

TV

Written by

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FADE IN:

INT. BEDROOM - DAWN

The walls are a light shade of blue as the winter sky falls through the cracks in the blinds. The sheetrock rolls and waves top to bottom from old age.

The ceiling once stark white is now a brownish-yellow, countless cigarettes inhaled and exhaled, their smoke drifting upward and dissipating into the pores of the popcorn spray above. The floor is a dark, stained hardwood that bellows with almost every step.

RICK, 34, a younger man with an old man's wrinkles and dark, shaggy hair, quietly tip-toes back and forth in his work boots, grabbing whatever he can from his dresser and shoving it into a large bag that's resting on the floor.

His foot presses into a soft spot and the wood creaks loudly. He sees his wife move underneath the covers and freezes, waiting until she settles again to continue packing.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - NEAR DUSK - WINTER

A worn down pickup truck pulls hastily into the snow covered driveway, slamming on the brakes right before it slides into the garage door. The old suspension bounces left to right with loud creaks, as snow sprays up into the air from under the tires.

Rick stares out the windshield with a blank expression, gripping tightly to the steering wheel until his knuckles turn white. The faded orange glow from the headlights shine in front of him, showcasing the large dent that was already dead center on the painted metal door.

INT. CAB OF TRUCK - NEAR DUSK

Rick slides his hands off the steering wheel as he continues to stare forward. He combs both hands through his crop of oily hair, and holds them on the back of his head, fingers interlaced.

Pushing out an exasperated sigh, he leans forward and stretches his right arm down, reaching underneath the bench seat. He rummages around blindly, the sounds of metal cans hitting one another echo in the small cab.

With a grunt, he pulls his body up using the wheel for support, revealing a half-empty bottle of whiskey gripped tightly.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - DUSK

Rick pulls the handle of the door and throws it open with his forearm, sliding half of his body out - just in time for the it to swing back around and smash his leg.

RICK
Goddamnit! Stupid fuckin' door.

With a less forceful push, Rick slides out of the driver's seat and onto the driveway, kicking the door closed behind him with the bottom of his boot. Swaying, Rick leans on the truck as he stares at the bottle in his hand.

RICK (CONT'D)
It don't matter anyhow.

Unscrewing the cap and letting it fall to the ground, he takes a long swig, swishing the liquor around in his cheeks like mouthwash.

EXT. FRONT PORCH - DUSK

The overhead light casts a harsh shadow over Rick as he fumbles with his keys in one hand. He pushes one into the lock and twists it, but the door doesn't budge.

RICK
Ella! Come let me in! My key ain't workin.

Rick yells Ella's name as he pounds on the glass door. He pauses, taking the last swig of brown liquid and tossing the empty bottle into the bushes nearby.

ELLA
(Muffled)
I'm comin, I'm comin!

ELLA, 32, a teenaged thin woman with dark brown hair and a kitchen towel over her shoulder, slides the chain lock out and turns the deadbolt over with a snap, pulling the thin door open.

She sees a blurry image of Rick through the dirty storm door, twists that lock loose, and cracks it to keep the cold from getting in.

ELLA (CONT'D)
Get on inside, Ricky. It's freezing
out there. Why ain't your key
workin'?

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Ella heads towards the kitchen at the back of the house, as Rick sits hard onto the edge of a recliner. He takes off his coat and unlaces his aged work boots, throwing them both on the floor in front of him. Chunks of mud break from the tread on the soles and scatter across the floor.

Rick rotates his ankles in the air back and forth, each one cracking from soreness. He swipes the remote off of the coffee table and falls back into the soft cushion, flipping up the footrest.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

The faucet runs as Ella rinses a plate, scraping off particles of food with her thumbnail.

ELLA
How was work today, Ricky?

Ella sets the clean plate into the drying rack and reaches for another dirty one, looking out towards the living room through the doorway. It's dimly lit, and she can only see Rick's white socks resting on the coffee table.

ELLA (CONT'D)
What'd you say, Ricky? I couldn't
hear ya with the sink running.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Rick sighs as he presses the power button to the TV, the light flicking on and illuminating the room with a dull, incandescent light.

RICK
I said, why you always askin' me
that, El? It's the same fuckin'
answer I always tell ya. Goddamn.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Ella scrubs a fork with a washcloth.

ELLA

Sorry, Ricky, I can't hear so well with all this water running. Let me finish this real quick and I'll be out there.

Ella washes the remainder of the silverware and places them into the cup of the drying rack, turning off the sink. She grabs a dry towel hanging from the stove and twists it around her hands as she walks towards the door frame, flipping off the light.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Ella sees his coat and shoes laying on the floor as she makes her way into the living room. Bending over, she picks up the dust-covered boots and aged Carhartt.

ELLA

What'd you say a second ago, Ricky?
I couldn't hear.

Rick stares at Ella as she pulls the towel from her shoulder and starts to wipe off the boots.

