

SAMSUNG FRESH FILMS 2007

24 HOUR SERVICE
By
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Based on an Idea
By
Seattle Crew 2007

24 HOUR SERVICE

By Sandra Mitchell

FADE IN:

INT. DINER - NIGHT

One-handed, cellphone to her ear, GRACE tries to change out of her jacket and into her work apron as she talks.

GRACE

I just don't know what you expect me to do, mom. I've talked to him. Jenny's talked to him. He knows how we feel.

She struggles trying to tie herself one-handed, then smiles in pale thanks when an OLDER WAITRESS takes the ties from her and knots them in a bow.

GRACE (CONT'D)

Look, I can't really talk right now, I'm at work.

(beat)

I got called in, that's why. I'll talk to you tomorrow. Tomorrow. Yes. Bye.

Exasperated, she hangs up and tucks the phone away. Turning to the Older Waitress, Grace explains vaguely.

GRACE (CONT'D)

Mama drama.

OLDER WAITRESS

Yeah, baby, I know about that. You gonna be all right here by yourself?

Grace looks around. The diner is empty; dingy.

GRACE

I'll be all right. Tell Grant I hope he feels better.

OLDER WAITRESS

Will do, sug.

The Older Waitress leaves, and Grace stands alone in the diner. Grace looks around, trying to decide what to do with herself, when the bell over the door CHIMES.

A YOUNG MAN comes in, and Grace hurries behind the counter. She automatically reaches for a coffee cup and saucer.

GRACE

Get you something?

Cagey, the Young Man looks around; even peers around the corner to the bathroom. Then he walks up to the counter. He raises his hoodie pocket with his hand in it. It could have a gun in it, but he looks so *young*...

YOUNG MAN

Just, whatever's in the till.

He's not menacing. He's twitchy. He's afraid. And that kind of nervousness scares Grace more than anything else.

GRACE

I, I, I, you can have it, I just have to get the drawer open.

She bangs on keys, randomly.

The bell over the door CHIMES again. Grace stops banging the register. The Young Man throws himself into the stool at the counter, an empty coffee cup just waiting for him.

Coming from outside, PAUL, an older man, waves a hand at Grace impatiently as he heads behind the counter.

PAUL

I know where the coffee is.

GRACE

I can get that for you.

He waves her off again. He grabs a paper cup and pours his own coffee. Taking his time, he wanders around the other side of the counter and stops to take a look at the newspaper spread out there.

And to make conversation.

PAUL

How's your daddy?

GRACE

About the same.

PAUL

Stubborn.

GRACE

Yessir.

The Young Man with the gun clears his throat. He nudges the

cup in front of him, and Grace fills it with unsteady hands. Paul doesn't notice.

PAUL

You ought to threaten to take him over your knee.

GRACE

That would go over well.

PAUL

My daughter does it. She's on me all the time, daddy, take your medicine. Daddy, I'm gonna take that salt-shaker from you. Daddy, you gotta watch your blood pressure...

GRACE

She could be right, you know.

PAUL

You've got a mouth on you.

Grace nods; she does.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Well, I decided that I was gonna hear her different. Whatever she nags me about, I just change it to "I love you, daddy."

GRACE

How's that working out for you?

Paul puts a lid his coffee and leaves his money on the counter.

PAUL

Eh. She's still driving me up the wall.

He shuffles out; the bell over the door CHIMES.

The Young Man snatches the money off the counter and stuffs it in his jeans pockets. He waves his covered hand at Grace again.

YOUNG MAN

All right, you did that all right. Hurry up.

Anxiously, Grace fumbles with her little key, but she can't get the register to open.

GRACE

It's stuck or something.

YOUNG MAN

Then ring something up. Hurry up.

Blanking, Grace stares at the register.

YOUNG MAN (CONT'D)

I said hurry up!

GRACE

Stop it! I can't think when you're yelling at me!

Finally, she starts to key in a purchase, but the bell over the door CHIMES again. Two UNIFORMED WOMEN come in, straight off of second shift. They scoot into a booth by the door.

UNIFORMED WOMAN

Hey, Gracie, how's your daddy?

GRACE

About the same.

She nods as she opens the menu.

UNIFORMED WOMAN

I went through the same thing at your age. Well, not the same thing. But something like it.

Shooting a pleading look at the Young Man, Grace hurries over to their table to pour them coffee.

GRACE

I'm sorry to hear that.

UNIFORMED WOMAN

Well, you live the life you have, not the life you want.

She laughs at herself, confiding.

UNIFORMED WOMAN (CONT'D)

I can say that now. I was angry as hell at the time.

Oh god, they're going to linger. Grace tries to move them along by making a suggestion.

GRACE

We still have some cherry pie.

UNIFORMED WOMAN

That sounds all right.

(to her friend)

Is that all right with you?

Her friend nods, and Grace hurries back to the counter to get two slices of pie.

YOUNG MAN
(whispers)
Get rid of them.

