

Jam
by
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EXT. HIGHWAY ROUTE 37 - DAY

Traffic as far as the eye can see. Nobody's going anywhere.
One clunker idles next to the stone median, boxed in.

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

An old car radio, with knobs and tape deck. A hand adjusts the volume.

TRAFFIC REPORTER (O.S.)
...and on route 37, forget it, an
overturned tractor trailer has shut
down the entire northbound side.
Police are trying to clear it-

RAY (30s), in no hurry, tsks to himself and spins the knob.

He drops the needle into the low AMs. Soft jazz. He
reclines his seat, leans back, and closes his eyes.

The music breaks up. Ray tweaks the knob, but can't get the
station back.

Suddenly, A NOISE from the radio. It's not static. It's a
rumbling snarl, topped with a whistling teakettle shriek.

Ray grimaces. He twists the knob again. Then, beneath the
ugly sound, a conversation emerges:

LATE (V.O.)
-can't be late for this meeting!

OFFICE LACKY (V.O.)
Calm down. You've still got twenty
minutes.

Ray turns up the volume, quizzical.

LATE (V.O.)
He said the next time I missed a
meeting, forget it, I'm pink
slipped.

OFFICE LACKY (V.O.)
I'll talk to him. Where are you?

LATE (V.O.)
I'm stuck in traffic! There's a
goddamn overturned truck on route
37!

Ray sits up straight.

The conversation breaks up, swallowed by the ugly snarling noise. Ray tunes the radio again.

Suddenly, a throng of overlapping voices:

BUSINESS MAN (V.O.)
-yeah, route 37, total nightmare-

QUARTERBACK (V.O.)
-had Vick...four touchdowns last night! I'm in first place!

PANICKED (V.O.)
-cannot be in this car for one more minute. I need my medication-

JERK (V.O.)
-totally got that chick drunk and-

VALEDICTORIAN (V.O.)
-Mom, listen. I need an alternate route, can you get on Google-

Ray stares out his window. Everywhere he sees drivers on cell phones. All of their calls are pouring simultaneously out of his radio.

He tunes the dial upwards. He singles out a conversation:

DEEP VOICE (V.O.)
-you know you want to tell me.

LAUGHING WOMAN (V.O.)
No! No I don't.

Ray notices a beautiful LAUGHING WOMAN (20s) on her cell phone in the adjacent car. Ray can hear her entire conversation with a man on the other end.

LAUGHING WOMAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I can't. I'm in a traffic jam.

DEEP VOICE (V.O.)
Come on. Start with the underwear.

LAUGHING WOMAN (V.O.)
It's. Yellow. Bright yellow.

DEEP VOICE (V.O.)
Unusual. I like that.

Ray watches, unable to turn away. He smiles in disbelief - this voyeurism is weird, unnerving, but just a little fun.

LAUGHING WOMAN (V.O.)
My skirt is pretty short. In fact,
if you were here, I could probably-

SKREEEE. The radio blasts a loud, annoying bray. Ray jumps.

He switches to FM. Pop music.

He snaps back to AM and scans through the stations. At 900 he gets sports talk.

He slowly scrolls down through the frequencies. The overlapping conversations start in the 700s.

At the very bottom he gets the menacing snarl again.

He scans up again. At 610 he gets a single conversation:

SIGHTLINE (V.O.)
-might be listening, this guy. The
signals are bleeding together, we
could be compromised.

COMMAND (V.O.)
We've got to keep off the radio.
Do you have a bead on him?

SIGHTLINE (V.O.)
I've got him in crosshairs. He's
listening to 610 on the AM dial.

Ray's hand flies from the radio knob as if he's been burned.

SIGHTLINE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Shit! He heard us!

COMMAND (V.O.)
It's not possible, we're scrambled-

SIGHTLINE (V.O.)
I'm taking the shot.

Ray tumbles down under the windshield.

PING PING PING. Tiny bullet holes open up in his door.

COMMAND (V.O.)
Cease fire! Soldier! Cease-

Ray fishes his cell phone out of his pocket and dials.

911 (V.O.)
 Nine-one-one what is the nature-

RAY
 I'm being shot at! I'm in the
 traffic jam on Route 37-

SKREEEE. Ray's phone emits an electronic squeal.

911 (V.O.)
 Are you there, sir?

RAY
 Can you hear me? Hello?

But then a multitude of voices bursts through the phone, a hundred different conversations.

Ray peers carefully out his window. Every driver is shouting into a cell phone. By their confused expressions, Ray can tell that now they all hear each other.

On the radio he hears:

COMMAND (V.O.)
 -the cell towers are compromised.
 Pull out-

The radio breaks up in the ugly snarling sound. Ray spins the dial again. The snarl is eating up half the channels.

Near the top frequency, he gets muffled police and emergency chatter, all urgency but hard to understand. He tunes carefully and manages to filter out one conversation:

SWAT (V.O.)
 -never seen anything like this
 thing. It must have gotten damaged
 when the truck overturned.

LIEUTENANT (V.O.)
 Can you disarm it?

SWAT (V.O.)
 It doesn't look like it. It's
 screwing with our radio bands, cell
 phones, some kind of radiation-

LIEUTENANT (V.O.)
 Is it dangerous?

SWAT (V.O.)
 I don't - wait.

Ray hears a HELICOPTER overhead. Chattering conversations start to drown out the police. Then, loud and clear:

SWAT (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Detonator! We've got about a
minute, it's building to critical-

Ray leaps out of the car.

EXT. HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS

Ray plunges through the rows of cars, running back through the unmoving traffic, away from the unseen obstruction ahead on the highway.

He bangs on several windows.

RAY
Run! Get out!

The drivers shoo him away and continue to yell at their cell phones.

Ray leaves the road and sprints across the grass, running for his life. The helicopter again roars above him.

FFFT! A bullet catches Ray through the chest.

He drops, without fanfare, and dies in the grass, eyes open.

The drivers on the road don't notice. They continue to argue on their cell phones, inaudible inside their cars.

The sound of the helicopter fades. Just the wind, and some distant honking.

Then, far up the road:

A BLINDING WHITE LIGHT, and a SONIC BOOM.

The white envelopes everything. Silence.

Black.