

CADILLAC COUNTRY

Written by

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CADILLAC
Hey girls. Where's your fine momma?

They both point to the kitchen.

KITCHEN

Cadillac rushes in, finds his wife, JOSIE, the captivating heartbeat of this family, 30's, cooking supper. Baby HAZEL, 4 months, swaddled across her back in a fabric sling.

Coming up behind them, Cadillac wraps his big strong arms around them both. Hazel wriggles and giggles. Josie smiles sweetly. Their man is home.

Cadillac kisses Josie's neck. Whispers in her ear -

CADILLAC (CONT'D)
I can't stay. I'm late.

Through her smile, Josie whispers back -

JOSIE
Then don't be starting something
you don't have time to finish.
(a twinkle in her eye)
If it's not too late when you get
home, there might be some dessert.

CADILLAC
Yes, ma'am!

He snags a couple of her cooling biscuits on his way out.

4 **EXT. CADILLAC'S FARMHOUSE - DAY**

The riff of a country music band erupts as Cadillac races out the front door, tears down the gravel road in his old pickup.

5 **EXT./INT. CADILLAC'S PICKUP - TRAVELING - DAY**

The impatient music grows louder as we follow Cadillac. He's flying down the gravel road, billows of dust behind him.

6 **EXT. MILLER'S FARMSTEAD - DAY**

The pickup screeches to a halt in front of a quonset, a long cylindrical workshop. The country music thumping from inside.

Cadillac grabs a large cardboard box from the bed of his truck and hustles inside.

7

INT. MILLER'S QUONSET - DAY

The place is piled with stuff collected from flea markets, auctions and garage sales.

Cadillac drops the box inside the door, plugs his guitar into the amp and joins the BAND playing amidst the mess.

The music takes off, the addition of Cadillac like gasoline to their fire. Raw talent. This in no fat dad band.

THE BAND

MILLER, Cadillac's brother-in-law, plays bass with JERRY, an easy going plumber, who's keeping the beat on drums. Both wearing the unassuming attire of the upper Midwest; jeans, hoodie, boots and a baseball cap. TRENT plays his guitar, in mechanic's coveralls just like Cadillac.

All in their 30's, rough around the edges, these guys have been friends since kindergarten, living in this rural community that nobody moves to and people rarely leave.

TIME JUMP:

The guys, hot and sweaty, in the middle of another rippin' song. Tear the skin off your bones loud. Cadillac's voice, rich and soulful, in the lead.

Then, from behind the men, a door opens, and PIKE, Miller's little shit of a step son, 12, lobs a wad of black cat firecrackers into the middle of their groove.

Pike's half grown cattle dog pup, GUNNER shoves past him barking. Attacks the drum's thumper just as Jerry enters the sweet spot of his drum solo.

JERRY

What the hell?

The smoky haze from the fire works mingles with Pike's obnoxious cackle. He runs off. Gunner, barking relentlessly, chases after him. They guys look to Miller, pissed.

CADILLAC

You gonna handle your damn kid?

Miller retorts -

MILLER

Not my kid.

CADILLAC

Keep thinkin' that. You put a ring
on it.

MILLER

Not rockin' that boat more than it
already is.

Cadillac doesn't want to get into it, removes his guitar.

CADILLAC

I'm callin' it a night, boys.
Gather round.

Cadillac slices through the packing tape of the cardboard box
with his pocket knife as Miller, Jerry and Trent look on.

Inside, CD's. T-shirts with "The Slingin' Guns Summer Tour
2010" across them. Cadillac hands out sheets of paper.

CADILLAC (CONT'D)

Our itinerary. First gig
Minneapolis. Three weeks. It's
happening. We're on our way.

8 **INT. CADILLAC'S FARMHOUSE - THE NEXT MORNING**

Cadillac peeks out the window to find Josie, content in her
cozy floral chair underneath the cottonwood tree, wrapped in
a shawl, soaking up the first warm rays of spring. Hazel,
nestled in her bosom.

Cadillac ponders, the band t-shirt in his hand.

9 **EXT. CADILLAC'S FARMHOUSE - MORNING**

Cadillac joins Josie and Hazel under the tree.

CADILLAC

How are my girls this fine morning?

JOSIE

It is fine, isn't it?

Cadillac kisses Josie, sits beside her, his voice timid -

CADILLAC

You still ok me pulling the trigger
on this? There won't be much money
for awhile, maybe a long while.

Cadillac offers her the t-shirt.

CADILLAC (CONT'D)
It's gettin' real.

Josie takes his hand in hers, looks him in the eye -

JOSIE
You were born to play music. We're
doing this.

Cadillac leans his head against her shoulder, relieved.

CADILLAC
I can do anything with you by my
side.

Josie leans her head on his.

JOSIE
I've got you, babe.

Josie lays the shirt across Hazel's tiny body.

JOSIE (CONT'D)
You ever think maybe you're paving
the way for her?

They admire their baby together, dreaming of the future.

JOSIE (CONT'D)
What song will you open with?

CADILLAC
How about your song?

JOSIE
That's a good one.

Cadillac belts out -

CADILLAC
("Baby Got Back" by Sir
Mix-A-Lot)
*I like big butts, and I can not
lie. You other brothers can't deny,
that when a girl walks in with an
itty bitty waist and a round thing
in your face, you get sprung...*

Josie gasps in mock disdain, slaps his arm. A deep belly
laugh from Cadillac. Then, amidst a lingering chuckle in his
deep, rich voice, he croons to her -

CADILLAC (CONT'D)
 ("You Are My Sunshine" by
 Jimmie Davis and Charles
 Mitchel)

*You are my sunshine, my only
 sunshine. You make me happy when
 skies are grey. You'll never know
 dear, how much I love you. Please
 don't take my sunshine away.*

THWAP, the screen door interrupts them. Faye carries a mug of steaming hot tea. Stella records her journey with her portable camera. Faye sets down the mug for Josie.

FAYE
 Can I hold her?

Stella zooms in on Hazel's little face.

JOSIE
 You girls need to be off to school.
 You'll be late if you don't hustle.

STELLA
 But, we want to stay home today and
 help you with the baby!

JOSIE
 There will be plenty of time for
 that after school's out. Besides,
 Faye has an important test today.

STELLA
 But mom!

Cadillac interjects -

CADILLAC
 You heard your mother. Load up.

Stella knows better than to argue.

STELLA
 Bye Mom. Bye Hazel...

Faye and Stella go to the truck. Cadillac rises. To Josie -

CADILLAC
 Don't go anywhere.

Josie smiles.

JOSIE
 Hurry back.

Cadillac kisses Josie's smiling lips.

CADILLAC
Just gotta drop off kids, check in
at work. You want me to get you
those blueberry pancakes you like?

Josie's eyes light up.

JOSIE
Oh, would you?

CADILLAC
I got you, babe.

Cadillac kisses Josie and then baby Hazel. As he rises, a large flock of Snow and Canada geese honk as they fly above. Cadillac gazes into the sky.

CADILLAC (CONT'D)
It'll be any day now!

Josie chuckles.

JOSIE
Good thing you got all that kissing
out of they way. It won't be
happening for awhile if you win.

Cadillac laughs as he saunters away, calls back to Josie -

CADILLAC
When I win, Josie. When I win.
We'll need it to catch our food if
we go broke singing for a living.

Then to Faye and Stella waiting in the truck -

CADILLAC (CONT'D)
Ready to get your learnin' on?

Cadillac takes his place in the driver's seat beside his girls.

10 **INT./EXT. CADILLAC'S PICKUP TRUCK - TRAVELING - MORNING**

Cadillac trundles down the gravel road humming. Even his hum is rich. Faye and Stella content beside him.

GABRIEL, their wiry, half Native American neighbor, simple, 18 going on 8, meanders towards them, with a fishing rod.

The old farmhouse he lives in with his mother can be seen in the distance. Cadillac slows his truck.

CADILLAC
Morning, Gabe. Need a ride?

GABRIEL
Goin' fishing.

CADILLAC
I can see that. Hop in.

Gabriel climbs in the back. Cadillac shifts into drive. Stella opens the back window, films Gabriel. He waves.

A BIT LATER

Goose Lake stretches alongside the back country road. Cadillac brakes. Gabriel climbs out of the truck bed.

GABRIEL
You wanna fish with me?

CADILLAC
Some other time.

Gabriel's disappointment is obvious.

GABRIEL
Ok. A different day.

CADILLAC
Good luck, buddy.

Gabriel lumbers to the shoreline. Stella slides over to the passenger side window, filming Gabriel as he goes.

STELLA
Why's he like that, Dad?

FAYE
Stella!

STELLA
What? He's not like us. I just want to know why.

FAYE
It's not appropriate. That's all.

CADILLAC
Gabe didn't get enough oxygen being born. I guess the chord was wrapped around his neck.

Cadillac is now speaking Faye's language.

FAYE
Hypoxia. He could have died!

CADILLAC
Hypoxa what?

FAYE
Hypoxia, Dad. It's a deficiency in the amount of oxygen reaching body tissues.

CADILLAC
(teasing)
Look at you and your fancy words.

FAYE
Dad.

STELLA
Could that have happened to Hazel?

FAYE
It can happen to any baby.

Stella turns her camera towards Cadillac and Faye.

STELLA
Gabe has a mom. Where's his dad?

CADILLAC
Left one day. Never came home.

STELLA
Why? Didn't Karey need help?

CADILLAC
Yeah, she did, but life's no Disney movie, and shit happens.

