

SUNDOWN

Written by  
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INT. RURAL CONVENIENCE STORE - NIGHT

The convenience store is grimy. A florescent light flickers. A nasty fly strip dangles by the door.

The sound of the bell over the door gets JAN'S (17), attention. She looks up from a magazine at ZU (22), black, in a NYU BSU hoodie, black jeans and combat boots. A bottle of water in her hand.

Jan slides her hand beneath the counter. She presses a button. She pops gum, rubs her pregnant belly and goes back to her magazine.

BOB (50), huffs behind Jan to the end of the counter. He pulls up his pants and points his finger sternly at Zu.

BOB

You can't wear that in here.

Zu takes her hoodie down slowly. She pats her picked out Afro.

BOB (CONT'D)

No, that mask. You can't wear it in here.

She cocks her head to the side, confused.

ZU

Masks keep people safe... we're in the middle of a pandemic.

Bob slams the counter with his hand.

BOB

Pandemic my ass. Stop believe'n the liberal media. Ain't no pandemic out here.

Zu shakes her head. She takes off her mask. She wanders down the aisle. She stops at a magazine rack and picks up a popular lifestyle magazine. She flips through the pages.

WENDY(50), a hard-nosed bitch with an attitude, wrinkled and sallow, with dark frizzy hair, in a smock, shouts at Zu.

WENDY

If you want to read it, you need to buy it. This ain't no library.

Zu looks at Wendy. She closes the magazine and stuffs it back in the rack. She wanders down another aisle.

Wendy follows her. She pretends to organize inventory. She watches Zu pick up almonds and a bag of Skittles.

Zu looks at the Skittles. She considers. She adds them to her snacks.

Zu walks down another aisle. Wendy is right there.

Zu grabs two apples and some crackers. She walks to the counter and sets the items down.

Jan pops a bubble.

JAN

I just love your hair.

Jan reaches out. She tries to touch Zu's hair.

JAN (CONT'D)

How do you get it that big?

Zu leans back out of Jan's reach.

JAN (CONT'D)

Oh. Sorry. I didn't mean to --

Zu looks down at the counter. She notices Jan's chipped and broken nails. The tattoo on her ring finger.

ZU

We're good.

Jan rings things up.

Bob restocks cigarettes behind Jan.

BOB

Our welfare machine is down. I hope you got cash to pay for that.

Bob turns around.

ZU

Oh no, how are all the white trash, trailer park moms, that live around here going to pay for their Mountain Dew and white bread?

Jan looks at Bob and nods. He shakes his head at Jan and walks over to stand next to her. He leans on the counter.

Zu looks at his forearm. She notices his Aryan Brotherhood tattoo. She takes a step back.

The bell over the door rings. HARTLEY (40), bi-racial, she looks like a catalogue model, in stylish travel couture, walks in with urgency. She adjusts her mask.

HARTLEY

Zu... this road trip is off to a rough start. You won't believe what happened outside.

Hartley walks over to Zu. She adjusts her bag.

HARTLEY (CONT'D)

What's taking so long?

Hartley looks around.

BOB

You can't wear that in here.

Hartley looks at Bob confused and then to Zu.

HARTLEY

Why aren't you wearing your mask?

Zu looks at Bob's name tag. She points at him.

ZU

According to Bob... out here there 'ain't no pandemic.' He also made sure I knew the welfare machine is down.

HARTLEY

What, why?

ZU

It doesn't matter. Let's just go.

Zu tucks a twenty-dollar bill into her pocket.

HARTLEY

What about the snacks?

ZU

I think we've had enough crackers.

Hartley and Zu walk off. Zu slips her hand in her pocket.

JAN

Hey, you gotta pay for that water.

Zu stops. She rolls her eyes and turns around.

ZU  
I brought this in with me.

JAN  
You got a receipt?

Wendy comes out of the aisle. She walks over to Zu.

WENDY  
What about the Skittles? You bring those in with you?

Zu clinches her fist inside her pocket, with sudden awareness, she freezes, she realizes what she's done.

WENDY (CONT'D)  
I saw you pick um up. I don't see um on the counter.

Hartley gets between Wendy and Zu.

HARTLEY  
Step away from my niece.

Wendy doesn't back down. She steps closer to Hartley. She gets in her space. She challenges her to do something.

WENDY  
There are two things I hate. Them job steal'n wetbacks and uppity niggers who forget their place.

Hartley opens and closes her hand slowly. She makes a fist.

HARTLEY  
Be careful. You look like you've got a few wetbacks and niggers swinging from your family tree.

CHUNG! CHUNG! The sound of a double-action pump shotgun.

Everyone looks to the counter.

Bob points a double-action pump shotgun at Hartley.

BOB  
Shoplifters will be prosecuted.

Hartley puts her hands up. She walks to the counter. She takes her mask off. She looks Bob square in his eyes.

HARTLEY  
Are you going to shoot us over a bag of candy?

Hartley reaches down to the display in front of the counter. She maintains eye contact. She picks up two bags of candy.

HARTLEY (CONT'D)  
These are two for a dollar.

She puts the candy on the counter. She rifles through her bag. She takes out her wallet. She pulls out a five.

HARTLEY (CONT'D)  
Here's a five.

Hartley throws the money at Bob. It floats to the ground.  
Bob looks over the counter and down at the money. He sneers.

BOB  
Now you go ahead and be a good  
nigger and pick that up.

Bob gestures with the shotgun.

BOB (CONT'D)  
Go on. Do it.

Jan plays with her gum. She looks down at the magazine and up at Hartley.

JAN  
Oh my GOD! It's you. I watch your  
show. Or I used to before I started  
work'n doubles 'cause of need'n  
extra money for the baby.

Bob steps back. He lowers the shotgun.

BOB  
What the hell you babble'n about?

JAN  
That's Hartley Taylor.

Jan slides the magazine to Bob's side of the counter.

JAN (CONT'D)  
She's a celebrity chef. Accord'n to  
this she's got a new show in LA  
where she's open'n a restaurant.

Jan looks at Hartley.

JAN (CONT'D)

When you made those short ribs. I told my boyfriend we have to get us one of them Dutch ovens.

Bob looks at the magazine, then to Hartley.

BOB

Well shit, I love cook'n shows. You know Ina Garten? She's my favorite.

JAN

Didn't her husband beat her up?

WENDY

No... that was Nigella.

Bob looks from Jan to Wendy.

BOB

Sometimes y'all need a good beat'n.

Hartley backs away. She bumps Wendy who is racing to get in on the celebrity gossip.

The bell over the door rings. Sheriff HASTINGS (50), a tough disciplinarian, walks in. He looks at Bob.

HASTINGS

Brother.

Hastings adjusts his hat. He spits a wad of chew in a dirty trash can by the door. Hastings looks from Hartley and Zu.

HASTINGS (CONT'D)

It's dangerous be'n black around here.

Hartley takes Zu by the arm.

HARTLEY

We're leaving.

Hastings puts his hand on the door. He pulls it and turns the lock.

FADE TO BLACK