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NIGHT SHIFT

Dialogues / Thriller / 4 min
Cast 3 Female x1 Male x2

Len has worked the register at a gas station convenience store for twenty years. At quarter to three a calm woman walks in with a young man who will not meet anyone's eye. Len has to decide what he is looking at, and what he is prepared to say about it.

CHARACTERS

LEN - 60s, night cashier. Slow to speak, misses nothing, has a paperback and a lot of patience

ROSE - 40s, a customer. Pleasant, unhurried, never raises her voice

CALLUM - late 20s, with Rose. Jittery, pale, trying to say something without saying it

SETTING

The convenience store of a 24-hour gas station on a quiet road, two forty in the morning.

*A 24-hour gas station convenience store.
Fluorescent hum. LEN sits behind the register
reading a paperback.*

*A bell. ROSE enters first, calm, a coat over her
arm. CALLUM follows, hands in pockets, eyes
everywhere.*

LEN

Evening. Or morning.

ROSE

Morning. Pump four. And whatever he wants.

*Callum goes to the cooler. Stands there without
opening it.*

LEN

Forty-two on four.

ROSE

Card.

She taps her card. Len watches Callum.

LEN

Door sticks if you stare at it, son. You gotta pull.

CALLUM

Right. Yeah.

He opens it. Takes a bottle of water. Comes to the register. Puts it down. His hand shakes.

ROSE

Cold night.

LEN

It is.

CALLUM

You got a bathroom?

ROSE

We're not staying.

CALLUM

Two minutes.

ROSE

(pleasant)

We're not staying, Cal.

Beat. Len catches it.

LEN

Around the side. Key's on the hook by the door. You'll need it. It locks behind you.

Callum looks at the hook. Looks at Rose.

ROSE

Go ahead, then. Two minutes.

Callum takes the key. Goes out. Rose does not turn around. She looks at the paperback.

ROSE

Any good?

LEN

Not really. I've read it before. I know who did it.

ROSE

Then why read it?

LEN

Something to do with my hands.

ROSE

Quiet out here.

LEN

Mostly. Trucks till about one. Then it's just me and the coolers.

ROSE

You don't get nervous? All by yourself.

LEN

Nobody robs a place with one old guy and a book in it. Nothing to prove.

ROSE

That's a nice way to look at it.

LEN

It's the only way to look at it, three nights a week.

Silence. Rose picks up a pack of mints. Puts it down.

ROSE

He's my nephew. Bad week. I'm driving him to his mom's.

LEN

At three in the morning.

ROSE

She's an early riser.

LEN

There's a bruise coming up under his ear. Fresh one.

ROSE

He fell.

LEN

People do.

*Callum comes back. Puts the key on the counter.
He is very pale.*

CALLUM

Thanks.

LEN

No problem.

Rose picks up the water. Turns to go.

LEN

Forgot your change.

ROSE

I paid by card.

LEN

Did you.

(beat)

Doesn't matter. Take a mint. On the house.

He slides the mints across. Callum reaches for them. Len keeps two fingers on the pack a second too long. Eye contact.

LEN

The key. Did it stick?

CALLUM

(understanding)

Yeah. Yeah, it stuck.

LEN

That door's had a problem all week. I keep meaning to write it up.

ROSE

Come on.

She takes Callum's arm. Not hard. Firm.

LEN

Camera on that bathroom door feeds to the office. Not just here. The main office in town. They keep it live after midnight. Insurance.

Rose stops.

ROSE

Is that so.

LEN

Three minutes of it now. Him going in. Him coming out. You not turning around.

ROSE

That's not a crime.

LEN

No. But it's a face and a time and a license plate on pump four. And I've been standing here twenty years. I know what a kid looks like when he wants to say something and can't.

Rose lets go of Callum's arm.

ROSE

(to Callum, soft)

Get in the car.

Callum does not move.

LEN

He can wait in here. Warmer. You go sit in your car and think about which one of you drives off.

Rose looks at Len. A long look. Then she puts the water bottle back on the counter.

ROSE

Keep it.

She goes. The bell. Callum's knees give a little. Len puts the paperback down.

LEN

Sit there. I'm calling it in. Then you can tell me who she really is.

END OF SCRIPT