DITCH

Written by

Eric Cook
EXT. HIGHWAY 23 - NIGHT
A late, cold night. It's a vacant field road until--
A Chevy Tahoe cruises into view.

INT./EXT. CHEVY TAHOE [MOVING]
JOHN CROWE (50) drives, wearing a white tee and knit pajama shorts. His wife LUCILLE (few years below 50) rides passenger, wearing a sleep chemise.

They scan the sides of the road. While they scan, a phone in a car mount attempts to make a call on speaker.

JOHN
Can you see him?

LUCILLE
No, John.

JOHN
Dammit.

He grits his teeth.

JOHN (CONT’D)
He better pick up.

EXT. FIELD ROAD - NIGHT - EARLIER
A dead and vacant road. In the far distance, a--

DITCH BANK
It consists of wheat and dead grass. In it, lies a Chevy Malibu with beaming headlights.

O.S: Murmurs of a male voice.

PAN TO the shoulder of the road.

A handsome eighteen year-old has the phone to his ear. His name is DONALD CROWE and he's eager for the caller to pick up.

The phone BURRS a couple of times, until--
VOICEMAIL
Hey, it's Michael. Leave your message after the beep.

The beep of a voicemail.

Donald's blood boils and he hangs up.

DONALD
(whispery)
Fuck.

He dials another number, then puts the phone back to his ear.

Once again, he hears the phone burr.

INT. BEDROOM [CONTINUOUS]

John and Lucille watch TV in bed. They wear the same clothes as they wore in the car.

On a dresser nearby, the house phone rings.

John and Lucille hear it ring, but John hustles to the phone.

JOHN
(getting out of bed)
I'll get it.

He hurries out of bed and reaches the dresser. John accepts the call, then presses the phone against his ear.

JOHN (CONT’D)
Hello?

John waits for a response.

DONALD (V.O.)
Hello?

John recognizes the voice, so he smiles.

JOHN
Hey, Don. What's up?

Lucille overhears their conversation. She can't help it to smile.

EXT. FIELD ROAD - SHOULDER

Donald looks at his Chevy in the ditch.
DONALD
Dad. I need help.

INT. BEDROOM

John's smile dissolves into panic.

JOHN
What do you mean you need help?

Lucille heeds to John's sentence and worries too.

LUCILLE
(to John, low voice)
Put him on speaker.

John puts him on speaker.

With the phone louder, they hear Donald sigh.

DONALD (V.O)
My car's in a ditch.

John and Lucille's hearts skip a beat.

DONALD (V.O.)
After I left the party, I drove on the sixty-eighth and made a wrong turn. I called a couple friends, but none of 'em picked up. So, I--

LUCILLE
Donald, are you alright?

DONALD (V.O.)
Calm down, Ma. I'm alright.

JOHN
How much damage is on the car?

DONALD (V.O.)
None. Not even a scratch. I just need to push it back on the road.

John and Lucille take an easy breath.

JOHN
Were you drinking?

DONALD (V.O.)
No-no, Dad. I made a wrong turn, that's all.
JOHN
Did you call 911?

DONALD (V.O.)
No. This is not an emergency. Look. I'm not even that far away from home. I just need--

JOHN
Why didn't you call Triple A?

DONALD (V.O.)
I don't have Triple A. You know that.

Beat.

DONALD (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Look. All I need is a little bit of assistance. So, can you guys please help me out?

John runs his fingers through his hair, then sighs.

JOHN
Where are you again, son?

DONALD (V.O.)
Between Marshall and Lynd, just off the twenty-third.

JOHN
Wait. Twenty-third? Now that I remember it, I thought you said crashed on the sixty-eighth.

DONALD (V.O.)
(annoyed)
No-no, I crashed on the twenty-third.

JOHN
Donald, are you sure haven't been drinking?

Donald eases his burden with a sigh.

DONALD (V.O.)
Okay. I took one shot of whiskey, but that's all. I'm not drunk. I slipped up and said the sixty-eighth. My bad, I meant the twenty-third. Just can you guys please pick me up?
John heaves, then sinks his feet into his bed slippers.

JOHN
Okay, Don. We'll be right there.
Stay where you are.

DONALD (V.O.)
Okay. Bye.

JOHN
Bye.

John quickly hangs up, then taps Lucille.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Come on, Lucille. You heard what I said. We gotta go look for him.

As Lucille plants her feet into her slippers, John leaves the room.

LUCILLE
Hey! Wait up!

She scurries out the room, attempting to catch up to John.

INT./EXT. CHEVY TAHOE [MOVING]

JOHN
He better pick up.

The call crackles to life.

DONALD (V.O.)
Hello?

JOHN
Don, we're on the twenty-third between Marshall and Lynd with a tow rope in the trunk. We've been looking and so far, we haven't been able to find you. Where are you?

EXT. FIELD ROAD

Donald stands on the road's side with his phone glued to his ear.

He looks up and down the road, but it remains void.
DONALD
I'm on the side of the road. You can't miss me.

Behind him: an ominous, bright LIGHT suddenly shines beyond the fence lines.

Unfortunately, Donald's blind to the beam behind him.

INTERCUT FIELD ROAD/CHEVY TAHOE

JOHN
Well, we must've missed you. Do you see anything that can help us find out where you are?

DONALD
Well--

Donald scans the street up and down again.

DONALD (CONT'D)
I'm near a street. Nothing's really here. I haven't seen a car or a headlight ever since I got here.

JOHN
Okay, Donald. Do you see anything behind you?

DONALD
(turning around)
Well, there's my car and my headlights are still on, but--

The light masks Donald's face as he turns around. Donald finally sees the beam of light.

DONALD (CONT'D)
(away from the phone)
What the hell.

LUCILLE
(in response to Donald's initial sentence)
But what?

JOHN
But what, Don? What do you see, son?

DONALD
A light. I see a light.
Lucille hears what Donald says. She peers deeper into the sides' horizons.

John looks on both sides of the road. He sees nothing.

JOHN
What light, Donald?

Unbeknownst to John and Lucille, Donald gazes into the light. He lets himself stray away from the road. He treads onto a gravel path toward the fence lines, as he stares into the light.

Over the phone, John and Lucille hear the CRUNCH of gravel.

JOHN (CONT’D)
What's that sound, Donald?

DONALD
A gravel path. I'm walking on a gravel path to get a better look at this light.

John brakes.

JOHN
Well, we haven't seen a light and we're heading into Lynd. We haven't seen you or any cars out here. We're making a U-turn. If we still can't find you, we're calling the police.

John makes a U-turn.

Meanwhile, Donald leans an arm on the fence lines.

DONALD
Wait. You guys don't see this light?

Lucille looks again and John takes a quick glance at both sides.

JOHN
Donald, we've been looking ever since we got here and we haven't seen a bright light or you on either side of the road.

Donald hops over the fence lines.
DONALD
How do you guys not see it? It's big, bright, and-

END INTERCUT

CHEVY TAHOE

DONALD (V.O.)

OH SHIT!

JOHN
Donald?
The call cuts off.
Then, John immediately pulls over. He and Lucille tear up.
John dials Donald again.

CUT TO BLACK.

The phone BURRS over their whimpers.

JOHN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Pick up, Donald!

Another burr.

JOHN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Pick up!

Lucille and Jon CRY as the phone continues to burr.

"Donald Crowe was never seen or heard again, even with assiduous calls."

"The authorities used Donald's cell phone records to locate his vehicle. They discovered it was farther than he suggested."

"It was twenty miles from Lynd."

"Various searches have been conducted, but all were unsuccessful. To this day, no one knows what exactly happened to Donald."

FADE OUT.