

HIT RATE

by

Dustin Chandler

dl_chandler94@yahoo.com
(828) 446-8164

INT. MICHAEL'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

A dank, decrepid bedroom, with bullet holes and obvious wear and tear in the walls, as well as an aggressively leaking ceiling. The SOUNDS of rushing wind and debris hitting the windows howl throughout the room.

A bony, slender Hmong teenager stands at the front of a broken wall and digs through a chest of drawers: MICHAEL VU (19), in a wife beater and torn, baggy jeans.

He pulls out a thin wad of cash. Nothing but one dollar bills.

A small, soft voice calls out to him.

MINDY (IN HMONG)
Michael?

Michael spins around to see MINDY VU (7), also Hmong and wearing obvious hand-me-downs - from Michael, no less.

MINDY (IN HMONG) (CONT'D)
I'm hungry.

Michael looks at the dollars in his hands, then back to Mindy. A slight disappointment sets in.

MICHAEL (IN HMONG)
I know.

A thought hits him. He kneels to her level.

MICHAEL (IN HMONG) (CONT'D)
Let's go to the store. I'll get you something there.

MINDY (IN HMONG)
But it's scary outside.

MICHAEL (IN HMONG)
It'll be fine, I promise. I'll be right here with you.

He holds out his pinky, as Mindy grabs it with her own. She smiles and runs off.

Michael makes sure she's gone before spinning back around to the drawers.

EXT. GRAB 'N NAB GAS STATION - NIGHT

Michael, now layered in a skull cap and heavy winter coat, marches through the strong winds and scattered rainfall with Mindy, making their way up to the front of the gas station.

Cars swerve and pass by at a furious pace.

At first sight, the gas station appears a few decades old, with two rusted gas pumps available - both of which hold crudely drawn signs that read "OUT OF ORDER".

A number of customers scurry out of the store, covering their heads with newspapers and trying to outrun the current rainfall.

Inside the store, MARTY (56), heavysset and black in a work uniform, hangs a "CLOSED" sign on the glass door.

Michael and Mindy approach the door, shielding their eyes from the ensuing storm.

MICHAEL

(to Marty)

Hey! You guys still open?

Marty leans his ear in closer to hear.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

(louder)

You still open?

MARTY

We're closin' up.

MICHAEL

But it's only 9:30.

Marty cracks the door open, still keeping his distance.

MARTY

Look around ya, kid. They're calling for somethin' fierce.

MICHAEL

Please - let me grab a few things.
They're for my sister.

Marty eyes both Michael and Mindy up and down. His eyes draw to the bagginess of Michael's jeans.

He nonetheless relents.

MARTY

Make it quick.

Michael rushes himself and Mindy inside. Marty, shaking his head, closes the door and twists the inside lock.

INSIDE THE STORE,

Marty walks behind the counter and fidgets with a radio. Nothing but STATIC. He grunts and gives it a few knocks.

A WEATHER REPORTER's voice bleeds in and out, before Marty finally gives up.

MARTY

New Age piece of shit.

Michael browses through the aisles, aimlessly picking at items. Mindy tags along, staring at assorted candies.

In the corner of the store, a YOUNG CUSTOMER, late teens in torn, baggy jeans and a sleeveless t-shirt, tries to hide behind a store rack, stuffing pastries in his pocket.

He turns his head and a pack of cigarettes flies towards him, hitting him in the face.

The young customer reacts, grabbing at his eye before another one hits him again.

MARTY (CONT'D)

Hey, boy! This ain't no soup kitchen - drop 'em!

Marty continues to throw cigarette packs at the young customer, before he finally empties his pockets.

YOUNG CUSTOMER

Alright, alright, I'm goin' - damn!

The young customer flees the store, as Marty simmers down, calling out in the young customer's direction.

MARTY

I just restocked on Wednesday, you little bastard!

Michael watches all of this and grows weary. Hesitant.

Mindy approaches him with a small, cheap toy.

