No one is there either.

She turns back to Ray red faced with hands on her hips.

PATRICIA

You think this is funny?

RAY

I swear on my daughter's life I saw
the reflection of a man in a black
coat hiding in the back of your
car. Right behind the driver seat.

As if the man would spawn like a ghost at any moment, Ray
cautiously checks the back of the car.

Patricia just glares at him.

RAY

He must have gotten out or
something. I saw him.

PATRICIA

Yes, he got out of the car while it
was in full view right in front of
you when you were filling out your
stupid form. Is that what you're
saying?

Ray fumbles through his brain for an answer and finds none.

PATRICIA

Can I go and sign your stupid form
now, please?

RAY

What? No. I only acted like that so
I can get you out of the car
without alerting him.

Patricia gives him the "Oh really?" look.

RAY

Hey, screw you. I already swore to
you that I'm telling the truth. I'm
not doing it again. If you don't
believe me, just... leave.

PATRICIA

Fuck you very much.

She puts the money on top the pump and gets into her car.

The Camry peels off.

The pump's glass reflects Ray's half angry, half scared face.

INT. BATHROOM - MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Patricia wipes the fog off the mirror to see the reflection of her own moistened face and wet hair. She puts on her pajamas and ...

INT. MOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

... steps into the room.

She falls onto the bed, grabs the remote control, and turns on the TV. It's the news. She mutes it, then picks up her cellphone and dials.

PATRICIA

(into the cellphone)

Hi mom. I made it. I'm in a motel room now, and yes I'm alone.

(listens)

Yes, everything is fine. I just can't find the vein to inject the cocaine.

(laughs)

Yes, it's funny. You just have no sense of humor, like at all.

ON TV:

News flash about a deranged person loose in the area. Armed and dangerous. Last seen wearing a back coat.

Which goes unnoticed by Patricia.

PATRICIA

I know, I know. I love you too. Buh-bye.

She turns off the TV, then the light.

FADE TO BLACK.

NANCY (V.O.)

Get me out of here.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Patricia wakes up startled. She stays down for a moment.

PATRICIA

Fuck it.

EXT. PARKING LOT - MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Patricia, still in here pajamas, opens the passenger door. Gets a flashlight out of the glovebox. Turns on the interior light.

She gets into the back seat, knees first. She finds some dirt on the floor. She feels it with her fingers. She shrugs.

PATRICIA
This is stupid.

As she turns off the car's interior light, she catches the glimpse of something. She points the flashlight at it.

Whatever she sees, it certainly just convinced the hell out of her that Ray was telling the truth.

INT. CAMRY - NIGHT (MOVING)

Again, doing a 110 miles per hour, Patricia is on her cellphone.

PATRICIA
Yes, I'm pretty sure there is no other explanation for the blood on my seat.
(listens)
I'm not sure. But he could be still at the gas station right now. Please send someone right away. A man and his daughter could be in danger.

She hangs up. The speedometer maxes out.

EXT. GAS STATION - NIGHT

Patricia, on foot, points her gun down as she walks around the closed, dark store, looking for a way in.

As quiet as possible, she approaches the backdoor.

She holds her hand up to block the moonlight, and peers into the store through the glass.

No lights. No sign of movement. Nothing. Just still darkness.

She tries the door knob. *It's open.*

INT. GAS STATION - NIGHT

Patricia treads with caution. She goes behind the counter, then tiptoes toward the office door.

Light sips from beneath the door. She puts her ear to the door. She hears nothing. She opens the door.

The light floods out revealing --

-- THE SILHOUETTE OF MAN standing between the aisles.

Patricia steps into the office.

INT. OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

She finds Ray, naked, bruised, tied to a chair unconscious. Wounds stripe his body like grilling lines on a steak.

PATRICIA
(whispering)
Oh my God.

She checks his neck for a pulse.

She snatches the handset off the office phone. No dial tone.

She pulls out her cellphone. No signal.

PATRICIA
(mouths)
Fuck.

She turns back toward the door. She steps back keeping the wall to her back and the gun up and steady. She slaps Ray gently again and again. Then Harder. Harder still.

Ray snaps out of it with a gasp.

RAY
Pat--

She puts her finger to his lips.

PATRICIA
(Whispers into his ear)
Keep it down. I called 911 before I came here. They're already on their way... I hope so. I'm so sorry.

She kisses his cheek. Her tears flow free.

RAY
(struggling to speak)
He didn't find her. Please--
(crying)
-- get her out of here.

PATRICIA
Where is she?

RAY
I -- I don't know.

PATRICIA
Think, Ray. Think. Where would she
hide?

Patricia approaches the door. Gun still up and ready. She
takes a look outside into the store.

INT. THE STORE - CONTINUOUS

Still inside the office, Patricia takes another step toward
the door.

Outside, right next to the frame, THE MAN stands with his
back to the wall. He raises the hatchet.

She takes another step. Her gun is an inch out of the door.

THE MAN's grasp tightens around the hatchet.

RAY (O.S.)
I think I know where she is.

INT. OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Patricia moves back to Ray.

PATRICIA
Where?

INT. NANCY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Behind the closet door.

Behind the tiny hanging clothes.

Behind the loose board.

On the floor Nancy curls up.

NANCY
(low voice)
Seven times seven. Forty-nine.
Seven times eight. Fifty-six.

