

STAY OUT

Written by

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Based on, If Any

"Stay Out" by Tyshawn Irons

Address
Phone Number

FADE IN:

INT. CAR - DAY

Radio STATIC. Slim FINGERS, manicured nails, spin a RADIO TUNER. Searching. TALK RADIO. NEWS. MUSIC. 80s HIP HOP.

DAVID (O.S.)
Jess? Baby?

The hand of JESSICA NASH, 20s, African American, vogue, stylish. She wears a pink leotard, acid wash jeans. A mountain of teased hair, sunglasses hide her eyes.

She sits in the passenger seat. Next to her, DAVID JORDAN, 20s, African American, in a lettermen jacket. A hybrid of jock and nerd. He drives. Watches her with worry.

DAVID (CONT'D)
Baby, come on. You still mad?

She hums to the SONG. Ignores him. Stares out the window. She notices a RED TRUCK, on their tail, in the SIDE MIRROR.

DAVID (CONT'D)
You just not gonna talk at all?

She rips off her shades. Glares at him, arms crossed.

JESS
We've been driving for hours.

DAVID
We're almost there.

JESS
Why won't you just tell me where
we're going?

David smiles wide. He points out the windshield.

DAVID
There. That's where.

Jessica follows his finger. She sees a DIRT ROAD enveloped in evergreens. She groans. He drums his fingers to the BEAT.

JESS
This looks real legit.

DAVID

Why you gotta be like that? I told you. My cousin took his girl out here last year. Did the same hike.

JESS

You said it was a PUBLIC park. This looks like Ted Bundy's backyard.

DAVID

It is public, uh, as in the public can find it, maybe not officially recognized, but, uh, very public.

She's distracted. In the REARVIEW MIRROR, the same RED TRUCK, close behind, follows them as they swerve onto...

EXT. ROW RIVER ROAD - CONTINUOUS

A desolate road, muddy from SPRING rain. David's BUICK putters along. The RED TRUCK, keeps their pace.

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

DAVID

He said there's nobody out here. No tourists. No kids. No dog shit.

Jessica turns in her seat. Her eyes on the RED TRUCK.

JESS

Who said?

DAVID

Jadyn. Remember? My cousin?

JESS

How long has this car been behind us? Seriously, David?

The RED TRUCK suddenly STOPS in the middle of the road. Jessica squints. She sees a MAN inside. He wears a RED CAP.

DAVID

People don't need your permission to drive down a road.

JESS

I've seen that truck before.

DAVID

You are the definition of paranoid.

The road curves, the RED TRUCK disappears. She faces forward.

EXT. MOON FALLS - DAY, LATER

David's car is parked by an abandoned nature park. Jessica stands by the car, glaring at a mossy wooden SIGN.

It reads: MOON FALLS PARK. CLOSED TO PUBLIC. **STAY OUT.**

INT. CAR - DAY

David reaches in the backseat, digs in a backpack. He pulls out a small velvet jewelry box, flips it open.

CLOSE ON: A DIAMOND RING. He studies it, smiles to himself.

Jessica BANGS on the passenger window. He JUMPS, shoves it in his pocket. She doesn't notice, points to the sign.

EXT. CAR - DAY

David slams his backpack on the trunk. Jessica leans against the car. Her camping bag at her feet. Pissed.

JESS
Stay out. STAY. OUT.

DAVID
I know how to read, Jess.

JESS
Is it even legal to be here?

DAVID
Look around you.

She stares around. Nature. Big deal. Shrugs. David moves to her. Puts his hand on her cheeks. She shakes her head.

DAVID (CONT'D)
Really. Look.

He gently turns her head. She looks. WILDFLOWERS. LUSH and GREEN. A mist drifts through the trees. BIRDS chirp. Serene.

DAVID (CONT'D)
Happy anniversary.

JESS
The car could get towed.
We could get arrested.

David sighs. Grabs his backpack. He walks towards a TRAIL.

DAVID
Can't you just live a little?

She huffs. Grabs her backpack and follows him.

EXT. FOREST TRAIL - DAY

Jessica stumbles, reaches David. The trail is unkempt. Caked in leaves. Fallen logs. Suddenly, he stops, pats his jacket.

