

A Story About You

by

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Based on the podcast "Welcome To Night Vale" by Joseph Fink &  
Jeffrey Cranor

FADE IN:

EXT. DESERT - AFTERNOON

A small valley in a massive desert. Two large, dusty flatbed trucks are sitting side by side. One truck is piled high with wooden crates, each a cube about 3 feet on each side. The other has just one. To the side is an old Ford Probe.

JOHN, a man in his mid-30s, sporting jeans, a white t-shirt, and a painfully ordinary haircut, grabs the last crate off one truck, and moves it to the other.

His BOSS, a woman in her 40s in a sharp suit, watches him. As he moves the last crate, she pulls out a thick envelope. She hands it to John, who grabs it and peeks inside.

Cash. Lots of it.

He hops down off the truck and walks to his car: the trusty Ford Probe.

He gets into his car; it is clean. Empty. Lonely.

He turns on the RADIO, which sputters to life with a deep, mellifluous voice.

RADIO VOICE (V.O.)  
This is a story about you, and  
you were happy, because you  
always wanted to hear about  
yourself on the radio.

John smiles slightly. He starts up the car.

INT. JOHN'S TRAILER (KITCHEN) - NEXT MORNING

JOHN putters around his kitchen: it is far from nice, but it is not cluttered. Like the car, it contains only the essentials.

A RADIO is on in the corner. In another corner, there is a picture of a small house.

John starts making coffee.

RADIO VOICE (V.O.)  
You didn't always live here. You  
lived somewhere else, where there  
were more trees, was more water.

He loads coffee grounds and water into his coffee machine, and presses the button.

RADIO VOICE (V.O.)  
You wrote direct mail campaigns  
for companies. "Dear Resident,"  
you wrote often. "Finally a  
reason not to kill yourself."

The coffee begins to drip.

RADIO VOICE (V.O.)  
Then you would delete that and  
write something else. And it  
would be sent out. And it would  
not be read by anyone.

He grabs the coffeepot and begins pouring into a mug.

After he finishes pouring he picks up the picture of the  
house. It is a quaint, put-together, one-story house. In front  
of the house stands John and a beautiful WOMAN, both smiling.

RADIO VOICE (V.O.)  
You had a friend, and then a  
girlfriend, and then a fiancée -  
the same person.

He puts down the picture. He takes a sip of his coffee. Not  
good, but it'll do.

RADIO VOICE (V.O.)  
One day you looked out the glass  
box of your office, and a vision  
came to you. Though it was the  
middle of the day, the moon  
glowed hot and bright against the  
dull backdrop of the cityscape.  
You knew it could not be the same  
moon you'd seen every night: it  
had never looked so beautiful  
before.

He puts the half-finished coffee down and picks up his keys.

RADIO VOICE (V.O.)  
It was so far away.

He walks up to the door. He stops.

RADIO VOICE (V.O.)  
And that day, you did not go  
home. You drove instead. You  
drove a long time, and eventually  
you ended up here, in Night Vale.  
And you stopped driving.

He opens the door and steps through.

EXT. TRAILER - MORNING - CONTINUOUS

The sun beams down on a dirty trailer off on the edge of a desert town. JOHN walks out and squints up at the sun.

He makes his way to his Ford Probe. He gets in the car, settles down, and turns on the radio.

Like clockwork, the RADIO VOICE kicks up again.

RADIO VOICE (V.O.)  
How easy it was to walk away from  
your life. You never heard from  
your fiancée or your job again.  
They never looked for you.

He starts up the car and pulls out of his turnout onto the small dusty road.

RADIO VOICE (V.O.)  
Or maybe it's that here, you  
cannot be found.

EXT. DESERT HIGHWAY - MORNING - LATER

JOHN drives along the highway, staring straight ahead. The sun beats down.

RADIO VOICE (V.O.)  
Complete freedom. A lack of  
consequence.

EXT. DESERT - DAY - LATER

JOHN reaches the same desert site, and just like before there are two trucks: one piled with crates, the other empty.

The BOSS stands by one of the trucks.

JOHN parks his car.

RADIO VOICE (V.O.)  
It terrifies you.

He turns off the car and the radio, and gets out. He looks up at his Boss, who nods wordlessly.

John goes up to the full truck. He picks up a crate. He pauses.

The crate TICKS.

He pulls the crate down and moves it to the other truck.

EXT. DESERT - AFTERNOON

JOHN has unloaded over half of the crates. He picks up one from the now half-empty truck, and begins carrying it over to the other one.

The BOSS' phone RINGS. She looks down at it, and walks off a ways. Her back is to John.

John pauses. He looks down at the crate in his hand. No ticking. He looks over at his boss, thinks for a moment...

