

50 ACRES OF DIRT IN EASTERN NEVADA

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OVER BLACK WE HEAR a COIN dropping into a slot, BUTTONS being pushed, then a JUKEBOX WHIRRING to life. Marty Robbins' "A White Sport Coat (and a Pink Carnation)" PLAYS.

FADE IN:

INT. DIVE BAR - DAY

SAMMY GENTRY (27, drunk for ten years) stands at the jukebox, dressed in a white sport coat and a pink carnation. Otherwise he's got on cowboy boots, Wranglers, and a belt embroidered with his name.

He turns from the jukebox, dancing a waltz. Singing along to the tune, he holds his BEER BOTTLE up high, where his partner's hand should be.

It's mid-morning. Only two others are here. The BARTENDER cuts limes. A SEXY GRANDMA watches from her stool, amused.

Sammy extends his hand toward her. *Dance?* She just smiles.

SEXY GRANDMA

You're a whole lot of trouble,
aren't you?

Sammy turns and dips his invisible partner.

SEXY GRANDMA (CONT'D)

Yeah, I'm about forty years too
late for you.

Sammy stops and checks his watch.

SAMMY

I'm bound to be late myself.

He crosses to the bar and lifts a SHOT OF WHISKEY, toasting the old woman.

SAMMY (CONT'D)

Ma'am.

He does the shot, then slams the glass down onto the bar.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

Sammy, one of four PALL-BEARERS, carries a CASKET to an open grave. One of the other pall-bearers notices him miss a step, or maybe it's just the white sport coat that catches his attention.

Everyone gathered round the grave is dressed K-mart country and western, including the PASTOR. He opens his Bible after the casket is set down.

PASTOR

Dear Lord, we praise you for the time you have allowed Jesse to journey with us, and ask that You take him up into Your arms now that he is absent from the body. Ashes to ashes and dust to dust, may he be with you always, Amen.

The pastor closes his Bible. Everyone echoes the Amen.

The casket is lowered into the grave.

A FUNERAL-GOER presses play on a PORTABLE CD PLAYER. An OUTLAW COUNTRY & WESTERN SONG PLAYS. Something upbeat and unrepentant, like Merle Haggard's "I Think I'll Just Stay Here and Drink."

With the casket now lowered, a BIG-BELLIED MAN leads the sobbing WIDOW to the PILE OF DIRT beside the open grave. A tiny SPADE sticks out of it. The Widow uses it to toss some dirt onto the casket.

The pastor looks to Sammy, inviting him to go next. He hesitates. But everyone's looking, so he steps forward and reaches past the spade for a handful of dirt.

Only, he can't do it. Can't let it go. He just stands there, holding the dirt, as a look deepens on his face.

PASTOR (CONT'D)

Son?

Sammy stuffs the dirt into the pocket of his white sport coat and turns toward the parking lot.

SAMMY

(incredulous)

"Son"?

The Widow stiffens. Glances at the Big-Bellied Man. This is not the day to piss her off.

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

Sammy opens a storage compartment on the side of a WHITE UTILITY TRUCK. ICE spills out. He grabs a CAN OF BEER and pops it open, then turns to see --

-- The Widow crossing the cemetery toward him, followed by the Big-Bellied Man, who struggles to keep up.

WIDOW

To come all this way and do that!

SAMMY

Lady, that man didn't give me nothing my whole life. If I can't even have a little dirt ...

WIDOW

He left you this truck! Your daddy left you this truck!

Sammy looks at it. It's nothing to look at.

WIDOW (CONT'D)

If I knew you were gonna do this, I never would've given it to you.

SAMMY

You want the truck?

She begins sobbing. The Big-Bellied Man comforts her.

SAMMY (CONT'D)

She want the truck?

He leads her away.

SAMMY (CONT'D)

I'll give her the truck!

Sammy opens the driver's door. SCOUT, his golden retriever, looks up drowsily from the passenger seat.

SAMMY (CONT'D)

Fuck do I want with this truck?

INT/EXT. SAMMY'S TRUCK - DAY [MOVING]

OUTLAW COUNTRY MUSIC PLAYS on the RADIO. Merle Haggard's "Mama Tried," say. Sammy throws his TIE out the window and cracks a new can of BEER, singing along loudly.

