

TROUBLE IN STORE

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EXT. BOOK STORE - DAY

MICHAEL WOOD, late 20s, steps out of the bookstore, locks the door behind him. He quickly reads through something written on a piece of paper he's holding, folds it carefully, puts it in his inside jacket pocket.

EXT. GROCERY STORE - DAY

Michael peers through the store window. He sees KRISTI CONNOLLY (also late 20s) serving behind the counter. He wipes his sweaty palms on his pants, pulls the door open and steps inside.

INT. GROCERY STORE, ENTRANCE - DAY

Michael stands inside the doorway. He nervously fiddles with his inside jacket pocket.

He draws in a long breath, then walks towards the counter, towards Kristi.

MARGE BRACKLEY, 50s, steps in front of the counter, a basket full of groceries to ring up. Michael turns away, stride and confidence broken. Marge notices him, watches him cautiously.

MARGE
(to Kristi)
Is he okay?

KRISTI
That's just Michael. He's in here
all the time.

MARGE
Three stores were robbed in this
neighbourhood in the past two
weeks.

KRISTI
He's fine.

Nevertheless, Marge continues watching Michael out of the corner of her eye.

INT. GROCERY STORE, PHARMACEUTICAL AISLE - DAY

Michael stands where he can watch Kristi dealing with Marge. He alternates between checking his jacket pocket and fiddling with items on display, not really looking at what he's doing.

He takes the piece of paper from his pocket, looks it over again.

KRISTI

You need some help, Michael?

Michael jumps, turns -- Kristi is right beside him. He looks down and realises he's holding a pack of adult incontinence diapers. He quickly stuffs them back on the shelf.

MICHAEL

I'm fine, thanks. Listen, Kristi,
can I -

Marge coughs conspicuously.

KRISTI

Hold that thought.

Marge looks suspiciously at Michael as Kristi heads back to the counter to finish serving her.

MARGE

Is he okay?

Michael turns away, heads towards the shop entrance.

INT. GROCERY STORE, ENTRANCE - DAY

Michael flicks through a magazine. He glances up occasionally, sees Kristi and Marge look his way from time to time, say something quietly between themselves.

He takes out his piece of paper, puts it inside a magazine, looks at it again as though he's reading the magazine.

Marge finally walks towards the door. She looks Michael over as she passes him.

Michael moves towards Kristi.

The door flies open, nearly smacks Marge in the face.

JOHN STOLL strides in, oblivious to the near-wounding. He heads straight towards the counter. Stops when he sees Kristi.

JOHN

I thought you weren't working
today.

Marge and Michael both turn their attention fully to John, Marge forgetting she was leaving, Michael forgetting he was walking.

KRISTI

Bill called in sick.

JOHN

Christ.

KRISTI

Good to see you too.

JOHN

That's not what I meant, babe.

He heads behind the counter, towards the till.

KRISTI

Hey!

MARGE

(moving back towards the
counter)

Young man, you can't do that!

John ignores her. He opens the till, pulls out some notes.

KRISTI

What are you doing?

JOHN

I'm short.

KRISTI

So?

JOHN

So I'll pay it back when I can.

He grabs a pack of cigarettes from behind the counter, opens it and lights up.

MICHAEL

You -- you can't smoke in here.

Everyone stops and looks at him. He's moved closer to the counter since they last looked.

JOHN

What'd you say?

MICHAEL

You can't -- it's not --

JOHN

(to Kristi)

Is he okay?

MICHAEL

I can't --

Sweat pours from Michael's brow. He stammers, stumbles.

John's hand travels suspiciously around to the back of his pants --

Michael nervously puts a hand in his inside jacket pocket --

MARGE
He's got a gun!

John turns to Marge --

She's pointing a chubby, accusatory finger at Michael -- John grins --

Michael sees the finger aimed at him rather than John --

MICHAEL
What? No -- !