And starts walking, crate in hand. But as he gets to the truck, he hooks to the side, and walks towards his car. He walks quickly, but calmly.

He puts the crate down, and slowly reaches for his keys. He pulls them out of his pocket and unlocks the car, as if diffusing a bomb.

He picks up the crate, and sets it in the trunk.

He stares at it for a moment.

He closes the trunk, and walks wordlessly back to the first truck. His Boss is still talking on the phone.

He picks up a new crate, and continues with his job; truck to truck, like nothing happened.

EXT. DESERT - LATER

All the crates have been moved, and JOHN leans against the now-full truck, waiting.

His BOSS walks back, looks at the two trucks, and pulls out a thick envelope. She hands it to John, who opens it.

Full of cash, just like always.

EXT. DESERT HIGHWAY - DUSK

JOHN drives along the highway, heading back home. The sun is starting to set and streaks of light stretch across the desert in front of him.

The radio is off.

He is smiling.

## INT. JOHN'S TRAILER (KITCHEN) - NIGHT

JOHN is standing in his kitchen, staring at the crate, which is sitting in the middle of the floor.

He bends down to the crate and looks closely. He puts his ear against it. A faint HUM is heard. No ticking.

He runs his hand along the top of the crate, stopping at the nail in each corner. All he would need is a crowbar or a hammer.

He pulls back. He steps to the other side of the room.

He stares at the crate.

After a moment, he turns and goes to the door.

## EXT. DESERT ROAD - NIGHT

A dark road heading into the small desert town of NIGHT VALE. The wind whips dust around John's old Ford. The only light is from the moon and the headlights; there are no street lights in this part of the desert.

JOHN drives in silence for a while. He looks down at the radio.

He reaches his hand out, but stops before it hits the dial. A moment of decision.

He pulls his hand back and keeps driving.

## EXT. EDGE OF NIGHT VALE - NIGHT

JOHN drives past a large, wooden sign: "WELCOME TO NIGHT VALE."

He enters the town. The buildings are all small, and the lights are mostly off.

## EXT. MOONLITE ALL-NITE DINER - NIGHT

JOHN makes a right turn, and the MOONLITE ALL-NITE DINER comes into view, its neon sign shining a sickly green all along the street.

John parks his car across the street in front of it.

INT. MOONLITE ALL-NITE DINER - NIGHT

The diner is old and kitschy, but clean. At the front, leaning against her podium is a HOSTESS (female, mid-20s.)

JOHN walks up to her. She points to an empty booth by the window. John nods and walks over.

He slides into the booth and looks around. The diner is not empty, but there are plenty of empty tables and booths, and the occupied ones all have only one person.

John looks out the window at the moon.

All of a sudden a mysterious MAN IN A TAN JACKET, sporting a black fedora pulled low over his eyes, slides into the booth across from him. He places a suitcase on the table and one black-gloved hand on John's hand.

John grimaces, but does not pull it away.

The Man In The Tan Jacket sits silently.

After a moment, he finally begins to speak, in Russian.

MAN IN THE TAN JACKET  
You are in danger.

John looks towards the kitchen. He doesn't speak Russian.

MAN IN THE TAN JACKET  
They're coming.

The Hostess walks by with a slice of strawberry pie. She places it on the table between the two of them.

JOHN  
I think my pie is here now.

A long beat.

MAN IN THE TAN JACKET  
They will come from above. Pies  
will not help.

The Man In The Tan Jacket grabs his suitcase and walks to another part of the restaurant.

John looks down at his pie. When he looks up, the Man In The Tan Jacket is nowhere to be seen.

John starts eating his pie.

INT. MOONLITE ALL-NITE DINER - LATER

JOHN's pie sits, mostly finished, on his plate in front of him. John picks up his water glass and whispers into it.

JOHN  
Check please.

He puts the glass down, then lifts up the napkin dispenser. There is a filled out check waiting for him.

He picks it up, looks at the total, and gets a few dollars out of his wallet. He places the check down, then the money on top of it, and finally the napkin dispenser.

He waits.

There is the sound of SWALLOWING.

He gets up.

He walks past the HOSTESS, who is bobbing her head rhythmically and silently, as if listening to music.

EXT. MOONLITE ALL-NITE DINER - CONTINUOUS

The night is cold and clear. JOHN walks out of the restaurant and gets into his car.

He turns the ignition, but leaves the radio off.

EXT. ROAD - NIGHT

JOHN's car blazes down the road towards his trailer, much faster than before.

INT. JOHN'S TRAILER - NIGHT

JOHN walks into his kitchen to see the crate, sitting exactly where he left it. He crouches down to listen to it. Still a HUM, still no ticking.

