

DISTINGUISHED SERVICE

written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. MEMORIAL BRIDGE - DAY

Cars stop-and-go through suburban Virginia toward Our Nation's Capital. Across the Potomac River, dawn silhouettes the monuments and memorials.

EXT. MCPHERSON SQUARE PARK - DAY

A block of forest surrounded by office buildings. COMMUTERS race-walk through the park en route to work.

Across a bench sprawls the corpse of BUM* (40s, looks older). Despite the heat, he wears a ratty army jacket. A beat-up, empty paper coffee cup teeters on his gut.

The Commuters pass him by without a glance. White drops of bird poop spatter onto his collar. Is this guy really dead?

W.H. RECEPTIONIST (V.O.)
You have to deliver it by 4:30 the latest.

EXT. WASHINGTON HARBOUR OFFICE COMPLEX - DAY

Buildings gleam in sunlight reflected off the Potomac.

W.H. RECEPTIONIST (V.O.)
It's going to D.C. Superior Court.
Yes, on Indiana Avenue.

INT. WASHINGTON HARBOUR OFFICE - RECEPTION AREA - DAY

The RECEPTIONIST (30s) is dressed to impress as she speaks on the phone:

W.H. RECEPTIONIST
We'd very much like our usual man to handle this package.

The Package, big as a phonebook, dominates the front desk.

W.H. RECEPTIONIST
I'm sure they are, but we'd feel safer in his hands. I'm so glad you understand. We'll look forward to seeing him, then.

* Nobody in this script has a name; you are what you do.

She hangs up the phone, takes her seat, and waits for Prince Charming to come for The Package.

EXT. CAPITOL HILL - DAY

COURIER (20s) flies his gleaming bicycle through morning gridlock.

Dressed for the Tour de France, his shoulder bag advertises his employer: DIVINE MESSENGERS, INC.

He charges up Pennsylvania Avenue, weaving effortlessly through lanes choked with cars.

Red lights don't exist for him; he passes through oncoming traffic like he's a ghost.

EXT. MCPHERSON SQUARE PARK - DAY

Courier weaves through the Commuters as he crosses the park.

But when he sees Bum, he stops. Courier produces a dollar bill. He dismounts and bends over to make a donation.

With a snort, Bum awakes, bolts up. He blinks, studies his cup, holds up the new bill.

He looks around, but Courier is far off.

Bum sits up grinning. He looks up to the statue of General McPherson commanding the troops from horseback.

BUM

Looks like a good day.

He takes from his jacket a wad of cash and adds the bill.

Bum looks up, like the General just said something. He gasps, just remembering something.

BUM

You're right. Gonna be late for work.

Bum pulls his shopping cart of worldly possessions out from behind the bench and pushes it toward the street.

BUM

No Sir. Can't keep my public waiting.

He passes JUNKIE (20s), still sprawled out on the ground near the bench. Junkie opens one eye, sees that Bum's gone, and takes the bench to continue his slumber.

EXT. WHITE HOUSE - DAY

Courier flies the wrong way down one-way H Street, past Lafayette Park.

EXT. STREETS AROUND FOGGY BOTTOM - DAY

Courier flies past office buildings chock full of lobbyists. He passes a black Sedan, which pulls up alongside an alley.

IN THE ALLEY

LEGBREAKER (30s), a shaved-down gorilla in a pimp's suit, pummels an INNOCENT MAN (50s) to a bloody pulp.

The Innocent Man grabs with a bloody hand onto Legbreaker's lapels. Legbreaker glares at the smeared blood on his jacket, then at the Innocent Man.

Legbreaker rips the Innocent Man's hands off the jacket. Then it's one punch -- lights out.

Legbreaker's cell phone rings. He hastily wipes his hands on the Innocent Man's jacket, then answers the call:

LEGBREAKER

Yes, Sir. Yeah, that guy, he played dumb. A lot of "I don't know what you're talking about, you got the wrong guy." What did I do? Well, he disrespected me -- us. I did what I had to do.