His truck passes a ROADSIDE SIGN: "You are now leaving the state of Oregon."

EXT. NORTHERN CALIFORNIA - DAY

The day darkens as Sammy's truck passes Mt. Shasta. And moves through the Central Valley. And turns onto Highway 20 at Williams. It's now sunset.

EXT. FRONTAGE ROAD - NIGHT

LARGE OAK TREES line this two-lane road. It's empty until Sammy's truck appears ... drifting across the yellow line.

INT/EXT. SAMMY'S TRUCK - NIGHT [MOVING]

Sammy nods awake at the wheel.

A LARGE TREE stands up ahead.

Sammy dozes again, the truck heading right for it.

But then his front tire drops into a POTHOLE and Sammy jerks awake, pulling at the wheel and barely avoiding a crash.

Scout offers a disapproving look from the passenger seat.

SAMMY

Who feeds you?

Sammy turns on the RADIO. RANCHERO MUSIC plays, Spanish and happy. He turns it up loud and sings along, poorly.

EXT. THE LION'S CLUB - NIGHT

The building's facade is decorated with RAISED LETTERS spelling out the club's motto: WE SERVE.

WE HOLD on the building as Sammy's truck passes.

A moment later, the truck backs up and turns onto the lot.

After parking, Sammy gets out and grabs another beer from the truck's side compartment. With it, he opens another compartment and finds a can of SPRAY PAINT.

The RANCHERO MUSIC still PLAYS as he steps around his truck's TWISTED BUMPER and moves toward the building.

Scout looks on from the passenger seat, watching as --

-- Sammy spray-paints beneath the motto. First an "M," then an "A."

A SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT PATROL CAR turns in off the frontage road, releasing a single blast from its SIREN.

Sammy quickens his work. A SPOTLIGHT is directed at him.

DEPUTY O'HARA, plump and friendly, steps out of his parked patrol car.

DEPUTY O'HARA
You know I'm a member of the Lion's
Club?

Sammy turns from his still-dripping masterpiece: "WE SERVE
... MAMMON."

DEPUTY O'HARA (CONT'D)
What the hell ya doing, Sammy?

SAMMY
Don't mean to tell you your
business, but I believe the code
book calls it vandalism.

Deputy O'Hara steps toward him, reaching for his handcuffs.

DEPUTY O'HARA
You're supposed to read the news,
not make it.

Sammy trips and falls as he steps toward him.

SAMMY
Whoa. I think I spilled. Michelle
hates it when I spill.

Deputy O'Hara helps him to his feet.

SAMMY (CONT'D)
You drive me home?

DEPUTY O'HARA
This ain't Mayberry.

SAMMY
That's not the impression my
Realtor gave me.

The Deputy handcuffs Sammy and lowers him into the back of his patrol car.

SAMMY (CONT'D)
(remembering)
Scout. I can't leave my dog.

The deputy steps away, then returns with him a moment later. Scout whimpers as he's pushed into the car alongside Sammy.

SAMMY (CONT'D)
Who feeds you?

The door slams shut. The patrol car pulls away.

EXT. LAKE COUNTY, CALIFORNIA - DAY

Impoverished and rural. So poor it's peaceful.

Double-wide trailers dot the shores of California's largest lake. MOUNTAINS rise up on all sides. VINEYARDS and PEAR ORCHARDS spread across the land. A HERD OF BUFFALO can even be found grazing alongside the highway. Near this is:

EXT. COUNTY JAIL - DAY

Establishing.

INT. PROCESSING STATION - DAY

A GRUFF SHERIFF'S DEPUTY dumps a manila envelope onto a counter-top and begins sliding the contents over to Sammy.

GRUFF SHERIFF'S DEPUTY
One embroidered belt, a key-chain,
one black leather wallet --
(opening it)
-- empty, a Zippo lighter ...

He picks it up to give it a closer look.

INSERT - ZIPPO

The decal reads: "I'm the Meanest Son of a Bitch in the Valley."

The deputy offers Sammy a skeptical look. The Zippo must be ironic, because Sammy's tall and lean -- no bruiser.

The deputy slides the Zippo over, then reaches for a small BAGGY that holds ...

