

THE LAST EXIT

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Inspired by Actual Events

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LOGLINE: After a near accident with his daughter in the car, a struggling father must salvage their relationship before it's too late.

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IN BLACK:

We hear the LOW HUM of a car engine.

RAYMOND (V.O.)
I need to stop at a friend's place
before I drop you off with your
mom.

The HUMS of other engines slow. This engine HUMS LOUDER.

NOVA (V.O.)
Dad, the light. The light!

The engine is REVVING.

We hear the sounds of BRAKES SLAMMING and HORNS HONKING.

FADE IN:

INT. RAYMOND'S CAR - EVENING

RAYMOND FOSTER (40s) and NOVA FOSTER (15) sit on the side of the road, unharmed, but stunned.

Littered with empty soda cans, clothes and boxes in the back seat. The console is covered with packets of Swisher Sweet rolling papers.

RAYMOND
Are you okay, Chocolate Chip? I
thought I could make that light.

Nova refuses to look at her father. She fiddles with her hands as Raymond tries to change the subject.

RAYMOND (CONT'D)
I still need to stop at my friend's
place. That work?

NOVA
Sure.

Raymond pulls into the liquor store parking lot. He parks behind the store.

EXT. LIQUOR STORE - EVENING

Raymond stands outside his car and looks in at Nova.

RAYMOND

This shouldn't take too long. Want me to grab you some candy while I'm in there?

NOVA (O.S.)

Sure, just no black licorice.

RAYMOND

(stern)

And don't tell your mom. I've got this taken care of.

INT. RAYMOND'S CAR - EVENING

Nova watches as Raymond walks into liquor store. She pulls out her phone and calls her mom, Lena.

NOVA

Hey, Mom.

LENA (V.O.)

Hey, sweetie. Are you on your way home?

Nova opens the glovebox and shuffles some things around.

NOVA

Yeah, but Dad almost got us in a car accident. I don't feel comfortable driving the rest of the way home with him.

LENA (V.O.)

Dammit, Raymond. Do you need us to come get you?

Nova hesitates.

LENA (V.O.)

Nova?

NOVA

(hesitant)

Could you? We're at the liquor store on Oakridge Drive.

LENA (V.O.)

Alright, we'll be there soon. What are you doing there?

Nova pulls a dime bag of weed out of the glovebox. She shoves it into her pocket.

NOVA

He said he needed to stop at a friend's place. Again.

(beat)

He's coming back, I should go. Bye, Mom.

Nova hangs up as Raymond gets back in the car.

RAYMOND

Who were you on the phone with?

NOVA

No one. I was just watching a video on my phone.

RAYMOND

Okay. I got you some root beer and a box of Good & Plenty.

Nova ~~takes the candy and~~ looks at it before tossing it beside her.

NOVA

Dad, are we going to talk about what just happened?

RAYMOND

What's there to talk about? You're safe and no one got hurt.

NOVA

Sure, but I don't feel safe.

RAYMOND

What do you mean, you don't feel safe? You're in one piece.

Nova shakes her head before turning to look at Raymond.

NOVA

I'm just scared, Dad.

RAYMOND

Come on, Nova. There isn't anything you need to be afraid of.

(chuckles)

You just need to "man-up."

Nova cringes at Raymond's comment.

NOVA

Not true. Remember when you left me alone with your new girlfriend?

(MORE)

NOVA (CONT'D)

You said it wouldn't be that long.
You were gone for three hours. I
was six, Dad.

RAYMOND

But I came back. And you were fine,
you were watching a movie. I made
sure you had food and that you were
safe.

NOVA

I had no idea who she was, and you
left me alone with her.

RAYMOND

Yeah, but that was one time.

NOVA

What about the time when I was at a
school dance and Daniel asked to be
my boyfriend? You repeated the fact
that I wouldn't be allowed to date
until I was in my thirties and
seven feet tall.

RAYMOND

That boy was trouble, and you know
that. I didn't want you going down
the same path I did.

NOVA

We were in first grade. He gave me
a teddy bear and chocolate.

Nova pulls her sleeves down and crosses her arms.

NOVA (CONT'D)

It's like you don't even care how I
feel.

Raymond points to the candy on Nova's lap.

RAYMOND

But I got you some candy to cheer
you up, Sucka Butt.

NOVA

Good & Plenty is your favorite
candy. I hate black licorice.

RAYMOND

Then why didn't you tell me what
you wanted? I would've gotten you
something else.

NOVA

I did tell you, Dad. There are countless times where you don't listen, and you are so wrapped up in your own world to realize that I'm here, too.

Raymond looks at Nova.

RAYMOND

You are a part of my world. I'm your father. I love you, and I take care of you. Just because your mom and I aren't together anymore, doesn't make you less important to me.

(self-pitying)

If anything, you've been pushing me away. You never text me, you never want to hang out, I barely see you anymore. All I have is when you come over to the Payne's place.

NOVA

Dad, look around. Your car isn't a place for your kid. Neither is your apartment. Any time I come over, it's always a new place and I don't even have my own room. How am I supposed to feel taken care of if I don't have a place to sleep?

Raymond looks around. His shoulders slump; she's right.

Nova's phone BUZZES. It's a text from her mom.

"LENA: almost there."

Nova texts back.

RAYMOND

Who you texting?

NOVA

(hesitant)

It's Mom. I asked her to come pick me up.

Raymond's face shifts to rage. He jumps out of the car, just to slam the door shut. He gets back in and slams his fist on the center console.

RAYMOND

I told you not to! I told you that I had this handled! God, Nova, why didn't you just listen?

Nova shuts down. She puts her knees to her chest and throws on her hood.

NOVA

This. This is why I'm scared. One misstep and you explode. I don't feel safe with you. I haven't in a long time.

Raymond is frozen. He stares at Nova.

RAYMOND

Nova, I'm sorry. Is there any way I can make it up to you? Video games? Dinner? Please? Whatever you want. What do you say?

A CAR HORN HONKS behind Raymond's car.

NOVA

Mom and Austin are here.
(tosses the dime bag)
Don't forget to see that friend.

Nova gets out. Raymond looks out at her.

RAYMOND

Will I see you next weekend? The Paynes are having a pool party, and it would mean the world to me if you could come.

Nova looks at her mom's car before looking back at Raymond.

NOVA

Bye, Dad.

Nova slams the car door.

Through the rearview, Raymond watches Nova walk to her mom's car. The car drives off. He looks to the passenger seat and sees the box of Good & Plenty sitting there.

Raymond takes a deep breath. He breaks down and sobs.

FADE OUT.

THE END