John looks around. He breaths heavily.

After a moment, he grabs the crate.



EXT. JOHN'S TRAILER - NIGHT

JOHN flings open the trunk of his car, and pops the crate down into it. He walks around and gets into the front seat, and turns on the car with a start.

It rumbles for a moment, sitting in the dust.

He looks down at the radio.

He reaches out and gingerly flips it on.

RADIO VOICE (V.O.)  
You turn the ignition, and your  
car radio comes alive with a pop,  
just as the announcer says "your  
car radio comes alive with a  
pop."

He sits, shaking.

RADIO VOICE (V.O.)  
Where to now?

After a moment, he pulls the car out onto the road.

EXT. NIGHT VALE MAIN STREET - NIGHT

A quiet street in a sleepy small town. JOHN is alone as he drives through the center of town.

RADIO VOICE (V.O.)  
This is a quiet town. A friendly  
town. A town where the sun is hot  
and the moon is beautiful.

A HELICOPTER flies above him. John stops the car in the middle of the street. He gets out and looks behind him, tracing the arc of the helicopter.

He sees it flying past the edge of town, spotlights streaming down. There are SIRENS.

He turns back and looks up at the moon, shining brightly over in the night sky.

He gets back into the car.

RADIO VOICE (V.O.)  
This is a perfect town.

He drives forward through the town, silent but for the SIRENS in the distance. The houses and shops are all shrouded in darkness.

RADIO VOICE (V.O.)  
The radio begins playing your  
favorite song. You do not know  
why it is your favorite song. You  
do not even particularly like it.  
But you know without a doubt that  
it is your favorite.

The radio plays an old, sweet, and sad SONG.

EXT. MOONLITE ALL-NITE DINER - NIGHT

JOHN keeps driving, slowing down as he passes by the Moonlite All-Nite Diner.

He looks into the diner, the green glow of the neon lights washing over his face. There are still people dining, all sitting alone.

The HOSTESS is still bobbing, but it is now in time with the music from the radio.

He sees the MAN IN THE TAN JACKET sitting alone in a table by the corner. As John passes by, the Man In The Tan Jacket looks up and turns towards him.

The Man In The Tan Jacket tilts his head up and for the first time shows his eyes; they are deep bright PURPLE and they stare at John unblinkingly.

John looks away and speeds back up.

After a moment, he turns towards the passenger seat to see the Man In The Tan Jacket, sitting calmly next to him. His hat is once again pulled down low.

John keeps driving. The Man starts speaking, still in Russian.

MAN IN THE TAN JACKET  
This is a good song.

The Man holds out his hand and passes it over the dashboard. As he does so, the volume starts to fade.

MAN IN THE TAN JACKET (CONT'D)  
Not everyone is meant to live  
here.

The volume fades away to nothing.

Buildings start to thin out as they reach the edge of town.

They drive past a car lot, silent and dark.

A SHADOWY FIGURE slinks between the cars, which start to hum and flicker their lights when the Figure touches them.

MAN IN THE TAN JACKET (CONT'D)

The road is long; drive far  
enough, and you cannot be  
followed.

The Figure turns toward John. Two GLOWING RED EYES stare at him. John stares back.

He looks ahead again, and sees that the Man In The Tan Jacket has disappeared.

As soon as he notices this, he passes a WOMAN holding a cactus and a pair of scissors in her hands. The Woman SCREAMS at John.

John keeps driving. He looks down at the silent radio.

He passes another old wooden sign: "THANK YOU FOR VISITING NIGHT VALE. PLEASE COME AGAIN."

As he drives by the sign, he sees as GIANT PURPLE CLOUD above and ahead. It glows against the night sky, occasionally pulsating with electricity.

He looks down at the radio again.

As he gets closer, his car starts to WHINE and the radio begins turning to STATIC. It becomes more cacophonous the closer he gets to the cloud.

He keeps driving towards it.

He finally drives directly underneath, and the WHINES and STATIC build to an UNLISTENABLE SHRIEK.

The world goes WHITE.

And after a second, everything returns to normal. He is driving on a quiet, lonely desert road. The radio is silent. The car hums along normally.

He drives. He smiles. He looks down at the radio.

And turns it on.

RADIO VOICE (V.O.)

You reach the edge of town, and  
are completely alone now. You  
have never been freer.

(MORE)

RADIO VOICE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

(beat)

You decide to pull over.

John pulls the car over to the side of the road. He leaves the car running and steps out. He closes the door. The Radio Voice keeps TALKING, muffled and indistinguishable through the closed doors.

He looks back towards town. Helicopters swarm overhead, shining beams into buildings. People are suspended in the beams, floating up towards the helicopters.

