

Driver Wanted

Written by

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INT. OFFICE - LOWER MANHATTAN - AFTERNOON

A plush office. Richly appointed. A WOMAN (early 30's) fidgets nervously in her chair. She's attractive, especially when she's put together like she is today. But just now she looks like she wants to be anywhere but here.

Across from her, on the wall facing us is a CAMPAIGN POSTER--

TIME FOR YOUR "WAKE" UP CALL, NEW YORK!

SUPPORT KIRK WAKEMAN FOR ALDERMAN - 5th DISTRICT

And seated just below the poster, across the desk from this young lady is KIRK WAKEMAN himself. He's 37 now (okay, 40) and dashing, in spite of his casual attire. And judging from the Cheshire Cat grin he wears -- both on the poster and the genuine article -- he knows he's on a roll.

He LEANS BACK in his plush, leather chair, enjoying this woman's nervousness--

KIRK

I don't know, Melanie. I never considered a girl for the job.

The woman grimaces, but just slightly. She's not going to break a hip anytime soon, but she left "girlhood" behind a long time ago. Still, she needs this.

MAGGIE

I know it's not normal, but...
neither are you, Mister Wakeman.
(beat; reflexively)
And it's "Maggie", sir.

Did she correct him? *The fuck she think she's talking to?*

KIRK

What's that supposed to mean?

She takes the bait -- FLUSHES, right in front of us.

MAGGIE

(backpedaling)
No... I didn't mean... all I meant was... Your restaurant is my absolute favorite! And you're hotel! I just meant...
(beat; gives up)
...I'm sorry Mister Wakeman.

KIRK

Let me give you a piece of advice,
sugar. Never say you're sorry.
Ever. Makes you look weak.

Maggie is mortified. She literally SQUIRMS in her chair.
And Kirk is loving every second of it.

MAGGIE

I'm s...
(catches herself)
You're right. Thank you.

Kirk CHECKS HIS WATCH--

KIRK

Well, this has been fun and all,
Maureen, but I'm extremely busy.
So let me just ask you this. If I
did hire you to be my driver--
(looks her over; lewdly)
--*What, exactly*, would you bring to
the table?

We all know what he means. Maggie lowers her eyes to the
desktop, unable to hold his gaze. Everything could ride on
this, so she searches for the right answer. Then--

MAGGIE

(sincere; hopeful)
I have a three-hole-punch?

And she is now so frazzled she thought he meant literally
"bring to the table". She wasn't avoiding his gaze at all,
she was taking inventory of his fucking office supplies!

Wow.

KIRK

(less than sincere)
We'll let you know.

Maggie practically JUMPS out of her chair, visibly relieved
to be finished here. She extends her hand to Kirk--

MAGGIE

Thank you, Mister Wakeman. It
really is a thrill to meet you.

Kirk withdraws from her hand--

KIRK

Germaphobic.

MAGGIE
 (what else could go wrong)
 Of course. Well, goodbye, sir.

And she isn't even to the door before Kirk hits the INTERCOM button on his phone--

KIRK
 (into phone)
 How did she get in here, Doris?

A VOICE belonging to an older woman answers the question. This is DORIS, (late 60's and seen it all) Kirk's secretary--

DORIS (O.C.)
 Did it go poorly, sir? I'm so sorry, that was Mister Rosenberg's referral.

KIRK
 (shakes his head)
 Of course. Call him up and tell him if he likes banging her that much, he can give her a job.

DORIS (O.C.)
 Yes, sir. Straight away.

KIRK
 Are there any more?

DORIS (O.C.)
 Just one, sir.

Kirk checks his watch again -- RUBS HIS EYES.

KIRK
 From now on, I'm not doing more than two of these a day, got it?

DORIS (O.C.)
 Would you like me to have this last gentleman reschedule?

A BEAT, as Kirk thinks it over.

KIRK
 Fuck it, let's get it over-with. But I want you to call me in exactly five minutes and tell me I have a meeting. Just make something up, I don't give a shit.
 (MORE)

KIRK (CONT'D)

I just don't wanna be stuck here
all day getting my leg humped by
some schnook.

DORIS (O.C.)

Five minutes. Yes, sir.

KIRK

Anyway, it couldn't be worse than
the last one, right? OK, let's go.

Kirk lets out a LONG BREATH, leans back in his chair. Here
we go again--

A BEAT... but nobody at the door. Then another--

KIRK (CONT'D)

(shouts)

Hello?! I said let's go!

Still nothing. But just as Kirk is about to hit the INTERCOM
button again, the door suddenly OPENS, and in walks the last
candidate of the day.

Meet OLIVER RIDGE, (59) and still obviously fit under his
(also) obviously cheap suit. What hair he has left is worn
very close and he moves with purpose to the open chair.

OLIVER

Good afternoon, sir. Thank you so
much for seeing me.

KIRK

(dismissive)

Yeah, right. You're here about the
driver thing?

OLIVER

(sincere)

Oh, yes.

KIRK

Uh-huh. And what makes you think
you're qualified for the job?

