

A HELPING HAND

Written by

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"In reality there are no others. Thus the best place to find a helping hand is at the end of your arm."

Frank H Zimmermann

FADE IN:

EXT. OPEN OCEAN - AFTERNOON

Vast, open waters. Not a single living thing in sight. Endless, gently rippling waves backlit by a scorching sun.

A piece of wood bobs into frame. A badly sunburned hand wearing a broken watch sticks out on top of it.

A MAN on a raft. The man is weak, skinny, unshaven. His hollow gaze staring at something.

A yellow jelly candy snake stares right back at him.

The man picks up a credit card snapped into the shape of a knife and grabs the candy snake, which is already half eaten. He uses the card to cut a thin slice off the snake and puts the card back, sliding it into a crack on the raft to secure it.

He places the tiny slice of candy on his tongue and shuts his eyes in enjoyment. This is the highlight of the day.

A long gaze at the horizon.

The man's raft is made of a wooden pallet the size of two doors. His clothes are torn and he's wearing only one shoe, a leather belt is wrapped around the other foot to protect it from the sun.

He carefully tucks away the rest of the candy next to his credit card and tends to his foot. Unwinds the belt and inspects the crackling, sunburnt skin. It's bad.

He removes his shoe on the other foot. It's in the same horrible shape. He alternates and wraps the belt around this foot instead then tries to put on the shoe on the other foot.

A sudden burst of intense pain, he jerks back and immediately rips off the shoe.

MAN

Shit!!

He slams the shoe into the water and it disappears into the depth.

In that exact same moment an identical shoe floats up on the other side of the raft.

The man can't believe the other shoe appeared and throws himself towards it. He manages to get hold of it and puts it down on the raft while hurrying back to the spot where he threw in the original shoe.

He scans the dark waters. Nothing.

He lowers his arm into the depth in an attempt to find it.

He's unaware that at that point an identical arm, wearing the same broken watch, appears from the water on the other side of the raft.

As he moves his arm to one side in the water, the arm sticking out of the water mimics his move.

The man is focused, exploring the depth.

Meanwhile the arm sticking out of the water is exploring too. A finger finds a shoelace on the raft.

The man shines up. He leans further in.

The hand traces the lace back to the shoe and grabs it.

The man pulls himself up from the water and in that moment the arm with the shoe disappears under the surface.

Triumphant he holds up a wet shoe. He leans over to the other side of the raft to pick up the matching one but to his surprise, it's gone. He looks around.

He then puts his arm into the water on this side of the raft. Again an identical arm appears on the other side.

The man explores the dark waters while the hand sticking up from the sea searches along the other side of the raft.

The hand cuts itself on the snapped credit card.

The man jerks up from the water, examines his hand. He's bleeding.

Defeat in his eyes as he gives up. He puts on his one shoe and lies down exhausted.

Blood drops down on the raft and in between two boards. The man notices something. He pushes his face against the boards, there's something down there!

He jumps up and tries to squeeze his fingers through the gap. At that point, two fingers appear from a crack further down the raft. One of them bleeding.

A grin appears on the man's face. He focuses hard and stretches his fingers as much as he can.

Meanwhile, the fingers up on the raft desperately stretch themselves towards the candy snake. They get hold of it!

The man wiggles a candy up from the opening, while the fingers on the raft wiggle their candy snake down into theirs.

Victory! More food! The man grabs a mouthful, enjoying this moment to the fullest. Chewing like there's no tomorrow.

He throws a quick glance at his supply to make sure his original candy is still there - it's gone! A fresh blood stain in its place.

The man checks the skies for birds, nothing.

Saddened, observes what's left in his palm. Just the snake's head, which stares back at him.

The man touches the blood stain on the raft and peeks through the gap.

MAN

Anyone there?

He gazes out the side of the raft.

MAN

Hello?

He grabs hold of the side of the raft and pushes his head underwater. In that same moment the man's head surfaces on the other side of the raft. In shock. He sees the back of a man up on the raft.

MAN

Hey!

He stretches out and grabs hold of a leg.

MAN

Who are you??

Each time he gives the leg a tug, he's pulled down himself, as if someone's pulling him from below.

As he struggles to stay above the surface and pushes himself up again, the body on the raft is dragged away from him in a chaotic, circular tug of war.

Suddenly the pants rip and the man gets dragged down under the surface.

Meanwhile the man up on the raft resurfaces from the depth. Exhausted and wet, he examines the piece of cloth in his hand.

He then notices a rip in his own pants, the piece of fabric matches perfectly.

He stares at the water.

Gently lowers his right arm and watches as an identical arm emerges from the depth on the other side of the raft. As he moves his arm in the water, the one sticking up on the other side moves in an identical way.

MAN
How could you??

He manages to grab it with his left arm.

MAN
You stinking piece of shit!

Each time he yanks the hand he caught, he gets pulled towards the water. He fights hard, pushing and pulling himself back and forth almost like a snake trying to eat itself.

Suddenly the raft is hit by a tremendous force. The man jerks up in pure agony, a scream from the deepest pits of hell.

Water splashing everywhere. Blood.

A shark fin swims away from the raft. The man falls back onto the raft. He's missing one arm from the elbow down.

The man holds the bloodied, missing limb in his other hand. In shock. Sees the shark fin disappear into the depth.

MAN
(losing it completely)
Wanna eat me? Wanna fucking eat
me?? Here you fucking fuck! I dare
you!

He holds the limb down against the raft with his foot so that part of it sticks out into the water.

MAN
Eat me, come on! Eat!

He grabs the credit card knife with his other arm, aiming towards the water.

MAN
I'll be eating YOU!

The adrenaline settles, he's losing blood.

MAN
Come on, I dare you. Take a...
bite..

The man lies down, pale. Almost dozes off.

MAN

I dare..

His eyes start to wander.

Takes in the beautiful pink sky.

VOICE (O.S.)

He's alive! He's breathing. K66 to
Coast Guard, K66 to Coast Guard.

Noise of a VHF radio and an old engine HUMMING.

RADIO VOICE (O.S.)

This is Coast Guard services, go
ahead K66.

VOICE (O.S.)

We have a survivor. I repeat, we
have a survivor.

Our man looks down from the sky. An old fishing boat is
approaching. A weathered FISHERMAN in his 50's standing on
deck.

FISHERMAN

Jesus! What happened? You ok?

The fisherman reaches out.

FISHERMAN (CONT'D)

Friend, grab my hand!

The man grabs his hand, holds it tight.

FISHERMAN (CONT'D)

You'll be fine. I've got you! Just
hold on.

A smile slowly starts to spread across our man's face.

AERIAL SHOT:

The man lies on his raft in a pool of blood, one arm missing.
A smile glued to his pale face. No other ship in sight.

The man is holding his own, detached hand.

Vast, open waters. Endless, gently rippling waves.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END.