Legbreaker winces from the chewing-out.

LEGBREAKER

Washington Harbour? Sure I know where that is. By the water, right?

(winces at chewing-out)

Get the package. From the courier. Got it. No, really, I got it.

Legbreaker walks toward the alley entrance.

LEGBREAKER

How's he going to know to give it to me? Uh-huh. So "give it" to him, then he'll give it to me.

(laughs at his own joke)

Got it. Really, I do. Right.

Legbreaker sees the Sedan. He grins like a kid on Christmas Day -- a naughty kid who's still gotten a present.

LEGBREAKER
 For me? Won't let you down, Boss.

Legbreaker struts like the crime lord he wishes he was.

Legbreaker opens the Sedan's rear passenger door, gets in.
 DRIVER sits silent up-front. The interior is immaculate.

LEGBREAKER
 (to Driver)
 Call this clean? You smuggling
 Guatemalans this morning?

EXT. MCPHERSON SQUARE METRO STATION - DAY

A raucous bucket-drum solo jolts the sleepwalking Commuters
 ascending the escalators.

Bum pounds away at a bucket-drum ensemble. His half-full
 change cup sits on the ground in front of the kit.

A beefy COP (40s), latté in hand, exits the nearby coffee
 shop. He spots the source of the racket and marches over.

Bum plays on -- until a drumstick's snatched from his hand.
 Cop pins the stick into Bum's chest.

COP
 I told you yesterday: I don't want
 you disrupting my mornings.

BUM
 That was you?

Cop grabs the other drumstick.

COP
 Show's over.

BUM
 You can't just take away my career.

COP
 I hear you banging these buckets
 again, I'll take more than that.

BUM
 That's my only means of making a
 living.

Cop picks up the change cup. He turns it upside-down.

A couple of bills and some coins bounce onto the buckets.

COP
 If this is your idea of a living,
 then you're already dead.

Cop drops the cup on the buckets.

BUM
 It's not just about the money.

COP
 Everything's about the money. Now,
 if you're really willing to suffer
 for your art, then just say so.

Cop towers over Bum. Bum gulps.

Cop walks off. He dumps the drumsticks in a garbage can.

Bum stares at the change on his drum kit. Bum kicks over
 the drum kit and shuffles off.

EXT. K STREET OVERPASS - DAY

Courier powers west along K Street.

Near the waterfront, K Street splits into the Whitehurst
 Parkway above and K Street below. Courier descends.

EXT. WASHINGTON HARBOUR OFFICE COMPLEX - DAY

Courier decelerates across the traffic circle and courtyard.

Quick as a gunslinger, he locks his bike to the rack.

INT. WASHINGTON HARBOUR OFFICE - RECEPTION AREA - DAY

Receptionist hands Courier The Package. Their eyes meet.

COURIER
 I have a Priority Delivery first.
 But I'll make it to the courthouse
 by 4:30.

W.H. RECEPTIONIST
 I knew we could trust you.

Courier secures The Package and the envelope in his shoulder
 bag. Receptionist checks him out as he does so.

W.H. RECEPTIONIST
 You want a drink? Anything?

Their eyes meet again. He hands her a clipboard.

COURIER
Just your signature.

She smiles, takes the clipboard, signs, and returns it.

Courier tips his helmet and heads for the elevators.
Receptionist watches him leave.

EXT. WASHINGTON HARBOUR OFFICE COMPLEX - DAY

Courier takes off across the courtyard.

As he leaves, the Sedan rolls up. Legbreaker gets out, just in time to watch Courier speed away. Then Legbreaker's phone rings. As he fishes for the phone he hops back into the Sedan.

LEGBREAKER
That's him -- move.

EXT. MCPHERSON SQUARE PARK - DAY

Seated on a bench, Bum counts out the last of his savings.

BUM
Eighty-six dollars and twenty-seven cents. Oughtta be enough. Right?

