

S E N T

Margaret, a waitress in a small town believes it was "word of mouth" that brought in the traveler. But was it?

INT. ROADSIDE DINER - PAGE, ARIZONA -- DAY

The legend, "**Page, Arizona**" appears.

THREE TEENAGE BOYS sit at a booth by the window. Slurping down milkshakes. Kicking their legs under the table while laughing.

MARGARET(28) a small town waitress in an old-fashioned teal uniform, wipes over the bar countertop with a rag.

MARGARET

Pardon me.

Margaret looks up and smiles at the mangy MAN sitting at the bar. She wipes around his plate. He savors every fork full of food. Pays Margaret no mind.

Embroidered all over the man's ragged denim jacket are indecipherable messages, signs and symbols.

The man pauses. Regards the food, impressed. Shakes his head.

MAN

My my my. Stoppin' off wasn't in the plan. You see, I'm just passin' through. Tryin' to get to where I'm going come night fall. But this right here, this is the best Goddamn country fried steak I've ever tasted. Would say it's "outta this world", but then I'd be lying.

The man shovels more food into his mouth. Margaret smiles.

MARGARET

Well I'm glad you followed your gut feeling.

The man shakes his head. Doesn't miss a beat eating.

MAN

No ma'am. Uh-uh.

MARGARET

Excuse me?

MAN

I'm following orders.

A beat. Margaret smiles surprised.

MARGARET

A referral? That's just great.

Margaret pauses, happy. Rests her hands on her hips.

MARGARET (CONT'D)

Y'know it seems these days we are getting more and more folks like yourself stoppin' in. If there's anything else you need, you just let me know.

OUT OF NOWHERE THE MAN SLAMS HIS FIST DOWN ON THE COUNTER. MARGARET JUMPS. The patrons startled.

MAN

Why do you people insist on making promises you can't keep? What if I asked for something you couldn't give? What then, huh?

Beat. Margaret stunned. The man has yet to lift his head.

MARGARET

What I meant was...

MAN

... I know what you meant. Not all intentions can be met.

Margaret furrows her brow. She now regards the man as odd.

MAN (CONT'D)

This will do me just fine, though. Thank you.

Suddenly, the man pauses. Appraises the remaining food on his plate.

MAN (CONT'D)

Well, now I take that back. I just noticed my portion of taters has decreased without my knowing.

MARGARET

I can get you some more, if you like.

MAN

Now that you can do.

Beat. Margaret sets down the rag. Heads back to the kitchen.

Close on the peculiar man, washing his food down with a tall glass of milk.

A door chimes.

Margaret walks out with the extra side of mash potatoes. Looks up. Notices the booth by the window has three "empty" malt glasses on the table. The teenage boys are gone.

Margaret sighs.

MARGARET

Damn kids.

MAN

They'll get what's coming to em.
Just make sure you work em good.

A beat. Margaret slides the extra side of mash potatoes over. No time is wasted as the man eats immediately.

FADE TO:

LATER

The man puts on his cap. Gets up and slaps down several LARGE BILLS on the bar. He waves Margaret goodbye. Walks off.

Cash in hand, Margaret looks on in the bg.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. DINER -- LATER NIGHT

Tight on the "WE ARE CLOSED" sign hanging on the door. Margaret cleaning inside.

EXT. HIGHWAY 260 - MOVING -- SAME

A BLUE PICKUP TRUCK passes a road marker that reads: "Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest Next 3 Miles".

INT. DINER -- LATER NIGHT

Margaret sweeps around chairs and under tables. Music plays low.

A knock is heard at the door. She looks up. The three boys from earlier are outside with their heads hung low. A UNIFORMED OFFICER stands beside them with a wry smile. His hand on his gun.

EXT. APACHE-SITGREAVES NATIONAL FOREST -- SAME

WE SEE...

the wind blowing among tall trees...

a clearing with BRIGHT LIGHT shining down over the pickup...

and clothes peeling off the unusually long frame of a large headed FIGURE. Hunched over. Creeping away from the pickup and into the deep forest beyond.

INT. DINER -- NIGHT

The boys give Margaret the money she is owed. Their heads still hung in shame.

A beat.

OFFICER
Are we forgetting something?

Each boy looks to the other to speak.

OFFICER (CONT'D)
Either someone speak up or we can all take a ride down to county.

BOY #1
Ma'am...

The boy hesitates. Glances at his friends. Gets nudged by the officer.

OFFICER
Go on.

BOY #1
If there's anything we can do to right this wrong, we will gladly do it.

MARGARET
I appreciate that. But all I ask is that this never happens again. Is that clear?

ALL THREE BOYS
Yes ma'am.

OFFICER
Ma'am I'm afraid that's not enough. I urge you give these boys a job to do.

The officer stares at Margaret. Margaret finally gets it.

MARGARET
7 a.m. tomorrow morning. I'll have work for ya'll then.

FADE TO:

INT. DINER -- NEXT MORNING

Margaret shakes her head slightly. Smiles at the other STAFF as they watch the three boys work hard in the kitchen.

INT. END OF DAY - DINER -- NIGHT

The boys sit slumped over at the bar. Exhausted. Grease stains all over their clothes.

MARGARET

You boys hungry?

The boys liven up. Glance at each other. Nod their heads yes.

Margaret goes into the kitchen. Comes out with left over Apple pie. She divvy's up equal portions on small plates. Margaret watches as the boys dig in.

MARGARET (CONT'D)

Don't forget to chew.

The boys nod their heads. Continue to scarf down pie.

MARGARET (CONT'D)

So let me guess, the officer scared
you boys, didn't he? It was fear
that drove you to work so hard,
huh?

In unison the boys shake their heads, no. Margaret grins.

MARGARET (CONT'D)

No? Then tell me, what was it?

All together the boys pause. Catching their forks at their mouths. Margaret wonders. The boys look up and begin to raise their hands. Crippling fear in their eyes.

The forefingers of all three boys point pass Margaret. It's real now. We see the fear on Margaret's face. Unable to turn, Margaret looks at the window straight ahead. It's dark as hell outside. But light from the back kitchen plays off the window, silhouetting a long dark figure standing behind her. Margaret draws back. Covers her mouth. The dark figure with even darker eyes tilts its large head to one side as we...

CUT TO BLACK

THE END.