DAVID
Shit.

She grips a tree. He turns to her.

DAVID (CONT'D)
I forgot the map.

JESS
Of course you did!

She slams her bag on the ground. Storms off. He laughs.

EXT. MOON FALLS - DAY

Jessica stomps to the car, stops. The RED TRUCK is parked by them. It's empty. She looks around. No one in sight.

She paces to the RED TRUCK. Peeks inside. A tiny SILVER object sparkles in the backseat. She looks closer...

DAVID (O.S.)
Jess! Hurry up!

She jumps. Laughs at herself. Paranoid. She shakes it off. Drifts by the RED TRUCK'S bumper.

CLOSE ON: A FADED BUMPER STICKER. TARGET CROSSHAIRS.

EXT. FOREST TRAIL - DAY, LATER

Jessica is coated in sweat. They hike up wooden steps. David, ahead, reads the MAP, bites his lip. Nervous, but resolute.

DAVID
We're getting closer.

JESS
You said that two hours ago.

Jessica drags herself up the steps, out of breath.

JESS (CONT'D)
Let's take a break.

DAVID
Nah, I wanna make it by sunset.

JESS
Make what? God, just tell me where
we're going! This is ridiculous!

He doesn't hear her. He speeds up. She rests for a moment.
Behind her, she hears BRANCHES CRACKING. SOMEONE WALKING.

Her eyes spin. The mist is thicker. No clear view through
slimy trees. More FOOTSTEPS. She races up to him, entering...

A SCENIC MOUNTAIN OVERLOOK

A rocky CLIFF wrapped in a wooden fence.

JESS
David, I think someone is-

Jessica is speechless. A mountain valley reveals snow-tipped
peaks, a wide crystal lake, bright blue sky. David doesn't
notice her. He taps the map.

DAVID
You see! Not much further.

Jessica grabs his chin, turns his face towards the VIEW. He
pulls away, eyes back on the map.

DAVID (CONT'D)
Come on, further north.

She sighs, straightens her bag. He walks back to the trail.

JESS
How do you even know that's north?

DAVID
The spirit of our ancestors!

EXT. FOREST TRAIL - NEAR SUNSET

A shift in moods. Woods thicker, darker. David, bewildered,
grips the map. He's lost. Jessica, exhausted, stomps behind.

She hears a CRUNCH. Stops, leans, looks on the bottom of her shoe. CLOSE ON: A SILVER EARRING. She picks it off her shoe.

SHE LOOKS CLOSER. SCREAMS. Drops it. Disgusted. On it's thin hook, a SMALL CHUNK OF FLESH. She falls back against a tree.

David runs to her. She points at the earring. He kneels, inspects. He prods it with a thin, wet branch.

JESS

I wanna go back. Now.

DAVID

Jess, we aren't that far now.

JESS

You don't even know where we are!

DAVID

Calm down.

JESS

That truck. This place. It's not right. I keep hearing sounds all around us. We shouldn't be here!

DAVID

Listen. I get it. You're freaked. But you don't know what did that. Alright? There's bears, wolves...

JESS

That's not helping!

DAVID

We can't go back now. Let's just keep moving. We'll set up camp ov-

Jessica storms off, back down the trail, moving FAST.

A FOREST CLEARING

Jessica sinks against a tree. Hands on her face. Breathing. In. Out. Closes her eyes. Opens them. David next to her.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Listen to me, Jess.

JESS

Listen to you? Seriously? I just found a freaking earring with a piece of someone's ear on it!

DAVID
Just calm down.

JESS
You and all your stupid, bullshit
romance fantasies. Now look at us.
Why are we even here? Let me guess.
You had some lame ass plan to
propose by a waterfall?

DAVID
Why is that lame? God, why you
always gotta tear me down? It's
always your way or no way. But not
today. You wanna go back? Well it's
too damn late. It's gonna be fully
dark soon and unless you wanna get
lost in the woods at night, we're
camping here.

David slams his bag on the ground. They glare at each other.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
Oh, I wouldn't do that.

In unison, Jessica and David look towards the VOICE.

CINDY PARKER (20s), blonde, big-eyed. Wears a paisley dress,
greasy hair. Watches them by the woods. Duffel bag in hand.