GRACE
(whispers back)
Pie is quick.

INT. DINER - NIGHT

Standing at the counter, the pie finished, the Uniformed Woman smiles at the Young Man, like she suspects he's waiting to flirt with Grace. She pulls out her wallet and pays.

UNIFORMED WOMAN
Thank you, Grace, that was a good
an ending to the night as any.

GRACE
Come back anytime.

UNIFORMED WOMAN
And look, just remember. You can't
make somebody do what you want them
to. All you can do is hope they'll
come around. That's better than
burning up on your own fire, you
trust me.

GRACE
I'll keep that in mind.

The women leave and automatically, out of absolute habit, Grace CLOSES the register.

Agitated now, the Young Man jumps up.

YOUNG MAN
What did you do that for?!

GRACE
I didn't mean to!

YOUNG MAN
Why are you messing with me?

GRACE
I'm not. I'm not. This is my day
off! This isn't even my shift!

YOUNG MAN
All right. Shut up. Shut up. Just

calm down.

GRACE

What do you need this so bad for anyway? We have a help wanted sign out front! Why are you so special?

YOUNG MAN

Look calm down. Calm down now, I mean it.

The bell CHIMES on the door, and they both look to see a COP coming in with a big, refillable cup.

COP

Hey there Gracie, I just need a refill.

This is more dangerous than before. The Young Man glowers at her, warning her. Grace picks up the coffee carafe and nods.

GRACE

Fresh pot, right here.

COP

Any news on your dad?

GRACE

'Bout the same.

COP

Tell him I asked after him, all right?

GRACE

I will, thank you.

COP

You take care.

GRACE

Yessir.

The cop takes a second look at the Young Man. It's a tense moment, but he's just sitting there, drinking his coffee, so the Cop leaves.

That interruption made the Young Man nervous, and gave Grace a bit of a second wind. She finally approaches the register and manages to key in a combination that opens it.

Grabbing a to-go bag, she starts stuffing money in it.

YOUNG MAN

What's wrong with your dad?

GRACE

That's none of your business.

YOUNG MAN

What if I say it is?

He asks, with words, and with the shape of the gun in his pocket.

GRACE

I'm giving you your money. That's all you're getting from me.

Before he can argue with her, a PORTLY WOMAN bursts into the diner, flapping an envelope.

PORTLY WOMAN

Becky, you are not even...

She stops short when she sees Grace behind the counter instead of Becky. She slumps in annoyance.

PORTLY WOMAN (CONT'D)

Where's Becky?

GRACE

Grant came down sick; she went home.

PORTLY WOMAN

Well, hell. Is she coming back tonight?

GRACE

No ma'am.

PORTLY WOMAN

Why not? I got an answer back from that publisher in New York.

GRACE

I'll be sure to tell her.

PORTLY WOMAN

No, don't you dare. It's my news to tell. It's not even good news. It's just a form letter!

GRACE

Oh, that's too bad.

She just wants her to leave. We can almost see her willing it. Go away, go away, go away.

The Portly Woman is oblivious.

PORTLY WOMAN

And it's not even a whole sheet of

paper! This doesn't meet our needs
at this time, good luck elsewhere.
One sentence. One!

GRACE

That's terrible.

PORTLY WOMAN

I don't even know what's wrong with
people. I spent four years writing
that book, and that is a true
story!

The more she talks, the twitchier the Young Man gets. Grace,
too- she's got a bag full of money and an open register- for
all the world, it looks like she's robbing the store on her
own.

GRACE

Uh huh.

PORTLY WOMAN

I changed all the names, but still.
I have so many rejection letters
now, I could re-paper my kitchen!

GRACE

Better luck next time.

PORTLY WOMAN

Everybody that's read it loves it.
Becky. My cousin Georgia, the
ladies down at the church...

Desperate to get rid of her, Grace tries being hard.

GRACE

Maybe they're just telling you what
you want to hear. I've been guilty
of it. I bet you have, too.

Stepping back if slapped, the Portly Woman stops. She folds
her rejection letter.

PORTLY WOMAN

I'm keeping it under consideration
that your daddy's dying, but that's
no excuse to be hateful. You think
about that.

Stiffly, she leaves. The bell over the door CHIMES furiously,
and Grace shoves the bag of money at the Young Man.

GRACE

There. Get out.

The Young Man takes the bag. He turns, as if to flee, then

turns back.

YOUNG MAN

I'm not a bad person.

Beat.

GRACE

I don't care.

Finally, the Young Man runs out, leaving the diner in the same dingy quiet it was when he first arrived. Grace sinks behind the counter and fishes her phone out.

Shakily, tearily, she dials.

GRACE (CONT'D)

Daddy? Daddy, it's Gracie. We just got robbed. I know. I'm gonna call the police next, I just wanted to hear your voice.

(beat)

I'm fine. I'm just fine. And I want you to know I love you. Whatever I said before, I just meant I love you.

FADE OUT: