

TELL ME ABOUT IT

Written by

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Based on a story as old as time...

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FADE IN:

I/E. CAR, TRAVELING - DAY

A man driving in his car. He is...

MAX JACKSON, 40s. Average looking. Soft face.

MAX (V.O.)

My name is Max Jackson. For some reason, people talk to me. Out of the blue. Strangers will just open up, start telling me their life stories. Their troubles, their problems, even when I don't say anything back. It's been like that since I was a kid. They share their deepest darkest secrets. Meanwhile, I've got a secret myself.

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

Max walking from his car toward us.

MAX

There are all kinds of addictions and vices. One is ...gambling.

Automatic doors slide open.

INT. CASINO - DAY

POV Stroll through a CASINO--

People playing, drinking, smoking, yelling.

MAX (V.O.)

And there are all kinds of gamblers...

Three couples gather 'round a ringing slot machine.

WOMAN #1

I got the genie bonus!

THE GROUP

Woo hoo!

WOMAN #2

You just won \$46!

THE GROUP
Yaaay! Cathy!

Lifting umbrella drinks and beers.

MAX (V.O.)
There are the "Supers". They're
immune. Little chance of catching
the fever. Not built that way. They
can play a couple of bucks -win or
lose- and walk away.

Two elderly women, two elderly men, at a row of slot
machines. Chatting like old friends in wheelchairs and
oxygen.

MAX
There are the "Steadies".
Thanksgiving. Christmas. New
Year's. Doesn't matter, they're
here. Like punching a clock. They
live for the war stories and the
camaraderie. Then, there's this
guy...

Middle-aged MAN, wrinkled suit, loose tie. Playing BLACKJACK
alone at a table. Pit boss watches both the DEALER, 30's, and
the player, alternately.

MAX (V.O.)
He's one of the "Summers". As in
zero-sum. They'll play till they
lose it all. No matter what. Or how
long it takes.

DEALER
Place your bets.

Man PUSHES chips in. Dealer deals. Man shows 12.

MAN
Hit me.

Dealer FLIPS a one-eyed-jack.

DEALER
22. Bust.

Dealer rakes in Man's chips.

MAN
(to the pit boss)
Raise the limit. One hand. All of
it.

Pit boss EYES Man's chips. NODS to the dealer. Man PUSHES all-in.

MAN (CONT'D)
(adrenalized)
Here we go!

Dealer deals a 20 to Man. A face-up TWO to himself.

MAN (CONT'D)
Yes!

Dealer turns over his down-card, a KING. Flips a TWO. Then another TWO...

MAN (CONT'D)
Come on. Bust!

Then a FIVE.

DEALER
21.

Dealer takes the chips as Man gets up, shuffles off.

MAX (V.O.)
Wouldn't have mattered. Someone like that can never win enough to fill the hole in their soul. Usually goes back to childhood trauma, unresolved. Then there are the *real* hard cases. They end up in jail or treatment programs. Taking beatings from loan sharks, or their muscle, cuz they owe money they can't pay back. Sometimes killed. Maybe those are the lucky ones. They don't have to live with themselves.

EXT. PARKING LOT, OFFICE COMPLEX - DAY

Max walks through a door with a sign:

MAX L. JACKSON

BEHAVIORAL THERAPIST, LPC

INT. OFFICE LOBBY - DAY

Max walks through the lobby, to a desk. Handed mail by a RECEPTIONIST, 30s.

RECEPTIONIST
Morning, Max. Mr. Dozier is waiting
in your office.

MAX
Thanks, Carol.

RECEPTIONIST
Funny how he always leaves early.
Seems like a waste of money.

Max opens the door to his office, enters.

INT. MAX' OFFICE - DAY

On the couch--

Denny Dozier, 77. Silver hair. Once tough. Still rough around the edges.

Dozier
You're late.

MAX
We said 9 AM. It's 10 till.

DOZIER
If you're not 15 minutes early,
you're late. My father beat that
into me.

MAX
Apologies. Would you like to begin
now?

DOZIER
Yes, please. I, uh, I don't mean to
be snappy, I really get a lot out
of our sessions.

Max sits.

MAX
What's on your mind today?

DOZIER
I've been havin' a tough time at
work.

MAX
Tell me about it.

DOZIER
I think my boss doesn't trust me.

MAX
How does that make you feel?

DOZIER
Not good. I'm really starting to
worry about my job. I think he
feels I'm too old.

MAX
Is he right?

DOZIER
I don't know. I don't think so.
Isn't there a law against that
anyway?

MAX
The Age Discrimination in
Employment Act, or ADEA. Not sure
it applies in your case.

DOZIER
And he keeps testing me.

MAX
How does he test you?

Silence.

MAX (CONT'D)
You say "I think", "I don't think".
Tell me how you *feel*.

Silence.

Max points to a bruise under Dozier's eye.

MAX (CONT'D)
What happened there?

DOZIER
(touching it)
Uh, I don't really wanna talk about
it right now.

Dozier NODS to a cabinet.

MAX

Right.

Max unlocks and OPENS it.

Bottles of benzos and antidepressants on a pile of money, staring at a bottle of *Johnny Walker*. The *Johnny* looks down on the pills. Max grabs the stack of cash out from under the scripts.

As he turns back--

Dozier BACKHANDS Max across the face. Money FLIES out of his hand, FLUTTERS in the air--

MAX (CONT'D)

Ow!

Silence.

DOZIER

Sorry. The boss gave me one for lettin' you slide. I had to. In case anyone sees you on the outside.

MAX

(picking up the cash)
Uh, sure. Ow.

DOZIER (CONT'D)

(grabbing his hand)
AHHH! Arthritis flare-up.
Damn it!

MAX (CONT'D)

(counting bills)
There you go. 33,000.

DOZIER

You're only figuring a 10% vig.

MAX

That's what it is.

DOZIER

Not when you're on the long plan.
Then it's 15.

MAX

When did that start?

DOZIER

Recently.

MAX

You'd think I'd be grandfathered in.

DOZIER
*Grandfathered? You crackin' about
my age?*

MAX
No. Never mind.

Max takes every last dollar out of the cabinet, places it
neatly on the arm of the couch.

MAX (CONT'D)
There's another 1500. Another 30
next month. Plus 15.

DOZIER
(reflective)
Had to hurt a guy the other day.
Pains me. Maybe I'm gettin' weak.

MAX
Admitting weakness can be a
strength.

DOZIER
Not in my line.

Silence.

MAX
Look, I, uh, I gotta set up for my
next appointment.

DOZIER
Oh, sure. Of course.

Getting up--

DOZIER (CONT'D)
A degenerate shrink counseling
degenerates--

MAX
I'm a therapist.

DOZIER
A degenerate *therapist* counseling
degenerates. So ironical.

MAX
Yeah, you've said that before.

Dozier gets up, heads for the door.

MAX (CONT'D)

Hey Doz. Why do you do still do this at your age? Uh. Respectfully.

DOZIER

What else am I gonna do? Be a Walmart greeter?

Silence. Dozier turns--

DOZIER (CONT'D)

Why do you still do *this*, Max?
(holding up the cash)
Maybe it's time we both looked reality in the face, huh?

MAX' NEW WOUND

DOZIER'S OLD ONE

Dozier EXITS.

Max sits, opens his laptop. Hits keys.

Bank balance: \$117.93

PHOTO ON HIS DESK

A pretty woman. Two beautiful children. One disabled, with forearm crutches. All smiling. So perfect it looks like it came with the frame.

Max

Reality, huh?

Max opens it. Unfolds the photo at its crease, flattens it out. A smiling man, once folded under, now in the picture.

Max picks up the PHONE, dials.

MAX (CONT'D)

Hey Sally. ...No, I know. Just wanted to say I'm happy for you.
...I was wondering if I, uh, can maybe, see the kids, whenever it's--

Sally abruptly ends the call. Max stares into space.

Man from the casino BURSTS in. Frazzled.

MAN
Help me, doc!

MAX
I'm a therapist.

MAN (CONT'D)
I'm goin' to prison! I
embezzled money from my firm.

MAX (CONT'D)
(motioning)
Right. Why don't you have a seat.

