

COUNTRY ROADS

Written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

On a TWO-LANE ROAD an OLD TRUCK (like a '69 Chevy S10) drives swiftly on a hot summer day as we watch from ABOVE. An occasional MOTORIST PASSES on the opposite side.

ON THE RADIO:

A baseball game. Bottom of the 9th intensity.

INT. OLD TRUCK (COUNTRY ROAD) - MOVING - DAY

ROBERT (white, 50's), wearing a flannel shirt with the sleeves halfway rolled up, drives the old machine with both hands on the wheel.

CLOSE ON his TATTOOS and hard-working hands.

He's pissed at the ball game that isn't going his way. His grandson, JOHNNY (white, 6), is riding shotgun, playing a game on a small TABLET.

RADIO:

A winning homerun. Not Robert's team.

ROBERT  
(under his breath)  
Shit! Goddammit!

Johnny looks up at his frustrated grandfather. Robert angrily SCROLLS through the radio stations and lands on something he can tolerate more than the game.

MUSIC CUE: "I'm So Lonesome" by Hank Williams Sr.

Robert looks at his grandson and sighs. He then reaches into his shirt pocket and pulls out a CIGARETTE from a pack. He perches the cig on his lips, grabs his lighter. Pause.

He looks back over at Johnny, who is soaking it all in.

A sigh. He doesn't want to light up when the boy is looking at him. He takes the cig and edges it onto his ear for later.

One more glance at his grandson. Johnny chuckles and dives back into his game. The two continue on the journey while Hank sings on.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - PRE-DUSK

The road is almost desolate, not many cars are traveling this day. It's incredibly hot and dry. Lots of critters and small animals trying to find food and water.

DUST. WIND. The old truck swooshes through.

INT. OLD TRUCK (COUNTRY ROAD) - MOVING - PRE-DUSK

CLOSE ON:

Robert's face. Life hasn't been kind to his skin. If the Grinch was real, this would be the old-man version of him.

CLOSE ON:

The gas gauge. It's time to refuel. Robert grunts. He just wants to get to where they're headed.

END MUSIC CUE.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. RED CAVALIER (COUNTRY ROAD) - MOVING - PRE-DUSK

MUSIC CUE: "2 of Amerikaz Most Wanted" by 2pac feat. Snoop Dogg

CIARA (black, 25) is IN THE SONG, BOBBING HER HEAD, pulling into a RUNDOWN GAS STATION with the windows down, music BLASTING. A black BULLDOG (BEAR) is sitting in the shotgun seat, enjoying the ride.

Ciara jams to the song, changing the cuss words to her own version.

CIARA  
(singing, interacting with  
Bear)

*Picture perfect, I paint a perfect  
picture. Bomb the suckas with  
precision my intention's to get  
richer. With the S-N-double-O-P  
Dogg my friggin' homie. You a cold,  
cold fool on them hogs...*

Ciara turns the car off.

END MUSIC CUE.

CIARA (CONT'D)

(to Bear)

That's what we are, Bear. Two of  
America's most wanted, huh?

Bear whines. Ciara gives him one more head rub and gets out of the car. Bear waits anxiously, peeking out of the open window.

INT. GAS STATION (COUNTRY ROAD) - PRE-DUSK

Ciara walks in and greets the gas station clerk, JESSICA (white, 50's).

CIARA

Hey girl, how you doin'?

JESSICA

(with a smile and a  
southern drawl)

Good baby, you doin' okay?

CIARA

(a happy sigh)

Yeah. Got two days off in a row so  
me and Bear makin' the best of it.

(handing over cash)

Can I get thirty on pump two?

JESSICA

Of course! That's it?

CIARA

(a finger on her chin,  
looking around)

Oooh. You always gotta make me  
think about it, huh?

Jessica chuckles. Ciara has her eyes on some sunflower seeds. Grabs a bag.

CIARA (CONT'D)

I better get me some of these, too.

JESSICA

Love these! Best road snack!

CIARA

Mmmhmm!

She's a dollar short. Pulls out a card to pay for the balance.

JESSICA  
 Oh honey, don't worry about it.  
 It's just a buck.

CIARA  
 You sure, Jess?

JESSICA  
 (nodding)  
 I'm sure. Just don't forget about  
 us small-town folks when you start  
 that new job in the big city.

CIARA  
 Come on, now! Once a small-town  
 girl, always a small-town girl.

JESSICA  
 Good. Now go on and enjoy your days  
 off, will ya? Stop botherin' me!

Ciara chuckles.

CIARA  
 I'll come bother you tomorrow.

JESSICA  
 I'll hold you to it.

EXT. GAS STATION (COUNTRY ROAD) - PRE-DUSK

Bear WHINES and sticks his head out the car window. Ciara opens the door and lets him out, grabbing tightly to his leash. Bear is happy to be out of the car.

Ciara walks around to the gas pump, and hooks it into the Cavalier.

INT. OLD TRUCK (COUNTRY ROAD) - MOVING - PRE-DUSK

MUSIC CUE: Continuation of "I'm so lonesome" by Hank Williams Sr.

Robert pulls in to the same gas station and parks at the pump across from Ciara.

Johnny is excited. Big smile. Pumping the gas for Gramps is his thing. Robert cuts the engine off.

END MUSIC CUE.

Johnny hops out of the truck and runs to the pump. Robert is slow to get there. He inserts his credit card and initiates the pump.

JOHNNY  
Can I put it in there now, PawPaw?

ROBERT  
(squinting at the prompts  
at the pump)  
Now hang on a second, Johnny. What  
the hell does this thing say?

Johnny looks at the screen.

JOHNNY  
It says to pull out your card.

Johnny pulls out the card for him.

ROBERT  
Now hold on...is it--

Another prompt on the screen.

JOHNNY  
It says you can pump the gas,  
PawPaw. Can I do it now?

ROBERT  
(with a sigh)  
Well, shit. Maybe ya Meemaw is  
right. Maybe I do need glasses  
after all.

Johnny doesn't really care.

JOHNNY  
(impatient)  
Can I pump it?

Robert takes the pump off the holster and hands it to his grandson.

ROBERT  
Careful.

Johnny hooks the pump in the truck. Robert watches carefully.

As the gas is pumping, Johnny becomes restless. He peeks over to the other side of the pump and sees Bear.

He glances up at the dog's owner. He hasn't been around many black people. He's somewhat intrigued.

Johnny looks at Ciara's arm. Then looks at his own arm. He's in wonder.

CIARA  
(noticing the boy's stare)  
Hi there!

Johnny is startled by the greeting.

CLOSE ON:

Robert's face. He looks at Ciara with an uncomfortable expression.

Johnny peeks at Ciara and Bear from the corner of the pump.

CIARA (CONT'D)  
(with a smile)  
You know I can see you, right?  
(closing in)  
You like my dog?

Johnny shows more of himself from behind the pump. Still uncertain.

CIARA (CONT'D)  
His name is Bear. You can pet him  
if you want to...he's not mean or  
anything.

Johnny looks at his grandfather for approval. Robert doesn't show it. He's wondering about this woman that's engaging his grandson.

Johnny walks closer, though very cautiously, and slowly extends his arm to pet the dog. Bear is excited to be petted.

Ciara chuckles.

CIARA (CONT'D)  
Looks like he likes you.

Johnny lets his guard down. He receives pounces and face-licks from Bear. Realizing this may be too overwhelming, Ciara pulls Bear off him.

Ciara's pump stops. She tends to it, smiling.

JOHNNY  
(trying to whistle)  
Here boy...come here...come here,  
Bear!

The dog happily rushes toward Johnny, yanking Ciara along.

CIARA  
 Calm down, Bear! Geez!  
 (to Johnny)  
 Yeah, he REALLY likes you.  
 (a beat)  
 What's your name?

Johnny gets serious. Looks at Robert for approval once more.

ROBERT  
 Well? You gonna tell her your name?

JOHNNY  
 Johnny.

CIARA  
 Hi, Johnny! I'm Ciara.  
 (with a balled up fist)  
 Nice to meet you.

Johnny fist-bumps her.

