

Fraud

Written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

JAMES slumbers beneath his blanket on a bench set along a mostly empty sidewalk. DEBRA, late 30's, wearing a cleanly pressed pants suit, leans toward a jogger wearing headphones, failing to get her attention. She stands in front of James's bench, eyeing a man across the street.

DEBRA  
Sir! Excuse me!

The man in the distance doesn't notice her, but she continues to yell.

DEBRA (CONT'D)  
Do you know where Court Street is?

JAMES  
I know where Court Street is. Go two blocks that way and you'll see the sign to your left.

Debra, nonplussed, turns to see James settling back down for sleep.

DEBRA  
Umm, thanks.

JAMES  
(muttering)  
Just gone screaming like that like I don't exist, sheesh.

He notices Debra still standing over him with her arms crossed.

JAMES (CONT'D)  
What now?

DEBRA  
Well excuse me for being a little worked up, okay? I'm just not looking forward to getting sued. My car barely tapped hers, and now the heartless bitch is ruining my life.

James laughs and wheezes.

JAMES  
You've got problems, do you?

DEBRA

Okay, maybe I'm overreacting a bit.

James's face softens.

JAMES

Don't worry. You'll manage fine.  
People like you always do.

Debra scowls at James.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

MICHAEL, a formally dressed, slick-haired man lifts his attaché on the table and opens it. Next to him is EILEEN, an older stern-faced woman in a wheelchair. Settling down on the other side of the table is SAMUEL, a stocky man in a suit one size too small, and Debra.

MICHAEL

My client will be unable to work for at least a year, being unable to stand. She demands compensation for the excruciating back pain and constant fatigue and dizziness she suffers as a result of Debra Green's reckless driving...

Michael smug grin widens as he stares Debra down.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

...and frankly, incompetence.

Debra's head pivots to Samuel, who only takes notes, then to Eileen, and then back to Michael.

DEBRA

I checked, there were no one-way signs at that intersection.

Debra's eyes narrow, challenging.

DEBRA (CONT'D)

And I asked if she needed help and she said she was fine!

Debra stares at Samuel expectantly, then leans in to whisper with him.

DEBRA (CONT'D)

C'mon, this is fraud.

SAMUEL

Don't worry, your policy will probably cover you. We'll talk later.

DEBRA

Probably?

Debra finally meets the eyes of Eileen, who quickly looks away, suffering under her enduring glare. Samuel evaluates his client with concern.

SAMUEL

Why don't we break for lunch and continue in an hour?

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

James's gaze tracks a furious Debra as she scans the nearby cafes.

JAMES

How'd it go?

Debra realizes she is being addressed, and recognizes James. She storms up in a fury.

DEBRA

That woman is lying out of her ass. I wonder if everyone in this area treats working professionals as lottery tickets.

JAMES

What? You'd better take a hard look at your privilege before judging people like that.

DEBRA

She's a greedy opportunist. It just isn't right.

JAMES

You don't know the first thing about right and wrong.

DEBRA

Screw you.

Debra leaves in disgust.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

As Debra walks back toward the conference room, she pulls out her phone, revealing a reply from Samuel to her "I'm here", saying that she's early and will be there in 10 min.

Upon reaching the door, she turns her head and sees Eileen talking on her phone at the far end of the hallway -- not in her wheelchair. Debra rages forth, waiting with her arms crossed behind an oblivious Eileen.

EILEEN

Can you keep the kids for a bit longer? Please?

Debra's brow unfurrows.

EILEEN (CONT'D)

Please. They just told me I'm working late again... I know, but I need this job. Please, just this once, Harold!

Debra's eyes widen, then she steps away, leaving Eileen in peace.

EXT. INTERSECTION DOWNTOWN - TWILIGHT

James snores softly, curled up on his bench. Debra sits quietly at the opposite end, just past his feet. The snoring tails off.

JAMES

How long have you been there?

Debra breathes deeply, then their eyes connect.

JAMES (CONT'D)

You learned something, didn't you?

DEBRA

She's just a single mom trying to make ends meet. I told my lawyer to just settle.

James purses his lips, nodding. As Debra drifts off back into her own thoughts, James settles in to continue his nap.

JAMES

(to himself)

Maybe we've got a chance.

FADE OUT.