

MUTE

Written by

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Based on 'Mute' by Stephen King

A medal of Saint Christopher swings from the rearview mirror. Reveal, Monette (53) driving down a lonely highway. She looks like she stepped out of a lifestyle magazine. In the back seat of the car sits a small stack of boxes. Beauty and 'wellness' conference supplies. A few self promotional flyers and tubes of organic cosmetics. *

Through the windshield Monette spots a HITCHHIKER. She's young (20's) holding a small cardboard sign depicting an ear with an 'X' through it. After some hesitation Monette swerves to the right and pulls to a stop. Leaning over, she pops open the passenger side door.

MONETTE

Hey! Hop in!

The hitchhiker jumps in, nestling her large pack between her legs.

She's unkempt and a little dirty. It looks like she's been on the road for days. She could just as likely be homeless as heading home after a weekend of festival revelry.

MONETTE (CONT'D)

How far you going? I know which way but...

The Hitchhiker gestures to her sign and then flips it over. A similarly drawn mouth with an 'X' is depicted. *

MONETTE (CONT'D)

Oh. Uh... Do you read lips?

The hitchhiker doesn't respond. She points out towards the road.

MONETTE (CONT'D)

Yeah. That way. HOW. FAR. ARE. YOU. GOING?

Monette shouts even though she's not sure why. The young woman points again. She gestures towards the road, a sign of distance, eight maybe ten times. *

MONETTE (CONT'D)

Ok. I guess that means far? *

The hitchhiker signs "Thank you"

MONETTE (CONT'D)

Whatever. Just tap me on the
shoulder when you get where you're
going.

*

The young woman looks blankly at Monette.

MONETTE (CONT'D)

I guess you will.

The woman considers Monette but doesn't make a response.
She's worn out from traveling, and it's reflected in her
face. Her eyes are tired and she leans her head against the
passenger window.

MONETTE (CONT'D)

Mind some music?

Monette reaches for the radio controls and turns up the
volume.

MONETTE (CONT'D)

Of course not.

She gives a half hearted smile and keeps driving.

DETECTIVE (PRELAP)

Why did you pick her up?

2

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

2

Monette sits in a small interrogation room across from a
DETECTIVE. The medal of St. Christopher and a small note lay
on the table between them.

MONETTE

She reminded me of our daughter, I
guess. They're about the same age.
I didn't want a young girl like her
to get picked up by some creep.

DETECTIVE

Did you get her name? This
hitchhiker?

MONETTE

No. She never responded to any
questions, just looked out the
window. I thought she fell asleep
but now I'm not so sure.

DETECTIVE

Why do you say that?

MONETTE

I talked about my husband.

She stops and considers for a moment.

MONETTE (CONT'D)

No. I ranted about my husband. I...
you see...

She sighs, finding the words.

MONETTE (CONT'D)

She was deaf. I could say anything
and not have to listen to her make
an analysis or give an opinion. I
could say anything I wanted to.

She catches herself and looks to the Detective
apologetically.

DETECTIVE

What exactly did you say about him?

MONETTE

I told her he was fifty-four.

3 INT. MONETTE'S CAR (FLASHBACK) - DAY

3

Monette drives as the hitchhiker looks out the window,
focussing between the passing country and her driver.

*
*

MONETTE

I'm married. I'm fifty-three and my
husband, Bob, is fifty-four.

*

Monette gestures to her wedding band. She's telling her story
to herself more than to her passenger.

MONETTE (CONT'D)

We've been married twenty-six
years. I'm on the road a lot. Over
two hundred days last year. It
takes a lot of time, running a
business. We only had the one kid,
Kelsie, and she flew the coop after
high school. So bob was on his own
a lot.

*
*
*

She sighs.

MONETTE (CONT'D)

Turns out Bob's got a girlfriend.

Monette puts on a sick smile at this.

MONETTE (CONT'D)
Barb Yandowsky, but he calls her
Cowgirl.

Monette's eyes are glazed. Torn between laughter and tears.
The hitchhiker gives her a sympathetic look, but it's half
hearted. Her exhaustion is creeping up on her.

MONETTE (CONT'D)
Thursday nights they go to Range
Riders for line dancing and
tequila. Then they stumble across
the street to the old Grove Motel.
Bob is fifty-four. He wears *
bifocals! He gets regular prostate
exams! And he's got a girlfriend!
His little Cowgirl! Who's sixty!

Her hands clamp the steering wheel. She's ranting. Monette is
embarrassed by her rage and looks to the hitchhiker, but *
she's leaning against the window, sleeping. Relief.

MONETTE (CONT'D)
Last week Bob told me everything.
He wasn't defiant about it, wasn't
even ashamed. He seemed... serene.

Monette presses at her temple. A days long stress headache is *
beginning to clear, from her outpouring.

4

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

4

Back in the interrogation room, Monette is startlingly calm,
compared to how we've just seen her.

DETECTIVE
Did you tell her about your
husband's money problems?

MONETTE
The purchases, you mean?

The detective nods.

