

TOUCH & GO

by

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EXT. OUTBOUND TAVERN - NIGHT

A neon roof sign reading OUTBOUND TAVERN faces an unlit two-lane highway running past the entrance to the parking lot.

Wooded forest surrounds the establishment. Solidly midwestern.

A beat-up old car rumbles down the road, slows in front of the bar, makes a lousy turn into the lot.

INT. OUTBOUND TAVERN - NIGHT

The place is old-fashioned in style, but not old. Behind the bar, a colorful fish tank is centered between the bottles.

Bartender HENRI (sounds like Henry), early 30's, somewhat tall, wipes down the bar as steam rises from the sink.

TITLE: SATURDAY

The front door opens with the CLANG of an old iron cowbell. ARTIE (70's, scruffy) stumbles in, worn clothes hanging loose on his scrawny frame. He looks like an understuffed scarecrow.

HENRI
I'm closin' up, Artie.

Artie checks his watch-less wrist, can't focus on it.

ARTIE
(slurs)
Still time for a scotch 'n' soda.

Henri washes glasses as Artie struggles to claim a bar stool.

HENRI
Can't do it. You know the rules.

ARTIE
Ain't no rule against scotch 'n'
soda.

HENRI
For you, there is. Keys.

Artie reluctantly drops his keys on the bar. Henri scoops them up, pours a plain soda.

ARTIE
Really?

HENRI
Really.

Artie frowns, slurps it, drops a crumpled bill on the bar.

HENRI
Keep your money, Artie.

ARTIE
A real man always pays for his drinks.

HENRI
That isn't a real drink.

ARTIE
No shit. Take it anyway.

He shoves the crumpled bill further down the bar.

HENRI
I don't need it.

ARTIE
The hell you don't. Look around you.

HENRI
I like it here.

ARTIE
Well it ain't the Queen Elizabeth.

Artie takes another slurp. Henri continues cleaning.

ARTIE
How old are you, Harry?

HENRI
Henri. With an I.

ARTIE
Hunh?

Artie stares like Henri's speaking another language.

HENRI
(beat)
I'm thirty-two.

ARTIE
You own this place?

HENRI
Nope. Just work here.

ARTIE
Go to college?

HENRI
Briefly.

ARTIE
Married?

HENRI

Not yet.

ARTIE

So what the fuck you doin' here?

Henri sets down the last clean glass, dries his hands.

HENRI

Just where I ended up.

Henri pulls the drain plug on the sink.

ARTIE

Life ain't about where you end up,
man. It's about gettin' where you
want to be.

Artie sucks the last few drops of soda from his glass.

ARTIE

Ahh! Hit the spot.

Henri takes the glass, rinses it out.

ARTIE

Guess I'll be going now.

Artie holds out his unsteady hand. Henri shakes his head.

ARTIE

C'mon, hand 'em over.

HENRI

I'll drive you home after I lock up.

Artie slumps onto his stool, exasperated.

ARTIE

How long's that gonna be?

HENRI

Like two minutes.

Artie groans, then very obviously gets an idea.

ARTIE

I, uh, gotta get somethin' from my
car first.

Artie holds out his hand again.

HENRI

Do I look that stupid?

ARTIE

No?

HENRI

Tell you what -- count backwards
from five with your eyes closed, and
I'll let you go to your car.

ARTIE

Pfff! Easy!

Artie shuts his eyes, holds each arm out to the side, touches
his nose with alternate hands on each number.

ARTIE

Ten...nine...

HENRI

Artie.

ARTIE

...Eight...
(opens his eyes)
What?

HENRI

You know what, I'm sorry, my fault.
Go ahead. Please.

Artie scowls, shuts his eyes, touches his nose as before.

ARTIE

Eight...seven...

As Artie counts all the way down, Henri locates a particular
key, removes it from the chain, and pockets it.

ARTIE

Two...one...blast off!

Artie raises his arms in victory, eyes open again.

HENRI

Deal's a deal, here you go.
(hands over keys)
I'll be out in a couple minutes.

Artie ambles to the door, opens it, looks back to Henri,
shakes his keys.

ARTIE

Sucker!

Artie staggers out, cackles as the door closes behind him,
clanking the cowbell.

HENRI

Yeah, good luck startin' the car.

Henri picks up the phone behind the bar, makes a call.

HENRI

Hey. Yeah, I'm leavin' now. I just gotta take this guy home. An old regular. He's drunk, Maxine, I can't let him drive. Not far from here. I'll be home soon. All right. Bye.

He hangs up, briefly watches three colorful fish swim around aimlessly in the tank.

HENRI

Just keep swimming, kids.

Henri puts on a light denim jacket, flicks off several light switches. The whole place goes dark except for one lone bulb.

SMASH! From outside, the unmistakable sound of a car accident.

Henri rushes out the door to investigate.

FADE OUT

FADE IN:

INT. MAXINE'S HOUSE - EARLY MORNING

A small and modest single family home. MAXINE (late 20's) sleeps on the couch, fully dressed.

Henri enters quietly. Maxine stirs. Henri tiptoes even more cautiously, stops in his tracks when Maxine speaks.

MAXINE

What time is it?

HENRI

Very late. Or early, depending on--

MAXINE

Where the fuck have you been?

Henri seems about to speak, then enters the bedroom. Maxine sits upright, sees the sun coming up.

MAXINE

It's morning already! In what part of the universe is being out all night the same as being home soon?

She waits for a response. There is none.

MAXINE

Are you gonna answer me?

HENRI (O.S.)

I'm going to bed.

Maxine gets up, storms after him.

BEDROOM

Henri lies in bed, still dressed minus shoes and jacket.
Maxine stops in the doorway, radiating anger.

MAXINE

If you would just get a cell phone,
this wouldn't happen.

HENRI

Can we discuss it later?

MAXINE

Can you tell me where you were?

Maxine changes for bed.

HENRI

I was at the hospital and the police
station. There was an accident.

MAXINE

Not in *my* car!

HENRI

Your car's fine. So am I, if it
matters.

MAXINE

It does, but I could see that already.

Henri remains silent. Maxine lies in bed next to him.

MAXINE

So what happened? Someone get hurt?

HENRI

No, Max, people are always rushed to
the hospital in perfect health.

MAXINE

Don't be an asshole. Sometimes people
don't get hurt, just disorientated.

HENRI

That isn't a word. You mean
disoriented.

MAXINE

Don't correct me!

HENRI

Don't be incorrect.

Maxine fumes silently. For a long moment, the room is quiet.

MAXINE

Your van stained the driveway again.
I got oil all over my shoes.

HENRI

I'll get it looked at soon.

MAXINE

Soon, soon, everything's soon with
you. When are you actually gonna do
something?

HENRI

Soon as I get some sleep.

MAXINE

Very funny, you French bastard.

HENRI

French Canadian.

MAXINE

What the fuck ever. I'm tired of you
taking me for granted.

Henri faces her with a sigh.

HENRI

What's really bothering you, Maxine?

MAXINE

What's bothering me? You drive my
car, you live in my house, but you
never do anything for me! Or yourself.

Henri turns on his back, stares at the ceiling.

MAXINE

How many times have you talked about
finding a real job, or going back to
school? Then you just go back to
that stupid bar.

HENRI

Caroline needs me.

MAXINE

No, she doesn't. And the more I think
about it, neither do I.

HENRI

That's encouraging.

MAXINE

Look, Henri, I need someone in my
life who actually wants to do

(MORE)

MAXINE (CONT'D)
something with his. If that isn't
you, it's time for you to go.

Henri thinks a moment, then closes his eyes.

INT. KATIE'S BEDROOM - MORNING

KATIE (21, petite brunette) lies in bed, eyes closed.

CARLA (O.S.)
Katie...Katie.

Katie opens her eyes to the sight of CARLA (20, black hair & dark eyes) leaning over her. Carla wears a full length robe.

CARLA
You're gonna be late.

Katie takes a moment, lets out a sigh.

INT. BATHROOM - MORNING

The two women stand side by side at the sink, brush their teeth. Katie wears a towel, Carla still in her robe.

CARLA
I have a date tonight.

KATIE
No rehearsal?

CARLA
After rehearsal.

KATIE
Anyone I know?

CARLA
It's Brett.

Katie spits into the sink. Carla keeps brushing.

KATIE
Brett who?

CARLA
Brett. You remember.

Carla spits. Katie thinks for a moment.

KATIE
Carla! I thought you dumped that
creep months ago!

CARLA

I did. I'm giving him another chance.

KATIE

You sure he deserves it?

CARLA

No. That's why it's called a chance.

They both spit.

EXT. KATIE'S APARTMENT/CHICAGO - MORNING

Katie locks the door of the three-story apartment building. She wears simple, fashionable clothes and eyeglasses, quickly styled hair, and carries a faux-leather satchel.

TITLE: FRIDAY

Katie checks the time on her phone, rushes out the gate.

KATIE

Fuck, fuck, fuck.

EXT. LOGAN SQUARE SUBWAY ENTRANCE - MORNING

Katie moves quickly down the steps into the Blue Line subway.

INT. UNDERGROUND SUBWAY PLATFORM - MORNING

Katie runs to catch up to the last car of the inbound train as it pulls into the station.

INT. SUBWAY CAR - MORNING

Katie stands near the door of the packed car. Nearby are TWO TEENAGE BOYS w/ a TEEN GIRL, & JACQUES (29, sounds like Jack), a nice looking guy in a decent suit, holding a briefcase.

The boys wear jeans that are way too big and hang down low, oversized boxers puffed out behind them.

The girl wears an outfit too revealing for her age, but is made up enough to pass for older.

Katie regards the younger three as they chatter and giggle among themselves, then she notices Jacques' suit.

She looks him up and down, a look of assessment - of his clothing, not of him.

Jacques catches her look, smiles. Suddenly she sees she's been caught, is immediately embarrassed.

KATIE

I was...just admiring your suit.

JACQUES

It's all right, go ahead. I used to be a mannequin.

Jacques strikes a mannequin pose. Katie suppresses a giggle.

JACQUES

I retired, but they let me keep the outfit.

Katie can't help but laugh. Jacques smiles.

EXT. DOWNTOWN CHICAGO - MORNING

Katie exits the Jackson St. station on Dearborn, along with dozens of people in suits, a lot of business-like attire.

INT. CLOTHING STORE - MORNING

Katie hustles over just as the store manager VERONICA (50's, classy & striking) switches on the computers and registers.

KATIE

Morning, Veronica.

VERONICA

Good morning, Katie.
(with love)
Almost late, as usual.

INT. CLOTHING STORE - MORNING/LATER

This section is upscale fashion, but not the ridiculously overpriced kind.

Katie is behind the register as Veronica escorts a MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN with a shopping bag to the main entrance/exit.

As the customer steps out into the mall, she is nearly knocked down by a TEEN KID carrying a skateboard not looking where he's going. His pants hang low like the boys on the train.

SKATEBOARD KID

Whoa, sorry grandma.

He laughs it off as he catches up to his friends, a small group of TEEN BOYS who laugh at him, call him stupid names.

Katie frowns and shakes her head.

VERONICA
They're too young for you.

KATIE
That is not what I was thinking.

VERONICA
Mmm-hmm.

KATIE
I just wonder why we bother, you
know? I mean, look at these people.

They notice more unfashionable types walking by: soccer moms
in tennis shoes, step-dads in khaki shorts and sandals...

KATIE
Fashion is dead. And it's taking us
with it.

Veronica smiles at Katie, takes a moment.

VERONICA
When's the last time you got laid?

KATIE
Not everything is about sex, Ronnie.

VERONICA
Sure it is. As for the
unfashionable...

THREE OLD LADIES walk by, chatting away, all in full length
flower print dresses with hats to match.

VERONICA
There's just no helping some people.

Katie fiddles with a button on her outfit, stares blankly
out into the store. Veronica assesses Katie's demeanor.

VERONICA
In my experience, best thing for an
existential crisis? Get yourself
loosened up.
(off Katie's frown)
Seriously. It helps.

KATIE
That isn't what I need.

VERONICA
Not from those skater boys out there,
no. Find a man your age.

KATIE

I'm twenty-one, Veronica. There are no men my age. Just bigger boys.

EXT. DIRT PITCHER'S MOUND - DAY

MATT PRATT's (12, stocky) face hits the dirt with a THUD.