John grabs Kristi, pulls her with him around a corner. Once they're on the floor together, John holds her in front of him, hides away behind her back. Marge cowers behind her shopping bags.

MARGE
Don't shoot - please!

Michael backs away from them all. His back hits the shop door. He tries to get out without looking, can't find the handle.

The door BASHES against him as another CUSTOMER tries to get in.

JOHN
You should probably lock that.

Michael reaches around, locks the door. He slumps to the floor in front of it. After a moment, the Customer stops trying.

Michael turns the "OPEN" sign to read "CLOSED".

He wipes the sweat from his forehead, puts his head in his hands and rocks back and forth.

JOHN (CONT'D)
So what's the plan, hotshot?

Michael continues to rock, not responding. Doesn't even look up.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Only Kristi and me have plans for tonight. If you know what I mean.

KRISTI
What is wrong with you?

JOHN
(to Michael)
Well? What're you gonna do?

Michael finally looks up.

INT. GROCERY STORE, STORE ROOM - EVENING

Everyone is sat on the floor in the store room. There isn't much space to move.

Michael sits by the door, blocking it, hand still in his inside pocket.

JOHN

This is your plan? To sit somewhere different?

MICHAEL

I need to think.

JOHN

Probably should have done that before you took us hostage.

KRISTI

(whispers to John)

We need to call the police.

JOHN

How are you going to do that, when he's got a gun?

They look towards Michael, who looks a state.

INT. GROCERY STORE, STORE ROOM - EVENING

Everyone looks very warm and uncomfortable, loosened clothing and red faces.

Marge takes a handkerchief out of her purse, wipes sweat from her forehead. Kristi looks at her, concerned.

KRISTI

She needs water, Michael. We all do.

Michael eventually nods his head in agreement. Kristi climbs to her feet.

Michael moves so Kristi can get to the door. She puts a hand on the handle --

JOHN

Wait, who's in charge here?

Michael looks at him, confused for a moment, then realises --

MICHAEL

I am.

JOHN

Well, take charge, then.

MICHAEL
(to Kristi)
I'll go.

Michael stands up, exits the store room. Kristi looks at John questioningly. He winks at her.

INT. GROCERY STORE, DRINKS AISLE - EVENING

Michael browses the shelves, full of drinks. He picks up a large bottle of water. Looks at the price - \$1.95.

He fishes in his pocket for change, counts what he's got.

Puts back the large bottle of water, picks up a smaller one.

THWACK!

The bottle and loose change spill everywhere as Michael tumbles to the ground.

John stands behind him, wielding a frozen chicken.

INT. GROCERY STORE, FREEZER - EVENING

Through frosted glass, Kristi, John and Marge can be seen looking towards the freezer. Marge is sitting on the floor, head in her hands.

Michael's hand reaches out, wipes condensation from the door, making the aisle more visible. John grins. Kristi looks relieved.

Michael's hand bangs on the door.

INT. GROCERY STORE, FROZEN AISLE - CONTINUOUS

Michael is trapped in the freezer, with the door closed. The contents of the freezer scattered on the floor of the aisle, melting, a pool of water forming on the floor.

MARGE
I can't deal with this.

Marge gets up, walks away.

JOHN
Where are you going?

MARGE
The restroom, if it's all the same
to you.

John starts to protest.

KRISTI

Let her go.

Kristi moves towards the freezer, but John grabs her, pulls her away. She slips in the water, falls, bashes her forehead on a counter top leaving a gash.

MICHAEL

Are you okay?

JOHN

She's fine.

MICHAEL

She's bleeding.

JOHN

That's not your concern.

Kristi gently prods her forehead, inspects the blood on her fingers.

JOHN (CONT'D)

(to Kristi)

Go and get cleaned up.

John watches Kristi walk away.

JOHN (CONT'D)

(calling after her)

Check what's her name's still in there.

Once Kristi is out of sight, John moves up close to the freezer.

He pulls a gun from his pants. Shows it to Michael.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Not so tough without your piece, are you?