INT. OFFICE - NIGHT

Patricia puts her arms around Ray to help him up.

PATRICIA
Get out of here. Go to my car.

RAY
I can't walk. He cut my tendons.

PATRICIA
Jesus Christ.

RAY
Forget about me. Just get her out
of here.

Patricia's eyes dart left and right, the gears in her head
whirling.

PATRICIA
Got a barrow?

INT. HIDING PLACE - NANCY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Nancy wipes her tears, still curled in the corner.

She hears the floorboards of her bedroom outside CREAKING.
Footsteps. They get closer. Closer still.

Has the loose board just moved?

EXT. GAS STATION - NIGHT

Ray sits inside the wheelbarrow brandishing the gun left and
right. Patricia pushes it as fast as she can.

She skids to a stop next to her Camry.

RAY
You shouldn't have wasted time on
me. He's gonna get her.

She hoists him up, opens the car door, and puts him inside.

PATRICIA
It's a good hiding place. He won't
find her.

RAY
You don't know that.

She clasps his face and looks him in the eye.

PATRICIA
I'm gonna save you both. It was my
fault. I'm gonna fix it.

INT. THE STAIRS - NIGHT

Careful with her movements, the aim of her gun, even her
breaths, Patricia climbs up.

INT. NANCY'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

She steps in. A gust of wind blows through the open window.

Barely balancing on the window-sill --

-- Nancy, unconscious, lies on her side.

Patricia abandons caution and dashes toward her.

Like a genie out of a bottle, THE MAN stands up from behind the bed and clotheslines Patricia, which knocks her down hard, and sends the gun flying out of the window.

He pins her hips between his knees, then punches her hard.

PATRICIA

She's--
(punched)
gonna--
(punched)
fall.

A chilling wind blows. Nancy shivers. She loses balance.

Patricia goes limp. THE MAN pulls the hatchet out of his belt. Patricia barely draws a breath. With both hands, he holds the hatchet up, readying for the final blow.

With her teary, half-shut eye, Patricia watches Nancy's body sliding slowly to the outside. With that, the flames of madness in Patricia's eyes roar to life.

PATRICIA

GET OFF ME!

Like lightning, she bolts upright, clocking THE MAN with a headbutt that sounds like thunder. He drops to the side like an unhinged door.

Patricia gets up on her feet. Shuffles toward the window.

Nancy falls out of the window.

Patricia grabs her by the shirt. She pulls her up and back inside. They both fall to the floor.

THE MAN stirs, regaining conscious.

Patricia looks left and right. Searches for any object to hit him with, but finds nothing except stuffed animals and toys.

With tremendous effort, Patricia pulls herself up. She can barely stand. She can't outrun him.

THE MAN stands up, blocking her way out.

A tiny hand clasps Patricia's. Nancy is awake. With no better option, Patricia grabs Nancy and -- *jumps out the window.*

EXT. THE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

CRACK!

Patricia screams in agony. She broke something.

INT/EXT. CAMRY - NIGHT

Ray hears the scream, gets out of the car. He collapses. His legs can't carry his weight. He punches the ground.

RAY

FUCK!

EXT. GAS STATION - NIGHT

Still in a heap on the ground, Patricia lets go of Nancy, then pulls the car keys out of her pocket.

PATRICIA

Take it to your father. He's in the car over there. Run.

THE MAN comes from behind the building. He pauses to make up his mind whether to go after Patricia or Nancy.

PATRICIA

RUN!

Nancy runs a good couple yards, then stops.

PATRICIA

Wha-- what are you doing? Nancy don't stop.

THE MAN walks toward Nancy. Nancy runs again.

PATRICIA

I'm here, you cocksucker. LEAVE HER ALONE!

Nancy stops again. Turns back and faces Patricia.

Patricia motions at her to go. Screams at her to go.

Only a dozen yards separate THE MAN from Nancy.

Nancy runs back toward Patricia. Patricia shakes her head.

But when Nancy draws back her leg mid-sprint, Patricia notices the gun at Nancy's feet.

She KICKS it over toward Patricia. THE MAN stops.
Patricia picks up the gun. THE MAN cocks his hatchet.
A GUNSHOT interrupts his swing and shatters his shoulder.
Patricia's lips quiver in anger. She steadies the gun.

PATRICIA
You hitched the wrong ride,
motherfucker.

She blows half of his head off.

EXT. GAS STATION - NIGHT

Ray stops crawling when he hears the gunshots. Dreadful
silence. Desperation twists his face, then --

PATRICIA (O.S.)
Ray, we're okay! I killed the son
of a bitch! It's over now, Ray.

Ray drops his head to the ground in relief. He sobs.

FADE TO BLACK.

A while after the credit starts rolling.

PATRICIA (V.O.)
What's taking them so long?

RAY (V.O.)
They won't take any longer.

PATRICIA (V.O.)
Ray... I know this is a weird
moment for me to say this, but I
liked what I saw, if you know what
I mean.

RAY (V.O.)
I'm gonna pretend I didn't hear
that. It's the endorphins. You're
high.

PATRICIA (V.O.)
Ray... you know when I was taking
you to the car... I almost mistook
your thing for the barrow handle.

A moment of silence, then they both burst out laughing.

PATRICIA (V.O.)
Shit. You're right. I'm high.

THE END