

BAD FOR BUSINESS

by

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FADE IN:

EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY

LEMONADE is scrawled on a WOODEN SIGN in a child's handwriting. Both E's are backward.

A PITCHER of YELLOW LEMONADE sits full on the stand. Slices of lemon float near the surface.

A PLASTIC JAR sits empty by the lemonade. A small paper sign is taped to the jar: CASH REGISTER. Backward E's.

SUSIE (8) and CHARLIE (6) sit behind this sad little lemonade stand.

Susie looks left, then right. Not a customer in sight. She sighs, disappointed.

Charlie saws at a lemon with a PLASTIC KNIFE. He wipes the sweat from his brow, inspects his progress. Negligible.

SUSIE

Charlie, go inside and get me a
bottle of water, will ya?

Charlie looks at the lemonade pitcher, then at Susie.

SUSIE (cont'd)

We can't drink the merchandise.
That's bad for business.

Charlie does as he's told. Susie looks up and down the sidewalk again. She's all alone.

She pays no attention the Toyota Camry parked under a tree a few houses down, nor to the man behind the wheel.

INT. CAR - DAY

PHILLIP (late 30's) snaps a picture of Susie with his smartphone, then another, then another. He smiles.

He opens the phone's photo album and flips back to pictures of other kids. Hands tied. Mouths gagged. Terrified.

He closes the album, opens the glove compartment. Inside, a BROWN CHLOROFORM BOTTLE, a WHITE RAG, and a STRAIGHT RAZOR.

He slides the razor into one jacket pocket, preps the chloroform rag, slides it into his other pocket. He returns the bottle to the glove compartment.

EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY

Susie pouts behind the lemonade stand, her chin resting on her crossed arms. A SHADOW blocks out the sun.

Susie looks up at the dark silhouette of Phillip.

PHILLIP
One glass of lemonade, please.

Susie's eyes drift to the empty cash jar. She looks back at Phillip, raises her eyebrows.

PHILLIP (cont'd)
Of course. How much?

SUSIE
One dollar.

PHILLIP
Expensive.

SUSIE
I've got to cover my costs.

Phillip deposits a dollar into the jar as Susie pours a cup of lemonade. She offers it to him. He takes a drink.

A too-sour SCOWL crosses his face. He recovers his composure, LEERS at Susie.

PHILLIP
Heavenly.

Phillip glances up and down the sidewalk.

PHILLIP (cont'd)
Slow day?

SUSIE
People don't know a good thing when it's right in front of them.

Phillip grins.

PHILLIP
You know, I have just what you need in my car. A secret ingredient. You'll have customers lined up all the way to the end of the block.

Susie's eyes light up, hopeful.

(CONTINUED)

PHILLIP (cont'd)
If you want, I'll let you have it.
You'll need to come carry it
though. Bad back.

Susie's expression shifts to mistrust.

PHILLIP (cont'd)
Of course, if you're not
interested, I saw another lemonade
stand a few blocks over. I'm sure
that little girl-

Susie jumps to her feet, looks up and down the street.

SUSIE
Where's your car?

EXT. CAR - DAY

Phillip stands by the passenger door, one hand in his
chloroform rag pocket. He gestures to the glove compartment.

PHILLIP
It's right in there.

Susie hesitates, decides to climb in the car. She opens the
glove compartment. Phillip produces the chloroform rag.

SUSIE
It's empty.

Phillip hides the rag, confused. He looks inside the glove
compartment. The bottle is gone.

He's still confused when a WHITE RAG wraps around his face.
His world swims out of focus as he falls to the ground.

FADE TO BLACK

INT. BASEMENT - DAY

Phillip opens his eyes. Darkness. Candles.

He tries to sit up, can't. He's bound to a long table.

SUSIE (O.S.)
About time.

Phillip turns to see Susie wearing a Rainbow Brite Halloween
costume. The mask is pulled back, resting atop her head.

(CONTINUED)

PHILLIP

What the hell's going on here?

Susie SLAPS him, hard.

SUSIE

Mommy says we're not to use that kind of language. It's inappropriate.

Phillip hears SHUFFLING. He turns his head, sees more kids wearing plastic Halloween costumes: Pound Puppy, Pound Princess, He-Man, She-Ra, Strawberry Shortcake.

PHILLIP

Little girl, if you don't let me go right now, you're going to be in a lot of trouble.

SUSIE

I can't.

She produces his smartphone, shows him one of his pictures.

SUSIE (cont'd)

That would be bad for business.

Charlie appears beside Susie, dressed in a Chuck Norris Halloween costume. He hands Susie the STRAIGHT RAZOR.

Terror fills Phillip's face.

PHILLIP

You let me go right now you little bitch, you hear-

Charlie stuffs a LEMON into Phillip's ranting mouth.

A boy wearing a Yoda costume appears with a homemade book, all crayon and construction paper. The word NECRONOMICON is scrawled on the cover. The E is backward.

Yoda opens the book, begins to chant. The others join in.

Phillip screams into the lemon. He thrashes against his restraints, but he's not going anywhere.

Susie slides the Rainbow Brite mask down over her face. Her soft voice mutters in unison with the other kids. She opens the straight razor, raises it high, SLASHES.

CUT TO BLACK

EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY

LEMONADE is scrawled on a WOODEN SIGN in a child's handwriting. Both E's are backward.

A PITCHER of PINK LEMONADE sits nearly empty on the stand. Slices of lemon float near the bottom.

A PLASTIC JAR sits full of money by the lemonade. A small paper sign is taped to the jar: CASH REGISTER. Backward E's.

SUSIE and CHARLIE sit behind this busy little lemonade stand. A line of customers stretches down the sidewalk.

Hidden from sight, Charlie busies himself behind the stand, slicing lemons with the BLOODY STRAIGHT RAZOR. He smiles at how easily the blade slices through the fruit.

The water turns PINK as he drops in the lemon slices.

Down the street, a POLICEMAN pokes around the abandoned Toyota Camry. He moves toward the lemonade stand, steps to the front of the line, gestures toward the Camry.

OFFICER JANSEN

Excuse me. Have you seen anyone getting in or out of that car?

Susie and Charlie exchange a glance. They look back to the policeman and shake their heads. Pure innocence.

OFFICER JANSEN (cont'd)

Thanks anyway.

SUSIE

Want some lemonade?

Susie extends a cup of lemonade his way. He accepts the cup, takes a drink. A huge SMILE crosses his face.

OFFICER JANSEN

Wow. This is good. Thanks, kid.

Susie clears her throat, nods toward the cash jar.

OFFICER JANSEN (cont'd)

I thought this was on the house.

A sinister smile crosses Susie's lips.

SUSIE

That would be bad for business.

CUT TO BLACK