CINDY
I was comin' up that trail. Same
one ya'll was on. Fresh set'a bear
tracks. Better to camp out further.
Get off his scent.

JESS
You were following us?

Cindy smiles, dreamy. She drifts to them, cat-like. David
stiffens, but Cindy's smile reads innocent. He relaxes.

CINDY
I heard yellin'. Thought ya'll
mighta found trouble.

DAVID
Nah. No trouble. Just..

CINDY
Domestic bliss?

David laughs. Jessica side eyes him.

CINDY (CONT'D)
Ya'll come out here for the Falls?

JESS
We were just leaving.

DAVID
Yeah. We got lost.

CINDY
More like ass-backwards. Ain't a thing though. I'm campin' up the hill. Ya'll can park there tonight. Take ya' to the Falls at sunrise.

DAVID
Really? Hey, that'd be cool. Right, Jess? Sunrise. That's perfect.

JESS
David, no-

CINDY
Never seen nothin' like it.

Jessica grabs David's wrist.

JESS
(whisper)
You can't be serious. She's a stranger. David, please.

DAVID
You heard her. We can't stay here.

JESS
You don't know her.

DAVID
Come on, she looks nice.

JESS
Oh, really?

DAVID
I don't mean nice, as in, you know-

JESS
Well, you two have fun.

CINDY
Oh, don't be like that. I got plenty of food and booze.

JESS
We're fine. Thanks.

DAVID
You said you wanted public, right?

JESS
(leans closer to David)
Didn't your Mama tell you not to
trust strangers?

DAVID
We were strangers once. Maybe we
still are. Suit yourself.

David shoves his bag over his shoulder, walks to Cindy. Cindy
smiles at him. They linger for a moment, waiting for Jessica.

CINDY
You comin' or what?

In the woods, branches CRACK. Jessica looks towards the
SOUNDS. The sun sets, casting shadows through the trees.

CINDY (CONT'D)
The woods change at night, ya know.

Cindy walks off. David looks at Jessica. Jessica ignores him,
grips the tree. He shakes his head, catches up to Cindy.

She watches them leave. Feels splintered bark on the tree.
She looks at the tree. CLAW MARKS. Speckled in browned blood.

Five gashes. Almost like a handprint. WIND rustles leaves. A
WOLF HOWLS, far off. Jessica eyes the forest. ANOTHER HOWL.

She grabs her backpack, catches up to David and Cindy. They
walk, fast, through the woods and...

OFF TRAIL

They climb a hill. Jessica lumbers behind them. Scanning the
dark trees. David, mesmerized, keeps pace with Cindy.

DAVID
You came out here alone?

CINDY
I like the woods. Reminds me of
home. 'Cept, different, ya know?

JESS
(sarcastic)
Yeah, makes sense.

DAVID
Where are you from?

CINDY
Oh, around. That's how I found Ray.

Jessica pauses. SMOKE BILLOWS up the hill. A CAMP FIRE.

JESS
Ray?

CINDY
Mmhmm.

JESS
I thought you said you were alone?

CINDY
Even when you're with somebody, you
can still feel alone.
(smiles at David)
Know what I mean?

DAVID
Yeah. I mean. No. Never.

He eyes Jessica. She's lost in thought. Cindy and David keep walking, reach the camp. Jessica stops, lingers.

RAY (O.S.)
You know trespassin' is a crime.

Jessica gasps, swings around. Behind her, RAY PARKER, 40s, rugged, white, in a RED CAP, flannel, jeans, muddy boots.

His eyes flicker over her body, lingering too long.

JESS
I've seen you before. In the
truck...

RAY
Didn't mean to spook ya.

He smirks, holds out his hand. Jessica stares, blank.

RAY (CONT'D)
I can carry your bag.

She hesitates, slides the bag off her shoulder. He takes it, motions for her to follow him, up the hill, to the campsite.

EXT. CAMPSITE - NIGHT

They've been here a while. Trash, empty bottles. Worn tents. Clothes littered around. The four sit around a camp fire.

Ray smokes, chugs whiskey. David sips a beer. Cindy offers Jessica a beer. Jessica shakes her head. Cindy shrugs.