EXT. SUBURBAN PARK/BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

DOUGIE (13, freckled) holds Matt down with a knee in his back, hands on his neck. OTHER BOYS gather, egg him on.

DOUGIE

You did that on purpose!

MATT

No I didn't! Get offa me!

Matt struggles to get up, but Dougie is too strong.

DOUGIE

You tried to kill me with the ball!
Say it!

MATT

The pitch got away from me! I'm sorry!

DOUGIE

Yeah, you better be sorry!

Dogie smacks Matt in the head and lets him up. Matt jumps to his feet like an angry bull, but doesn't attack.

Dogie is the biggest of all the boys, with the rest of them aside and behind him. Matt stands alone.

DOUGIE

What? What're you gonna do?

Matt seethes for a moment, as if deciding just that.

MATT

Don't touch me again, Dougie.

DOUGIE

Or what? You'll eat me?

The boys get a good laugh. Matt remains tense.

A car honks nearby. The boys turn to see a black Lincoln Town Car come to a stop on the road next to the field.

Dogie heads in the direction of the Lincoln, turns to face Matt as he taunts him.

DOUGIE
 (like a sheep)
 So long, Maaaaatt!

The other boys laugh as they disperse. Some follow Dougie, most do the chant:

BOYS
 Matt Pratt, super fat, tried to fart
 but made a splat...

Matt stays where he is, clenches his fists.

Dougie yanks open the Lincoln's back door and hops in, followed by two other boys. Matt stares after them.

Dougie's mom AMY STEVENSON (mid-late 30's, blonde-ish) leans over the passenger seat to call out the window.

AMY
 You need a ride, Matt?

She has a clear southern accent, but not exaggeratedly strong.

Matt simply shakes his head.

AMY
 You sure? I have room here in the
 front!

Dougie and the boys give Matt the finger; Amy can't see it.

MATT
 No, I'm fine.

AMY
 All right. You take care now!

She gives him a big, genuine smile before addressing the back seat, in a more harsh manner.

AMY
 You boys better buckle up before you
 go flyin' through the windshield.

DOUGIE
 The car's not even moving, mom.

AMY
 Douglas, you mind your tone!

Matt watches the car drive away and turn a corner. He feels his bruised cheek, brushes himself off.

He strolls to the plate, picks up the forgotten baseball. Matt walks off the baseball diamond, all alone.

EXT. SUBURBAN SIDEWALK - DAY

Matt casually walks home, kicks at fallen brown and yellow leaves in his path, tosses the ball to himself.

TITLE: FRIDAY

He reaches out in front of him to catch an errant toss.

MATT

Hey Dougie, you know what a troglodyte is? No? Look in the mirror!

Matt lets out a chuckle, then shakes his head. He stops tossing the ball, keeps walking.

MATT

How'd you get those freckles, you wipe your butt with your face?

He laughs at that one.

INT. PRATT HOME - DAY

Matt enters the front door, heads into the kitchen.

MATT

I'm back!

He looks around the empty house, drops his ball and mitt into a chair at the table.

MATT

Uncle Ed?

INT. PRATT HOME/OFFICE - DAY

ED PRATT (mid 30's) types at the computer. He has short hair, glasses, and two-day stubble. He dresses simply, sits in a versatile, adjustable chair.

Matt strolls in the open door, drops into a second chair.

ED

Hey champ. You have fun?

MATT

Not really. What're you workin' on?

ED

Ruining an old novel that once held promise.

MATT
About the doctor?

ED
No, the cop.

Matt looks over Ed's shoulder at the computer monitor.

MATT
Then why's it called Hospital Zone?

Ed stops typing, takes a closer look.

ED
Aw, how the fuck...

Ed taps a few keys, manhandles the mouse.

ED
Sorry. Didn't mean to swear.

MATT
No biggie.

Matt spins the chair, around and around. Ed stops messing with the computer, turns to face Matt.

ED
I was working in the wrong file.

MATT
Uh-huh.

ED
What happened to your face?

MATT
I'm fine. It doesn't even hurt.

ED
It looks awful.

Ed stops the chair from spinning, takes a close look at Matt's bruise. Matt pulls away, shoves Ed's arms off of him.

MATT
I said I'm fine!

ED
So what happened?

MATT
Dougie Stevenson knocked me down. He thinks I tried to hit him with the ball.

ED

Did you?

MATT

No! Not really. I mean, it did hit him.

ED

Matt, come on. You could knock the cherry off a sundae and not get ice cream on the ball.

Matt shrugs, tries to act humble.

ED

First rule of pitching: never hit a batter who's bigger than you. Even if he deserves it. You did say Dougie Stevenson?

Matt nods.

ED

Oh yeah. He deserved it.

Matt can't help but happily agree.

ED

We should put some ice on that.

MATT

No thanks.

Matt gets up and walks out. Ed Follows him.

INT. PRATT HOME/UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - DAY

ED

How about a raw steak?

MATT

What? Why?

ED

Take the swelling down.

MATT

It's fine!

Matt enters his bedroom, which is covered with baseball stuff.

ED

I just think it'd be good to-

MATT

Stop mothering me!

Matt slams his door.

The DOORBELL rings. Ed sighs and heads for the stairs.

INT. PRATT HOME/FRONT DOOR - DAY

Ed opens the door to find Amy Stevenson outside.

AMY

Hi, Ed. Is Matt home yet?

INT. PRATT HOME/KITCHEN - DAY

Ed and Amy sit at the table, each with a glass of iced tea.

ED

Sounds like a minor misunderstanding to me. Boys will be boys, you know.

AMY

I know, but Douglas has had a difficult time since the divorce, and I worry he's taking it out on the kids at school.

ED

I don't know about that, but Matt's fine. I don't think it's a problem.

MATT (O.S.)

What's a problem?

Matt enters the kitchen behind Ed, casually heading for the fridge, when he notices Amy.

MATT

Oh. Hi, Mrs. Stevenson.

Amy smiles at first, then suddenly recoils in shock, hand to her chest, at the sight of Matt's bruised face.

She gets up and bears down on him, cringing as she inspects his bruise.

AMY

Oh, you poor boy, look at that face!

INT. HENRI'S BEDROOM - MORNING

CU: Henri's face as he lies in bed. His eyes open.

TITLE: SUNDAY

He looks over at Maxine's side of the bed, empty and unmade.

INT. SHOWER - MORNING

Henri lets the hot water pour over his head.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Showered but not shaved, in jeans and a white Chicago Bears away jersey (34 PAYTON), Henri stands over a tented piece of paper set on a small round table.

Written on the note in black marker is "YOUR FREE TO LEAVE WHENEVER YOU WANT".

Henri only reads the note, doesn't pick it up or even lean down to look closer.

SERIES OF SHOTS:

Henri removes clothes from dresser drawers.

He boxes toiletries and other personal items.

He unplugs cords and cables on his computer.

He rolls fragile objects in newspaper.

He seals a box with tape.

He slaps a key on the table next to Maxine's note.

EXT. HOUSE/STREETSIDE - DAY

The neighborhood is small town suburbia, the comfy midwest. Kids play on a lawn down the street.

Henri shuts the rear doors on his beat-up old cargo van, half-filled with boxes and suitcases.

Henri gets behind the wheel, slams his door, rolls down the window. He holds his finger on the ignition key.

After a moment, he opens his door and climbs out.

INT. HOUSE/KITCHEN - DAY

Henri changes "YOUR" to "YOU'RE" on the note with a red marker. He caps the marker and drops it on the table.

INT. VAN - DAY

Henri starts up the beast, chugs off down the street.

INT. VAN - DAY

Henri pulls up to a red light, stops next to a MIDDLE-AGED COUPLE in a convertible.

 CONVERTIBLE MAN
I didn't say that!

 CONVERTIBLE WOMAN
Then who did? Bigfoot?

Henri keeps his eyes on the light, waits for it to change.

 CONVERTIBLE MAN
I'm just saying, that isn't what I meant.

 CONVERTIBLE WOMAN
Oh, I know what you meant.

 CONVERTIBLE MAN
No, you don't. If you did, you wouldn't be mad.

 CONVERTIBLE WOMAN
I'll be mad whenever I damn well feel like it! You can't tell me not to get mad!

Henri turns to view the couple during their exchange.

 CONVERTIBLE MAN
I'm not telling you that!

 CONVERTIBLE WOMAN
You just said it!

 CONVERTIBLE MAN
That isn't what I said!

The light changes and the convertible takes off. Henri accelerates slowly, and a smile brightens his face.

EXT. HIGHWAY ON-RAMP - DAY

Henri's van climbs the hill and merges with high speed traffic, the small town left behind.

INT. VAN ON HIGHWAY - DAY

The road is a four-lane interstate with a concrete median and soft shoulder, surrounded by flat farmland.

Henri travels at the van's highest speed, around 50mph, in the right lane. A constant stream of cars and trucks passes him on the left.

EXT. VAN/EXPRESSWAY - DAY

Henri's van exits the busy road. As the van decelerates down the off-ramp, the city of Chicago is revealed.

EXT. TOWNHOUSE - DAY

Henri exits the van, parked in the street in front of a three-story townhouse in a residential neighborhood.

He enters the gate, climbs the steps, reaches an outstretched finger toward the door buzzer.

INT. CLOTHING STORE - FRIDAY AFTERNOON

Katie presses a buzzer under the counter.

Katie watches from the register as elderly MRS. CAHILL stuffs several silk scarves into an extra large purse.

Two SECURITY OFFICERS enter the store, calmly approach the shoplifter. She freezes as they stand on either side of her.

MRS. CAHILL

What do you want?

OFFICER #1

Would you come with us please, ma'am?

MRS. CAHILL

No! Leave me alone!

She turns away as if to continue shopping. The officers each take an arm, and gently lead her toward the exit.

MRS. CAHILL

Hey! You sons of bitches!

Veronica steps out of the back, joins Katie at the counter.

OFFICER #2

Mrs. Cahill, please don't be so difficult this time?

OFFICER #1

(to Katie & Veronica)

We should finish processing her by closing, have your merchandise back tonight.

MRS. CAHILL

Let go of me, you rat fucker!

VERONICA

Okay, thanks guys. Good night, Mrs. Cahill!

The officers give a friendly wave on their way out.

MRS. CAHILL

Help! Rape!

Katie turns to Veronica. They share a look.

VERONICA

That could be you in a hundred years.

KATIE

Thanks! I gotta get to class.

INT. DESIGN CLASSROOM - EVENING

Katie sits among a dozen FASHION STUDENTS, each working on a design. The INSTRUCTOR looks over a student's shoulder, points at something in the drawing, whispers a comment.

Katie stares at her sketch in front of her, colored pencil in hand. The sketch shows the beginnings of a simple yet stylish ensemble over a thin female figure.

Katie looks at the drawing of a student near her, a similar type of design. The other student herself is a GOTH GIRL with spiked hair, black makeup, the whole bit.

The goth girl looks up from her work, notices Katie watching. The girl turns her sketch away from Katie.

Katie sighs, goes back to her own work.

INT. SUBWAY PLATFORM - NIGHT

Katie squeezes out of a packed train car onto the platform. No one gives her any space, so she forces her way through, yanks her bag out after her.

Exasperated, Katie climbs the steps to the surface world as the train pulls away.

INT. KATIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Katie enters in near darkness, a faint glow in the windows from the street lights.

She locks the door behind her, makes her way across the front room in the dark. She BANGS into something heavy.

KATIE

Ow! Shit.

She shuffles to the living room wall, flips two switches to light both rooms. Katie gasps, startled by the sight of two people asleep on the couch.

Carla and BRETT (20's, skinny, shaggy hair) both lie naked under a blanket, coiled in each other's arms.

KATIE

(to herself)

Ohhh! Ever hear of a bed?

She drops her bag on the coffee table with a THUD. The noise jolts Brett semi-awake, but Katie doesn't notice this as she continues to the kitchen.

KATIE

(to herself still)

Or a hotel room?

Brett squints in the light, views his surroundings.

Katie opens the fridge, scans its contents.

KATIE

Bad enough there's no light switch
by the door, I gotta come home to
Brett's lazy ass on my couch.
Literally.

She grabs a bottle of hard cider and shuts the fridge. Turning around, she jolts in fright, drops the bottle.

Brett stands there, facing her, his bare ass to the camera.