MONETTE (CONT'D)
M-hm. I told her all about the
panties and heals. Boxes and boxes.
Fancy boutique stuff he never once
bought me. All for Ms. Yandowsky.
(MORE)

MONETTE (CONT'D)

You know half of it still had the tags? It was like a compulsion, he said. Kept the fantasy going.

*
*

DETECTIVE

But you never saw any receipts? Nothing to tip you off?

MONETTE

Oh, I saw his credit card statements. There wasn't anything on them. Not thousands of dollars worth of panties, that's for sure. That's how we got on to the real problem.

DETECTIVE

The embezzlement?

5 INT. MONETTE'S CAR (FLASHBACK) - DAY

5

Monette continues to drive.

MONETTE

One hundred and twenty thousand dollars, trickled out over two years.

She announces to her silent passenger.

MONETTE (CONT'D)

He worked for Maine School Administrative District. Their offices are based in Dowrie. Home of both Range Riders and the Grove Motel. Convenient. Got his business and pleasure all in the same area.

The memory is painful to bring forth, but Monette keeps going.

MONETTE (CONT'D)

Bob was the District Superintendent. He's a nice man, but embezzlement was a bit beyond him. He skated through life on C averages. Cowgirl Barb was his Executive Assistant for twelve years, so she had the checkbook.

Monette hears a slight rustle from the passenger seat. She looks over at the young woman.

A small snort escapes the hitchhiker's nostrils and she stirs but then settles back to sleep.

Monette focuses on the road.

MONETTE (CONT'D)

Apparently the state auditors had been by. They were going to find out about the money sooner rather than later. So I asked him how much was left, and you know what he said? Nothing.

6

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

6

The detective leafs through some records in a file.

DETECTIVE

We checked your husband's bank records. He wasn't lying when he said the money was gone. It looks like him and Ms. Yandowsky spent it as fast as they could acquire it.

*

MONETTE

You know I thought he was crazy at first. That he was telling me some sick lie. But he was much too serious about it all.

DETECTIVE

And how did you react to that? Get angry? Physical maybe?

MONETTE

No. I didn't even raise my voice at him. I think it was because I was too tired. All that information had just wiped me out. I wanted to take a nap. A long one. Hibernate for months, if I could.

Monette looks to the detective. Eyes connecting with his.

MONETTE (CONT'D)

Is that strange?

He considers her. She's deflated and looks as tired as she describes.

DETECTIVE

No.

MONETTE

I asked him how he could do something like that to me. Did he care so little? And he asked -

7 INT. MONETTE'S CAR (FLASHBACK) - DAY

7

On the road, a sign, marking a gas station and rest stop some miles ahead.

MONETTE

He asked me how I didn't know. He said... He said it was my fault! Cowgirl Barb and the rest of it.

*
*
*

In sharp contrast to the interrogation room, Monette is shaking with rage.

MONETTE (CONT'D)

I wanted to kill him. Trying to lay it all off on me and my fucking business. As if I could get another job that paid even half as much. At my age I'd be lucky to land school crossing guard.

*

She nearly spits at the idea.

MONETTE (CONT'D)

I was supposed to feel guilty for liking my work. For not drudging through my days, like him. Toiling away each day until I finally snap and bed the first person to look my way.

*

Monette startles herself with the sound of her own shouting. She looks to the hitchhiker, embarrassed that maybe she's being heard. Maybe she can feel the vibrations of the shouting?

MONETTE (CONT'D)

I didn't get into it with him. I just wanted to get out of there while I was still in shock... because that was protecting him.

*
*

She is the image of sharp and controlled rage. A slight smile emerges on her face as she considers the violence she could carry out on her husband.

*
*

8 INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

8

The detective holds Monette's gaze. Even though she's controlled, her face shows grief in her story.

MONETTE

He said he was going to go to jail. He even started to cry. I had to fight back the urge to hold him. After twenty six years it becomes a reflex, you know? But I didn't. I just turned around and walked out. And then he moved out. To the Grove Motel, of course. We talked on the phone a couple times. Talked to a lawyer too. I figured the next time I saw him would be in court. Him and Ms. Yandowsky.

9 INT. MONETTE'S CAR (FLASHBACK) - EVENING

9

Monette is still driving. She's calmer but her eyes show signs of crying.

There's another sign on the side of the road. REST AREA 2 MI

She looks to the hitchhiker, who's still sleeping. Monette reaches out and nudges her shoulder. Jostling the young woman awake.

The hitchhiker looks around and gets her bearings as Monette pulls into the rest stop.

10 EXT. REST STOP (FLASHBACK) - EVENING

10

It's a simple establishment. Gas pumps and a convenience store. There's a small diner with cars parked in front.

Monette parks in front of the store.

11 INT. MONETTE'S CAR (FLASHBACK) - EVENING

11

The hitchhiker looks out the front windshield.

MONETTE

You want to go further, or get out here?

Monette points to the hitchhiker and then towards the direction they came from. Questioning.