MAN
You don't know what it's like,
losing everything! You're so lucky!

Max looks at the PHOTO of his ex-wife and kids with her new
husband--

MAX
Tell me about it.

Slam to Black.

MAIN TITLES AND MUSIC

FADE IN:

INT. MAX' OFFICE - CONTINUOUS - DAY

Max sits at his desk. Man on the couch.

MAN
I'm in big trouble!

MAX
Why do you believe that?

MAN
I just told you. I took money from
my company and gambled it away!
When they find out...(breaks down)

MAX
Ok, first of all, take a big breath
and exhale.

Man does.

MAX (CONT'D)
Now, what's your name?

MAN

I, uh-- Do I have to tell you that?

MAX

Therapy is based on trust. How can I help you if you don't trust me?

MAN

Uh. I'm just not-- What if you go to the police?

MAX

I could. But--

Man jumps up, BOLTS out the door.

MAX (CONT'D)

Hey!

Man ...*gone*.

MAX (CONT'D)

"..but I am bound by therapist-client privilege" is what I was saying.

(to himself)

Maybe you want to lead with that next time, Max.

Door starts to open--

MAX (CONT'D)

Oh, I'm glad you came back. I was about to--

Two bodyguard types enter, scan the room. Followed by a manicured man in a tailored suit, trailed by Receptionist.

RECEPTIONIST

I'm sorry, Max. They just--

MAX

It's alright, Carol.

SUIT, 45, nods to the bodyguards. They leave, followed by the Receptionist. Suit helps himself to the couch. Max stands.

MAX (CONT'D)

What can I do for you?

SUIT

You come recommended.

MAX

By who?

Silence.

SUIT

I believe we can help each other.

FLASHBACK

INT. UPSCALE CASINO - NIGHT

SUB: MACAO

Golden tones and foreign languages fill the room. Suit plays Baccarat in a tux.

SUIT (V.O.)

I was on a--Hey! Don't write this down!

FLASHBACK INTERRUPTED

BACK TO:

MAX' OFFICE

Max stops taking notes.

MAX

Therapy is built on trust. You barge into my office, ignore my secretary, don't even bother to introduce yourself--

SUIT

I'm sorry, You're, uh, you're right. I'll get to who I am in a minute. I was on a junket in Macao...

FLASHBACK RESUMES

BACK TO:

CASINO

MONTAGE

Suit playing Baccarat. Drinking. Signing a marker at the table, handing it to a pit boss. Playing Baccarat. Trading another marker for chips. Walking with an elegant lady to his room. Toasting with champagne. Same lady rifling through his valuables while he sleeps. Lifting his wallet, passport, watch.

Suit sits SLUMPED at a long table on a stage. Stunned. Deer in the headlights.

Sign reads:

GLOBAL ECONOMIC FORUM

END FLASHBACK

BACK TO:

MAX' OFFICE

Max, arms folded. Suit, squirming.

SUIT

Let's just say I made a series of poor choices.

MAX

We all do, from time to time. Recovery begins with the first step. Which you've taken by coming in here.

SUIT

It's not that simple.

MAX

How's that?

SUIT

I'm a political figure here in the Southwest. That's all I--

MAX

A congressman? A mayor?

SUIT

Let's go with mayor, for now.
That's all I can tell you at the
moment. I'm being blackmailed. They
are threatening me with--

MAX

Excuse me, but it sounds like you
need a lawyer and/or a private eye.
Of which I'm neither.

SUIT

They've let me know they're
watching my every move. But no
one's going to suspect my
"therapist" doing my dirty work.

MAX

Dirty work? I'm not a *fixer*.

SUIT

You are now. You will look into
this for me, then act on it. On my
instruction--

MAX

Sounds like you're about to
blackmail me.

SUIT

When this gets straightened out,
you'll be free of that very large
debt you owe. Wouldn't that be
nice? Maybe get your life back?
Those kids'll be grown up before
you know it.

MAX

How do you know about them?

SUIT

Politics makes strange bedfellows.