MINDY

Michael, can you buy this?

It takes a few seconds before Michael finally recognizes her request.

MICHAEL
What? Oh, yeah.

He grabs the toy from Mindy.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
(looks around)
Um, listen. I need you to head home
right now.

MINDY
Why?

MICHAEL
I need - just do it, okay? I'll be
back soon.

MINDY
But it's cold, and we don't have an
umbrella--

MICHAEL
(explodes)
Mindy, just go! I'll be home later!

A frightened Mindy, on the verge of tears, stares at Michael as he calms down.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
(softly)
Please...

Mindy runs out of the store and into the thrashing rain.

MARTY
It's too dangerous for her to be
out there.

MICHAEL
Just ring me up, please.

Marty sighs. Slightly pissed, he remains professional and rings up Michael's items.

With each item, Michael grows increasingly nervous. His fingers scratch at his pockets.

Finally, Marty gives a total.

MARTY
\$6.27.

Michael doesn't respond.

MARTY (CONT'D)

\$6.27.

Again, no response. Michael reaches behind his back and digs his fingers underneath his shirt.

MARTY (CONT'D)

(firmer)

Hey boy, you hear me? I said it's
\$6.27.

Michael can't take it. He swings his arm around and reveals a silver pistol - he points it sideways.

MICHAEL

(screaming)

Hands up, motherfucker!

Marty immediately throws his hands up. This surprises Michael, who hides it under a faux confident swagger.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

I don't wanna hurt you, but I need
this money. So, just empty the
register and I'll be outta here.

Marty slowly brings his hands down to the register. He takes his time in taking out the money, practically dollar by dollar.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Pick up the speed, old man. I ain't
got time for--

He barely finishes his sentence, before the lights begin to flicker throughout the store. The MUSIC falters in an out as well.

After a few seconds, the room finally turns pitch black, while the music shuts off completely. Michael freezes. The overwhelming darkness and silence around him alerts him.

Marty sees an opportunity. He quietly tiptoes away from the Michael, slowly but surely keeping track of his footsteps.

As Michael looks around the store, trying to get an overall sense of where he's standing, Marty has finally made it out of Michael's view, several feet from the door.

He almost makes it. The earlier sounds of RUSHING WIND and SCATTERED DEBRIS return, in full blast, bleeding out the silence into something almost indeterminate.

Within an instant, the glass in the door shatters, sending a flurry of shards in Marty's direction.

Michael ducks out of the way, while Marty, trying to shield himself with his arm, is nonetheless attacked with several shards of glass, most of which cover his arm and side.

He falls to the ground, while the gushing wind sends mass amounts of leaves, tree branches and debris inside. Store racks topple over. Loose food products and dollars from the register flying throughout. Mass chaos.

Michael manages to bring himself back up, attempting to resist the destructive nature around him. He looks around the store and sees the rest room. He immediately runs

INSIDE

and shuts the door.

Michael braces against the door, trying his hardest to catch his breath. The ensuing wind and debris slap against the back of the door, almost trying to break through.

He sits down at a nearby toilet. Inhale. Exhale.

A thought suddenly hits him.

He cracks open the door and sees Marty, still laying seemingly lifeless near the store entrance, in the distance.

He closes the door again and sits back down.

He ponders his thoughts, weighing the options to himself.

A few seconds pass before, almost regrettably, he stuffs his pistol away back inside his jeans and rushes back

INSIDE THE STORE.

Michael resists against the wind once again, walking his way to Marty. He grabs Marty, bloodied and covered in glass, up under his arms and proceeds to drag him back

INSIDE THE BATHROOM.

Michael shuts the door. He leans Marty's body up against an adjacent wall and sits back down on the toilet.

He covers his face in his hands, exhausted by the ensuing chaos. He leans his head back and closes his eyes, going to rest.

The harsh winds continue outside the door, yet there's a sense of peace inside, until--

MARTY
(frail)
Pull them out...

