

TravelDay

By Jim Makichuk

Based on a true story

6/13/09 Draft

6/17/09 Draft

6/17/09 rev draft

6/20/09 Draft

6/24/09 Draft

Property of
Badland Company
Director: Shirley Petchprapa
Producer: Jim Makichuk
(818)995-4742/badland@dslextreme.com

Travel Day

OVER BLACK

PAUL (O.S.)

What do you want me to do? Tell me.
Just tell me what you want me to do,
that's all. Just don't lie to me
anymore.

INT. BUS -- DAY

Looking out the window at flat, bleak winter prairie. Traces of snow. Moving back to:

PAUL. Range from 28 to 35, at least that's what it says on his head sheet. He's closer to 40 but you don't want the big 4-0 on your head sheet. Paul's an actor.

He looks straight ahead:

The PASSENGER next to him looks up from his newspaper, maybe a little worried.

Paul stops. Looks down at his lap where a SCRIPT sits. Dialog scenes belonging to "HARVEY" are highlighted in yellow.

Paul reads, corrects himself.

PAUL

I *tried* to protect you...
(beat)
I tried to *protect* you...
(beat)
I had to tell the cops, they said
you were going up for murder.

Paul's conscious of the passenger, glances over with a warm smile --

PAUL (CONT'D)

It's okay, I'm an actor.

Passenger couldn't care less, turns to his newspaper.

PAUL (CONT'D)

I got a part in a movie.

Paul realizes the passenger isn't listening anymore. He turns to look out the window where:

A city begins to appear on the barrens of the prairie. New housing developments with crescent-shaped streets.

(CONTINUED)

CONT'D:

Beyond them, to the west, the towering Rocky Mountains stretch to the horizon.

BUS DRIVER (O.S.)
 (over the PA)
 For your information, we're coming
 into Denver.

Paul looks out the window, his expression one of anticipation. He lifts out a CALL SHEET. Finds his name in a slot - marked TRAVEL DAY.

EXT. BUS STATION -- DAY

Paul walks from the bus with his week-ender bag. He looks ahead where

A tall man in his 70's stands. Holding a sheet of paper with crude felt-tip writing on it - PAUL BENWOT.

He's also carrying a large cellophane-wrapped GIFT BASKET with muffins and chocolates and flowers.

Paul smiles and walks over to him. The old man keeps looking beyond for someone.

PAUL
 That's me.

Tom glances at him for a second, then up over his head.

PAUL (CONT'D)
 The sign, Paul Benoit, that's me.
 It's spelled wrong, it's not w-a,
 it's B-e-n-o-i-t-. French.

Tom lowers his eyes down to Paul and, without so much as an expression of recognition...

He stuffs the paper into his pocket and turns and walks away, leaving Paul standing there.

MOVING WITH TOM

Who's surprisingly fast for a man his age. Paul, taking bigger strides, catches up as the man reaches a 15-passenger VAN.

TOM
 You can throw that in the back.

With that Tom goes to the driver's side, climbs in and turns the engine on. Paul shrugs, throws his bag in the back.

INT. VAN -- MOMENTS LATER

Paul climbs in.

TOM
Ready?

PAUL
Yep.

Tom drives off.

PAUL (CONT'D)
We heading out.

TOM
One more pickup.

Off Paul's look --

EXT. AIRPORT ARRIVALS -- DAY

Establishing.

INT. AIRPORT ARRIVALS -- DAY

Paul and Tom look up at the arrivals board. Flights from all over the world.

Silence for a few beats.

Paul looks around, not sure what to think.

PAUL
What are we doing?

TOM
Waiting.

PAUL
Someone else.

Tom's already moving away, still carrying the gift package. Paul nods, follows Tom towards the INTERNATIONAL GATES.

INT. AIRPORT -- LATER

Paul and Tom sitting on chairs. Watching the people go by. Paul isn't sure if he should say anything so he just sits.

Still waiting. Finally:

(CONTINUED)

CONT'D:

PAUL
How's the roads gonna be?

TOM
This time of year, never know.

Paul nods, realizes the conversation's just ended.

PAUL
Yeah, guess so.

Paul looks up at the ARRIVALS board. A flight from New York BLINKS with a big "A".

Tom picks up the gift basket and starts to walk towards the gate. Paul opens his eyes, sees Tom and follows, now silently.

INT. AIRPORT ARRIVALS GATE -- MOMENTS LATER

First Class passengers step out of customs first. Two businessmen, then a FLURRY of activity as the two PILOTS come out with some FLIGHT ATTENDANTS and even a CUSTOMS AGENT:

In the middle, a blonde woman just a breath past middle age. She's KATHERINE VAN ZELLER, many a boy's fantasy in her young years. But it's been a long time between gigs.

She doesn't walk into a room, she "enters" it. Katherine's every move is practiced and intended. She holds a bottle of wine in one hand.

As the pilots buzz around her, she also glances off towards the crowd where:

A COMPUTER PRINTED SIGN reads: *KATHERINE VAN ZELLER*. Tom holds it along with the gift basket tucked under one arm.

Paul stands Beside him. His eyes light up.

PAUL
You know who that is?

TOM
The other actor.

PAUL
Katherine Van Zeller. The Katherine Van Zeller, she was huge in the 70's. Beatty, Nicholson, Lemmon, she worked with all those guys.
(beat)
She's gonna be coming with us?

(CONTINUED)

CONT'D:

TOM

Yeah.

Katherine sees Tom and the sign and expertly eases away from the pilots.

KATHERINE

Now boys, I really must get going.

She glides out from under their wings and makes an escape look like a fond farewell. With a gentle swoop of her coat, she presents herself -

- up close, she's clearly older, although still carrying her features well.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

You must be here for me.

Tom offers up the gift basket.

TOM

Producers said to give this to you.

He hands her the gift basket, then:

TOM (CONT'D)

Best be going to the van, meter's expired and those goddam parking guys love to hand out tickets.

And with that, Tom turns and walks away.

Katherine's momentarily stunned as Paul stands there, star-struck. She glances at him.

PAUL

Uh... hi, I'm Paul...

KATHERINE

Of course, nice to meet you.

Katherine shoves the gift basket into his hands, keeps the wine to herself and starts walking after Tom.

Paul takes a beat, then walks after them.

EXT. AIRPORT -- DAY

A 15-passenger VAN sits at a metered parking spot. A parking ticket flutters in the wiper blade.

Tom rips it off.

(CONTINUED)

CONT'D:

TOM
Son-of-a-bitch!

He turns, Katherine is there. Paul finally catches up, breathless. For a beat, they all look at each other, then:

PAUL
Miss Van Zeller, you can sit up front if you want. Best view.

She studies both of them for a beat.

KATHERINE
I'll sit in the back, thank-you.
(beat)
Is someone getting my luggage?

Looks between Tom and Paul. Paul senses what's going to happen as we cut to:

EXT. PASSENGER VAN - DAY

Paul loads the last of several huge luggage cases into the back of the van. He's out of breath as:

TOM
Daylight's burning, gotta make some time before night falls.

PAUL
(gasping)
Yeah...
(puffs)
Gotta make time.

Paul climbs into the front passenger seat. Tom gets behind the wheel. Paul looks around --

Katherine's ensconced into the 2nd row seat behind them. The row in front of her is empty

TOM
Everybody in?

Paul nods.

TOM (CONT'D)
We're going.

The van lurches into drive and heads off.

EXT. AIRPORT -- DAY

The van drives off into the winter day.

EXT. CITY -- DAY

Heading west and past the malls, motels and bare trees.

INT. VAN -- DAY

Nobody speaks. Paul is anxious to turn around but stops himself. He tries to catch a look of her in the rear-view mirror, but it's angled towards Tom and he only catches an occasional glimpse.

Katherine makes sure to keep the wine bottle and gift basket close to her as she looks out into the bleak winter day. People walk in heavy coats and boots. Car exhausts steam into the sub-zero air.

KATHERINE

Where are we?

Paul looks at Tom, wondering if he'll answer. Tom looks straight ahead. Paul sees this as his opportunity to engage in a conversation.

PAUL

This is 16th avenue.

A beat.

KATHERINE

What city?

PAUL

City? This is Denver.

Katherine leans back in her seat. Clearly unimpressed with the bleak picture she sees.

Another long spell of silence, then:

KATHERINE

Why do the cars have so much pollution here?

Paul turns around to her --

PAUL

I'm sorry, what did you say?

(CONTINUED)

CONT'D:

KATHERINE

The pollution, look at the exhaust.

Paul doesn't get it, turns to the outside. Finally realizes --

PAUL

That's sort of warm air hitting cold air. Makes clouds.

Katherine looks at him as if he's kidding.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Really.

She looks outside again, then at him. Then she turns back to her window.

EXT. CITY OUTSKIRTS -- DAY

Driving into the openness of the foothills as the city is slowly left behind.

INT. VAN -- DAY

Katherine looks outside. The bleakness of the city has now become an immense desolation as rolling foothills bare of trees, stretch to the mountains in the distance.

After a long look --

KATHERINE

Pardon me, Peter?

Paul looks at Tom, then realizes she's talking to him.

PAUL

It's Paul.

Katherine looks outside at the increasingly barren landscape.

KATHERINE

Why did they cut all the trees down?

PAUL

What?

KATHERINE

Outside. They cut all the trees. There are no trees left. It's a crime, isn't it?

Paul looks outside at the prairie landscape that's all too familiar to him. It takes a beat or two --

(CONTINUED)

CONT'D:

PAUL

There are no trees here, it's prairie.

Again she doubts him.

KATHERINE

They said there were lots of trees
where we will shoot.

PAUL

Where we're shooting? There's lots
of trees there, hundreds, millions.
We have seven hours of driving before
we hit trees.

KATHERINE

Seven hours?

PAUL

Yeah.

KATHERINE

Why don't people live here?

PAUL

They prefer the city.

KATHERINE

But there's so much space, in Europe
we do not have this much open space.

PAUL

Well, we got it here.

KATHERINE

What if something happens to us?
There are no houses out there. No
help.

PAUL

Nothing will happen. And it's really
not that wild here.

KATHERINE

This is like Buffalo Bill, maybe
we'll see a buffalo herd. Do you
think so, Peter?

PAUL

Paul.

(beat)

There are no buffalo anymore, just
in parks and stuff.

(CONTINUED)

CONT'D:

KATHERINE

I thought there would be buffalo everywhere. And cowboys. Like Buffalo Bill

PAUL

There's still cowboys, but not like the old days.

A beat, she looks outside.

KATHERINE

Maybe it's because they chopped all the trees down. Maybe buffalo need trees to eat and to hide in. They shouldn't have chopped down the trees.

Paul begins to reply but stops himself... Turns forward again. Glances at Tom who reaches for the radio and turns it on.

COUNTRY MUSIC pours out the tinny speaker. Real soulful *hurtin' music*.

Katherine reacts almost like she's hearing fingernails scrape blackboard.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

Oh my God, what is that! What's wrong!

Again, Paul turns around --

PAUL

What?

KATHERINE

That awful sound.

PAUL

It's music.

KATHERINE

That is music?

PAUL

Country music.

She looks at him, unbelieving. She leans back, still a little suspicious.

EXT. HIGHWAY -- DAY

As the country music carries the van into steeper foothills.

INT. VAN -- DAY

Moving along with only the radio on. Everyone sits in silence.

Katherine glances from Paul to Tom and back again.

Paul has his script in his lap, then, nervously, he turns around.

PAUL

I think we'll work together.

She looks at him suspiciously.

PAUL (CONT'D)

I mean the show...
(lifts the script)
Some scenes.

KATHERINE

You are working on the film.

PAUL

Yes. I have a part. Director said it's a pivotal scene.

KATHERINE

What do you do on the film?

PAUL

I'm one of the actors. Like you.

KATHERINE

You are an actor?

PAUL

Yes. What did you think?

KATHERINE

I didn't know. You look like a Teamster.

PAUL

Tom's the Teamster.

She glances at Tom.

KATHERINE

But you are an actor.

PAUL

I'm on the internet movie data base.

(CONTINUED)

CONT'D:

KATHERINE

You come all the way from Los Angeles?

PAUL

I'm from here.

She looks outside at the barren openness of the prairie.

KATHERINE

Here?

PAUL

Well, not this exact spot, but from near here.

KATHERINE

But there's nothing here. Why would you stay? If you want to act you go to Los Angeles or New York.

PAUL

I had some opportunities. Don't care for the heat.

KATHERINE

I cannot see the point of staying here. There is nothing here. Not even buffalos.

EXT. SIDEROAD -- DAY

The van pulls off the highway onto a small sideroad where it comes to a stop. He turns the engine off.

INT. VAN -- CONTINUOUS

Katherine clings to her bottle of wine as:

KATHERINE

What is it?

Tom reaches into the console and fishes out a single cigarette.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

You cannot smoke here.

He turns to the door, opens it and gets out. Closes the door.

They watch him walk to an overlook where they can see the foothills stretch out towards distant mountains. He lights up and takes in the view.

(CONTINUED)

CONT'D:

KATHERINE (CONT'D)
What is he doing?

PAUL
Smoking.

KATHERINE
I don't like this at all.

Paul reaches for his door handle.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)
Where are you going!

PAUL
Outside. Get some fresh air. Why
don't you come too?

KATHERINE
There could be mountain lions, or
bears.

PAUL
Well, there aren't any, and if there
were, we'd probably see them a mile
away.

KATHERINE
This is wilderness, animals are
silent, they can sneak up on you
without you knowing. Then they leap
and it's all over. They eat you.

PAUL
Well, suit yourself.

He climbs out and closes the door behind him.

EXT. ROADSIDE -- CONTINUOUS

Paul walks up to Tom.

PAUL
Got any extras?

TOM
Wife gives me one a day.

They both stand in silence. The wind comes over the rolling
hills. A hawk circles in the distance.

Paul looks back at the van where Katherine sits.

(CONTINUED)

CONT'D:

Tom takes a drag, quiet. Paul waits a beat --

PAUL
You from around here?

Tom nods.

PAUL (CONT'D)
Okay, I'm from down south, Medicine
Hat. Know it?

Tom doesn't react. Paul realizes he's a man of few words.
Just then, the passenger door opens.

Katherine steps out, looking as though she expects to be
attacked by wild animals at any time.

She steps carefully around, chooses a position off to one
side, upwind, to avoid any smoke. She turns towards the
distant mountains and a feeling overtakes her. Not fear,
not apprehension. Maybe a moment of peace.

WIDE SHOT

All three of them standing on the yellow prairie, overwhelmed
by the deep blue sky.

Above them, the hawk circles, hovers, then dives. He finds
something in the grass a hundred yards off.

They all watch as the wind comes up again, and the grasses
bend slowly with the whisper-like rush of air.

CLOSE ON KATHERINE

It seems like nature is working on her. She closes her eyes,
feels the wind, the warmth of the sun...

SUDDENLY, something MOVES near Katherine. She's startled.

Both men turn around as:

KATHERINE
I told you! Wild animals.

PAUL
Wild I guess, but not really
dangerous.

She glares at him, then follows his look to --

(CONTINUED)

CONT'D:

A clump of dead grass maybe twenty feet away. Where a WILD RABBIT stands perfectly still, his color almost the same as his surroundings.

He sniffs at them.

PAUL (CONT'D)

It's a rabbit.

KATHERINE

A wild rabbit.

PAUL

He's more scared of us.

Paul takes a step forward. The rabbit is gone in a flash. Hightailing it across the prairie until he disappears.

KATHERINE

I told you there were wild animals.

(beat)

And you live here?

She turns and walks back to the van.

PAUL

Just a rabbit.

Tom finishes his cigarette. Turns and walks back, leaving Paul alone. He turns towards where the rabbit ran off. Van engine roars to life, the quiet is gone.

Paul walks back to the van.

EXT. HIGHWAY -- DAY

Moving into bigger foothills. Even less signs of civilization.

Katherine is in the back once again, fur coat wrapped around her shoulders, wine bottle and gift basket at her side.

She looks outside, same scenery, then takes in the inside of the van. Not much else there either.

The country radio station is giving way to static. Paul spins the dial but can't find anything else. He turns it off.

Just the sound of the road now.

Paul leans back, turns to Tom.

(CONTINUED)

CONT'D:

PAUL
Guess you know this road pretty good.

Tom nods.

PAUL (CONT'D)
How many times you drive it?

TOM
Too many.

PAUL
Haven't been this way in years.
Least the weather looks good.

Tom looks up towards the sky, he's not as confident.

TOM
It can change.

KATHERINE (O.S.)
Look, there's someone on the road.
Don't stop.

There, standing on the road maybe couple of hundred feet away, SOMEONE is standing alone.

Tom slows down as they approach the figure. It's a GIRL, maybe a teenager, jeans and ski jacket, daypack.

As Tom slows to a crawl...

KATHERINE (CONT'D)
Don't stop!

PAUL
She could be stranded.

KATHERINE
No, it's a trap, I saw this on TV, a girl is the bait, she gets you to stop, then killers jump out of the woods and murder all of us.

PAUL
There are no woods. We gotta stop.

KATHERINE
No! They'll jump us.

PAUL
Nobody's gonna jump us.

(CONTINUED)

CONT'D:

KATHERINE

I command you.

Paul looks at Tom. Tom brakes and comes to a stop just past the girl. She runs towards the van.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

You must listen to me, I will tell the producer.

TOM

She don't look like any trouble.

The girl appears at the side. Paul jumps out, opens the slide panel door. She looks inside first, cautious. Her name is ASHLEY, maybe 15.

INSIDE THE VAN

KATHERINE

You'll see, we'll have our throats cut.

OUTSIDE

Ashley studies Paul.

PAUL

Where you going?

ASHLEY

Who are you guys?

PAUL

We're heading to Jasper.

She eyes him, a little suspicious, then looks at others.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Look, it's cold out here, you want a ride or not?

ASHLEY

You try anything funny and I'll fix you so you don't walk right for a long time.

PAUL

Get in.

She climbs inside, keeps her eye on Paul as she passes him. She picks the first row seat, dumps her daypack and sits, taking in Katherine behind her.

(CONTINUED)

CONT'D:

Katherine grips her wine bottle - just in case.

Ashley shifts so her back is against the window and she can keep her eyes on all three of them.

Paul closes the panel door, jumps inside. Tom starts off again. Van picks up speed.

CLOSE ON ASHLEY

Watching each of them carefully. Paul tries not to look back. After a beat she takes a deep breath, relaxes a little. Then she pulls her daypack closer to her, protecting it.

Ashley reaches for the zipper, unzips the daypack, checks it's contents. Closes it. Then, as though she forgot, she opens the daypack again, rummages inside. Everything that she needs is there.

She closes it again, feels someone watching. Katherine.

Ashley takes another breath, like she's just run away from something or someone. Studies the others for a moment and notices something. They're all quiet.

ASHLEY

You guys going to a funeral?

PAUL

What?

ASHLEY

Music.

PAUL

No stations here.

ASHLEY

Six-eighty.

PAUL

What?

ASHLEY

The radio? Six-eighty.

She motions turning the dial with her thumb and finger.

Paul tries the radio, finds a station coming in fairly well. Country music.

Katherine resigns herself to the music.

(CONTINUED)

CONT'D:

Ashley feels a little more comfortable. She reaches into her daypack again. Pokes around until she finds a pack of cigarettes. Still fresh and unopened.

She fumbles with the cellophane wrapper, obviously new to the art of cigarette smoking. Tries to look cool as she finally manages to rip the wrapper off. Pulls out a cigarette, slightly crushed.

KATHERINE

No smoking.

ASHLEY

Relax.

PAUL

She's right, no smoking.

Ashley debates challenging them, but it's too cold outside. She crumples herself up in the seat, a child-like anger.

ASHLEY

Can you turn the heat up, then?

Paul looks over at Tom. Tom reaches for the heater controls. Paul sits back, shakes his head.

Katherine watches Ashley. Ashley feels the look and turns towards her. Katherine focuses her look outside. Ashley looks towards the men, with all that distance between them and Katherine.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

The older chick's sitting in the back, what'd she do, piss you off?

Katherine bristles at the "older chick" line.

PAUL

She wants to sit there.

Ashley looks back at Katherine, notices the wine and gift basket beside her. She looks back at the men, trying to figure out the group dynamics.

PAUL (CONT'D)

What were you doing out there by yourself?

Ashley considers answering for a beat --

ASHLEY

Waiting for a ride.

(CONTINUED)

CONT'D:

PAUL
By yourself?

ASHLEY
What're you, a cop?

PAUL
Hey, a young girl hitching on an
open highway in the middle of nowhere,
in the winter... you don't see that
everyday.

ASHLEY
Well, today's your lucky day, isn't
it?

She realizes Paul isn't buying it.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)
I just left my aunt's.
(beat)
Missed the bus and I can catch it at
the truckstop at Highway 48. Everyone
hitches around here.

Paul doesn't push it.

Katherine keeps her eyes on Ashley.

Ashley, a little more comfortable, turns so her legs stretch
out across the bench seat.

EXT. HIGHWAY -- DAY

Establishing of the van moving through the foothills.

INT. VAN -- DAY

The radio station is fading until Paul finally reaches over
and turns it off. Only the hum of the road is heard now.

After a beat -- Paul turns back, looks at Katherine and then
Ashley...

PAUL
We're making a movie, you know.

Ashley glances around, notices something odd.

ASHLEY
A movie? Here?

(CONTINUED)

CONT'D:

PAUL

Yes. Not here, Jasper.

ASHLEY

Then where's all the stuff, cameras and the things?

PAUL

Everything is in Jasper. They've been there for a couple of weeks preparing. We're actors, they don't bring us in until they've set up.

ASHLEY

You're an actor?

Katherine smiles to herself, amused.

PAUL

Yeah.

ASHLEY

I don't recognize you. What are you in?

PAUL

I was in Black Winter.

Ashley thinks for a beat --

ASHLEY

Never heard of it.

PAUL

It played at the Yorkton film festival.

ASHLEY

So who do you know then? Leonardo? Brad?

PAUL

Not all actors know each other. I worked with Paul Newman.

ASHLEY

Who's he?

PAUL

You don't know Paul Newman. Butch Cassidy...

(CONTINUED)

CONT'D:

ASHLEY

The guy with the spaghetti sauce?

PAUL

Yeah, the guy with the spaghetti sauce.

Ashley turns back towards Katherine.

ASHLEY

So then who are you?

Katherine turns away.

PAUL

She's Katherine Van Zeller.

ASHLEY

Like, am I supposed to be impressed?

PAUL

She's famous, she knows everyone.

