

Loyalty

By

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FADE IN ON:

**EXT. LONG ISLAND SOUND - NIGHT**

The glow of an e-cig bobs in the dark. Water laps against an unseen shore.

RICK (32) leans against a black sedan. A scarecrow of a man, in a baggy suit. Big ears peek out from under greasy hair.

Angry voices float in the air, from the other side of the car. One (Jimmy) is high pitched. The other (Big Danny) is pure alpha male - with an accent to put a Soprano to shame.

Rick puffs. Smoke rises in the air. The voices rise higher.

BIG DANNY (O.S.)  
You skimming from Tony's bar? You think he wouldn't find out?

JIMMY (O.S.)  
Danny, it ain't what you think!

BIG DANNY (O.S.)  
Don't tell me what I think, Jimmy.

JIMMY (O.S.)  
I didn't mean -

BIG DANNY (O.S.)  
It's what I *know* that's the problem.

Rick yawns and scratches his balls. He tosses the e-cig to the ground, and lifts his foot to snuff it out. Stops when he realizes his mistake.

He bends over, and fishes the e-cig from the sand. His eyes follow the shore - past a docked rowboat out to the water. Reflected lights ripple off gentle waves.

Big Danny's voice isn't gentle.

BIG DANNY (O.S.)  
I wanted to go dancing with Shirlee tonight. It's your fault I gotta do this.

JIMMY (O.S.)  
Danny, I can explain...

BANG. Rick freezes.

A second BANG. Something hits the car, then the ground.  
Rick's eyes widen in shock. The e-cig falls once again.

RICK

Fuck.

A new sound drowns out the shore - a heavy body dragged through sand.

MOMENTS LATER

Rick stares down at Jimmy. Duct tape binds the large man's wrists and legs. A red stain on his burly chest.

Big Danny fidgets nearby; a bear of a man with jet black hair and a designer suit. Danny taps his wedding ring impatiently.

BIG DANNY

Well?

RICK

He's dead.

BIG DANNY

(snorts)

Course he's dead, dumb ass! Now whatcha gonna do?

RICK

Do?

Big Danny rolls his eyes. He points towards the shore, and the moored rowboat. He talks slowly to Rick, like a child.

BIG DANNY

Why ya think we brought him here?  
You gotta row him out, and dump the body overboard.

RICK

(horrified)

Why me? I can't swim!

BIG DANNY

'Cause the boat's too small for me.

He eyes Rick's shabby suit.

BIG DANNY

'Sides, I'm goin' out with Regina later. Don't want to get the threads messy.

RICK  
Regina? I thought you were seeing  
Shirlee?

BIG DANNY  
Shut the fuck up. Grab his legs.

The two men lug the corpse towards the boat. Big Danny eyes the e-cig in Rick's mouth.

BIG DANNY  
You still smokin' that shit?

RICK  
I'm trying to quit.

BIG DANNY  
Man, that makes you look gay.

MOMENTS LATER

Rick and Danny give the corpse the heave-ho. It THUNKS to the bottom of the boat. Big Danny slaps an oar into Rick's hands.

BIG DANNY  
'Kay. Row out to three hundred  
feet. Then push him over the side.

RICK  
Three hundred feet? Why that far?

BIG DANNY  
'Cause we don't want him washing up  
onshore. Do we, big guy?

Rick glares. Big Danny looks unfazed.

BIG DANNY  
You wanna cut him up instead?

Rick shakes his head, looks grossed-out. Big Danny SLAPS a flashlight into his hand.

BIG DANNY  
...didn't think so.  
(beat)  
Bring this back in one piece, maybe  
I'll let ya have a gun.

Rick SIGHS and unties the boat from the dock. He climbs inside and starts to row. Big Danny waves from the shore.

**EXT. ROWBOAT - ON THE WATER - CONTINUOUS**

Big Danny's figure shrinks to a dot, disappears. His black suit blends into the night.

Rick rows hard, pants from the effort. Water LAPS against the oars. The flashlight bobs like a beacon between his knees.

He stops to take a drag. The e-cig glows blood red.

Rick looks down at Jimmy's body. Water puddles at the bottom of the rowboat, soaking Jimmy's clothes and hair.

RICK

Ripping off Tony? Stupid fuck.

He looks around. The night's coal black - except for the fading flashlight beam.

