

RACoon RESCUE

Written by

Words To Film By

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FADE IN:

INT. DUSTY'S BAR - NIGHT

CLOSE ON: A crumpled piece of paper. A woman's handwriting, the kind that used to sign "Love always" -- now visible in fragments: "...six years of anniversaries alone..." "...I found the ring in your sock drawer, Danny. Three years ago..." "...Marcus makes me feel like I exist..."

PULL BACK TO REVEAL:

PETTY OFFICER FIRST CLASS DANNY VEGA (32), hunched over the bar in civilian clothes. Spine straight despite the booze. Jaw tight. Eight whiskeys deep. Alone.

A few STRAGGLERS occupy the far end. Neon beer signs provide the only warmth in this dingy establishment.

LEON (60s), the bartender, wipes the same glass he's been working on for ten minutes. Studies Danny over the rim.

LEON

Last call.

Danny stares at the letter. Folds it with military precision--three creases, exactly even. Tucks it in his pocket. Checks his watch: 11:45 PM.

DANNY

One more. Please.

That "please" costs him something. Leon hears it. Pours anyway. Danny downs it in one motion.

LEON

Cab?

DANNY

I'm squared away.

LEON

Mm-hm.

A beat. Leon keeps wiping. Danny shifts on his stool.

DANNY (CONT'D)

I've got my truck.

LEON

Didn't ask twice.

Danny drops two twenties on the bar. Too much. He heads for the door without waiting for change.

LEON (CONT'D)
(quiet, to the empty
glass)
Take care of yourself, sailor.

EXT. DUSTY'S PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Sodium vapor lights cast everything in sickly orange. The lot is nearly empty save for a few cars and one beat-up PICKUP TRUCK that has seen better days.

Danny crosses the gravel, keys already in hand. He fumbles. Drops them. Bends down.

Takes him three tries to pick them up.

He climbs into the cab. Keys in ignition. The ENGINE CRANKS--

--but a DIGITAL BEEP stops everything.

CLOSE ON: A BREATHALYZER INTERLOCK DEVICE mounted on the steering column. Clinical. Unforgiving.

Danny stares at it. The one thing he forgot.

DANNY
(quiet, to himself)
Negative. Negative, negative,
negative.

He picks up the handheld unit. Blows into the mouthpiece. The DISPLAY flashes.

DEVICE (V.O.)
BEEP SAMPLE REJECTED.

Danny waits. Thirty seconds feel like thirty minutes.

DANNY (CONT'D)
(muttering)
Come on. Blow harder. That's it.

He blows again. Longer this time. Controlled. Like it's a field sobriety test he can beat with willpower.

DEVICE (V.O.)
BEEP SAMPLE REJECTED. BLOOD
ALCOHOL CONTENT EXCEEDS LIMIT.

Danny SLAMS the steering wheel with both palms.

DANNY (CONT'D)
Come on. COME ON--

He pulls out his phone. Scrolls through contacts.

DANNY (CONT'D)
 (to himself, scrolling)
 Rachel-- no. Deleted her. Smart
 move, Danny.

He keeps scrolling.

DANNY (CONT'D)
 Kowalski. Jimenez. They're on base.
 Curfew. Bed check in twenty.
 (beat)
 Lieutenant Torres--
 (laughs bitterly)
 --yeah, let me call my CO. "Sir, I
 need
 a ride from a bar. Also I'm on
 probation. Remember that? Fun
 times."

He tosses the phone on the dash.

DANNY (CONT'D)
 (staring at the ceiling)
 Uber needs a credit card. Card's
 maxed. Dad's dead. Mom's in Phoenix.
 Ex-wife's... with Marcus.
 (beat)
 Who the hell is Marcus.

He sits in defeated silence.

DANNY (CONT'D)
 (quietly, to no one)
 This is how it ends. Petty Officer
 First Class Danny Vega. Found dead
 in a parking lot. Cause of death:
 couldn't blow into a tube right.

Then--

RUSTLING. From somewhere in the darkness.

Danny's head turns toward the sound.

EXT. DUSTY'S PARKING LOT - DUMPSTER AREA - CONTINUOUS

Behind the bar: a large commercial DUMPSTER. The lid is
 askew. Something MOVES inside.