GRUFF SHERIFF'S DEPUTY (CONT'D)
... and 5.4 ounces of dirt.
(as Sammy pockets it)
Had to test that. Make sure you
weren't smoking something we hadn't
seen before.

SAMMY
You got my dog?

The deputy looks behind him, where Scout sleeps on the floor.

SAMMY (CONT'D) (CONT'D)
Scout.

The dog doesn't move.

SAMMY (CONT'D)
Scout!

The dog reluctantly raises its head, then ambles over.

Sammy steps toward the door with the dog.

BY-THE-BOOKS SHERIFF'S DEPUTY
(stopping him)
You got a leash?
(off Sammy's look)
How you gonna take care'a dog when
you can't even take care'a
yourself?

EXT. COUNTY JAIL - DAY

RON, late-forties, leans against the side of a CRAPPY DATSUN, wearing a Member's Only jacket and a porn mustache that isn't ironic. He starts to laugh.

Sammy walks toward him, using his belt as a leash.

SAMMY
If there's a law, there's a way
around it.

Ron laughs louder still. A happy drunk.

EXT. THE LION'S CLUB - DAY

A group of OLD MEN stand in front of Sammy's display of GRAFFITI. Clearly not pleased.

INT/EXT. RON'S CAR - DAY [MOVING]

Ron slows down as he passes them.

Sammy shrinks into his seat. Ron chuckles and speeds away.

EXT. TOW YARD - DAY

Ron parks in front of a small modular building that's surrounded by A DOZEN or so half-wrecked or disabled CARS. He points to Sammy's utility truck.

RON
Hey, I know that guy.

He points farther off to a late-60s model DODGE DART that shows signs of having been in a crash.

RON (CONT'D)
And that one too!

He's laughing as Sammy exits with his dog.

SAMMY
Meet me at The Club, I'll thank you properly.

INT. TOW YARD OFFICE - DAY

Sammy approaches the front counter, where A COFFEE MACHINE GURGLES while brewing a fresh pot.

The SHOP OWNER, a burly man who very well may be the meanest son of a bitch in the valley, enters from a back room.

SHOP OWNER
I'll tell you upfront, we don't do no two-for-one deals.

SAMMY
You still want two-hundred bucks to tow the Dodge?

SHOP OWNER
Wasn't me chose to live so far out of town.

SAMMY
I'll pay for the one that still runs.

He puts a DISCOVER CARD on the counter. The shop owner reacts to it as if it were a turd.

SAMMY (CONT'D)
You don't take Discover?

His look: Cleary not.

Sammy is quick to boil. Letting the card lie there, he pours a cup of coffee, then replaces the Discover with an AMEX.

The man runs it through the machine.

SHOP OWNER

You let me put another fifty on here, I'll at least get the Dodge to the mechanic.

SAMMY

And some good that'll do if I can't even pay for the parts. Just the truck.

As the receipt is set down before him, he reaches for a PEN that's been taped to a plastic spoon.

SHOP OWNER

Should know those impound fees add up. Here soon I'll have a right to the title.

Sammy backs away, lifting the pen in the air.

SAMMY

I'm gonna forget to return this.

EXT. TOW YARD - DAY

Sammy dumps his coffee as he exits. Tosses the pen. Scout follows him to the utility truck.

EXT. MAIN STREET - LAKEPORT, CA - DAY

A quiet downtown. Used to be something in the fifties. Two BARS face one another. The BUCKHORN and the CLEARLAKE CLUB. Sammy's utility truck is parked in front of the Club.

INT. THE CLEARLAKE CLUB - DAY

It's early still. Small cone cups cover the tops of the open bottles. PAM, the day bartender, reaches into a jar standing on the back bar. It's filled with CRUMPLED DOLLAR BILLS.

She pulls one out and uncrumples it. "STEVE PRATT" is written on it in black Sharpie. Pam writes this NAME on a small CHALKBOARD hanging behind the bar.

Sammy shakes his head. Ron sits at the bar beside him.

SAMMY

I've been drinking in here how many years now, three, four? And has she ever called my name? Should get the grand jury involved. Chuck there --

CHUCK, the only other guy in the place, startles at the mention of his name. He's a stick of a man, and no scholar.

SAMMY (CONT'D)

-- two times he's had his name called just this year. Two times he's drank dollar beers all day, and what have I got? To quote the late great Charlie Brown, a rock.

CHUCK

Charlie Brown died?

SAMMY

All the money I spend here, you'd think my name'd be put up there in flashing neon lights, and that come my birthday there'd be titty dancers welcoming me at the door.

PAM

You don't like the service, you can cross the street to the Buckhorn.

CHUCK

Only derelicts drink at the Buckhorn.

SAMMY

(toasting)

So let's toast The Clearlake Club and a better class of loser!

(to Pam)

Not to mention the finest piece of ass in three counties.

Pam's just neglected enough to take this as a compliment.

PAM

I'm old enough to be your mother.

SAMMY

(an added bonus)

Taboo.

RON

Fucking Sammy!

PAM
 (friendly advice)
 Why don't you go home and get some
 sleep?

SAMMY
 You didn't see these old guys in
 front of the Lion's Club this
 morning. The way they looked, you
 woulda thought I was the one
 dropped The Big Fuck You on Pearl
 Harbor.

Sammy finishes his beer and sets his glass near the edge of
 the bar -- the call for another.

SAMMY (CONT'D)
 If I'm gonna sleep, gotta make sure
 it's gonna stick.
 (meaning Ron)
 Get the both of us.

Ron motions for her to write it down.

RON
 On me. I love this guy.

SAMMY
 You add a shot to that beer and
 I'll let you get a feel.

Ron's laughter carries us into:

EXT. THE WINDCHIME HOUSE - DAY

WINDCHIMES hang from the eaves of a modest home on a quiet
 residential street. They're home-made and cobbled together
 from every odd thing: cutlery, beer cans, fishing weights,
 lures, even hub-caps.

VIC MARTINEZ (mid-40s, mellow or apathetic, one can never
 know for sure) steps out onto the porch in his bathrobe. He
 sees Sammy parked across the street in his truck and gives a
 small wave.

Sammy nods back.

VIC'S WIFE emerges from the house with two mugs of coffee.
 She stiffens at the sight of Sammy.

Sammy drives off.

Vic's Wife shoves a mug into her husband's hand and returns indoors.

Vic sits in a chair and turns on a RADIO. RANCHERO MUSIC plays.

EXT. POTTER VALLEY TURN-OFF - DAY

Sammy pulls off the highway toward a line of modest rental units on the banks of the Russian River.

He parks in front of his unit -- a glorified shack, really -- and sits at the wheel thinking. Can't go in. Not yet.

He re-starts the engine and circles back to the highway. As he does, the COUNTRY MUSIC on his stereo bleeds into the same song being performed at:

INT. CONCERT HALL - NIGHT

MERLE HAGGARD performs on-stage.

The CONCERT-GOERS on the main floor sit at tables, drinking.

Sammy sits at a table with a YOUNG COUPLE who can't keep up with his drinking. They grow increasingly uncomfortable as he tries to flag down a passing COCKTAIL WAITRESS.

SAMMY

Fuck. Do you have to sleep with her
to get a drink? I'll sleep with you
honey, if that's what it takes?

Sammy gets up from the table and turns for the exit.

EXT. CONCERT HALL - NIGHT

Sammy walks toward the bar. THE DIRECTOR of the local theater company spots him and follows.

THE DIRECTOR

Sammy! Sammy, we still on for
Tuesday?

SAMMY

(not stopping)
Oh, yeah, wouldn't miss it.

THE DIRECTOR

You've been reading your lines?

Sammy stops and turns to face him.

SAMMY

Okay, you're gonna have to tell me what we're talking about.

THE DIRECTOR

Sammy! A week ago at The Club? You promised!

SAMMY

You should know better than to talk to me at The Club.

THE DIRECTOR

The play! You're my young Paul Newman. My *Hud!*

SAMMY

Oh, Tony.

THE DIRECTOR

You're a natural. You're cut from the same material as stars.

SAMMY

So are asteroids, and they crash and go boom.

(off his look)

I'm not an actor, Tony! I can't remember my address most nights, how'm I gonna remember all those lines?

THE DIRECTOR

You forget one, all you have to do is look at me and say, 'Line!' It's that easy.

A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN with FAKE BREASTS passes to the bar. Sammy watches her go, then looks to The Director.

SAMMY

Line!

INT. BAR - CONCERT HALL - NIGHT

The woman settles up against the bar and waits to grab the bartender's attention. She is at least seven years older than Sammy and will be known as THE GIRLFRIEND.

Sammy pushes up alongside her and produces a CONCERT TICKET.

SAMMY

The show's not even half over, and
who could resist stage-side seats
to one of the greatest country and
western singers still alive?

THE GIRLFRIEND

(with a country accent)

The only girl in here who doesn't
like songs about momma or trains or
trucks or prison or gettin' drunk.

SAMMY

You forgot cheatin'. I love a good
cheatin' song.

THE GIRLFRIEND

(no accent)

I'm sure you do.

(to bartender)

Amstel Light!

SAMMY

Oh, I get it. You're a city girl,
just up here having yourself a
weekend.

THE GIRLFRIEND

(with a country accent)

Sugar, I live in this shithole
county same as you. If I'm having
anything, it's just another night.

The Bartender returns with her beer. Sammy splits his lines
between him and The Girlfriend.

SAMMY

Gimme an MGD and -- you like
tequila? Four Cuervos. Otherwise
we'll be running back and forth all
the night.

THE GIRLFRIEND

Who are you?

SAMMY

Samuel Stonewall Gentry.

THE GIRLFRIEND

I'm guessing a good portion of
that's bullshit.

SAMMY

You think I would lie to you?

THE GIRLFRIEND

(diplomatic)

Aren't you gonna ask me my name?

SAMMY

You'll get around to telling it.

THE GIRLFRIEND

Then tell me, Stonewall, you've got an extra ticket for a pricey stage-side table: does that mean you dumped your girlfriend or she dumped you? And regardless of who did what to who, which glaring character defect of yours is to blame?

SAMMY

(a moment, then)

I think you like me.

The bartender returns with their shots. The Girlfriend downs one to hide her grin. Sammy does the same. Then she can't help it. She kisses him.

THE GIRLFRIEND

This doesn't mean I'm going to bed with you.

SAMMY

That's all right. We can do it standing up.

They share a look -- and it's sex personified.

INT. CONCERT HALL - NIGHT

The Cocktail Waitress delivers a new round to Sammy's table just as Merle Haggard is finishing a song.

MERLE HAGGARD

Thank you, thank you very much.

SAMMY

(heckling)

When'd you start wearing Nikes?

Merle Haggard, who does indeed wear NIKE TENNIS SHOES, looks at Sammy, clearly annoyed. He speaks to the crowd.

MERLE HAGGARD

This next one was inspired by my wife. One of'em, I should say.

SAMMY

Where're your cowboy boots?!

MERLE HAGGARD

Gonna be up your ass, boy.

The crowd LAUGHS. Merle Haggard tunes his guitar.

MERLE HAGGARD (CONT'D)

It's called 'The Days of Wine and
Roses.'

The song begins. The Couple sharing the table with Sammy and
The Girlfriend are annoyed.

COUNTRY & WESTERN GIRL

You're gonna get us kicked out!

SAMMY

(to Girlfriend)

It was the same with Willie Nelson
when he came through, only he was
wearing British Knights. Can you
believe that? Willie Nelson in
British Knights.

(to Merle Haggard)

When'd y'all stop being outlaws?

Merle Haggard plays a ROUGH CHORD on his guitar; FEEDBACK
echoes through the speakers. He steps up to his microphone.

MERLE HAGGARD

I'm sorry, folks, I've been
fighting this sound system all
night. Come see me next summer,
I'll play an extra set, God bless!

As the singer exits, the CROWD BOOS and one TOURIST stands.

TOURIST

(to Sammy)

Hey, asshole! You gonna buy my
tickets?

Sammy flips him off.

TWO BEEFY BOUNCERS step up to his table.

SAMMY

Oh, you gotta be kidding me. Cuz
you're supposed to do this before
the concert ends. That way you've
got leverage. Way it is now --

They lift Sammy and carry him toward the exit. He cooperates fully and enjoys the ride.

SAMMY (CONT'D)
 -- you're just helping me to my
 car.