Robert hangs the gas pump in its holster.

ROBERT  
 Come on, Johnny. We gotta hit the  
 road.

He nods at Ciara. Johnny pets Bear one more time and walks toward the truck.

CIARA  
 Have a good day, Gentlemen. Be  
 safe.

JOHNNY  
 Bye.  
 (to the dog)  
 Bye, Bear!

Robert gets in the truck and cranks it up.

MUSIC CUE: "You Never Even Called Me By My Name" by David Allan Coe

Ciara senses the disconnect, but smiles nonetheless.

Robert extends his elbow out the window, looks at Ciara and drives off.



EXT. OLD TRUCK (COUNTRY ROAD) - MOVING - PRE-DUSK

Robert CRANKS UP the song and nods to its rhythm. Johnny is back on his tablet, playing his game. They go for a few miles up the road and then:

HESITATION in the engine. SMOKE. STALL.

Robert grunts and pulls off on the side of the road.

CLOSE ON:

Temperature gauge. HOT.

ROBERT  
You gotta be kiddin' me!

Johnny is worried.

A beat. A deep breath.

Robert POPS THE HOOD.

ROBERT (CONT'D)  
(to Johnny, frustrated)  
Go grab the big bottle of water  
from the back, Son.

Johnny quickly exits. Robert slowly gets down and walks toward the front of the truck.

He OPENS the hood, props it up.

Johnny grabs the bottle of water from the truck's bed. It's heavy.

The truck is smoky.

Johnny opens the bottle of water before Robert asks him to and trips over it, knocking it over and spilling most of it out.

JOHNNY  
Oh no!

ROBERT  
Gottdammit! What the hell is wrong  
with you, Johnny!

He realizes he's yelling at a six-year-old.

ROBERT (CONT'D)  
(sighs)  
Shit.

Robert looks around. Not a creature in sight. It's hot. Sweaty. They have no water. No phone service. It's the sticks.

A beat later:

A car BLASTING hip-hop music approaches. It's Ciara. Robert is repulsed by the sound.

Ciara's Cavalier pulls up in front of the old truck and reverses. Ciara gets out and walks over to them. She leaves her car running.

CIARA

You guys okay? What happened?

ROBERT

Overheated. It happens every now and then on long hauls.

Robert lifts his phone in the air, trying to catch a signal.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

Tryin' to see if I can get someone out here but ain't no service.

CIARA

Yeah, you're in the dead zone my friend. No cell phone service for a good six, seven miles on this stretch.

Robert shakes his head in frustration.

CIARA (CONT'D)

There is a Cantina up the road less than a mile away. I'm sure Miss Lopez will let you use her landline to call a wrecker or somethin'...she's good people.

(a beat)

I can give y'all a ride if you'd like. It's right up the road.

Robert looks at his grandson, drenched in sweat, then looks at Ciara.

ROBERT

(accepting)

Thank you.

INT. RED CAVALIER - MOVING - PRE-DUSK

Robert is in the shotgun seat. Johnny and Bear are in the back.

CIARA  
So I got Johnny's name. But I  
didn't catch yours.

ROBERT  
(looking at her)  
You didn't ask.

CIARA  
(nods, smiles)  
Okay. What's your name?

ROBERT  
Robert.

CIARA  
Robert. I'm Ciara.

Robert nods.

ROBERT  
I know.

A beat into the drive, Ciara turns down the music.

CIARA  
Not a fan of rap music, huh?

Robert doesn't respond.

CIARA (CONT'D)  
I get you. It's not for everybody.

Robert ignores it. Stares out the window.

CIARA (CONT'D)  
I like country music, too.

Robert looks up at her.

ROBERT  
Do ya now?

CIARA  
(nodding)  
Yup. I like the stories.  
Heartbreak..drinkin'...American  
Pride...drinkin'...

Robert shakes his head and smiles. He can't deny it.

Ciara pulls into a small, mom-n-pop style Mexican Cantina. Vibrant colors on the outside.

INT. CANTINA - PRE-DUSK

More vibrant colors on the walls. Colorful table cloths. Spanish paintings.