Danny exits the truck. Approaches cautiously, curiosity
 overriding judgment.

DANNY
 (quietly, hand on hood for
 balance)
 Who's there?

More rustling. Then--

A fat, confident RACCOON emerges from the garbage. This is BANDIT. He holds a pizza crust in his tiny hands and regards Danny with absolute indifference.

Man and raccoon lock eyes.

Bandit does not run. He CHEWS. Maintains eye contact. Dominance established.

DANNY (CONT'D)
(stepping back)
Whoa. Easy.

Danny watches the raccoon breathe. In, out. In, out. The creature's chest rises and falls. Unbothered. Sober.

DANNY (CONT'D)
(to himself)
Look at you. Not a care in the world.

CLOSE ON: Danny's face. His expression shifts.

He looks back at his truck. Back at the raccoon. Back at the truck.

DANNY (CONT'D)
(slow realization)
Wait. Wait wait wait.

Bandit responds with aggressive chewing.

DANNY (CONT'D)
(a terrible idea forming)
You breathe, right? You definitely breathe. And you're not...
(beat)
You're stone cold sober, aren't you, little guy?

A terrible, beautiful smile spreads across Danny's face.

DANNY (CONT'D)
(to himself)
This is either the best idea I've ever had or the worst. No in-between.

EXT. DUSTY'S PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Danny approaches the dumpster. Arms wide. Moving slowly. Tactical.

DANNY
(coaxing, like talking to
a suspect)
Easy now. Nobody has to get hurt
here.

Bandit watches. Unimpressed.

Danny LUNGES--

Bandit DISAPPEARS.

Danny scrambles. Looks left. Looks right. Nothing.

DANNY (CONT'D)
Where did-- how are you so fast?

He climbs INTO the dumpster. Trash flies in all
directions. Empty bottles. Food wrappers. Mystery
substances.

Danny emerges, covered in filth, breathing hard.

Bandit sits on the DUMPSTER LID, watching him. Still
holding the pizza crust.

DANNY (CONT'D)
Oh, you think you're clever.

He spots a BROOM leaning against the bar's back door.
Grabs it.

DANNY (CONT'D)
(muttering, adjusting
grip)
Okay. Okay. I've had survival
training.
I've done SERE school. I can catch
one trash panda.

What follows is chaos:

Danny lunges LEFT--Bandit goes RIGHT.

Danny corners the raccoon by a parked car--Bandit runs
BETWEEN HIS LEGS.

Danny gives chase. They circle the car. THREE FULL LAPS,
like something out of a cartoon.

DANNY (CONT'D)
(mid-chase)
This is-- you're a RACCOON--

Bandit disappears under the car. Danny drops to his hands
and knees, peering into the darkness.

DANNY (CONT'D)
(out of breath)
I see you under there. I see your
beady little eyes.

The raccoon emerges on the OTHER SIDE. Waddles away casually.

Danny SCREAMS in frustration.

DANNY (CONT'D)
GET BACK-- I OUTRANK YOU!

He charges. Trips over a parking block.

HARD.

Danny lies on the asphalt, staring at the stars, chest heaving.

DANNY (CONT'D)
(to the sky)
Rachel's right. I make bad
decisions.

Bandit CHITTERS from somewhere nearby. It sounds like laughter.

EXT. DUSTY'S PARKING LOT - MOMENTS LATER

Danny, still on the ground, spots something: an abandoned PIZZA BOX near the dumpster. He army-crawls toward it.

Inside: one sad slice. Cold pepperoni.

He also grabs a BAR TOWEL from the ground--must have fallen during his dumpster dive.

A plan forms.

Danny sets the pizza box on the ground. Open. Inviting.

He crouches behind a truck. Towel ready. Waiting.

Silence.

Wind.

More silence.

Then: Bandit appears. Sniffs the air. Those tiny nostrils working.

The raccoon approaches the pizza. Cautious. Closer. Closer.

Danny POUNCES.

The towel comes down.

CHAOS inside the fabric. HISSING. SCRATCHING.
SCREAMING--from both parties.

DANNY
OW-- SON OF A-- HOLD STILL--

He wrestles the bundle, arms already bleeding from scratches that slice through the towel.

