

"The Jam"

by
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1 INT. CAR - LATE MORNING

1

LIZ and PAUL HEWITT, a young married couple, are in their car. Paul is driving. Liz, six months' pregnant, sits beside him - looking none too comfortable. Stacked on the back seat are several paper bags of groceries.

Traffic is light.

LIZ
We're going to be *late*.

PAUL
That's why I'm taking the highway.

Paul flips on his blinker and turns.

LIZ
Will we be on time then?

PAUL
Hopefully.

LIZ
Mother's not going to like this.
(beat)
How'd we get to be running late?

PAUL
(clears his throat
knowingly)

LIZ
(innocently)
What?

PAUL
Do you remember how many maternity
tops you tried on before you
settled on that one?

LIZ
No.

PAUL
Five.
(beat)
You tried on *five* tops.

LIZ
Thanks for keeping track.

She gestures at the top she is wearing.

(CONTINUED)

LIZ

I don't even really *like* this one.

PAUL

Then why are you wearing it?

LIZ

Because it *fits*. Not many of my tops fit me anymore.

PAUL

We'll buy you some new ones tomorrow.

LIZ

(sighs)
I'm so *fat*.

PAUL

You are *not* fat.

LIZ

What do you call it?

PAUL

Pregnant.
(beat)
I call it "pregnant."

LIZ

(beat)
Have you ever worn a maternity top?

PAUL

I was thinking maybe for Halloween.

LIZ

Sure, make jokes.
(beat)
They *bind*, and I feel like I have enough fabric around me to make a circus tent.

Paul pounds on the steering wheel.

PAUL

Oh *no*!

We see that they are driving into the far left-hand lane of a *large* traffic jam.

(CONTINUED)

LIZ

(beat)
On a weekend?
(beat; anxiously)
Can we turn around?

PAUL

There's already traffic behind us.

LIZ

We'd better get off at the next
exit.

Paul flips on his right blinker, hoping against hope to
change lanes.

The driver of the car beside him speeds up a little and
leans on the horn. Paul flips him the bird.

PAUL

(calling)
Same to you, pal!

LIZ

That's not a nice gesture.

PAUL

He knows what it means.

Traffic grinds to a halt. Paul rubs his eyes.

LIZ

Five lanes of traffic and no one's
moving.
(beat)
Unbelievable!

Paul clicks on the radio. The NEWSCASTER's voice comes
over the speaker.

NEWSCASTER (V.O.)

. . . in Washington, D.C.

(beat)

This just in: We're getting calls
about a bad traffic jam on Route
495 North, near exit 12. A tractor-
trailer has jackknifed and spilled
its load of eggs all over the
highway.

(beat)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

NEWSCASTER (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Police are at the scene, but they say it will take some time to right the truck and clean up the mess. They're advising everyone to avoid that section of 495 for the time being.

Paul turns off the radio.

PAUL

Now he tells me.

LIZ

Why didn't you check that *before* we left?

PAUL

(slightly sarcastic)
Because we were rushing to get to your mother's house, dear.

LIZ

I'd better call her. She'll worry.

Liz looks about the car.

LIZ

Where's the cell phone?

PAUL

Cup holder.

She picks up the phone. Looking confused, she presses several buttons.

LIZ

The battery's dead.

PAUL

It is?

LIZ

When was the last time you charged this thing?

PAUL

I don't remember.

(beat)

You?

Liz drops the dead phone back into the cup holder.

(CONTINUED)

LIZ

Great! We're stuck in this traffic jam with no way to reach Mother.

PAUL

(sotto voce)

At least *some* good's coming out of this.

LIZ

Paul!

PAUL

Look, Liz, we're likely to be here for a bit. If there's *any* way to get across those four lanes of traffic and snag an exit, I will.

(beat)

Do you want me to put on some music?

We hear a loud bang. It makes both Paul and Liz flinch.

PAUL

Wow! *Somebody's* car backfired.

LIZ

(scared)

H-H-Honey? That *wasn't* a backfire.

(beat)

It was a *gunshot*.

PAUL

What?

LIZ

Look in the rearview mirror.

(beat)

Do you see the blue Toyota one lane over?

