

“Going Down?”

By Jack Bloomfield

Characters

Sherri- Black Woman

Donna – Gay Woman

Rick – Overweight Man

Justin – Hip-Hop Teen

Dan – 1st Fireman (Caucasian)

Will – 2nd Fireman (Caucasian)

*** Synopsis***

Two firemen find themselves thrust upon a rescue situation where four people are trapped in an elevator. It is the first time the two have been partnered together as a rescue team. When it is time to begin pulling the victims to safety, one of the firemen can't bring himself to help them based on the fact that he has prejudices against each one. The situation reveals that even in a tragic situation like this, he can't reach out to help them. Eventually, the tables are turned and he suddenly finds himself hurt and in need of help from the same people that he couldn't get himself to reach out to. The help he receives not only brings him to safety but teaches him new lessons for living as well.

MESSAGE FOCUS: *Do our prejudices keep us from reaching out to help or care for others who might be one of “them”?*

Opening Scene:

Scene opens with 4 people going down in an elevator of a tall building. They are staring straight ahead as normal watching the numbers on the elevator go lower and lower. All of a sudden, the elevator stops abruptly. All of the people lose their balance and fall on one another. They slowly start to get up and realize that the elevator is stuck between floors. Through the PA system, they hear an announcement.

VOICE:

(firmly) “There is a fire in the building and the electricity has gone out. Please remain calm and do not panic. The fire department is on the way and they are going to help everyone to safety. Just remain calm.”

(At this time, the people on the elevator, somewhat scared and bewildered begin a dialogue.)

SHERRI:

“What are we going to do? I hope they can get us out of here.”

DONNA:

“I hope it doesn’t take too long. I get really freaked out in enclosed places.”

RICK:

“I’m really scared. I don’t hear anything.”

DONNA:

“It’s so quiet. I don’t know if they know we’re in here.”

(They all begin to scream and yell for help) “Help! Help! We’re trapped here in the elevator. Can anyone hear us? Is there anyone out there?”

RICK:

“It doesn’t sound like there is anyone there. Maybe we can get out ourselves. Here, get on my shoulders.” (motions to Justin and puts him on his shoulders.)

JUSTIN:

“I’ll put my head through the top and see if we are near a door that I can climb to. (Looks through small trap door) I can’t see anything. It’s pitch black.” (Gets down off Rick’s shoulders.)

SHERRI:

(frantically) “What are we going to do? We could die in here!”

DONNA:

“I’m having a hard time breathing. We’ve got to get out of here.”

(At this moment 2 voices are heard from a distance.)

DAN:

“Is anybody down there? Can you hear me?”

(they all begin screaming) “We’re down here! Help! Please help us!”

WILL:

“Just hold on. We’re doing our best to reach you and get you out.”

(All screaming) “Hurry! Please hurry! Help us!”

(At that moment, both fireman get to the side of the elevator and begin to try to break through to begin pulling the passengers to safety.)

DAN:

(reaching for Sherri’s hand) “Hey, here, give me your hand. Grab hold.” (at this moment he realizes that she is a black women and he pulls his hand back quickly just as their hands almost connect.)

WILL:

(shocked) “What are doing man? Grab her hand.”

DAN:

“No way, man. She’s black and I’m just not friends to the black race. *Those people* and me have never mixed.”

WILL:

“Move over. (pushes Dan out of the way.) “Here miss. Give me your hand. I’ll pull you out.” (he pulls Sherri out of the elevator to safety)

(Dan begins to reach to the next person to pull them to safety.)

DAN:

(reaching for Donna) “Here, give me your hand, I’ll help get you out of here.” (As Donna reaches for Dan’s hand, once again Dan pulls his hand away.)

WILL:

“What now?”

DAN:

“You pull her out. Did you see how she looks? She’s gay man and I ain’t touching no lesbians hand. I’ve gotta problem with *those people*”

WILL:

“You’re crazy man. These folks are going to die if we don’t get them out of here. (pushes Dan aside and reaches for Donna’s hand.) Here, grab on to my hand.”

JUSTIN:

(Afraid and trembling) “Please, please, help me. I don’t want to die.” (Reaching his hand out to Dan. Dan again backs away)

WILL:

(looks angrily at DAN) “Man, I don’t believe you. You got issues with this kid too, don’t you?”