Michael snaps his eyes open, startled by the sudden outburst. He looks around to see that it came from Marty, barely able to open his eyes.

MARTY (CONT'D)
Here...in my arm...pull them out.

He staggeringly shows his arm to Michael, revealing several lacerations and shards of glass still presently deep within.

Michael pauses for a second, then finally leans in towards Marty, edging his fingers closer to the arm.

He tugs at one of the larger shards, causing Marty to scream in anguish.

He immediately pulls back, unsure of what to do. He takes a moment to psyche himself up and grabs at the same shard of glass.

Marty once again screams, getting increasingly louder before Michael finally stops.

MICHAEL
I can't do it - you're in too much
pain.

Marty scoffs at Michael, and grabs at the shard. He lets out one final scream and yanks it out. He holds it up, admiring its size, then drops it on the floor.

He proceeds to pick out the more smaller shards of glass, then reaches across to where Michael is sitting and grabs a strand of toilet paper.

He starts to wrap it around his profusely bleeding arm.

Michael looks around the bathroom, not quite sure what to say. He finally responds with--

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
Alright. Now that you're good and
all, I'm gonna split.

MARTY

I don't think so.

MICHAEL

What? What do you mean?

MARTY

Look outside, boy. This is about as safe as you're gonna get.

MICHAEL

Fuck that, I'll take my chances.

He stands up and opens the door. A massive gust of wind knocks the door back, as a few bags of food and broken glass drift in.

Michael quickly slams the door shut, holding it tight for a few seconds, making sure it's completely shut.

Michael sits back, obviously disappointed. He looks around the rest room and casually grabs a bags of chips off the floor.

He opens it up and digs inside, as Marty looks at him.

MARTY

You gonna pay for that?

Michael keeps eye contact with Marty and chomps down on a chip. He digs in the bag for another before Marty swipes the bag out of his hand.

MICHAEL

What the hell? I was hungry.

MARTY

I don't care. My store, my food.

MICHAEL

Are you really tellin' me this shit at a time like this?

A pause.

MARTY

Yes. Yes I am.

MICHAEL

Well, what's to stop me from...
(looking for a response)
Putting a bullet in your head?

MARTY

I doubt it. Any punk that holds a gun like you can't hit for shit.

Michael looks at Marty, a bit embarrassed.

MICHAEL

(sheepish)

What's wrong with how I hold my gun?

MARTY

I've been robbed more times than you think, kid, and not one of them did that sideways shit.

MICHAEL

It works.

MARTY

Whatever.

Michael stands up, getting increasingly upset as he speaks.

MICHAEL

Look, I don't have to take this. Which one of us is bleeding on the floor right now?

MARTY

The only reason I'm here is cause you saved me, isn't that right?

Michael pauses.

MARTY (CONT'D)

Here's a question for you: why the fuck would you rob a store knowin' damn well your sister's at home durin' a storm?

MICHAEL

What, you expect me to rob the place with her in it? That's not--

MARTY

Right? It's not right?

MICHAEL

The point is, I'm supportin' her. I'm providin' for her.

MARTY

Bullshit.

MICHAEL

What?

MARTY

Throwin' a gun in my face ain't supportin' her. You wanna support her, you do it like a man. You pay the bills and put clothes on her back, not run around like "thug life" over here.

Michael pauses, barely able to respond.

MICHAEL

It ain't like that.

MARTY

It sure as shit sounds like it to me.

Michael waves it off and sits back.

MARTY (CONT'D)

Lemme ask you - did you come here for her or the money?

Michael doesn't respond. He sits quietly, trapped in his own thoughts.

Marty starts to cough, getting louder and louder with each one, as he reaches into his pocket and pulls out a flask.

He unscrews the lid and holds it to his mouth before noticing a parched Michael staring back.

He lowers it and offers it to Michael.

Michael looks at the flask, unsure, yet nonetheless snatches it.

MICHAEL

Aren't you supposed to ask me if I'm 21?