INT. PRATT HOME/KITCHEN - FRIDAY AFTERNOON

Amy sits at the table with Matt and Ed and their iced tea.

AMY

But, I thought I'd check on him
anyway.

Amy leans closer to Matt, gently touches his bruised face.

AMY

Ooh, you're turning purple.

Matt shyly pulls his face away from her hand.

MATT

Naw, it's okay. Can't even feel it.

Amy gives Ed an apologetic look.

ED

He's a tough kid.

AMY

Well, good. I suppose I'll be going, then. Time to get Douglas to his father's house.

MATT

Dougie's here?

Amy digs through her purse, looking for something.

AMY

No, no, he's at home. I would never leave him alone in the car, he hates that. Oh, heck!

ED

Something wrong?

AMY

I just realized I can't take Douglas with me tomorrow. I have to drive out to the boonies to see my brother, and it's a long drive with only the radio to keep me company.

Amy locates and extracts her keys.

ED

We're not doing anything tomorrow.

All three exchange glances in turn. Amy smiles.

EXT. PRATT HOME/FRONT DOOR - LATE AFTERNOON

Ed and Matt see Amy out the door, to her car in the driveway.

AMY

You sure you won't mind bein' out so late?

ED

Nah. It'll be good to get out and see the world.

MATT

Yeah, I like road trips.

Amy gives them each a quick half-hug, which embarrasses Matt a little. She climbs behind the wheel, starts the car.

AMY
Thanks again, gentlemen. See you
tomorrow night!

Amy backs into the street, waves to them as she drives away. Ed and Matt wave back, stand silent a moment.

ED
Wanna throw a few?

EXT. PRATT HOME/BACKYARD - EARLY EVENING

Matt unleashes a heater. The baseball SMACKS into Ed's mitt. He tosses the ball across the open yard to Matt.

MATT
Do you ever miss living in the city?

ED
Sometimes.

Matt winds up and lays one in there. The kid's arm is deadly.

ED
Youch!

Ed shakes off the pain with a grin, lobs it back. Matt hangs onto the ball, inspects the stitching.

MATT
Would you go back if you didn't have
to take care of me?

Ed stands up from his crouching position.

ED
Matt, if I wasn't here with you, I
don't even know what my life would
be right now.

Matt looks up, makes eye contact.

ED
I'm here because you need me.
Nothing's more important than that.

Matt briefly chews on this, gets into his stance. Ed returns to his crouch. Matt's pitch lands in Ed's mitt with a SMACK.

INT. PRATT HOME/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Matt and Ed relax on the couch, watch a Cubs game.

MATT

I could have moved in with you. Then you'd be a big shot in Chicago, and not some random guy in podunk hills.

ED

This is your home. You belong here. Besides, I was never a big shot.

On TV, the stadium crowd lets out a collective groan.

ED

You wanna switch over to the Sox?

MATT

(beat)

Nah.

INT. PRATT HOME/MATT'S ROOM - NIGHT

Matt wears pajamas, climbs into bed. Ed sits on a stool.

MATT

What did you want to be when you were a kid?

ED

I wanted to be like you.

Matt slides under the covers, remains sitting.

MATT

Like me?

ED

A pitcher, maybe for the Cubs. But I don't have your arm.

Matt flexes his arm, to exaggerated effect, which draws a chuckle from Ed.

ED

I wanted to be lots of things. But the older you get, the more those things fall away, one by one.

MATT

You wanted to be a writer, though. And now you are.

ED

Mm-hmm. That's the dream that wouldn't die.

MATT

I think I have one of those.

Matt lies down, pulls up the covers.

ED

You know what usually happens with those dreams?

Matt shakes his head.

ED

Most of the time, they kill you.

Matt's eyes go wide.

ED

You could spend your entire life looking for that one thing but never quite find it.

MATT

That doesn't sound good.

ED

(leans in, whispers)
Ah, but sometimes...sometimes, those dreams come true.

A big grin spreads across Matt's face.

ED

So never ever let your dreams fall away.

Ed tousles Matt's hair, stands, turns to leave.

MATT

What about my dad?

Ed stops, pauses a moment before he turns back, sits on the edge of the bed.

ED

I miss him, kid. I miss him every day.

MATT

But what were his dreams? I mean what was he like, when he was my age.

Ed smiles, looks out the window a moment.

ED

A lot like you are now. And wherever he went, he'd always let me tag along.

(MORE)

ED (CONT'D)

The other boys never wanted their little brothers around, but he always let me join in. And he loved baseball, just like you. Except he was terrible.

Ed laughs as he goes on.

ED

If the other kids let him play a base, he'd forget to tag it. So they stuck him in the outfield, and every time he'd get the ball, he'd throw it home.

Matt smiles wide.

ED

Every time! Didn't matter who was running where, he'd throw it home. He could do it, too. Hell of an arm, like you. Totally wild, though. He once threw a ball from the outfield, toward home, over that giant twenty foot backstop and across the street. He'd be amazed how accurate you are.

MATT

You think my mom had good aim?

ED

(nods)

Actually, she did. I played darts with her once before you were born. She beat the crap outta me.

They reflect a moment.

ED

You miss 'em too, don't you.

Matt nods, lips pressed together.

ED

Nothing wrong with that. But as long as you and I have each other, we're gonna be fine. Okay?

MATT

Okay, Uncle Ed.

ED

All right. Good night, Matt.

MATT

Good night.

Ed leaves the room, shuts the door behind him.

EXT. TOWNHOUSE/FRONT DOOR - DAY

Jacques (the guy in the suit on Katie's train, sounds like Jack) pulls the door open. Jacques is not as tall as Henri, wears a navy blue Chicago Bears home jersey (54 URLACHER).

JACQUES
Well lookee what we have here.

Jacques looks past Henri, sees the van parked in the street.

JACQUES
Does mom know?

HENRI
Know what?

Jacques steps back into the foyer, leaves the door open. Henri follows him in and closes the door.

JACQUES
That your engagement's off.

Jacques climbs the steps, his back to Henri, who follows.

HENRI
What makes you say that?

JACQUES
You're ringin' my doorbell on Sunday
with a van full of shit parked
outside.

HENRI
You're way off, Jacques. It's nowhere
near full.

INT. JACQUES' TOWNHOUSE/LIVING ROOM - DAY

The third floor front room has a western view of the afternoon sun, is tastefully decorated.

Jacques sits in a recliner, Henri sprawls on the couch, each with a beer in his hand.

JACQUES
You should call her.

HENRI
She basically told me to leave. I
got nothing to say.

JACQUES
Not Max, shithead. Mom.

Jacques takes a nice big beer gulp.

HENRI
Don't call me shithead, Jackie boy.

JACQUES
You wanna stay here, rent free, I'll
call you little miss sunshine if I
feel like it.

HENRI
Maybe I'm not staying here.

Henri takes a swig.

JACQUES
You gonna find another place in podunk
meadows?

HENRI
Podunk hills.

JACQUES
Why not move here?

HENRI
Here in Chicago or here in this room?

JACQUES
Chicago. The room's only available
for strippers and flight attendants.

Henri regards the label of the beer bottle, as if all the
answers are there in the fine print.

HENRI
I don't know.

Henri takes a long drink.

JACQUES
You're a good bartender. There's
like ten thousand restaurants here.

HENRI
Did it occur to you I may not want
to tend bar anymore?

JACQUES
Yes. Has it occurred to you?

Henri has to stop and think, checks the beer level in the bottle.

HENRI

Not until just now.

They contemplate this in silence for a moment, then a phone rings. Jacques answers.

JACQUES

Moshi moshi!

Henri finishes off his beer, holds on to the bottle.

JACQUES

Why hello beautiful!

Jacques gives Henri a wink. Henri couldn't appear to care less.

JACQUES

Absolutely! I can't say no to you!

Henri lurches to his feet, heads for the kitchen.

JACQUES

(in French, subtitled)

I don't think he will! No, I wouldn't let him get away with that either!

Henri quickly returns to the room with an unopened beer, silently waves off Jacques (I'm not here!).

JACQUES

(in French, subtitled)

Now he's pretending he's not here! You're right, he is being ridiculous!

Henri shrugs in defeat, hands Jacques the beer.

JACQUES

Okay. Love you too.

Henri takes the phone, flops onto the couch.

HENRI

Hi mom. No. I don't know. I'm not sure why she'd say that.

Jacques laughs at Henri, pleased with himself.

HENRI

She practically told me to get out. I'm surprised she'd even call you.

Henri rises from the couch.

HENRI

(in French, subtitled)

Of course she sounds worried!

Henri paces as he talks.

HENRI
 (in French, subtitled)
 She didn't expect me to leave!
 Probably thinks something's wrong
 with me.

Jacques tries to open the beer, winces in pain, then realizes it doesn't twist off.

HENRI
 No, mom, nothing's wrong with me.

JACQUES
 Nothing a hammer and nails won't
 cure.

Henri shoots him a look, but Jacques merely chuckles on his way to the kitchen.

HENRI
 (in French, subtitled)
 That was Jacques, being his usual
 charming self.
 (in English)
 Listen, mom, don't worry.

Henri stands at the window, faces the city.

HENRI
 Sometimes things need to get worse
 before they get better.

Henri returns to the center of the room.

HENRI
 (in French, subtitled)
 I'm sorry, mom, I've got to go. Yes.
 I will. Love to Dad. Bye bye.

He hangs up as Jacques returns with two open beers, hands one to Henri.

JACQUES
 What's the next move, slick?

EXT. TOWNHOUSE/STREET - AFTERNOON

Henri closes the rear doors of the now empty van. Jacques holds out two keys on a ring, drops them into Henri's hand.

JACQUES
 Come back when you're ready.
 (MORE)

JACQUES (CONT'D)

Just be sure and turn the lights on if you come in really late, so I don't bash your face in.

HENRI

Thanks for the warning.

JACQUES

You really want to drive back down tonight?

HENRI

I can't quit my job over the phone. Caroline's been good to me. Besides, I want to stop by the hospital.

JACQUES

(indicates van)

Yeah, but...in that thing? You're lucky she made it up here.

HENRI

Hey, she's tougher than she looks.

Henri bangs a fist on the closed door. Something loose rattles and drops inside the door with a muted CLANG.

Jacques gives Henri a look.

HENRI

I'll be fine.

EXT. INTERSTATE HIGHWAY - EVENING

Henri's van rolls along.

INT. VAN ON HIGHWAY - DUSK

Henri sees the sun set over the fields out his passenger window.

EXT. OUTBOUND TAVERN - NIGHT

Henri's van pulls in. A silver pickup truck sits in the lot.

INT. OUTBOUND TAVERN - NIGHT

A boisterous group of six men (50's & 60's) sit at the bar, rugged types in flannel shirts and denim jackets. FREDDY, EARL, PAULIE, JASPER, DOC, and GEORGE each have a drink.

The owner of the tavern, CAROLINE (early 50's), is behind the bar.

Caroline has sharp but inviting features, confident posture, and a voice like a knife.

GEORGE

(indicates Paulie)

So he's tyin' his belt on my arm to stop the bleeding, but there's no hole in my jacket!

PAULIE

No tear, no nothin'.

DOC

Musta been a magic arrow.

The men laugh heartily as Henri enters.

CAROLINE

Well, look who dropped by!

Henri sits at the end of the group as they greet him.

MEN

Hank! Hey kid! Yo, Hen-er-y!

CAROLINE

Didn't expect to see you today.

HENRI

Yeah, I just...didn't have anywhere else to be right now.

EARL

Join the club!

The men chuckle.

HENRI

Thanks, Earl.

CAROLINE

Whatcha drinkin', sunshine?

HENRI

Baby's bottle, Caroline. I'm not stayin' long.

CAROLINE

Sasparilla it is!

Caroline yanks a bottle from the cooler and deftly flips off the lid with an opener, returns the opener to her pocket like a quickdraw pistol to its holster.

She slides the bottle toward Henri, along the full length of the bar.

INT. KATIE'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Katie's dropped (and unbroken) bottle rolls along the floor to Brett's feet, where he picks it up.

KATIE
Jesus, Brett, what the fuck?

BRETT
'Sup, Katie. How's school?

Brett twists off the cap. The shaken contents spew onto his bare, hairless chest.

BRETT
Whoo! Cold.

He's about to drink what's left in the bottle when Katie grabs it from him.

KATIE
Give me that!

BRETT
Hey, no prob.

He reaches forward to open the fridge. Katie backs away from his nudity, kicks the fridge door shut.

KATIE
Don't drink my booze! And put some pants on!

BRETT
What for? You know you like it.

He moves toward her with a mock swagger. She backs away.

KATIE
Stop.

He moves slowly forward, she continues back.

BRETT
Come on baby. I'm ready for ya.

KATIE
(looks down)
No, you're not.

BRETT
So why don't you give me a hand?

Katie backs into the corner against the counter. With nowhere to go, she hands him the open bottle, averts her eyes.

KATIE

Okay! Here!

Brett takes the bottle, backs up and turns away.

BRETT

Sucker.

He chugs what's left as he returns to the living room.

Katie vents a growl of frustration and takes another bottle from the fridge. She enters the living room with one hand shielding her eyes from a view of the couch.

LIVING ROOM

Brett pulls up and zips a pair of jeans as Katie tries to retrieve her bag without looking at him.

BRETT

You can blink now.

Katie risks a glance, stops shielding her eyes, grabs her bag and takes it into the adjoining bedroom.

Brett continues to get dressed.

BRETT

You act like you've never seen a naked man before.

KATIE (O.S.)

If that were true, I still haven't.

BRETT

Ha fucking ha.

KATIE'S BEDROOM

Katie empties her bag of folded dress clothes, nice shoes, books, etc.

BRETT

Hey, I know Carla likes what I got.

KATIE

Yeah, okay.

BRETT

She liked it almost three times tonight.

KATIE

Almost, huh? That's great.

BRETT

Did you know she growls when she comes?

KATIE

Whatever, Brett! I don't give a shit!

Brett stands in the doorway fully dressed: old t-shirt, torn jeans...slacker apparel.

BRETT

Gettin' ready for bed?

KATIE

No.

BRETT

Do you sleep in the nude?

KATIE

NO.

BRETT

Ever wake up with your hand on your vag?

Katie slams the door in his face, turns the lock. She mimes tearing her hair out.

She kicks off her shoes, wiggles toes inside her socks. There is a soft knock at the door. Katie rolls her eyes.

BRETT (O.S.)

I gotta talk to you about something.

Katie removes her coat, drops it on the bed, undresses.

BRETT (O.S.)

Katie? Seriously. No more fuckin' around.

Katie throws on loose-fitting sweatpants, a hooded sweatshirt.

BRETT (O.S.)

I got a job for ya. If you want it.

Katie twists off the bottle cap, unlocks and opens the door. Brett looks surprised that she actually opens it.

KATIE

You have a job for *me*. How ironic.

She pushes past him.

LIVING ROOM

BRETT

I mean it, Katie. Honest-to-Jesus.

Katie flops onto the couch next to a still sleeping Carla, takes a drink.

KATIE

I'm sure it's not the least bit illegal.

BRETT

No, it's legit. But don't tell Carla.

Katie makes an "Oh really?" face, shakes Carla to wake her.

Brett tries to wave her off, but Katie doesn't stop until Carla stirs, still sleepy.

CARLA

Mmmmm...hey Katie bird!

Katie gives Brett a look, "What do you think of that?" Carla absently scratches her collarbone, eyes not fully open.

CARLA

Brett was here.

Carla puts her head back down, not ready to be awake. Katie gently pushes Carla's hair behind her ear.

KATIE

Is he that tall, sexy businessman?

CARLA

No, the skinny one you don't like.

Brett frowns, insulted but trying not to act like it.

Carla gets comfortable, and just like that, she's asleep again. Katie brings the blanket up to Carla's shoulders.

Brett stoops over to slip his shoes on.

BRETT

I mean it about the gig. You should do it.

KATIE

What sorta gig?

Brett looks between her and the sleeping Carla.

BRETT

Meet me tomorrow. I'll give you all the details.

KATIE

I'm not wasting my Saturday on you.

Katie takes a long drink as Brett pleads.

BRETT

Come on, Katie! I need you!

KATIE

Why? Why me?

Brett pauses, summons the courage to admit it.

BRETT

Because you hate me! And you have no problem telling me all about it.

Katie nods; no way to argue with that.

BRETT

That means I can trust you.

KATIE

But I don't trust you.

Brett grabs his jacket off the floor, slips his arms in.

BRETT

I know. Look -- meet me for coffee tomorrow. I'll tell you everything. If you don't like it, just walk away.

EXT. LOGAN SQUARE COFFEE SHOP - MORNING

Katie swiftly walks away from Brett, her shoes slapping the sidewalk. She carries two cups of coffee to go.

BRETT

Wait, wait!

Brett hustles to catch her, matches her quick stride. He wears the same clothes, she looks casually un-madeup.

KATIE

What kind of job could you give me when you can't even pay for the coffee you asked me out for?

BRETT

I left my wallet in my other pants!

KATIE

Do you even have other pants?

BRETT

Just please, let me explain.

Katie stops abruptly, turns to face him.

KATIE

(indicates coffees)

You have thirty seconds before I throw these in your face or kick you in the balls. I haven't decided which.

Brett seems to be at a loss for words.

KATIE

That means talk!

BRETT

Uh, okay, okay! Here's the deal: I'm tryin' to sell some paintings to this guy, but he won't come into the city. I need you to deliver them.

KATIE

Paintings?

BRETT

Yes.

KATIE

Did you steal them?

BRETT

No, I painted them.

Katie gives him a look of incredulity.

BRETT

I'm an artist. Carla didn't tell you?

KATIE

I thought we weren't telling her about this.

BRETT

Not this, the other thing. The painting thing.

KATIE

This isn't the painting thing?

BRETT

No, I meant...okay, yeah, it is.

KATIE

Your thirty seconds are up.

Katie pulls the lid off one of the coffees. Brett shields his face with one arm, covers his balls with the other.

Katie sips from the open coffee. Brett cautiously faces her again, unshielded.

BRETT

Look. This guy's leaving the country tomorrow. He wants the paintings tonight, but I've got plans with Carla. And I don't want to stand her up.

Katie's apprehension appears to wane. She softens.

KATIE

How would I get there?

Brett pulls car keys from his pocket, dangles them in front of her.

INT. BRETT'S CAR/MOVING - MORNING

A nice late-model four-door mid-size sedan. Brett drinks coffee as he drives through the neighborhood, Katie in the passenger seat. She wears a seat belt, he doesn't.

KATIE

This can't be your car. It's too clean.

BRETT

I just got it.

KATIE

You mean stole it?

BRETT

I don't steal, Katie! What makes you think I'm a criminal?

KATIE

You're lazy and unscrupulous.

BRETT

I'm not lazy, I'm an artist. And I'm not that other thing you said.

They reach a stop sign. Brett makes a full stop, checks all sides, lets someone go first. Very safe.

KATIE

Unscrupulous.

BRETT

Yeah. I don't do that.

Katie eyes him as they cross the intersection.

KATIE

You don't know what that means, do you?

BRETT

I know it ain't good. But this is my car. My brother gave it to me. He bought a Mercedes.

KATIE

And I should believe you because...?

BRETT

Look in the glove box, man, check the title. Got my name on it and everything.

Katie opens the glove box, pulls out an empty Twizzlers wrapper, tosses it in the back with disdain.

BRETT

Sorry.

Katie finds the title, looks it over, puts it back.

BRETT

See?

KATIE

So you want me to take your car to the middle of nowhere and meet some guy to sell him your paintings.

BRETT

Yeah.

KATIE

Do you not hear how dubious that sounds?

BRETT

The guy's a collector. He's legit.

KATIE

So why won't he meet you here?

BRETT

He's afraid of the city. He grew up in backwoods Albania or some fuckin' place. The guy's a pussycat, I swear!

KATIE

I'm still gonna pass.

BRETT

Aw, Katie!

KATIE
I'm not getting involved in your
clandestine bullshit.

BRETT
My what?

KATIE
Your bullshit.

BRETT
No, the other part, what the fuck
does that mean?

Katie frowns at Brett, gives him the evil eye. He risks a
glance at her to gauge her silence.

KATIE
Clandestine means secret, CIA, James
Bond kinda shit. I won't do it.

BRETT
Why not?

KATIE
Because I won't lie to Carla about
it.

BRETT
You don't have to, I will!

KATIE
I don't want you lying to her either,
dickwad! That's why she dumped you
in the first fuckin' place!

BRETT
I never lied to her, I just...turned
out to be wrong sometimes.

KATIE
You can take me home now.

They drive in silence for a lengthy moment. Katie stares out
her window.

BRETT
All right. On the level. I'm making
plans for tonight to take your sister
out for her birthday. But she doesn't
know about it, because I'm trying to
surprise her.

Katie turns to look at him, and when she can't hold it back
any longer, bursts into laughter.

BRETT

What? What's so fucking funny?

Katie's laughter subsides, but her smile remains.

KATIE

A, she's my cousin, and two, she certainly will be surprised because her birthday was four months ago!

Katie laughs, but more controlled and subdued.

BRETT

All right, all right. I thought you were sisters, I don't know why. But I do know when her birthday is. I'm takin' her out now because I missed it last time.

KATIE

Yeah, when she dumped you.

BRETT

I know.

KATIE

She was up crying all night.

BRETT

I feel terrible about that. Really.

KATIE

I told her you weren't worth it.

BRETT

I wasn't. But I'm trying to be now. And I could really use your help.

Katie scrutinizes his face. He appears truly sincere.

KATIE

Show me the paintings.

INT. BRETT'S LOFT - DAY

Brett picks up one of several unframed paintings in a stack next to a plain brick wall, holds it up for Katie to view.

The painted image is an impressionistic scene of midwestern trees shedding autumn leaves and a boy raking them up.

EXT. PRATT HOME/FRONT YARD - DAY

Matt rakes leaves as Ed brings a tall (and empty) brown paper yard waste bag out of the garage.

TITLE: SATURDAY

Ed turns the bag upside down, approaches Matt from behind, knocks the rake aside and drops the bag over Matt's head. It covers him head to toe.

Ed chuckles. Matt laughs too, muffled by the bag. He shuffles forward without revealing his feet, so it looks like a bag hovering across the lawn.

ED

Oh no, it's possessed! Look out!

He pushes Matt over, knocks him into the soft pile of leaves.

MATT

(in between laughs)

It's eating me! Help! Get me out!

Ed grabs Matt by the ankles and slides him out of the bag. Matt lies on the ground, crippled by laughter.

ED

(mock serious)

Hey, quit foolin' around, we got work to do.

Matt gets up, still laughing. Ed picks up the rake.

MATT

You started it.

ED

Wasn't me. I saved you. Got here just in time.

Ed hands the rake to Matt.

MATT

Uh-huh.

Matt resumes raking, while Ed tosses armfulls of leaves into the bag.

MATT

Hey Uncle Ed?

ED

Yeah.

MATT

Where's the boonies?

ED

The what?

MATT

The boonies. Mrs. Stevenson said her brother lives there.

ED

Oh. It's a generic term. It means, like, the middle of nowhere. Far from civilization.

Ed brushes leaves from his shirt, picks them off and drops them in the bag.

MATT

Hmm. Boonies. It sounds funny.

ED

It actually started as a slang form of the word boondocks. Which means pretty much the same thing.

MATT

Cool.

Ed scoops up more leaves, drops them in the bag, absent-mindedly sings Billy Joe Royal's "Down In The Boondocks".

ED

Down in the boondocks...down in the boondocks.

MATT

Please don't sing.

ED

(louder)

People put me down 'cause that's the side of town I was born in!

Matt stops raking, glares at Ed, who uses two handfuls of leaves as if they were maracas, or pom-poms.

ED

I love her...she loves me...but I don't fit in her society.

Matt tries not to be amused, but slowly loses the battle. Ed rains down his leaves on Matt's head.

ED

Lord have mercy on the boy from down in the boondocks.

As Matt cleans leaves off his head, Ed looks around at the half-raked yard.

ED

You ready for a break?

Matt unceremoniously lets the rake drop to the ground.

ED

Good. I'm ready for a sandwich.

INT. PRATT HOME/KITCHEN - DAY

SERIES OF SHOTS as Ed and Matt each build a sandwich and cut them in half diagonally.

