

Absolution

by  
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Weekend nightlife. The bar overflows with half-drunk men and happy-go-lucky women. Low lights and loud music encourage all kinds of dancing and flirting.

Past the noisy crowd, barely noticeable, a solitary woman in her twenties nurses a beer - one of several bottles sitting next to her. She stares into the crowd without seeing the people, the only solemn face in the room. MEGAN.

Fed up, she downs her drink and turns to leave, almost running right into -

JASON, a tall man nearing thirty years. Chiseled. Handsome. Perfect.

JASON

Oh, I'm sorry.

Megan continues toward the exit.

JASON (CONT'D)

Not leaving already, are you?

MEGAN

(surprised)

What?

JASON

Can I get you a beer?

MEGAN

Uh, sure.

With a look and a gesture, Jason flags down the bartender and orders two more drinks. Megan sits, confused. Is this guy hitting on her?

JASON

I'm Jason.

MEGAN

Megan.

They shake, but Jason keeps holds of her hand.

JASON

Hold on, I'm gonna try to guess what you do for a living by your handshake.

(dramatic pause)

I got it.

(MORE)

JASON (CONT'D)

You're the little person in the ATM machines that hands out the money.

MEGAN

I'm between jobs, actually.

JASON

Damn, so close.

MEGAN

Let me guess yours.  
(shakes his hand again)  
Public relations.

JASON

Pretty close, actually. I do company relations, but not publicly.

MEGAN

Sounds shady.

JASON

Don't worry, it is.

MEGAN

Are you here with friends? I don't think I've seen you before...

JASON

No, I'm just in town on business. I'm flying out in a day or two.

MEGAN

I see. Where are you from?

JASON

That's actually a tricky question. Name a place, I lived there.  
(pause)  
Go ahead, name a place.

MEGAN

Oh, um, Albuquerque.

JASON

Okay, not that one.

MEGAN

Well, that's not very convincing then.

JASON  
Oh come on, that's the most obscure  
city.

MEGAN  
Is not!

JASON  
You've never met anybody from  
Albuquerque, I guarantee it.

MEGAN  
Actually, I have.

JASON  
You liar.

MEGAN  
I have! I think you have to buy me  
a shot to apologize.

JASON  
What have I gotten myself into...

Megan laughs.

CUT TO:

2 EXT. BAR - LATER

2

Jason and Megan exit the bar together, his arm around her,  
helping her keep her footing after so many drinks.

MEGAN  
I never get this drunk.

JASON  
Prove it.

MEGAN  
I can't prove it now! You have to  
come back next weekend, I won't  
drink like this, I promise.

JASON  
Can't, I'm going home in a couple  
days, remember?

MEGAN  
Oh, right. Tomorrow night, then?

JASON  
 Yeah, maybe.  
 (beat)  
 Is your place close?

MEGAN  
 Yeah, just a couple blocks up.  
 You?

JASON  
 I gotta catch a cab back downtown.  
 I'll walk you home first.

MEGAN  
 Oh, you don't have to do that...

JASON  
 'Course I do. Can't let anything  
 happen to you.

Megan looks at him with suddenly focused eyes, enraptured by this man. She grabs and kisses him awkwardly for a long moment.

MEGAN  
 Sorry, that was stupid.

Jason pulls her close and kisses her again, passionately.

MEGAN (CONT'D)  
 Come on.

She leads him down the street.

CUT TO:

3 INT. MEGAN'S APARTMENT - LATER

3

Megan collapses onto the bed, completely drained by the intense sexual experience. She stares at nothing, stunned and sobered by the incredible events of the evening.

Jason rolls over and embraces her. Megan melts into him.

JASON  
 You're amazing.

Megan closes her eyes and lets herself drift off in his arms.

DISSOLVE TO:

4 LATER

4

Megan sleeps soundly, a faint smile on her face. Jason stands over her, getting dressed in the predawn light but keeping his eyes on her.

He finishes dressing and just stares at Megan, regarding her vulnerable form on the bed.