Paul looks in the mirror.

PAUL

The driver has white hair and glasses?

LIZ

That's him!

(beat)

He *shot* someone who was sitting beside him.

(CONTINUED)

1 CONTINUED: (5)

1

PAUL

Come on now!

LIZ

He *did*. I saw him. And worse than that:

(longish beat)

I'm pretty sure he saw *me*.

FADE TO:

2 INT. CAR - MOMENTS LATER

2

LIZ

(nervously)

We *have* to get out of here!

PAUL

I'm open to suggestions as to *how*.

LIZ

(nervously)

He *knows* I saw him. He'll try to kill *me* next!

PAUL

Are you *sure* of what you saw?

LIZ

(astounded)

You *don't* believe me?

PAUL

I'm not saying that!

LIZ

I'm *sure*.

(beat)

I was looking in my side mirror. I noticed two older people in the blue car. Both of them had white hair and glasses. I thought how cute they were together - a matched set.

PAUL

And then?

LIZ

The man who was driving took out a gun, pointed it at the woman, and pulled the trigger.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

LIZ (CONT'D)

(beat)
I don't think she even saw it
coming.

(beat; getting teary
eyed)
Oh, why did you forget to charge
the cell phone!?

PAUL

Enough about the phone, OK? We'll
have to figure out something else.

(beat)
If you're right about Whitey -

LIZ

(surprised)
If?

PAUL

He's already killed once. I don't
think he'd feel any remorse
killing us to cover his tracks.

LIZ

Do you think anyone else saw him
kill her?

PAUL

Maybe.
(beat)
If so, the police may already have
been called.

LIZ

But how will they get to him with
all this traffic?

PAUL

I don't know.
(beat)
In the meantime, we have to
protect ourselves.

LIZ

How?

PAUL

Does Whitey have a license plate
on the front of his car?

Liz looks in her side mirror.

(CONTINUED)

LIZ
(longish beat)
Yes. Yes, he does.

PAUL
Write it down.

LIZ
On *what*?

PAUL
Look in the glove compartment. We
must have a pen and some paper in
there.

She opens the glove compartment and rummages about in it.
Shortly, she holds up a pen.

LIZ
I found a pen.
(beat)
I don't see any paper though.

She rummages some more, stops, and pulls out some napkins
from a doughnut shop.

LIZ
Napkins!

PAUL
Write down the plate number. We'll
need to tell the police that
later.

Liz looks in her side mirror.

LIZ
(beat)
It's. . . *tough* to see.

PAUL
Put on your glasses.

LIZ
I didn't bring them with me.

PAUL
Why not?

LIZ
You're driving. I didn't think I'd
need them.

(CONTINUED)

PAUL

Squint then. Do what you have to do.

She squints and is able to read the license plate. She writes it down on a napkin as she says it.

LIZ

(beat)

5-5. . . 7. . . J. . . Z. . . A.

PAUL

Is it a Massachusetts plate?

LIZ

Yes. It has the same coloring as ours.

She puts the napkin into her blouse pocket.

LIZ

(beat)

Now what?

PAUL

We need to get someone's attention.

LIZ

Drive into the car in front of us.

PAUL

What?

LIZ

Or the one *behind* us.

(beat)

The other driver will get out to exchange papers. We can ask for his help.

PAUL

No. That'll only draw Whitey's attention.

LIZ

(longish beat)

Can you pull up even to the car beside us?

PAUL

I can *try*.

(CONTINUED)

LIZ

If I can get the driver's
attention, maybe *he* can help us.

She starts writing on another napkin.

PAUL

What are you doing?

She shows him the napkin. "HELP" is written on it.

LIZ

If I can't get the driver's
attention, maybe *this* will.

Liz and Paul's car pulls up roughly even with the car
beside it.

Liz powers down her window. Holding the "HELP" napkin in
one hand, she starts gesturing at the driver beside her.

LIZ

Over *here*! Hello?

HARRY, the other driver, a gray-haired man in his 50s,
rolls down his window.

HARRY

(confused)
What's wrong, lady?

LIZ

Oh, thank God!
(beat)
There's a man back there who wants
to *kill* us.