Finally, he holds the wrapped raccoon at arm's length.
Triumphant.

DANNY (CONT'D)
(breathing hard)
Gotcha. Nobody can resist cold pepperoni.
(beat)
Just like me.

He looks at his forearms. Blood. Lots of it.

DANNY (CONT'D)
(examining wounds)
That's fine. That's... I've had worse.
Definitely had worse. This is nothing.
(wincing)
I might need a tetanus shot.

INT. DANNY'S TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

Danny slides into the cab, raccoon bundle in one hand. He slams the door behind him.

Bandit thrashes inside the towel. HISSING. GROWLING.

DANNY
Okay. Standby. We're gonna do this nice and easy--

He positions the breathalyzer tube with his free hand.
Tries to angle Bandit's snout toward it.

The raccoon is NOT cooperating.

DANNY (CONT'D)
Just-- just breathe into the--
(getting bitten)
OW-- you have to EXHALE, you--

Bandit BITES Danny's thumb THROUGH the towel.

Danny SCREAMS but doesn't let go. He's committed now.

DANNY (CONT'D)
(through gritted teeth)
This is happening. We are doing
this.

The struggle intensifies. Man versus nature. Both losing.

In desperation, Danny SQUEEZES the bundle. Hard. Maybe too hard.

Bandit goes limp.

Danny freezes.

DANNY (CONT'D)
(horrificed whisper)
Oh God. Oh no. Oh no no no--
(checking)
I killed him. I killed a-- it's a
federal-- is this a federal crime?

He peels back the towel. The raccoon's eyes are closed.
But its chest still moves. Barely.

Not dead. Just... unconscious.

DANNY (CONT'D)
(relieved, then realizing)
Okay. Okay. You're breathing.
(beat)
You're breathing.

Danny stares at the limp creature. Then at the
breathalyzer.

DANNY (CONT'D)
(quietly)
I'm sorry about this, buddy.

He holds Bandit's snout up to the tube.

Nothing.

He squeezes gently. A wheeze escapes the raccoon.
Air--sober air--hits the sensor.

BEAT.

The display processes.

DEVICE (V.O.)
BEEP SAMPLE ACCEPTED. VEHICLE
ENABLED.

GREEN LIGHT.

The ENGINE ROARS to life.

Danny stares at the dashboard. Then at the raccoon. Then at the dashboard.

DANNY (CONT'D)
(disbelief)
It worked.

He sits there. Processing.

DANNY (CONT'D)
(louder)
It worked.

He drops the unconscious raccoon on the passenger floorboard. It lands with a soft thump, towel splaying open.

Danny puts the truck in gear.

DANNY (CONT'D)
(half-laughing,
half-terrified)
I'm a genius. I'm an absolute--
this is the worst thing I've ever
done.

He peels out of the parking lot.

INT./EXT. DANNY'S TRUCK - MOVING - NIGHT

Danny drives. Windows down. The night air works at sobering him, but not nearly enough.

He's on residential streets now. Nice houses. Manicured lawns. Quiet.

He glances at the floorboard. The raccoon hasn't moved.

A laugh escapes him. Nervous at first. Then genuine. Building.

DANNY
(to himself)
A raccoon. I used a raccoon to beat
a breathalyzer. That's...
(beat)
That's either the most pathetic
thing
I've ever done or the most
brilliant.

He shakes his head. Disbelief.

DANNY (CONT'D)
(laughing)
Kowalski's gonna lose his mind. He's
(MORE)

DANNY (CONT'D)
gonna-- actually, I can never tell
anyone about this. Ever.

He relaxes. Hands at 10 and 2. The tension drains from his shoulders.

He passes a sign: "OCEANVIEW ESTATES - A PEACEFUL COMMUNITY"

DANNY (CONT'D)
(exhaling)
Ten more minutes. Home free. I'm
gonna
be fine. I'm gonna sleep this off,
deal with my life tomorrow, and--

LOW ANGLE on the floorboard.

Bandit's eyes are still closed.

But a paw TWITCHES.

INT. DANNY'S TRUCK - MOVING - CONTINUOUS

Bandit's eyes SNAP open.