RICK

You don't have to be doin' that,
Ella.

Rick flips through the channels.

ELLA

It's alright, I was already
standin.

Ella heads to the closet door, and the hinges squeal as she opens it abruptly. A broom that hangs on the backside of the door falls from the loose hook it was on. Rick sits up and glances toward Ella.

RICK

Why'd you go and slam that?

ELLA

I didn't. It was just an accident.

RICK

I'm sure it was, Ella. You been
drinkin or somethin?

Rick's favorite show, a series about a small town man traveling the world with his dog, plays on the TV.

Light flickers in the dim room like a flashlight shining through a window.

ELLA

I'm not doin this with you again.
I'm too tired to do this.

RICK

You best be gettin' some better
sleep then, honey. You ain't doing
much, anyhow. I can't see how
you're always so damn tired all the
time.

Ella begins to fold and unfold the now dirt covered towel in her hands. She glances away from where Rick sits and looks toward the TV, pointing at the screen.

ELLA

This is all you do when you're
home, Ricky. You just sit there and
watch, and I know you're drinkin. I
can always smell it right when you
walk through that door. Here soon,
that entire garage is going to come
down after you slam into it again.

Rick watches the show intently. The man on the screen rests on a hammock as his dog lays on the ground next to him. His duffel bag sits near by; the same color and shape as Rick's packed bag that's in the cab of his truck.

ELLA (CONT'D)

What do you get out of it, anyhow?
It's just a bunch of silly things
that can't be real life for you.
I'm real and I'm standin here.

He turns the volume up two notches from the remote.

RICK

I don't know and I don't give a
damn. I just like it.

ELLA

(Shouting)
Don't you like me anymore?

RICK

Well...I...do...I do.

ELLA

It doesn't seem much like it
anymore.

(MORE)

ELLA (CONT'D)
I wish you could just take the damn
TV back where it came from.

Rick stares at the screen without answering.

ELLA (CONT'D)
Pretty soon you're gonna come home
and it will be plum gone.

Ella's finger shakes as she continues to point at the screen,
her other hand on her hip.

Rick points the remote straight at Ella, as if it were a gun.

RICK
Don't you dare touch that TV, Ella.
Don't you dare.

With the towel still in her hand, Ella walks over to the
power strip behind the set and pulls out the plug. The
flickering light fades out and the room turns orange from the
streetlamp outside.

A car pulls to the stop sign at the intersection near by, and
its headlights flash across the walls inside the living room.

RICK (CONT'D)
I can't see shit in here, Ella.

Rick slams the recliner shut as he stands in the almost dark
room. He tries to step around the coffee table and
accidentally bumps his shin into the corner edge.

RICK (CONT'D)
Goddammnnnnitttttt.

He groans while he limps over to the TV's silhouette,
reaching behind it blindly as he searches for the power cord.
Ella stands nearby and watches his shadowy figure as he
fumbles with the tangled spiral of cords.

He traces his hand from the back of the unit and follows it
down to the strip, plugging it back in with force. He then
reaches over to the side of the TV's plastic shell and
presses the "On" button. Light flickers in the room again.

Holding himself up for a minute with the heavy TV, Rick
finally makes his way back around the table and sits into the
recliner, swooping up the remote and turning the volume up as
loud as it will go.

ELLA
Fuck you, Ricky.

Ella takes fast paced strides towards the unit and the strip again.

RICK

Why can't you just leave me alone?

Ella rips the strip from where it sat on the ground and pulls the plug again. Rick struggles to get out of the recliner quickly, but he finally gets the leg closed.

He steps up onto the table and over the other side, knocking off a glass cup. It shatters across the floor. He extends his arm out to grab Ella and the strip, but she drops it and jumps back just in time.

RICK (CONT'D)

I'm done with your shit, El. Flat out done, you hear me? Don't touch my fuckin' TV again. This is my TV and I paid for it and you didn't pay for goddamn none of it. You can't pay for nothin. You just sit on your ass around here while I work to the bone.

Rick plugs the TV in again and turns it on, making his way slowly to the recliner. His face is flushed with anger as he sits back down. He slides both of his hands down the sides of his face, leaving white streaks behind for a brief moment.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Ella violently rummages through drawers, searching for something. When she reaches the last drawer in the column, she pulls out a medium sized, cast-iron skillet and places it on the counter in front of her.

Her face is bright red as heavy breaths emanate from her chest and mouth. She stares at the empty skillet for a moment before picking it up again.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

With the skillet in hand, Ella comes flying into the room, and heads straight for the flashing TV. Before Rick has time to know what is happening, Ella swings the iron straight into the screen, exploding the curved glass all over the floor and inside the now hollow set.

RICK

(screaming)

What the hell did you just do!

(MORE)

RICK (CONT'D)
You're fucking crazy, Ella. Off
your goddamn rocker.