RICK

Two hundred feet? Close enough.

A shadow slides through the water - ten feet from the boat.

Rick flinches. He aims the flashlight at the form. But whatever it was, is now gone.

He pockets the cig, and slides hands under Jimmy's body. Tries to push up; no leverage.

RICK

Fuck, man. You're heavy.

He shoves again. Jimmy rolls up an inch, SPLASHES back down. The boat rocks crazily upon impact.

Rick GASPS and steadies the sides. After a moment, the rocking subsides. Rick's breathing doesn't - he's terrified.

RICK

How'm I gonna get you overboard?

Jimmy MOANS.

Rick jumps. He scuttles to the rowboat's far end.

He stares at the "corpse." Jimmy twitches, MOANS again. He raises a weak, sea-soaked head.

JIMMY

Ricky? Man... Help me. Please.

Jimmy's eyes roll back. His head slumps down to his chest.

Silence. Rick waits. No movement. He shines the flashlight in Jimmy's face.

Then picks up an oar, and pokes Jimmy in the shoulder. No response. The man's like a wet Kleenex.

Rick grins and pokes Jimmy again. This time in the stomach.

Jimmy SCREAMS and curls around the oar.

Rick SHRIEKS, and lets go.

Jimmy grabs the oar like a life preserver, and looks toward Rick - a pained expression on his face.

JIMMY

Whatchu poking me for?

RICK

I thought you were dead!

JIMMY

Rick, please. You gotta listen...

He looks around.

JIMMY

Where are we?

RICK

In a boat.

JIMMY

But -

His eyes widen.

JIMMY

You was gonna drop me overboard?  
Man, that's cold! You know there  
are sharks out here? You were gonna  
give me to 'em as a snack?

RICK

Sharks? Seriously? Where?

He looks around in a panic. Jimmy stares at him.

JIMMY

That's not the point.

RICK

I told you, I thought you was dead!  
Big Danny ordered me to.

Jimmy licks blood stained lips.

JIMMY

Danny's wrong. I didn't do it. You gotta help me, man...

Rick backs away, and scoots to the edge of the boat. His arm dangles off the side.

Something slides through the water. A fin breaks the surface - rough skin brushes against Rick's hand.

RICK

Shit!

He yanks his hand back, and grabs the flashlight. The shadow of a fin sinks slowly beneath the waves.

Rick stares at the water. He casts the flashlight back and forth, his attention drawn from Jimmy.

Jimmy rests his duct taped wrists against the oar, and rubs against it frantically. There's already a rip along one side. It widens - poised to split in two.

Rick swings back to Jimmy. Jimmy hides his wrists against his blood soaked chest.

RICK

What do you mean?

JIMMY

What do you mean, "what do you mean?"

RICK

I mean, you said you didn't do it. Why you lyin' to me? They found the money on you!

Jimmy spits dirty sea water from his mouth.

JIMMY

The money wasn't Tony's. I got a bookie job on the side.

RICK

A bookie job? What for?

JIMMY

My daughter's birthday. She's gonna be six. I promised her a big party.  
(wheezes)

JIMMY (MORE)

Tony - you know he don't pay so well.

RICK

So you workin' for someone else?

JIMMY

No, man! It's freelance!

Jimmy lies on his chest, and secretly tugs at the duct tape at his wrists. Soon enough, his hands pop free.

He smiles in the darkness.

RICK

Then who took Tony's money?

JIMMY

I don't know. What do I look like, a fortune teller?

RICK

(grins)

No, man. You look like shit.

Jimmy LAUGHS darkly. Locks pain-filled eyes with Rick.

JIMMY

Can you at least help me sit up?  
The water down here tastes like piss.

RICK

(beat)

How you know what piss tastes like?

JIMMY

You've drank at Tony's, haven't ya?

Rick's grin widens. He reaches for Jimmy's jacket.

Jimmy's hand shoots out, and drags him down.

Rick's flashlight CLATTERS over the side, and hits the water with a SPLASH.

The two men wrestle at the bottom of the rowboat; Jimmy's legs still duct taped together.

The boat rocks crazily.

Jimmy shimmies on top of Rick, and pins him with his weight. He holds Rick's head with his left hand, and rifles his pockets with his right.

JIMMY

You gotta have a knife somewhere!

