

AT THE END OF THE ROAD LIES MY REDEMPTION

Written by

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An abandoned looking house sits a mile or two back from the open road, hidden away from sight. Stadium country music can be heard blasting from broken windows.

A car's breaks squeal as it drives up and parks in front of the abandoned house. Through the dusty windows CHANCE, an accomplished hitman, can be seen checking his gun before getting out and stomping up to the broken front door.

There's a surprised shriek in response before he storms inside. The country music quickly cuts off with a crash. There are sounds of punching, glass breaking, and then a thud as though a body hits the floor.

RUDY, Chance's very haggard looking target, scrambles out the door. He gets about three steps out before falling face first into the dirt. Before he can get to his feet a bullet strikes the ground near where he landed.

He turns to see Chance stomping out the door after him, sporting a busted lip and a cut bleeding from his hairline.

CHANCE

If you're gonna fight back, at
least finish what you started.

RUDY

Listen man, I told Mr. Armstrong
I'd pay at the end of the month-

CHANCE

Don't care.

Chance shoots Rudy at point blank to the temple. The body falls to the ground and Chance takes a moment to catch his breath before holstering the gun in his jacket and letting out a groan as he drags the body towards his car.

As he nears the trunk, he drops one of Rudy's legs in order to retrieve his keys from his pocket. When he presses the fob and nothing happens he drops the other leg in order to force the trunk open.

He then turns back to Rudy, struggling to wrestle his body into the trunk. He slams the lid closed and leans against it to recover from the exertion while digging his phone from his pocket, cursing when he sees the screen is shattered.

He dials a number, and when the person on the other end answers he doesn't give them a chance to speak.

CHANCE (CONT'D)
Jobs done. Expect my delivery
somewhere around ten.

Chance begins to make his way towards the drivers side door, kicking at one of the back wheels when he notices it looks a little flat. He inspects his injury in one of the dusty windows.

CHANCE (CONT'D)
I told you I'd nab him, and I did.
I don't know why you're so
surprised.

He wrenches the car door open and flops down into the passenger seat, slamming the door closed behind him.

CHANCE (CONT'D)
Listen Armie, I've been doing this
job longer than your fat cat ass
has been alive. When I say a job is
gonna get done, it gets done.

Chance hangs up and tosses the phone into the backseat before dropping his head to the steering wheel with a tired groan.

CHANCE (CONT'D)
I'm too damn old for this...

He turns the key in the ignition, swearing when the car stalls before trying again and listening to it rumble to life. Quickly throwing the car into reverse, he backs out the way he came.

2 INT - CHANCE'S CAR - AFTERNOON

2

Bluegrass plays over the radio as Chance makes his way down the highway. He taps his fingers idly to the music before reaching for the volume.

A magazine cutout of a beautiful family taped to the dashboard with the father's head replaced by the volume knob. Across the mother's shirt is written the name "Betsy".

Chance turns the volume down before flashing "Betsy" a loving grin.

CHANCE
What'd I tell ya, hon? I was gonna
finish this job and then we'd be
sittin' pretty for some well earned
vacation time.

Chance checks the road before continuing.

CHANCE (CONT'D)
What are you thinking? Road trip?
Destination location? I've been
wanting to try my hand at fishing
for some time now.

The cutout just smiles up at him, silent. Chance still nods his head as though acknowledging something.

CHANCE (CONT'D)
What about camping? I'm sure the
kids would love it.

The two children in the cutout have had the names "Lucky" and "Rose" scrawled across their chests. Chance reaches out to touch the pad of his finger to their heads.

CHANCE (CONT'D)
Remember last time? Just you, me,
and the stars above.

Chance gives a sigh, smiling.

CHANCE (CONT'D)
It got so cold we had to sleep in
the car, too cold to do much of
anything other than shiver. In the
morning you demanded I make it up
to you and I took you for pancakes.

Chance's expression grows wistful, and he reaches out to touch the woman in the cutout.