Ashley looks back at her again. Studies her longer.

ASHLEY

Maybe I saw you on something. Where you in an Adam Sandler movie?

KATHERINE

I hardly think so.

Ashley shrugs, mimics Katherine's words to herself, childlike:

ASHLEY

I have an uncle, sort of an uncle, he worked on a movie once. He drove the honeywagon, used to say it was a real shitty job.

She laughs --

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

Get it, shitty job?

Paul shakes his head.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

Jeez, you movie people are pretty uptight.

She leans back, finds some gum, takes out a piece and begins chewing.

(CONTINUED)

CONT'D:

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

You know, I'm not such a hick as you think. We get satellite TV at home, movies and sports mostly, my dad likes his sports.

KATHERINE

Where is your father?

A beat of silence as Ashley realizes Katherine's spoken. Ashley turns towards the window.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

Well, where is he?

ASHLEY

I don't know, probably at home.

KATHERINE

And why aren't you home?

ASHLEY

'Cause I'm not.

Katherine watches her.

TOM

Rest stop ahead, lunch.

EXT. HIGHWAY CAFE -- DAY

Approaching a small cafe. Several pickup trucks and a car or two. The van pulls into the gravel parking area and stops.

INT. VAN -- DAY

Tom turns off the engine.

TOM

Half an hour for lunch.

He opens his door and leaves. Paul turns to the women.

PAUL

You guys wanna get a burger?

KATHERINE

I don't eat meat.

PAUL

They probably got other stuff.

(CONTINUED)

CONT'D:

Paul gets out, Ashley waits a beat, then pulls out one of those duct material wallets with velcro. She opens it with that velcro tearing sound, impossible to not attract attention.

She waits a beat, looking around as though it didn't happen. Finally she discretely checks her money, finds a few rumped bills, not looking enough for a full meal, she shakes the purse, several coins drop out, she counts them individually. She feels someone is watching, turns and sees Katherine, who doesn't acknowledge.

EXT. TRUCKSTOP PARKING AREA -- CONTINUOUS

Ashley follows behind Tom and Paul. As she enters she spots a PAYPHONE and stops for a beat. Something goes through her mind but soon passes. She goes inside.

INT. TRUCKSTOP CAFE -- CONTINUOUS

Handful of people sit around at the counter and at some of the booths. Farmers and ranchers. All men except for the waitress, SONNY, 50's.

Tom nods as he passes her. She acknowledges. Tom slides into the end booth by the window. He takes his cap off and sets it on the window sill and looks outside.

PAUL

Mind if I join you?

TOM

Lots of room.

Paul slides in across from him.

Ashley goes to the counter, gets some looks from two YOUNG FARMERS sitting there.

She finds a seat, sits down, looks at the menu, prices are clearly more than she has. She notices the two young farmers watching her -- they both smile.

1ST FARMER

Howdy.

She just rolls her eyes and turns away. Looks towards Paul and Tom. Then she gets up and walks over to their booth. Sits down beside Paul.

PAUL

Friends of yours?

(CONTINUED)

CONT'D:

ASHLEY
I don't dig farmers.

PAUL
Oh. I should have known, I guess.
Waitress comes by. Coffee and cups already.

SONNY
Hey, Tom.

TOM
Hey Sonny.

SONNY
Who ya got this trip?
Tom motions to Paul.

TOM
Couple' a actors.

PAUL
I'm Paul Benoit.

SONNY
Actor, huh. You ever meet that
Harrison Ford?

PAUL
No.

SONNY
Well, if you do, tell him to drop by
sometime, coffee's on me.
She winks. Paul likes her.

PAUL
Sure will.

SONNY
(to Tom)
Hot Hamburg.

TOM
Yah.

SONNY
You guys want anything?

PAUL
Cheeseburger.

(CONTINUED)

CONT'D:

SONNY
Fries.

PAUL
Sure.

SONNY
Gravy?

PAUL
What the heck, let's live a little.

SONNY
(to Ashley)
Sweetie?

Ashley looks down...

ASHLEY
Uh, just coffee.

SONNY
You sure.

Paul catches her embarrassed look --

ASHLEY
Yeah.

PAUL
Movie company's paying. Might as well have something as not, they don't care.

Ashley looks up at Paul, then at Tom.

PAUL (CONT'D)
It's on them. They always pay for meals on travel days.

ASHLEY
What's that?

PAUL
Means when you're traveling. Expenses. Once we're on the road, they pay.

She's hesitant...

PAUL (CONT'D)
Cheeseburger?

(CONTINUED)

CONT'D:

ASHLEY
Sure, why not.

PAUL
(to Sonny)
Fries, coke.

ASHLEY
Diet Pepsi. Don't like coke.

Sonny leaves. Awkward silence between them, Ashley plays with a fork, neither of the three have anything to say, finally Paul takes it.

PAUL
(to Tom)
You stop here every trip.

TOM
Mostly.

PAUL
Road ever get boring? I mean, you do this every day, right?

TOM
Person gets bored with life, person might as well pack up and die, what I say.

Paul can't find a quick answer for that --

PAUL
Okay.

Just then the door opens and all eyes turn. Paul catches Tom's look and turns around to see --

Katherine making her entrance. Think Joan Crawford or Bette Davis.

She sees Tom and Paul and Ashley, but decides on her own table, an empty one across the room. She sits and waits.

Paul watches her --

ASHLEY
What's her problem?

PAUL
She can sit wherever she wants.

(CONTINUED)

CONT'D:

ASHLEY

Ask me, she really thinks she's something special.

PAUL

She's a movie star.

Sonny approaches Katherine.

SONNY

Coffee?

KATHERINE

Green tea, with ginseng if you have.

SONNY

We got regular tea.

Katherine shrugs --

KATHERINE

Regular tea then.

SONNY

To eat?

KATHERINE

Salmon salad on soy bread.

SONNY

We don't have that salmon stuff.

(beat)

No soy, but we got soy sauce. Comes with the Chop Suey.

KATHERINE

Do you have a menu?

SONNY

Yeah, but we only have sandwiches, ham or egg salad, egg salad's been there for a while, and hamburgs.

(beat)

Hamburg's the best thing. Safest too.

KATHERINE

Salad?

SONNY

You like lettuce? 'Cause that's all we got.

(CONTINUED)

CONT'D:

KATHERINE
I'll have that. Oil and vinegar.

SONNY
Thousand islands.

KATHERINE
(resigned)
Fine.

Sonny leaves.

Katherine takes the place in, country music, men in workboots, caps, heavy jackets. All drinking coffee and smoking. The haze drifts up to the ceiling.

An OLD MAN watches her from the next table. He's most likely retired, a weather-toughened man who's spent his life out here. When he catches her eye, he smiles and winks.

Katherine looks away. But when she turns back, the old man smiles again. Tips his cap.

Off Katherine's nervous look --

AT PAUL'S TABLE

Sonny's brought the food. When she leaves -- Katherine suddenly appears.

PAUL
Oh hi, come to join us?

Katherine sits beside Paul, across from the others.

KATHERINE
This place is beginning to feel like
that movie... Deliverance.

Paul isn't sure what she means until she motions with her head towards the old man, who waves at them.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)
We have to be careful, I think he's
dangerous. Probably a trapper, you
know what they do with women.

TOM
That's Arnold Luddington, he ain't
gonna harm nobody. Just bein'
friendly.

Paul reacts to Tom's speaking more...

(CONTINUED)

CONT'D:

KATHERINE

You say friendly, I say crazy.

TOM

Arnold's just a little bit mixed up
in the head, been alone since his
wife died.

Paul glances at the old man, feels sympathy as Sonny pours
more coffee for him.

KATHERINE

Sure, the type that they say never
bothered anyone, kept to himself,
good neighbor.

(beat)

Until they find the bodies in his
basement.

Tom looks at her for a beat, almost ready to say something.
But he decides against it, turns to his food.

Katherine looks at the plates, hamburgers with fries and
gravy. Paul dips a fry into a dark pool of gravy on his
plate.

Sonny sets Ashley's burger down and brings Katherine's food
to her. A small plate with some limp, brown-edged lettuce
and a sealed single-serving container of Thousand Island
dressing.

Katherine can't even begin to comprehend this -- Paul watches
her, then:

PAUL

Try one.

He offers his plate of fries and gravy. She hesitates, looks
at the "salad"...

She reaches for the fries, delicately picks up one, it's
edge covered in gravy. Holding it like it were a worm, she
finally finds the strength to taste it.

It isn't all that bad. Not that she'd admit it, though.

Ashley bites into her own burger, feeling like she's being
watched, glances up at Katherine, who's caught watching.
She turns away.

Ashley turns to Paul.

(CONTINUED)

CONT'D:

ASHLEY

If you guys are hot shot movie people,
why are you driving in an old van.

PAUL

It's an independent film.

ASHLEY

So what does that mean?

PAUL

The budget, it isn't as high as some
other movies, some people don't even
get paid right away.

ASHLEY

Then what's the point of doing it, I
could make more waitressing.

PAUL

Because we want to act.

ASHLEY

Sounds pretty stupid to me.

A beat --

KATHERINE

It is pretty stupid.

Paul turns to her, put off a little.

ASHLEY

So why do it?

KATHERINE

Because that's all we can do.

ASHLEY

You guys are weird.

Off Paul's look.

EXT. HIGHWAY -- DAY

Sky darkens with late afternoon storm clouds as the van drives
along increasingly rugged terrain, prairie foothills giving
way to scrub brush and leaf-bare Aspens.

WEATHER REPORTER (V.O.)

... weather for Rocky Mountains and
foothills, expect a late spring
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONT'D:

WEATHER REPORTER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 snowfall as the low pressure Pacific
 front moves in overnight. Snow at
 higher elevations can exceed six
 inches. Lower elevations two to
 three inches, with patches of black
 ice...

INT. VAN -- DAY

Same seating as before.

KATHERINE
 What is this black ice?

PAUL
 Clear ice on the road, can't see it
 because it's the same color as the
 road.

KATHERINE
 Why does the radio tell us that...

PAUL
 Warning to be careful.

Katherine sits up, looking out the front window two rows
 ahead of her.

KATHERINE
 Driver!

Tom glances at her in the mirror --

KATHERINE (CONT'D)
 Do you know about black ice?

TOM
 Yeah.

KATHERINE
 Watch out for it, it's dangerous.
 And you can't see it.

TOM
 Yeah.

PAUL
 How far?

TOM
 Four hours, if we're lucky.

(CONTINUED)

CONT'D:

PAUL
Think we'll catch the storm?

A beat --

TOM
Don't know.

It's enough to unsettle Paul as he sits back, checks his seat belt. It's getting darker there as night and storm clouds increase.

Paul turns to Tom, driving.

PAUL
I remember that big storm of 89,
that was really something...

Tom stares at the road, no reaction. Paul's caught in mid-sentence, decides to keep going, turns to Ashley and resets.

Once again, Katherine watches Ashley, studying her.

PAUL (CONT'D)
... yeah, 89, it was incredible,
went down to minus 50 degrees... you
weren't even born yet...

Ashley rolls her eyes...

ASHLEY
Boring.

Tom driving, checks his watch, then goes over the dash gauges.

KATHERINE (O.S.)
You're running from home.

Ashley hears her, but doesn't respond.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)
I said, you're running from home.
Aren't you?

A beat --

ASHLEY
What are you talking about?

KATHERINE
It's quite simple to see that.