Just barely, he starts to lean in as though to touch her...

Then, he tears himself away.

CUT TO:

5 INT. HOTEL HALLWAY - DAY

5

Jason carries a small box to a hotel room door and knocks.

PROFESSIONAL  
Busy, go away please!

JASON  
I have a message from a Mr. Takagi.

A brief pause; the door unlocks and opens, revealing two gruff men glaring back at him: one seasoned and professional, the other young and impulsive.

PROFESSIONAL  
Get in here.

Jason enters the

6 HOTEL ROOM

6

PROFESSIONAL  
You're late.

JASON  
If you don't want this traced, you gotta cut me some slack.

As soon as the door closes -

- the younger man pins Jason against the wall.

IMPULSIVE  
Shut up!

JASON  
Relax, newbie, we're safe here.

PROFESSIONAL  
Gimmie the box.

Jason hands over the box, still held against the wall.

The first man opens the box and, confounded, pulls out... a woman's panties.

The two henchmen exchange looks.

PROFESSIONAL (CONT'D)  
What the hell?

The first man draws a pistol and holds the panties in Jason's face.

PROFESSIONAL (CONT'D)  
What the hell is this?

Jason grabs the gun and smacks it into the young man's face, knocking him out.

The remaining henchman and Jason grapple momentarily, then Jason head-butts him hard, knocking him to the ground. Jason stands over them both, holding the pistol. He walks away, fuming.

7 INT. HOTEL BATHROOM - SAME

7

Candles and bubble bath; a private encounter in the bathtub. MERRICK, a paunchy man in his fifties, enjoys the company of TORI, barely twenty, as she lays with him in the tub.

The door swings open...

MERRICK  
I said stay out!

...Jason enters, gun held at his side.

Tori screams and huddles in the opposite corner of the tub. Jason and Merrick hold eye contact, never breaking. Jason approaches.

MERRICK (CONT'D)  
Wait a second. I'm paid up.

Jason advances slowly, ignoring every pleading word.

MERRICK (CONT'D)  
I know your bosses. I'm protected.

Jason puts the pistol to Merrick's forehead

MERRICK (CONT'D)  
 Whatever you're getting, I'll  
 double it.

Jason looks into Merrick's eyes. Merrick stares back,  
 resigned.

BANG!

Tori shrieks continuously as blood pours into the water and  
 floats toward her.

Jason glances at her, once, then walks out. He tucks the gun  
 into the back of his pants.

8 INT. HOTEL ROOM - SAME

8

The henchmen lie motionless. Jason stoops and searches the  
 mature man's pockets. He removes a cell phone and dials.

JASON

It's done.

(pause, listens)

No, it's done, I'm going dark.

(pause)

I know the procedure, sir, but this  
 isn't -

(pause, resigned)

No, sir, that's not a problem. Yes,  
 I'll be in D.C. this afternoon.

Jason glowers at the phone. Then, he drops and smashes it.  
 He turns and exits.

CUT TO:

9 INT. MEGAN'S APARTMENT - LATER

9

Megan's eyes open... to an empty bed. Confused, she stares  
 at the empty pillow and listens. Not a sound.

She gets up and stumbles through the apartment, disheveled  
 and heartbroken. Jason isn't there. Her body goes limp;  
 she's been used and thrown away.

Megan sits down and sobs, unable to do anything else.

A KNOCK at the door shakes her out of it for the moment. She  
 stands and opens the door...

Jason holds up a deli bag, smiling like an advertisement.

JASON  
Sorry. The line was unbelievable.

Jason leans in to kiss her; Megan stares at him, stunned.

JASON (CONT'D)  
(off her look)  
What?

Megan dries her tears and steps aside.

MEGAN  
Nothing. What'd you get me?

JASON  
(walks in)  
I didn't know what you liked, so I just got a buncha stuff. There's a couple poppyseed, which I like, and some sandwiches...

Megan can't help smiling to the hallway as she closes the door.