CHANCE (CONT'D)
We laughed about it, saying we were
never going to do that again but...
the solitude? The peace? It was
just a world made of you and me,
and I think it's become a favorite
memory of mine. I'm thinking we
could make another one like it,
this time with the kids too.

A large *POP* and the whining of gears rips Chance out of his daydreaming. He jumps as the car gives a lurch and he sees several warning lights flicker on across the dashboard.

CHANCE (CONT'D)
No, no, no!

He tries to urge the car on further, hoping to make it to a service station before he's forced to pull over, but smoke begins pouring out of the hood.

CHANCE (CONT'D)

No! Dammit!

He gives the wheel a violent yank, pulling over to the side of the road.

3

EXT - SIDE OF THE ROAD - LATE AFTERNOON/EARLY EVENING

3

The gears of the car squeal as Chance pulls over past the shoulder and into the dirt, kicking up a large cloud of dust in the process.

There's a moment where nothing moves. Then Chance kicks his way out of the car, snarling and swearing as he marches to the front and shoves the hood open where he's hit in the face with smoke, which only makes him angrier.

When he fails to find an obvious fix, he storms towards the backseat to find his phone and pull it out. He hopes to call for service but finds he has no reception.

He rounds the car to stand by the side of the road, looking for signs of civilization. However, there's nothing in either direction for as far as he can see.

Growing more and more hopeless, Chance turns and walks back to his car, opening the door to grab a map. He begins studying it to try and figure out what his options are.

A blue car slows down as it passes by. This draws Chance's attention in time to see the blue car pull over a few feet ahead of him.

CHANCE

Just be checking your directions...
just be checking your directions...

The blue car's door opens.

CHANCE (CONT'D)

Damn.

From the car emerges ALFRED, a well dressed man in a bolo tie and cowboy boots. He smiles at Chance as he gets out, walking forward and extending his hand as he draws near. When he speaks it's with a southern accent.

ALFRED

Howdy!

Chance ignores Alfred's hand and instead looks him up and down before returning to his map. Alfred slowly lowers his hand, his grin a bit more forced as he continues.

ALFRED (CONT'D)

I noticed you stranded on the side of the road here and thought I'd stop to help.

CHANCE

I'm alright, much obliged though.

Alfred glances towards the still slightly smoking car.

ALFRED

You sure? I'm no mechanic, but-

CHANCE

Well then I don't see how much use you could be to me.

ALFRED

I have a tool box and three years of high school shop class under my belt. Maybe I could see if there's something I could do?

CHANCE

I said I'm fine.

Alfred sighs, placing his hands on his hips. His forced grin turns apologetic.

ALFRED

Listen, I can't just leave you stranded out here. It's gonna drop below freezing and who knows what's out here.

Chance lowers the map and reaches for his gun. He points it at Alfred, who immediately raises his hands into the air.

CHANCE

I'm not some airheaded co-ed looking to be rescued, nor am I some feeble old man. Leave.

ALFRED

Hey, woah, I'm sorry!

Alfred takes a step back, slowly lowering his hands.

ALFRED (CONT'D)

Look, I could at least lend you my tools? I'll just hang around while you try to fix your car. I got a real banger of a novel I've been meaning to get through anyway.

Chance sighs, rolling his eyes as he lowers the weapon.

CHANCE

Fine.

Alfred grins and goes to retrieve his tools, handing them over and backing away slowly while Chance gets to work on his car.

LATER

The sun is rapidly descending and Betsy is no closer to being fixed. Alfred has taken over trying to get her working again while Chance watches the passing traffic. A flashlight sits duct taped to the lip of the engine cavity for light.

Alfred grins at Chance while he works.

ALFRED

You know, judging from the wear and tear on this thing, I'm kinda amazed you've gone so far.

A crack forms in Chance's angry expression, growing wistful as he gives a fond sigh.

CHANCE

That she did.

ALFRED

(Intrigued)

She?