A COUPLE sits at a wooden table, eating chips and salsa. A MAN is putting cash into an ANTIQUE JUKEBOX.

MUSIC CUE: "Hermoso Carino" by Vincente Fernandez

Ciara, Robert, Johnny, who now has Bear on a leash, walk toward the counter of the restaurant. They are greeted by MRS. LOPEZ (50's), a feisty Mexican woman with a thick Spanish accent.

MRS. LOPEZ

(excited)

Hi, Mija!

(hugging Ciara)

Oh my goodness, I haven't seen you in what, a month? Where you been?

CIARA

I've been working my butt off is where I've been! God I can't wait to get out of there.

MRS. LOPEZ

I know, Mija. I know. When you moving?

CIARA

In three weeks!

Mrs. Lopez pouts.

MRS. LOPEZ

(nodding)

I'm going to miss you.

(looking at Robert and Johnny)

Who are your friends?

CIARA

Miss Lopez, this is Robert

(pointing to Johnny)

And that little man is Johnny.

(MORE)

CIARA (CONT'D)

Their truck is stalled out down the way and they were wondering if they could use your landline to call a wrecker.

Mrs. Lopez looks at Robert with interest.

MRS. LOPEZ

Oh really?

(playfully looking down at Johnny)

Hi, Mijo! How are you?

Johnny hides behind his grandfather, tugging the dog along with him. Robert puts a hand on Johnny's shoulder. Squeezes.

JOHNNY

Hi.

Mrs. Lopez looks up at Robert and waves a hand. Robert nods but doesn't say anything.

MRS. LOPEZ

(to Ciara, in Spanish)

This one...Does he speak?

Ciara chuckles because she somewhat understands Spanish.

MRS. LOPEZ (CONT'D)

(to Robert, in English)

I call a wrecker for you, Mister Robert. But you have to buy something. Nothing is free in America, no?

ROBERT

What would you like for me to buy?

MRS. LOPEZ

(shrugging, in Spanish)

I don't know.

(in English)

You're in a restaurant. Food maybe?

Awkward silence for a beat.

MRS. LOPEZ (CONT'D)

I'm just kidding, Senor! I'll call a tow truck for you, don't worry. It's on the house!

Mrs. Lopez goes to a phone in the corner and makes the call.

A LINE COOK (MANNY, 28), short but handsome, walks out to greet Ciara.

MANNY  
Hola, Ciara! How are you, Mi Amor?

They hug.

CIARA  
Hi, Manny! I'm good. How are you?  
How's Victoria?

MANNY  
Oh she good. She's you know...  
(making a gesture with his  
stomach)  
Mucho pregnant. Ready to pop, no?

Ciara chuckles.

CIARA  
How exciting! You have a name  
picked out yet?

MANNY  
Si! Maria Gabriella Angelica Lopez!

Robert squints his eyes.

CIARA  
(with a smile, shaking her  
head)  
Man! You guys be having so many  
names. Sounds so cool though!

Manny laughs.

MANNY  
We can't agree on the name so we  
give them all the names, no? Why  
not?

Mrs. Lopez walks up from the counter.

MRS. LOPEZ  
(to Robert)  
Miguelito says it will be about one  
hour before he can come.

ROBERT  
(frustrated)  
An hour? What are we supposed to do  
for a whole hour here?

MRS. LOPEZ

(fiesty)

I don't know, Mr. Robert.

(walking away)

Maybe eat a taco. You're *welcome*  
for calling him.

Robert is not used to being spoken to like that.

ROBERT

(to Ciara)

She always talk to her customers  
like that?

CIARA

(laughing)

Miss Lopez is a firecracker. But  
she's all heart!

Robert shakes his head.

CIARA (CONT'D)

Well? You guys hungry?

Robert looks down at Johnny. Johnny smiles wide and nods.

INT. CANTINA - TABLE - MOMENTS LATER

Robert sits across from Ciara. Johnny sits in the middle  
chair, focused on Bear, who is at Ciara's feet laying down.  
They each have a drink in front of them and chips and salsa.

CIARA

(munching on a chip)

So...what brings you boys around  
these parts? Just passing through?