OLIVER

I've been preparing for this
opportunity for years, Mister
Wakeman. Years.

KIRK

Clearly. How old are you, anyway?

OLIVER
 Fifty-nine.
 (considers it)
 I'm fifty-nine years old.

KIRK
 And where are you from?

OLIVER
 Oh, here and there.

Kirk isn't in the mood. Not this late. Not ever, actually.

KIRK
 How about being more specific?

ON OLIVER: A tiny SMILE creases his face--

OLIVER
 I travelled a lot with my job. But
 home's the Midwest. Michigan.

KIRK
 That wasn't so difficult, now was
 it?

OLIVER
 What's that, sir?

KIRK
 (obviously annoyed)
 Telling me where you're from. Now,
 you think you can remember where in
 Michigan, or do I have to guess?

OLIVER
 Half-way between Detroit and Ann
 Arbor. It's called "Livonia."

ON KIRK: And it was so subtle we're not sure we even saw it.
 But, just for a split-second, it looked like he might have
 FLINCHED. Still, if he did, he recovers in a flash.

KIRK
 Never heard of it.
 (moving on)
 So, why would I hire you to be my
 driver if you're not even from New
 York? I've got a crazy schedule
 and I need someone who knows this
 city inside and out.

OLIVER
I've been in the city for some time
now, Mister Wakeman. And, between
us, I've driven my bosses through
tougher streets than Manhattan's.

KIRK
Yeah? Like where?

OLIVER
Mogadishu, Kabul, Tikrit. Karachi
was no picnic either.

Okay, that just got Kirk's attention. He LEANS FORWARD--

KIRK
Military?

OLIVER
Marine Corps. Thirty-six years.

And now Kirk hits us with one of those ELECTION-YEAR-SMILES--

KIRK
(out comes the charm)
Well, why didn't you say so? I'm a
strong supporter of our troops.

OLIVER
Nice to hear.

Something occurs to Kirk--

KIRK
Wait, did you say Karachi?

OLIVER
I did.

KIRK
But...
(confused)
Do we even have troops in Pakistan?

OLIVER
Not officially.

Kirk stares right at Oliver, who holds his gaze easily.
He's starting to like this guy--

KIRK
Sounds like an interesting
career...

OLIVER

Major.

KIRK

(nods; impressed)
And a successful one.

OLIVER

I was good at my job.

KIRK

Good at mine, too. You know, a guy like you might come in handy, Major. Politics in this town can get a little rough.

OLIVER

(please)
I'm sure.

KIRK

And if I decide to hire you, when would you be ready to start?

OLIVER

I'm ready right now. As in today.

Kirk can't help but NOD in satisfaction. This guy is gung-ho. And all of a sudden, Kirk is glad he stuck around. Then...

OLIVER (CONT'D)

But that isn't what I do?

KIRK

Excuse me?

OLIVER

Protection. That's not what I do.

Okay. Maybe we spoke too soon--

KIRK

Look, I wasn't suggesting-

OLIVER

(interrupts)
Were you ever in the military, Mister Wakeman?

Kirk hasn't been spoken to like this in a very long time. But something about Oliver, just something in his voice, compels Kirk to answer his question.

KIRK

No.

OLIVER

Didn't think so. See, that's what you civilians don't understand. You choose not to look past the spiffy uniforms and the parades. And all the commercials talk about is money for college, right? But when you're a soldier, no matter what other trade they teach you, your job is to kill as many people as you possibly can. Before you get killed.

Kirk is a very cool customer. But there's now a visible chink in the armor. This just got creepy--

OLIVER (CONT'D)

If you're looking for protection, hire a lifeguard.

Oliver allows himself a chuckle at his own joke. And Kirk quickly joins him, but he LAUGHS way too hard, desperate to break the tension and reset the tone.

OLIVER (CONT'D)

You sure you've never even heard of Livonia?

That stops the laughter. Let's be clear, Kirk is no pushover. But he looks legitimately worried now. And all of a sudden, one thing becomes crystal clear--

This is Oliver's interview now.

KIRK

Of course I'm sure.

OLIVER

And don't get me wrong, I'm very grateful for the opportunity, but why don't you drive yourself?

KIRK

(confused; incredulous)
What?

OLIVER

I asked you why you don't just drive yourself. If you're worried about keeping your schedule, I mean.

And yes, Kirk is back on his heels, but that pissed him off.

KIRK

(stern)

Just who the hell do you think
you're talking to?

But Oliver presses on. It's as if he can't even hear Kirk--

OLIVER

I mean, I know it can be a huge
hassle. Dangerous, too.
Especially if you've been drinking.

(beat)

You know I have a daughter? Oops,
I mean had a daughter. Pardon me.

This time, we don't have to guess. Kirk looks like he's just
taken a shot to the gut. He SLUMPS BACK in his seat.

KIRK

(sotto)

Oh my God.

OLIVER

She was killed in a car crash. In
Livonia. Not instantly, though.
The car she was in flipped over a
few times, pinned her underneath
the passenger side door. Split her
head wide open.