Suit slides a burner phone across the desk--

SUIT (CONT'D)

This is how we communicate for now
on. Start looking into my
background the deal's off. Don't
get back to me within 15 minutes,
the deal's off. If you tell anyone--

MAX

I don't remember agreeing to a deal.

SUIT

Who wouldn't agree to a deal that wipes \$30,000 a month off the books? You looking forward to 48 more of *those*?

MAX

47.

Silence.

MAX (CONT'D)

How do I know you're on the level?

SUIT

What have you got to lose? Other than your license, which I'll get pulled if you don't cooperate.

Suit gets up--

SUIT (CONT'D)

I'll see you soon for my "therapy". Makes a good cover while we figure out who's doing this.

Turns at the door.

SUIT (CONT'D)

And don't get cute. The burner has a tracker on it.

Exits.

Moments later...

Max pops a pill. Washes it down with a splash of *Johnny Walker*. Sits at his desk, contemplates. Reaches into a bottom drawer, pulls out his own burner phone, turns it on. Buries the one from the Suit under a pillow on his couch. Makes a call.

MAX

Hey. Can you meet me at the place, tonight? 10 o'clock?

Max ends the call, walks out.

INT. OFFICE LOBBY - DAY

Max walks past the desk without stopping--

MAX
Please cancel my appointments for
the rest of the day.

RECEPTIONIST
Sure, Max. Everything alright?

MAX
Taking my dog to the vet. Been
throwing up.

RECEPTIONIST
Wait? What? When did you get a dog?

Max out the door.

Immediately comes back in, walks into his office.

INT. MAX' OFFICE - CONTINUOUS - DAY

Max retrieves the Suit's burner phone from under the pillow,
sticks it in his pocket, EXITS.

INT. LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Walks past the Receptionist.

RECEPTIONIST
What's his name?

MAX
Named him after me.

RECEPTIONIST
Max? Or Jackson?

MAX
Lucky.

Exits.

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

Tumbleweeds. Bushes. Narrow, dirt road.

Max DRIVES UP. Gets out under a JET-BLACK sky, dotted with
diamonds. Standing next to her car is...

LIZ GARCIA, 30s. Latina. FBI agent. In civvies, leaning up against her car.

LIZ
You pick "the place"?

MAX
(pointing)
It was right over there, right?

LIZ
I, uh. I don't know, I can't remember. What do you--

MAX
I'm, uh-- I'm sorry. I didn't mean to--

LIZ
It's okay.

Silence.

LIZ (CONT'D)
Heard Sally got remarried. You okay?

MAX
Huh? Yeah. She's uh-- It's better this way. She's better off.

LIZ
Maybe. I can't imagine how those kids are though. You're a *great* father, Max.

MAX
Thanks. How's the Bureau?

LIZ
Same. What happened, Max?

Max gets the Suit's burner phone out of his car.

Phone reads:

MISSED CALL 2 MIN AGO

MAX
Oops. Quick call.

Motions "*shhh*" to Liz.

MAX (CONT'D)
(into phone)
Yeah. I was taking a... *What?*
...I'm in a-- I'm in a bad spot, I
can't hear you. I can't-- OK. OK.

Silence.

MAX (CONT'D)
Right.

Max throws the phone back in his car.

LIZ
What'd you get yourself into now?

MAX
Blackmail. This slick cat, barged
into my office draggin' a coupla
goons. Official types. Says he's a
mayor or something. Wouldn't say
where. Threatened to have my
license pulled if I didn't do what
he said.

LIZ
What does he want from you?

MAX
Someone is blackmailing *him*. Stems
from a lost weekend in Macao or
something. Using my couch as a
cover.

LIZ
How'd he find you?

MAX
Wouldn't say. Tethered to that
burner, awaiting instructions.

LIZ
I'll pull CCTV from outside your
office. Stays between us.

MAX
Cross my heart.

LIZ
Facial Tech should make a match if
he's a public figure.

Liz gets in her car, starts it up. Window down--

MAX
Thanks, Liz. I owe ya.

LIZ
Tell me about it.

MAX
That's my line.

LIZ
One of your many, Max.

Max watches Liz drive off through the dust. Shakes his head.
Gets in his car.