Ella drops the skillet onto the floor and shakes violently
from adrenaline and fear.

RICK (CONT'D)
If this how you wanna be, El, I'm
outta here. Right now. Bag is
already packed and in the truck.

ELLA
(shaking voice)
You packed a ba...leave then,
Ricky. Fine. Just leave!

Rick heads for the closet, brushing past Ella who stands by
the TV, frozen. He throws open the door and reaches in to
grab his boots. Walking back to the recliner, he sits down
and laces them up quickly.

RICK
See if I ever come back here again.

ELLA
I ain't comin to save your drunk
ass this time, Ricky. Go get in
your truck and drive out on them
snowy roads after all that whiskey,
I don't care anymore. I ain't comin
to find you again. I won't do it.

RICK
See if I care. I ain't goin nowhere
you could find me anyway. I'm
gettin outta here. Far as hell away
from you.

ELLA
You're so full of shit, Ricky. You
ain't gonna make it but a few miles
out of this town and you know it.

You're just too blind all the damn
time to see that you're hurtin me.

Rick stands up and makes his way to the front door without
his coat. He opens the first, and blasts open the storm door,
slamming it back as hard as he could throw it when he gets
outside.

Once it hits the frame, the entire pane of glass cracks and
shatters all across the front porch. Ella starts to cry as
Rick makes his way to his truck.

EXT. CAB OF TRUCK - DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

On his way to the driver's side door, Rick slips and falls backwards on a patch of ice underneath the snow. He lays there for a second and curses into the night sky.

Turning himself over, he pushes up off the cold ground slowly. He leans against the truck, and without brushing the snow off his shirt and pants, he unlocks the door and pulls himself into the seat.

With the key in the ignition, he tries to start the engine, but it won't turn over. He pushes in the gas pedal as he tries to turn the key again, but it still doesn't start. He throws himself back into the seat and screams loudly, punching the wheel as hard as he can over and over.

He grabs hold of the key that is still in the ignition and turns it one more time, the engine firing up and rattling the entire truck.

Slamming his foot onto the brake, he pulls back the shifter into reverse, and presses on the accelerator hard. The tires spin in the snow as the truck moves backwards out of the driveway. Once he hits the semi-cleared street, Rick pulls the shifter and peels out into the pink glow of the streetlights.

INT. CAB OF TRUCK - BACKROADS - NIGHT

The truck accelerates forward at unprecedented speeds. Rick shakes his head back and forth as he starts to cry, and tries to turn on the radio with a slam of his fist. The only thing that plays is static.

His foot doesn't let off the gas as he careens down the road. Not paying attention to what's in front of him, Rick's truck slides on a patch of ice and starts to spin uncontrollably.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

In a split-second, the truck crosses over a shallow ditch and into an opening in the woods, spinning towards a tree, causing the momentum of the vehicle to stop after the short-bed hits it. The rear axle is bent as the truck idles at a stand still.

INT. CAB OF TRUCK - NIGHT

Rick cuts off the engine, resting his head onto the top of the steering wheel, exhausted.

He pushes his body up onto the bench seat and lays on his side, curling his knees into his chest, forgetting to turn off the lights. He starts to croon out an old country song.

RICK

(Short, breaking crooning)
Did you ever see a robin weep when
leaves began to die...

RICK (CONT'D)

...that means he's lost the will to
live.

EXT. WOODS - DAWN

The sun rises over the trees, falling into the clear glass of the truck and onto Rick's face. He opens his eyes slowly, looking towards the cloth lined roof.

Rick pushes himself up and looks out the windshield, seeing the road out in front of him in the distance.

Opening the door, he steps into a few inches of snow. Slowly, he makes his way around to assess the damage. He sees the broken axle wedged against the tree, and all of the sudden begins to vomit, holding himself up with his hand on the truck.

He stands up straight and wipes his mouth, heading back inside the cab and shutting the door.

INT. CAB OF TRUCK - SUNRISE

He unzips his bag and pulls out a jacket, throwing it on as quickly as possible. Reaching into the pocket of his pants, he pulls out his cell phone and stares at it.

Rick scrolls through his contacts and stops at Ella's name, his thumb resting on the call button. He leans forward and rests his forehead on the top of the steering wheel, the phone hanging by his side as he presses the button.

The dial tone starts in and after a few rings, she picks up, as the phone still hangs.

ELLA

(On the phone, muffled)
What do you want?

Rick glances down at the lit up screen.

ELLA (CONT'D)
Hello? Hellooooo?

He snaps the phone shut, and tosses it on the floorboard of the truck. With a swoop, he zips his bag closed again and throws it over his shoulder.

EXT. WOODS - SUNRISE

Rick steps out of the truck with his bag and shuts the door. He glances out towards the horizon, and begins to head back out towards the road. Once he reaches it, he starts to walk towards the outskirts of town, snow falling off of his boots behind him.