Stella stops filming. Cadillac turns his truck onto pavement.

11 **EXT. CADILLAC'S FARMHOUSE - SAME**

Josie's in her chair under the cottonwood. Hazel sleeps in her basinet alongside. Josie's eyes glimmer as she slides a letter into an envelope, "Cadillac" scrawled across it.

Hazel fusses. Josie tucks the envelope in the crack between the cushion and the chair. Josie rises, cradles Hazel in her comforting arms. A moment of dizziness.

Josie leans against the basinet for balance, eases herself back into her chair, hand over her mouth, nauseous.

12

EXT. SCHOOL - SAME

Kids funnel to the school entrance. Cadillac stops the truck.

CADILLAC

Have a terrific day Dr. Faye. Miss
Hollywood.

Stella winks at her dad.

STELLA

You know it!

She slides on a pair of sunglasses. Faye's all business.

FAYE

I've got a test, so it'll only be
good if I do well. Scholarships
don't happen on their own.

CADILLAC

Just relax and show 'em what you
know. Maybe throw in one of those
big words like you used earlier.

Faye collects her things.

FAYE

Dad. Please. And anyway, I'm not a
doctor yet, so don't be hyperbolic.

CADILLAC

There you go. Use that.

A teenage-sized eye roll as Faye hustles off. Stella lingers.

STELLA

Make sure you tell me if Hazel does
anything interesting.

CADILLAC

She sleeps, cries and poops.

STELLA

Dad! You know, like if she smiles,
or says my name.

CADILLAC

You'll be the first to know.

He blows Stella a kiss. She catches and pockets it.

STELLA
I'll save it for later.

Cadillac winks, trundles away.

13 **EXT. TRACTOR AND MOTOR SERVICES - MORNING**

Cadillac pulls up to work just as Trent flips the open sign to closed, lawn chair under his arm. Calls to Cadillac -

TRENT
They've landed!

Cadillac throws his truck into reverse, charges away.

14 **EXT. THE NIGHT OWL LOUNGE AND GAS STATION - MORNING**

Miller unloads cases of alcohol when Jerry races by in his truck, honking his horn.

JERRY
It's happening! I'm gonna win!

Miller grabs a lawn chair. Throws it in the back of his truck beside several cases of beer, tears after Jerry.

15 **EXT. GOOSE LAKE - MORNING**

A line of trucks, Cadillac, Miller, Trent, and Jerry among them, race past Gabriel who is fishing along the shore. He waves to the men, but no one notices.

16 **EXT. FIELD - MORNING**

The trucks arrive to a vast, harvested corn field at nearly the same time. About 12 guys emerge, grab their lawn chairs.

Miller hands out beers. They spread out across the field, search for the perfect spot. Cadillac uses his chair as a divining rod.

CADILLAC
It's my year, boys. I can feel it!

Miller peers into the distance, then to the sky, calculates.

MILLER
Oh, no. It's mine.

MEANWHILE ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE FIELD

A CAMOUFLAGED MAN, with a walky talky and a shot gun sneaks through a hedgerow. Peaks from behind a tree, peers through binoculars.

Binocular POV - Thousands of Snow and Canada geese cover the field. Beyond them, the men, sprawled in their lawn chairs.

VOICE FROM WALKY TALKY

We're in position. Let her rip.

The camouflaged man brings his walky talky to his mouth.

CAMOUFLAGED MAN

Roger that.

The camouflaged man shoots his shotgun in the air. Honking erupts as the geese ascend in droves.

BACK ON THE MEN

The cacophony of honking geese grows louder as they careen towards the lounging men. Jerry dons a pair of ski goggles.

CADILLAC

What are you doing?

JERRY

I got pink eye last year.

CADILLAC

Pussy.

Cadillac leans back in his chair.

CADILLAC (CONT'D)

Bass boat lottery, bitches!

MILLER

Incoming!

All the men follow Cadillac's lead and lean back. They throw their heads back and open their mouths wide.

The droves of squawking geese fly over. Plop, plop, plop, white splats of shit begin to pepper the men.

A giant white deuce splats directly on Cadillac's face into his wide open mouth. He jumps up, arms raised in celebration.

MILLER (CONT'D)

Bullseye! We have a winner!

Hoots and hollers erupt. All the men raise their beers to Cadillac and guzzle.

MILLER (CONT'D)

A baby, summer tour, and a now a boat. You lucky bastard!

A whitewashed grin as Cadillac swirls a swig of beer, spits out the goose shit.

17

INT. CADILLAC'S PICKUP TRUCK - TRAVELING - MORNING

Gravel crunches under tires. An impressive bass boat in tow. Cadillac hums along with the radio. Not a care in the world.

We approach the looming cottonwood, behind it the farmhouse.

CADILLAC

We're fishin' in style this year, darlin'!

Pulling into the driveway, we hear Hazel crying.

CADILLAC (CONT'D)

What'd ya do? Pinch her?

Cadillac dismounts, a styrofoam container in his hand.

CADILLAC (CONT'D)

Brought your pancakes!

As Cadillac approaches, he spots Hazel. She's lying on the ground, dirt on her face, wailing.

The container drops from his hand as he rushes over. Josie's in her chair, motionless. Her eyes stare at nothing, a trickle of blood from her nose.

He doesn't know who to attend to first, scoops up howling Hazel. Touches Josie's face. She's stone cold.

CADILLAC (CONT'D)

Josie!

Hazel in one arm, his other around Josie. Off Hazel's mournful wail intermingled with Cadillac's cries of agony -

CUT TO:

18 **INT. JOSIE'S MINIVAN - TRAVELING - DUSK**

The whir of the engine. The driver's bundled in a parka. We can see her breath as she scrapes the frosted windshield.

A relentless wind blows snow across the icy road. Hard to tell the horizon from the landscape. All the same dull gray.

19 **INT. CADILLAC'S GARAGE - SAME**

A big blue tarp covering a car on blocks, a guitar and an amp beside an old worn out chair fill the space.

Across from it, Josie's floral chair. Her shawl draped across the back, as if it's waiting for its queen to return.

A rustling. We find Stella, now 15, fiddling with something, but we can't tell what she's doing.

20 **INT. CADILLAC'S FARMHOUSE - SAME**

Roller skates travel across the wood floor of this dirty, cluttered house, looks more like a bachelor pad than a home.

Hazel, now 5 years old, hums and rolls. She's wearing overalls, fairy wings, a tutu. We follow her to the -

KITCHEN

A long-haired, heavily bearded man cooks at the stove. It takes us a moment to realize it's Cadillac. Hazel lurches to a stop beside him.

HAZEL

I'm hungry.

Absently -

CADILLAC

Almost done.

Hazel rolls out. The phone on the kitchen wall rings. Cadillac wanders over. Answers -

CADILLAC (CONT'D)

Yeah.

A pause -

CADILLAC (CONT'D)

Yep. The title? I know I got it somewhere. I'll look.

Another weary pause -

CADILLAC (CONT'D)
Sure. Come 'round tonight.

CADILLAC'S BEDROOM

Dirty clothes litter the floor, but in the middle of the room, a spotless, well made bed.

On the floor, next to the actual bed, a makeshift one. Looks a bit like a homeless encampment, complete with sleeping bag.

We find Cadillac, rummaging around in his snarled closet. On the top shelf, way in the back, a metal file box.

As he pulls it down, clothes and another box come with it. Bashes him on the head before crashing to the ground.

The "Slingin Guns" T-shirt lays strewn over a sturdy vintage stetson hat box. He pulls it away and finds it's tied with a red ribbon, "My heart" scrawled across the lid.

He takes it to the bed, unties the ribbon. Inside, a treasure trove of Josie's memories. He tenderly removes each one.

A photo - Josie and a Native American girl both in their late teens in front of a yellow VW Beetle convertible, "*Josie & Karey, Friends Forever!*" printed in the white margin.

Another photo - Josie leans on Cadillac beside the same car.

A VHS tape, a few cassettes, baby booties. A guitar pick, with a C & J surrounded by a heart scratched into it.

Every love note Cadillac ever gave to Josie. Tears cascade.

21 **INT. JOSIE'S MINIVAN - TRAVELING - SAME**

We approach Cadillac's farmhouse. The giant cottonwood. It's splintered off it's trunk and lies dead, sprawled across the front yard somewhat buried in snow. The ripped and jagged trunk, all that remains standing.

22 **EXT. CADILLAC'S FARMHOUSE - DUSK**

A 19 year old Faye exits the minivan. Hauls out a heavy school bag, grocery bags. Kicks the car door shut.

Off the sound of the car door slamming -

CUT TO:

23 **INT. CADILLAC'S GARAGE - SAME**

Stella jerks up her head while tinkering with her project.

24 **EXT. FARMHOUSE - DUSK**

Stella emerges, hustles across the yard. Faye spots her.

FAYE

Hey Stella! A little help here!

Stella disappears through the back door.

FAYE (CONT'D)

Uh... Alright. I'll just carry all
this crap in myself.

Faye waddles up the steps to the front door mumbling -

FAYE (CONT'D)

What's that? Do I need any help?
Only drove two hours in this man
magnet of a mom-mobile.

Sets down the groceries in the snow. Opens the front door.

FAYE (CONT'D)

Decided to come home and cook for
you instead of go out with friends.

Struggles to get inside.

FAYE (CONT'D)

But, no. I'll take care of
everything. Sherpa Faye, cook Faye,
mother Faye at your service.

