

THE BUTTON

by

Peter Force

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Thunk@extra.co.nz

EXT. CITY - NIGHT

It must be Sunday because the streets are virtually deserted.

An eccentrically dressed teenage girl, ANDIE, spins her way happily down one of them.

Her plastic bangles clack together as she twirls around a light pole.

She skips past the shops, walks across the forecourt of a car park. It's like a cement fortress for cars.

EXT. CAR PARK BUILDING FORECOURT - NIGHT

A car idles at the entrance.

A MAN'S arm is outstretched from the driver's side window. He's parked a little too far from the ticketing machine and struggles to reach the button.

Andie rushes over, glances into the car and sees a conservatively dressed OLDER COUPLE inside.

She hits the button for them and as it spits out a ticket a woman's voice broadcasts from a small speaker.

WOMAN'S VOICE

Please take your ticket with you
and pay before returning to your
car.

The voice hits Andie like a slap.

She barely notices the driver as he takes the ticket and drives into the car park.

Andie kneels in front of the machine, grips it with both hands and stares at it.

She pushes the button again.

WOMAN'S VOICE

Please take your ticket with you
and pay before returning to your
car.

Andie plucks the ticket from the machine, drops it on the ground and hits the button again.

WOMAN'S VOICE

Please take your ticket with you
and pay before returning to your
car.

There's something about that voice.

Andie pulls the next ticket from the machine and lets it fall to the ground.

She pushes the button again but this time she leans in close, peers into the speaker and searches for the little voice inside.

WOMAN'S VOICE

Please take your ticket with you
and pay before returning to your
car.

INT. OFFICE - NIGHT

A not particularly big, but nasty looking SECURITY GUARD watches Andie's every move on a security camera monitor. His hair's greasy and his uniform has coffee stains down the front.

CLOSE UP:

Andie on the low-res monitor, she's about to push the button again.

Off screen the guard groans.

He reaches for his large torch as he gets up and marches out the door.

EXT. CAR PARK BUILDING FORECOURT - NIGHT

Andie's kneeling by the machine, discarded parking tickets at her feet. A gentle breeze blows a few of them across the forecourt.

Suddenly, she spins around and sees the security guard.

He looks angry.

She dives behind the ticketing machine - it's a feeble attempt to hide herself.

The guard walks toward her.

Andie takes off and all the guard can do is watch as she sprints off down the street.

He shakes his head, wanders across the forecourt picking up the discarded tickets.

INT. OFFICE - LATER

The office is empty.

On the security camera monitor is the static image of the empty car park forecourt.

Suddenly, Andie walks into view and across the forecourt. She stops, takes a quick look around and then heads straight for the machine.

As soon as she reaches it she leans down, hits the button and pulls out another ticket.

She looks at the machine for a moment turns and walks into the car park.

INT. CAR PARK - NIGHT

Andie explores the different levels. She walks up ramps, checks out the parked cars.

On one of the upper levels she stops and takes in the twinkling city lights.

She looks around the floor, spots a van parked nearby with Plumber written along one side.

She marches over to the van and pushes her face up against the glass of a side window.

ANDIE'S POV:

The van has tools in it, one in particular catches her attention.

Andie checks the front and side doors. They're all locked so she makes her way around to the rear of the van and tries the back door - it pops open.

Andie works quickly, she lifts the door just enough to squeeze inside.

INT. THE VAN

Andie quickly searches the van and smiles when she finds what she was looking for...a hacksaw.

INT. OFFICE - NIGHT

The security guard has his feet up on the desk and reads the paper. Out of the corner of his eye he notices something on the monitor.

He puts down the paper and leans closer stares at the screen.

His breath's taken away by what he sees, he can hardly believe it.

EXT. CAR PARK BUILDING FORECOURT - NIGHT

The guard sprints onto the forecourt.

The ticketing machine's head has been severed. Wires spew from the pole that once supported it - the hacksaw is on the ground nearby.

A trail of small white parking tickets disappears into the car park. The guard follows them.

INT. CAR PARK - FIRST FLOOR

Like Hansel and Gretel following bread crumbs, the trail of tickets lead the security guard over the first floor and up the ramp.

CAR PARK - THIRD FLOOR

The guard walks across the third floor then abruptly stops.

There are no more tickets to follow.

He raises his heavy torch hits the switch and shines light into the dimly lit corners.

Andie hides behind a car.

She clutches the ticketing machine to her chest and looks very scared as the beam of light sweeps past.

The guard moves closer, his footsteps echo off the car park walls.

Andie shuts her eyes, holds her breath and squeezes the machine so tightly that she accidently presses the button.

WOMAN'S VOICE

Please take your ticket with you
and pay before returning to your
car.

Andie gasps, throws her hand over the little speaker to muffle the voice.

The guard's ears prick up, he stands and heads straight for the sound.

Andie peers around the car and directly into the blazing light of the torch.

Her immediate response is to jerk back behind the car but then, she takes a deep breath, stands up and confronts the guard.

He stops and stares at her.

Andie takes a sideways step and the guard extends his arms, crouches a little - he's ready for her.

She's wide-eyed now, desperate, like a cornered animal.

She looks past the guard. He smiles, beckons her toward him.

She runs straight at him then swerves at the last minute.

The guard lunges but all he manages to catch are the fake pearls around Andie's neck.

The pearls spill and bounce across the hard cement.

Andie keeps running.

She passes the lift and the doors miraculously open.

Andie dives in, slams her palm down hard on the first floor button.

The doors of the lift slide shut just as the guard reaches them.

He slaps the doors and runs toward the ramp.

CAR PARK LIFT

Andie turns and leans against the lift doors and patiently waits as the lift descends.

The doors open and Andie's face-to-face with the elderly couple.

They stare down at the severed head of the ticketing machine. Andie notices and can't help herself - she pushes its button.

WOMAN'S VOICE

Please take your ticket with you
and pay before returning to your
car.

She hands the old man the ticket, then sprints from the lift.

CAR PARK - FIRST FLOOR

The hulk of a guard comes sprinting down the ramp and onto the first floor.

He's just in time to see Andie racing out through the car park entrance.

He doubles over, puts his hands on his knees and catches his breath.

EXT. CITY - NIGHT

Andie walks quickly along the city streets with her hefty prize in her arms.

She occasionally looks over her shoulder but there's no sign of the guard.

EXT. BRIDGE - LATER

Andie walks across an inner city bridge.

She reaches the other side and when she's sure no one's watching, she ducks under the barrier and jumps onto the dirt slope below.

She makes her way carefully down the slope and disappears under the bridge.

EXT. UNDER THE BRIDGE - NIGHT

This crawl space is Andie's home.

It's dark and Andie sits on an old mattress with the head of the ticketing machine next to her.

She reaches for a shoebox, opens it, takes out an apple and bites into it.

She returns the half-eaten apple to the box, lays down and pulls the blanket up over herself.

The ticketing machine's next to her and she drapes an arm over its hard metal edges.

EXT. BRIDGE - NIGHT

It's too dark to see Andie under the bridge.

The only thing that gives her away is the distant voice that floats out from the darkness.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
Please take your ticket with you
and pay before returning to your
car.

THE END