The Girlfriend admires the scene for a moment, then grabs his cigarettes from the table and follows him out.

EXT. LUTHERAN CHURCH - NIGHT

A LIT SIGN out front reads: "If you're looking for a sign, this is it!"

WE HOLD on it as Sammy's truck passes by and exits the frame.

A moment later, the truck backs up and parks.

INT. SAMMY'S TRUCK - NIGHT

He studies the sign. The Girlfriend dozes in the passenger seat. It's peaceful. The night so perfectly still and quiet.

Then -- HONKING, SCREECHING TIRES and LIGHT GROWING BRIGHTER in the REAR-VIEW.

Sammy holds a hand up to his eyes, shielding himself from the light as it engulfs him.

EXT. TOUR BUS - NIGHT

Skidded to a stop behind the truck. A near miss.

LOW SHOT --

As the DOOR opens and a Man steps out. He wears NIKE TENNIS SHOES.

INT. SAMMY'S TRUCK - NIGHT

Sammy observes the man's approach in his side-view mirror (we see no higher than his chest). Then he reacts to a knock on his window. He rolls it down.

MERLE HAGGARD (O.S.)
 Well I'll be goddamned ...

SAMMY
 (pointing)
 It's a sign.

On his drunk smile, we --

FADE TO BLACK:

FADE IN:

EXT. A LION'S CLUB - NIGHT [FLASHBACK]

It's dark. A WHITE UTILITY TRUCK turns in from the road and parks on the otherwise empty PARKING LOT.

At first glance, this truck looks just like Sammy's, but then we realize it's brand new and doesn't have a twisted bumper. The driver's side door is different, too. Sammy's has the words "Jessie Gentry Plumbing" painted on it. This one reads: "Bruce Wilson, Plumber."

JESSIE GENTRY (late-20s) cuts the engine. He is ducktail-sleazy -- and also Sammy's father.

A TEENAGED BEAUTY sits in the passenger seat and fidgets beneath his gaze.

As Jessie slides toward her, WE HEAR the SOUND of WATER and --

CUT TO:

INT. SAMMY'S BATHROOM - DAY

As Scout drinks standing water from the floor of the backed-up shower.

Sammy wakes up on the toilet with his pants around his ankles and something balled up in one hand. Standing, he sees it's a COCKTAIL NAPKIN.

INSERT - COCKTAIL NAPKIN

With the following words handwritten on it:

MERLE HAGGARD (V.O.)
 For valuable consideration, receipt
 of which is acknowledged, I, Merle
 Haggard ...

CUT TO:

EXT. EASTERN NEVADA - DAY

As we float across the windblown desert:

MERLE HAGGARD (V.O.)
 ... grant to Sammy Gentry all that
 real property situated in Elko
 County, Nevada, described as
 follows: beginning three miles down
 the unpaved dirt road between
 Interstate 80 and Shafter, Nevada,
 thence one mile south, thence --

A SCREAM is HEARD, and we --

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. SAMMY'S BEDROOM - DAY

As The Girlfriend pops up in bed, pointing.

THE GIRLFRIEND
 What is it?

Sammy appears at the door, buttoning his fly.

A one-horned ANIMAL paces the floor of the room. A unicorn?

THE GIRLFRIEND(CONT'D)
 What is it?!

SAMMY
 A goat!

Sammy tries to chase it through the ajar French door.

SAMMY (CONT'D)
 C'mon, get!

THE GIRLFRIEND
 Goats have two horns!

SAMMY
 This one's got one! Get!

At last the "goat" trots out across the deck and down to a fenceless backyard shared by Sammy's neighbors.

Several other "goats" graze there, loosely shepherded by a HIPPIE WOMAN who is clearly an acid casualty.

Sammy shouts to her from the door:

SAMMY (CONT'D)
 Can't you control these damn
 things?

The woman points over her shoulder.

HIPPIE WOMAN
 My phone rang.

Sammy closes the French doors and shuts the curtains. The
 Girlfriend sits up in bed, still freaked.

SAMMY
 (meaning Hippie Woman)
 She's your classic North Coast acid
 casualty, though one with a
 background as a vet. I'm told she
 scoops one horn out at birth, then
 pushes the remaining one into the
 center of the skull. Like that a
 goat becomes a unicorn.