ROBERT

We're goin' fishin'. Lake Bastrop.  
Unfortunately the only way there is  
through these country roads. I  
can't stand 'em. No life out here.

CIARA

It's not so bad.

(looking out)

There's something magical about  
these roads.

ROBERT

Magical, huh?

CIARA  
Yup. I grew up here.

Robert nods. Takes a drink.

ROBERT  
(nods)  
Figured. They all seem to know you.

CIARA  
Man, I haven't been fishing in so long!

ROBERT  
We try to find a different fishin' hole every time. Never been to this one.

CIARA  
(nodding)  
It's pretty nice. My brother and I used to camp out there and go fishing with my grandpa. Every summer.

ROBERT  
You don't do it no more?

Ciara is affected.

CIARA  
Grandpa passed away three years ago. Haven't been camping or fishing since.

ROBERT  
I'm sorry to hear that.

CIARA  
I miss him every day.

Beyond the music there's an uncomfortable silence.

ROBERT  
(eating a chip)  
Sounds like you're moving.

CIARA  
Yup. Moving to Houston. I got a management position at a grocery chain. It'll be a step up from the old Country Store I've been working at since I was fourteen.



ROBERT  
Houston?  
(with distaste)  
Good luck.

CIARA  
Never lived in a big city before.  
I'm sure the culture shock will be  
real. I'm excited though.

Manny brings over a tray full of delicious-looking tacos.

MANNY  
Okay, mi amigos!  
(passing out the dishes)  
Chicken fajita, Carne Guisada,  
and...Bean and Cheese for the  
little guy.

Manny has a small bowl of meat on the tray. He kneels down  
and places it near Bear.

MANNY (CONT'D)  
(pets the dog)  
And as always...plain Pastor for  
the Bear, eh?

Bear goes to town. Ciara chuckles.

CIARA  
You're the BEST, Manny! This all  
looks so friggin' delicious!

MANNY  
Of course! Can I getchu guys  
anything else?

Everyone is good.

CIARA  
I think we're all set!

MANNY  
Okay. Enjoy!

Manny winks at Ciara and walks away.

CIARA  
(to Robert)  
Thanks for the tacos.

ROBERT  
Thanks for the ride.

Johnny digs in. Burns his mouth. OUCH!

ROBERT (CONT'D)  
Take it easy, Boy. Let it cool down  
a little.

Johnny listens. Blows air on his tacos. A beat, then...

JOHNNY  
(to Ciara)  
Why are you so dark?

ROBERT  
(aggressive)  
Johnny! What's wrong with you?  
Apologize!

Johnny cowers.

JOHNNY  
Sorry.

ROBERT  
(deeply)  
I'm really sorry.

Ciara is surprised, but chuckles anyway.

CIARA  
Out the mouths of babes. Don't  
worry about it, he's just a kid.  
(a beat, then to Johnny)  
You really wanna know why?

Johnny, with a fork in his hand, looks at his grandfather,  
then at Ciara. Of course he wants to know why.

CIARA (CONT'D)  
(leaning in)  
You ever seen a really nice  
painting?

Johnny looks at her with confusion, partly intrigued.

CIARA (CONT'D)  
You know, a painting. Like on a  
canvas.  
(pointing to a painting on  
the wall)  
Like that one over there.

Johnny understands now. He nods.

CIARA (CONT'D)  
Well, you know what a palette is  
right?

Johnny shakes his head. He doesn't know the term.

CIARA (CONT'D)  
A palette is where the painter puts  
all of his colors together  
(demonstrating on the  
table)  
And he mixes certain colors with  
other colors to get the perfect  
tone to fit his vision, his  
masterpiece.

Johnny is intrigued and interested. Robert is interested,  
too.

CIARA (CONT'D)  
Well, when God painted you...he  
chose to mix up certain colors to  
give you *your* beautiful skin. And  
when he painted me, he chose a  
different set of colors to give me  
*my* beautiful skin. They're  
different colors, but...beautiful  
nonetheless!

Johnny soaks it in, nods. Robert finishes his bite. He is  
equally intrigued by her.

