

CRY MOTHER MOON

An Original Short

By

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EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

CAROLINE (35) pushes a shopping cart out of a grocery store.

In the cart sits her daughter, ANNIE (6). She squirms. Tries to stand up.

CAROLINE  
(puts her legs back in)  
Here baby. Now settle down, please.  
Mama's late and you're making her later.

ANNIE  
I want a fruit snack.

CAROLINE  
I'll get you a fruit snack as soon as we  
get to the car.

EXT. PARKING LOT, NEXT TO VAN - DAY

Caroline at her minivan, lifts Annie into her car seat and straps her in. She slides the side door closed and loads the back with a couple of brown bags.

We get a chance to look at Annie who is a darling big brown-eyed child. She sticks her little finger's into a bag of fruit snacks and pulls out a green one.

The SOUND of rain plunking on the roof. Caroline fits the last of the bags in the back.

FADE OUT:

TITLE: "BURY OR BURN THE ONES YOU LOVE"

FADE IN:

INT. MINIVAN - DAY

It's coming down harder. Caroline plugs in her phone headset. Clicks through her phone book while driving.

The road is a cliff-side two lane highway. Empty. The kind that Northern Arizona is famous for.

On the radio a couple of drive-time D.J.'s discuss the weather.

D.J. VOICE #1 (O.S.)  
It sure is coming down out there folks.  
And boy could we use it.

D.J VOICE #2 (O.S.)  
Remember to be extra careful on the  
roads. First rains of the season--

Turns the radio down.

CAROLINE  
Hey. Um, just calling to say I'm gonna  
be late, I've got to check to see if it's  
cancelled. I hope the rain clears up by  
tonight. And Annie's with me. Say hi  
honey. She's not being cooperative.  
Okay, I'll be there soon. Bye.

Turns her wipers up.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)  
(looks at Annie in the  
rearview)  
Annie. Look at mommy. Annie, do you  
hear me? Are you excited?

ANNIE  
No!

CAROLINE  
Well I'm excited. Wish for the rain to  
go away with me.

Annie closes her eyes and makes a wish.

They turn a corner and the van suddenly fish-tails.  
Sliding out of control, Caroline slams on her breaks.

Crashes violently into the railing. The railing gives  
way.

Everything happens too fast. The windshield fills with  
the image of a straight vertical drop 50 feet to the  
desert floor.

Helpless, Mother and Daughter yank forward, held by seat  
belts. The van slides down the cliff, through a canopy of  
branches and hits the ground.

The air-bag deploys. The windshield explodes. Groceries  
and toys fly forward. Litter the inside of the van.

Annie passes out.

FADE OUT:

INT. POLICE STATION, ENTRANCE - MORNING

THOMAS (27) bangs on the glass partition.

Thomas looks like a bearded child. Baseball cap hides his messy hair. A sleepless night behind him.

THOMAS

Is anybody in there? Hello? Excuse me?!

A Officer, SHIRLEY (30's) rolls up to the window in her little rolling chair.

OFFICER

Sir, get your hands off the window.

THOMAS

I'm sorry. I-I have to report a missing person, persons, people.

INT. POLICE STATION - MORNING

DETECTIVE DAVID SHORE (39) is a troublemaker. Face like a sock puppet. He sips his coffee and leans back in his light brown suit.

THOMAS

They were headed over last night. I've called her cell phone a thousand times in the last twelve hours. I've called hospitals, morgues. I'm going out of my mind.

SHORE

I'm sorry, it's early. What's your relation to Caroline and her daughter?

Thomas takes a moment to think about it.

THOMAS

I'm her... friend. I'm a friend of the family.

SHORE

So... However close you and your friend are, friend's don't tell friends everything. Have you called her house? Spoken with her husband?

THOMAS

I'm coming to you for help. I'm mean you're the cops for Christ-sake. Are you going to help me?

SHORE

I'd give it another day. If she's not back yet. Give us a call, you can file a report.

Thomas gets up to leave.

THOMAS

(calm)

I have no idea why anyone even bothers with the police. You're telling me rules and procedures. This is a little kid--

SHORE

(laughing)

Oh, forgive me, a kid's with her mom. I better call the mayor in on this.

(serious now)

Your relationship to this woman is questionable at best. You can't just file a missing persons because someone stood you up. Bring me a relative of hers. Go see if her husband's missing a kid. Then come back. Little shit.

Thomas walks away.