Harry squirms in his seat.

HARRY

Back where?

LIZ

About four cars behind you. He's
got a gun.

HARRY

He *does*?

PAUL

(calling)
Listen to her, man. She's telling
you the truth.

(CONTINUED)

The man's wife, THELMA, in the seat beside him, looks up from her magazine.

THELMA

She sounds nuts to me, Harry.

HARRY

Me too, Thelma.

(beat)

That kind of stuff doesn't happen around here.

PAUL

(calling)

It *did*.

LIZ

I *swear* it did!

HARRY

What is this - *Candid Camera*? One of those "gotcha" TV shows?

LIZ

Of course not!

THELMA

We're gonna be on TV?

LIZ

We need your help.

HARRY

I don't want to get involved with anything weird. I've got my wife and kids in the car.

LIZ

But you *have* to.

(beat)

Do you have a cell phone?

THELMA

Sure. Who doesn't nowadays?

LIZ

May I borrow it - just for a second?

HARRY

What?

(CONTINUED)

THELMA

Don't give it to her, Harry!
She'll keep it, and they'll drive
away.

PAUL

(calling)
How are we going to do *that*? We're
stuck in a traffic jam, for crying
out loud!

LIZ

Then could you *please* call the
police?

HARRY

(surprised)
The cops?

LIZ

Tell them there's a man back there
who's killed someone in his car.

HARRY

You're *nuts*, lady.

Harry quickly rolls up the window. Liz pleads with him,
trying to beat the window closing.

LIZ

(quickly)
He has white hair and glasses.
He's driving a blue Toyota. The
plate number. . .
(beat)
Please!

His window up again, Harry looks away. Traffic starts
moving a little better. Very shortly, their cars are no
longer side by side.

Liz powers up her window.

LIZ

I can't *believe* them!

PAUL

The world is *full* of Harrys and
Thelmas, honey.
(beat)
I'm not surprised.

Liz looks at the traffic ahead of them.

(CONTINUED)

LIZ

Are things starting to move a
little?

PAUL

Just a bit.

LIZ

Which means. . .
(growing nervous)
. . . Whitey will be beside us
soon!

FADE TO:

Squinting, Liz looks in the rearview mirror.

LIZ

He's about three cars back. . .
and gaining on us.

PAUL

I was afraid of that.

Liz looks at the clock on the dashboard. She gestures at
it.

LIZ

Is that right?

PAUL

Sure.

LIZ

(disbelieving)
We've only been stuck here for 15
minutes? It seems like hours!

(beat)

I wonder when he'll think he has a
good shot lined up.

PAUL

Maybe he won't even try.

LIZ

Why not?

PAUL

How would he get away with it?
(beat)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

3 CONTINUED:

3

PAUL (CONT'D)

Someone's *bound* to see him shoot
at us.

LIZ

Someone else probably saw him kill
his wife too, but - like you said -
the world is full of Harrys and
Thelmas.

FADE TO:

4 INT. CAR - MOMENTS LATER

4

LIZ

He's coming closer!

PAUL

Get down.

LIZ

What about you?

PAUL

Just get down!

Liz crouches down behind the car door as best she can.

A gunshot rings out. It shatters her window and exits
through the windshield. Liz screams.

PAUL

The traffic's opening up.

(beat)

Hang on!

Paul guns the engine, leaving Whitey behind them.

FADE TO:

5 INT. CAR - MOMENTS LATER

5

Liz starts rising to her seat. Noticing what remains of
her window, she looks around nervously.

PAUL

Are you alright?

LIZ

Sh-Shaken up, but OK.

(beat)

How about you?

(CONTINUED)

PAUL

I'm fine.

Liz sees the bullet hole in the windshield.

LIZ

(shocked)

It *barely* missed you!

(getting teary eyed)

Oh, honey!

PAUL

Can you see Whitey?

Liz glances in her side mirror.

LIZ

(sniffs)

He's six or seven cars behind us.

(beat)

Do you think anyone saw what he did?

PAUL

I don't know. We have to assume we're on our own.

Liz looks ahead, and a relieved smile crosses her face: A police cruiser is a couple of car lengths (and one lane) ahead of them.