25 **INT. CADILLAC'S FARMHOUSE - DUSK**

Faye enters. Hazel spots her, careens full speed toward her.

HAZEL

You're home!

Hazel slams into Faye with an exuberant hug around her legs.

CADILLAC'S BEDROOM

Cadillac hears the commotion at the front door. Wipes tears.
Smooths out the quilt on the bed.

ENTRY WAY

Cadillac appears. His pained eyes brighten a bit.

CADILLAC
How's my hardworking valedictorian?

Faye puts on a brave face.

FAYE
Oh you know, lotta homework.

Cadillac kisses Faye's cheek. Relieves her from the bags of groceries and makes his way to the kitchen.

CADILLAC
Made dinner.

Faye follows. Hazel rolls behind.

FAYE
Heat's acting up in the minivan.

Cadillac continues to the kitchen.

CADILLAC
Ok. I'll take a look...

KITCHEN

Cadillac plops the groceries on the messy counter. Faye spots a pot of mushy mac and cheese, grabs a wooden spoon, stirs.

FAYE
Usually a meal consists of more
than one food group, Dad.

CADILLAC
There's cheese in there.

FAYE
I meant like vegetables, you know,
vitamins and minerals.

CADILLAC
That's what ketchup's for.

FAYE
Oh, Dad...

CADILLAC
I'm going out to the garage for
awhile. Glad you're home.

Faye sighs.

FAYE

Ok. I'll take care of this.

Cadillac lumbers out the back door. Faye surveys the mess. Stella comes downstairs. Pokes around in the grocery sacks.

STELLA

Hey.

FAYE

Didn't you hear me calling you?

STELLA

No. Why?

FAYE

I could use some help.

Stella rolls her eyes, but starts to empty the bags. Faye puts on a pot of water to boil. Hazel rolls in.

FAYE (CONT'D)

Have any homework?

Hazel rolls around the kitchen.

HAZEL

Nope. I'm hungry.

A flustered Faye rummages in her purse. Hands Hazel a snack.

FAYE

Here.

Faye goes back to cooking. Hazel wrinkles her face.

HAZEL

I can't eat this!

Faye looks over to Hazel. She's holding a pen. Faye plunges back into her purse. Pulls out a stick of licorice.

FAYE

Why don't you go find something to do until dinner's ready?

Hazel takes the licorice, salutes.

HAZEL

Aye aye, Captain.

Hazel rolls away.

CADILLAC'S BEDROOM

Hazel rolls past the open door sucking her licorice. Rolls past again, slower this time. On the next pass, she rolls backwards. Spies down the hall. The coast is clear.

Hazel creeps in, eyes the "Slingin' Guns" shirt. Shuffles through the keepsakes. Discovers the VHS tape. Swipes it along with the t-shirt, rolls out.

KITCHEN

Faye flips through a stack of mail on the counter. Stella puts away groceries.

FAYE
Homework done?

STELLA
Mostly.

FAYE
You notice any mail come for me?

Stella rummages through the groceries.

STELLA
Who even gets mail anymore?

Faye changes the subject.

FAYE
Why were you in the garage? You know you're not allowed in there.

STELLA
It's nothing.

FAYE
It won't be nothing if Dad finds out. What were you doing?

A knock on the door. Stella rushes to answer. Faye calls after her -

FAYE (CONT'D)
Stella. Seriously.

AT BACK DOOR

Stella opens the door. It's Gabriel with his mother, KAREY, Josie's best friend from the keepsake photo, now in her late 30's, calm and capable. She's holding a pie.

Gabriel smiles from ear to ear. He produces a whopper of a fish from behind his back.

GABRIEL
A big one! It's not for you.

STELLA
Why not?

GABRIEL
Mom says I have to say thank you
and give your dad a fish.

Stella looks at him quizzically, then laughs -

STELLA
It's huge! One sec.

Stella races up the stairs. Faye invites them in. Stella
returns with a polaroid camera.

STELLA (CONT'D)
Hold it up high!

Gabriel, as proud as a peacock raises his catch. Snap! Stella
takes a picture. Karey hands Faye the pie.

FAYE
What's this?

KAREY
Came to pick up the title to the
snow machine he gave Gabriel.
Thought a pie and a fish was the
least we could do to thank him.

FAYE
Anything besides macaroni is
welcome here.

KAREY
How were midterms?

Faye's eyes well up with tears. Then from the living room -

HAZEL (O.S.)
Dad!

Stella pauses from her photo shoot. Calls to Hazel -

STELLA
Dad's in the garage.

Hazel yells back -

HAZEL (O.S.)
Dad's on tv!

LIVING ROOM

Faye, Karey, Stella and Gabriel with his fish enter. Hazel's wearing the swiped t-shirt, but on her, it's more like a dress. She mimics a much younger version of Cadillac on the tv, wildly strumming an imaginary guitar.

STELLA

It is Dad!

Karey smiles in recognition.

KAREY

Would you look at that! This is back when I worked at the Night Owl.

ON THE TELEVISION

A grainy home movie, a jolly crowd of people. Cadillac on a small stage sings a catchy country song, playing his guitar with his band, Miller, Jerry and Trent. Karey's waitressing.

KAREY (CONT'D)

Look at how young we all were. I made a thousand bucks in tips every night he played. Packed the house.

FAYE

Where did you get this Hazel?

Hazel points towards the bedroom never taking her eyes off the TV. Goes right back to strumming.

STELLA

Who filmed this?

KAREY

Your mom. She was at every one of his gigs. She loved to watch him play. We all did.

Everyone watches, mesmerized.

INT. CADILLAC'S GARAGE - SAME

Cadillac sits across from Josie's chair, strumming his guitar, singing the same song from that day under the tree. But instead of a frolicking melody, now a mournful dirge -

CADILLAC
 ("You Are My Sunshine" the
 Jamey Johnson version)
*The other night dear, as I lay
 sleeping, I dreamed I held you in
 my arms. When I awoke, dear, I was
 mistaken and I hung my head and
 cried...*

When he's finished, a deep heartsick sigh. Cadillac kisses
 his fingers. Touches them to her chair.

CADILLAC (CONT'D)
 Love you, baby...

Cadillac steps out of the garage.

27 **INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT**

The VHS tape whirs in the player. Hazel plays her air guitar.
 Everyone else watches. Cadillac enters. They all turn to him.

HAZEL
 I play just like you. See?

Hazel strums hard. Karey smiles.

KAREY
 Remember those good ol' days?

Cadillac is stoic.

CADILLAC
 They're long gone.

Stella interrupts.

STELLA
 Can I use some of this footage -

Cadillac cuts her off.

CADILLAC
 No. Turn it off. And get rid of it.

Stella's overflowing with creative inspiration.

STELLA
 But Dad, I'm working on a project
 and it, it would be perfect for -

Cadillac paces to the VCR. Frantically pushes buttons, but it won't stop. Rips the VCR from the shelf yanking it free from the tv, throws it violently.

Glass shatters from the front window. The VCR lands outside in a snow bank. Horrified, everyone freezes.

Cadillac comes to, realizes he's just frightened everyone. Now he's embarrassed, but instead of saying anything, retreats back to the garage.

STELLA (CONT'D)

What just happened?

Karey steps in.

KAREY

I'm not sure. Let's give him a little time.

(beat)

Gabriel why don't you put that fish in the sink and find some cardboard. Faye, Stella a broom. Sweep up this glass. Hazel, can you find some duct tape?

Off everyone carrying out their orders -

28

INT. CADILLAC'S GARAGE - LATER

Cadillac has pulled back the big tarp from the car on blocks. Underneath, the VW Beetle from Josie's pictures. It's still yellow, but seen better days. He's sitting in the driver's seat staring out the front window.

Karey enters, leans her head in the passenger's side window.

KAREY

So, we going on a road trip?

Karey drops into the seat beside him and starts to rummage. Finds a pair of vintage Mickey Mouse sunglasses tucked in the visor. She slips them on.

KAREY (CONT'D)

Do I still got it or what?

Cadillac can't help but smile. She looks ridiculous.

CADILLAC

Wow. That brings back memories.

Karey opens the glove compartment. Digs around.

KAREY

Talk about memories. Remember these?

She holds up an old package of clove cigarettes.

KAREY (CONT'D)

We thought we were so edgy.

She puts one in her mouth and pretends to smoke.

KAREY (CONT'D)

I miss this car.

(a nostalgic sigh)

Remember the road trip? One last time as free women before you two got married.

Cadillac smirks.

CADILLAC

Wanted to prove you didn't need a man. But who'd you end up calling when you broke down? You know how many miles I drove to save you two?

KAREY

Save us? That's an exaggeration.

CADILLAC

In the middle of nowhere Canada on the side of the road with a blown engine. Save. Rescue. However you say it, you called a man for help.

Karey leans back in her seat.

KAREY

I should've known right then and there Hank was no good. He wouldn't even come with you.

Cadillac sighs.

CADILLAC

At least he didn't throw a VCR through a window in front of his kids.

KAREY

No. He just abandoned us.

A few moments of uncomfortable silence.

CADILLAC

Karey, what's wrong with me?

Karey waits a few beats, then carefully -

KAREY

Do you remember high school shop class?

CADILLAC

What about it?

KAREY

We had a whole semester of small engine repair. I would get so frustrated. You got out your Chilton manual and did some trouble shooting. Showed me how things worked. Now I can help Gabriel work on this snow machine together.

Cadillac faces her.

CADILLAC

What's that got to do with this?

KAREY

You just blew a gasket in there. It's time to find out why.

Cadillac thinks it over. Karey nudges.

KAREY (CONT'D)

You think you're immune? I've never seen you cry, even at her funeral.

Cadillac stares out the window.

CADILLAC

This isn't about her.

Karey gently counters -

KAREY

Your living room window's telling a different story. Do you remember how messed up I was when Hank left?

CADILLAC

Oh, you weren't that bad.

KAREY

You don't remember my drinking
days? The time I parked my car in
my living room?

Remembrance flashes across Cadillac's face.

CADILLAC

We took you to rehab.

KAREY

It's going to come out one way or
the other if you don't face it.
Just like it did tonight with your
girls, my son.

Cadillac drops his head, and after a few beats -

KAREY (CONT'D)

They're worried about you. Scared.
You aren't running right. It's time
to go to work on your engine.

CADILLAC

Fuck.

Karey pats Cadillac on the shoulder, before exiting.

KAREY

Come in when you're ready. I made
pie.

29 **EXT. FARMHOUSE - NIGHT - A BIT LATER**

Cadillac trudges up the steps past the VCR in the snow bank.
The front window patched with cardboard and duct tape. He
pauses to take a look at the damage before heading inside.

30 **INT. FARMHOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT**

Karey, Gabriel, Faye, Stella and Hazel surround the table
eating pie. In the center, one lone piece remaining. Cadillac
enters, contrite.

FAYE

Hi Dad...

CADILLAC

I'm sorry for scaring everybody. It
won't happen again.

Faye, eager to make peace -

FAYE
We forgive you, Dad.

GABRIEL
When I'm mad, Mom says count to 10.

Cadillac relaxes a bit.

CADILLAC
Thanks. I'll try to remember that.
Gabriel beams proudly.

HAZEL
How am I going to watch my movies?
Cadillac drops his head.

CADILLAC
I'm not sure.

STELLA
I think I might be able to fix it.

CADILLAC
That would be great, Stella.
Stella scurries towards the front door.

FAYE
We saved you a piece.

KAREY
A thank you for the snow machine.

CADILLAC
That reminds me.

Cadillac pulls an envelope from his pocket, hands it to her.

CADILLAC (CONT'D)
I found the title.

Karey takes it, then looks to Gabriel who's scooping the last of his pie into his mouth.

KAREY
Son, don't you have something to say to Cadillac?

GABRIEL
Thank you.

KAREY

And...

All at once Gabriel remembers, pushes his chair back. Hurries to the kitchen, returns with his fish.

GABRIEL

It's not for Stella. It's for you.

Cadillac takes the fish.

CADILLAC

He's a beauty, Gabe. Thank you.

A huge smile spreads across Gabriel's face.

31 **EXT. CADILLAC'S FARMHOUSE - SAME**

Stella bends down in the snow bank, picks up the VCR, the tape peaks from inside the player. She scurries in the house. Off the warm light of the living room as she opens the door -

CUT TO:

32 **INT. CADILLAC'S BEDROOM - EARLY MORNING**

The hallway light filters into the tomblike room as Faye opens the door. Cadillac's cocooned in his floor bed.

FAYE

Dad, I'm leaving. Time to get up.

Cadillac doesn't move. Faye flips on the light.

CADILLAC

(suddenly remembering)

I was going to work on your car.

FAYE

You can look at it next time.

CADILLAC

You're not going anywhere without heat in this weather.

FAYE

Dad, I'm going to be late.

CADILLAC

I'll be right there.

Faye shuts the door.

33

EXT. CADILLAC'S FARMHOUSE - EARLY MORNING

Cadillac's under the hood. Faye, bundled in her parka, lobs her school bags into the minivan.

CADILLAC

Who's been messing with this car?

Faye stumbles over her words.

FAYE

Oh. A friend. From school. You wouldn't know him. He was helping me. Putting in a stereo.

CADILLAC

He?

FAYE

Dad. I told you, a friend.

CADILLAC

He jacked it all up, blew a fuse. That's why your heat didn't work. I fixed it.

FAYE

Thanks Dad. Ok, gotta go.

Faye pecks Cadillac's cheek before taking off in the minivan.

34

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Hazel scoops Captain Crunch into her mouth with a large spoon. Stella hurries in.

STELLA

You ready for school?

Hazel nods as she shovels cereal. Cadillac wanders in. Grabs a bowl and spoon. Sits beside Hazel. Pours himself a bowl.

HAZEL

Morning.

Cadillac grunts. A honk from outside.

STELLA

(to Hazel, terse)
Andrea's here. Let's go.

HAZEL

I gotta get my backpack.

STELLA
You said you were ready.

HAZEL
(defiantly)
I am. I just gotta get it.

STELLA
That's not ready.

Hazel climbs down from her chair.

STELLA (CONT'D)
Hurry up, Hazel.

Hazel implores Cadillac who's not paying any attention.

HAZEL
I don't want to go with Stella. I
want to go with you today. K Daddy?

In between bites -

CADILLAC
Yeah. Sure.

STELLA
Fine.

Stella rushes out the door. Hazel climbs the stairs. Cadillac continues to eat. Hazel returns with her backpack.

HAZEL
I'm ready.

Cadillac trudges to the door. Hazel trundles behind.

35

EXT. THE NIGHT OWL LOUNGE AND GAS STATION - DAY

Gabriel strolls down the side walk, minding his own business, when all of the sudden, we hear a big angry bark.

Now we see Gunner, Pike's pup, all grown up tied in the back of a pickup lunging and snapping at Gabriel, who stumbles back, slamming his head against the building.

Pike, now 17, rolls down his window, laughs and calls out -

PIKE
He don't bite retards. Fuckin'
Indian bastard.

Gabriel, trembles, edges to the entrance of the bar.

36

INT. THE NIGHT OWL LOUNGE AND GAS STATION - DAY

Gabriel enters the dark, small town bar, white as a ghost. Miller emerges through the swinging doors from the kitchen, expectant. But then sees it just Gabriel.

MILLER

What's got you so upset?

Gabriel points. Miller peers out the window to see Pike driving off.

Jerry, slouches at the bar, drinking a beer.

JERRY

Some people's kids.

MILLER

Haha, very funny. Not my kid.

Jerry ignores Miller, addresses Gabriel.

JERRY

Next time that dog gives you any lip, jus' slice him open with that fishing knife you got there.

Gabriel shakes his head. Recites an ingrained rule -

GABRIEL

It's just for fish. Not...Not nothing else.

Miller steps in -

MILLER

Ok, Jerry that's enough.

JERRY

Jus' sayin'. That's what I'd do.

MILLER

There's a lot of things you'd do, that he shouldn't.

JERRY

That's probably true...

Jerry returns to slurping his beer. Miller turns to Gabriel.

MILLER

Grab a seat. I'll bring your order.

BACK OF THE BAR ROOM

Gabriel drops into a seat over by the juke box just as Cadillac enters through the back door. Acknowledges Gabriel with a pat on the shoulder as he passes.

AT BAR

Cadillac takes a seat on a stool, but he's looking back at Gabriel. Miller approaches, begins wiping the bar.

CADILLAC
What's with Gabe?

MILLER
That damn dog of Pike's just gave
him a good scare.

CADILLAC
What you gonna to do?

MILLER
Nothin' to do. His mom didn't want
my advice before the divorce and
for damn sure not after. Money's
the only thing of mine she's
interested in.

Cadillac takes a pretzel from a bowl, snaps it half.

CADILLAC
Some things just need to be dead.
You should never have got him that
dog.

MILLER
That's what I get for trying to be
nice.

Miller looks to the front door. Nothing. He turns his attention back to Cadillac.

MILLER (CONT'D)
You're usual?

Cadillac nods. Miller calls to the cook -

MILLER (CONT'D)
One Cadillac special.

COOK (O.S.)
Cadillac special comin' right up!

MILLER
(to Cadillac)
Lunch is on me today.

Cadillac shoots Miller a sideways look.

CADILLAC
What's it this time?

MILLER
Just a little carburetor trouble.
Nothin' serious.

CADILLAC
Can I even get in the quonset?

MILLER
Yeah, yeah. Don't worry about that.
(under his breath)
I'll move some stuff around.

AT THE OTHER END OF THE BAR

Miller brings EVELYN, an attractive woman, in her 30's, her to-go order in a paper sack.

MILLER (CONT'D)
Need anything else?

Evelyn nods towards Cadillac.

EVELYN
What's a girl got to do to get his attention?

Miller considers before answering -

MILLER
You know that pair of swans that that nest by the dam every year?

EVELYN
Sure.

MILLER
They mate for life. Cadillac's the human version of that. Once he met Josie, that was it for him.
(beat)
I, on the other hand, am no swan. Your attention is welcome my way any time.

Evelyn dismounts from her stool.

EVELYN
Oh, no. You had your chance.

MILLER

That was 7th grade! I was an idiot!

Jerry looks on as Evelyn moves to leave.

EVELYN

So nothing's changed then.

Jerry spits out his beer laughing.

MILLER

I swear to god, Jerry...

Miller disappears behind the swinging doors to the kitchen.

AT FRONT DOOR

As Evelyn exits, she passes DICK, a man in his 60's, along with PEARL, much younger eye candy, hanging on his arm. They're obviously not from around here.

AT BAR

Moments later Miller returns to Cadillac, hands full -

MILLER (CONT'D)

Burger and fries.

(beat)

And your mail. Karey's runnin' late today. Told her she could leave it with me instead of drivin' all the way out to your place.

Miller looks up, spots Dick the man he's been waiting for. Covertly points to Cadillac who munches on his burger, seemingly unaware.

Pearl and Dick take a seat right beside Cadillac. Dick begins to introduce himself, but Miller shakes his head, asks -

MILLER (CONT'D)

What can I get you two?

Dick looks to Miller, a bit confused, but plays along. Looks over at Cadillac's plate -

DICK

I'll have what he's having.

(to Pearl)

How 'bout you?

PEARL

(in a thick Jersey accent)

I'm not hungry.

Dick pulls out some quarters.

DICK
Go pick us out a song then, baby.

Pearl saunters to the juke box. Miller indicates to Dick with his eyes to play it cool. Dick nonchalantly looks around.

DICK (CONT'D)
(to Cadillac)
Do a lot of performances?

In between bites -

CADILLAC
Nope.

Dick points to a little stage on the other side of the room.

DICK
Looks like somebody must perform
here from time to time.

Dick calls out to Gabriel who's back by the juke box.

DICK (CONT'D)
What about you, Chief? You a
performer?

Cadillac bristles.

CADILLAC
His name's Gabriel.

Dick can tell by Cadillac's tone that he crossed a line.

DICK
Didn't mean anything by it.

Cadillac ignores him, calls out to Gabriel -

CADILLAC
Gabe's the best fisherman in the
county, ain't that right, Gabe?

Gabriel nods, a big smile spreads across his face.

GABRIEL
Maybe I could come with you some
time, win the boat. Then I could
catch bigger fish.

CADILLAC
I don't think you're old enough.

Gabriel wilts in his seat. Jerry looks to Miller.

JERRY
When did we make that rule?

MILLER
Shut up, Jerry.

COOK (O.S.)
Order up!

Miller takes a sack from the service window. Cadillac takes it from Miller, heads over to Gabe.

AT BACK OF THE BAR

Cadillac hands Gabriel the order of burgers.

CADILLAC
I can't just bring you to the bass boat lottery. It's not that easy. You gotta be nominated, voted in by all the guys. Understand?

We can tell by Gabriel's demeanor that he's disappointed.

GABRIEL
Ok. Ok.

Gabriel exits with his sack of burgers.

AT BAR

Cadillac returns to his lunch. Miller's cleaning out glasses, gabbing with Dick like he doesn't know him.

MILLER
What is it you do?

Dick wades into his schpeal.

DICK
Curator of oddities, attractions and talent. Always looking. Some of the most interesting people come from the most unlikely places.

Miller darts Cadillac a look who promptly shoots him down.

MILLER
Huh, you don't say? I knew someone a while back who was all of that.

Dick takes the opportunity -

DICK
Always looking for that next
someone who's got what it takes,
looking for their chance under the
big lights.

Dick slides Cadillac a card, "*Crossroads Talent Agency.*"

DICK (CONT'D)
Robert Johnson went down to the
crossroads to make his deal with
the devil. I'm the guy that brings
the crossroads to you. Name's Dick.
Dick Grimes.

MILLER
What do ya say, Cadillac? Think we
could find him?

Cadillac's not amused, ignores the business card.

CADILLAC
That guy you're thinking about's
long gone. Pretty sure he got run
over by a train.

Dick looks as if he's watching a tennis match. Cadillac rips
a bite from his burger. Miller continues to wipe out glasses.

MILLER
I'd guess he could make a come back
if he wanted.

CADILLAC
Not if he's dead. With a bass
player that's about to be.

Dick realizes he's no longer in the game. Miffed -

DICK
If you two figure out if he is or
isn't around, if he's livin' or if
he's dead, you got my card. Give me
a call. Or don't.

Dick takes back his business card, glares at Miller.

DICK (CONT'D)
You can cancel my order.

Miller shoves through the swinging doors back to the kitchen.

MILLER (O.S.)
 (louder than necessary)
 Cancel that last order.

Cadillac tears another bite from his burger. Dick calls to Pearl who's finally dropping a quarter into the juke box.

DICK
 Let's go!

PEARL
 But I just picked out my song!

DICK
 You can listen to it later.

Off Garth Brooks caterwauling "I've Got Friends In Low Places", Pearl shrugs and follows Dick out of the bar.

37 **INT./EXT. CADILLAC'S PICKUP - DAY - LATER**

Cadillac slouches, thumbing through the mail Miller handed him at the bar earlier. Pauses on an envelope from Bismarck State College. Inside a letter -

...We regret to inform you that Faye Holloway's grade point average has dropped below the allowable standard to remain in good standing. She has been placed on academic probation and is in jeopardy of losing her full ride scholarship...

Cadillac stares blankly out the window, letter in his hands -

CUT TO:

38 **INT. MILLER'S QUONSET - NIGHT**

Cadillac stares at the hood of an old pickup, its front half all that fits inside the quonset that's piled high with junk. Miller's scrounging through tools. Miller turns to find Cadillac hasn't begun working.

MILLER
 You forget how to open a hood?

Nothing.

MILLER (CONT'D)
 You so good you can fix it with
 only your mind?

Still nothing.

MILLER (CONT'D)
Cadillac!

Cadillac finally looks Miller's direction.

MILLER (CONT'D)
What's with you?

CADILLAC
What?

MILLER
I know my hood's not that
mesmerizing. What are you doing?

CADILLAC
Just thinking.

Miller pops the hood.

MILLER
'Bout what?

Cadillac doesn't answer. Miller steps out from under the hood, his hands pushing up some rags under his shirt augmenting his "breasts". With his eyes crossed and in a thick jersey accent -

MILLER (CONT'D)
You trying to pick out your song?

This snaps Cadillac out of it, but he's not amused.

CADILLAC
What are the odds a knuckle head
producer just happens to wander in
the exact time I'm having lunch?
What idiot tree do you think I fell
out of? Why do you keep doing this?

A resigned sigh from Miller.

MILLER
I keep hopin'.

CADILLAC
You know its a waste of time, don't
you?

MILLER
Well, it's my time to waste.

CADILLAC

Can't take care of my kids now and
you want me to start playing again?
Go on the road? I'm a shitty dad.

MILLER

Hold up. Is that what this about?

Miller scoffs.

MILLER (CONT'D)

You want to know a shitty dad? Once
I didn't turn the hot water all the
way off at the kitchen sink. Left
it dripping. My Dad made me stand
out in the snow while he hosed me
down with cold water. Wanted me to
know what wasteful felt like. And
he was nicer than his dad, so he
tells me.

CADILLAC

Wish he would have taught you to
flush the toilet.

MILLER

Listen, I'm serious. Faye's gonna
be a doctor. Stella's on her way to
bein' the next Spielberg, and Hazel
doesn't twitch every time she sees
a garden hose. Which part of that
is failure? You're not a bad dad.
Your stuck, that's all.

CADILLAC

What the hell's that supposed to
mean?

MILLER

You know. Depressed. And maybe if
we were playing, you wouldn't be so
depressed.

CADILLAC

I can't be there for my kids now.
And you think going out on the road
is going to make that better?

MILLER

It's not all or nothing! I'm just
sayin' pick up the guitar once in
awhile. Have some fun, like we used
to. God knows, I need it.

CADILLAC

What you need is to get your shit together. Now I know why your dad hosed you down. I don't even know why I come over here.

Cadillac storms to the door.

MILLER

Ok. Will work on this later then?

Cadillac flips him the bird as stomps out the door.

MILLER (CONT'D)

Love you too...

39

INT. TRACTOR AND MOTOR SERVICES - THE NEXT DAY

Cadillac enters, still in a mood from the night before. Trent meets him at the door.

TRENT

I need you to go to Bismarck right away.

CADILLAC

Aww, man. why?

TRENT

Hinrichs has already been in here bitching at me. The part will be in Bismarck today, but won't get here until tomorrow at the earliest. If you'll go get it, I can get that guy off my back.

CADILLAC

You buyin' lunch?

TRENT

Put it on the company card.

CADILLAC

Fine.

Cadillac heads back out the door.

40

INT. CADILLAC'S PICKUP - TRAVELING - DAY

Cadillac drives across the snow covered plains. The radio keeps him company.

41 **INT. BISMARCK, NORTH DAKOTA - SPEEDY DELIVERY - DAY**

Cadillac enters, approaches a CLERK behind a desk.

CADILLAC

I'm here to pick up a part for
Trent, Tractor and Motor Services.

The Clerk clickity-clacks on his computer.

CLERK

Looks like it'll be here soon. A
couple hours at most.

CADILLAC

A couple hours! It was supposed be
here waiting for me!

CLERK

I can't give you what I don't have.

CADILLAC

What am I gonna to do 'till then?

CLERK

There's a great coffee shop around
the corner. Get a latte, bite to
eat. You know, cool your engine.

Cadillac exits, miffed.

42 **INT. BISMARCK, NORTH DAKOTA - COFFEE SHOP - DAY**

Cadillac enters to the alluring aroma of coffee, funky music
and art. Espresso whirs amidst chatting people. It's like
he's happened upon an enchanted world.

What is this place? Cadillac's angst begins to melt.

Cadillac approaches LEVITICUS, a fuzzy-haired barista behind
the counter. Life's been rough, but it doesn't get him down,
man. Cadillac studies the chalk board menu behind him.

CADILLAC

Got a burger and fries?

LEVITICUS

(super chill)

We don't do meat here.