JOHNNY  
Cool!

CIARA  
(changing the subject)  
Are you excited to go fishing with  
your grandpa?

Johnny nods with a mouth full of food.

ROBERT  
(a serious look)  
Who said I'm his grandpa?

Ciara is a little taken aback.

ROBERT (CONT'D)  
Just kiddin'.

Ciara nudges at his elbow.

CIARA  
You ALMOST got me! Thought I was  
gonna have to call the cops or  
something.

Robert moves his arm back and smiles a little.

CLOSE ON:

An exposed tattoo on his forearm. A faded Confederate flag.

Ciara notices it. Robert quickly rolls down his sleeve to  
cover it up.

ROBERT  
(with disappointment)  
I had a past.

CIARA  
(taking a bite)  
Haven't we all.

ROBERT  
Not proud of mine.

An awkward silence.

ROBERT (CONT'D)  
It's not what you think. I'm not  
that person anymore.

CIARA  
(with a smile)  
Hey, you don't have to prove  
anything to me, Friend. I'm just a  
stranger who crossed paths witcha  
at a gas station.

Johnny shifts in his seat. He then leans toward his  
grandfather and attempts to whisper something, but everyone  
can hear it.

JOHNNY  
(cupping his hand in  
Grandpa's ear)  
I have to poop.

Ciara laughs.

ROBERT  
Well, what? You want me to hold  
your hand while you do it?

CIARA  
(with a chuckle, pointing  
to the restroom)  
It's that way, Johnny.

Johnny rushes off to handle business.

BACK TO THE TABLE.

Ciara is playing with a BRACELET on her wrist. She's curious but doesn't ask questions. Robert seems to read her well.

ROBERT  
(pointing to his arm)  
I joined this group when I was in  
my twenties. Just a buncha  
knucklehead boys with good hair who  
wanted to shave it all off and get  
tattoos of Confederate flags.  
(a beat)  
Some got Swastikas. Thought we had  
a cause. A purpose.  
(another beat)  
I don't think anyone really knew  
what it was.

Ciara nods. A bit uncomfortable.

ROBERT (CONT'D)  
Pretty silly, huh?

CIARA  
It's what you believed at the time.  
I get it.

ROBERT  
I was in a box. It's all I knew.  
(a beat)  
I grew up in a small town too you  
know. It was just much different  
than this one.  
(looks around)  
Everyone seems to get along 'round  
here.

Ciara nods. Takes a drink.

CIARA  
You said you're not that person  
anymore. What made you change?

Robert wipes his mouth with a napkin, thinks for a moment before he answers.

ROBERT

My son Thomas - Johnny's daddy -  
he's a police officer in Vidor,  
Texas.

(a beat)

Well, *was* a police officer anyway.

A deep sigh. Ciara feels the emotion.

EXT. ROADWAY SHOULDER - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

THOMAS' POV (BODY CAM):

A frightened YOUNG MAN (black, 19) in a CLASSIC CAR with  
flashy rims. The young man has his hands above his head and  
is breathing heavily.

*ROBERT'S DIALOGUE continues over the FLASHBACK.*

ROBERT (V.O.)

It was a traffic stop. Nineteen-  
year-old black kid ran a red light.  
Thomas lit him up, did his usual  
spiel. But the kid was extremely  
nervous. Kept looking around or  
somethin'. Made him look suspicious  
like he had something to hide.

BODY CAM POV:

THOMAS

(southern drawl)

What's going on, dude? Why are you  
acting funny? I didn't ask you to  
put your hands up. Let me see your  
license and insurance.

The young man, shaking, hands over the documents. He's  
paranoid.

YOUNG MAN

(breathing heavily)

I'm just...I don't want no trouble,  
Sir.

THOMAS

You ran a damn red light and almost  
hit that car, man. You been  
drinkin' or somethin'?

The young man shakes his head.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Why are you so nervous? You got anything in the car I need to know about?

YOUNG MAN

I...I just can't catch my breath, Sir. Please, I don't want no trouble. I'm just goin' home, Sir. Please let me go home!