She points excitedly at the police car.

LIZ

He'll help us!

(beat)

We *have* to get beside him.

PAUL

Easier said than done.

LIZ

Then stop the car and let me out.

PAUL

Are you crazy?

LIZ

The traffic's barely moving again.
I'll run up to him and get help.

(CONTINUED)

PAUL

No way! If you step out of this car, Whitey will have a clear shot at you.

LIZ

But we have to get his attention!

Paul has thought of something.

PAUL

How's your throwing arm?

LIZ

(confused)
What?

PAUL

Open up the glove compartment.

Liz does so.

PAUL

Anything *heavy* in there?

She rummages around and pulls out an old flashlight.

PAUL

Perfect.

(beat)
Do you think you can hit the cop car from here?

LIZ

I *did* play softball in high school.

She powers down her window and leans slightly out. She heaves the flashlight at the police cruiser, grunting a little as she does so.

She misses. The flashlight pops open on the road, sending the batteries to and fro.

LIZ

Damn it!

PAUL

Anything else in there?

She rummages some more, finally locking the glove compartment.

(CONTINUED)

LIZ

Nada.

Paul gestures at the cup holder.

PAUL

Try the cell phone.

LIZ

But -

PAUL

It's not doing us any good.

Liz grabs the phone and heaves it at the cruiser. It smashes on the road, just shy of its target.

Paul looks in the rearview mirror.

PAUL

(suddenly)

Liz, the *groceries*!

Liz unbuckles her seat belt, turns about, and pokes through the grocery bags.

LIZ

(happily)

Eggs!

Holding the eggs, she turns back around and sits. She throws one egg out the window at the cruiser.

Splat!

Liz smiles.

PAUL

That should get his attention.

(beat)

Again!

Liz throws another egg. It hits the cruiser even better.

LIZ

Why *isn't* he stopping?

PAUL

Got anything *bigger*?

She turns in her seat again and pokes through the bags. Successful, she sits back down, a small sack of flour in her hand.

(CONTINUED)

She throws it with all of her might. The sack bursts open as it hits the back windshield of the police car, sending up a cloud of flour.

The COP live parks his car and starts walking back toward Liz and Paul.

COP
(approaching)
What's going -

LIZ
Officer, watch out!

COP
What are you -

LIZ
There's a man with a gun back there!

COP
Where?

PAUL
The white-haired guy in the blue Toyota.
(beat)
557-JZA.

LIZ
I think he killed someone!

The officer draws his weapon.

COP
Stay put.
(beat)
I'll take care of this.

FADE TO:

In a busy police station, Paul and Liz sit before the officer's desk.

LIZ
I'm sorry we had to mess up your police car.

(CONTINUED)

COP

(chuckles)

It was a novel way to get my attention.

LIZ

Was the woman in the car. . . dead?

COP

I'm afraid so, Mrs. Hewitt.

(beat)

She was the driver's wife.

PAUL

Did Whitey say *why* he did it?

COP

(beat)

Whitey?

PAUL

That's what we named him.

COP

Insurance money.

(beat)

From what he's confessed, his idea was to drive to a rough neighborhood, and shoot his wife and himself - his wife fatally. Then he'd dispose of the gun and say they were attacked by some hoods who shot both of them and ran off.

PAUL

Thereby collecting his wife's life insurance money.

COP

Exactly.

LIZ

Why did he kill her during the traffic jam instead?

COP

We're not certain of *that* yet.

(beat)

Our theory is that she noticed they weren't heading home, thereby threatening her husband's plan.

(CONTINUED)

PAUL

But then they got caught up in the
traffic jam.

COP

Right.

(beat)

Fortunately, ma'am, you saw what
happened, and we were able to
catch him.

LIZ

(surprised)

No one else had notified the
police?

COP

No.

PAUL

(sotto voce)

Harrys and Thelmas.

The cop stands.

COP

That was one heck of a traffic jam
we were stuck in, wasn't it?

Paul takes Liz's hand.

PAUL

We were in a jam alright, the kind
of jam I hope to *never* be in
again.

FADE TO BLACK.