RAY
Maybe she likes the harder stuff.

CINDY
Looks like it.

Ray stands, towers over Jessica. Offers her his whiskey.

JESS
No, thanks. I'm fine.

CINDY
Yeah, you sure are.

RAY
Jesus, Cindy. Behave yourself.
These are classy folks.

Ray, again, offers whiskey to Jessica.

JESS
I said I'm fine.

A tense moment. Ray's mood shifts, darker.

DAVID
Don't take it personal, man. She's
always like this with strangers.
She's from Chicago.

JESS
What the hell does that mean?

DAVID
Babe, I'm jokin' around.

Cindy pulls Ray towards her. Ray sits, lights a smoke. Cindy rubs his shoulder, flirtatious. They're distracted.

Jessica leans closer to David.

JESS

(quiet)

These people are freaking me out.
Jadyn knows we're here right?

DAVID

Who?

JESS

Your cousin. You said he found this
place. Gave you the map.

DAVID

Huh? Oh! Yeah, uh, he knows.

JESS

You're lying.

DAVID

Okay, I'm sorry, maybe, I missed a
few details, but, we'll be-

JESS

I can't believe this. Are you fu-

RAY

Everything alright?

David stands, avoidant.

DAVID

Just gonna use the facilities.

JESS

David, wait-

RAY

Can't a man piss on his own?

CINDY

You're one to talk, Old Fart.

Ray glares at Cindy, her posture shifts, a flash of fright.
Jessica watches David, desperate. He's unconcerned.

DAVID

Jess, chill, I'll be right back.

David fades off, towards the trees. Jessica turns back.
Through the rising flames, they watch her, expressionless.

IN THE TREES

David zips his pants. Flashlight in one hand. He bucks, his light hits something TINY, BLUE. He shines the light on it.

It's a bloody FINGERNAIL. His hand shakes, his light scans the ground more FINGERNAILS. A TRAIL OF BLOOD ON THE LEAVES.

THE CAMPSITE

Ray stands, plops next to Jessica, shoves his whiskey at her. Jessica, cornered, tenses. Shakes her head. Scoots away.

RAY

Don't be shy, sweetheart.

JESSICA

Get away from me!

CINDY

Smile!

A FLASH OF LIGHT. Jessica, shocked, blinks. Cindy, by the fire, holds a POLAROID CAMERA. Takes another PICTURE, laughs.

RAY

That ain't a smile.

Ray grips her knee. Jessica pushes him, stands. Not quick enough. Ray grabs her, holds a BUCK KNIFE at her throat.

IN THE TREES

David's flashlight illuminates a second FINGERNAIL. He shines his light CLOSER. BLOOD on the leaves.

David, eyes wide, hands shaking, follows the trail of blood, tripping over branches as he discovers...AN ABANDONED SHACK.

On the door, painted in RED. **STAY OUT.**

INSIDE THE SHACK

COBWEBS. He coughs. Smells rotten.

LINED ON A WALL. Dozens of POLAROID PICTURES. WOMEN. Each in different states of distress, by a CAMPFIRE.

His light scans the shack. SHOES. BACKPACKS. A WOMAN'S PURSE, SPLATTERED IN BLOOD, it's contents, dusty, worn with age.

He backs towards the door. BUMPS a table.

A glass jar SHATTERS. He looks. On the floor, bloody human TEETH. They scatter like marbles.

David, gasps, stumbles out the shack back into...

THE WOODS

Frantic, he runs back to...

THE CAMPSITE

Smoke billows in darkness. The fire, extinguished. Darkness. Only his light. They're gone. She's gone.

DAVID

Jess!

David spins around, frantic. Sees an EMPTY DUFFEL-BAG. BOTTLES, SMASHED. The CAMERA, a photo hanging out its mouth.

He leans down, snatches the photo. THE PICTURE OF JESSICA. Far off, in the woods, he hears a woman SCREAMING.

THE WOODS

Deep in the forest. David searches. His light hits the trees. ANOTHER SCREAM. He stumbles over branches, back on his feet.

Stops. Hears WHIMPERING. MOVEMENTS. He follows the sounds.

