

READY FOR PRIMETIME

By

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DRAFT

INT. APARTMENT. NIGHT.

FADE IN

The 1980's looking digital clock screen reads 5:29AM and quickly changes to 5:30AM. An alarm rings out.

A hand taps the top of the alarm clock and the noise stops. The hand picks up a pair of glasses. A figure stumbles in the darkness towards the bathroom and turns on the light.

The bathroom is cold and unwelcoming, not unlike a morgue under a rough, cold white light. A hand opens the medicine cabinet. A pill bottle sits on the shelf. A hand reaches in and grabs it and pills rattle in the background as a man's reflection is revealed as he closes the mirror-surfaced medicine cabinet door.

In the bathroom, FREDRICK hesitates a moment after catching his reflection in the mirror. He looks down at his phone, open to the stored contact of "THERAPIST" on one hand and a couple of pills in the other. He takes a deep breath and pushes send. It rings as he hold the phone up to his ear.

OPERATOR (V.O.)

Westside psychiatric associates, is this an emergency?

FREDRICK

Hello, answering service? It's Fredrick Hannsen. I need to talk to Dr. Rosenbaum as soon as possible. It's urgent.

Fredrick looks at himself in the mirror nervously as he holds to the tune of a poor man's Kenny G imitation cutting in and out. The poorly made music plays as we examine him. He is in his late fifties, balding, average height, slightly overweight man. He is dressed in a slept-in outfit that had seen better days. It looked like something that barely survived the 70's or early 80's with cream and mustard colors.

OPERATOR (V.O.)

Mr. Hannsen, you're now connected with Dr. Rosenbaum.

DR. ROSENBAUM (V.O.)

Fredrick? Is everything alright?

FREDRICK

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I'm sorry doctor. I know we've discussed off-hour calls. It's just that, it's just... today is the day.

DR. ROSENBAUM (V.O.)
The visitation hearing? I didn't realize it was 6 months already. That's wonderful news Fredrick!

FREDRICK
I'm just so nervous and I'm feeling the anxiety building and I'm concerned that I'll make a mistake or...

DR. ROSENBAUM (V.O.)
Now, now. Listen Fredrick, you have done great work to get to a better place, I wrote you a glowing recommendation for visitation and frankly, I don't take that lightly. You have convinced me that you are ready. Today should be a happy day for you. Are you taking your medication?

FREDRICK
Yes. I've just had a really bad week. Especially the commute to and from work, it gets worse every day. I'm certain it's the paranoia still showing its face but I've just had a really hard time around people.

DR. ROSENBAUM (V.O.)
Look Fredrick, I've got to let you go. Focus on your daughter and how wonderful it will be to share with her again. I can increase your script to a higher dosage of the anti-psychotic if need be. You've come such a long way. You go to that courthouse today and get your daughter back into your life.

FREDRICK
Thank you Doctor, I'm sorry, I lost my nerve for a second. I'll see you at our next appointment. Goodbye.

He lowers his phone, takes off his glasses and proceeds to brush his teeth.

After a lazy attempt at a comb-over, he takes a quick look at

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the watch on his wrist which reads 5:49 am, and proceeds to gather his belongings and head towards the door.

Before he opens it, he hesitates for a moment. He looks at his worn leather shoes, holds his briefcase tight and takes a deep breath. With a renewed determination, he finally opens the door and leaves.

EXT. STREET. DAY.

In a fairly quiet and dormant neighborhood, Fredrick walks head down exactly center on the sidewalk. Intermittently, he lifts his sight to check his surroundings nervously, never slowing or speeding his walk. He finally stops.

Fredrick stands straight, alone at a bus stop.

FREDRICK (V.O.)

I am going to have a good day.
Everything is alright. I'm going to
have a good day.

Sounds of screeching breaks get louder as the bus draws closer. The driver sits in an empty, worn-down, aged bus. The tilted clock hanging on the front of the bus reads 6:02 am. The driver, a mountain of a man, opens the doors and signals Fredrick to get in. A few moments later, he sighs and he runs his right palm down his face in frustration.

BIG SAM

Every-Damn-Morning! Are you coming? Or
am I supposed to sit here staring at
your dumb face all day? Get on with it
Mister Bean!

INT. BUS. DAY.

Fredrick finally climbs on the bus. A driver is a large man in a worn navy blue driver uniform. He wears a crooked nametag that reads "Big Sam" with a happy face sticker on it. Big Sam exhales loudly to ensure Fredrick registers his frustration.

Fredrick finally boards the bus and walks past the driver and reaches the isle of the bus. As the screeching old doors close, Sam drives on. Fredrick seems to be analyzing the seating situation, although most seats are empty. He painstakingly evaluates each seat individually as he mumbles a bit to himself after looking at each one. He's frozen.

The now familiar sounds of the bus' breaks interrupt him as

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it grinds to another stop. People begin boarding the bus. They are piling up behind Fredrick who seems unable to pick a seat.

CHILD #1
Hey asshole, move!

For a moment, Fredrick struggled to identify the source of the insult. And then he saw a small blonde, blue eyed boy like those you would expect to be a in a children's clothing ad. The child displayed a degree of frustration far beyond his years.

CHILD #2
Are you deaf? Get out of the way!

Fredrick sets off in a panicked quest. He can't decide which seat to select but he's already walking and people are following him and taking seats as they go. He finally sits down in a seat right by the bus' rear doors.