Now Kirk looks like he's going to be sick. Oliver goes on,
almost casually--

OLIVER (CONT'D)

You wanna know the pickle of the
whole thing? She wasn't even
driving. And whoever was behind
the wheel wasn't even hurt. Nope,
he just up and vanished into thin
air. But wherever he got to, one
thing's for certain -- it was a
place that didn't have any phones.

(beat)

Had to be, you see? Or else why
wouldn't he have called for some
help?

Kirk's chest begins to rise and fall more quickly. His eyes
WIDEN, and he begins to SWEAT.

OLIVER (CONT'D)

(more intense now)

You know how long it takes to bleed to death from your skull, Mister Wakeman? It can take hours. Unless you're hanging upside down and gravity can help things along. But Janey wasn't. Oh, I'm sorry. That was my daughter's name...

(glares at Kirk; steady)

... Janey.

The sweat is coming freely now. Kirk has gone white as a sheet. Oh. Fuck.

KIRK

How... How did you...

OLIVER

Eleven years, Mister Wakeman. That's a long time to look for someone, don't you think? Especially when you don't know who it is you're looking for. If that cab driver hadn't remembered a ride he gave some kid a long time ago... a kid so shook up and drunk he puked all over the back seat? Well, without that I wouldn't have even known where to start. Plus, I was always away working.

(beat)

I told you what I did, didn't I, Mister Wakeman? In the military, I mean?

Kirk can't bear to look at Oliver any more. He just stares up at the ceiling, then back down to the desk..

...and the PHONE!

DORIS! Kirk's eyes LOCK on the phone. Had it been five minutes? If he can get her to call for help, he might--

OLIVER (CONT'D)

(matter of fact)

Oh, Doris? She won't be calling.

Kirk's JAW DROPS OPEN, and he stares at Oliver in unfiltered horror.

OLIVER (CONT'D)

Trust me.

KIRK
 (this can't be happening)
 You...

But Oliver doesn't miss a beat, just pushes on--

OLIVER
 (interrupts)
 You know, in some weird way, I suppose I should thank you. Did you know killing one person can sometimes be more effective than killing a hundred? Especially if you do it right. Lucky for me, I had lots and lots of practice. And like I said, I was good at my job. I was from the start, really. But once I had you to focus on? Man, I got downright creative. You know, I actually cut off a guy's lips with a can opener once?

Kirk begins to CRY.

KIRK
 (weakly)
 Nooo...

OLIVER
 (plays through)
 Didn't think it would work. You gotta squeeze the clamp down really fucking hard, but the little blade will cut right through. I never would've even thought to try that if I wasn't pretending the guy in the chair was my guy, you know?
 (beat)
 The guy that let my daughter bleed to death. All alone in the street. At nineteen years old.

Kirk CRIES a little harder now--

KIRK
 Please... I-

OLIVER
 And hey, listen, don't you worry about making noise, okay? I've heard people scream in every language you could think of, don't bother me one bit. Nope the screaming is fine by me.
 (MORE)

OLIVER (CONT'D)
 But a lot of them actually shit
 themselves when the really heavy-
 duty stuff starts. And, man...
 (beat; scrunches his nose)
 Never did get used to that.

Oliver STANDS UP, REMOVES his suit coat, revealing the torso
 of a man who is built to do damage.

Kirk is desperate now and also STANDS--

KIRK
 (hysterical)
 Wait. WAIT!

Oliver actually seems startled momentarily by the passion in
 Kirk's voice; decides to hear him out.

KIRK (CONT'D)
 This won't bring her back!

But now it's Oliver's turn to look confused.

OLIVER
 Who said anything about bringing
 her back? Janey's dead.

Kirk is desperate; PLEADING--

KIRK
 (through his sobs)
 Then why are you doing this!?
 You'll get caught, you know that!
 You'll get caught and you'll wind
 up dead, too!

ON OLIVER: And if we didn't know any better, we might
 mistake the look on his face for pity.

OLIVER
 (completely calm)
 My daughter was the best thing in
 my whole world. The only truly
 good thing I've ever known. And
 when you took her from me, all that
 went away. You want to know why
 I'm not afraid to die? Because I
 died eleven years ago, Mister
 Wakeman.
 (beat; means this)
 And you're going to die right now.

Oliver takes a step around the desk, cutting off Kirk's path
 to the door.

Kirk's survival instincts get him out of his chair and backpedaling away from Oliver, his ARMS OUT in a "STOP" gesture--

KIRK
(hysterical)
It was an accident! I know I
should have called, I... I'M SORRY!

Oliver stops one, last time -- careful to continue to block Kirk's only path of escape.

OLIVER
You should never apologize, Mister
Wakeman. Ever.
(beat)
Makes you look weak.

And as the irony of this lands on Kirk, Oliver LUNGES with terrifying, liquid speed and GRABS HIS ARM in a lock. The meeting is over. And for Kirk Wakeman, it's all over--

Except for the screaming, that is.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END