MICHAEL

What? That's not... Let me out!

JOHN

Now she's gone, maybe you could explain something to me.

MICHAEL

What?

JOHN

This.

He slams a sheet of paper against the door to the fridge. The first line is clearly visible: "DEAR KRISTI".

Michael shrinks away from the door.

INT. GROCERY STORE, BATHROOM - EVENING

Kristi walks in to the bathroom. She knocks on the door of a closed stall.

KRISTI
Everything okay?

MARGE (O.C.)
Oh, sure. Wonderful.

INT. GROCERY STORE, FROZEN AISLE - EVENING

John pulls open the freezer door. Michael shrinks back as far as he can.

JOHN
You're looking kind of cold.

He reaches in and grabs Michael.

INT. GROCERY STORE, BATHROOM - EVENING

Kristi looks in the bathroom mirror, wipes tears from her eyes and straightens her hair. Marge is also visible in the mirror, standing to the side.

Kristi picks up her cell phone from beside a sink and puts it in her pocket.

One last look in the mirror.

KRISTI
You ready?

Marge nods her head, yes.

INT. GROCERY STORE, FROZEN AISLE - EVENING

Kristi and Marge walk to the frozen aisle. The contents of the freezer are still on the floor, the door to the freezer is open, but no one is there.

A loud choking sound attracts their attention...

INT. GROCERY STORE, CONDIMENTS AISLE - CONTINUOUS

Kristi and Marge heads towards the sound.

Michael is on the floor, John standing over him, pouring hot chilli sauce into his mouth.

KRISTI
What are you doing?

JOHN
Defrosting him.

KRISTI
You're choking him.

JOHN
He's fine. He's got something he
needs to tell you.

KRISTI
What are you talking about?

JOHN
Little Mikey has written you a
letter.

John helps Michael sit up a little, so he's more upright.
Michael wipes hot sauce from his face as John holds the note
in front of him.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Read it to her, Mikey. Be a man.
Grow a pair.

Michael shakes his head, no.

Kristi tries to catch his eye, but Michael can't even look
directly at her.

JOHN (CONT'D)
No? I'll do it, then.

As John pauses dramatically, clears his throat like a stage
actor, Kristi notices a gun propped on a counter.

She slowly edges towards it.

JOHN (CONT'D)
(reading)
Dear Kristi, sorry to do this in a
note, but whenever I try to talk to
you directly, the words come out
all wrong.
(pours more hot sauce in
Michael's mouth)
Poor little Mikey.
(continues reading)
I wanted to let you know that
you're the most beautiful person
I've ever met, and I come in to
your store every single day just to
see you. Just seeing your resp -
resp --

MICHAEL

Resplendent. It means dazzling.

JOHN

I know what it means.
 (pours more sauce,
 continues reading)
 Just seeing your... smile helps
 make my day worth living through.

John turns to look at Kristi, who is a few inches closer to the gun.

JOHN (CONT'D)

(to Kristi)
 Smile, then, babe.

She smiles very weakly.

JOHN (CONT'D)

(to Michael)
That gets you through your day? How
 about this for a smile?

He squirts hot sauce across Michael's mouth, creating a chilli sauce smile.

KRISTI

Enough!

John turns back to Kristi. She stands pointing the gun at him.

JOHN

Careful with that.

KRISTI

Why did you bring a gun with you to the store?

JOHN

That's not my gun. It was Michael who took us hostage, remember?

KRISTI

I never saw Michael with a gun.
 (turning to Marge)
 Did you?

MARGE

I don't know -- I thought --

JOHN

(to Marge)
You're the one who said he had a gun.

MARGE

Everything happened so fast. I was confused.

KRISTI

I know this is your gun, John. Why did you have it with you?

SIRENS sound from outside. Blue and red LIGHTS flood the shop through the windows.

John heads towards the entrance.