(MORE)

LEVITICUS (CONT'D)

We do have a pretty tasty tofu on sprouted rye with all the fixings and a side of dehydrated zucchini crisps, all organic. Add a nitro brew and you've got yourself an A+ meal.

CADILLAC

That doesn't even sound like food.

LEVITICUS

That's my fuel, man.

CADILLAC

That's what I'm afraid of.

(considers)

Ok. I'll try anything once.

Leviticus studies Cadillac for a beat.

LEVITICUS

You look really familiar. You go to Coachella a couple years back?

CADILLAC

Nope.

LEVITICUS

I feel like I know you from somewhere.

CADILLAC

I'm pretty sure I'd remember you.

Leviticus takes it as a complement. He just wants to be friends.

LEVITICUS

Thanks, man.

Leviticus rings up the total.

LEVITICUS (CONT'D)

That'll be \$17.68

Cadillac pulls out his wallet to pay, but then spots a glass fridge with bottled soda.

CADILLAC

Is that Coke? In a bottle?

LEVITICUS

Sure is.

CADILLAC
I haven't had one of those since I
was a kid.

CADILLAC (CONT'D)
I'll take one of them too.

LEVITICUS
Now we're talking.

LATER

Cadillac relaxes at a table, sips Coke, nibbles zucchini chips, takes everything in. He might even be having fun.

In the corner, a small stage. Cadillac's curious, investigates. A poster -

Open mic night - Anyone welcome to perform, every Wednesday and Saturday, 7pm.

Beneath, a sign up sheet. Cadillac contemplates. Takes a long look around. *Maybe Miller's right.* Scribbles his name.

43

INT. CADILLAC'S FARMHOUSE - LIVING ROOM - LATE MORNING

Cadillac's watching tv eating a bowl of cereal. Stella wanders through, on her way out.

CADILLAC
Where's Faye? She's not coming home
this weekend?

Stella halts. *Bummer, she's been spotted.*

STELLA
She seemed stressed, some big test.
I told her she didn't need to. I'd
hold down the fort.

CADILLAC
You know anything about Faye and
some boy?

Stella scoffs.

STELLA
Boy? Not unless he can recite a
medical journal front to back.

CADILLAC
How's she doing? You, know in
school, that sort of thing?

Stella's nonchalant.

STELLA

You know Faye. School's her jam.

Cadillac exhales.

CADILLAC

Yeah, I'm sure your right.

(beat)

Where you going?

STELLA

I was going to hang out with Andrea.

CADILLAC

Be home by 4. I got a thing tonight.

STELLA

4? But we were planning on -

CADILLAC

Aren't you holdin' down the fort?

Stella huffs -

STELLA

Yeah, ok.

Stella heads out. Cadillac changes the channel.

44

INT. BISMARCK, NORTH DAKOTA - COFFEE SHOP - OPEN MIC NIGHT

Cadillac enters clutching a guitar case. A middle-aged woman caterwauls onstage. Too many people. *This was a bad idea.*

Cadillac turns to make a quick escape, but more people push in behind him. Reluctantly, Cadillac takes a seat in the back corner.

The singing woman, if you can call it that, finishes to moderate applause. Leviticus rambles to the stage.

LEVITICUS

Gotta give it to you, Barb. You always know how to keep it real. Next we have Shirley Harris reciting poetry that she wrote herself.

Cadillac recognizes the name as the one just above his on the sign up sheet. He starts to tremble.

Shirley recites her poem, something about true love being like the winds across the prairie, but Cadillac's not listening. He's too busy making sweat.

And before he knows it -

LEVITICUS (CONT'D)
Cadillac. Playing music.

Cadillac holds statue still. He's changed his mind.

LEVITICUS (CONT'D)
Cadillac? Don't you want to play
for us?

Cadillac doesn't budge. Leviticus scans the crowd, questions Cadillac with a look, but he's stoic.

LEVITICUS (CONT'D)
I guess he's a no show. Next we've
got Mo with bird calls so realistic
they'll put feathers on your chest.

45 **INT/EXT. CADILLAC'S TRUCK - TRAVELING - LATER THAT NIGHT**

Cadillac stares blankly at the gravel road ahead of him. The headlights illuminate a forgotten patch of a cemetery next to a little abandoned country church.

Miller's truck plowed into a snowbank alongside, door open. Cadillac lurches to a stop.

CADILLAC
Son of a bitch. Not again.

46 **EXT. ABANDONED COUNTRY CHURCH - CEMETARY - NIGHT**

Cadillac trudges through snow, following footsteps to a grave, *Miller Hove Sr. 1950-1992*. Miller's passed out at the base, beer cans scattered. Cadillac nudges him with his boot.

CADILLAC
Let's go.

Miller doesn't move. Cadillac nudges harder. Miller stirs.

47 **INT./EXT. CADILLAC'S TRUCK - TRAVELING - NIGHT**

Cadillac drives. Miller slumped beside him, mumbling drunk -

MILLER

Left me holdin' the bag. Didn't ask
for this.

CADILLAC

It was an accident. Nobody's fault.

48 **INT. MILLER'S FARMHOUSE - NIGHT**

Cadillac enters to a full on hoarder house. He finds a trail
to the couch. Maneuvers Miller to it. He collapses across it.

CADILLAC

Sleep it off. Back to work
tomorrow.

49 **INT. TRACTOR AND MOTOR SERVICES - MORNING**

Cadillac's working on a tractor. Trent's doing paperwork in
his office. Karey and Gabriel enter.

CADILLAC

What are you two up to?

KAREY

I promised Gabe we'd get his
snowmobile running. Today's the
day. Took off work and everything.

CADILLAC

What about your creed? You know
neither snow, nor rain, nor heat
nor gloom of night, all that stuff?

KAREY

Sometimes you gotta play hooky,
take time for what's important. You
should try it sometime.

Gabriel lays some old spark plugs on the counter.

GABRIEL

Need new ones. Ski-Doo. Yellow.

Karey lays an old drive belt beside the spark plugs.

KAREY

We'll take a new one of these while
we're at it.

CADILLAC

Let me see if we got 'em.

Cadillac searches the shelves, finds the parts.

CADILLAC (CONT'D)

You're in luck. You'll be up and
runnin' in no time.

GABRIEL

Zoom!

Karey smiles her thanks before leaving with Gabriel.

Cadillac taps his fingers on the counter, considers. Throws
on his coat, heads to the door. Trent hollers from his
windowed office -

TRENT

Where you goin?

Cadillac doesn't stop, but calls back -

CADILLAC

Takin' a personal day.

The bell on the door jingles. Trent calls after him -

TRENT

What about Hinrichs' tractor? He's
already called twice today!

But Cadillac's gone. Trent throws up his hands in disgust.

50

INT. SCHOOL - OFFICE - DAY

Evelyn's on the phone as Cadillac waits behind the counter.
She brightens when she sees him. When she's finished -

EVELYN

What can I do for you today,
Cadillac?

CADILLAC

I'm here to pick up my girls.

EVELYN

Oh, everything ok?

CADILLAC
Just some family stuff.

EVELYN
I'll call them up. One minute.

Cadillac wanders down the hall as he waits for his girls, leaving Evelyn without any company.

LIBRARY ROOM

Cadillac meanders down the rows of books in this quiet and empty room. He travels up and down each row. Pauses in front of the self-help section.

One book in particular catches his eye, *"I Wasn't Ready To Say Goodbye."*

Cadillac looks around. There's no one in here. He slides it from the shelf, and makes his way to the door.

Just then, the seasoned librarian, MRS. WENDELL, enters. She spots Cadillac. Slowly, recognition -

MRS. WENDELL
Mr. Holloway? Is that you?

CADILLAC
Mrs. Wendell. You're still here?

MRS. WENDELL
Now, where else would I go?
I didn't recognize you with all
that hair.

Cadillac touches his shaggy head.

MRS. WENDELL (CONT'D)
I haven't seen you in a month of
Sundays.

Mrs. Wendell lowers her gaze to the book that Cadillac has by his side. He tucks it a little further behind him.

MRS. WENDELL (CONT'D)
I remember when you used to wear
out the books in the music section.
(beat)
In fact, I'm still waiting for that
biography of Hank Williams you
never returned. I loan them out for
days, not decades.

Cadillac shifts nervously.

CADILLAC

I've been meaning to bring it back.

MRS. WENDELL

That would be nice. There may be other kids who'd like to learn about a country legend.

She places her hand on his, the one that's holding the book.

MRS. WENDELL (CONT'D)

But you take as long as you need with this one.

CADILLAC

Yes, ma'am.

Cadillac can't get out of there fast enough.

HALLWAY

Cadillac rushes past Evelyn -

CADILLAC (CONT'D)

Tell the girls I'm in the car.

He's gone before she can respond.

51

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

Cadillac makes a beeline for his truck. Leans his head on the cab to catch his breath, compose himself.

Hazel and Stella emerge. Cadillac tosses the book in the glove box. Hazel careens to Cadillac. Barrel hugs his legs.

HAZEL

I love you so much, I just can't stop saying it.

Cadillac picks her up. Squeezes her long and tight. Stella meanders towards them.

STELLA

What's going on?

Cadillac lowers Hazel to the ground.

CADILLAC

I'm bustin' you outta here. Let's go have some fun.

HAZEL

Yeah!

Stella's skeptical. Cadillac opens the door for his girls.

HAZEL (CONT'D)

What are we gonna do, Dad?