The hitchhiker shakes her head and points further down the road, making a face to suggest 'not here.'

MONETTE (CONT'D)
You're just rambling, aren't you?

No response.

MONETTE (CONT'D)
Yeah, you are.

She considers for a moment.

MONETTE (CONT'D)
I need to pee. You need to pee?

She points to the washrooms at the side of the rest stop. The hitchhiker shakes her head no.

Monette looks again to the washroom and is stuck. She needs to go but doesn't want to leave the woman alone in her car. What if she stole something? But then Monette realizes, ushering her out of the car will only show her lack of trust.

MONETTE (CONT'D)
I'll be right back.

She points to herself and then the washrooms, then back to herself again. The hitchhiker gives her an 'OK' thumb and index finger touching.

12 EXT. REST STOP (FLASHBACK) - EVENING 12

Monette rushes across the parking lot.

13 INT. LADIES WASHROOM - EVENING 13

In the stall, Monette looks calm. While washing up, she pauses at the mirror to touch up her makeup. She's pristine again.

14 EXT. REST STOP (FLASHBACK) - EVENING 14

Monette exits the restroom and approaches her car. Once beside it she realizes - the hitchhiker is gone.

15 INT. MONETTE'S CAR (FLASHBACK) - EVENING 15

She opens the front door of the car and looks inside. The woman and her pack are gone.

Monette gets in and opens her glove compartment. Nothing's missing. In the back seat, the same. Her things are untouched but there's no sign of the hitchhiker.

16 EXT. REST STOP (FLASHBACK) - EVENING 16

She looks around but the woman is nowhere to be seen. Monette makes a short circle of her car, looking for the hitchhiker.

Monette gets back in the driver's seat. She starts the car and pulls away, heading back on the road.

*
*

17 INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY 17

The Detective sits across from Monette.

DETECTIVE
Is that all?

18 INT. MONETTE'S CAR (FLASHBACK) - NIGHT 18

It's nighttime now and Monette is still driving.

MONETTE (V.O.)
Well, I looked around for her. Kept an eye out anyway. It felt like unfinished business to have her leave like that. I didn't notice until later...

She looks towards her rearview mirror.

MONETTE (V.O.)
My St. Christopher medal. She stole it.

Monette's face is strained and unsettled by the theft but she keeps driving.

MONETTE (V.O.)
And then, just two nights later is when I got the call. From the police. Bob and Ms. Yandowsky, murdered.

19 INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY 19

Monette looks directly to the detective. Face full of worry.

MONETTE
 Maybe it was her?

20 EXT. GROVE MOTEL (FLASHBACK) - NIGHT

20

From behind, we follow a person as they walk along a line of motel room doors. They're dressed in similar clothes to the hitchhiker, as we saw her. A heavy pipe is in her hand, dangling. *

She approaches one of the rooms and knocks.

MONETTE (V.O.)
 Today, the pendent and a note,
 "Thank you for the ride." It was in
 my house! She could have gotten my
 address from my registration while
 I was in the bathroom. Kelsie's
 home for the funeral. What if this
 woman is dangerous and broke into
 my house?

The motel door opens. She swings wildly, hitting the person on the other side of the door. She rushes into the room and slams the door behind her.

MONETTE (V.O.)
 Don't you see? I told her -
 everything - the name of the motel,
 the town. What if she wasn't deaf
 at all?

21 INT. MOTEL ROOM (FLASHBACK) - NIGHT

21

Inside the motel room, Bob lays in a pool of blood. The killer reaches for his phone on the nightstand, and unlocks it with his limp index finger.

DETECTIVE (V.O.)
 But she didn't give you any sign
 that she heard your story.

MONETTE (V.O.)
 No.

She scrolls through his messages and stops on a thread with 'Cowgirl'. She types: "I can't wait to see you" She hits send.

DETECTIVE (V.O.)
 And you didn't make any sort of
 agreement with her?
 (MORE)

DETECTIVE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Said anything that could have lead
her to believe that you wanted your
husband dead?

The camera tilts up to reveal the face of the killer. It's
Monette. Her eyes are deadly frozen rage, and she waits.

22 INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY (CONTINUOUS) 22

We're back in the interrogation room with the Detective and
Monette.

MONETTE
No. Jesus. No. Nothing.

Her face shows no trace of the lie.

23 EXT. CHURCH - DAY 23

It's later. Monette, dressed in the perfect image of
mourning, walks up the front steps of a large Catholic
church.

24 INT. CHURCH - DAY 24

Monette quickly strides along the pews. She makes her way
towards the confessional and then steps in. *

25 INT. CHURCH CONFESSIONAL - DAY 25

Monette sits. Her hand floats up towards her collar bone. She
thumps the St. Christopher medal hanging around her neck. *

In front of her, in the confessional is a small sign. It
reads: FOR ALL HAVE SINNED AND FALLEN SHORT OF GOD'S GLORY

The panel behind the screen opens.

MONETTE
Forgive me Father, for I have
sinned.

CUT TO BLACK