INT. OUTBOUND TAVERN - SUNDAY NIGHT

Caroline sets down two plates, each with a sandwich cut diagonally, in front of Earl and Jasper. Each man grabs half a sandwich from the other man's plate, sets it on his own.

GEORGE

You fellas just love to share, don't ya?

EARL

It's called variety, Georgie-boy.

JASPER

Yeah, try it sometime.

GEORGE

I'm comfortable being set in my ways, thank you.

FREDDY

So are they. I ain't seen either one of 'em stick with his own food in ten years.

PAULIE

More like twenty.

DOC

Were we even comin' in here twenty years ago?

PAULIE

Sure. Just had a different name back then.

FREDDY

Woody's Bar, wasn't it?

EARL

(mouth full)

I don't think so, Fred.

JASPER
 (mouth full)
 Who the fuck is Woody?

Further down the bar, Caroline leans over to chat with Henri.

CAROLINE
 So...still shaken up from last night?

HENRI
 Wouldn't say shaken up, exactly, but
 yeah.

Henri finishes off his sasparilla. Caroline snatches the empty bottle from his hand, drops it into a recycle bin.

CAROLINE
 You want another one?

HENRI
 No, um...Caroline, I'm...I'm leaving.

CAROLINE
 All right, well, we'll see you
 tomorrow then.

HENRI
 I mean that I can't work here anymore.

Caroline looks mildly shocked, speechless.

HENRI
 You see...last night, after the
 accident and all, I was thinking
 about what I'm doing with my life.

The men gradually quiet their conversation to listen to Henri.

HENRI
 And as much as I like working for
 you, and talking to these guys...it
 isn't what my life is about.

Henri pauses to gauge their attentive and sympathetic faces.

HENRI
 I'm not saying I'm meant for greater
 things, or that I need to make a
 difference in the world or anything
 like that. I just want to do what's
 right for me. And unfortunately, I'm
 pretty sure I'm not gonna find it
 here.

The men exchange looks, shrugs, quizzical expressions.
 Caroline smiles.

DOC
 (sincere)
 Well good luck to ya, Henri.

PAULIE
 (raises glass)
 To Henri!

The men raise glasses, wish Henri well, take a drink.

MEN
 Yeah, to Henri, you said it...

CAROLINE
 What's Max think about this?

HENRI
 Haven't told her.

CAROLINE
 Don't you think you ought to?

HENRI
 She left me a note this morning.
 Said I'm free to leave whenever I
 want.

Caroline gasps, her jaw drops.

CAROLINE
 She kicked you out?

HENRI
 No, I left.

CAROLINE
 Why?

HENRI
 She doesn't want me there, I'm not
 gonna stay.

CAROLINE
 So where are you gonna go?

HENRI
 Haven't quite determined that yet.

GEORGE
 You could always build a shack in
 the woods like your pal Bub.

JASPER
 Hey, I helped build that place. It's
 a cabin.

FREDDY

It's made 'a shit and twigs, Jasper.
That's a shack.

EARL

If he says it's a cabin, it's a cabin!

PAULIE

He can say a pig is a porcupine, but
I'll still cut it up for bacon.

EARL

What in the freakin' hell does that
shit mean?

Caroline lets out a sharp, high-pitched whistle. The men
become still and quiet.

CAROLINE

Ya fuckin' apes.

(to Henri)

You have somewhere to stay, at least?

HENRI

With my brother, in Chicago. But I
can still cover the bar until you
find somebody.

CAROLINE

Don't worry about that, I'll take
care of it. Like you said, you have
to do what's right for you.

DOC

Oh, Henri! I saw that ER doctor today.
Told me them paramedics said you
were a real cool customer.

HENRI

They did?

DOC

Yeah! Said people usually flip out
over blood and guts, but you stayed
cool.

HENRI

I had some medical training a few
years ago. Guess it sticks with you.
I wasn't really thinking about it.

CAROLINE

Have you been to the hospital?

HENRI

Not since last night.

CAROLINE

Why don't you stop in on your way
out of town.

HENRI

I think I'll do that.
(stands)
Well guys, I'm outta here.

Henri claps Doc on the shoulder.

HENRI

(to all)
Don't fall off your chairs, don't
order somethin' you can't pay for,
and don't piss in the garbage can.

Henri shakes each of their hands.

HENRI

So long, Doc. Take it easy, George.
See ya, Paulie. Earl, you're the
man. Jasper, you're the other man.
Freddy -- watch out for snakes.

Henri gives Caroline a warm smile.

HENRI

I'll see you again, Caroline.

She returns the smile as Henri backs up to the door.

HENRI

Adios, muchachos. Thanks for
everything.

The men give a friendly wave as Henri walks out.

EXT. OUTBOUND TAVERN - NIGHT

Gravel crunches under Henri's feet as the door closes behind
him. He approaches his van, but pauses.

Henri strolls to the edge of the gravel entrance, next to
the highway. He leans on a large rock at the shoulder, looks
closely at the broken glass, the shards of tail lights and
headlights that have been swept off the road.

HENRI

What a fuckin' mess.

INT. BRETT'S LOFT - DAY

Brett shoves aside a pile of dirty clothes, used paper plates, cigarette butts, and empty beer bottles in an attempt to clear a space for Katie on an old couch. She remains standing.

Brett gestures to several paintings now leaning against the brick wall, which is clear of both furniture and garbage.

BRETT

So? How do you like 'em?

Katie gives the artwork a cursory glance.

KATIE

They're very nice. What's he paying?

BRETT

You barely even looked at anything!

KATIE

Do you really care what I think?

BRETT

Of course! I always wanna know how fellow artists feel about my work.

KATIE

I'm not an artist.

BRETT

What do you mean? I've seen your drawings.

KATIE

Those are design sketches. I'm a fashion major.

BRETT

Yeah, but you're really good. I mean, you're not too shabby. You should be an artist.

Katie strolls past the paintings, looks them over.

KATIE

I'll keep that in mind, Picasso. Now how much is this guy paying?

BRETT

Six grand.

KATIE

For all of these?

BRETT
For everything you see here.

KATIE
(beat)
I'll do it for twenty-five percent.

BRETT
What?! That's like...
(counts on fingers)
Almost half!

Katie turns to look at Brett directly.

KATIE
Who taught you math?

BRETT
I'm not giving you that much!

KATIE
Twenty-five percent is one-fourth.
Fifteen hundred dollars.

BRETT
Oh. Still, that sounds like a lot.

KATIE
Don't be a cheap-ass. Remember, we're
doing this for Carla.

Brett sighs heavily, stomps like a petulant toddler.

BRETT
Fine.

KATIE
Good. Keys?

Brett reluctantly retrieves the car keys, hands them over.

KATIE
I'll be back for the paintings. You
should wrap them up. Oh and you're
paying for gas, too.

BRETT
Hey, don't push it, sister.

Katie looks him in the eye as she unceremoniously drops the keys on the floor and heads for the door.

BRETT
(picks up keys)
Okay okay okay, I'm sorry, I'm sorry.

Katie holds out her hand. Brett puts the keys in her palm.

INT. BRETT'S CAR - DAY

Katie drives through the neighborhood, alone in the car, happy behind the wheel, sings along to the radio.

INT. KATIE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Katie passes the open bathroom door, hears Carla in the shower, leans on the doorjamb.

KATIE

Hey Carla bear!

CARLA (O.S.)

Hey Katie bird! Where you been?

KATIE

Just out for a coffee. You doing anything tonight?

CARLA (O.S.)

Yeah, Brett's got some clandestine evening planned.

Katie smiles at the word 'clandestine'.

CARLA (O.S.)

Wouldn't tell me anything, said it's a big surprise.

KATIE

Let's hope it's the good kind.

Carla sticks her head outside the curtain, her face all soapy.

CARLA

Do you think I'm making a mistake?
With Brett?

KATIE

He is kind of a dimwit.

CARLA

I know. But he's really sweet.

KATIE

I don't think you're making a mistake.
Just don't let him break your heart.

Carla smiles, ducks back into the shower.

EXT. BRETT'S APARTMENT/ALLEY - DAY

Brett/Katie's car is parked in the alley behind the building. Katie stands by the open trunk. Brett wears his other pants, carefully sets paintings wrapped in brown paper in the trunk.

Brett slams the trunk. Katie holds out her open hand.

Brett grabs his wallet, pulls out a few singles, holds them out to her. Katie gives him the "keep it coming" hand gesture.

Brett frowns, slaps a gas station credit card in her hand.

INT. KATIE'S CAR - DAY

SERIES OF SHOTS

Katie behind the wheel, yanks the driver's door shut.

Katie turns the key in the ignition. The engine ROARS.

Katie's car peels out in the alley, tires SQUEAL.

Katie's car makes a quick turn from the alley to the street.

Katie's car zooms up an EXPRESSWAY ON-RAMP.

Katie's car screeches to a stop in HEAVY OUTBOUND TRAFFIC.

KATIE

Ahh, shitbuckets.

INT. PRATT HOME/OFFICE - SATURDAY EVENING

ED

(simultaneous pre-lap)

Shitbuckets!

Ed sits at his desk, views the screen in front of him.

He picks up his phone and makes a call, shakes his head in frustration as he waits for someone to pick up.

ED

Noah! What the fuck, man?

Matt appears in the doorway, curious about the outburst.

ED

Yes I got their notes, that's why I'm calling. What does all this mean, and why do they need it tomorrow?

Ed notices Matt's presence, points to the phone and shrugs while looking confused. Matt looks on questioningly.

ED

So I'm supposed to just drop everything and take care of this.

(beat)

Fine. Fine! I'll have it to you sometime tomorrow. Okay. Yeah, bye!

He hangs up, turns to Matt, exhales his frustrations.

ED

They need the next chapter for a presentation or some shit, I don't know. Looks like we can't go on that little road trip with Ms. Stevenson.

MATT

I can still go.

ED

By yourself?

MATT

With Mrs. Stevenson.

ED

Mm, I don't know about that.

MATT

Why not?

ED

May not be a good idea.

MATT

You can't make her go to the boonies alone after we said we'd go with.

ED

This is not a ride to school, Matt, it's a long drive. I'm not sure it's appropriate.

MATT

I don't see what the big deal is.

ED

Well, you don't have to, because you're the kid, and I'm the adult type responsible person here.

MATT

The parent?

ED

Bingo.

MATT

So is she.

ED

Then she and I will discuss it when
she gets here.

The DOORBELL rings. Matt and Ed exchange looks for a moment.

EXT. PRATT HOME/DRIVEWAY - EVENING

Matt sits in the front seat of Amy's car, buckles up as Amy backs the car out of the driveway.

Ed stands in front of the house, waves as they drive off.

INT. AMY'S CAR/MOVING - EVENING

AMY

How about a little traveling music?

She turns on the stereo, plays something fun and upbeat.

EXT. SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD/AMY'S CAR - EVENING

Amy's car passes Maxine in her driveway, dressed up fancy, furiously scraping the bottom of her shoe on the grass.

MAXINE

Stupid fuckin' van!

EXT. HIGHWAY ENTRANCE - EVENING

Amy's car leaves the suburban streets behind, pulls onto the two-lane highway as the sun goes down.

INT. AMY'S CAR/MOVING - NIGHT

Amy and Matt sit comfortably as the car cruises the open road. The silence stretches into awkward territory.

AMY

If you want to play games or something
on your phone, I don't mind.

MATT

No, I don't really play those. They're
boring. Plus I'm no good at 'em.

AMY
What are you good at?

MATT
Baseball.

AMY
Uh-huh, and what else?

MATT
That's pretty much it.

AMY
Well, what do you like to do? When you're not playing baseball.

MATT
I read a lot, I guess.

AMY
There you go! That's something.

MATT
Yeah, but that's like, not really a thing. I mean, nothing happens. It's just for fun.

AMY
Playing baseball isn't for fun?

MATT
Well yeah, but you know, it's a sport. You're playing against people, you're actually doing something. You can't win at reading.

AMY
True. Often times a good thing is its own reward.

Matt nods, unsure how else to respond. The silence grows, until Amy suddenly laughs to herself.

MATT
What?

AMY
Groucho Marx said "Outside of a dog, a book is man's best friend. Inside of a dog it's too dark to read."

Matt chuckles.

MATT
Who said that?

AMY
Groucho Marx.

MATT
Was that really his name, Groucho?