He pulls out the e-cig, stares at it.

JIMMY

What the fuck is this?!?

Rick chomps on Jimmy's hand. Jimmy SCREAMS and rolls away.

The boat rocks. Tips. THUDS against something large.

Both men freeze, and stare over the side. A huge SHAPE slides through the water. Almost as big as the rowboat.

RICK

(mutters)

We need a bigger fuckin' boat...

The two men duck back into the boat, and crawl to opposite sides. They stare at each other - GASP for breath.

Rick slides a hand out, and grabs an oar. Wields it like a baseball bat. Jimmy rips duct tape off his legs, and glares across at him.

JIMMY

Okay. Stalemate.

RICK

Stalemate? You're shot, Jimmy! You get up, I'm gonna club you like a baby seal!

JIMMY

Yeah? Well, you do that, and I'm gonna rock this boat 'til it flips. Let *both* of us be shark chow.

Rick thinks it over.

RICK

Yeah, you're right. Stalemate. But I can't take you back. Big Danny'll have my balls.

JIMMY

Not if I can explain -

RICK

Sure. That worked great before.

JIMMY

But - this time you'll help me!  
Just gimme a chance to say my  
peace. I'll make things all right  
again.

RICK

Make everything right? He shot you!

Jimmy rolls his eyes.

JIMMY

It's Big Danny. I'll forgive. He'll  
forget... and go back to balling  
Shirlee.

Rick fumbles for the e-cig on the floor.

RICK

I don't know.

JIMMY

Please? For my daughter?

Rick hesitates and looks away. Lights his e-cig with shaking hands. The glow bounces off a massive shape in the water - a huge black fin that looks like a pirate sail.

Rick and Jimmy follow the fin's trail with their eyes.

Water LAPS against the dark boat. The silence between the men grows. Rick looks at Jimmy. Nods.

RICK

Fine. You got a deal.

**EXT. LONG ISLAND SOUND - SHORELINE - LATER**

The boat bumps against the shore. Big Danny shuffles forward.

BIG DANNY

Damn, that took some time. You stop  
for a smoke break, Rick?

He peers over the side. His eyes widen.

BIG DANNY

What the fuck? Jimmy?

Rick climbs awkwardly over the side, and approaches Danny - hands raised.

RICK

Before you shit yourself, there's something you need to know.

Big Danny's beady eyes glint in the night.

BIG DANNY

Don't tell me what I need to know.

RICK

Danny, listen. We were wrong.

Wet clothes SHIFT behind Rick. Jimmy's trying to stand.

BIG DANNY

No. You had it wrong.

More RUSTLING. Rick swings around, irritated.

RICK

Jimmy, lemme handle this!

Jimmy stands on the shore, uninjured. A gun in his hand. Danny CHUCKLES. Rick glances back. He's armed, too.

RICK

What?

Danny heads towards the trunk of the car, and opens it.

BIG DANNY

You think this was about Jimmy? The man's got a six year old kid. As trustworthy as they come. It's you we had questions about. You had one little job - dispose of a body. And you failed.

JIMMY

You're the one we can't trust. And you know what that means.

He marches towards Rick, a roll of duct tape in his hand.

RICK

This don't make sense. You got shot!

JIMMY

(shrugs)  
Halloween blood. Costs a buck at Walmart.

RICK  
But the duct tape... What if I'd  
thrown you overboard?

Jimmy grins, and holds up a shred of tape from before.

JIMMY  
Pretorn. And - unlike your faggy  
ass - I know how to swim.

RICK  
(beat)  
You went out in a boat with me -  
hands tied. That took major balls!

JIMMY  
Nah. Easy. You ain't got none.

Danny removes a chain-saw from the trunk. Rick looks between  
the men, terrified.

RICK  
The sharks - they woulda eaten you!

Big Danny grins like a shark himself.

BIG DANNY  
(to Jimmy)  
Little man don't know the  
difference between nurse sharks and  
great whites?

JIMMY  
Yeah, those puppies are more scared  
a' us, than we are of them.

He wraps duct tape across Rick's wrists and mouth. Big Danny  
REVS the chain-saw.

BIG DANNY  
Kinda like you shoulda been.

The chain-saw ROARS - drowns out Rick's final SCREAMS.

FINAL FADE OUT: