

INT. DETECTIVE'S OFFICE - JUNE 21 2018

SILENCE. The CLACK OF MECHANICAL BUTTONS. STATIC. A moment's pause as TAPE NOISES indicate a recorder running, but no one on the mic. An OLD DESK FAN buzzes in the background. Then...

DET. BAILEY

I don't even... I'm... Sorry. I should've written something down before I got started. Didn't think... I mean... God, where to even start?

The FLIPPING OF PAGES.

DET. BAILEY (CONT'D)

I mean, I've got a hundred pages of case notes here, but I can't even make sense of the damn things.

One last PAGE FLIP. A long pause.

DET. BAILEY (CONT'D)

That was the ninth... tenth, if you count Richard Seaver -- and I do. Most people don't, but I think...

A DISTANT SOUND, like the soft waves rolling up the beach. Bailey's chair SCRAPES BACK ON THE LINOLEUM FLOOR in a single panicked movement. FOOTSTEPS move away from the mic, as does his voice.

DET. BAILEY (CONT'D)

(muffled)

No no no -- it's not real, it's not real, it's not...

The window SLAMS SHUT. The sound of waves vanishes. SILENCE, and the desk fan. FOOTSTEPS, SCRAPING CHAIR, then...

DET. BAILEY (CONT'D)

Sorry. Everything's just... with things like they are, I...

He pauses, then makes up his mind at last.

DET. BAILEY (CONT'D)

Let's start over.

MECHANICAL BUTTONS, then the sound of reversing tape. SCRAMBLED, BACKWARDS VOICES create a hallucinatory atmosphere.

CLICK.

INT. DETECTIVE'S OFFICE - JANUARY 6 2018

The room is quiet -- even the fan is gone. There's a HUM OF OFFICE ACTIVITY in the background, but it's through the wall.

A significantly less harrowed sounding Det. Bailey CLEARS HIS THROAT.

DET. BAILEY
So, um... It's January -- six?
Yeah, January six, twenty... does
this thing auto datestamp? I
think...

RUSTLING OF PAGES -- only this time, it sounds like a phone book.

DET. BAILEY (CONT'D)
Let me look at the instructions
here -- J***S.

A loud BLEEP drowns out the blasphemy. The rustling stops.

DET. BAILEY (CONT'D)
You've gotta be f***ing kidding me.

The same loud BLEEP.

DET. BAILEY (CONT'D)
This thing has an auto-censor? Who
the h**l decided that was a good
ide -- oh, Mary H. Mother of
C****t.

A long sigh, then the instructions SLAP DOWN ON THE TABLE.

DET. BAILEY (CONT'D)
Okay. This is Detective Sam Bailey
of the Agate Shore Police
Department, recording for the first
time with this d**n contraption
because Jerry said, 'oh, it's
easier than typing everything out,'
and I guess that's right because
that computer's just another d**n
contraption I have to work with on
this job, and I might as well save
some time for all the other nothing
I've got to do around here...

He stops, realizing he's rambling.

DET. BAILEY (CONT'D)
Look, I'm not just getting on this thing to hear the sound of my own voice, is what I'm saying. G*d knows I don't like it. Oslow County's finally joining the 21st century and accepting audio logs in place of case files, so here we are. Here -- we -- are...

A FLIPPING of notepad pages.

DET. BAILEY (CONT'D)
Right. Holdup at the Seven Eleven down on Front Street. Couple of hooligans in ski masks with BB guns -- probably just kids on Christmas break, passing through. All they took were a few cases of beer. Took off south, but no one caught their license plate. Called up the station in Arrowhead to watch out for an old red Jeep.

Another FLIPPED PAGE.

DET. BAILEY (CONT'D)
Ms. Miller called this morning to say her basement was flooding and she needed help. Told her that was *impossible*, since we live in a desert, but she kept insisting so I sent two officers to help her. It's not like they had anything else to do, and it's the least we could do for all the cookies she sends to the station. Boys called back to say she *was* telling the truth -- the water was up to their knees. Don't know if they were in on the joke or not, but they stayed there all day -- bailing water, supposedly. Sure.

FLIP.

DET. BAILEY (CONT'D)
Couple of drunk and disorderly's at Chuck's last night -- just the usual. One outta-towner -- Jim said he stood up on the table and started singing in Mexican before he fell off and banged his head.
(MORE)

DET. BAILEY (CONT'D)

I doubt Jim knows Spanish from Arabic, but I didn't feel like pressing the issue, since we had to drag the sorry sap out of the bar to get him to the hospital. He was gone next morning, but no one saw him leave. Figures. Didn't have any ID on him, but we've got his description if he ever shows up again -- black hair, blue eyes, pale Caucasian, fancy clothes. Hospital's breathing down my neck about who's gonna pay the bill. I say, bill for what? They say ER service, but all they did was put an icepack on his head and let him sleep in...

CLICK.

INT. DETECTIVE'S OFFICE - JUNE 21 2018

The sound of the FAN resumes. Bailey sighs, sounding sixty years older.

DET. BAILEY

That was six months ago. First time recording. Jesus. I couldn't even tell what was important or not, I just read my whole damn notepad. Let's try...

CLICK. REWINDING TAPE. DISCORDANT VOICES.

CLICK.

INT. DETECTIVE'S OFFICE - FEBRUARY 10 2018

DET. BAILEY

...and I swear to G*d if Alan doesn't stop stapling both copies of his reports together I'm going to take him out back and shoot him myself...

Bailey takes a deep breath, clearly at the end of a long diatribe. His tone with the machine is much more natural, less formal -- it's like he's recording a diary. He realizes it a moment too late.

DET. BAILEY (CONT'D)
 Sorry, that's... that probably
 shouldn't be on this tape.
 "Official business only." They
 wrote that on top of it in big red
 letters in case I forgot. But who
 else do I have to talk to about
 these things? I mean, is it less
 professional to complain to a
 coworker, or a machine? And I can't
 talk to anybody in town -- word
 travels too quick. I tell Jim about
 Alan, Jim tells Mary, Mary tells
 Abby, Abby tells Jerry and Jerry
 tells Allan. If this gets played in
 county court someday -- which I
 find unlikely -- nobody in Agate
 will hear it. Probably.

That gives him pause. In the silence, a far off SIREN.

DET. BAILEY (CONT'D)
 I'm -- I'm avoiding the issue. I
 guess. Just don't want to talk
 about it.

The SIREN grows louder. A long pause -- then resolution.

DET. BAILEY (CONT'D)
 One of the kids went missing at
 school today. The Martins boy, Pat.
 Good kid. Too shy for his own good,
 but smart. Sweet. Curious. Couple
 of the other kids saw him wander
 off into the lake bed... it's was
 an Agate hunting trip. There were
 too many kids for Miss Maisey to
 keep track of, and the volunteer
 parent bailed at the last second.
 Saw him at Chuck's last night --
 he's probably still hungover.

The SIREN almost drowns out his voice. He seems to notice it
 for the first time.

DET. BAILEY (CONT'D)
 That's -- that's an ambulance, not
 a patrol car. G*d, I hope that's
 not...

The office door BANGS OPEN.

ALAN
 SAM!

CLICK. TAPE AT TRIPLE SPEED, FORWARD THIS TIME.

INT. DETECTIVE'S OFFICE - MARCH 15

The office is silent except for the creaking of crickets outside. It's late, and no one's around by Bailey.

DET. BAILEY

There's been another one. J***s. No -- another three. Couple of teenagers from Arrowhead, up for Spring break. They were car-camping out on the lake bed, smoking or drinking or... you know. Whatever kids do out there. And Alan went out when he saw their jeep parked out there. He...

Bailey has to collect his thoughts. He's having a hard time believing any of this.

DET. BAILEY (CONT'D)

It was just like Pat. The Martins kid. Dead as disco in the middle of the desert, with their lungs full of water. Salt water.

He takes a breath.

DET. BAILEY (CONT'D)

Then Alan tries to tell me that when he got to the car, it was flooded all the way to the windows, and the kids were floating in it, that when he opened the door it all spilled out and soaked into the ground before anyone else got there. I mean, g*d Alan, people are dying out there! The least you could do is stop cracking jokes...

CLICK. TAPE. BAILEY'S VOICE RUN AT DELIRIOUS SPEED.

INT. DETECTIVE'S OFFICE - MARCH 31

Silence. Silence for too long. The sound of faint, ragged breath, as though someone has just stopped crying and is trying to recover.

DET. BAILEY

Alan's dead.

A long pause. Bailey SWALLOWS BACK TEARS, then...

DET. BAILEY (CONT'D)
 He -- I -- It was just like all the other others. Water, in his lungs. His skin colder than it should've been out on the lake bed in the sun. The coroner said the said thing as he did with the others: he drowned. On saltwater. In the middle of the desert.

Another long pause. A SHUFFLING, FLIPPING OF PAGES, before...

DET. BAILEY (CONT'D)
 I'm sorry, I -- I can't.

CLICK. NO FAST FORWARDING, but the room tone changes.

INT. MORGUE - APRIL 2

A BUZZ OF FLORESCENT LIGHTS and an echoing emptiness.

DET. BAILEY
 This is the first time I've recorded anything in a while.

His words reverberate in the pause.

DET. BAILEY (CONT'D)
 I couldn't just -- sit in my office. I couldn't -- I couldn't breath in there. It felt like, like I was...

He can't say it, but it lingers there. *DROWNING*.

DET. BAILEY (CONT'D)
 I don't know why I thought it'd be better here, of all places. But I couldn't get away from them in the office. Oslow sent up a new team of investigators -- they think it's a serial killer. Someone with a fixation on the old lake. But I...

He breaks off again, shuffling in his seat.

DET. BAILEY (CONT'D)
 It took me a while to figure out how to move this thing. They had it mounted to my desk, but I got it off. But I couldn't take it home.
 (MORE)

DET. BAILEY (CONT'D)

Maybe it's quieter there, but -- I couldn't just tell it to the recorder. I had to -- I needed you to...

Another silence.

DET. BAILEY (CONT'D)

I'm sorry Alan.

CLICK. FAST FORWARD. CONTORTED VOICES SING IN UNISON.

INT. DETECTIVE'S OFFICE - APRIL 20

A STEADY RAIN beats on the window. A DESK FAN runs in the background. All else is silent.

DET. BAILEY

They're dead. They're all dead. All four of them. Marcus, Clarice, Han, Evan. I barely even knew their names before I got the coroners report. The whole team from Oslow. That's nine in four months -- five cops and three kids.

He lets that sink in a moment.

DET. BAILEY (CONT'D)

They were out on the lake. They called it a stakeout, but -- I don't know what they were hoping to find. Maybe they were going to use one of them as bait. They were still on their serial killer theory. Trying to chase down leads on that guy who disappeared out of the hospital in January, right before all this started -- the one singing in Spanish, or whatever it was. Nobody's seen him since, but they were so sure, so confident, so determined that nothing I said...

A pause, shuffling -- then a SLAMMED FIST.

DET. BAILEY (CONT'D)

I told them it wasn't a serial killer. I tried to tell Han -- I thought he might listen. He laughed in my face. That was -- that was the last time we spoke.

Bailey falls silent. At the same moment, the FAN CLICKS AND STOPS. We can almost hear Alan's raised eyebrow.

DET. BAILEY (CONT'D)
What the hell?

A loud ELECTRICAL SURGE, then the sound of POWER FAILING. The recording disappears into static before...

CLICK. FAST FORWARD. TOO FAST.

INT. DETECTIVE'S OFFICE - MAY 15

CLICK. THE FAN'S BACK ON. BIRDS CHIRP deliriously outside.

DET. BAILEY
It's finally stopped raining.
Finally. Took Russel out for a walk
for the first time in weeks
yesterday night. I just couldn't
sleep, and then the rain stopped,
so I...

He pauses, then continues.

DET. BAILEY (CONT'D)
The gutters were still flooded.
Nothing drains properly here --
guess it's cause we live in the
desert, despite what the weather
wanted us to think. I had my boots
on, but of course Russel was having
a blast. He was going to make a
mess of the carpet when we got
back, but I didn't care. Not trying
to impress anyone, anyway. And I
was too distracted to care. Even if
it was dark, and there wasn't much
to look at except the streetlights.
I could smell the water, though. I
know it's impossible, but -- it
smelled like the ocean. Like salt.
I was hypnotized by it -- by the
streetlights and the smell and
something... something at the back
of my mind. The sound of waves.
(beat) And then the lights went out
again.

He BREATHES IN WITH A SHUDDER.

DET. BAILEY (CONT'D)
Russel started barking right away. I noticed it too. I couldn't see anything, but -- I felt someone watching. Waiting. Considering me. There wasn't a moon last night, and what was left of the rain clouds was hiding the stars. But it wasn't dark. Not like it should've been.

He pauses, trying to think of how to put this.

DET. BAILEY (CONT'D)
You know how, when you're swimming in a lake, and you open your eyes? How there's that kind of grey-green glow all around you? It was like that, except if you were at the very bottom of the deepest lake you could think of, and there was barely any of that light, but it was still all around you -- no up, no down, and no real source you could see. And you look up to try and find the sun, the way back to the surface, and -- it's gone. And then I felt like there was water in my lungs, and I was coughing and choking on the ground, trying to breath...

He CHOKES UP, as though feeling the same way now. After a moment, he SWALLOWS and starts again.

DET. BAILEY (CONT'D)
Russel saved me. He was off barking at the shadows behind one of the dead streetlights. I thought I saw something moving there -- something tall and pale, but I only saw it for a second. My eyes were watering -- I was crying. Then Russel was licking my face, snapping me out of -- whatever it was. Then I was crying again. Jesus. Crying over the fact I was alive. (beat). Oh yeah. By the way, the profanity filter's broken. Haven't tried to fix it. The filter, the lights, the generators -- everything keeps breaking down these days. Except for the cars. Those are still working. I know, cause people keep leaving.

CLICK. THE TAPE RUNS FORWARD, so fast it seems to trip.

INT. DETECTIVE'S OFFICE - MAY 30

CLICK. An eerie silence, seeming almost to lack room tone. Somewhere in the distance, a CAR REVS UP AND PEELS OUT, fading slowly into the silence. At last...

DET. BAILEY

Jim found the guy. The guy from the bar that night. The pale one, with black hair and blue eyes singing in another language. He was murdered behind the supermarket. He'd been dead four days before anyone noticed the smell.

Bailey breathes, trying to remain composed.

DET. BAILEY (CONT'D)

There wasn't any water in his lungs this time. The autopsy said he died of shock. Could be. He was older than I thought he'd be -- 67, if his ID was legit. And he did have some this time -- an expired driver's license from Montana. Maybe it wasn't another one -- but he'd been out in the sun for days. It could've evaporated, or drained out, or -- something. Anything. I don't know.

A long pause.

DET. BAILEY (CONT'D)

His name was Richard Seaver.

CLICK.

INT. DETECTIVE'S OFFICE - JUNE 15 2018

CLICK.

DET. BAILEY

It's over. They're all gone. They were already leaving, and this was the last straw.

A long pause, and in it, the OPPRESSIVE SILENCE OF A GHOST TOWN.

DET. BAILEY (CONT'D)

Jim was out on the lake. Nobody knows what he was doing out there. It was a few hours after Chuck's closed, and someone on the highway saw him wandering out there. They couldn't tell if he was moving away from town or towards it, but they pulled off and drove over to him. By the time they got to where they thought he was...