AMY
Not his real name, no. You never
heard of the Marx Brothers?

MATT
Nope.

AMY
Duck Soup? Horse Feathers?

MATT
I have no idea what that means.

AMY
Ask your uncle when you get home.
He'll tell you all about 'em.

MATT
Okay.

They drive in silence for a moment, Amy's eyes on the road,
Matt watching the landscape pass by in the dark.

AMY
Matt, I'd like to ask you something.

MATT
Sure.

AMY
It's about Douglas.

MATT
(beat)
All right.

AMY
I want you to understand that I
realize he's no prince, but I do
love him, and I always want what's
best for him.

MATT
Okay.

Amy takes a deep breath.

AMY
Is he a bully?

Matt thinks over his answer carefully.

AMY

You can tell me the truth, Matt. I really want to know. Is my son just awful? Is he dangerous?

MATT

Umm...I don't think he's dangerous, no. I mean he does act like a jerk most of the time, but he doesn't really hurt anybody.

AMY

What about your face?

MATT

Oh, he just knocked me down after I hit him with a pitch.

AMY

He didn't punch you?

MATT

No, he just pushed me and I fell. Tripped over my own feet, really. Then my face hit the ground.

AMY

Why did you hit him with the pitch?

MATT

(beat)
I'd rather not say.

AMY

I understand that, but please. This is important to me.

Matt screws up his face, spills the embarrassing truth.

MATT

He kept calling me whale-butt. He's always giving me names like that. Porky potato, that's another one. I just get sick of it. He's a jerk.

Amy sighs.

AMY

I'm sorry, Matt.

MATT

No, it's okay. It isn't your fault.

AMY

Still, I feel ashamed. You're a decent young man, and you deserve better.

Amy gives him a motherly pat on the shoulder. Matt smiles sheepishly.

EXT. AMY'S CAR/HIGHWAY - NIGHT

The car continues down the dark and empty road.

EXT. OUTBOUND TAVERN - SUNDAY NIGHT

Henri sits in his van, engine idling, at the parking lot exit. He looks up and down the dark, empty road. Nothing to see in either direction. He contemplates the choice.

Henri turns in the direction away from Chicago, drives off.

EXT. KATIE'S CAR - SATURDAY EVENING

Katie leaves the city behind in the distance as traffic thins and the sun nears the horizon.

INT. KATIE'S APARTMENT - SATURDAY NIGHT

Carla, dressed-up and stunning, skitters to the front door as the bell rings.

She opens the door to find Brett scrubbed clean, hair freshly cut, in pressed slacks and a dinner jacket. He looks decent.

She looks him over, pleased. He gestures grandly to the street.

A sleek black limousine waits at the curb. Carla is delighted.

EXT. INTERSTATE HIGHWAY OFF RAMP - NIGHT

Katie takes the exit, pulls onto a two-lane highway divided by a double yellow line.

INT. KATIE'S CAR - NIGHT

Katie checks a map on her phone as she drives.

KATIE

Okay, this is fifty-one north, and,
we go nine miles to...

EXT. HIGHWAY/DUSTY MOTOR INN - NIGHT

Katie's car turns off the road into the parking lot.

KATIE (V.O.)
 (carries over)
 ...the Dusty Motor Inn.

The motel has a dozen rooms in the classic "L" configuration, a neon VACANCY light, and pastel colors.

Katie backs into a spot in front of room 3, next to a red Porsche streaked with road grime. No other cars in the lot.

EXT. DUSTY MOTOR INN/ROOM 3 - NIGHT

Katie steps out, stretches, takes a look around.

KATIE
 Where the fuck am I?

She approaches the door of room 3, hesitates, knocks loudly.

The door swings open. SERGEI (40's) fills the doorway, the room dark except for the neon from the sign outside.

Sergei is over six feet tall, 250 lbs, much of it muscle. Short thick beard, black denim jeans, sweater, and bare feet.

He looks like a brute, not a pussycat. His accent is strong but clear, and he behaves somewhat nervously.

SERGEI
 You are Katya?

KATIE
 Katie, yes. You're Sergei?

SERGEI
 Yes. Please. Come inside.

He steps back, out of her way.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS/NIGHT

Katie steps in but stays in the doorway, leaves it open. Sergei keeps his distance, but the open door clearly bothers him.

SERGEI
 I am here for business only. No funny stuff.

Katie eyes the room, flips the light on. Sergei squints and shields his eyes from the lamp overhead.

KATIE
 Art's in the trunk.

She presses a button on the car key remote.

The trunk pops open. Katie backs away from the door as Sergei sticks his head out. He sees the car, scans the empty parking lot. He doesn't budge from the doorway.

SERGEI

Would you bring inside, please?

He retreats into the room like a rabbit disappearing down a hole. Katie looks at him, then peers outside at the car.

Katie steps over to the open trunk, pulls the wrapped paintings out one at a time.

KATIE

(to herself)

Maybe he is a pussycat.

INT. DUSTY MOTOR INN/ROOM 3 - MOMENTS LATER/NIGHT

Katie carries in two paintings, leans them against another wrapped pair. Sergei unwraps yet another.

KATIE

That's the last of them.

Katie kicks the door closed as Sergei shakes his head, sets the painting down.

SERGEI

These are not what I expected.

Sergei grabs another to unwrap it.

KATIE

What do you mean?

Sergei angrily tears off the brown paper.

SERGEI

This is not the set I asked for.

Katie looks over the paintings he's opened. They are the same ones seen earlier in Brett's apartment.

KATIE

These are the ones he showed me.
This is what he's selling.

SERGEI

(scary loud)

This is not what I'm buying!

Sergei throws the painting to the floor as he gets to his feet. He makes no move toward Katie, but towers over her. Very threatening in appearance.

Katie shrinks back, swallows hard.

KATIE

Look...Sergei...this is all I brought with me. If there's something else you wanted, you'll have to talk to Brett.

INT. THE 95TH - NIGHT

A classy restaurant on the 95th floor of the Hancock building, a table by the window with a view of Chicago and Lake Michigan.

Brett is down on one knee next to the table, holds Carla's hand as she sits sideways, tears in her eyes.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - SUNDAY NIGHT

NURSE ASHLEY (20's) wipes away a tear. She stands next to Henri, over a hospital bed with an unseen patient.

NURSE ASHLEY

You were there? When it happened?

HENRI

Mm-hmm.

NURSE ASHLEY

It must have been awful.

HENRI

Actually I feel worse now. Last night I at least felt like I was doing something. Now all I can do is wait.

She puts her hand on his arm near his shoulder.

NURSE ASHLEY

You did good. Don't forget that.

She pats his arm, walks out, closes the door behind her.

Henri sits in a chair next to the bed. He takes a deep breath, lets it out slowly.

HENRI

Doesn't look that bad, really. A few bandages, nothin' big.

Henri rubs his eyes. He looks tired.

HENRI

You really should wake up, though. They say the longer you stay in there, the less likely you're gonna recover.

Henri leans forward, stays in the chair.

HENRI

I never saved anyone's life before.
You're the first. But if you don't
wake up...then it doesn't count.

EXT. AMY'S CAR/TWO LANE HIGHWAY - NIGHT

The car passes an exit.

MATT (V.O.)

Forty-two...

INT. AMY'S CAR - CONTINUOUS/NIGHT

Matt looks out his window at a passing sign.

MATT

Exit forty-three, two miles ahead.

AMY

Good work, mister navigator!

EXT. HIGHWAY OFF RAMP - NIGHT

Amy's car leaves the two-lane highway, takes a well-worn road.

EXT. OLD ROAD/WOODS - NIGHT

Amy's car turns off the one-lane road onto a path leading
into the woods. The path is covered with sticks and leaves,
but clear enough to drive on.

EXT. CABIN - NIGHT

Amy's car slowly travels the bumpy path as it narrows and
comes to an end, in front of a wooden two-room cabin with no
exterior lights. The road is nowhere in sight.

Matt looks out the window as Amy stops the car.

MATT

Somebody lives here?

Amy puts the car in PARK.

AMY

Unfortunately, yes.

Amy turns the engine off. For a moment, all is dark and quiet.

Suddenly a crazed beast jumps on the hood of the car with a ravenous GROWL!! Amy and Matt are quite startled!

BUB JENKINS (30's) laughs, still crouched on the hood.

INT. CABIN - NIGHT

Bub leads Amy and Matt inside. He has a thick beard, shaggy hair, wears dirty jeans and a dark brown flannel shirt.

The cabin is solidly built, small but cozy, well-lit by kerosene lamps, sparsely furnished with hand-crafted items.

Bub chuckles as he closes the door, speaks like a midwesterner (without Amy's pronounced southern accent).

BUB

Oh, you shoulda seen your face!

He takes a good look at Matt.

BUB

Put on a few pounds there, Douggers?

Amy smacks Bub on the shoulder.

AMY

Doug's with his father! This is my friend Matt.

BUB

Oh. Pardon me.

Bub bows respectfully, shakes Matt's hand.

AMY

Matt, my little brother, Bub Jenkins.

MATT

Nice to meet you, Bob.

Bub stops shaking Matt's hand, but doesn't let go.

BUB

(serious)

Not Bob. Bub.

He stares at Matt, still doesn't let go. Matt tries to break the tension.

MATT

You mean like, "What's all the hubbub, bub?"

Bub doesn't respond. Amy looks back and forth between them.

Bub breaks into a huge grin, lets go of Matt's hand.

BUB
Yeah! I like that!

Bub flops into an unpadded wooden chair.

BUB
What's all the hubbub? Bub?

Bub breaks into hysterics. Matt whispers to Amy.

MATT
He's your brother?

AMY
Yes, he's simply lost his accent.
And his charm.

Bub removes his flannel to reveal a dirty white tank top.

BUB
Hey Mealie, I know you're on the
rebound but this one's kinda young,
ain't he?

Amy sits on the edge of a wooden chair.

AMY
Knock it off, Bubba. And don't call
me that.

BUB
Sorry, Mealie.

Amy purses her lips, gives Bub the evil eye. Matt looks confused.

AMY
(to Matt)
When he was little he couldn't say
Amelia. That's my full name.

MATT
Oh.
(to Bub)
And your full name's Bubba?

Amy busts out laughing. Bub simply frowns.

BUB
No, you little snot, it's Ernest.
She just likes callin' me Bubba.

AMY

But it's a nickname, Bubba, you're not supposed to sign your checks with it.

BUB

What checks? And I like being called Bub better than Ernie.

AMY

No one ever called you Ernie.

BUB

Mama did all the time!

AMY

She called you Bubba, Ernest. I mean... dang it, you got me all mixed up!

Bub chuckles at her frustration.

BUB

So what brings you by?

Amy stares at Bub, incredulous. He looks patently clueless.

BUB

What?

He looks to Matt, as if for an answer. Matt has nothing for him. Suddenly, Bub remembers.

BUB

Oh! Right. Mama's necklace.

AMY

It's a pendant.

BUB

Whatever it is, I got it tucked away for you.

AMY

Well then un-tuck it, Bubba, 'cause I'm here to pick it up.

BUB

Oh, you think...hell, Mealie, I wouldn't keep it here!

AMY

Aww, Bubba!

She stands up, approaches Bub in his chair. He flinches like she's coming to attack him.

BUB

It wouldn't be safe here!

AMY

In this dumb ol' shack, in the middle of the woods!

BUB

It's a cabin.

AMY

I swear, Bubba, you couldn't be more of a dirtball redneck if you had a still drippin' moonshine out back!

BUB

I do! You want a drink?

Amy raises her hand to smack him. Bub shields his head with his hand, laughs as she hits his arm over and over.

BUB

I'm just kiddin', Amy, I'm kiddin'.

Amy turns away in disgust, stands over Bub with authority. Matt suppresses his laughter.

AMY

Ernest William Jenkins, you bring me mama's jade pendant right now!

Bub holds up his hands in surrender.

BUB

It's okay. It's safe.

AMY

Then let's go get it.

BUB

Don't you want something to eat first?

Amy sighs heavily, collapses into the chair. Bub gets up.

BUB

I haven't had dinner. I need to eat.

Amy exaggerates her accent for comic effect.

AMY

Why don't you go ahead and fry us up a batch a' squirrel patties fer supper!

BUB

That's a good one. But no, I meant I'll take you out. My treat.