SHORE (CONT'D)

(shouting)

You know if those two do turn up missing, you're at the top of my list.

EXT. POLICE STATION - DAY

Thomas looks out over the town of Flagstaff, Arizona. In the distance are giant red bluffs. Mountain peaks beyond that. Clear blue sky beyond that.

THOMAS

(whispers repeatedly)

WhatdoIdo...whatdoIdo...whatdoIdo...

INT. VAN - DAY

The van is on it's nose at the base of the cliff.

Annie wakes up hanging from her car seat. Blood crusts from a nose bleed that ran up her forehead. She drips sweat.

Annie looks around. Her mother is gone.

She reaches for the passenger seat in front of her. The ground at this angle.

She pushes on the plastic restraint and squeezes a leg through. Then another and plops heavily on the back of the passenger seat.

She hurt herself. Starts to cry. Looks around for her mom.

After half a minute she calms down. No help. No mom. No reason to cry.

She crawls into the front seat. Presses the window down button. The window grinds and slips. Opens.

Annie looks out. The van is destroyed, wheels on the cliff. It has smashed into the base of a tree. The canopy covers the van from the sun and anyone looking down from the road above.

The rest is miles of red rock, brush and flat desert in every direction.

It might as well be Mars. She whimpers.

Tries the door. It won't budge. She leans back on the dash and kicks and kicks the door.

ANNIE

Mommy!! Let me out!! Let me oo-uu-t!

(silence for a moment then)

MOOOOOOOMMMIEEEEE!!!!!!

Cries. Echoes into...

I/E. CAR/RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Thomas parks across the street from a nice house in a nice neighborhood.

A sedan backs out of the garage. Thomas watches it pull into the street and take off.

He thinks for a second, then opens his door.

EXT. BACK YARD OF THAT HOUSE - DAY

Thomas lifts the mat, all the potted plants. No key. Looks around, thinking silently. Wipes the sweat off his upper lip.

Takes off his cap and places it around his fist.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Thomas punches in the door-glass and turns the knob from the inside. Steps into a beautiful kitchen.

He quickly opens the drawers. Papers, odd and ends. Silverware. He can't find what he's looking for.

He checks the cabinets. One looks promising. Files. He thumbs through them. His attention is momentarily distracted by a photo on the fridge.

INSERT PHOTO: Caroline, a baby Annie and a Man (late 30's) in happy times.

He finds something. A registration for a Minivan. License plate number and everything. He calls 911 on his cell phone.

THOMAS

Hello. Yes, I'd like to report a stolen vehicle.

(pause)

Okay.

Looks at the fridge picture again. Walks around the kitchen, nervously.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Hello. My name? My name is

(looks at the registration)

Rodney Graves. Yes. My van was just stolen. And it's got my daughter inside. She's six years old. Yes. It's a maroon 2002 Ford Mini-Van. License--

Walks into the...

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Where stands in the front doorway, the Man from the photograph.

This is the real RODNEY GRAVES (42). This is a big guy. Jacketless suit and tie. Already sweating.

He's got his car keys in one hand and a GUN in the other.

THOMAS

(freaked but tries to finish)

--Plate number A-Y-X-3-4-5.

Rodney moves on him.

RODNEY

Get on the ground! Get off the fucking phone!

THOMAS

(on the his stomach)  
Please help me. My daughter--

RODNEY

(presses the gun to the back  
of Thomas's neck)  
Hang up the fucking phone! I swear to God!

Thomas hangs up and slides it away.

THOMAS

I'm sorry. Sir. I'm sorry, you don't know me.

RODNEY

What are you doing in my house?

THOMAS

I'm a friend of your wife's. I'm--  
(shaking)  
I'm a friend of your wife's and I think her and your daughter are in danger. Please. I didn't want to break in but the police won't help. I thought--

RODNEY

What? Are you fucking crazy? You break into my fucking house. You think I didn't see you waiting for me to leave.  
(slaps his head)  
Dumb-Ass. Get up. Get off the fucking floor. What the fuck. Now I'm late for work.

Thomas gets up, hands in the air and turns to face Rodney. He's a shivering, terrified mess.

RODNEY (CONT'D)

(pitying)  
Put your fucking hands down. Go sit down.  
(points to the couch with his gun.)  
Over there. I'm going to get a Nestea. You want one? It's hot.  
(Walks to kitchen)  
Crazy fucking asshole in my house.



Thomas sits. His cell phone rings on the floor of the kitchen. Rodney picks it up.