THE GIRLFRIEND
 That is so wrong.

SAMMY
 She used to run with this circus
 based out of Juarez, Mexico. I'm
 told she got kicked out.

THE GIRLFRIEND
 (disbelief)
 She got kicked out of a Mexican
 circus?

SAMMY
 Wuddaya gonna do?

A beat.

THE GIRLFRIEND
 Did we have sex?

Slowly, Sammy pulls the sheets away and admires her beauty.

SAMMY
 Maybe we should do it again just to
 be sure.

EXT. LUTHERAN CHURCH - DAY

Sammy's truck is parked on the side of the road in front of
 the sign. Cars fill the parking lot for a Sunday service.

EXT. SAMMY'S SHACK - DAY

The Girlfriend stands outside the front door, wearing panties and one of Sammy's flannel shirts. She looks both ways, but only sees a VW VAN.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Sammy stands in his boxers at the stove. The Girlfriend enters.

THE GIRLFRIEND

You sure you don't drive a van?

SAMMY

I think we flew home on the wings of an angel. God looks out for drunks and children.

He lifts a can of beer.

THE GIRLFRIEND

Am I stranded here forever?

He turns to her with a spoon and the pot from the stove.

SAMMY

Taste this and you won't want to leave.

She does, and likes it: Mmm.

SAMMY (CONT'D)

Potato flakes and a can of mushroom soup.

THE GIRLFRIEND

Yeah? More.

(eating hungrily)

Is this how all single men eat?

SAMMY

The cultured ones. You gonna tell me I'm your first?

THE GIRLFRIEND

I'm getting a divorce.

Sammy's unsure how to take this.

SAMMY

Did I just break a commandment without knowing it?

THE GIRLFRIEND

I think you started breaking things
long before I came along.

The truth hurts. He sets the pot down.

THE GIRLFRIEND (CONT'D)

C'mon, don't be like that.

The Girlfriend unbuttons her flannel. Those breasts, my god.

THE GIRLFRIEND (CONT'D)

It's not Monday morning yet.

She pulls at the waistband of Sammy's boxers. He resists for
a moment . . . Then let's her pull him into the bedroom.

EXT. RADIO STATION - NIGHT

It's just before sunrise.

Sammy sits in his parked truck, reading the paper and
drinking coffee. A TAPED NEWSCAST plays on the RADIO.

SAMMY (V.O.)

Good morning, this is Sammy Gentry
in the KVine newsroom. A fire in
Lucerne Friday morning took the
life of 71-year-old Ella May
Jenkins. According to Fire Marshal
Alex Gibbons:

FIRE MARSHAL (V.O.)

The burn patterns were not what we
would expect to find in a natural
blaze. We knew right away --

Seeing a car pull up beside him, Sammy turns the radio off.

JACK IRONS, a friendly-looking man in his fifties, gets out.
He's the morning DJ.

Sammy exits his car and follows him to the door.

IRONS

(re: utility truck)
Your inheritance, I gather?

SAMMY

My birthright.

Irons unlocks the front door. Sammy follows him in.

INT. NEWSROOM - DAY

Sammy stands by the printer as a half-dozen POLICE REPORTS get printed out. He grabs one.

INSERT - POLICE REPORT

Name: Samuel John Gentry.

Offense: Public Intoxication; Vandalism

Irons appears at the door with a mug of coffee.

IRONS

Anything new on the arson?

Sammy nods, balling up the police report that has his name on it.

INT. STUDIO - DAY

Irons stands at the microphone, waiting for a SONG to end. Through a window, we can see Sammy sitting at his station in the adjacent newsroom.

When the song does end, Irons pushes a button on his soundboard and throws his finger in Sammy's direction.

INT. NEWSROOM - DAY

Sammy pushes a button on his soundboard. INTRO MUSIC plays. He speaks into a microphone.

SAMMY

Good morning, this is Sammy Gentry
in the K-Vine newsroom.

A FOLDED NEWSPAPER lies open on the soundboard. LINES from one ARTICLE have been highlighted. Those lines are:

SAMMY (CONT'D)

A Friday fire in Lucerne is now
being investigated as a homicide.
Sheriff's deputies arrested a Lower
Lake Man Saturday night in
connection with the crime ...