INT. GROCERY STORE, ENTRANCE - MOMENTS LATER

John peers through a window by the entrance, standing back so he can't be seen.

There are several police cars outside. Armed POLICE OFFICERS crouched behind their open car doors, guns pointed towards the store.

SERGEANT COLE hails them with a loudspeaker.

SERGEANT COLE

This is the police. Exit the building slowly and with your hands in the air.

JOHN

Shit.

INT. GROCERY STORE, CONDIMENTS AISLE - MOMENTS LATER

John rejoins the others.

JOHN

Well, this is it. Looks like you're going down. Time to be a man and face the consequences of your actions.

KRISTI

You were annoyed I was here.

JOHN

What are you talking about?

KRISTI

You didn't want me to be here. You were planning something.

JOHN

Babe. There are, like, a hundred cops outside.

Kristi tries to hand John the gun.

KRISTI

Take it.

JOHN

Whoa, whoa! That's not mine. The cops can't see me with that.

KRISTI

Enough, John. I know it's yours. Just take it.

JOHN

No way.

MICHAEL

I'll take it.

They both turn towards Michael as he rises unsteadily to his feet.

KRISTI

Michael --

MICHAEL

This is all my fault anyway. I'll take the gun.

KRISTI

None of this is your fault.

MICHAEL

I'm --
(looks pointedly at John)
Being a man.

Kristi reluctantly hands the gun to Michael.

KRISTI

I'm sorry.

Michael nods his head; he knows. He looks at her for a moment, finally able to properly make eye contact.

SERGEANT COLE (O.S.)

I repeat: exit the building slowly
and with your hands in the air.

JOHN

Let's move.

Michael nods his head again. He helps Marge to her feet.

INT. GROCERY STORE, ENTRANCE - MOMENTS LATER

The group are by the door. John is about to open the door. Michael puts a hand on the door, stops him.

MICHAEL

Wait.

He ushers John away from the door.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Ladies first.

Michael unlocks the door, holds it open. Marge and Kristi exit the store.

EXT. GROCERY STORE - CONTINUOUS

Marge and Kristi walk out of the store, hands held high. Two POLICE OFFICERS move quickly towards them, march them away from the building.

INT. GROCERY STORE, ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

John starts moving out of the store.

MICHAEL

Wait.

JOHN

What now?

Behind his back, Michael rubs down the gun with his sleeve, wiping it clean.

MICHAEL

I just need to tell you something.

EXT. GROCERY STORE - CONTINUOUS

Marge and Kristi stand with the Police Officers. They look towards the store. In the doorway, they see Michael and John standing close together.

Michael leans in towards John, whispers something in his ear.

John's expression changes to one of rage. He snatches the gun from Michael.

Michael runs from the doorway as John lifts the gun towards him.

John fires.

Michael falls to the ground.

A POLICE OFFICER fires at John, who also falls down.

Officers rush to John, knock the gun away from him. An Officer turns him over, nods towards Sergeant Cole. They handcuff John, carefully pull him to his feet.

Kristi breaks free from the officers holding on to her, and runs over to Michael.

He pulls himself up, lifts his top. He's just been grazed in the side.

SERGEANT COLE

Is he okay?

Kristi smiles, nods her head.

INT. AMBULANCE - NIGHT

Michael sits in the back of an ambulance, the doors wide open. He's wrapped in a blanket.

Kristi, also wrapped in a blanket, comes over and hops on to the back of the ambulance.

KRISTI

You were lucky.

MICHAEL

I know.

KRISTI

What did you say to him?

MICHAEL

What do you mean?

KRISTI

Before John shot you. You said something to him.

MICHAEL

It doesn't matter.

He looks away, but Kristi takes hold of his chin, makes him look at her again.

KRISTI

It matters to me.

MICHAEL

I told him... I said that whatever happens tonight, he can never stop me from loving you.

They look at each other for a long moment.

Eventually Kristi smiles slightly.

She slips her hand in to Michael's and leans her head on his shoulder.