RODNEY (CONT'D)  
Must be the cops calling back.

Presses the ignore button. Gulps down a canned iced-tea.

RODNEY (CONT'D)  
Now. One more time.

Points the gun at Thomas again.

RODNEY (CONT'D)  
Where's my daughter and how do you know  
my wife?

EXT. DESERT, UNDER TREE - DAY

The driver's-side door creaks open. Blood smears the interior. Annie stretches one little foot down onto the tree. Then slowly to the ground.

She looks around. No one. Around her is miles of empty brushland. No roads, no people.

She walks out a ways into the hot desert.

ANNIE  
Mommy?

Turns around. Looks up. 50 feet above is the road and the railing, hanging in scraps. The faintest VROOM of a car driving around the corner.

ANNIE (CONT'D)  
Hello?

Annie looks into the steaming distance. Mirages wave and vanish.

CUT TO:

INT. VAN - DAY

Annie drinks water from a water bottle. She's sweaty and gasps while she drinks.

INT. RODNEY'S HOUSE - DAY

Thomas is now standing, holding an iced tea can against his split lip. Rodney looks winded.

THOMAS

I know this isn't the best circumstances.  
But there's something wrong. Something  
has to be wrong. It's not like her to  
just disappear and not call. Just never  
call anyone.

RODNEY

How do you know she didn't call anyone.  
I'm her husband. I'm Annie's father.  
How do you know she didn't call me?

THOMAS

Did she?

Rodney's not listening. He's at the window.

POV: A police car pulls into the driveway.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Who's out there?

INT. VAN - NIGHT

The high yellow moon keeps watch. Annie, wrapped in a  
picnic blanket, sits in the Van with the cab light on.

She plays with her doll and eats fruit snacks.

ANNIE

(Doll) Where are we going? (Annie) We're  
going to my work. I work in a office.  
Where do you work? (Doll) I work at the  
toy store.

She looks up. Hears something outside. Quickly opens  
the door and steps out.

EXT. DESERT, UNDER TREE - NIGHT

Annie hears it again. RUSTLING in the darkness.

ANNIE

Mommy?

A coyote HOWLS in the distance, followed by others  
further away. Annie startles. Crawls back inside the  
van.

Finds the headlights. Pulls them on.

The light bounces off the sand and lights up a dozen  
yellow glowing retinas. Opossums, rabbits, rats...

Annie grabs her doll and holds it against her.

INT. JAIL CELL - MORNING

Thomas wakes up on a bench. His lip cracked and scabbed.

Detective Shore stands outside the cell eating a peach.

SHORE

You have a nice night, Mr. Kramer?  
Doesn't look like it. You look like you  
just spent a night in jail.

THOMAS

(sits up)  
Did she call?

Shore considers Thomas.

SHORE

No. She didn't. You shouldn't've done  
what you did. It was stupid.

THOMAS

I didn't think I had another option.

SHORE

Everybody has options. Except, well  
except people behind bars.

THOMAS

Are you going to harass me all morning?

Shore finishes his peach. Ejects a slimy pit from his  
lips into his hand.

SHORE

I was wrong about you. You're not first  
on my list any more.

Flings the pit into the cell.

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

Rodney sits across from Shore's desk. He's just as sick  
looking as Thomas.

Shore walks in.

RODNEY

Any word?

SHORE

I've been on the phone with the Arizona NCIC, state and local officials. We've got the pictures on every wall in every precinct.

RODNEY

What about that alert? The famous alert thing.

SHORE

The Amber Alert's only used in cases where the child is in immediate danger. She was with her mother, so she doesn't qualify. Have you called relatives, friends?

RODNEY

Yeah. They. They don't know anything.

SHORE

Okay. Well... Okay.

Sits back in his chair.

SHORE (CONT'D)

Do you know that guy in there? The one with the fat lip?

RODNEY

No. I never met him.

SHORE

You know he's fucking your wife?

RODNEY

Mm-hm.

SHORE

You want to press charges on the breaking and entering?

RODNEY

Yeah. Do you think he's involved?

SHORE

No. Well... no. I mean, he's more involved than you are.

Shore smiles, waits for a reaction. Rodney doesn't give him one. Just sucks his tooth.

SHORE (CONT'D)

Do you love your wife, Mr. Graves? How long you been married?

(MORE)

SHORE (CONT'D)

You wanna know something? When I was married, I hated my wife. Ha! How bout you?