FOREST CLEARING

He sees her. Jessica. She's bound in rope, mouth duct taped. He approaches her. She shakes her head in warning, stay back.

He races towards her. THWACK. A fist knocks David onto his knees. His flashlight tumbles to the ground.

From behind, Ray wraps a thin rope around his neck. TIGHT. Strangling him. David, struggles, his eyes on Jessica.

A shadowy figure slinks towards her. Cindy, BUCK KNIFE in her hand. Cindy kneels by Jessica. David gasps, chokes.

Cindy grabs Jessica by the hair, forces her onto her stomach. Cindy raises the knife. STABS her. Jessica screams, muffled.

Cindy smiles at David, SINKS the knife into her back. AGAIN. Ray tightens his grip on the rope, grunts, pulling hard.

David's eyes flutter. He sees Jessica, motionless, a blur. Her eyes, empty. She's gone.

Blood spills over the weeds by her body. Cindy walks to them, BLOODY KNIFE in hand. David's body slacks. His eyes fall to the grass.

A GURGLING COUGH. Jessica spits blood. She's still alive. Moaning in pain, rolls herself over, onto her back.

PULLS at her binds, squeezes a hand out, rips tape off her mouth. Sees David, struggling. Searches, sees a ROCK.

She drags herself forward, slow, tears stream her cheeks. Ray sees Jessica, distracted, loosens his grip in David.

RAY
Dammit! Cindy!

David smashes his weight against Ray, they topple back. David RIPS the KNIFE from Cindy's hand, she falls.

He JABS it into Ray's ankle. Ray groans, loses his ground. Fast, David grabs his shoulder, punches him in the face.

Cindy rips her nails in David's shoulder. He nudges her back. She clings on him, trying to pull him off Ray.

A HAND grabs Cindy by the HAIR. Cindy spins around. It's Jessica. She SMASHES a rock against Cindy's face.

Cindy screams. Blood streams down her forehead. Jessica raises the rock, arm shaking. David hits Ray. Over and over.

Finally, Ray stills. Cindy runs, stumbling, out of the weeds.

David moves off of Ray, to Jessica. She looks at David. He stares at Ray's bloody face, in shock.

DAVID
Jess...

He snaps out of it. Turns. She's gone.

INTO THE WOODS

Jessica falls against a thick tree, keeps moving, fast, adrenaline pumping, following the sounds

WHIMPERS, FOOTSTEPS, BRANCHES CRACKING. She reaches the...

MOUNTAIN OVERLOOK

Same as before. Moonlight streams over the lake. Cindy stands, still, a shadowy silhouette, by the rails.

DAVID (O.S.)
Jess! Where are you?

Jessica approaches her, worse for wear, pale, glittered in sweat. Cindy turns, blood soaks blonde strands.

Cindy slowly paces to her, hands up.

CINDY
You're miles out in the woods. You
kill me, ya'll won't make it out.

Jessica presses a hand on her blood soaked leotard. Cindy slinks closer, a GLINT OF LIGHT.

DAVID (O.S.)
Jess! Jess!

Cindy looks towards the sound. Jessica sees, in her hand, the BUCK KNIFE. Jessica rushes forward, pushes her back, HARD.

Cindy slams against the wooden fence of the overlook. The rail SNAPS. Cindy tumbles off the cliff, her SCREAM, echoing.

Jessica sinks to her knees. HANDS grab her shoulders, gentle, keeping her up. It's David. They stare at each other.

DAVID (CONT'D)
That's what I meant when I said
you're from Chicago.

EXT. FOREST - DAWN

David and Jessica stumble towards LIGHT. Battered, bloody. They see a RIVER ahead. Jessica wears David's jacket, barely on her feet.

They exit the woods. Hear ROARING. GUSHING WATER.

EXT. MOON RIVER WATERFALL - CONTINUOUS

Blue and gray streams crash against black stones. They rest against a large rock, staring at the FALLS. Silent. Peaceful.

David digs in his pocket, searching. Jessica watches him curious. He slips out the velvet ring box. It's wet, dirty.

He opens her palm, sets the box in her hand.

DAVID
Is it still lame?

Jessica laughs. She looks at the waterfall, back to David.