(CONTINUED)

CONT'D:

ASHLEY

You don't know anything about me.

KATHERINE

If you are running, you should consider it.

Ashley considers - then turns away, trying to ignore her.

ASHLEY

What are you talking about?

KATHERINE

You're such a little girl.

ASHLEY

I'm not a little girl, you got that?
Go to hell!

Paul turns. Tom, eyes on the road, glances at the mirror.

PAUL

Hey, trouble in paradise?

ASHLEY

Why don't you shut up too!

Paul realizes he walked into this. He turns back.

KATHERINE

Driver!

Tom sees her in the mirror --

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

Driver!

TOM

Yes ma'am.

KATHERINE

Stop.

Tom keeps driving.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

Stop, now! This instant.

Paul looks at Tom, who shakes his head. He slows down and pulls over to the side of the highway. When he's stopped.

TOM

What is it, ma'am?

(CONTINUED)

CONT'D:

KATHERINE

I will not take this yelling and
foul language, we are not barbarians.

TOM

Yes ma'am.

KATHERINE

Tell her she must behave herself if
she wants to drive with us.

Tom, still not turning around, watches both of them in his
mirror.

ASHLEY

Tell you what, pal, I'll save you
the trouble.

With that she reaches for the door handle, lifts it and gets
out. Cold wind blows inside.

PAUL

Great.

Paul gets outside and starts after Ashley.

Katherine leans back, satisfied that something's happening.

EXT. HIGHWAY -- EVENING

Ashley bundles up as best she can, and walks ahead into the
van's headlights. She's heading away from the van as:

PAUL

Wait.

Ashley is determined, in spite of the cold air.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Goddam it, stop!

His sudden outburst stops her in her tracks. Paul approaches.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Get back in the van.

ASHLEY

Not with that bitch.

PAUL

That's enough!

Ashley reacts - a little taken back by his strong tone.

(CONTINUED)

CONT'D:

PAUL (CONT'D)

Just get back inside, you can't go
anywhere here, you could freeze before
someone else would come by.

ASHLEY

So I'll freeze.

Paul shivers in the cold, looks at her --

PAUL

Listen, this won't last much longer,
we'll be at the intersection soon.

(she turns away)

We're not going to leave you here.
Even if I have to drag you kicking
and screaming into the goddam van
and tie you down with gaffer tape to
shut you up.

(beat)

We're not leaving you here.

She looks at him, then back at the van.

ASHLEY

What's it to you, she doesn't give a
damn about anyone but herself.

PAUL

Don't worry about her.

ASHLEY

Why do you let her off like that?

Paul looks away, it's freezing cold and he doesn't need this.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

Oh, is it an those actor things?
She doesn't even talk to you.

Off Paul's look.

INT. VAN -- EVENING

Katherine can see them both through the windshield. Tom
sits quietly at the wheel.

KATHERINE

Why does he bother? She's a trouble-
maker.

TOM

Can't leave her.

(CONTINUED)

CONT'D:

Tom drives forward.

EXT. HIGHWAY -- EVENING

Ashley turns to look at the open highway ahead. She is freezing but won't admit it. Paul is cold too.

Then the van pulls up a few feet beside them. Through the open window --

TOM

You about finished out here?

Paul looks at Ashley --

PAUL

Come on?

Paul walks over and slides open the panel door. Ashley climbs inside and takes her seat again. Paul, relieved, climbs in up front.

INT. VAN -- EVENING

Once all the doors are closed --

TOM

Okay?

PAUL

Yeah. Okay.

Tom pulls away slowly.

EXT. HIGHWAY -- EVENING

The van drives off into the increasing darkness. It's tail-lights carry it over a hill and it disappears into the dark. Only the wind remains as the first few flask of SNOW begin to drift down to Earth.

INT. VAN -- NIGHT

As the day darkens into night, the van drives in silence. Nobody talks. Only the sound of the tires humming along the pavement. Finally:

ASHLEY

Hey.

Paul turns, she has something in her hand. Offers it to him. It's a CD she's fished out of her pocket.

(CONTINUED)

CONT'D:

PAUL
Name's Paul. Thanks.

ASHLEY
Just remember to give it back when
it's done.

Paul puts the CD into the radio player and almost instantly we hear a Joni Mitchell song.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)
It helps me go to sleep.

Paul leans back as the music fills the van. It calms everyone down as they all seem to settle into their own worlds.

EXT. HIGHWAY -- NIGHT

The van moves towards the massive dark shadows that rise into the sky, the Rocky Mountains.

EXT. TRUCKSTOP & BAR -- NIGHT

A lonely intersection of two highways meeting. Were it not for the truckstop and bar there wouldn't be any reason to even slow down.

The place has gas pumps and service bay, a small office and bus lobby and a bar/cafe off to one side. In spite of the fact it's in the middle of nowhere -- several cars and trucks are parked in front of the bar.

The van pulls up to the gas pumps.

INT. VAN -- NIGHT

Tom stops. After a beat --

TOM
This'll be the last stop before we
hit the mountains, no more services
till Jasper.

Ashley grabs her daypack and steps outside and walks towards the building.

PAUL
You coming in, Miss Van Zeller.

KATHERINE
In a moment.

(CONTINUED)

CONT'D:

Paul closes the door and walks to the buildings. When she's alone, Katherine takes out her cell phone. She tries to use it but there's no service.

She sits there for a moment, staring ahead.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)
Low budget films.

INT. BAR -- NIGHT

Inside, it's a large room with a bar and dining area and just behind a low wall, there's the inside gas office and a small area reserved for bus passengers with a couple of chairs and a counter with a bus schedule.

It's relatively slow, week-ends are better. Maybe five or six MEN sit around playing pool, drinking beer, listening to music.

Paul steps inside. First thing he notices is a fish-tank sized cage on a table. A live chicken sits inside. Below it, a sign reads: BASKETBALL PLAYING CHICKEN.

Paul keeps walking, right to the bar and sits down. Bartender comes up, he's a man of few words.

BARTENDER
Whattya want?

PAUL
Draft. And a shot of whiskey.

BARTENDER
Draft is here, whiskey's in the
Squirrel Cage.

PAUL
What?

Bartender points to an old wooden phone booth against the wall. It's got the vertical folding door half open and there appears to be something inside.

PAUL (CONT'D)
What is it, a joke on tourists.

BARTENDER
You want a shot, you gotta go there.

Paul considers being a joke... Bartender looks serious.

(CONTINUED)

CONT'D:

PAUL

Ok.

Paul walks over to the phone booth, squeezes between the folding door and slips inside. There's a tiny bar and liquor ads, some chintzy road souvenirs nailed to the wall. There's a liquor licence with the restriction of *MAXIMUM 2 OCCUPANTS*. Paul looks around, barely enough room for one.

Then a sliding panel opens and the Bartender appears.

BARTENDER

What can I do for you?

Paul can't believe this...

PAUL

Whiskey.

Bartender pours a shot, hands it to Paul.

BARTENDER

Drink in here.

Paul downs the shot.

Bartender closes the panel, leaving Paul. Paul walks out and back to the bar, takes a stool.

BARTENDER (CONT'D)

Seven fifty.

PAUL

Seven fifty?

BARTENDER

Hey, it ain't the city.

PAUL

It ain't the Plaza either.

BARTENDER

Tell the owner.

(beat)

She got ID?

PAUL

Who?

Bartender motions behind him. Paul turns, it's Ashley.

ASHLEY

"She" isn't drinking.

(CONTINUED)

CONT'D:

Ashley sits beside him. She looks up at a TV, playing some entertainment show about movie stars.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)
Oh look, it's all your buddies.

Paul looks up at images of Leonardo, Julia, other current movie stars.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)
It must be nice to not have any problems.

PAUL
Everyone has problems.

Paul turns away from the TV.

PAUL (CONT'D)
Know how many actors it takes to screw in a light bulb?

She waits -

PAUL (CONT'D)
Three. One to do it, two to say, "I could have done it better."

She look --

ASHLEY
What?

PAUL
It's an actor joke. We always say we can do better than the other guy.

ASHLEY
Why didn't you go to Hollywood? If it was me, I woulda gone.

Beat.

PAUL
I guess it wasn't meant to be.
(looks at the screen)
I've got two scenes and they'll probably cut out both.

ASHLEY
I'm sorry, at least you get to work with Miss Smiley out there.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONT'D:

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

You can add that to your list, Paul
Spaghetti sauce and Katherine Van
whatever her face.

A beat. Ashley turns and walks away. Leaving Paul to wonder.

INT. BUS LOBBY -- NIGHT

Katherine walks into the small office and bus lobby. There's a few racks of convenience foods, milk, etc. also a small rack of videos for rent. Over to one side there's two chairs for passengers and some bus posters.

An INDIAN WOMAN sits on one of chairs, waiting for the bus. A man, 60's, wearing a black cowboy hat and long black DUSTER-type coat drinks a coffee at a small counter.

Katherine pans the room, nothing very exciting here. She passes by the junk food rack, grimaces at the choices. Then she sees the video rack and walks towards it.

The racks has an expectedly small, almost pathetic collection of movies, some big hits, some family, some soft-core porno.

As Katherine looks the videos over, she has a feeling of being watched. She looks over the rack where --

"Duster" stares at her.

It unnerves Katherine. She returns to studying the rack. Checks out a few titles. What she's really doing is looking for one of her movies. Sure it's the middle of nowhere, but who knows --

--- and sure enough. There, in a worn dust cover is one of her movies. A Bond-clone spy caper film from the late 60's.

She smiles to herself as she reads her name above the title.

KATHERINE

(to herself)

Above the title.

She looks up, but again encounters the stare from Duster. He's looking straight at her. Katherine turns, maybe someone's behind her. But no, he's looking at her.

Then he smiles.

Katherine's paranoia takes hold again. She slowly turns, looks for the door...

(CONTINUED)

CONT'D:

Duster gets up, starts to move towards her. Katherine looks for escape. But maybe he's not coming to her, maybe it's her paranoia.

She turns to the videos again, maybe he's walking outside.
But:

DUSTER
It's you, isn't it?

Katherine pretends she doesn't hear him.

DUSTER (CONT'D)
If someone woulda told me, I'd never believe them. Katherine Van Zeller.

Katherine can't avoid his look anymore. She looks up.

KATHERINE
Pardon me?

DUSTER
I got four of your movies, had to mail order 'em from Los Angeles, Stanley just wants the current hits here... with some girly stuff for the farmers.
(glances at the video in her hand)
Had to threaten to blow up the place if he didn't stock at least one of yours.

He grins at the thought of that... raises an eyebrow.
Katherine isn't sure if it's a joke or not.

DUSTER (CONT'D)
(looks at the video)
That's my favorite.

Katherine shifts uncomfortably.

KATHERINE
I'm sorry, you must have me mistaken for...
(looks at the video)
Her.

DUSTER
You are her.

(CONTINUED)

CONT'D:

KATHERINE

She would be here? In this place,
in this part of the world?

DUSTER

We get everybody here sooner or later.
Last week Bjorn Stenherdt was here,
filled up his truck right outside
there.

KATHERINE

Who?

DUSTER

Forward for the Flames. Won best
defense in the NHL.

KATHERINE

NHL...

DUSTER

Hockey.

(beat)

Last summer, Wayne Newton passed
through goin' fishing. Five years
ago, Alan Thicke did a TV special up
in Jasper. Old days, Crosby and
Hope used to be there. Betcha didn't
know Marilyn Monroe was up there
too. River of No Return. We had
'em all.

She studies him for a beat --

KATHERINE

You liked this movie.

DUSTER

That and Red River, best John Wayne
movie, better'n that stuff he did in
the 60's.

KATHERINE

It was a long time ago.

DUSTER

You look the same.

Her face lights up. Who's wouldn't?

KATHERINE

Now you are lying.

(CONTINUED)

CONT'D:

DUSTER

What you are ain't in your skin,
it's in your heart.

(beat)

Read that in Reader's Digest.

Katherine can't help but smile.

DUSTER (CONT'D)

I don't mean to bother you, but, you
think I could maybe get an autograph?

KATHERINE

Of course.

Duster looks for a piece of paper, has none.

DUSTER

Wait here.

Duster turns and walks to the counter and grabs a pen and
heads back to her.

Katherine takes the pen and writes on the video box instead.

KATHERINE

To who?

DUSTER

Folks call me Duster. That'll do
fine.

KATHERINE

Well, Duster...
(she writes)
Thank you.

She finishes, hands it to him. It reads: *TO DUSTER, THANK
YOU, KATHERINE VAN ZELLER.*

Duster beams as:

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

Now, if you'll excuse me, I have to
go.

DUSTER

Thank you, ma'am.

Katherine pauses -

(CONTINUED)

CONT'D:

KATHERINE

It doesn't surprise you to see me
showing up here?

DUSTER

Way I figure, wait around long enough
an everybody's gonna show up.

She nods, turns and leaves. He watches her go, then looks
down at the videobox. Takes a deep breath and --

DUSTER (CONT'D)

Goddam.

EXT. BUS LOBBY -- NIGHT

Katherine takes a breath of cold air, looks towards the truck
where Tom fills the window washers with anti-freezing wash.

She heads towards the bar.

INT. BAR -- NIGHT

Katherine walks inside, adjusts to the light and walks past
the dancing chicken cage. She stops, looks at it, doesn't
believe this.

The chicken sees her, jumps up and begins pacing,
anticipating.

Katherine doesn't know what to do. She looks around, nobody
else notices.

The chicken paces, head jerking back and forth. Ready to
go. Ready to play basketball.

TRUCKER (O.S.)

He's waiting for a quarter.

Katherine turns, a TRUCKER, waiting to take his turn at pool,
nods towards her. She doesn't understand, looks back at the
chicken, still pacing.

TRUCKER (CONT'D)

Quarter, in the slot.

Katherine shrugs. Trucker walks up to her, finds a quarter
in his pocket and reaches towards a coin slot.

KATHERINE

No! Don't harm him.

(CONTINUED)

CONT'D:

TRUCKER

Doesn't harm him, lady, that's his
job. This is what he does to get
fed.

Still not understanding, she stares as the trucker puts the
coin in the slot.

Instantly, bells ring and prerecorded tinny-sounding crowd
noise comes from a cheap speaker.

THE BASKETBALL CHICKEN

What happens here is simple. A ping-pong ball rises on a
blast of air on the basket side of the bars. The chicken
pecks through the bars, hits the ball - and - sinks one!

His odds are usually pretty good, at least 2 out of 3. when
he sinks one, a bell rings, and a tiny handful of chicken
feed drops from a chute. He eats it, dances around and is
ready for the next two shots. He sinks one, then blows one.

After some pacing, he looks up through the window at Katherine
and the trucker.

Another quarter, please.

BACK TO KATHERINE

She's never seen anything like this in her life.

POOL PLAYER (O.S.)

Hey Ray, com'n, your shot!

TRUCKER

(to Katherine)

We all gotta eat, huh.

Trucker leaves Katherine and the chicken looking at each
other. A long beat, then:

KATHERINE

Uh, okay, okay...

She reaches into her purse, scrambles for some quarters.
Finds two. Then, cautiously, she puts a quarter in.

Bells and crowd sounds again. And Chicken sinks three.

Katherine's mesmerized by this. Bartender comes by.

BARTENDER

Anything to drink?

(CONTINUED)

CONT'D:

KATHERINE

Chardonnay.

BARTENDER

We only got red or white?

A beat - a look -- then -

KATHERINE

White.

EXT. GARAGE -- NIGHT

Tom finally finishes up. Closes the hood. Night ATTENDANT is there, name on his overalls says BOB.

BOB

Finished.

TOM

Fluids all up. Gimme an extra pint of the windshield de-icer.

BOB

You heading west.

TOM

Jasper.

BOB

Trucker came through couple'a hours ago, said the road's pretty wicked. Maybe oughtta lay over couple of hours. Salt trucks not gonna get here till morning.

TOM

That bad?

BOB

Just what I hear.

(beat)

You oughtta get the torsion bar checked out soon, it's gonna go.

TOM

Next time. Got a phone inside?

BOB

Yeah.

TOM

Thanks Bob.

(CONTINUED)

CONT'D:

BOB

Harvey.

(beat)

Owner won't buy us new overalls.

TOM

Thanks, Harve.

BOB

You bet.

Tom starts for the garage as a PICK-UP flies in past him, raising dust as it SKIDS to a stop. A young man steps out, long hair, vest and cowboy hat.

INT. BAR -- NIGHT

One empty wine glass sits at a table near the basketball chicken. Katherine downs another as the bartender brings a handful of quarters.

Without looking at him --

KATHERINE

Another glass.

BARTENDER

You ain't drivin', are ya?

KATHERINE

I don't drive. People drive me.

BARTENDER

Right.

He leaves.

Katherine leans towards the chicken.

KATHERINE

Tonight, you eat like a king, my friend.

SCHA--LINK - another quarter.

Chicken's in bird heaven.

ANGLE ON ASHLEY AND PAUL AT THE BAR

ASHLEY

For a movie star who's been everywhere, she obviously never seen a chicken.

(CONTINUED)

CONT'D:

PAUL

A basketball playing chicken.

(beat)

They're rare.

Ashley looks unimpressed. She walks off.

INT. GARAGE -- NIGHT

Tom's on the phone.

TOM

Road's fine, Martha, might take an extra hour or so...

(beat)

I'm fine, too.

(beat)

Yes, I'm taking my pills.

(beat)

Don't worry 'bout the cows, I told Fred to come over in the morning to check on them. You just sit back and turn on that satellite dish and have an extra nip of sherry for me. Before you know it I'll be back.

(beat)

Yes, I have my scarf on.

(he doesn't)

Yes, I have lots of vitamin C, and echineacea.

(beat)

Bye honey. See ya soon.

Tom hangs up, takes a breath. Takes out a CALLSHEET from the movie production, checks the phone numbers.

One's underlined in ink, PRODUCTION OFFICE.

INT. BAR -- NIGHT

Chicken's going for his tenth food drop. He's beginning to slow down a little, not as lean as when he's hungry.

PAUL

Looks like you got a big fan there.

Katherine turns, her look misses him a few feet, slowed by the wine.

KATHERINE

I'm saving his life. Nobody here helps him earn a living.

(CONTINUED)

CONT'D:

PAUL

I think he does all right.

KATHERINE

It is such cruelty. I will buy his freedom.

PAUL

I think he's fine where he is, where's he gonna go? He'd last less than an hour outside. If the coyotes or wolves don't get him, a car probably would.

KATHERINE

Then he'll come with us.

PAUL

Look at him... he's fat, gets enough food, got a roof over his head, he's doing better than me.

KATHERINE

He needs a girl chicken.

PAUL

Maybe they bring one in for him from time to time.

KATHERINE

Not that kind, a nice girl chicken.

PAUL

I don't think he'd know the difference.

KATHERINE

You men are all the same.

INT. BUS LOBBY -- NIGHT

Ashley walks in, Indian woman still waits. Duster is gone. Not much happening. In fact nothing happening. Ashley walks past the videos, looks at the bus schedule.

She sits near the Indian woman. After a moment....

INDIAN WOMAN

Where you goin'?

Ashley turns. Indian woman looks at her, waiting for an answer.

INT. BAR -- NIGHT

Katherine looks at the chicken. He's slowing down. She still has quarters. But she decides not to use them.

KATHERINE

Take five.

Katherine stands, feels a little woozy from the wine. Paul shows up.

PAUL

You okay?

KATHERINE

I'm fine, perfectly fine.

PAUL

How much did you drink?

KATHERINE

I can drink anybody under the table.
Maybe I need to... freshen up.

PAUL

Over there, past the bar.

She begins to walk, a little swaying.

PAUL (CONT'D)

I can help...

She waves him off, stands up straight and --

KATHERINE

I run five miles every morning.

With that she walks past him towards the restrooms at the end of the bar.

Some of the poolplayers watch her and laugh, they catch Paul looking at them and give him a look.

Katherine comes up to two doors. One marked COWBOYS, other is COWGIRLS. She goes inside.

INT. BAR RESTROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Katherine walks inside the small restroom, a few stalls and wash basins and mirrors. There's some dispensing machines.

Ashley is putting make-up on. She's doing this more from what she's seen in commercials and magazine ads.

(CONTINUED)

CONT'D:

Katherine doesn't realize who it is as she approaches the wash basin.

Katherine turns on the water, takes a handful and splashes it onto herself. Checks her image in the mirror... a beat --

KATHERINE
 (to nobody in
 particular)
 Light is a bitch, isn't it.

Ashley realizes who's standing beside her.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)
 Two things can destroy a woman,
 mirrors and bad lighting.

Katherine catches Ashley watching her in the mirror.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)
 But then, you're too young to know
 that.

Ashley turns back to her make-up job. Katherine quickly realizes the young girl doesn't know what to do...

KATHERINE (CONT'D)
 Too much mascara.

ASHLEY
 I'm fine, thank you. And I'm not
 that young.

KATHERINE
 You really don't want to look cheap,
 do you?

ASHLEY
 Excuse me!

KATHERINE
 Is he out there?

ASHLEY
 I don't know what you're talking
 about.

KATHERINE
 Make sure he's worth it, they make a
 lot of promises. And never follow a
 man to a foreign country unless he
 says he'll make you legal.

(CONTINUED)

CONT'D:

ASHLEY

What! I can look after myself.
I've got a whole lifetime to make
mistakes... I'm not washed up like
some people.

Ashley knows what she said. Katherine is still.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

Don't talk to me.

She leaves.

Alone, Katherine stares into the mirror.

KATHERINE

Me washed up? She was never a star,
just a tramp who slept with more
producers and even grips than anyone
could count. Grips! I never slept
with a grip. Never below the line.

INT. GARAGE -- NIGHT

Tom's on the phone again. He finishes and hangs up. Tom
looks down at the call sheet again.

INT. BAR -- NIGHT

Music suddenly comes from the CD juke box in a corner.
Dancing rock and roll as:

Paul sits looking at the basketball chicken, now asleep.

KATHERINE

We must dance.

Paul turns, Katherine has returned. Ready to rock and roll.

PAUL

I don't think we have time.

KATHERINE

Peter, I command you.

PAUL

Paul.

Katherine pulls him up and begins dancing, standing apart.
She twists to the music, arms rising up. Were it not so
uncomfortable, it might be funny.

(CONTINUED)

CONT'D:

But Paul isn't laughing as he's conscious of the pool players watching and laughing.

PAUL (CONT'D)
Miss Van Zeller... we should go.

KATHERINE
I paid good money for this body and
I want to get my dollar's worth.