RODNEY

I love my wife. I love my kid.

SHORE

Yeah. I did too. We have a name for...

RODNEY

I gotta go to work. I can't.

SHORE

I know, oh work. What do you do? I don't care. Go to work. But before you go, you'll wanna know what we call a man who just lost his whole family, Pfft, Vanished, like that, no trace?

RODNEY

What?

SHORE

Our number one suspect, Rod.

(Picks up his phone.)

You're going to be late. You can use my phone.

INT. JAIL CELL - AFTERNOON

Thomas stands on his head. Eyes closed. A GUARD's baton raps the bars.

Thomas stands up right. Looks at the Guard (30's).

THOMAS

What can I do for you?

GUARD

You can get off yer damn head and come with me.

INT. HELICOPTER - DAY

In a police helicopter, officers look down over vast expanses of desert as they fly over a mountain pass.

Below is a tree near a cliff. They don't see anything. The van is hidden by the tree.

They move on.

INT. VAN - CONTINUOUS

The CHOPPER leaves. The SOUND grows more faint.

Annie is tucked into the bottom of the passenger side floorboard.

A loud metallic groaning wakes her.

EXT. DESSERT - DAY

The van falls towards the passenger side and rolls slowly onto its roof.

INT. VAN - DAY

The inside of the van is now upside down. Food, garbage and empty water bottles litter the roof. The windows have burst.

Annie doesn't move.

The glove box bursts open on top of her. Owner's manual, maps, insurance, etc.

She crawls out of the van.

EXT. DESSERT - DAY

Annie pulls the rest of the food from the broken back window. Crackers, cheese, olives, wine, smoked salmon.

EXT. UNDER TREE - DAY

Eats the cheese in silence. Slight breeze in the leaves.

INT. VAN - DAY

Locks the food in the glove compartment. Crawls out. Her lips are chapped white.

Underneath her scrapped knees she notices the maps.

EXT. UNDER TREE - DAY

She spreads out a road map of Northern Arizona. Crawls on top of it to keep the wind away. Leaves little bloody knee prints.

ANNIE  
(whisper's to self)  
Okay, our house...where is our house?

She looks up to the distance. Almost mimicking how she's seen adults do it before.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

Annie walks around the cliff, looking for a way up. She doesn't see one, but she does notice a few vultures flying lazily.

She turns around and slowly, exhausted. And into focus, appears:

Her mother, Caroline, curled up in a ball a dozen yards from the cliff side.

Next to her mother sits a strong SILVER COYOTE. It stares at Annie, scaring her.

Annie takes a step forward. The Coyote stands and trots away.

She rubs her nose as she approaches.

ANNIE  
Mom. Are you okay? Are you sleeping?

She places a hand on her mother's shoulder. Caroline's face is chalky and sun cracked. Blood dried with sand.

Caroline's eyes are closed and she isn't breathing.

INT. INTEROGATION ROOM - DAY

Rodney and Thomas sit in silence. Thomas arms crossed. Rodney's knuckles rap the table.

Pull back into the...

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM - DAY

Shore stands in the room with his coffee. CAPTAIN WALLACE (50's) speak into a phone.

WALLACE  
Nothing else right now Sir. Yeah, the father can make that. Okay Sir, thank you.

Hangs up.

WALLACE (CONT'D)

Detective. Which one of these pricks was up late putting holes in my desert?

SHORE

Neither Sir. I think these two know exactly where she is. They just don't know they know. Ya know?

WALLACE

What-ever. I need father at six. I want this thing on ice before the national news comes knocking.

INT. INTEROGATION ROOM - DAY

Shore walks in. Pulls out a flask and cools off his coffee.

Turns a chair around, sits backwards.

SHORE

Hope you both don't mind I question you together. We're under a bit of a time...crunch.

(pause)

Mr. Graves, in one day your wife and daughter could've travelled hundreds of miles. But they haven't been missing for one day, they've been missing for three days. Thirty-two-hundred square miles of possibility. That's six states. Tonight the search effort will be called back in standard procedure. The news will parade you around in a last attempt at ratings before they go find tomorrow's fucking...baby in a well. I'll file this day away in a folder with a red label instead of a white one. The only two people who won't get to move past today are in this room. Starring each other down like children. I think we need to get to know one another a little better and see if we don't have any better ideas for them than faces on milk.

Shore slides the chair up.

SHORE (CONT'D)

I'll start. Hi, my name is David Shore and I have mother issues.