DAN:

“You’re damn right I do. I don’t like kids that look like this kid. They’re all a bunch of hoods and criminals. *Those people* aren’t people I can mix with.”

WILL:

“Here kid, give me your hand I’ll help you.” (reaches out pulling him to safety.)

DONNA:

(speaking angrily to Will.) “What the hell is wrong with this guy? Is he your partner?”

WILL:

“Yea, but it’s the first time we’ve been on a rescue call together. It looks like he’s got some serious problems.”

(from a distance a loud voice over the P.A. system is heard.)

VOICE:

“The building is no longer safe. Everyone must evacuate the building at once. Do not panic. Please leave immediately!”

DAN:

(talking to Will) “Let’s get out of here man. We got to go or we’re going to die.”

WILL:

“There is still one more guy in the elevator. We can’t leave till we get him out too.”

RICK:

(begins screaming) “Help me, PLEASE help me!”

DAN:

(speaking to Will) “You get him. I’m out of here. Besides, did you see how fat he is? *Those people* give me the creeps. They really disgust me.”

WILL:

(angry and disgusted) “I’m telling you now, when this is over, I’m going to bring you up on charges. I can’t believe you. While people’s lives are at stake, you have all these different problems with everyday people who we are supposed to be rescuing.”

DAN:

“Everyday people! They’re not everyday people. They might be your everyday people, but their not my everyday people.”

WILL:

“Man, you are one twisted dude.”

DAN:

“They ain’t like me so I don’t want to mess with them.”

WILL:

“Every single time you’re referring to the people we are rescuing as “*Those people*” What’s that’s supposed to mean?”

DAN:

“It means that I like to mix with people that are like me. Other than that, I don’t feel comfortable around people that are different than me.”

WILL:

“What makes you think they’re so different? Are you afraid of them?”

DAN:

“Because they are. We don’t have anything in common.”

(At that very moment the elevator drops another half of a floor and both fireman fall forward and are now trapped in the elevator with Rick. During this sudden jolt, Dan falls to the floor and hit's his head, knocking him unconscious. Will and Rick begin to yell out to Donna, Sherri and Justin.

WILL and RICK:

“Are you guys out there?”

DONNA:

“We're here. Are you guys OK?”

WILL:

“Rick and I are OK, but Dan looks like he's hurt pretty bad. I think he is unconscious. We'll lift him out to you.”

SHERRI:

(anxious) “Hurry, Hurry. It's not safe in the building.”

(Will and Rick, while still in the elevator, pick up Dan while Donna, Sherri and Justine reach to pull him out. As they all begin to exit the building to safety, Will leads the way as Sherri, Donna, Rick and Justin all grab one of Dan's legs and arms and carry him outside to safety. When they reach the outside, Dan begins to regain consciousness.)

DAN:

(to Will) “What happened man? The last thing I remember was the elevator dropping again.”

WILL:

“You were knocked out. These folks carried you to safety.”

DAN:

(speaking to Donna, Sherri, Rick and Justin) “I owe you all a debt of gratitude. If you weren't there to pull me out, I could have died.”

DONNA:

“It's not a problem. We were just reaching out to someone in need.”

DAN:

“But all along I wasn't helping you because I felt that we were so different and I have so many problems with people who aren't pretty much like me. Why would you guys stick your hand out for me when I wouldn't give you my hand?”

SHERRI:

“Probably because we know something that you don’t. It seems that you see all people as what group or category they fit into and if it doesn’t jive with you, you don’t see any connection. Well, I’ve got news for you my friend. There is one group we all fit into and you need to know that. We all fit into the human family and these labels that you put on people only bring about division, prejudice and intolerance. We see you as a human being. You’ve been seeing people as black or white, gay or straight, tall or short, rich or poor and what not. It’s time you wake up and take another view my man.”

RICK. (looking directly at Dan) “So Dan, maybe this is your wake up call my friend. I think it’s time to that you join the human race and become one of us? What do ya think?”

Fade to black...

THE END

Dialogue and questions:

Do we ever use the term “*Those People*” when we refer to other groups?

How does a person’s prejudice keep them from reaching out to others?

What is prejudice mainly rooted in?

When you think of the word prejudice, what is the first type that comes to your mind?

What are some of the other prejudices that human beings carry inside them?

If prejudice did not exist in our world, what would it look like?