There are SCREAMS. There is GUNFIRE.

The Purple Cloud continues to glow and pulse.

John walks around to the back of the car and opens the trunk. He places his hand on the crate.

He leans down to listen one more time. Still a HUM. Still no ticking.

He looks back again towards town. He sees a long black car driving along the road towards him.

He waits.

The car gets closer.

He continues to wait.

Finally, the car pulls up next to him.

TWO MEN get out of the car, dressed in matching black suits: a SHORT MAN, and a TALL MAN.

John stares calmly at the two men. They stare calmly back.

JOHN

How did you find me?

SHORT MAN

Everything you do is being  
broadcast on the radio for some  
reason.

TALL MAN

That made it pretty easy.

A beat.

JOHN

Yeah. I see that now.

SHORT MAN  
You have the item?

John stares silently.

The Short Man gestures to the Tall Man, and walks past John towards the car. He looks into the trunk, then looks to his partner and nods.

SHORT MAN  
Even easier.

The Tall Man walks up to John and puts a knife against his throat.

John begins to smile.

The Short Man takes the crate out of the car and sets it on the ground. He leans in to listen. The crate is TICKING.

He carefully opens the crate, and reaches inside to pull out a small, beautifully detailed house. It is identical to the house pictured in John's kitchen.

It appears to have lights and movement within.

John looks on at the house with wonder and his smile grows.

SHORT MAN  
Undamaged.

John tilts his head back and looks up at the sky.

The moon glows above him, almost looking within reach.

John reaches up. He closes his eyes.

CUT TO BLACK:

RADIO VOICE (V.O.)  
This has been your story. The radio moves on to other things - news, traffic, political opinions, and corrections to political opinions. But there was a time, one day, *one single day*, in which it was only one story. A story about you. And you were pleased, because you always wanted to hear about yourself on the radio.

ROLL CREDITS

After the credits have ended:

EXT. DESERT - DAY

The same small valley in the same massive desert. The trucks are set up just as before, and the same Ford Probe sits off to the side.

JANE, a woman in her early-20s, sporting the same jeans and white t-shirt as John, grabs the last crate off one truck, and moves it to the other.

The BOSS watches her. As she moves the last crate, the Boss pulls out a thick envelope. She hands it to Jane, who grabs it and peeks inside. Cash. Lots of it.

She hops down off the truck and gets into her car.

She turns on the RADIO, which sputters to life with the same deep, mellifluous voice.

RADIO VOICE (V.O.)  
This is a story about you, and  
you were happy, because you  
always wanted to hear about  
yourself on the radio.

Jane smiles slightly. She starts up the car.

CUT TO BLACK:

The End

## Process Note

Thanks for reading this new version of “A Story About You.” Looking forward to talking about it on Wednesday!

### **Strengths:**

Overall, I am fairly happy with this draft. I think it does a good job of clarifying the things that should be clarified, while not losing the mystery and dream-like quality of both the earlier draft and the source material.

Specifically, I think there is now more of a story flow to the piece. The decision to replace the Apache Tracker with a different character (The Man In The Tan Jacket) freed me up to more drastically change the way the character functioned in the story, and somewhat set up this tension between the Radio Voice/Town Of Night Vale and this mysterious stranger, both of whom seem to be battling over John and his future.

In general, I like that the town of Night Vale seems more menacing and dark than it did in the earlier draft, particularly because this is another deviation from the source material. In the podcast, the Radio Voice is the main character, and is a completely lovable guy, and the town, despite its Lovecraftian horror, is always portrayed as a great place. I like though that the context of *this* specific story flips that a bit.

### **Weaknesses:**

I’m not fully satisfied with the name of “John.” I originally changed it from “You” to “The Man,” to keep that sense of anonymity (at least for the reader) but made scenes with “The Man In The Tan Jacket” unreadable and confusing.

I also only expanded the Man In The Tan Jacket’s role last night, so I think more work could be done building up the Radio Voice vs. Man In The Tan Jacket struggle that John finds himself caught in the middle of.

While I’m much more satisfied with the piece overall, it still doesn’t have the metatextuality that a radio show about a radio show has. Which I am *fine* with, since this is instead about this specific story, but it is an aspect I loved a lot about the original, and I wish my attempts at incorporating it had worked.

### **Questions:**

More a formatting question than anything: how does one write in credits and post-credit scenes? I couldn’t find any solid consensus when I was searching (other than a lot of “You’re not the director, don’t bother with credits,” which I think is bad advice when I specifically want an post-credits scene.)

Also, does the post-credits scene land? Especially considering the “And you were happy, because you always wanted to hear about yourself on the radio” line is repeated three times instead of just at the beginning and end?