RODNEY

Come on, dammit. Are you for real?

SHORE

You next? Alright. Sir, when was the last time you saw your wife?

RODNEY

Two days ago, in the morning. Before I went to work.

SHORE

Did she say anything out of the ordinary?

RODNEY

We didn't say much to each other. I think I mentioned my conference next week.

SHORE

(to Thomas)

What about you? Does she talk to you?

THOMAS

We spoke on the phone that afternoon.

SHORE

'Bout what?

THOMAS

Well, she works at U of A and her co-

RODNEY

No she doesn't. My wife hasn't worked since Annie was born.

SHORE

(to Rodney)

Are you sure about that?

He nods.

SHORE (CONT'D)

(to Thomas)

Are you sure?

He nods.

SHORE (CONT'D)

Cool.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

Annie walks back to her mother. Bottle of water in hand. She kneels close to her, rubbing her nose again.

She cleans her mother's face with what water's left in the bottle.

ANNIE

Wake up mommy. It's time to wake up.  
Are you hungry? I brought you some food.

She pulls out some water crackers.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

I think I had these before. They're not very good but they're okay.

She pulls a cracker out. Hold it out for her mother to take.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

Mama. Please wake up.

Sits with her. Looks out. Pats her mother's head.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

(whispers)

Did the accident hurt you? Are you okay?

(pause)

You can have Stephanie if you want. She will keep you company if you get scared.

Annie lays her doll next to her mom. After a moment she kisses her on the temple and stands up.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

I love you.

Walks back to the van.

INT. INTEROGATION ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

SHORE

So, Caroline gets a part-time job, decides to take classes, stays out all night with Mr. Kramer only to get up and play loving mother to a six year old, and all the while not letting on to her husband.

(pause)

And this went on for at least four months.

(pause)

So my question is, with all this on her plate, how did she manage to meet you Mr. Kramer?

Rodney seethes. After a while Thomas answers sheepishly.

THOMAS

I'm her Guru.

Rodney leaps over the table at Thomas's throat.

Shore opens the door.

SHORE

Anyone want to watch this?

RODNEY

(screaming)

Lock this little piece of shit up for ever!

Captain Wallace walks in.

WALLACE

Mr. Graves, get the hell off that boy before I throw you both in a tiger box all night. We need you for a minute Mr Graves. Do you have a minute? It's almost six.

EXT. POLICE STATION - LATE AFTERNOON

Rodney and Wallace walk out of the station and are immediately blinded by the lights from cameras. Wallace steps in front of the microphones.

WALLACE

At approximately five-thirty, the local and state police, with the help of several hundred volunteers completed a search of the surrounding area. We have found no trace--

INT. POLICE STATION - LATE AFTERNOON

Shore puts on his jacket. Shirley watches a TV showing the press conference.

INSERT TV: Rodney approaches the microphones.

SHORE

Good night Shirley.

SHIRLEY

You might want to exit through the back tonight.

INT. JAIL CELL - DUSK

Thomas sits in his cell with his head in his hands. He sniffles and wipes his eyes.

The door opens. Shore walks in.

SHORE

Before you were so rudely interrupted.  
You said something about being her Guru.  
What exactly are you a Guru of?

THOMAS

I'm in enough trouble. I'd rather just  
not talk about it.

SHORE

Ooooo. Well, I'm off the clock. Unlike  
my colleagues, I'm not a cop after six.  
Not to mention that I'm not really a guy  
who's interested in arresting people for  
their beliefs. But... now I am curious.

THOMAS

I'm a Peyote Shaman. Caroline came to me  
because she wanted to expand her  
consciousness. I guided her through her  
first experiences.

SHORE

I get it. Now you're fucking with me?  
Very good. I fuck with you, make you  
think I'm crazy, you make up a very  
intriguing connection to this woman.

THOMAS

She was supposed to pick me up the night  
she disappeared. It was a surprise.  
Where is she Detective?

SHORE

That *is* the question. I think my Captain  
had a good idea. I'll be right back.

EXT. POLICE STATION - SUNDOWN

The press have left. Rodney sits on a bench, defeated.

Shore steps outside.

SHORE

Mr. Graves. I'm placing you under arrest  
for the assault of Thomas Kramer.

RODNEY

Go to hell.

SHORE

You have the right to remain silent.

EXT. VAN - SUNDOWN

Annie digs around, picking up empty water bottles.