FADE TO:

10

EXT. STREETS - DAY

10

Jason and Megan walk casually down the street, window shopping, completely comfortable and carefree.

Megan looks through one of the windows and stops in her tracks, fixed on what she sees.

Jason watches her react from behind. He can't take his eyes off her.

JASON  
You wanna try it on?

MEGAN  
I shouldn't, I'll get too attached.

JASON  
Maybe I'll just buy it for you.

MEGAN  
(disbelieving)  
Do you have any idea how much these dresses cost?

JASON  
I can afford it. The deal I had  
this morning? Went down perfectly.

MEGAN  
That's great!

Megan jumps into Jason's arms and kisses him.

MEGAN (CONT'D)  
We should celebrate.

JASON  
In Atlantic City.

Megan looks at him incredulously.

JASON (CONT'D)  
No, seriously, Atlantic City. Road  
trip.

MEGAN  
(uncertain pause)  
You're serious?

JASON  
Why not? It's not like you have to  
go to work Monday.

MEGAN  
No, but I can't just up and -

JASON  
Picture yourself in that dress, in  
the casino, at the blackjack table,  
standing over my shoulder. Or are  
you a roulette girl?

MEGAN  
Fat chance. I'll take your life  
savings at poker.

JASON  
That's the spirit. Come on, it'll  
be the perfect celebration.

MEGAN  
Right now?

JASON  
Right now.

Megan looks into his eyes. It's too good to be true, and  
yet...

MEGAN

I have to go home and pack my stuff.

JASON

Then we better get to it.

(gesturing)

Don't forget to try that dress on first.

FADE TO:

11 EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT 11

The view from a car across the street. Jason and Megan run excitedly out of the apartment, carrying suitcases and loose clothes. Megan wears a knockout dress.

They climb into the car, Jason in the driver's seat, and pull away.

The driver of the car across the street watches them and starts to follow.

12 EXT. BRIDGE - MOMENTS LATER 12

Megan's car turns onto a bridge over a wide river.

MEGAN (O.S.) (PRELAP)

I must be out of my mind.

13 EXT. BRIDGE - MEGAN'S CAR - SAME 13

JASON

You're telling me you've never just run away before?

MEGAN

Not since I was six, no.

JASON

I don't believe you.

MEGAN

Come on, this is crazy.

View from the pursuing car. It slowly pulls up next to Megan's on the right...

JASON  
You can't tell me you're not that  
kind of person.

MEGAN  
Okay, this one time, me and my  
girlfriends -

JASON  
Oh, I knew it! The truth comes  
out!

MEGAN  
Shut up! Let me tell it!

Megan catches sight of the car next to her. She sees the  
driver looking back -

Black. CRUNCHING METAL. A SCREAM. A CRASH. A BRIEF  
PAUSE. Something SMASHING INTO WATER.

SILENCE...

CUT TO:

14 EXT. RIVERSIDE - DOWNTOWN - NIGHT

14

A sidewalk sloped up from the river. Megan crawls up the  
concrete, grunting, completely drenched. She drags an  
unconscious Jason up with her.

Hysterical, Megan starts CPR on him. He doesn't move. Megan  
pushes hard on his chest -

Jason finally coughs and spits up water. Megan collapses,  
drained. Jason sits up, confused, holding his head.

JASON  
What happened?

Megan looks at the river in response.

JASON (CONT'D)  
How did we get out of the car?

MEGAN  
Your gun.

Jason feels the back of his pants. No gun. His face falls  
as he looks at her.

JASON  
Do you still have the...

MEGAN

In the river.

She stares straight ahead, refusing to make eye contact.  
Jason can only watch her shiver.

JASON

Let's get home.

MEGAN

You should go to the hospital.

JASON

I'm fine.

MEGAN

Why, afraid they're looking for  
you?

JASON

It's not like that.

MEGAN

Bullshit it's not.

JASON

Come on.

Jason grabs her arm and pulls her up. She shakes him off,  
violated.

JASON (CONT'D)

Let's just get you home.