(MORE)

BUB (CONT'D)

(to Matt)

You hungry?

Matt kind of half nods, being agreeable.

BUB

All right then. Let's get goin'.

Bub throws an arm into his flannel shirt.

AMY

Oh, at least change your shirt.

One arm in the flannel, one out, Bub pulls the front of his dirty tank top away from his body to get a look at it.

BUB

S'okay, I'm good.

Amy leans toward Bub, gives him a sniff, recoils.

AMY

Eww, Bubba, you smell like...

INT. DUSTY MOTOR INN/ROOM THREE - NIGHT

SERGEI

Garbage! I will not pay for this!

Sergei stacks all the paintings by the closed door.

SERGEI

You take them back! No money!

Katie shakes her head, chuckles incredulously. Sergei takes a step toward her.

SERGEI

No funny stuff.

Katie gives him an angry look, steps right up to him. She's too short to get in his face, but gets as close as she can.

KATIE

I drove all the way down here, and gave up my Saturday, to bring these to you. So I don't care if you like them. I don't care if you burn them, or eat them, or take them up on a ferris wheel and make out with them. But I'm not taking them back, and I'm not leaving without my money!

Sergei leans his imposing figure over Katie's head, shakes a finger in her face.

SERGEI

You tell your boyfriend to take this
trash and shove it straight up--

He abruptly halts his speech as Katie grabs his pointed
finger, twisting his hand and wrist to gain leverage.

Sergei drops to his knees, down to her level. She gets in
his face.

KATIE

Brett...is not...my boyfriend!

Sergei looks pained, scared to move.

KATIE

Now pay up!

Sergei pulls a wad of cash from his pocket, offers it up.

KATIE

How much is that?

SERGEI

Ten thousand. You take.

Katie takes the money with her free hand, then lets him go.
He drops to the floor, cradles his strained arm.

Katie counts out the hundreds. He looks up at her.

SERGEI

Just take. Is okay.

KATIE

The deal was for six thousand.

She finishes counting, pockets her share.

KATIE

No funny stuff.

She tosses the rest at Sergei. He makes no move to catch it,
so it bounces off him.

EXT. DUSTY MOTOR INN/ROOM 3 - NIGHT

Katie slams the door to the room as she exits.

Katie shuts the car door from the driver's seat.

Katie's car peels out of the parking spot, kicks up dust and
rocks onto Sergei's red porsche.

INT. KATIE'S CAR/MOVING - NIGHT

The road past the headlights is nothing but darkness.

KATIE

Brett, you lousy little fuckworm, I
am gonna...

She's too mad to think of a proper threat.

Off the highway, the lighted sign of the Outbound Tavern
switches off. The sudden change draws Katie's attention.

She returns her eyes to the road just in time to CRASH full
speed into a previously unseen car crossing her path.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Henri jolts awake in his chair at the sound of a CRASH outside
the open door as an unoccupied gurney collapses to the ground.

An embarrassed ORDERLY quickly lifts the gurney upright, rolls
it away. Nurse Ashley enters, sits next to Henri.

NURSE ASHLEY

I might suggest you go home and get
some sleep, if I thought you would
actually do it.

Henri gives her a tired smile.

NURSE ASHLEY

I can get you a cot, and a pillow,
if you want to lie down.

HENRI

No, I'm fine. Thank you, though.

The sit comfortably in silence for a beat.

HENRI

The weird thing is, in a situation
like last night? You expect chaos.
But it all made a kind of sense to
me. I mean the training just comes
right back to you.

NURSE ASHLEY

Medical training?

HENRI

Yeah. I was in an EMT program, years
ago. Didn't finish though. Problems
with money, family...time. You know
how it is.

Nurse Ashley nods. Henri yawns, politely covers it.

NURSE ASHLEY
So what are you doing now?

HENRI
I'm, uhh...sorting things out. Again.

NURSE ASHLEY
I can definitely understand that.
(beat)
I'm Ashley.

She holds out her hand, shakes with Henri.

HENRI
Thanks for sitting with us. I'm--

INT. OUTBOUND TAVERN - SATURDAY NIGHT

BUB
Henri with an I!

Henri (wearing the same clothes as the opening scene) stands next to a corner booth, takes a punch on the arm from Bub.

The six regulars are at the bar: Freddy, Earl, Paulie, Jasper, Doc, and George. The place is otherwise empty.

Bub removes his brown flannel -- he wears a clean, button down, long-sleeve underneath -- as Amy and Matt settle into one side of a booth. Bub sits across from them.

BUB
What's shakin', bacon?

HENRI
Nothing exceptional, Bub. Who're your friends here?

Amy smiles as Henri hands her a menu.

BUB
My sister Amy, and her buddy...Mark.
No! Mike.

MATT
Matt.

HENRI
Matt! I've seen you before. I live down the street from you.

MATT
Really?

HENRI

Yup.

MATT

And you work all the way out here?

Rambunctious laughter erupts from the huddle at the bar.

HENRI

If you call this work.

Henri looks at Matt's bruised face.

HENRI

You do a lot of boxing, Matt?

MATT

No, that's from...baseball.

Matt glances at Amy, who merely smiles at him.

HENRI

You lean in too far on a bunt?

MATT

Something like that, yeah.

HENRI

Well, nothing like gettin' on base
the easy way. Somethin' to drink?

MOMENTS LATER

Henri returns to the booth with two plastic tumblers and a glass bottle, sets each drink in front of them.

HENRI

So! What're we havin'?

Matt still reads the menu. Amy starts to answer, since Henri is looking at her, but Bub opens his big mouth first.

BUB

You know darn well I want a fat ol'
juicy steak burger and fries, Henri,
I don't know why you bother askin'.

Amy gives Bub a disapproving look. Bub hands Henri his menu.

HENRI

Okay. How about you two?

Matt continues to inspect the menu, so Amy speaks up.

AMY

Do you have a chicken Caesar salad,
or something close?

Bub rolls his eyes. Matt sets the menu down to listen.

HENRI

I can put one together for you.

AMY

That'd be lovely, thank you.

Henri takes her menu. He doesn't write anything down.

HENRI

What're you in the mood for, chief?
Juicy steak burger?

Matt glances down at his menu, looks up at Henri.

MATT

Is it low fat?

HENRI

Not even close.

Matt hands Henri his menu, looks disappointed.

MATT

I'll have that chicken Caesar, then.
If it's all right.

HENRI

It's all right with me, but let me
tell you -- a lousy meal once in a
while won't kill you. Trust me.

MATT

That's okay. Thanks.

Matt looks down at the table, scratches it with a fingernail.
Henri tucks the menus under his arm.

HENRI

How old are you? Thirteen?

MATT

(looks up)
Twelve.

HENRI

You play a lot of baseball?

MATT

Yeah.

HENRI

Catcher?

MATT

Pitcher.

HENRI

No kidding! That's awesome. I was never any good at baseball. When I was your age, I was into soccer.

Bub pretends to check his watch, even though he's not wearing one, frowns at Henri for delaying his food.

HENRI

Kids said I should play goalie 'cause I was wide enough to block the net.

Henri holds out his arms to imitate extreme corpulence.

HENRI

They told me no one could score as long as I didn't turn sideways.

Bub busts out laughing. Amy frowns at Bub, though Matt looks quietly amused.

BUB

That's a good one, Henri, I'm gonna remember that. Sideways.

Henri ignores Bub, speaks directly to Matt.

HENRI

The point is, if you eat healthy most of the time, one juicy steak burger won't hurt you.

MATT

All right. Let's do it.

HENRI

Excellent choice, sir.

MATT

But hold the fries.

HENRI

Ah, compromise. I like it.

Henri backs away smiling, heads for the kitchen.

BUB

I'll take his fries, Henri!

LATER

Bub drips barbecue sauce all over a heaping portion of steak fries, on their own plate, then eats them by hand.

As Matt cuts his a huge steak burger in half, Amy looks up from stabbing her lettuce to see Bub get sauce in his beard.

She looks at him with disgust. He gives her a wink as he chews with his mouth open.

EXT. OUTBOUND TAVERN - NIGHT

Bub leads the way out the front door, pats his stomach. Amy and Matt follow him to her car, which is alone in the lot except for the big silver pickup truck.

BUB

Whew! That hit the spot. I'm gonna be five pounds lighter in the morning!

Matt chuckles, Amy rolls her eyes.

MATT

Thanks for dinner, Bub. I appreciate it.

BUB

No problem, kid.

AMY

Bubba, can we please pick up mama's pendant now? It's gettin' late.

Matt stifles a yawn as they reach the car. Amy unlocks the doors with a remote, Bub leans on the driver's door.

BUB

Sure we can. Keys?

Bub holds out his hand for the keys. Amy hesitates.

AMY

Are you okay to drive?

BUB

I had two ginger beers, Mealie. Soda pop. Only a jerk-ass scumbag low-life would drink and drive. And I ain't no jerk-ass scumbag low-life.

AMY

At least one of those terms is debatable.

She slaps the keys in his hand.

INT. AMY'S CAR - NIGHT

Everyone buckles up, Matt in back, Amy riding shotgun.

BUB

Ready to go?

Amy gives him a deadpan look.

BUB

All righty! We're off!

Keys in hand, Bub pretends to start the car. He makes revving noises, screeching tires, vroom vroom sounds...Amy looks at him like he's crazy.

Meanwhile, the six regulars file out of the bar, chatting and laughing. They climb into the silver pickup.

Bub makes one final screech, pretends to put the car in park. Amy looks like she's ready to slap his face off.

BUB

Here we are!

AMY

Bubba, I swear...

BUB

Really? I never heard you cuss.

AMY

Five seconds, Ernest! One, two...

BUB

It's here. Mama's necklace.

AMY

Pendant. What do you mean, here?

BUB

I mean a few paces from the Outbound.

The pickup truck drives off down the highway. Amy looks out the window at the surrounding woods.

AMY

You didn't.

Bub unbuckles his seat belt, unlocks the door.

BUB

Had to keep it safe, right? Wanna gimme a hand? Or maybe the kid wants to...

Bub notices Matt dozing off in the back seat.

BUB

...take a nap. Okay then.

Amy undoes her seat belt, reaches back to jostle Matt awake. He opens his eyes, has to refocus them.

AMY

Matt? Will you be alright for a bit?

Bub exits the car, opens the trunk with the keys.

MATT

Yeah, I'm okay.

AMY

I'll be back in a few minutes. I hope!

Amy gives him a big smile, climbs out of the car. Matt closes his eyes, leans back again.

EXT. AMY'S CAR - NIGHT

Bub digs around in the trunk, hands Amy a metal flashlight.

BUB

Take this. Where's your shovel?

AMY

Normal folks don't keep a shovel in the car, Bubba, 'cause we don't go around burying things in the woods!

BUB

Hmm. Guess this'll have to do.

Bub snatches up a plastic ice scraper.

Amy turns away, exasperated, flicks on the flashlight and heads into the woods at the edge of the parking lot.

Bub slams the trunk and hops after her.

BUB

Hey, wait up! I can't see nuthin'!
Watch out for snakes!

Bub and Amy disappear into the darkness of the woods.

Amy's keys dangle from the lock at the back of the trunk.

A beat-up old car makes a lousy turn into the parking lot.

INT. OUTBOUND TAVERN - NIGHT

Henri wipes down the bar top. The front door opens with a CLANG of the cowbell. Artie stumbles in.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Amy stands motionless, arms crossed, lips pursed. Bub circles around, peering up into tree branches with the flashlight.

AMY

Why are you lookin' up there when you said you had to dig?

BUB

Gotta find the right tree to dig under.

AMY

Wouldn't that be easier in daylight?

BUB

Yeah, but it was already dark when you got here.

AMY

So why didn't...oh, nevermind.

BUB

A-ha!

Amy looks up to where Bub aims the flashlight. An old styrofoam egg carton sits impaled on a branch.

BUB

Eggs marks the spot!

Bub guffaws as he hands Amy the flashlight, then digs with the ice scraper at the base of the tree.

EXT. OUTBOUND TAVERN - NIGHT

Artie opens the door, looks back to Henri, shakes his keys.

ARTIE

Sucker!

Artie staggers out, cackles as the door closes behind him, clanking the cowbell. He flips through his keys, confused.

He sees Amy's keys dangling from the trunk, shuffles over, takes Amy's keys. He places his own keys in the trunk lock.