Chance reaches out to pat the door of the car. His hand remains where it is, touching the dingy metal.

CHANCE

Betsy's been with me about as long as I've been driving. I always figured that she'd go when I go but...

The smile disappears from Chance's face. He slowly trails his fingers along the exposed rusty metal of the car door.

CHANCE (CONT'D)
I guess everything dies in it's own
time.

Alfred gives a dismissive wave, turning to root around in the toolbox.

ALFRED
Nonsense! She's come this far, she
can go a little longer.

Chance shakes his head, turning so that he's facing the open window. He reaches in to wrap a hand around the steering wheel, as though holding the hand of a dying loved one.

CHANCE
No... no I think Betsy's given all
she's got. She didn't have to keep
me company all these years, I won't
force her to keep moving when it's
time she rest.

Alfred pulls a wrench out and leans back into the engine bay. Chance doesn't seem to notice as he stares down into the car.

ALFRED
Well, I think we can at least get
her moving again long enough to get
you where you're going.

Chance slowly reaches into the car and carefully pries the magazine cut out from the dashboard. He straightens to study it, his finger caressing the woman as he folds the husband and kids out of view. He slips the cutout into his pocket.

ALFRED (CONT'D)
Maybe she's got one last swing in
her!

CHANCE
Betsy's run her course. She's old
and tired and knows it's time. She
knows the fights over and it's time
to call it quits.

There's a moment of stillness before Alfred shrugs, dropping the wrench into the toolbox where it makes a loud crash.

ALFRED
If you say so, boss.

Chance looks up, closing his eyes as he lets out a sad sigh. When he opens his eyes again Alfred smiles in a way that shows his teeth.

ALFRED (CONT'D)
Say, how about I give you a lift?

Chance looks to the trunk of his car as Alfred gathers up his tools.

CHANCE
Well-

ALFRED
You can call a tow company in the morning to get her off the side of the road. Littering's against the law after all.

Chance pauses for a moment, seemingly considering it. He could just abandon the car. However, should the body be found there was a high chance an investigation could lead back to him. Not to mention the body is expected at Armstrong's.

CHANCE
I think I might just sleep in her tonight and make my way to a service station in the morning.

ALFRED
And leave yourself out in the open for all the critters and frostbite?

Chance rolls his eyes and opens the car door to climb inside, slamming it behind him. Alfred moves to the open window.

ALFRED (CONT'D)
Betsy will be nice and safe right here.

Chance turns to dig a blanket out of the mess in his backseat. It gets stuck, leaving him to tug uselessly at it.

ALFRED (CONT'D)
It's really no trouble, I don't have anywhere to be tonight anyway.

CHANCE
(with gritted teeth)
You are determined to be someone's hero, aren't you?

Alfred barks out a laugh and leans against the car.

ALFRED
Well, it doesn't help that you presented me with a challenge. I like challenges.

Chance gives up for the moment and turns to Alfred, weary.

CHANCE

Look, you tried your best. But I
don't want to leave my car out to
chance like that.

Alfred gives a long sigh and runs a hand through his hair
before looking back at Chance.

ALFRED

Look, I know you want to figure
this out by yourself, but it's the
middle of February.

Chance turns to stare out the windshield.

ALFRED (CONT'D)

You think you can muscle through
freezing temperatures? This car and
that blanket are not gonna be
enough to keep you from turning
into a popsicle.

CHANCE

I've handled worse things.

ALFRED

(Flatly)

I will call the highway patrol and
tell them there's some old coot on
the side of the road determined to
fulfill a suicide pact he made with
his car.

The anger and fight leave Chance and he gives a long, drawn
out sigh.

CHANCE

Just let me... get my bag.

4

INT. - INSIDE BETSY'S TRUNK - NIGHT

4

Rudy's eyes snap open as he comes to with a gasp. He panics,
but after he smacks his head he begins to assess his
surroundings. He realizes he's surrounded by bags of junk,
rolls of tape, and various old and used weapons.