Katherine dances like she's had too much to drink, nearly slips a few times, doing a bad Rita Hayworth impression of *Miss Sadie Thompson*.

Paul can't keep up to her and steps back.

The pool players stop and watch, trading comments.

Paul takes a seat at the bar and watches as Tom appears.

TOM
Looks like she's in better spirits.

As Katherine dances, Paul notices the pool players come to the bar for more beer. They catch his look, Paul turns away. Tom watches the men, he's just slightly concerned.

TOM (CONT'D)
We should leave soon.

Paul turns to see both pool players standing in front of them. One of them has a jug of beer and downs a giant gulp of beer. The other has a cigarette in his hand.

POOL PLAYER
She's pretty wild, huh.

PAUL
No, not really.

POOL PLAYER
What's your problem?

PAUL
No problem.

Glances at Tom who motions to the door.

TOM
We gotta go.

Paul gets up, starts to walk, Tom beside him. Both players block the way.

(CONTINUED)

CONT'D:

Suddenly, Pool Player throws the cigarette at Paul, hits his chest and falls. Paul turns when the Pool Player grabs his jacket, ripping it. Paul turns, reluctantly ready to do whatever comes next... Tom looks for an escape.

When -- out of nowhere --

Katherine expertly slips between Paul and the players, pressing her hand gently on Pool Player's chest while taking Paul's hand at the same time.

KATHERINE

We've had a wonderful time, really
but we can't stay, we must be going.

Pool Player is confused...

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

I know, sad, but we really must.
(to Paul and Tom)
Come boys.

And in that instant -- Katherine pulls Paul past the pool players and away. Before they know it, Paul and her are gone.

Katherine passes the basketball chicken, stops.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

Never let them see you cry, my friend.

The chicken looks at her as Katherine finds the last of her quarters and puts them into the coin slot. Bells go off, lights go on, and the sound of the crowd comes back...

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

And always leave 'em asking for more.

With that, Katherine turns and walks to the door, held open by Paul.

Katherine notices Ashley watching her. She touches Tom on his arm as he turns to her.

Paul approaches Ashley.

PAUL

We're leaving.

ASHLEY

Fine with me.

(CONTINUED)

CONT'D:

PAUL
Do you really want to stay here?

ASHLEY
This is as far as I go.

PAUL
You sure.

The pool players watch, mumbling to themselves. Paul feels the pressure to leave - soon.

PAUL (CONT'D)
You can't stay here.

ASHLEY
My ride's coming in a couple of hours.

TOM
We're leaving.

He glances at Ashley, then Paul, leading him outside. Ashley looks almost disappointed as they are gone.

EXT. TRUCKSTOP PARKING AREA -- NIGHT

Moving with Katherine, breathing in great gulps of cold air, savoring it. But she weaves a little as she walks. Noticed by Paul.

Tom's at the gas pumps, talks with Bob about something.

Paul catches up with Katherine as she marches towards the van.

PAUL
We can't leave her there.

KATHERINE
Sure we can, this is where she wanted to get dropped off.

Tom approaches them.

TOM
Ready?

KATHERINE
Let's go.

Katherine grabs the door handle but slips. She rights herself quickly, trying to look perfectly in control as she climbs in.

(CONTINUED)

CONT'D:

Tom reaches the van, opens the door and climbs in. Paul looks back at the bar one last time before he climbs inside.

INT. VAN -- NIGHT

Paul and Katherine take their seats.

PAUL

You okay?

KATHERINE

Of course.
 (to Tom)
 Drive on.

INT. BAR -- CONTINUOUS

Through a window, the van drives off into the night. Watching it leave, Ashley looks uncertain about her choice.

POOL PLAYER (O.S.)

Hey, wanna play a game, sweets?

ASHLEY

Drop dead. I'm a minor, you want to really get into trouble?

Pool Player backs off quickly. Bartender approaches.

BARTENDER

Weren't you with them?

ASHLEY

No.

BARTENDER

Listen, you're not old enough to be here by yourself.

ASHLEY

I'm not drinking.

BARTENDER

You're not eating either. You're loitering. See the sign, no loitering. You gotta buy something, or you're loitering.

ASHLEY

Toast.

BARTENDER

Toast.

(CONTINUED)

CONT'D:

ASHLEY

Yeah, last time I checked, it was
food.

Bartender shakes his head, she wins.

INT. VAN -- NIGHT

Driving.

Everybody's quiet. For Tom it's no problem. Paul, however,
is worried. After a long beat --

PAUL

I wonder what's gonna happen to her?

After a beat --

KATHERINE

We all make our choices.

PAUL

She's just a kid.

KATHERINE

Old enough to run away.

PAUL

She told you?

KATHERINE

Surely you saw that.

Again silence, Katherine, still a little inebriated, she
begins to hum and move her head in rhythm. She looks outside
where --

The van's headlights illuminate ghostly dark stands of
evergreens that seem like ominous silent sentinels on either
side of the road.

Then - suddenly, Tom slows down. Paul looks at him then
ahead to the road where --

A handful of DEER stand in the ditch, staring, literally
"deer in the headlights".

Katherine also sees them. She sits up alert. It lasts for
less than ten seconds as Tom passes them and picks up speed
again. Nobody says anything.

Katherine is wondering if she really saw what she saw.

(CONTINUED)

CONT'D:

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

Driver.

Tom waits a beat --

TOM

Yes ma'am.

KATHERINE

What was that?

TOM

Deer.

KATHERINE

Who let them out?

PAUL

Nobody, they live here.

Katherine ponders that, still a little inebriated.

KATHERINE

What happens if grizzly bears attack us.

TOM

Don't think so.

Katherine watches him, unsure...

KATHERINE

(to Paul)

What do you think?

PAUL

I don't think we have anything to worry about.

Katherine looks unsatisfied.

KATHERINE

Yah, sure.

Paul turns back.

INT. BAR -- NIGHT

Ashley gets the toast.

ASHLEY

You got peanut butter.

(CONTINUED)

CONT'D:

Bartender shrugs, walks back to find peanut butter. Ashley looks around the near-empty bar and notices a paper on the floor near where Paul was shoved around. She walks over and scoops it up.

It's the call sheet Paul had. The one where his and Katherine's names are written under "Travel Day". She returns to her seat at the bar as Bartender returns with two little single-serving plastic containers of peanut butter.

BARTENDER

What's that.

ASHLEY

Nothing.

Leaves the peanut butter.

BARTENDER

Bon appetite.

Ashley gives him a look.

INT. VAN -- NIGHT

Driving.

Katherine tries to sleep, pushing the wine and muffins away.

Paul stares ahead at the road. Tom drives.

Only road noise.

A long beat --

PAUL (O.S.)

You know what I like about the road,
gives you the chance to think clearly.
Just the hum of the tires, the world
passing by.

Paul stares out at the passing wilderness.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Ever wonder about the explorers?
You know, like the guys who first
discovered these mountains. Boy,
they must have had a hell of a time.
No cars, no highways, no truckstops.
Just dark forest and cold and
grizzlies.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONT'D:

PAUL (CONT'D)
(looks outside)
Don't think I could do that.
(a long beat)
You know how they made it through?

No response from either Tom and Katherine.

PAUL (CONT'D)
Animal paths. People think they
busted their way through the bush,
but they followed animal paths.
Animals don't just wander aimlessly,
they got paths, like highways sorta.
Indians used to follow them, then
the white explorers. Lots of our
highways through the mountains were
once animal paths.
(beat)
I never knew that till I was thirty.
Didn't really change my life either.

Paul looks over at Tom again. Decides to test him to see if
he's still awake.

PAUL (CONT'D)
Boy, I'd sure hate to walk out there
tonight.

Just then, they HIT a POTHOLE and the van SLAMS hard against
the pavement.

Tom glances down at the dash gauges.

Then a SHUDDER. Longer and stronger.

PAUL (CONT'D)
What's that?

Then, all HELL BREAKS LOOSE.

The van SINKS and SHAKES, Tom has to hold the wheel to keep
it straight.

EXT. MOUNTAIN ROAD -- NIGHT

The van SHUDDERS to a stop, skidding on the gravel shoulder.

INT. BAR -- NIGHT

Ashley carefully spreads peanut butter on a slice of toast.
She has a child-like attentiveness to the job at hand. It
has to be perfect.

(CONTINUED)

CONT'D:

Ashley senses someone is watching -

It's Bartender.

Ashley gives him a "what are you staring at" look. Bartender shakes his head, goes to some bar chores.

Ashley finishes spreading the first piece of toast. Lifts it slowly so as not to let the peanut butter spread over the side. Then she takes a bite.

BARTENDER

Everything ok?

ASHLEY

Can I have some water?

Off his look.

EXT. MOUNTAIN ROAD -- NIGHT

The van sits still in the dark.

Paul stands outside, steam coming from his breath.

PAUL

See anything?

No answer.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Tom?

Tom slides out from under the van. He stands up, has a flashlight.

PAUL (CONT'D)

What?

TOM

Spring broke. Twisted the torsion bars and bent the axle when we hit that damn pothole.

PAUL

So we're not going anywhere.

TOM

Nope.

KATHERINE (O.S.)

What's going on out there!

(CONTINUED)

CONT'D:

Katherine sticks her head out the window.

PAUL
Is there much traffic this time of
night.

TOM
Not much.

KATHERINE
I'm cold.

Paul and Tom glance at her again.

PAUL
What about the cops?

TOM
They'd be in bed about now.

PAUL
In bed?

TOM
Fifty miles away.

PAUL
So what do we do?

KATHERINE
So are we screwed?

INT. VAN -- NIGHT

Paul slides the door open. Katherine is in the back seat,
wrapped in her coat.

KATHERINE
What is it?

PAUL
Axle's gone.

KATHERINE
Who?

PAUL
Not who, what. The axle.

KATHERINE
Did we lose it?

(CONTINUED)

CONT'D:

PAUL

No. But we're not going anywhere right now.

KATHERINE

Well, call the auto club.

PAUL

Got no phone service, and there's no auto club around anyways.

KATHERINE

Then what do we do?

PAUL

We can stay in the truck, but it's getting cold. Tom says there's an old church up the road, about a mile or two. We can build a fire there.

KATHERINE

A church?

PAUL

Yes, a church. An abandoned church.

KATHERINE

What good is an abandoned church. No. This is not acceptable. I will not go out into the wilderness with the animals and build a fire. This is simply not acceptable.

Paul takes a breath --

PAUL

Well, it's getting cold and the heater in the van isn't working well and Tom and I are going to the church. If you want to stay here, you're welcome to.

(beat)

Do what you want.

Paul closes the doors and walks off into the darkness. Katherine waits for a beat. Suddenly alone, she realizes how dark it is - and how quiet.

EXT. VAN -- NIGHT

Katherine steps out, clinging to her wine and muffin basket.

(CONTINUED)

CONT'D:

KATHERINE

Wait!

Tom and Paul stand near the truck, having waited for her.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

What about help?

PAUL

We left a note on the windshield.
They'll know where to find us.

KATHERINE

What about the animals?

Paul turns, finally had it, as he reacts.

PAUL

They're sleeping.

KATHERINE

Yah, sure.

PAUL

You ready?

Katherine reluctantly starts to follow them as Tom leads.

INT. BAR -- NIGHT

Ashley has moved to a table near the chicken with her glass of water and second piece of toast and PB.

Basketball chicken is fat and sleeping. Life as he knows it is good. And isn't that what it's all about.

