

Price Check on Film Noir

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FADE IN ON:

EXT. CITY STREET. 1940'S -NIGHT

Parked cars line the rain-soaked curb. Stores line the sidewalk. People in period attire hurry along covering their heads with handbags and newspapers.

BRANSON (V.O.)

The time was approaching 7:30 and today was only a few hours away from turning into a soggy yesterday...

INT. SUPERMARKET CHECKOUT LINE.

People stand in line at the register. At the head is an ELDERLY WOMAN.

The REGISTER GIRL (20) nonchalantly checks prices on various store items and slowly enters them into the register.

Can of lard.

Loaf of bread.

Bottle of floor polish.

Behind the old woman is NICK BRANSON (40). His chiselled chin and cold eyes are topped by an expensive fedora. His trench coat hangs perfectly over his broad shoulders.

BRANSON (V.O.)

I ran into Dollface on the street. She promised to cook me a hot meal. While I was picking up the pork chops, she was in Murphy's, picking up a bottle of my favorite dessert.

He SIGHS.

The register girl continues ringing up items.

Can of tuna fish.

Cans of tomato soup.

Loaves of bread.

The old lady's buying a hundred things!

Branson looks at his single item, a small package wrapped in brown paper.

He rolls his eyes.

BRANSON (V.O.)

It looked like the old broad in front of me was doing her shopping for the winter. She didn't care she was holding the hard working people of this city hostage--

The old lady says something to the register (MOS). The register girl forces a smile and continues ringing things up.

BRANSON (V.O.)

People like me who keep the city running and the streets safe. While she's spending her remaining days ringing up food, I stand here quietly holding my meat.

The register girl rings up the last item, a jar of mustard.

BRANSON (V.O.)

The fury within me finally released itself. It was the kind of relief that one feels when solving a case... or when a man from Alabama slaps a colored.

The old lady reaches into her coat pocket--

BRANSON (V.O.)

I thought lady luck was finally smiling on me--

--and pulls out a slips of paper. She gives them to the register girl.

BRANSON (V.O.)

Instead, she spit in my eye...

The register girl flips through the slips of paper.

The people on line fidget in frustration. Branson stands there, with a cool composure.

BRANSON (V.O.)

Coupons!

She shows one to the old lady, shaking her head.

The old woman reaches in her pile of groceries and picks up a box of laundry detergent.

BRANSON (V.O.)
The rage inside me started building
again, eating at my guts like a
starving cat--

The register girl shakes her head.

BRANSON (V.O.)
Eating a juicy mouse.

Branson looks up. A faint smile grows on his face.

BRANSON (V.O.)
Then, before I could do something,
she appeared--

DOLLFACE (30), stands at the front of the store. A beautiful
woman wearing a fancy coat and matching hat.

She cradles a tall paper bag in her arm.

BRANSON (V.O.)
Dollface. She looked like an angel
to me--

Sticking out of the bag is the sealed top of a liquor bottle.

BRANSON (V.O.)
An angel carrying a forty-eight
ounce bottle of salvation.

Branson holds his package up and smiles. She smiles back as
he puts the item on the counter.

The register girl finishes bagging the old lady's groceries.

BRANSON (V.O.)
Soon, all my problems would be gone
like Fatty Arbuckle's career... A
hot meal is all this old workhorse
needed after a long day at keeping
his nose to the grindstone.

The register girl hits the total button on the register. The
til drawer opens.

The old lady reaches into her handbag.

Branson's smile is replaced with a look of alarm.

BRANSON (V.O.)
Then, in one swift move, trouble
showed it's ugly face.

Dollface's eyes get real big.

The old lady pulls something out of her bag.

BRANSON (V.O.)
It showed its face and bit me on
the ass.

It's an open check book!

A look of rage grows on Branson's face.

BRANSON (V.O.)
The rage boiled in me like a
percolator on a roaring fire.
That's when I did it--

The old lady starts writing a check.

Dollface looks at Branson, horrified.

Branson raises his package of porkchops over his head. He
brings it down on the old woman.

FINAL FADE OUT.

BRANSON (V.O.)
I slapped the old lady in the face
with my meat.