Rudy whimpers as he brings his fingers up to the side of his
head, where it turns out his wound is bloody but superficial.

Above him, someone pulls at and hits the lid of the trunk as
they struggle to open it. Rudy begins to scramble.

5

EXT. - SIDE OF THE ROAD - NIGHT

5

Chance opens the trunk, only to be caught by surprise as a metal rod slams into his face. The impact sends him back a few steps, allowing Rudy to scramble away. Chance blinks in horror before he gives chase.

CHANCE
(hissing)
Wait!

Chance tackles Rudy to the ground where they start to struggle. There's a noise from Alfred's car, causing Chance to freeze. Rudy elbows him in the gut and starts to get away before Chance manages to get his arm around Rudy's neck.

He strangles Rudy, covering his mouth and waiting until long after he's stopped moving to let go. Rudy's body drops to the dirt and Chance rubs his face and grimaces.

Chance drags Rudy's body out of view of the road, glancing towards Alfred's car periodically. He freezes when he sees Alfred lean his head out the window, his head turned away.

ALFRED
Everything all right out there?

Apparently, Alfred has noticed none of what's been happening and was instead reading his book.

CHANCE
Yeah... Yeah, everything fell out
at some point so I have to repack.

Alfred's head is replaced by his arm as he gives Chance a thumbs up before going back to his book.

Chance groans in relief before he returns to his trunk, where he pulls out the large plastic tarp and some duct tape.

After wrapping Rudy's body up to look less like a body and more like poor bundling, he begins dragging it towards Alfred's car. He hits the trunk twice to signal Alfred to open up.

Like before, Chance struggles to lift Rudy into the trunk of the car. The entire car shudders with the weight and force of the effort. Chance sits on the edge of the trunk to recover.

ALFRED
What was that? You carrying rocks?

Chance's eyes lower to the tool box that's ended up near Rudy's head. He slowly reaches out to wrap his fingers around the wrench. The metal gleams up at him shiny, new, and clean.

ALFRED (CONT'D)
Hey, you know of any late-night
diners willing to serve two hungry
road tramps this late? I'll pay!

Chance blinks, lowering the wrench back to the toolbox and pulling the cutout out of his pocket. He unfolds it, looking over the entire family before his eyes linger on "Lucky".

ALFRED (CONT'D)
You all right back there?

Chance gives a tired sigh. He slowly slips the picture back into his pocket.

CHANCE
Peachy.

He slams the trunk closed with more force than probably necessary and turns back to give Betsy a final, longing look. The car seems to stare back at him, though there's no sense of abandonment or betrayal. Just goodbye.

He turns to climb into Alfred's car, only to find the man has climbed out and is now leaning against the exterior, watching him.

ALFRED
All good?

CHANCE
Just about.

Alfred hums, looking Chance over.

ALFRED
You know, I've been meaning to ask,
what are you doing so far out here
anyway?

Chance stills, his guard back up.

CHANCE
Work.

Alfred nods.

ALFRED
Me too. My job has me going just
about everywhere.
(MORE)

ALFRED (CONT'D)

I shouldn't complain though, I'm
the newest on the scene so I'm
still the lowest on the totem pole.

CHANCE

Sales?

Alfred raises his arm to reveal he's holding a pistol.

ALFRED

Not quite.

Chance withdraws his own gun as Alfred gives a wide, cocky grin, much colder than anything seen before.

CHANCE

Playing a bit of a long game today?

ALFRED

What can I say? I like a challenge.

Chance casts a glance back towards Betsy, trying to calculate his options. He slowly begins to take careful steps sideways around the car. Alfred doesn't move.

ALFRED (CONT'D)

Armstrong wanted to thank you for
your many years of dedicated
service.

Chance frowns in disbelief, trying to process the betrayal as he continues his approach.

CHANCE

Armstrong?

ALFRED

He thinks you're too old, that you
lost your touch. He thinks you've
lost the passion for your work -
his words by the way.