She finds a little warm backwash in one. Downs that with no problem.

Keeps looking. Finds the wine bottle. Holds it to the cab light. Looks like liquid inside.

She tries to find a way to open it. Not sure how. There's no twist top. Only a cork.

She taps the neck a few times on the side of the van. Then gives it a whack.

The bottle's neck breaks. A little wine escapes. Annie raises the jagged end to her mouth. Thinks better of it. Tips it over her head and pours the wine in.

BLEATH!!! She chokes, cough, wretches, puts the wine down, wipes her face.

INT. JAIL CELL - NIGHT

Shore locks Thomas and Rodney in the holding cell together.

RODNEY

You can't put me in here! I want to talk to my lawyer! I'm going to have your fucking badge!

Shore stands outside the bars with a cell phone. He opens it and presses a button.

Holds it out. Conjures a ghost from the raspy speaker.

CAROLINE

(recording)

Hey. Um, just calling to say I'm gonna be late, I've got to check to see if it's cancelled. I hope the rain clears up by tonight. And Annie's with me. Say hi honey. She's not being cooperative. Okay, I'll be there soon. Bye.

He closes it.

SHORE

You two know this woman. Make like  
people who want her found and talk to  
each other.

He looks at the Guard.

SHORE (CONT'D)

Sergeant, give me a call when they start  
making out.

Slams the door.

INT. VAN - SUNDOWN

Annie lays on the ceiling of the Van. Writhes in agony.  
An empty wine bottle at her feet.

A horrible SCRAPING SOUND, claws on vinyl startles her.  
Annie can't really see but something is moving around in  
the front passenger seat by the glove compartment.

She crawls on her stomach out of the window and throws  
up.

She looks up through her tears. In the blurry, weeping  
horizon, a woman's dark shape appears before the sunset.

ANNIE

Mom.

She tries to get up but can't. Her face covered in vomit.

The silhouette is not of a woman, but a Coyote facing  
forward. It walks slowly to the left, revealing four  
legs. Disappears behind the van.

Annie crawls further away from the van. Clearly wasted  
and severely dehydrated.

Terrible GROWLING and BARKING. The Coyote is facing off  
with whatever is in the front seat.

After a yelp, it skitters off into the night. The Coyote  
walks around the van and sits in front of Annie. Licking  
the blood off it's jaws.

Backed against the tree, Annie can't defend herself. She  
can't even stand up.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

I don't... have... any food.

INT. JAIL CELL - NIGHT

Rodney sits down on a bench across from Thomas.

Takes off his shoe. Pulls a cigarette out of his sock.

THOMAS

You got another one?

RODNEY

Nope. But there is a store around the corner. Why don't you take a fucking walk.

(pause)

Hey Guard, you gotta light?

GUARD

There's no smoking in this precinct, Sir.

RODNEY

Then let me out.

GUARD

I'm sorry you're going to have to give me that.

Shore bursts in. Grabs the keys off the Guard's desk. Opens the door.

SHORE

Thank you Sergeant. You've effectively rendered yourself completely useless. You're dismissed.

Rodney stands, defiant. Faces Shore as he enters the cell.

He's a Cowboy.

Shore smiles a little and lights it for him. Rodney sits and smokes.

RODNEY

(to Thomas)

You think I'm a neglectful husband, a bad father? How long have you known my wife? A few months? I knew her three years when I asked her to marry me. Two more before we had Annie. We've been a family a long time and... I don't know, it doesn't... Some years it doesn't work. Do you know what that means? To say some years it doesn't work?

(MORE)

RODNEY (CONT'D)

Not "we had a fight and we went off and fucked other people." We've had a fight every day for the last eight and a half years except for yesterday. And you know what I felt when I woke up this morning?

Thomas shakes his head.

RODNEY (CONT'D)

I missed her like hell. I did. I missed fighting with her.

(laughs)

Now if you want to act like the hero for knowing her a little better these last few months, for paying more attention, go ahead. You want to act like the concerned sad-shit, fine. But so you're clear, your *girlfriend* stood you up on your date a couple days ago. And that's all you got to worry about. I'm missing my family.

THOMAS

Why didn't you report it?

RODNEY

Report what?

THOMAS

When they didn't come home. Why didn't you call somebody. The cops.

RODNEY

Because that, my man, is not what we do.

Thomas takes that in.

THOMAS

It's my fault if she's hurt. Or if Annie's hurt. I had to make a big deal out of a stupid four-monthiversary. I insisted we do something special. She said she make it a surprise.