Megan doesn't answer; she just turns toward the road.

CUT TO:

15 INT. MEGAN'S APARTMENT - LATER

15

Megan bursts in the door, Jason close behind. They're still  
sopping wet.

MEGAN

You're sick.

JASON

What else do you want me to say?  
It's just for protection.

MEGAN

Against who?

Megan goes into her closet and starts to take off her wet clothes.

JASON

I travel a lot, some cities aren't as safe as others. It's just a pistol, I have a permit for it.

MEGAN

Those people were trying to kill you!

JASON

They weren't trying to kill anybody, they just lost control -

MEGAN

Lying bastard.

JASON

I don't know what to say.

MEGAN (O.S.)

(steps out of closet)  
Where the hell did you get the gun?

JASON

I just couldn't let you see it before. You wouldn't have slept with me if I'd told you-

MEGAN

SHUT UP! Don't remind me.

JASON

I'm not the bad guy you think I am.

MEGAN

Prove it.

Jason opens his mouth, but nothing comes out.

MEGAN (CONT'D)

(quiet, accusing)  
You're a liar. And a cheat. You lied to get in my bed...

JASON

Megan, please -

MEGAN

You owe me... you owe me...

Jason can't lie anymore, caught in Megan's accusing stare. He nods, slowly. Megan sits.

MEGAN (CONT'D)  
What's your real name?

JASON  
It's Jason.

MEGAN  
What are you doing here?

JASON  
I work for the government. Have  
for six years.

MEGAN  
How many people have you killed?  
(no reply)  
You can't even remember -

JASON  
Thirty one.

Megan falls silent, shocked.

JASON (CONT'D)  
Today it was a drug runner.  
(pensive pause)  
I came in last night and couldn't  
stay in a hotel, too easily traced.  
So I went to the bar... and found  
you. I... did the job this  
morning. I was supposed to leave  
town right away, but I couldn't,  
I... So I tried to get you out,  
but they found me somehow. On the  
bridge...

Jason trails off, his voice breaking. Megan can't believe what she's hearing.

MEGAN  
I have to call the police to report  
the crash. You should go.

JASON  
(reaching for her)  
I came back for you.

MEGAN

I can't do anything for you, so  
just go. If you're still here,  
they'll arrest you. Just go.

Jason hesitates, helpless. Then, he turns and walks out the door.

CUT TO:

16 INT. BAR - NIGHT 16

Jason sits at the bar, staring at his drink. He picks up his head to look at the other patrons: couples chat, singles flirt, the same as always. Jason watches them guiltily.

He looks out the window -

- Merrick's older henchman smiles back.

Jason jumps out of his seat and reaches behind his back for a gun, but he doesn't have it.

The henchman walks casually away from the window.

Jason runs across the room and out the door to -

17 EXT. BAR 17

The henchman continues around the corner, picking up speed. Jason darts after him.

CUT TO:

18 INT. APARTMENT HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER 18

Jason enters the hallway just in time to see the henchman disappear into an apartment. Jason follows him through the door into

19 MEGAN'S APARTMENT 19

The henchman stabs Jason in leg, dropping him to his knees, guard down, at his enemy's mercy. The henchman holds the knife to Jason's throat.

PROFESSIONAL

Where I'm from, a guy comes at me  
like that, I put him in the ground.

Jason glares at the henchman, who involuntarily flinches.  
Jason looks up...

Megan stands in the middle of the room, unhurt but mortified.

The younger henchman stands to the side, gun drawn, a bandage on his forehead. Fuming.

TORI (O.S.)

They said you're only worried about yourself.

Tori, the girl from the bathtub, walks around from behind Megan, holding a pistol to Megan's head.

TORI (CONT'D)

These fuckers said you were a professional. That's how you got past them. But they don't know you at all. 'Cause professionals are loyal to their mission. But you're not.

Megan shakes uncontrollably, about to buckle at any moment.