ARTIE

Trade ya.

Artie casually climbs into the driver's seat of Amy's car.

Matt is sound asleep in the back.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Bub digs furiously in the dirt. Amy looks over his shoulder.

AMY
How much longer, Bubba?

BUB
I don't know, Mealie. Maybe I should
ask Henri if he's got a shovel.

SMASH! From nearby, the unmistakable sound of a car accident.

BUB
What the fuck was that?

AMY
Matt!!!

Amy runs toward the parking lot, flashlight in her grasp.

EXT. OUTBOUND TAVERN - NIGHT

Amy emerges from the woods as Henri runs out of the bar.
Both rush toward the pair of mangled cars.

Katie's car stopped in the road, front end crumpled and
smoking. Amy's car is pushed off the road, one side smashed.

Bub comes out of the woods as Henri and Amy reach the cars.

BUB
Whoa, shit!

AMY
Matt! Matt!

Amy goes to the undamaged side of her car. The rear door is
open. Matt is still buckled in, and completely unharmed.

MATT
What happened?

Amy quickly frees him from the seat belt, pulls him out and
away from the car, hugs him close.

AMY
Oh, Matt!

Henri pulls open Katie's bent-but-intact driver's door. Katie
coughs on powder from the deployed airbag.

HENRI
Feel any sharp pains, broken bones?

KATIE

No, no.

HENRI

Pain in your head, neck, chest?

KATIE

I don't...I don't think so. Do you see my glasses?

Henri finds them on the floor at her feet, hands them to her. She puts them on as Henri unbuckles her seat belt.

HENRI

Okay, turn off the ignition, if you can, and just climb on out.

Katie turns the key and switches it off, lets Henri help her out of the wreck. Henri notices blood on her forearm.

HENRI

How's your arm?

KATIE

It's just a scrape from the airbag.

BUB (O.S.)

Henri, this guy's hurt.

Henri looks over to Bub, on the other side of Amy's car. Amy still has her arms around Matt.

HENRI

(to Katie)

You're a bit shaky, can you stand?

KATIE

Yeah. I'm all right.

Henri leaves Katie leaning against her car as he swiftly makes his way over to Bub.

Bub has opened the front door of Amy's car. Artie lies on the floor.

BUB

Should we get him out of there?

HENRI

No, we don't want to move him. Bub -- go inside, call the ambulance. The number's on the phone, so is the address here. Go.

Bub nods, runs toward the bar.

HENRI

Then bring out the fire extinguisher!

Henri kneels down, checks Artie's pulse.

HENRI

Amy, how's Matt? Is he hurt?

Amy shakes her head, tears on her face.

MATT

I'm okay.

HENRI

You could still go into shock. Go inside and sit down, take deep breaths. Okay?

Amy moves to take Matt inside, but Matt pauses, looks at Artie. Henri sees this.

HENRI

He's unconscious, but he's breathing. Go ahead. He'll be all right.

Amy and Matt head for the bar. Katie steps around the car, looks on as Henri continues to check on Artie.

KATIE

How is he?

HENRI

Well, he isn't dead. Aside from that, I'm not sure.

Katie takes a deep, stuttering breath.

HENRI

You should sit down.

KATIE

This is all my fault. I just looked away for a second.

HENRI

No, this is not your fault. He's drunk, and this isn't even his car. I have no idea how this happened.

Katie looks unsteady, her breath short. Henri stands.

HENRI

Hey, hey, listen. What's your name?

KATIE

Katie.

Henri holds Katie by the shoulders, comforting.

HENRI

Katie, this is not your fault. And
he is not gonna die. We're gonna
help him. Okay?

Katie nods. Bub runs out of the bar with a fire extinguisher.

HENRI

(to Bub)
Hose down the engine and the
dashboard.
(to Katie)
Just in case.

Bub rushes to Katie's car, sprays under the crumpled hood.

Katie looks down at Artie, sees a small pool of blood on the
floor mat under his head.

KATIE

He's bleeding.

Henri stoops to check it out.

HENRI

We gotta stop it, or he could bleed
out before the ambulance gets here.

Henri stands so he can pull off his jacket. Katie stops him
with one sleeve off.

KATIE

Wait! Wait!

Katie runs over to her car, pulls Bub away from the open
driver's door before he can spray the dashboard.

She yanks her bag off the passenger seat, digs into it as
she runs back to Henri.

KATIE

Use this.

She pulls out a maxi pad and quickly unwraps it.

HENRI

That's perfect. I need you to place
it on the wound and apply pressure
while I lift his head. Can you do
that?

KATIE

I can do it.

Henri braces his shoulder against the seat, supports Artie's neck and head together as he gently lifts Artie's thin torso.

Blood drips onto the floor mat as Katie holds the pad against the underside of Artie's head.

HENRI
Got it?

KATIE
Yeah.

HENRI
All right, I'm gonna set him down again.

Henri slowly lowers Artie's head to the mat.

Bub sprays the engine of Amy's car as best he can.

HENRI
(to Katie)
That was good thinking.

KATIE
(distracted)
Thanks.

HENRI
No, really. You just saved his life.

Katie tries to smile through the anxiety.

EXT. OUTBOUND TAVERN - NIGHT

An ambulance departs the scene, lights and siren blaring.

A tow truck hooks up Katie's wreck, Amy's yet unmoved.

Katie sits on the large rock at the shoulder next to the gravel entrance. Henri joins her.

HENRI
Head trauma, dislocated shoulder, a few broken ribs. Looks like that's it.

KATIE
And that little boy was in the back seat?

HENRI
Yeah! Not a scratch on him.

KATIE

Are you sure? His face looked a little bruised.

HENRI

Naw, that's from baseball.

A car passes them on the road, then screeches to a stop.

Henri and Katie look up to see a brand new Mercedes sedan with tinted windows swing around and pull into the lot.

Carla jumps out, still dressed to the nines except for a pair of athletic shoes and a light jacket.

CARLA

Katie!

She runs to Katie, who hops to her feet.

KATIE

Carla?

Carla brings a fierce embrace, doesn't let go.

CARLA

Brett said you were using his car and then I just saw it being towed away all smashed up and I thought you were dead!

KATIE

I'm fine. What are you doing out here?

INT. OUTBOUND TAVERN - NIGHT

Amy sits next to Matt in a booth, cell phone to her ear, Bub across from them.

AMY

I'm so sorry. I know, but...okay. Thank you. Bye.

She hangs up.

AMY

He's on his way.

MATT

He sounded worried.

AMY

Parents always are.

She puts her arm around Matt, holds him close.

Henri enters, approaches the booth.

BUB
How's that girl?

HENRI
A little freaked out, but mostly unharmed. Plus her friend showed up, which is good, because now we've got two working cars here, and we all need to go to the police station to give a statement.

AMY
Tonight?

HENRI
I know it's late, but, yeah. Besides, they're right next to the hospital, and you might want to get Matt checked out while we're there.

AMY
That is a very good idea.

MATT
I'm totally okay though.

HENRI
Better safe than sorry, dude.

EXT. OUTBOUND TAVERN - NIGHT

Carla and Katie lean against the Mercedes.

CARLA
But it sounded like he sent you out of town in order to whisk me away, and I had a bad feeling about this, so I made him tell me everything.

KATIE
Where did you get this car?

CARLA
It's his brother's. He proposed, by the way.

KATIE
He what?!?

CARLA
It was actually very sweet, but so not the right point in our relationship. Oh, I'm just glad you're all right!

Carla hugs Katie again. Another tow truck pulls up next to Amy's car.

INT. HOSPITAL EXAM ROOM - NIGHT

Nurse Ashley checks Matt's vitals, Amy and Bub close by.

NURSE ASHLEY
Everything looks good here. Nothing to worry about.

MATT
See? I'm fine.

BUB
Wanna check me out too?

NURSE ASHLEY
Were you in the accident?

BUB
I was near the accident.

AMY
Hush up, Bubba.

Ed enters the room, hugs Matt tight.

ED
How you feelin', champ? You in one piece?

MATT
For about the eight hundreth time, yes, I'm okay.

NURSE ASHLEY
He's right, there's not a mark on him. Except for this bruise.

BUB & MATT
That's from baseball.

NURSE ASHLEY
All right, well, he's free to leave whenever you're ready.

She departs with a smile.

ED
Amy, thank you so much for--

AMY
No, no, this is all my fault, I--

ED
Amy, it's okay. Matt's okay. Nothing
is your fault.

BUB
Yeah, if anything, it's my fault.

All eyes turn to Bub.

ED
And you are...?

AMY
Oh! Ed, this is my brother, Bub
Jenkins.

Bub gives a sheepish, embarrassed half-wave.

ED
Well, it's all over now, so, no one's
blaming you either, Bob.

MATT
Bub.

ED
Hmm?

MATT
His name is Bub.

BUB
As in "What's all the hubbub, bub?"

Matt and Bub chuckle. Ed isn't sure what to make of them.

ED
Sure. Uh, we're gonna head home now,
so, can I drop you off somewhere?

BUB
Yeah, I could use a ride.

They gradually make their way out of the room.

BUB
Sorry we didn't get that pendant,
Mealie. Ooh! Hey Ed, you got a shovel?

INT. POLICE STATION LOBBY - NIGHT

A quiet night, just one OFFICER at the desk, where Henri
stands. Katie sits nearby, Carla asleep on her shoulder.

HENRI
Any idea how much longer?

The officer shrugs. Henri shuffles away, slumps into a chair.

KATIE
Long night, huh?

HENRI
Quite. How are you feeling?

KATIE
I'm durable.

Henri nods, his eyes tired, his head heavier than usual.

KATIE
I gotta say, we're all lucky you
were there tonight.

HENRI
I'm always there. I work there.

KATIE
Even so...you know how people talk
about being in the right place at
the right time? I never understood
that. I mean, you are where you are,
and everything happens around you.
But I feel like tonight, you were
there because we needed you.

HENRI
Maybe.

Henri rubs his eyes, sighs heavily.

KATIE
Of course, I was in the wrong place
at the wrong time, because I don't
really belong down here in podunk
trails. No offense.

HENRI
No, I know exactly what you mean.
I'm not sure I belong here either.

KATIE
Yet here you are.

HENRI
Yup. Maybe that's how life works. A
series of poor choices and wrong
turns.

Katie dwells on these thoughts.

KATIE
How much do you know about fashion?

HENRI

Very little. Almost nothing. Okay, nothing.

KATIE

I've been studying it for a while. Thing is, I'm just not interested in it anymore.

HENRI

Hmm. One of those wrong turns?

KATIE

More like I kept going straight when I shoulda taken that left turn at Albuquerque.

Katie takes a deep breath, releases it slowly.

HENRI

So what are you interested in?

Katie offers up a big, questioning shrug.

HENRI

Well, what do you like most about fashion? Or what *did* you like?

Katie looks up, as if searching for a thought bubble.

HENRI

Don't think about it, just answer: the best thing about fashion is...

KATIE

Costume design.

HENRI

Okay. Start there.

KATIE

(indicates Carla)

This one's heavy into theatre. Maybe I could get involved somehow.

HENRI

There you go. Make that left turn.

Katie smiles thoughtfully. Carla stirs, remains asleep.

HENRI

You two live in Chicago?

Katie nods.

HENRI

My brother's up there. I should go visit sometime. Feel like I haven't seen him in...I don't know. Too long.

KATIE

Well if you do, while you're there, who knows? Maybe you'll find yourself in the right place at the right time.

They share a meaningful look across the space between them.

INT. PRATT HOME/MATT'S ROOM - DAWN

The day's first rays of light shine through the shaded window as Ed tucks an exhausted Matt into bed.

INT. MAXINE'S HOUSE - EARLY MORNING

Henri enters quietly as Maxine sleeps on the couch, fully dressed.

EXT. KATIE'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Brett slouches on the landing, dressed up and sound asleep.

Carla and Katie step over him to go inside. Katie slams the door, which startles Brett awake.

He looks around, gets his bearings, closes his eyes again.

EXT. CHICAGO SKYLINE - DAY

The rising sun peeks through the tall buildings to the east.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - SUNDAY NIGHT

Henri sleeps in the chair next to Artie's bed, wears his Bears jersey. Artie opens his eyes, looks around.

ARTIE

What the fuck?

THE END