INT. CANTINA - TABLE - PRE-DUSK (PRESENT DAY)

Robert is deeply affected by what he is revealing.

ROBERT

I saw the video, my son's body cam, and you could see it. The kid was breathin' funny. Like he was wheezin'. But Thomas was...he was too focused on the kid acting nervous...I guess it made him nervous.

CLOSE ON:

Ciara's face. She's affected by the suspense.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

Ordered the kid to step out the car, pulled out his taser. And the kid complied, he did what was asked of him, but you could tell his breathing was not right.

(a beat)

And as he got out the car, he had his hands up, but then he did somethin' strange...

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. ROADWAY SHOULDER - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

WHEEZING. SWEATING. The young man is out of the car with his hands up.

THOMAS

Keep them UP, you hear me? I will tase you, Boy.

(to his radio)

(MORE)

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Dispatch, send me another unit  
gottdamnit, I have a non-  
cooperative subject. He's a huge  
son-of-a-bitch too.

YOUNG MAN

(struggling to stand up)  
Sir, please. I can't breathe! I  
need to get in my pocket.

THOMAS

(extending the taser  
forward)  
Shut up! Keep those fuckin' hands  
up! You make any sudden moves and  
I'll take your ass down, you hear  
me?

The young man has no choice. He needs to get to his inhaler.  
He feels like he's dying.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

HEY! Don't do it man! Don't...  
(holsters taser, pulls out  
gun)  
Let me see your hands! Don't!

Lots of MOVEMENT. There's a scuffle. Everything on the  
bodycam is fuzzy, then...

GUNSHOTS. SEVERAL GUNSHOTS.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

(yelling)  
Shots fired! Send me help!

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. CANTINA - TABLE - PRE-DUSK (PRESENT DAY)

RESIDUAL SOUNDS of the gunshots and the echo of Thomas'  
voice.

CLOSE ON:

Robert's face. The blood has left his features.

ROBERT

(shaking his head)  
Turns out the kid was unarmed. He  
was reaching in his pocket to get  
his inhaler...he was having an  
asthma attack.



Ciara shakes her head. Robert is emotional, almost teary-eyed.

We can see in our peripheral that Johnny has come out of the restroom. He is interacting with Mrs. Lopez, who is showing him something interesting.

BACK AT THE TABLE.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

When I heard of it of course I naturally stood by my son. That's my flesh and blood. But the more I looked into it, I realized that he was in the wrong. Now talk about a confusing feeling...

CIARA

(serious)

So what happened to him? Your son.

Robert takes a drink.

ROBERT

Well, at first he was suspended with pay. Then after the investigation, the department let him go. Bodycam footage sealed the deal.

(a beat)

And then he faced the wrath of the District Attorney...and the public. Everybody was angry. Ended up being charged with Involuntary Manslaughter. Folks wasn't too happy about that. They wanted a murder charge. Protested over it and everything.

Ciara nods.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

Most difficult time of my life. Supporting my son, knowing what he did was wrong. Maybe it was more so out of guilt than anything.

CIARA

Guilt?

ROBERT

(nodding)

Like I said, I was raised to think a certain way.

(MORE)

ROBERT (CONT'D)

And I raised my son under the same program. I installed hate in him. Yeah, he's responsible for what he's done, but I had somethin' to do with the way he thought about things.

(a beat)

I always knew it'd catch up to me one day. And it did so in the most painful way.

Ciara understands, though she's pained by the story.

CIARA

Is he...serving time?

ROBERT

(nodding)

Five years. He's got two down, three more to go.

(a beat)

And the rest of his life to think about it. That's worse than any iron bars if you ask me.

We hear laughter in the background. Johnny is having fun playing a game with Mrs. Lopez and Manny, who has joined them.

BACK AT THE TABLE.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

Icing on the cake was during the sentencing hearing. The boy's mother had some words.

(a beat)

It was crazy. She said she forgave my son for what happened. Asked that God be merciful to him and change his ways.

(looking deeply at Ciara)

Can you believe that? She forgave Thomas for killing her boy.

CIARA

(emotional)

Wow.

(a beat)

That must have taken a lot.