Ashley looks down at her daypack, opens it and lifts out something, a torn aged folder. It's a map, an old roadmap with vintage 50's cover.

She slowly, almost methodically opens it so as not to tear the edges any more than they are already.

She studies it as --

BARTENDER

What's that?

She looks at him, isn't it obvious. He looks at it.

BARTENDER (CONT'D)

That is old.

(CONTINUED)

CONT'D:

ASHLEY

Yeah.

She focuses on the map, ignoring him.

BARTENDER

Some of those blue highways there probably don't even exist.

ASHLEY

They can still take you somewhere.

BARTENDER

So where you going?

Ashley looks at the map.

ASHLEY

Wherever I want.

Bartender nods, good enough.

BARTENDER

Bus is gonna be here soon.

He leaves.

Ashley looks down at the map again.

EXT. HIGHWAY -- NIGHT

Katherine's walking on the dark highway, quick-time, like on a race. She realizes she's by herself and stops.

KATHERINE

Where is everybody?

Some sounds behind her in the dark indicate Paul and Tom as they approach.

Katherine looks up at the night sky.

KATHERINE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Jesus, look at the stars.

(beat)

Can you see the stars?

Heavy breathing precedes Paul as he approaches. He's not in as good shape as her.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

What's the matter?

(CONTINUED)

CONT'D:

PAUL

I don't run a marathon every day
like you.

KATHERINE

Hah, too many cheeseburgers and French
fries. All you people here eat junk.

Paul tries to catch his breath.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

Look at the stars, there must be
millions of them.

PAUL

Actually you can only see about two
thousand, and that's on a good night.

KATHERINE

Well, you don't see this in New York,
or Berlin or even Paris. This is
the Rockies, isn't it.

PAUL

Yeah, Rockies.

KATHERINE

We don't have this in Europe. We
have forests, but they're tame.
This is wilderness. Real wilderness.

PAUL

I thought you were scared of animals.

KATHERINE

If I can't see them, they can't see
me.

Paul looks at the wine and muffin basket. Katherine pulls
it closer to her.

TOM

You folks all right?

PAUL

Yeah.

TOM

Heard ya all the way down the highway.

PAUL

Sorry...

(CONTINUED)

CONT'D:

Tom turns and walks down the road. Paul starts after him, following the light. Katherine looks up at the sky once again then follows.

EXT. BAR -- NIGHT

Ashley steps outside. Looks around the place. There's no easy way out. She's stuck here.

"Bob" notices her, seems to take an interest.

Ashley fishes out the cigarette package from her daypack, then finds a lighter.

Ashley takes out a cigarette, it's squashed. Then another that's partially bent. Doesn't care, she puts it into her mouth, lights it. Lighter goes out.

Bob watches.

Ashley curses, lights it again. This time it works. She takes a deep drag, coughs a little, tries to change it into a clearing of the throat in case Bob hears it.

The sound of a vehicle turns her towards the highway where -

THE BUS APPROACHES

The BUS headlights appear, and it slowly turns in and stops. The door opens with a familiar hiss as the DRIVER jumps out, goes to the baggage compartment.

Ashley watches him take out an armful of packages which he carries to the bus lobby.

She looks up at the window, where a few sleepy passengers look out. The bus sign reads *Salt Lake City*.

Bus driver returns, Indian Woman carrying her small suitcase. She notices Ashley as she climbs in.

Ashley watches, holds the cigarette down.

BUS DRIVER

You coming?

Ashley stands there for a beat, waiting. Then --

ASHLEY

No.

Bus driver gets in, door swooshes closed as the bus pulls away. Ashley watches it leave until --

(CONTINUED)

CONT'D:

She sees something else.

Another vehicle has appeared in the parking lot. But there's something familiar about it.

It's got overhead lights on top.
It's a POLICE CAR.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

Damn it...

She turns and starts to walk back to the bar as the police car passes her and goes to the gas pumps. Ashley watches as she walks, the car stops and a youngish POLICEMAN steps out and starts talking to "Bob".

Bob readily opens up to him and then points towards Ashley.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

God damn it!

Policeman heads towards her.

EXT. CHURCH -- NIGHT

Tom's flashlight offers a partial view of the old church. It's a simple wood-frame building with an onion dome on top, Byzantine-style. A weathered sign reads in Cyrillic alphabet.

KATHERINE

This is it?

Paul climbs the small steps to the door. It's locked. And with a padlock for added security.

PAUL

Door's locked.

He turns around to Katherine. Notices Tom has left.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Tom?

AROUND THE SIDE

Tom walks towards a side door. He reaches over the door and gropes around the frame until he pulls out a key. He tries the key on a padlock. It unlocks.

INT. CHURCH -- NIGHT

Warm light comes from colored glass cup-shaped candle holders.

(CONTINUED)

CONT'D:

The place lights up enough to see most of the inside. It's pretty much empty except for a few rows of wood pews and what's left of the altar.

A metal "AIRTIGHT" stove against the wall. There's still wood piled beside it. A metal chimney pipe rises to the ceiling.

Paul carries a candle around with him as he explores.

Katherine walks slowly around, feeling the place.

Tom has rolled up a newspaper and lights it. Then he shoves it into the stove to allow the heat to climb the metal chimney pipe. When the flames are being lifted upwards by the draft created, he lowers the newspaper to ignite the wood.

Tom steps back, the fire's caught.

Dancing flames flicker shadows across the room, giving it an eerie feeling.

EXT. GARAGE -- NIGHT

Ashley's at the phone booth.

ASHLEY

Yeah, yeah, I'm okay. Jeez, I'm okay already!

(listens)

Yes, I'll be there.

(beat)

I'm getting a ride.

She turns towards the cop, OFFICER MELNYK, 20's, almost too young-looking for a cop.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

No... not some stranger, a cop.

(beat)

No, I didn't rob anybody, Jesus... mom, whatta you think I am?

Officer Melnyk tries to hide a smile as he listens. But Ashley catches it and gives him a glaring rebuff.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

Dad, I don't care what the neighbors will think when they see a cop car taking me home. I don't care what anybody thinks.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONT'D:

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

(beat)

Look, I'll be there tomorrow, okay.
I can't talk anymore, he's gonna put
handcuffs on me and I'm gonna spend
the night in jail. He's taking me
now, bye, can't talk. See you
tomorrow.

She hangs up.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

Sorry, I had to say the handcuff
stuff otherwise they'd never quit.

OFFICER MELNYK

I understand.

ASHLEY

You know, you could say you lost me.

OFFICER MELNYK

Sorry.

ASHLEY

Don't you guys have anything better
to do? Go arrest somebody.

Melnyk shakes his head.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

You know, you don't even look like a
cop, where's your ID?

Melnyk is used to this, just nods.

INT. CHURCH -- NIGHT

Looking at the muffin basket and wine.

Paul eyes it, as does Katherine. She also glances at him.
A long beat before --

KATHERINE

No.

Paul still stares...

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

This might be our only food. I've
heard stories about what happens to
people in the mountains without food.

(CONTINUED)

CONT'D:

PAUL

What are you talking about?

KATHERINE

You know. They eat what is there.

Paul realizes what she's talking about.

PAUL

We're not that desperate.

KATHERINE

Yah, that's what the soccer players said.

PAUL

Soccer players.

KATHERINE

In the Andes.

Paul eyes the muffin basket. Katherine pulls the muffin basket closer to her.

PAUL

You know, you changed my life.

KATHERINE

Don't blame me.

PAUL

No. No, a good way.

(beat)

I used to love Ally Sheedy, I saw Breakfast Club twenty times, and that was before dvds. Ally, she had that look, you know...

KATHERINE

You said I changed your life.

Beat. Paul backs up...

PAUL

Ah... one time, one of your movies was playing, one of the French ones. I was under-age...

KATHERINE

A child?

(CONTINUED)

CONT'D:

PAUL
No, under sixteen. Some movies you
couldn't get in if you were under
sixteen.

KATHERINE
Why not?

PAUL
They were R-rated.

KATHERINE
Americans...

PAUL
I sneaked in.
(beat)
It was goodbye Ally.

KATHERINE
That must have been the nude scene.

Paul smiles --

KATHERINE (CONT'D)
Yah, I got a lot of fan mail from
young boys. Did you send me any?

PAUL
Yeah.

KATHERINE
Did you get anything back?

PAUL
A studio photo.

Katherine smiles --

KATHERINE
Good.

PAUL
This is so weird. We're sitting and
talking.
(beat)
Life is strange.

EXT. GARAGE -- NIGHT

Ashley's sitting in the front seat of the police car, waiting
for Officer Melnyk to finish with Bob. She taps impatiently
on the dash.

INT. POLICE CAR -- NIGHT

Just then Melnyk opens his door and climbs inside.

OFFICER MELNYK

You ready?

ASHLEY

Yes, I'm ready.

OFFICER MELNYK

You know, you can get into trouble
in a place like that.

ASHLEY

I can handle myself pretty good.

OFFICER MELNYK

You're fifteen. You're a kid.

ASHLEY

Yeah? Well, last spring my dad got
his thumb cut off by a pulley on a
combine and I had to go find it and
wrap it up in a rag and then drove
him back to the house so's he could
put his thumb on ice until the doctor
came and sewed it back on again.
Doc said if I didn't do what I did,
he woulda lost his thumb.

Officer Melnyk reacts.

Ashley studies him for a beat...

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

How old are you?

OFFICER MELNYK

Not that it matters, but I'm twenty-
four.

ASHLEY

Old guy.

Melnyk rolls his eyes -- closes his door. This is going to
be a long ride.

EXT. TRUCKSTOP PARKING AREA -- NIGHT

Bob watches the police car drive away. Excitement is over
for the night.

INT. CHURCH -- NIGHT

Wine is being poured into three candle-cups. Katherine carefully measures the same amount for each of them.

Tom eats a muffin nearby.

Paul tries the wine. Nods.

KATHERINE

Not a burgundy. Back in the day it was champagne and caviar and now it's domestic and pastries.

PAUL

Must have been a good time.

KATHERINE

It's always a good time when you're young, even when things aren't so good.

PAUL

How old were you when you started.

KATHERINE

Seventeen. They hired me for an ad in a magazine for Coca Cola. Someone saw the ad and hired me for a movie.

PAUL

Just like that.

KATHERINE

Just like that.

PAUL

How did you get to Hollywood?

KATHERINE

I did four movies in Germany and two in France. Very cheap movies, that one where I swam in the nude. A Hollywood producer saw that one and liked what he saw.

Her eyes drift away -- Paul waits.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

After the war, we had very little, our country was destroyed. My father was killed in the war.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONT'D:

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

My mother would get food from the G.I.'s, and chocolate. I remember powdered milk, I thought, what a wonderful thing, powdered milk. You add water to powder and it became milk. It was magic.

(beat)

When people offer you much money and work, like Hollywood did, I did what they wanted. It wasn't hard, when you're young.

PAUL

Look, I'm sorry, I shouldn't be asking.

KATHERINE

It was a long time ago. Time makes some things better than they were.

Katherine relaxes a little, the wine helps.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

I loved the American movies, we all did. Casablanca, even though the Germans were the bad guys. And Montgomery Clift and James Dean. Very sexy.

PAUL

Everyone says they don't make them like they used to.

KATHERINE

It's not about creating stars anymore, it's about creating product. Corn flakes. Packages of corn flakes.