Bum looks down beside him on the bench. JUNKIE, curled up like roadkill, snores loudly on the bench. He barely hangs onto his own change cup. Bum snorts his indignation.

BUM
Like talking to a rock.

He looks up at the General:

BUM
Got to be enough. He bought them for fifty; now I'll buy 'em back.

Bum's startled by whatever he hears back.

BUM
Why wouldn't he sell 'em back? Who else is gonna buy a box of lousy medals? Well yeah, except for me. Why wouldn't I go through with it? I saved this long, didn't I?

Bum's outraged by the imagined response.

BUM

What's the point? I can't believe you, of all people, are asking me that. You know what? I don't want to talk about it.

Bum pockets the change, fires a parting shot at the General:

BUM

I'm getting them back. You'll see. More than even you got.

Chin up, Bum heads for the street. Still asleep, Junkie stretches out across the bench.

EXT. PAWNSHOP - DAY

Among the junk sits a display case of military medals.

Through the glass, Bum inspects each one.

BUM

All present and accounted for.

INT. PAWNSHOP - DAY

The display case rests on the counter. Bum lays out the last of his savings. He looks up with a hopeful smile. The greasy PAWNBROKER (50s) just sighs.

PAWNBROKER

One hundred. No less. I have a business to run.

BUM

I sold them to you for fifty.

Pawnbroker holds up the display case.

PAWNBROKER

I got a regular, he'd pay a hundred for the case. It's solid cherry.

BUM

The case?

PAWNBROKER

The medals aren't worth anything.

BUM

Then let me have them.

PAWNBROKER

I break the case open and then it's worthless too.

BUM

Those medals are not worthless.
They're very worthwhile.

Bum turns the case, points out his most prized medals.

BUM

This one is the Order of Military
Medical Merit. I was a medic.

PAWNBROKER

They let you give out medicine?

BUM

This is the Purple Heart. I took a
bullet in the buttocks. Look --

Bum starts to open his pants. Pawnbroker stays him.

PAWNBROKER

I'll take your word for it.

Bum returns to his presentation:

BUM

And this is the Army Distinguished
Service Medal. Want to know how I
got that?

PAWNBROKER

I don't ask questions.

BUM

I gave "exceptionally meritorious
service to the Government in a duty
of great responsibility." I was in
the war.

Pawnbroker mocks Bum with a laugh.

PAWNBROKER

Which war?

BUM

What do you mean, "which war?"

Pawnbroker snatches back the case.

BUM

No way to treat a veteran.

PAWNBROKER

I didn't steal these from you.

Pawnbroker returns the case to the window.

BUM
How do you expect me to come up
with a hundred dollars?

PAWNBROKER
I don't.

Bum's silent, cut down by this slap in the face.

EXT. MACPHERSON SQUARE PARK - DAY

Bum and Junkie share a bench. Bum reads the employment section of the newspaper, his change cup at his feet.

BUM
I told you: I'm saving my money.

JUNKIE
For what, retirement?

Junkie holds a crude sign: "HOMELESS -- NEED MONEY FOR FOOD." Junkie impatiently shakes his change cup at the Commuters. He looks over at Bum, reaches for the paper.

JUNKIE
Lemme see that.

Bum jerks the paper from Junkie's reach.

BUM
I need to find a job.

JUNKIE
You "need" to find a shower.

Junkie fine-tunes his sign: "HOMELESS -- NEED MONEY FOR FOOD AND MEDICINE."

JUNKIE
So you were in "The War." Now
you're on the street. What good's
a bunch of medals out here?

Bum puts down the paper.

BUM
Right now? I'm just homeless. But
when I had my medals? I was a
Homeless Veteran.

JUNKIE
"Homeless Veteran." I like that.

Junkie chuckles as he re-revises his sign: "HOMELESS VETERAN -- NEED MONEY FOR FOOD AND MEDICINE -- GOD BLESS."