RODNEY

That sounds more like Caroline.

SHORE

What do you mean?

RODNEY

When we were dating she did the surprises thing. Dragged me around. Museums, art exhibits, the God damn observatory twice.

(MORE)



RODNEY (CONT'D)

This was back in California, before we moved here.

THOMAS

Really she likes the stars?

RODNEY

It's been a while now since we've gone. Jesus, forever. She loved it.

They all sit quiet for a second. Thinking to themselves. Slowly they start looking at each other. Their eyes grow larger as they all realize at the same time where Caroline was headed.

INT. SHORES'S CAR - NIGHT

Shore drives up front with Thomas and Rodney in the back.

EXT. DESSERT - MORNING

Annie and the Coyote sit next to a small fire. It is morning but there is no sun.

Skewered corn all drippy with butter, a small hen roasted with garlic and basil grills over the fire,

Next to Annie sits a shining carafe of crystal-clear water. Annie takes a big spilling drink and stuffs handfuls of cherry pie and ice cream into her mouth.

A woman's hand turns the corn and hen so it doesn't burn. Her face is blotted out by the sun.

CAROLINE

Wow baby, that was a good sleep.

Annie smiles. Caroline picks her up in a giant hug. She kisses her daughter all over her ice cream covered face.

ANNIE

Why were you sleeping so long, mommy?

CAROLINE

I was tired. Were you a big girl while I was away?

ANNIE

Yeah.

(gets embarrassed)

I ate the cheese.

CAROLINE

(happy)

You ate all the cheese! Oh my God! Not the cheese.

Tickles her until she starts to squirm. Sets her down.

ANNIE

Are you hungry mommy? You can have the rest of my food.

CAROLINE

No baby, I'm not hungry. You look sunburnt. Do you want to go home?

Annie nods.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)

You were such a big girl these past few days.

The Coyote trots off. Annie watches it go. She looks back. Her mother is gone.

Annie gets up. Newly energized and runs after the Coyote.

ANNIE

Wait. Don't go!

The Coyote turns back and waits. But runs off again just before Annie catches up.

The moon hangs low and bloody in the pink sky.

The Coyote starts to climb, jumping from rock to rock.

Annie slowly climbs the pebbled rock side of the mountain. She slides down.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

Where are we going?

INT. SHORE'S CAR - NIGHT

Rodney looks over at Thomas.

RODNEY

Peyote...shit. Did she ever do a fucking, what are they called?

THOMAS

Vision Quest? Not really, I mean we go out into the desert--

RODNEY

What, like... what did she say she saw?

THOMAS

I don't know. You'll have to ask her.

RODNEY

Yeah. Well. I don't know how easy that's gonna be. Annie's the only thing we have together.

Shore listens to this.

RODNEY (CONT'D)

God, I hope my baby's okay.

They pass a sign that reads: "LOWELL OBSERVATORY, 2 MILES"

EXT. MOUNTAIN ROAD - NIGHT

The camera pulls out to see the car driving up a mountain road. At the summit, lit only by the moon are several white domed buildings. A astronomical observatory.

INT. SHORE'S CAR - NIGHT

SHORE

I can't see a fucking thing.

Turns on his wipers to clear the bug guts.

RODNEY

I don't know what I'd do without that little girl.

A blur rushes in front of the car. Shore slams on the breaks.

They are shaken, hearts racing. One by one they see what's standing before them. In the headlights, a Silver Coyote with shining green retinas stands still and quiet. Behind him a broken railing. Beneath him, Annie's body.

EXT. MOUNTAIN ROAD - NIGHT

Shore grabs his gun. Gets out of the car. The Coyote runs away.

Rodney and Thomas get out. Rodney to his daughter and Thomas to the railing.

Rodney scoops Annie up. Holds her little mouth to his ear.

RODNEY  
She's breathing.

Shore calls it in on the CB radio.

SHORE  
Lets get her to the hospital. Thomas,  
get in!

THOMAS  
Go on without me. I'm going to try and  
find Caroline.

SHORE  
Alright, back up will be here soon.

Rodney climbs into the car with Annie in his arms. They turn around and speed away.

Thomas is left in the pitch. Only the moonlight carves his face into the night.

He looks up. The heaven above endless and brilliant. The sky swallows him.

After a few moments. He heads along the road to find a way down.

FADE TO BLACK:

THE END