TORI (CONT'D)

You just thought I was some stupid whore Merrick picked up off the street, didn't you? I knew you would. And I knew you're not as tough as you look. You're just like any other thug, protecting a soft spot. So I knew you'd come back to try to save her.

JASON

She's got nothing to do with this.

TORI

So I should just let her go, huh?  
Just take my revenge on you?  
'Cause you're trained to deal with torture, but not with love?

Tori pushes Megan to her knees.

TORI (CONT'D)

I watched you kill my husband. Now you're gonna watch me kill her.

JASON

Fine, do it.

TORI  
Just watch me.

JASON  
You are so weak.

TORI  
I'm holding the gun.

JASON  
I'm protecting a soft spot? While  
you waste your time trying to get  
revenge for that maggot?

The older henchman gets ancy.

TORI  
Merrick was a great man in ways you  
could never understand.

JASON  
Yeah, I'm sure the old man was a  
freak in the sack.

TORI  
Stop it!

JASON  
His brains were better off floating  
in the tub. I'm glad I killed him.  
He was a monster, and so are you.  
And anyone else who knew him.

Tori aims her gun at Jason -

- and Jason grabs the henchman's knife hand and yanks him  
down, using him as a shield.

Tori fires, three times. Jason looks into the henchman's  
face as he takes the bullets in the back. Jason grabs the  
knife as if to throw it, but Tori forces Megan into the  
bedroom.

The second henchman runs for Jason, trying to get a clear  
shot. Jason knocks the gun away, and the henchman turns the  
knife toward Jason's face. They stare into each other's  
eyes, the henchman with the upper hand; he tries to head-butt  
Jason -

- and Jason dodges. The henchman smashes his face against  
the wall. Jason slams him into it several times, creating a  
blood stain on the wall.

Jason picks up the henchman's pistol and whips him across his head; his body topples to the floor.

Jason turns toward the bedroom door and cringes. He looks down at himself and sees a blood stain spreading across his stomach. Resolute, he holds his wound with his free hand and walks toward the bedroom.

Gun arm extended, he swings the door open...

Tori holds Megan on her knees execution-style.

JASON (CONT'D)

Just couldn't finish the job, could you?

TORI

One more step and you'll both be dead.

Jason throws down his gun.

JASON

Go ahead. Do it.

(Tori hesitates)

You came for me, now kill me. I'm sick of this, I've been waiting for you to just finish it, now just do it! Do it!

Megan grabs Tori's gun hand, and Jason tackles Tori onto the bed. He pins her down with his legs and puts his hand over her mouth and nose.

Tori snarls and shakes, but Jason keeps his hold. Tori stares pure hate into Jason's eyes, the only thing sustaining her. Finally, her body stops shaking, and the glare in her eyes turns into an empty stare.

Jason lets go of her and looks at Megan. She cowers on the floor, training a gun on Jason. He looks back at her fearlessly, exhausted.

Jason turns to get off of the bed and collapses onto the floor. Megan drops the gun and helps him sit up.

JASON (CONT'D)

Did they hurt you?

MEGAN

No, but you...

JASON  
Just call nine-one-one, they'll  
take care of everything.

Megan touches his face, on the verge of crying.

JASON (CONT'D)  
Just call it in. You'll be safe  
then, I promise.

MEGAN  
They'll arrest you.

JASON  
No, they'll fire me. Please, just  
call. Please...

Megan tears herself away from him and steps into the living  
room. She stands still for a moment in the carnage.

DISSOLVE TO:

20 INT. MEGAN'S APARTMENT - DAYS LATER - DAY 20

Megan stands in the same place, the bodies gone, the room  
spick and span. She's dressed for an evening out, but she  
stares as though still seeing the dead bodies. Slowly, she  
collects her keys and walks out the door.

21 INT. BAR - LATER 21

Megan sits confidently at the bar, watching the TV screens,  
unaware of the world around her.

She looks down to take a drink and catches sight of a man  
across the bar looking at her. He smiles warmly and nods a  
silent greeting.

Megan smiles back, then turns back to the TV.

FADE TO BLACK.