For one frozen moment, man and raccoon lock eyes in the rearview mirror.

Recognition. Memory. FURY.

DANNY
Oh no. No no no--

Bandit LAUNCHES.

The raccoon hits Danny's face like a fur-covered grenade--clawing, biting, SCREAMING that unholy raccoon scream.

Danny SCREAMS back. The truck SWERVES.

DANNY (CONT'D)
GET OFF-- I'M SORRY-- GET OFF--

Bandit is EVERYWHERE. Every time Danny grabs him, the creature twists free and attacks from a new angle.

Teeth sink into Danny's ear.

DANNY (CONT'D)
MY EAR-- HE'S ON MY EAR--

He releases the steering wheel. The truck jumps the curb.

MAILBOX DOWN.

Danny shoves Bandit into the backseat. The raccoon launches right back, claws digging into Danny's shoulder.

DANNY (CONT'D)
(desperate)
WE HAD A DEAL-- WE--

He punches at the creature, misses, hits the dashboard.

Through the windshield: a GARDEN GNOME.

SMASH.

The truck careens across a manicured lawn.

Danny can't see--the raccoon is ON HIS FACE, blocking his vision with fur and fury.

DANNY (CONT'D)
(muffled)
I CAN'T-- THERE'S FUR IN MY-- I
CAN'T SEE--

Through his fingers, through the chaos:

A WHITE PICKET FENCE. Dead ahead.

Beyond it: the shimmer of WATER.

Danny's eyes go wide.

EXT. HOMEOWNER'S BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

SLOW MOTION:

The truck EXPLODES through the fence. Pickets fly like shrapnel. Headlights cut through the darkness.

INT. DANNY'S TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

Danny sees the pool--kidney-shaped, beautifully lit, in-ground perfection--directly ahead.

DANNY
(genuine terror)
NOT A POOL-- PLEASE NOT A--

He yanks the wheel. Too late.

EXT. HOMEOWNER'S BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

The truck LAUNCHES off the pool deck.

For one beautiful, terrible moment, it's airborne.

IMPACT.

The truck hits the water with a MASSIVE splash.

UNDERWATER:

The pickup sinks. Headlights still on, illuminating the blue depths. Bubbles rise. The engine dies.

Danny scrambles. Claws at the window. Squeezes through.

EXT. HOMEOWNER'S POOL - CONTINUOUS

Danny surfaces, GASPING. Coughing. Bleeding from a dozen wounds.

He treads water, watching his truck settle on the bottom. The headlights flicker and die.

Movement at the edge of the pool.

Bandit pulls himself out of the water, having been thrown clear from the truck bed. The raccoon shakes off, CHITTERS once at Danny--almost conversationally--and waddles into the darkness.

Unbothered. Victorious.

Danny watches him go.

DANNY
(quiet, broken)
Of course. Sure. Why not.

A PORCH LIGHT flicks on.

GERALD (58), bathrobe, slippers, reading glasses still perched on his nose, steps onto his ruined deck. He holds a phone. His mouth hangs open.

He sees: A destroyed fence. A sinking truck. A bleeding man in his pool.

Gerald raises his phone. Starts recording.

Danny, water up to his chest, has nothing to say.

GERALD
(processing, slowly)
There's a... there's a truck in my pool.

DANNY
Sir, I can--

GERALD
My pool. The pool I just re-tiled.
(beat)
That's my truck. In my pool.

DANNY
It's actually my truck.

GERALD
(voice rising)
I don't CARE whose truck it is, it's
in my POOL.

DANNY
There was a raccoon. In the cab.
It--

GERALD
(cutting him off)
A raccoon.

DANNY
It attacked me. I couldn't see--

GERALD
A raccoon drove your truck into my
pool.

DANNY
No, I was driving, but the raccoon--

GERALD
(quiet, dangerous)
I'm going to call the police now.

DANNY
(resigned)
Yeah. That's... that's fair.

Gerald stares at him. Then at the bubbles rising from the depths.

GERALD
Is the raccoon okay?

DANNY
(beat, surprised)
I... honestly don't know.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. HOMEOWNER'S BACKYARD - MORNING

Red and blue lights flash. TWO COPS stand with Danny, who sits on the pool deck wrapped in a shock blanket, still soaking wet. Handcuffs on his wrists.