CADILLAC

Roller skating!

Hazel's dizzy with glee. Stella warms a bit.

STELLA

We haven't gone since, you know...

CADILLAC

We're doing it now.

The girls climb in the pickup.

52

INT./EXT. CADILLAC'S PICKUP - TRAVELING - DAY

Cadillac starts the engine and off they go.

HAZEL

How are we gonna skate? It's snowing.

CADILLAC

Bismarck's got a rink. Grab Faye, a bite to eat. You know, make a day of it.

Hazel squeals in delight.

HAZEL

This is the best day ever!

As they drive through town, Stella spots an old step van with a sign in its window - *"For Sale"*.

STELLA

Dad, Jerry's selling his van!

CADILLAC

So?

STELLA

I want it.

CADILLAC

What? Why?

STELLA

I'm almost 16. I need wheels. And, it would be perfect for hauling all my filming equipment.

CADILLAC

Do you have any idea how much work it would take to get that thing up and running? If you're planning on being a famous Hollywood director, you need a flashy sports car, not that pile of shit.

STELLA

Dad. That's not... Never mind...

Stella stares at the snowy landscape as they drive.

CUT TO:

53

EXT. GOOSE LAKE - DAY

An old Ski-Doo snowmobile whirs across the snow covered ice. Gabriel drives with Karey behind, both grinning from ear to ear. The Ski-Doo sputters to a stop, dies. They dismount.

KAREY

Pop the hood, son.

Gabriel lifts the cowling.

KAREY (CONT'D)

You make sure those spark plugs are in real tight?

Gabriel checks them. An engine roars, but it's not theirs.

On the frozen lake coming towards them, Pike in his truck, spinning donuts all up and down the ice. His dog, Gunner, in the seat next to him. Gabriel takes a step back.

KAREY (CONT'D)

Don't mind him.

Karey returns her attention to their machine. Gabriel reluctantly takes his eyes from Pike and Gunner.

KAREY (CONT'D)

Try starting it now.

Gabriel pulls the chord. The engine sputters to life. Karey tussles Gabriel's hair. He grins. They mount up, putter away.

54

INT. BISMARCK STATE COLLEGE - DORMATORY - DAY

Cadillac and Stella stroll down the hallway. Hazel charges ahead.

HAZEL
I know which one.

Hazel runs to the door with a sock hanging from the knob.

INSIDE FAYE'S DORM ROOM

Cadillac and Stella bridge the threshold just as Hazel catapults onto Faye's bed.

We discover together, not only is Faye still in bed, she's there with a guy, with at least his shirt off, but we all know better. Except Hazel -

HAZEL (CONT'D)
Why are you in bed? Are you having
a sleep over?
(to the guy)
What's your name?

Faye flushes the deepest shade of red. The guy freezes, Cadillac's glare boring holes into his brain. Today could be the day he dies. Cadillac finally breaks the ice.

CADILLAC
We'll be in the hall. Hazel, come.

IN THE HALL - A LITTLE LATER

Cadillac, Stella and Hazel wait. WYATT, 20's, a decent guy in any other situation, treads out to Cadillac.

WYATT
I didn't want us to meet like this.

Cadillac uses every ounce of his energy to contain himself.

CADILLAC
Keep walking.

Wyatt can take a hint. He's outta there. Faye emerges, her humiliation, palpable.

FAYE
I wasn't expecting any company.

CADILLAC
No shit.

FAYE
What's going on?

Hazel puts her little hands on her waste like a super hero.

HAZEL
Bustin' you outta here. We're going
roller skating, and you're coming
with us!

CADILLAC
Stella and Hazel can skate. You and
I are gonna have a talk.

55

INT. ROLLER WORLD - DAY

"Punky's Dilemma" by Simon & Garfunkel frolics through the
sound system while Hazel zips around an empty nostalgic rink.

Stella roller skates too, glances over at Cadillac and Faye
who are sitting at a table across from each other in the
vacant concessions area.

AT THE TABLE

Cadillac pulls out the college letter.

CADILLAC
I came here today so you could tell
me about this -

Cadillac hands the letter to Faye.

CADILLAC (CONT'D)
It's been eatin' me up.

Faye scans the letter. Cadillac continues -

CADILLAC (CONT'D)
But that was before we found you in
bed with *he's just a friend*, so I
don't even know where to start.

Faye drops her head.

FAYE
I was trying to avoid this.

CADILLAC
This is all you've ever wanted to
do. What's going on? And now a guy
that you're lyin' to me about? What
the hell, Faye?

Tears well in Faye's eyes.

FAYE

I'm only 19 and I feel like a 40
year old woman. I guess I needed to
have fun, for once.

Cadillac's confounded.

CADILLAC

Lettin' a guy park his beater in
your garage isn't for your
amusement. Tell me you know that.

Faye buries her head in her hands.

FAYE

I know. I know. I don't know what's
wrong with me. I'm overwhelmed.

CADILLAC

With what? School? Is it harder
than you thought? You've always
gotten straight A's.

Cadillac's trying to make sense of this whole mess.

CADILLAC (CONT'D)

Is it the car?

Faye's flummoxed.

FAYE

Yes, Dad. It's the car. It's
school. It's everything.
(then, the real truth)
And, I've had to fill in. A lot.

CADILLAC

What do you mean?

FAYE

I've had to be Mom.

Cadillac sighs.

CADILLAC

No one asked you to do that.

FAYE

Someone had to.

CADILLAC
You don't have to worry about us.
I've got that covered.

FAYE
Growing children need more than
macaroni. The house is a disaster,
and -

Cadillac cuts her off -

CADILLAC
Don't use us as an excuse. You have
to face your shit.

FAYE
You mean like you do in your garage
with her chair?

CADILLAC
That's different, and you know it.

FAYE
Is it?

Hazel roller skates up and slams into the table.

HAZEL
I'm hungry!

Before Faye can move, Cadillac's up, got Hazel by the hand.

CADILLAC
Come on. I'll take you.

56 **EXT. BISMARCK STATE COLLEGE - LATER THAT DAY**

Faye extracts herself from Cadillac's tension-filled truck.
Stella and Faye exchange the knowing look of sisters.

FAYE
(to Stella and Hazel)
Bye.

Hazel waves.

HAZEL
Bye Faye. Have fun at your school.

Faye comes around to Cadillac. He rolls down the window.

FAYE

Don't worry about me. I'm just
going to buckle down and do better.

She hugs his neck. Cadillac pats Faye's shoulder.

CADILLAC

Me too.

57

INT. BISMARCK, NORTH DAKOTA - COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT

Cadillac enters grasping his guitar case with a look of determination that he didn't have before, but the place is hopping. Through the crowd, Leviticus spots him, zips over.

LEVITICUS

Hey, man. Your Cadillac Holloway,
lead singer for the Slingin' Guns!
I knew I recognized you! Where you
been, man?

CADILLAC

Had a lot going on.

Leviticus is bubbling over with excitement.

LEVITICUS

It's great to have you back. Get
settled. You're up first!

MEANWHILE IN THE BACK CORNER

Faye and Wyatt sip lattes at a table. Faye freezes, whispers -

FAYE

It's my dad!

Wyatt tenses.

WYATT

What! Where?

Faye points to Cadillac over by the stage tuning his guitar.

WYATT (CONT'D)

Should we go? We should go.

FAYE

What's he doing here?

Faye's shock turns to curiosity.

FAYE (CONT'D)
I want to see this.

AT THE STAGE

Cadillac's waiting, his guitar tuned and ready. But his determination is evaporating. He shifts nervously. On stage -

LEVITICUS
I was fifteen the first time I saw
this next guy play. Stole my
brother's car, used a fake ID and
spent a night in jail to do it, but
it was worth it. You never know
what you're going to get at these
open mic nights, but this guy's the
real deal.

A deep breath before Cadillac takes the stage as if he's walking the plank. Leviticus pats him on the shoulder, whispers in his ear as they trade places.

LEVITICUS (CONT'D)
This is so awesome, man.

Cadillac's too tense to share in Leviticus' enthusiasm. Wipes sweat from his brow. Plugs his guitar into the amp.

Faye and Wyatt observe from the crowd, intrigued. Uncomfortable silence. Cadillac puts a pick to his guitar. A beautiful sound erupts.

Cadillac's vision tunnels, the room spins, and before he sings a single note, hits the floor, unconscious.

SMASH TO BLACK:

OVER BLACK

FAYE
Dad...Dad...

WYATT
Can you hear me?

Cadillac's eyes open sluggishly to discover both Faye and Wyatt leaning over him.

CADILLAC
Faye?

Wyatt's fingers press on his carotid artery feeling his pulse. Faye peers into his eyes, deeply worried. Wyatt's all business.

WYATT

Can you tell me your name?

Cadillac's groggy.

CADILLAC

Cad...Cadillac

WYATT

Any medical issues? History of fainting, heart problems, anything like that?

CADILLAC

No. No. I'm good.

Cadillac pushes himself up to a sit, only to realize he's still on stage, the audience staring back at him, murmuring.

It's Cadillac's turn to flush red. Cadillac wobbles to a stand. Wyatt and Faye help him balance.

WYATT

Easy now, not too quick.

Leviticus comes alongside.

LEVITICUS

You hit the ground hard, man. You ok?

Cadillac's embarrassed, wants to just get out of there.

CADILLAC

Yeah, yeah. I'm good. I'm gonna go.

LEVITICUS

You sure you don't want to take another crack at it?