FREDRICK (V.O.)
This works, I can get out quickly. I did well. We're alright. Everything is alright. Just don't look at anybody. I'm going to have a good day.

Fredrick raises his sight and realizes all of the passengers now seated, are looking at him. He looks down immediately. After a few minutes, he looks up again and none are looking at him. He looks out the window.

FREDRICK (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Every day. It can't be. You are just nervous. We are ok. Nobody is looking at you. Everything is alright.

Stop after stop, more riders pile in. Fredrick is trying to remain calm and remembers that he's right there close to the exit, so he can get out quickly.

BIG SAM (OVER THE PA)
-Static- Folks, the rear door is broken. You need to exit out the front doors. Thank you kindly!

Terror sets in. Fredrick pulls the stop notification chord and it gives way limply, no sound. It's broken. He feels a jolt in his chest. He looks up towards the front of the bus and it is packed. He recognizes the gas station that is just a few blocks before his stop. He gets up to begin to try and

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cut through the packed, sardine-like bus.

FREDRICK

Excuse me. Excuse- My apologies, I just need to get by... I, I'm going to miss my stop. I just- Excuse me...

A young woman stands close to his seat, leans into him and he nervously pushes her off.

LAURA

Excuse me! Did you just touch me! Are you crazy? Get off me!
(she pushes him back to his seat as he struggles to get up and make his stop)

He eventually reaches the front and tells Sam he needs him to stop. Sam drives 3 blocks before he finally slowed down.

FREDRICK

Driver, with all due respect, I asked for my stop many blocks back, I-

BIG SAM

Yeah, I know. Have a great day Mr. Dahmer.

Fredrick looks down. His right eye twitches ever so slightly. He gets down to the last step of the bus, about to head out to the street in the business district where he works.

Fredrick stands on that last step, clutching his briefcase as the bus driver hurries him to get off. He looks ahead at the bus stop in front of him. On the stop's glossy billboard ad, he catches his reflection. His eyes focus. He's arrived at some sort of realization. He unbuttons his shirt collar, takes off his glasses and puts them in his pocket. He lowers his arms and we see his cell phone open in his hand. He beeps through some menus until he reaches a contact of "THERAPIST". Head lowered to the phone in his hand, he hesitates for a moment. He presses SEND, dials the number but puts the phone back in his pocket.

BIG SAM (CONT'D)

What's the matter, weirdo? Get goin'!

Fredrick turns around and walks back into the bus. He closes the doors behind him. He unflaps his briefcase.

FREDRICK

I knew. You all couldn't let me have
(MORE)

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FREDRICK (CONT'D)

it. I thought maybe I could get this one good day.

As Fredrick looks down and reaches into the briefcase, Sam's eyes open wide. His smirk disappears as he struggles to get a word out.

INT. BUS. DAY.

The clock on the top front of the bus cabin above the windshield reads 6:55 am. The clock starts rolling back counterclockwise. Through the windows of the bus, daylight outside turns to dark and the clock's dials rolling back slows and eventually stops at 4:00am.

INT. BUS. NIGHT. - FLASHBACK

The clock reads 4:00. It's morning and dark again. The bus is parked in a dark and apparently empty warehouse-type structure. Outside of the bus, there is one lit space. There is a make-shift classroom and a number of people are present. People from Fredricks's upcoming bus ride that same day.

BIG SAM

Everybody! Take your seats! Our target, Mr. Hannsen needs to be setup today. We've primed him plenty over the oast few months. (taking a draft and stubbing out the cigarette)Leadership has advised we have an op, that will have at least 13 casualties and they want a lot of press, false flag attention-grabbing event. We need him to be a quick snap, display a little at work and finally trigger him fully downtown. Very public, we need plenty of eyes and media on him. The team taking care of the actual op can work within that time frame.

Sam points towards a chalkboard with the bus route but also various different scenarios along with a timeline loaded with notes and dates. There are numerous pictures of Fredrick going about his day, shopping and even long lens pictures of him through his apartment window.

Sam walks over to one of the seats in the front of the space where a young redhead is sitting. He looks at the young woman and grabs her shoulder.

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LAURA

I know I can get him ready for primetime today. I almost did it the other day. I can lean into him and press him a bit more. I can work him up.

Sam nods with a smile. He sees she's happy to be given a primary role in the operation.

BIG SAM

That's the spirit. Let's crack this nut! Everybody on the bus for drop-offs and we want to stage the route by 5:30am, hustle!

They all board the bus.

INT. BUS. DAY.

The clock on the top front of the bus cabin above the windshield reads 6:55 am again. Terror forms on Sam's face as he reacts in slow motion.

BACK TO PRESENT - MONTAGE

TVs around the world, in bars, homes, and storefronts relay the same news story.

INT. NEW YORK CAFE - DAY

Wait staff gather around a TV screen

REPORTER ON TV
Breaking news...

INT. HOUSTON AIRPORT - DAY

Travelers and flight crew walk past a TV monitor.

REPORTER ON TV
a man opened fire in the New York business district on a city bus...

EXT. A SPORTS BAR PATIO - DAY

Patrons gaze up at the large TV screen on the wall.

REPORTER ON TV

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 killing the driver and passengers...

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

 REPORTER ON TV
 more on this breaking story as details
 emerge...

Dr. Rosenbaum's TV clicks off.

FADE TO BLACK.

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