PAUL

Which film of yours did you like the best?

KATHERINE

The best?

(beat)

The one I got paid most for.

PAUL

Do you think you'll ever be done with this business?

(CONTINUED)

CONT'D:

KATHERINE

Ava Simone says I'm a washed up has-been, and the tabloids loved that one.

(beat)

She married a grip. Yes! I never slept with a grip. Never below the line.

Paul glances at Tom who looks a little embarrassed. Paul can't hold back his laugh as Katherine lifts the wine -

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

More?

In that moment, with soft warm fire light shining, Paul notices a different Katherine. Shadows highlight the lines on her face and hands that she can't cover, she is her age, yet there's a softness that seems to come through that Paul had not seen yet.

She seems at ease with the world, the way older people can be sometimes. Comfortable, at least for that moment.

INT. POLICE CAR -- NIGHT

Driving. Ashley stares out the side window as Melnyk drives. She glances over at him, studying his face.

After awhile, he becomes aware that she's watching him. Ashley turns back to the road.

OFFICER MELNYK

Why'd you run away?

Ashley doesn't answer.

OFFICER MELNYK (CONT'D)

You don't have to tell me, it's not a questioning thing. I was just interested.

ASHLEY

You wouldn't understand.

OFFICER MELNYK

Try me.

She studies him again, wondering if he's being honest.

INT. CHURCH -- NIGHT

Tom loads the last of the wood into the stove. He gets up, puts his coat on and starts for the door.

PAUL
Want some help?

TOM
If you want...

Paul gets up and goes outside. Katherine looks around her, alone. She stands up, sips more wine from the bottle and walks towards the altar.

Once there, she turns back towards the pews, crosses herself in a Catholic manner, sips some wine --

She smiles, then notices something pushed against a dark corner. She reaches for it, all we see is a wooden photograph frame.

EXT. CHURCH -- NIGHT

Tom makes his way to a thicket of bush nearby, shines his flashlight where he can see some twigs and deadfall. Wouldn't this be great if it was snowing lightly?

Paul joins him, walking through the brush, finding deadfall that's big enough to burn. Tom does the same, in silence.

PAUL
Should be enough to hold us till morning.

Tom nods.

PAUL (CONT'D)
Gotta admit, you are the quietest man I ever met.

Tom waits a beat, glances at him, thinks --

TOM
You drive a tractor all day long on three hundred acres of land, with nobody to talk to, you get used to silence.

PAUL
I don't know how that wouldn't drive you crazy... I don't think I could
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONT'D:

PAUL (CONT'D)

make it through a day without talking to someone.

TOM

A guy gets to know himself, farm life suits me.

PAUL

My drama teacher used to say all we really need are farmers and poets, farmers to feed our stomachs and poets to give us tomorrow.

(beat)

Guess they forgot lawyers and politicians, huh.

TOM

Guess so.

Tom moves away, gathering wood. Paul holds back, shrugs, continues to look for more wood.

INT. CHURCH -- NIGHT

Looking at an aged PHOTOGRAPH, with an ornate curved wood frame. The photo, circa 1940's, is of a Slavic husband and wife, with their daughter in the middle.

Katherine studies the photograph as she sits down, setting the wine bottle down beside her.

The people in the photograph stare back at her.

Tom and Paul enter, carrying armloads of wood. They carry it to the stove and stack it.

Katherine approaches, carrying the photograph.

KATHERINE

Look.

She shows them the family photo.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

They had a hard life. I wonder what happened to them.

TOM

Used to be a coal mining town. Once the coal ended, everything pretty much shut down, nobody had work so they all left.

(CONTINUED)

CONT'D:

Katherine studies the photo again, then puts it back where it was.

KATHERINE
I never had children. Never really had any relationships except to the public.

Tom shrugs, finishes stacking the wood.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)
Tom, what's important to you?

Tom shrugs --

KATHERINE (CONT'D)
Please, tell me.

He looks up at her, finishes stacking, then sits down. She sits beside him. Paul watches from a few feet away.

TOM
Getting you folks to the location.

KATHERINE
You have children?

Tom continues working.

TOM
Yeah.

KATHERINE
Where are they? Tell me.

Tom doesn't look up as he stacks the wood.

TOM
Oldest boy handles most of the farm now. Second boy joined an evangelical group, he's a missionary in Africa. My only girl is a masseuse in Portland.

KATHERINE
You must be proud of them.

Tom finishes stacking, gets up.

TOM
Fire's stoked pretty good. If you folks wanna try to get some rest, might as well.

(CONTINUED)

CONT'D:

He walks over to the altar, finds some paper to use if the fire goes out.

Katherine watches him as she leans back, stretches.

INT. POLICE CAR -- NIGHT

Melnyk drives as Ashley slips into sleep, bunched against the door.

He glances at her.

INT. CHURCH -- DAWN

Paul stretched out on a pew, restless, trying to find a comfortable position.

Katherine has spread her coat onto the altar and lies down there. She looks up at the colored candle holders and the dancing light coming from them.

EXT. PRAIRIES -- DAWN

Sun is beginning to rise over the distant horizon a hundred miles east.

EXT. FARM -- DAWN

The police car drives up a long dirt driveway to a farmhouse and barn surrounded by tall trees. All around it is rolling prairie.

INT. POLICE CAR -- CONTINUOUS

Ashley watches as they approach. She sees her FATHER, carrying milkcans out of the barn. He notices the car, but keeps on walking to the house.

The car comes to a stop near the house.

OFFICER MELNYK
This the place?

ASHLEY
Yeah.

OFFICER MELNYK
You want me to come in?

ASHLEY
No.

(CONTINUED)

CONT'D:

OFFICER MELNYK

I can if I feel there's a need to.

ASHLEY

They're good to me. Roof over our head, turkey at Thanksgiving, we even have satellite. No one made me leave.

OFFICER MELNYK

Then why'd you do what you did?

A beat. Ashley thinks about it, then --

ASHLEY

I wanted to be missing.

OFFICER MELNYK

What kind of reason is that?

ASHLEY

Sometimes there doesn't have to be a reason. Quiet misery.

OFFICER MELNYK

What?

ASHLEY

Don't you just feel like you want to be free of everything for a day or an hour or a minute?

A beat --

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

Hey, thanks alot, for a cop, you're okay.

She offers a handshake.

Melnyk, surprised, reaches sideways and shakes her hand.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

One thing.

OFFICER MELNYK

What?

ASHLEY

Can you turn the light on when you drive away.

(off his look)

Neighbors will love it.

(CONTINUED)

CONT'D:

Ashley then exits, and walks slowly up to the kitchen door.

Melnyk watches her leave. When she enters the kitchen, he turns his car around. He waits a beat, smiles and then -- he flicks a switch as he drives off.

The RED AND BLUE OVERHEADS light up.

INT. CHURCH -- DAWN

Paul is scrunched onto one of the pews, sleeping a restless sleep. Finally the hard wood is just too much. He opens his eyes.

It takes a beat to remember where he is.

He looks around, he's alone. Fire is out, candles are out. Dawn streaks in through the windows.

EXT. CHURCH -- DAWN

Paul steps outside, it's frosty cold. He bundles his coat as he looks around for any sign of the others. He can see the area now, mountains all around them.

There's a movement in a small cemetery near the church. It's Katherine.

There's no sign of Tom.

EXT. CEMETERY -- MOMENTS LATER

If it snowed last night, this would be really nice.

Katherine looks at the Slavic crosses with Byzantine edges. They're simple white stone. Many of the names are weathered so that they're hard to read. Some have cameo photos of ethnic faces, worn by hard lives.

Katherine kneels down by two small graves. She brushes away some snow to reveal the names. Both are children. The ages indicate they were 2 months and 7.

Katherine's aware of someone nearby. It's Paul.

PAUL

Hi.

She glances at the graves then stands up.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Did you see Tom?

(CONTINUED)

CONT'D:

KATHERINE
He left an hour ago.

PAUL
Old guy works hard.

KATHERINE
I envy him.

PAUL
Because he's made it simple?

KATHERINE
Yes.

Just then, A HORN SOUNDS.

They both turn to see a car drive up to the church. Tom steps out and waves to them.

PAUL
Looks like we've got a ride.

He waits for her. Katherine takes one last look at the cemetery, at the church. It's a moment that she knows will be gone once she leaves.

The horn sounds again.

Katherine turns, walks past Paul and he follows her to the waiting car.

As he leaves, a slight wind blows across the cemetery. For a beat, Paul wonders ---

EXT. ASHLEY'S HOUSE -- MORNING

Looking through the window into the kitchen. Ashley sits at a table, watching as her father eats and her mother is at the stove.

Mother brings a plate of eggs and bacon to Ashley, she looks at it, looks at mom smiling. Ashley digs into the breakfast.

EXT. JASPER -- DAY

LOOKING OUT THE WINDSHIELD at Jasper's small main street. Some light traffic in a town of 2000 set amidst mountain peaks.

Paul and Katherine are in the back seat, Tom in the front with the driver.

(CONTINUED)

CONT'D:

A MOTEL looms ahead of them. The car turns towards the parking lot, pulls in and stops. There are several film PRODUCTION VEHICLES parked that stand out from local vehicles.

EXT. MOTEL PARKING LOT -- DAY

Tom gets out, opens the door for Paul and Katherine. They both climb out.

TOM

You folks go right on inside. I'll send one of the p.a.'s back for your luggage.

He starts to walk away --

KATHERINE

Tom.

Tom turns, a little surprised.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

Thank you. For everything.

Paul comes up.

PAUL

Yeah, thanks.
(smiles)
Couldn't have done it without you.

Tom stoically nods --

TOM

Just doin' my job.

He turns and walks away. Katherine and Paul exchange looks and smile.

PAUL

Come on, they're probably waiting for you.

He shows her inside the motel hallway.

PAUL (CONT'D)

You know, I never thought I'd ever be sharing a ride with Katherine Van Zeller.

KATHERINE

You wait long enough, everybody's going to show up.

(CONTINUED)

CONT'D:

She kisses him on the cheek.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

Break a leg.

For a beat, she's a real person, no pretension, no make-up. Just her.

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

Miss Van Zeller.

In the next second, she transforms seamlessly, becoming the star and slipping into her entrance mode. She walks inside as the Assistant Director greets her. Jack follows.

INT. MOTEL HALLWAY -- DAY

Where the entire wing has been turned into production offices. Computer-printed signs indicate the production offices, accounting, etc.

Assistant Director leads Katherine down until --

VOICE (O.S.)

Miss Van Zeller!

They turn to see a production secretary approach. She's Kerrie, dressed in film location standard of jeans, down vest, cap.

KERRIE

Oh God, we were so worried about you... we thought, well, we didn't know what to think.

(shouts)

Harry, Sue... she's here!

Other people stream from their offices into the hallway within seconds. In short time, they flock around Katherine and edge her away from Paul.

Paul watches as they leave him, scurrying around Katherine like lemmings. The group moves forward.

Assistant Director comes up to Paul.

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

So that's her, huh. The big movie star.

PAUL

Yeah.

(CONTINUED)

CONT'D:

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR
She looks older than I expected.
You the driver?

PAUL
No, I'm an actor.

Assistant director nods, nobody important.

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR
Yeah. Good.
(points)
Check in with the production
secretary.

He walks off, joining the groupies ahead of him.

Leaving Paul by himself. Paul watches them and can't help
but smile.

Fade to black.