

TRASK  
E1 "The Rain in LA"

Written by

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It is true that we are weak and sick and ugly and quarrelsome but if that is all we ever were, we would millenniums ago have disappeared from the face of the earth.

-John Steinbeck

**EXT. LOS ANGELES STREET-EARLY EVENING**

Onscreen: **SUMMER 1992**

In the aftermath, all we can hear is the POURING RAIN.

Everything moves slowly. POLICE litter the area. The flashing lights of EMERGENCY VEHICLES light up the sky. CIVILIANS clamber to get a look at the taped off area.

Standing amidst it all staring at something unseen is a shell-shocked ERNEST TRASK (male, Half-Black/Half-White, 50s).

TRASK (V.O.)  
It never rains in LA.

The rain has soaked through his coat. His greying hair sticks to his forehead right above bloodshot eyes.

TRASK (V.O.)  
At least, that's what everyone who lives here will tell you. And mostly, they're right. But when they're wrong... This city can't handle rain. And these people can't handle being wrong.

An OFFICER comes up to him. The officer is muted but seems to be congratulating Trask, who doesn't react.

TRASK (V.O.)  
So, they keep saying the same thing every year hoping this time they'll be right. They get to say "I told you so" and the world and this city can spin on as they should.

Trask watches PARAMEDICS wheel a BODY BAG into an ambulance. He swallows bile.

He pulls out a MATCHBOX CAR from his pocket. He stares and brushes his thumb over it.

TRASK (V.O.)  
I could say they're idiots. Naive.  
I should.

(MORE)

TRASK (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Maybe if I didn't ignore dark  
clouds I would've seen this coming.  
I should've. But who am I kidding?  
I don't even own an umbrella.

The rain stops.

**INT. BAR- COUNTER- LATE NIGHT- WINTER OF 1991**

**Onscreen: 7 MONTHS EARLIER**

Trask, dry and looking more put-together, sits at a bar next to horrendously drunk SUIT GUY (male, White, 30s). Trask pretends to be equally inebriated.

SUIT GUY

I just- I don't know man.

TRASK

No, no I get it. It's hard.

SUIT GUY

Right? I mean...

Trask carefully pulls out a RECORDING DEVICE from his pocket. It CLICKS on.

SUIT GUY (CONT'D)

I'm just doing what-what I gotta do  
to provide for her. For both of us!

TRASK (V.O.)

What a crock of shit.

Trask takes a fake sip.

TRASK

It's hard.

SUIT GUY

Having some ass on the side helps,  
you know? I can't just work, work,  
work...

He trails off then hiccups.

SUIT GUY (CONT'D)

I'd lose it. And then we'd both be  
screwed.

Another hiccup.

SUIT GUY (CONT'D)  
You ever get like that?

TRASK  
Sure.

SUIT GUY  
A guy's gotta let off some steam  
and my lady she won't do what this  
chick does man. The other night she  
did this insane thing with her-

TRASK  
I get it.

Trask clicks the recorder off and drops the act.

TRASK (V.O.)  
It's always the guys with endless  
twenties in their pockets that do  
everything they can to blow it.

Suit Guy gives Trask a strange look. He decides he's too  
drunk to care.

SUIT GUY  
You married?

TRASK  
Once.

Trask puts the recording device away. He looks over to call  
the BARTENDER over and notices a WOMAN secretly watching him.

SUIT GUY  
So you do get it.

TRASK (V.O.)  
To them, a good woman is just a  
bore.

Trask stares at her but she looks away. He turns back to Suit  
Guy as the Bartender arrives.

BARTENDER  
Closing out?

TRASK  
Yeah.

SUIT GUY  
Oh, sure. Let me just...

Suit Guy fumbles with his pockets trying to find his wallet.

TRASK  
It's alright.

Trask slaps some money down.

BARTENDER  
Is he alright to get home?

TRASK  
I'll handle it.

The Bartender counts out the cash, notices the tip, nods to Trask, and leaves the duo.

SUIT GUY  
I'm alright, man. You don't need to worry.

TRASK  
It's no problem at all.

SUIT GUY  
You sober up fast, man.

Trask stands and helps Suit Guy to his feet.

SUIT GUY (CONT'D)  
You drink a lot?

TRASK  
Not if I can help it.

SUIT GUY  
You a drunk? Is that why she left you?

TRASK  
I left her.

Suit Guy didn't know that was a possibility.