One cop reads from a notepad, struggling to keep a straight face.

COP #1

Alright, let me make sure I've got
this.
Driving under the influence.
Reckless
driving. Destruction of property.
(flips page)
Criminal mischief. Trespassing.
And...
(squints at notes)
...interference with wildlife? Is
that
even a charge?

COP #2

(barely holding it
together)
It is now.

Danny stares at the pool. His truck is visible through the
clear water. A total loss.

COP #1

Sir, I've been doing this for
fifteen
years. This is going in my memoirs.

DANNY

(quiet, hollow)
I was almost home. Two more miles.

CUT TO:

EXT. DUSTY'S PARKING LOT - MORNING

The dumpster. Peaceful in the morning light.

The lid moves.

Bandit emerges. Same spot as before. He carries a fresh
pizza crust--a new conquest.

He sits on the dumpster lid. King of his domain.

CHITTERS.

Life is good.

CUT TO:

INT. GERALD'S KITCHEN - DAY

Gerald sits at his kitchen table, phone pressed to his
ear. He rubs his temples. The look of a man who has
explained this three times already.

INSURANCE AGENT (V.O.)
I'm sorry, sir. One more time?

GERALD
(measured, tired)
A pickup truck. Came through my
fence.
Landed in my pool. The pool is now a
crime scene. The truck is evidence.
(beat)
I can't swim in evidence.

INSURANCE AGENT (V.O.)
And the driver was...?

GERALD
A Navy sailor. Intoxicated. Who--
(deep breath)
--who was transporting a live
raccoon
in his vehicle at the time of the
incident.

INSURANCE AGENT (V.O.)
I see. And the raccoon caused the
accident?

GERALD
The raccoon woke up and attacked
him,
yes. Also destroyed my gnome.
Herbert.
My wife bought him in Tuscany. I
don't
even know how to tell her.

Long pause.

INSURANCE AGENT (V.O.)
Sir, I'm going to need to transfer
you to our... special claims
division.

GERALD
You have a special claims division.

INSURANCE AGENT (V.O.)
We do now.

HOLD MUSIC begins.

Gerald stares at his destroyed backyard through the
window.

GERALD
(to himself)
I just wanted to read my book.

CUT TO:

INT. LOCAL NEWS STUDIO - DAY

JESSICA CHEN (35), poised and professional, sits at the anchor desk. Her CO-ANCHOR, MIKE (40s), sits beside her. Both have clearly read this story before going on air.

JESSICA
In local news tonight, an unusual incident near Camp Pendleton early this morning.

She takes a breath. Steadies herself.

JESSICA (CONT'D)
A Navy petty officer was arrested after allegedly using--
(beat, consulting notes)
--a wild raccoon to bypass his court-mandated vehicle breathalyzer.

Mike's hand slowly covers his mouth.

JESSICA (CONT'D)
(fighting it)
According to authorities, the sailor captured the raccoon outside a local bar and used the animal's breath to start his vehicle. The plan was...
(long pause)
...described by police as "technically successful."

Mike makes a sound. Could be a cough. Could be a laugh.

JESSICA (CONT'D)
However, the raccoon regained consciousness while the vehicle was in motion, leading to what investigators are calling--
(she closes her eyes briefly)
--"an altercation."

MIKE
(barely holding it together)
An altercation.

JESSICA

The vehicle was subsequently
recovered
from a residential swimming pool.
The
sailor faces multiple charges
including
DUI, reckless endangerment, and...
(checking notes,
incredulous)
...unlawful restraint of wildlife.
(beat)
The raccoon remains at large.

She stares at the camera. Her professional veneer cracks.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

(quietly, almost to
herself)
And is considered... not dangerous.

Mike loses it. Turns away from camera.

CUT TO:

EXT. DUSTY'S PARKING LOT - DUMPSTER - NIGHT

The same dumpster. The same parking lot. A new night.

Bandit sits on the lid. Fat. Content. A fresh piece of
garbage in his tiny hands.

He stares directly INTO THE CAMERA.

CHITTERS.

TITLE CARD:

"Based on a true story."

TITLE CARD:

"The raccoon was never found."

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END