CUT TO:

INT. MEN'S ROOM - DAY

FLUSH!

Ron turns from the urinal. Sammy stands at the sink, washing his hands.

RON
How come I don't ever hear you on
the news?

SAMMY
(suspicious)
All you have to do is listen.

RON
Ah, you read it. But you never
appear in it.

Ron laughs.

INT. CLEARLAKE CLUB - DAY

They exit the men's room to the bar and retake their stools.

SAMMY
I almost wish I got dinged a second
time on Saturday night. At least
then I'd have a police report to
tell me how I got home.

RON
What you need to do is date a
courtroom stenographer. "Can you
read that back to me?"

Sammy pulls out the Merle Haggard cocktail napkin and sets it down between them.

RON (CONT'D)
Maybe you wrote him a song and
that's his payment.

Pam delivers two shots.

PAM
These are on Ed.

ED, 70s, is as subtle as his buzz-cut. He raises his beer from far end of the bar, then slowly comes over to join them.

RON

(re: napkin)

As your priest and legal counsel, I suggest you go to the assessor's office to see if it's legit.

SAMMY

In Eastern Nevada?

RON

Only way to know for sure.

ED

(arriving, to Sammy)

What's this I hear about you blacking out a machine at the Indian casino?

SAMMY

Shit, Ed, that's old news.

ED

How much you take'm for?

SAMMY

Enough to run around for a week or two having so much fun I crashed my car. But not so much I could pay the asshole at the tow shop and get it to the mechanic.

ED

You have to pay taxes on them casino winnings, too.

SAMMY

Way ahead of you.

Pam lifts a VASE behind the bar. It's filled with LOSING LOTTERY SCRATCHERS.

SAMMY (CONT'D)

It's your basic high school accounting. Every dollar I lose takes away the tax on every dollar I won.

ED

(impressed)

This fucking guy.

RON

You haven't even heard about the truck that fell into his lap or the new girlfriend he's got in it.

ED

What's this about a new girlfriend?

RON

A real live Beverly Hills boob job.

ED

(envious)

All they had when I was your age was tissue paper. What does she do?

SAMMY

What do you mean?

ED

You know what I mean. Tell me what she does.

SAMMY

Aren't you someone's grandfather?

Ed lays money on the bar and motions to Pam.

ED

You keep pouring drinks till this bastard mentions a sex act! Now talk, goddammit. You'll be my age yourself one day.

EXT. FAMILY PLANNING CLINIC - DAY

In a run-down mini-mall. Sammy's truck is parked out front.

INT. FAMILY PLANNING CLINIC - DAY

ELIZABETH (19), an all-American cutie, sits in a corner of the waiting room. Her eyes grow big as she sees Sammy enter with The Girlfriend and approach the front counter.

SAMMY

You sure I can't wait in the truck?

THE GIRLFRIEND

You can if you wanna stop having sex with me.

As the Girlfriend signs in, Sammy glances into the waiting room and notices a YOUNG WOMAN IN A MOTLEY CRUE T-SHIRT.

As Sammy and the Girlfriend pass before her, she says:

MOTLEY CRUE GIRL
Picking up or dropping off?

Sammy leads The Girlfriend as far away from her as possible. Only after he sits down does he realize Elizabeth sits facing them. She lowers a magazine and waves shyly.

ELIZABETH
Hi, Sammy.

SAMMY
Hey.

A plain-looking NURSE in her forties appears.

NURSE
(reading from clipboard)
Sandra Wilson?

The Motley Crue Girl follows her out.

INT. SAMMY'S TRUCK - DAY [MOVING]

Sammy drives. The Girlfriend sits in the passenger seat with a bag of birth control pills from the clinic.

THE GIRLFRIEND
(amused)
So d'you get a percentage of all
the business you send their way?

SAMMY
Let me say it again. How 'bout I
just wait in the truck?

He turns on the RADIO to his 5 o'clock NEWSCAST.

SAMMY (V.O.)
At today's preliminary hearing,
county prosecutors laid the case
against 23-year-old Bobby Jenkins.

Sammy looks toward THE TOW YARD as he passes it. The hood on his old Dodge Dart is up.