MARTY

I'm bleeding and covered in glass, son. At this point, I could give a fuck.

Michael chuckles. He holds the flask in the air like a refined wine glass.

MICHAEL

Here's to "not giving a fuck".

He takes a swig, then hands the flask back to Marty.

Humored, Marty holds the flask in the air, just like Michael.

He takes a hard swig. Halfway through, he coughs again, more aggressively than previously.

Michael leans in to assist him, yet Marty waves him off, trying to cover his coughs with his hand.

Michael looks down at Marty's stomach and notices a fresh blood stain, growing larger and thicker by the second.

He jumps off the toilet to kneel at Marty's level and inspects the blood stain. He's unsure of the cause until he looks closer: a thick shard of glass, three inches wide and barely sticking out.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Oh, shit.

Marty stops coughing and looks at Michael.

MARTY

What? What is it?

Michael, obviously panicked, tries to maintain composure.

MICHAEL

Nothing. It's fine.

He looks at the shard of glass, fingers at the ready. Too deep.

Marty's eyes drop to his stomach, then back up to Michael with a confident, understanding look.

Michael catches on to this. He doesn't know how to react.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

What do we do?

Marty coughs again, with spurts of blood coming out. He manages to keep it all in. His body gets increasingly frail as he speaks.

MARTY

I want you to go out there and pick up every dollar you can find. Tens, twenties, even singles if you can.

Michael is perplexed.

MICHAEL

What?

MARTY

(coughs)

Use every bit of it on that girl,
and not a penny on yourself. You
got that?

Michael nods, as his eyes water.

Marty's coughs turn to wheezing as he can barely let in a breathe of air. Blood continues to come out with every cough and wheeze, as the blood stain on his stomach soaks in more.

His body finally goes limp and his head falls.

Lifeless.

Tears stream from Michael's eyes, yet he attempts to hold back.

The WIND outside the door simmers, eventually replaced by absolute SILENCE.

Michael takes notice of this. He gives one last look to Marty before he creeps the door open again. Barely even a whisper.

He stands up and cautiously walks

INSIDE THE STORE.

A sullen and defeated Michael walks around the store, taking in the magnitude of the destruction around him.

Not a single store rack sits upright - most of which aren't even sitting at all. Food of all assortments lay everywhere. Freezer doors shattered open, as water and, presumably, beer drips down the side.

A few scattered dollars lay among the rubble. Tens, twenties, and, yes, even ones. Not a massive amount, but still quite a bit.

Michael looks over the dollar bills, then back towards the bathroom. He hesitates for a few seconds before finally grabbing handfuls of dollars and sliding them in his pocket.

He picks up the last dollar and finds Mindy's small toy in the corner. He looks it over before tucking it under his arm.

Michael heads for the destroyed glass door before giving one last look at the bathroom.

He sees Marty's limp, lifeless legs sticking out from the door frame.

He motions as if to walk back to the bathroom, before walking back to the shattered door and walks

OUTSIDE THE STORE.

A distraught Michael walks briskly down the street with his hands tucked tightly inside his pockets. An ambulance drives by behind him. He barely notices.

EXT. MICHAEL'S HOUSE - LATER

Michael walks down the street and makes it to his house, before something causes him to halt in his tracks.

His house appears damaged, with shattered windows and covered in mud, scattered pieces of wood, glass, and branches.

The same ambulance sits in front of his house, with passersby gathering up and trying to peek at the situation.

Michael's jaw drops. He's speechless, as he runs to the front door.

INT. MICHAEL'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Michael runs inside to see the entire room toppled. Bedsheets and night stands scatter the floor.

In the corner, a broken window rests above an overturned mattress, with small pieces of glass dressing the top.

Something catches his eye. He slowly moves closer to the corner and sees, in horror, a small arm protruding from underneath the mattress.

He motions towards it, but keeps his distance, unsure of his next action.

MICHAEL (IN HMONG)

Mindy?

No response.

CUT TO BLACK.