Trask manages to drag him to the front door. He looks back at where the woman was but she's no longer there.

**EXT. MANSION- EARLY MORNING**

The sun is just starting to breach the horizon.

Trask stands in front of his shitty car as THE WIFE (female, WHITE, 30s) counts out cash. Suit Guy is passed out in the front seat.

TRASK

I picked up the tab.

The Wife pauses. She sighs then fishes out some more cash from her purse.

THE WIFE

Thankfully he's a lightweight.

Trask reaches through the driver side window and produces the recording device as well as an ENVELOPE.

TRASK

Got him admitting to the affair plus I snagged some credit card statements. Couldn't get photos of them together but I have them leaving the same hotel a few times.

The Wife looks through the envelope. She's stoic. She saw this coming. She hands Trask the cash.

THE WIFE

You work fast.

TRASK

I try my best.

THE WIFE

I'm just happy you lived up to your reputation. Your references spoke highly of you.

TRASK

All of that should be a big help when the attorneys get involved.

THE WIFE

I'm not leaving him.

Trask can't hide his profound confusion.

TRASK (V.O.)

My wife always hated when I made that face. She said it made her feel small.

THE WIFE

Do you see my house? My car. My life. He's an idiot but that doesn't mean I'm going to let him blow up my whole life.

TRASK

He's sleeping with an eighteen-year old. She's still in high school.

THE WIFE

And our prenup has an infidelity clause. If he wants to leave me for a child he'll have to leave everything else at the door.

She walks to the passenger side of Trask's car. She SWINGS the door open and lets Suit Guy SMACK his head on the ground.

He groans but doesn't get up.

TRASK (V.O.)

My whole life I've never understood women. Can't imagine that's changing soon.

THE WIFE

I'll give you another fifty if you can get him into the house.

TRASK (V.O.)

Nearly twenty years of this. A solid twenty and people still manage to surprise me.

**INT. TRASK'S CAR- AN HOUR LATER**

Trask sits in morning commuter traffic on the freeway. He opens the center console to pull out NICOTINE GUM. He initially just takes one then decides on another.

TRASK (V.O.)

It's not the most glamorous work but it's decent. And I'm not the only person who needs a paycheck.

Trask stares out his window at a CROW attempting to open a discarded container on the side of the freeway.

A FLASH and for a moment, the container becomes a HUMAN ARM laying on the ground through a doorway.

TRASK (V.O.)

It had been a rough few months for a lot of folks. Everyone started turning in on themselves as the city prepared to implode.

A car horn BLARES.

The container and road return. Trask snaps back to reality and gives his rearview mirror a dirty look. Then gets moving.

TRASK (V.O.)  
It meant more work for me but,  
honestly, I preferred the quiet.

**INT. TRASK'S APARTMENT- LATER**

Trask walks through his front door. It's a studio apartment. The decor is warm and contemporary.

He takes his shoes and coat off and carefully places them by the front door. We see the holstered GUN he hides behind his back.

TRASK (V.O.)  
My days of flashy cases and pro  
bono hero work were far behind me.  
I wanted stable. Boring. And for a  
while that's what life was.

He walks to his bed and places the gun on the bedside table next to BOTTLES of ANXIETY MEDS and a pair of EARPLUGS. He gets under the covers fully dressed then sticks the plugs in his ears.

As if on cue, SCREECHING tires and YELLING erupts outside.

TRASK (V.O.)  
It could've been worse. And I'd  
soon find out just how bad life  
could get.

**INT. NEWSPAPER HQ- LEE'S DESK- MORNING**

The woman at the bar, LESLIE "LEE" COLT (female, late 20s) sits at her desk while two of her coworkers: MICHAEL "MIKE" COHEN (male, 30s) and CHRIS MILLER (male, 40s) hover around her. Coffee and bagels in hand. She's exhausted and annoyed.

Amidst the clutter of her desk sits a **Selden Ring Award** and a *matchbox car*.

MIKE  
Jesus, Lee, you look like shit.

CHRIS  
Hey, you shouldn't speak to a lady  
like that.



MIKE  
Shit, there's a lady here?

Lee flips him off.

LEE  
I was out a lot later than I  
thought I'd be.

MIKE  
You get some?

CHRIS  
Were you dropped on your head?

LEE  
You do realize you're a walking HR  
violation.

MIKE  
Let the record show that that was  
not a "no".

LEE  
Not that I have to explain myself  
to you but I was out working on an  
article.

