

SPEED TRAP IN LUDOWICI

Written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. COASTAL LOW COUNTRY OF SOUTH GEORGIA - DAY

A vast, flat expanse of pine trees and palmetto bushes intersected by two lane black top roads.

On the side of the road, a gopher turtle makes its way off to god knows where.

SUPER: SUMMER 1950

EXT. COASTAL LOW COUNTRY OF SOUTH GEORGIA - CONT'D

An old sedan with running boards and two piece windshield makes its way slowly down a straight two lane highway towards the town of Ludowici.

At the wheel, the lone occupant of the car, MRS IRENE NOE, 60s, grips the steering wheel with determination.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

As evidenced by old photographs, my maternal grandmother was once a very handsome woman in her youth. By the time I came along, she was a heavy set woman with a care worn face who kept her grey hair pulled into a tight bun on the back of her head.

(small beat)

I can't ever remember seeing her dressed up. She wore nondescript inexpensive cotton dresses from a now defunct department store and carried a small plastic pop-open coin purse clutched in her hand - She never carried a handbag.

Mrs Noe slows as she nears the city limits of a small pulpwood town named Ludowici. She glances at a billboard on the roadside posted by the State Governor:

INSERT B/W PHOTO OF LARGE SIGN: BEWARE! YOU ARE IN LONG COUNTY AND APPROACHING LUDOWICI, GEORGIA. DON'T GET FLEECEED IN A CLIP JOINT, DON'T GET CAUGHT IN A SPEED TRAP, LESTER MADDOX, GOVERNOR.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

My grandmother only attended school for three years, but this didn't prevent her from becoming a very wealthy woman way back when a dollar was still a dollar.

(small beat)

She certainly was nobody's fool.

Mrs Noe slows to a stop at the only red light in town. She waits patiently for the light to change before moving on.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

She had lived through the Great Depression and getting her to part with her money was not an easy task. Even so, I could sometimes talk her into giving me a few coins to buy a soda. On these rare occasions, she would root around in her coin purse and begrudgingly hand over the money. These coins came with a painful look on her face as if she was giving me one or two of her vital internal organs.

EXT. DOWNTOWN LUDOWICI, GEORGIA - DAY

One story brick and wooden buildings line both sides of the main street. A police patrol car falls in behind Mrs Noe's car and turns on its red lights.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

And so it came to pass, on one lazy summer day, my grandmother was stopped for allegedly speeding in Ludowici.

(small beat)

For anyone remotely familiar with the reality of the situation, the idea of my grandmother speeding was preposterous. Her pre-World War 2 sedan with faded black paint and huge fenders was incapable of going faster than any speed limit even if it had it been shot out of a cannon!

Mrs Noe pulls to the side of the road and stops. A well fed uniformed police officer, BILLY BOB BENSON, 30s, parks behind her. He gets out of his car and adjusts his hat.

The officer comes to the side of Mrs Noe's car and takes out a ticket pad.

BILLY BOB

Name?

Mrs Noe looks up at the officer with soft eyes and anxiously asks,

MRS NOE

Mrs Irene Noe. What's the problem, officer?

The officer starts writing in his ticket pad.

BILLY BOB

Well, ma'am, you was speeding through our little town and we got laws against that sorta activity.

MRS NOE

Pachaw!

Billy Bob frowns.

BILLY BOB

Please calm down, ma'am or I'll have to add reckless endangerment and assault on an officer of the law to this here ticket.

Mrs Noe contorts her face and frowns at the officer.

MRS NOE

Write down whatever you like, I ain't paying...

Billy Bob chuckles.

BILLY BOB

We'll see about that.

Mrs Noe puts her worn hands to her face and cries.

MRS NOE

(sobs and cries loudly)
It's not that I don't want to pay...I can't pay! I'm a poor widow woman with three children and no husband.

BILLY BOB

Ma'am, I'm truly sorry, but the law is the law.

You can either pay the fine now or follow me to the jail house where you'll be locked up until we can bring you before a judge.

Billy Bob taps a pencil on his ticket pad.

BILLY BOB

It being Friday and all, we might not be able to get you before a judge until sometime Monday or maybe Tuesday?

Mrs Noe throws her hands in the air and wails.

MRS NOE

Follow you to the station? I don't even know if I got gas enough to get home and I got three head of hungry children to feed!

BILLY BOB

Again, ma'am, I'm truly sorry, but the law is the law. Pay me now or follow me to the station...

Mrs Noe looks at Billy Bob and wipes tears from her eyes.

MRS NOE

I'll follow you to the station, but you can't get blood outta no turnip!

BILLY BOB

OK, just follow me to the station.

He points.

BILLY BOB

It's just 'round the corner...

Mrs Noe nods her head in agreement. As the officer turns and walks back to his car, she puts her red pop open coin purse and a big wad of dollar bills taken from her bra under the front seat of her car.

She checks her rearview mirror to confirm she's not being watched.

EXT. DOWNTOWN LUDOWICI, GEORGIA - CONT'D

The patrol car passes Mrs Noe parked on the side of the road. She starts her car and follows Billy Bob to the station.

ENT. LUDOWICI POLICE STATION - DAY

An small unpretentious brick building with bars on the windows. Sign over door: LUDOWICI JAIL

Billy Bob turns in and parks followed by Mrs Noe.

The both enter the building.

INT. LUDOWICI POLICE STATION - DAY

A paddle fan on the ceiling stirs the air. Behind a cluttered desk, an officer, DAVIS, 40s, puts down a magazine as Billy Bob and Mrs Noe enter.

Davis looks up.

DAVIS

Well, Billy Bob, what do we got here?

Billy Bob indicates for Mrs Noe to take a seat, tilts his head to one side, addresses his fellow officer.

BILLY BOB

Speeder. Says she can't pay.

Davis turns to Mrs Noe.

DAVIS

Is that so, ma'am?

Mrs Noe wipes tears from her eyes.

MRS NOE

Yes, officer. I'm a poor widow woman with three hungry kids waiting for me at home...And no husband.

She indicates Billy Bob with a nod of her head.

MRS NOE

Your man here tells me you'll lock me up if I don't pay...So be it. I don't have no money and can't pay.

The officers look at each other.

DAVIS

Is that so!

MRS NOE
Yes sir. I don't even have money
for gas to get home...So you'd
better just lock me up.

Billy Bob moves to where Davis is seated. They whisper.

DAVIS
What have you dragged in here this
time?

BILLY BOB
Just trying to do my job...

Davis frowns.

DAVIS
Just the ones that can pay...Not
the ones we gotta feed and house!

Davis and Billy Bob shake their heads and confer in
unintelligible mutters and hand gestures.

Davis reaches into this pocket and pulls out two well worn
paper dollars. Billy Bob matches his contribution.

Billy Bob walks to where Mrs Noe sits.

BILLY BOB
We're goin' let you go this time
with a warning.

He solemnly hands her the four dollars.

BILLY BOB
This is for gas...Now get on home
and take care of them babies.

Mrs Noe gets to her feet, takes the money and gives him a
thin smile. She nods her head.

MRS NOE
Thank you, thank you kindly
officer.

She turns and leaves the Ludowici Police Station.

EXT. LUDOWICI POLICE STATION - DAY

Mrs Noe gets into her aging car, starts the motor, adjusts
the rearview mirror, smiles and drives away.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

As a child, I enjoyed hearing stories about my waggish grandmother who was as smart as a fox and tight with her money. I only hope some of her DNA was passed on to me.

FADE OUT.