Robert nods.

ROBERT

It definitely made a statement for me. Cuz you know what?

(a beat)

If the shoe was on the other foot, and it was her son who killed mine...

(leaning in, emotional)

all hell would've broken loose. I would've never forgiven him. So what does that say about that woman?

(a beat)

More importantly, what does it say about me?

Ciara nods. She is intrigued by the honesty.

A loud CHUCKLE from Johnny.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

That's why I want to make sure I do right by Johnny. Teach him the right things.

(a beat)

I messed up with my son. But that boy right there still has a chance.

CIARA

(nodding)

It's never too late to change the pattern.

Robert shakes his head.

ROBERT

And then there's you.

CIARA

Me?

ROBERT

You don't know me from a can of paint. Yet you show kindness to my grandson and myself... 'never too late to change the pattern', huh? I think you're right.

Ciara smiles.

CIARA

At the end of the day, regardless of our past or the color of our skin, we both bleed red.

(MORE)

CIARA (CONT'D)  
Human is the only color.  
(a beat)  
My grandpa taught me that...and it  
hasn't failed me once.

Robert nods and takes a deep breath.

We see a tow truck pulling up into the parking lot of the  
Cantina.

MRS. LOPEZ  
(yelling)  
Looks like your ride is here,  
Senor!

Johnny runs up to the table. Robert reaches in his wallet and  
pulls out some cash, drops it on the table.

Johnny kneels down and pets Bear.

JOHNNY  
Bye, Bear! It was nice meeting you,  
Boy!

Ciara stands up. So does Robert.

CIARA  
(to Johnny)  
I guess it's goodbye time. Can I  
get a hug?

Johnny hugs her tight. No approval needed this time.

CIARA (CONT'D)  
Now that's a REAL hug right there!

Ciara makes eye contact with Robert. Tries to read him. Then  
extends her hand for a shake.

CIARA (CONT'D)  
It was really nice to meet you,  
Robert. Thank you for sharing that  
story with me. It takes a lot to be  
vulnerable.

ROBERT  
(shaking her hand)  
You make it easy. Thanks for the  
ride. And...for listening.

After the goodbyes, Robert and Johnny walk toward the front  
door. Robert halts and turns around.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

(to Ciara)

Call me crazy for this but...You  
wanna go fishin' with us tomorrow?

Ciara looks surprised. Johnny is excited.

JOHNNY

Yeah! Please? Come with us so I can  
fish with Bear!

CIARA

But your truck?

ROBERT

Hell, I'll have to get a rental car  
in Bastrop anyway. That thing ain't  
gonna be fixed no time soon. Either  
way I'm not missing out on fishin'  
with my grandson this weekend.

Ciara thinks about it for a moment.

CIARA

You know what? I'd love to.  
(with a smile)  
It's time.

ROBERT

South Shore Park at Lake Bastrop,  
if you're willing to make the drive  
we'll be there by Noon tomorrow.  
We'll wait on you.

Ciara smiles.

CIARA

I'll be there.

Robert nods. A deep stare at the road...

ROBERT

(to Ciara)

You know, maybe there is something  
good to these country roads after  
all.

CIARA

Something magical.

ROBERT

See you tomorrow.

CIARA  
See you, Robert.

Robert and Johnny walk out.

CLOSE ON:

Ciara's face. Her smile. A deep sigh.

EXT. CANTINA (COUNTRY ROAD) - DUSK

The TOW TRUCK DRIVER (MIGUELITO, 40's), greets Robert and Johnny.

MIGUELITO  
Car trouble, huh?  
(extending his hand)  
I'm Miguelito.

ROBERT  
Robert.  
(a hand on Johnny's  
shoulder)  
And this is Johnny.

MIGUELITO  
Hey, Papa! Come on, let's go get  
your truck.

INT. TOW TRUCK (COUNTRY ROAD) - DUSK

MUSIC CUE: "Take Me Home, Country Roads" by John Denver

Robert sighs in relief, like a new beginning has manifested. The driver puts it in gear and they get on the country road and disappear.

ROAD VIEW. SUNSET.

FADE OUT.