CHRIS  
Leslie, don't tell me you're back  
on this again.

MIKE  
Of course she is.

LEE  
I don't know what you guys are  
talking about.

MIKE  
Whatever you say.

CHRIS  
Stalton's not gonna be happy about  
this.

LEE  
Stalton doesn't have to know.

MIKE  
Hah! Good luck with that.

Lee goes to bite back but is interrupted by...

STALTON (O.S.)  
Colt! My office, now!

Lee groans before slowly getting up from her desk.

MIKE  
I might be a fucking psychic. I  
should charge for this.

LEE  
Shut up, Mike.

She pushes past him. Chris grabs her arm.

CHRIS  
Say anything but the truth.

She hesitantly nods then heads to her boss' office.

**INT. LA TIMES OFFICE- STALTON'S OFFICE- SECONDS LATER**

Lee opens the door slowly.

JAMES STALTON (50s, white) stands behind his desk. A GOLD PLACARD reads "Editor in Chief". ACCOLADES decorate the walls around him. A CHAIR rests empty across from him.

LEE  
You wanted to see me?

STALTON  
No, I just yell for the hell of it.

He stares her down. She fidgets.

STALTON (CONT'D)  
Sit down.

Lee quickly sits herself down. Another heavy pause.

LEE  
Listen, I-

STALTON  
Listen?

She's fucked up.

STALTON (CONT'D)  
Me, listen? How about for once,  
just fucking once, you listen! Like  
you're paid to do.

He takes a deep breath. Calms down.

STALTON (CONT'D)  
What are you doing, kid?

LEE  
I hate when you call me that.

STALTON  
Then start acting like a grown up.

LEE  
I was just-

STALTON  
Don't lie to me.

LEE  
There's something going on and I  
know you believe me.

STALTON  
Do I?

LEE  
Three people, James. Three. All  
killed and placed the same way. All  
with increasing levels of violence.

STALTON  
That doesn't necessarily mean  
anything.

LEE  
It's a signature. They're linked.

STALTON  
Says you.

LEE  
Says the evidence.

STALTON  
Evidence? Last time I checked  
there's isn't even a case let alone  
evidence.

LEE  
You spoke to the police?

STALTON  
 I had no choice. Captain Ames called me in a fury complaining one of my reporters was giving him a fucking migraine berating/officers about some missing vagrants after repeatedly being told to stick your nose elsewhere.

LEE (CONT'D)  
 /I politely asked why there wasn't official police involvement after multiple potential homicides-

STALTON (CONT'D)  
 You are not on the crimes beat!  
 Plain and simple.

LEE  
 You honestly think Jeffrey or, God forbid, Mike could write this?

STALTON  
 I think they would do whatever I asked them to. No questions asked.

LEE  
 I thought our whole purpose was to ask questions.

STALTON  
 We ask certain questions.

LEE  
 You mean certain people.

Her turn to stare him down.

STALTON  
 Drop this, Lee. Please.

Finally, she lets out a big sigh and nods.

LEE  
 So, what boring interview are you throwing at me to keep me busy?

STALTON  
 One on councilman Gerald Lloyd's handling of the current police brutality crisis in the city. And maybe something about those extortion rumors.

Lee practically jumps up in excitement.

STALTON (CONT'D)  
I taketh but I also giveth.

He reaches into his desk and pulls out a thick FOLDER.

STALTON (CONT'D)  
The interview is set for one  
o'clock this afternoon.

She SNATCHES the folder. She immediately opens it and starts reading as she gets up to leave.

LEE  
This doesn't mean I forgive you.

STALTON  
Sure. Get a rough draft on my desk  
by end of day.

She waves him off as she leaves his office. He chuckles. Then concern takes over his face.

**INT. LA TIMES OFFICE- LEE'S DESK- SECONDS LATER**

Lee gathers her things while still reading through the folder.

A smug Mike approaches.

MIKE  
He fire you yet?

She throws an annoyed smile his way and continues to read.

MIKE (CONT'D)  
You know, one day, he's gonna be  
done taking your shit.

That gets her attention.

LEE  
I understand you're intellectually  
inept, but last time I checked  
you're severely overpaid for a job  
that not only do I want and am more  
qualified for but that you're  
objectively terrible at. So maybe  
you just worry about yourself big  
guy.

MIKE  
He only helps you cause he wants to  
fuck you.

LEE  
And you don't?

He fails to form words as she walks out of the office.