INT. MAX' APARTMENT - NIGHT

Max SLEEPING in his cramped studio apartment.

Home phone RINGS. And rings--

Max bolts up. Answers--

MAX
Uh. Hello? Who is it?

SUIT (O.S.)
It's me.

MAX
Oh. Yeah. Why are you calling me at home? I thought that's what the--

SUIT (O.S.)
Because you didn't answer the phone I gave you. What did I tell you?

Max reaches to the nightstand for the burner--

TWO MISSED CALLS

MAX
Oh. I, uh, must've had it on silent.

SUIT
One more slip and--

MAX
I know.

SUIT (O.S.)
I got a lead on who's threatening
me. You'll fly to Macao and look
into it.

MAX
I'll *what?*! I can't do that.

SUIT (O.S.)
You'd rather keep paying 30 grand a
month?

Silence.

SUIT (CONT'D)
I'll make an appointment with your
secretary and--

MAX
Receptionist. Carol.

SUIT
And give you the details in person.

Suit ends the call. Max stares at the phone. Clicks it from
"silent" to "ring" mode. Puts it on the nightstand. Lies back
down.

A minute later--

Home phone RINGS. Max answers--

MAX
You don't have to call the home
phone, I took yours off silent.

Silence.

MAX (CONT'D)
Mr. Mayor? Or whatever you--

VOICE
(Chinese accent)
He is no Mayor, Mr. Jackson.

Silence.

MAX
Who is this?!

VOICE
We know who you are and what you
are doing.
(MORE)

VOICE (CONT'D)

And we don't have to hide behind a cheap Korean burner phone.

MAX

Wha-- Who are you? What do you want?

VOICE

We will match the offer the owner made you. We will pay off your debt. Completely. When you arrive in Macao, we will put you up in a suite of your choosing. You will be given \$20,000 in chips to do with what you will. And we will transfer \$100,000 to your bank account. You are with Wells Fargo?

MAX

Uh. Yes.

VOICE

How very American. The myth of the rugged Wild West cowboy.

MAX

What? I don't understand.

VOICE

We know the owner wants you to pay us a visit. He has become desperate, using a therapist to handle his business. You will follow his instructions to a T. A driver will meet you at the airport.

MAX

And if I spill the beans?

VOICE

We do not like to make loud threats, as they do in the West.

Silence.

VOICE (CONT'D)

We hope you will make the right choice, Mr. Jackson.

Ends call. Max stunned, hangs up. Head on pillow, eyes wide open.

INT. MAX' OFFICE - DAY

MOS/No Sound

Suit, impeccably dressed, talks to a seated Max. Max' phone on his lap, obscured by the desk.

Text: *LIZ*

"No match yet. Sorry. Call you later."

Suit babbles on. Max lost in his own thoughts--

Text: *UNKNOWN CALLER*

"You are doing very well, Mr. Jackson. Keep nodding."

Max eyes DART around the room, looking for a hidden camera.

SOUND UP

SUIT

Did you hear what I said? You leave tomorrow night for Macao. I'll text you your ticket and other relevant information.

MAX

(re burner on the desk)
Got it right there.

SUIT

We know they're Triad. Chinese Mafia. You'll never be suspected.

MAX

I still don't understand what you think I can accomplish for you.

SUIT

You will come back with names, addresses, phone numbers and photos of these, these ...*crooks*.

Silence.

MAX

How much do you owe them?

Silence.

SUIT

\$25M.

INT. AIRPLANE - NIGHT

First Class. Max antsy. FLIGHT ATTENDANT, 30s, notices.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT
Can I get you anything, Mr.
Jackson?

MAX
Huh? No, I'm fine. Thank you.

CUT TO:

Max sleeps under a blanket. Wakes to a note in his lap.

MAX (CONT'D)
What's--

Looks around.

Note:

"Come to the back. Last seat on the left. Work to do."

Max looks around, LANDING on each person in view.

Gets up. Walks through the plane. Arrives at the last seat.
Sees...

EXT. AIRPLANE - NIGHT

The jet airliner flies through the air as we--

FADE TO BLACK.

- THE END -

- TELL ME ABOUT IT, EP. 1 (PILOT) -