Bailey pauses, then reaches over to the fan and turns it on. The HUMM fills the silence a little bit.

DET. BAILEY (CONT'D)

It was just like all the others. Almost. Water in the lungs, pale, cold. Except he had a note in his hand. It was pretty well crushed and soaked through, but there was only one word on it, over and over again. RESTORE. Restore. Restore...

CLICK. A long silence, then...

REWIND. REWIND. REWIND.

The case files play backwards, double-speed and distorted. Finally...

INT. MORGUE - APRIL 2

DET. BAILEY

I'm sorry Alan.

The same FLORESCENT BUZZ as before. The same ECHOING EMPTINESS. The same dread.

DET. BAILEY (CONT'D)

I should've know what this was right from the start. The signs were there -- the lake bed, the drownings, the weather -- h**l, even Ms. Miller's flooded basement. It's so, g*****n obvious even you could've figured it out, if only -- if only I told anyone.

A heavy pause.

DET. BAILEY (CONT'D)

I grew up here in Agate Shore. I know, I know, I play the big city cop dragged here against my will -- and that's also kind of true. When I went to school, I never wanted to end up working for here. Nobody else would take me, though. Guess I was too bad with computers to actually fit in anywhere else. Or maybe it was Agate Shore, trying to...

He breathes, trying to put his life into a perspective that isn't horrifying. He starts over.

DET. BAILEY (CONT'D)

Back when I was a kid, there was actually a shore. There was actually a lake. You're too young to remember it -- h**l I'm almost too young myself. They build the dam when I was in third grade, and the lake was gone the next summer. But before that, I was always out there with my parents. My mom and dad would swim out on the lake early in the morning, then teach me to swim in the shallows. We went out there as often as they could, sometimes three or four times a week in the warm season. I was a pretty good swimmer by the time I was starting kindergarten, and I decided that I could do what my parents did -- swim out into the middle of the water and float in the sun. So, when my parents went back to the car to fetch the towels, I turned and jumped into the lake.

He pauses.

DET. BAILEY (CONT'D)

I was a good swimmer -- but not half as good as I thought I was. It was late February, and the lake was still cold. I made it about twenty yards before my arms seized up. I tried kicking to keep going, but my legs were already stiff, and I couldn't seem to stay afloat.

(MORE)

DET. BAILEY (CONT'D)

Then my legs froze too. And then I was sinking.

A long, dreadful pause.

DET. BAILEY (CONT'D)

You know how, when you're swimming in a lake, and you open your eyes? How there's that kind of grey-green glow all around you, and you can't tell which way is up? That's what it was like. Except I knew I was going deeper and deeper by the second. I tried to scream before I went under, but that just filled my lungs with water. I was drowning, and stupid as I was I could recognize the fact that no one was coming to save me. And then I heard it: the voice. I -- I don't know if it was the lake itself, or some creature or monster or what. For a long time I thought it was my own imagination. Maybe it was God. Probably not.

He SWALLOWS, as though afraid to repeat its words aloud.

DET. BAILEY (CONT'D)

"What would you do to save yourself?" it asked. "Anything," I said. "What would you give to save yourself?" it asked. "Anything," I said. "Whom would you give to save yourself?" I wasn't thinking clearly -- my brain couldn't get the oxygen. "Anyone," I managed before I blacked out.

He stops. Takes a long breath, as though appreciating the air in his lungs.

DET. BAILEY (CONT'D)

When I woke up, I was in the hospital with my parents watching over me. I never got a straight answer out of them about what happened. They said I just made it out of the water in time. But I could still hear the sound of waves -- I still hear it, now and then.

He pauses, as though listening for it now. He seems almost disappointed he can't hear it.

DET. BAILEY (CONT'D)
For a while I thought one of them
swam in and got me. Now I'm not so
sure. I never got the chance to
really ask them. The lake took them
a few months later.

A long, meaningful, rueful pause.

DET. BAILEY (CONT'D)
Anything. Anything. Anyone.

CLICK.

THE END