CHANCE

So he sent you here to get rid of
me?

ALFRED

I *volunteered*! Prison rules, you
know? Take down the biggest guy in
the yard and everyone respects you.

As Chance draws closer, Alfred begins walking back. All the while holding Chance's gaze.

ALFRED (CONT'D)
It's sad though, I have to say you
doesn't quite live up to the
legends. I'd expected this to go
down a little differently.

CHANCE
How so?

Alfred scoffs.

ALFRED
I expected you to actually try, for
one. But all I saw when I pulled up
was a sad old man playing in the
dirt!

Alfred waves vaguely in Chance's direction with the gun,
annoyed.

ALFRED (CONT'D)
Do you know how insanely easy it
was to get you to move that body to
my car? Scare you with the chance
of getting cold and then I didn't
even have to lift a finger!

Chance rolls his eyes. Alfred looks giddy as he closes an eye
to better aim his own gun.

ALFRED (CONT'D)
My eyes and reflexes are better
than yours, old man. Who do you
think wins at this time of night?

Chance's finger curls around the trigger, but before he can
squeeze his eyes find Betsy and the fight seems to leave him
all at once.

CHANCE
I have a question for you.

Alfred raises a curious eyebrow, his frame relaxing by a
fraction.

ALFRED
Yeah?

CHANCE
Do you know what you're signing up
for? What you're *really* signing up
for?

Alfred gives a slow, contemplative nod.

ALFRED
I think I do.

CHANCE
Long nights on the road, weeks
where you're either alone or
surrounded by the absolute scum of
the Earth.

ALFRED
I was never really a people person.

CHANCE
Your whole life spent cleaning up
other people's messes or running
from your own. No family, no
friends, no connections.

ALFRED
Is that what happened to you? You
have to choose between work and
family?

CHANCE
I never had a family. I never had
the chance. I just woke up one day
in some backwater motel alone,
after decades of being alone. With
nothing ahead of me but decades
more of being alone.

Chance looks at Alfred sadly.

CHANCE (CONT'D)
I'm tired. I'm old. I've lived my
life, and I regret every second of
it.

Chance spreads his arms wide, leaving himself exposed as he
drops his pistol to the ground.

CHANCE (CONT'D)
I am your future.

Alfred's smile is cold and self assured.

ALFRED
I'll take that chance.

The gun gives two *POPS*, the bullets landing in Chance's gut
and chest. Chance is forced to step back from the impact, and
then he slowly sinks to his knees.

Alfred's grin relaxes into something a bit more human. He waits until Chance begins to spit up blood before making his way towards him.

6

INT. - CHANCE'S CAR - NIGHT

6

Alfred roughly drops Chance into Betsy's driver's seat, leaning against the doorframe as he looks down on him.

ALFRED

This afternoon wasn't all bad. I
really did have three years of shop
class under my belt.

Chance can only breathe, slow and ragged. Alfred cocks his head to the side, thinking.

ALFRED (CONT'D)

I wonder... had things been
different... we might have made an
interesting team.

He straightens, dusting himself off and inspecting his nails.

ALFRED (CONT'D)

Even still, while you may regret
your life choices I don't see that
being where I end up.

Giving a final nod, more to himself than to Chance, Alfred steps back and closes the door. As he makes his way back to his car, he gives Chance a final wave goodbye.

As Chance feels his body dying, he pulls the magazine cutout out of his pocket. Now stained with his blood, he brings it closer in order to make it the last thing he sees.

There's a small, sad smile on his lips.

7

INT. - ALFRED'S CAR - NIGHT

7

As Alfred settles into his car he casts a glance in the rearview mirror towards Betsy, where he can still make out Chance's body thanks to the light of the road.

Chance's head has fallen forward, his body utterly lifeless.

Alfred scoffs, unimpressed, before turning his attention to starting his own car and driving away.

However, as he pulls onto the road, the final glance he gives the rearview mirror is a bit more thoughtful and subdued.