Cadillac picks up his guitar.

CADILLAC

No. I'm through.

Leviticus hands him a bottle of coke.

LEVITICUS

Thought you might like one of these. I know it's your favorite.

CADILLAC

Thanks, man.

Cadillac shambles out to applause, the kind that's supposed to feel supportive, but doesn't. Faye and Wyatt close behind.

58 **EXT. BISMARCK, NORTH DAKOTA - COFFEE SHOP - AWHILE LATER**

Cadillac sits in his pickup, door open, bottle of coke against his brow. Faye and Wyatt both there.

FAYE

You sure you're good?

CADILLAC

I'm sure.

FAYE

I wasn't expecting to see you here,
not really your kind of place.

CADILLAC

Trying to have a little fun. Not
workin' out too well.

(beat)

Ok. Well, I gotta get home.

WYATT

Take care, sir.

FAYE

Call me when you get there.

Cadillac tucks his feet inside the cab, pulls his door shut. Wyatt and Faye stand in the snow as Cadillac drives away.

59 **INT. SUPER VALU GROCERY STORE - THE NEXT DAY**

A frazzled Cadillac lingers in the pasta aisle, a box of mac and cheese in one hand, in the other hamburger helper.

He's deep in thought when Evelyn comes around the corner, strolls towards him. She flashes a smile.

EVELYN

Hey there.

Cadillac looks up, shows her the box of hamburger helper.

CADILLAC

Can you add vegetables to this?

EVELYN

Of course you can.

CADILLAC
Just any vegetable, or?

EVELYN
Come with me. I'll show you.

Cadillac follows Evelyn to the freezers. She pulls out some frozen broccoli.

EVEYLYN
This is my favorite. Sometimes I even add corn. You can really do whatever you want.

Cadillac picks out several kinds while Evelyn comes close.

EVELYN
Loved your music video. You're so talented.

Cadillac's not really paying attention. Nods -

CADILLAC
Thank you.

Evelyn reaches out touches his hand -

EVELYN
I like this brand.

He nods uncomfortably, scoops several packages into his cart. Wheels quickly his past her. Off a disappointed Evelyn -

AT CHECKOUT

Cadillac loads his groceries onto the conveyer belt. ANDREA, Stella's friend and check out girl, 16, smiles -

ANDREA
Can you believe that video? You're trending!
(beat)
Do you have a coupon?

Cadillac's startled -

CADILLAC
What? No.

Looks back to where Evelyn was. Then back to Andrea. *Did someone record his fiasco from last night?*

ANDREA
That'll be \$37.50

Cadillac pays, glances toward Andrea, stymied. *Trending?* What? But she's already helping the next customer. Cadillac grabs his groceries, exits.

60 **INT./EXT. CADILLAC'S TRUCK - TRAVELING - DAY**

Cadillac meanders down gravel roads, groceries beside him. Notices movement in the snow covered fields beyond. A *coyote*?

He eases to a stop, pulls his rifle from its rack behind him. Finds the creature through the scope. It's Gunner, Pike's demon dog trotting across the field.

Cadillac centers him in his crosshairs, edges his finger to the trigger, exhales slowly. Then -

CADILLAC
Son of a bitch.

Cadillac reluctantly racks the rifle, eases on down the road.

61 **INT. TREEHOUSE - DAY**

Hazel draws on the slatted boards of the simple treehouse with chalk. She's wearing her winter coat, but instead of a hat, a head band with heart-shaped antennae on springs.

She spots Cadillac's truck driving towards her. She ducks down. We can hear the truck approach, then -

CADILLAC (O.S.)
Hazel.

Hazel holds very still.

62 **INT./EXT. CADILLAC'S TRUCK - SAME**

From Cadillac's POV we can see the treehouse and in the space between the boards, two hearts bob on their springs.

CADILLAC
Hazel... I can see you.

Slowly Hazel rises into view.

HAZEL
Hi, Dad.

CADILLAC
What are you doing?

HAZEL
Nothin'.

CADILLAC
Does Stella know where you are?

HAZEL
I'm just playin'.

CADILLAC
Where are you supposed to be?

HAZEL
The yard.

CADILLAC
Come on. Let's go.

Hazel descends the makeshift ladder. Climbs in the truck.

63 **INT. FARMHOUSE - STELLA'S ROOM - DAY**

Movie posters line the walls. Filming equipment on shelves. The living room VCR in pieces. Stella edits footage on her laptop. Downstairs a door slams, but Stella's wearing headphones.

CADILLAC (O.S.)
Stella!

Stella doesn't answer. She's working.

CADILLAC (CONT'D)
(louder)
Stella!

STAIRWAY

Cadillac's at the bottom with Hazel. Stella's at the top.

CADILLAC (CONT'D)
You know where I found Hazel?

Stella's angry eyes narrow in on the little twerp.

STELLA
Where?

CADILLAC
The treehouse.

STELLA
Hazel! I told you to stay in the -

Cadillac cuts her off, jabs a finger towards her -

CADILLAC
You need to be more responsible.

He turns to leave.

CADILLAC (CONT'D)
I'm going to the garage.

Stella calls after him -

STELLA
But Dad! I told her to stay in the
yard.

The back door slams in response. Stella stomps off. A beat later her bedroom door slams too, leaving Hazel alone.

64 **INT. CADILLAC'S FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN - EVENING - LATER**

Cadillac cooks hamburger helper at the stove. Hazel hums, draws at a table nearby. She sniffs the air.

HAZEL
What are you making?

CADILLAC
It's called hamburger helper with
vegetables.

HAZEL
Oooh.

CADILLAC
We're expanding our horizons.

Stella enters with a cold shoulder. Noses around in the fridge. Cadillac doesn't look up from cooking -

CADILLAC (CONT'D)
Don't spoil your dinner. It's
almost ready.

STELLA
I don't want mac & cheese.

Hazel calls out -

HAZEL
We're spanding our horizons.

Head still inside the fridge, Stella oozes angst.

Out of nowhere, Miller explodes through the back door,
straight towards Cadillac -

MILLER
(livid)
20 years.

Stella turns from the fridge, a soda in her hand.

CADILLAC
What are you talking about?

MILLER
That's how long it's been. And now
I find out you're going behind our
back. Going solo?

CADILLAC
I have no idea what you're talking
about.

In the background, Stella, motionless.

MILLER
Me, Jerry and Trent not good enough
for you? You could have just told
me the other night instead of
blaming it on your failure as a
dad. I'm a big boy. I can take it.

Cadillac's utterly confused.

CADILLAC
What is going on?

Miller doesn't back down.

MILLER
Why'd you upload that video?

At this, Stella attempts to leave, but the arguing men are
blocking her escape.

CADILLAC
What are you talking about?

MILLER
You know, from your phone. Upload?

Cadillac jabs a finger towards the kitchen phone.

CADILLAC

The only phone I have is hangin'
right there on that wall. I push
buttons with numbers on 'em.

Miller raises his arms in surrender.

MILLER

I forgot. You still live in the
dark ages.

CADILLAC

And what's this about a video?
You're the third person today
talking to me about some video like
I should know.

MILLER

If you didn't do it, who did? I
mean, it's amazing.

Cadillac's frustration grows.

CADILLAC

Son of a bitch! Do what?

Miller pulls out his phone, starts scrolling. Stella moves to
leave again, but the men aren't budging, and there's no room
to get around them.

Miller turns the screen towards Cadillac. Because of where
Stella is standing, she can see too. Hazel hustles over.

HAZEL

I wanna see.

Hazel climbs onto the kitchen counter, next to Cadillac.

HAZEL (CONT'D)

Hey Dad, that's you!

Cadillac is on the screen, playing an achingly beautiful love
song to Josie's empty chair in the garage. The filming
covert, voyeuristic even.

Occasionally it cuts away to clips of the family, some old,
some new. Even some clips with Josie before she died. The
video is raw, gritty, a fine piece of work.

But then, the same clip that Hazel was playing in the living
room, the other night, flashes on the screen. Across
Cadillac's face, recognition. Miller notices.

MILLER
See, I told you. Professional...

No sooner do the words come out of his mouth, they both realize together. Miller and Cadillac slowly turn toward Stella who's backed up against the fridge, trapped.

MILLER (CONT'D)	CADILLAC
(excited)	(fuming)
It was you?	How could you?

STELLA
Dad...

MILLER	CADILLAC
(to Stella)	(also to Stella)
You're the talk of the town!	That was private!

Then -

CADILLAC (CONT'D)
I told you, no!

Cadillac's stupefied.

CADILLAC (CONT'D)
And the garage. How'd you...?

Stella realizes only now, she has seriously overstepped.

STELLA
I hid a camera...

Miller's face says it all - *Holy shit, Stella.*

CADILLAC
(irate)
You did what?!

Hazel stands frozen on the counter. Stella fights back tears.

STELLA
I think it's beautiful, you singing
to Mom...

CADILLAC
You had no right!

Tears of frustration erupt from Stella.

STELLA
I hoped you'd be happy.

But Cadillac isn't listening. He's on his way out the door.

CADILLAC
Son of a bitch! Are you fucking
kidding me?!

The door slams so hard behind him it shakes the house. Hazel jumps into Miller's arms, clings to his neck. Miller wraps an arm around Stella too.

MILLER
It'll be ok. He's just blowin' off
some steam.

65 **INT. CADILLAC'S GARAGE - NIGHT - LATER**

Cadillac leans over the VW Beetle wrenching an engine bolt.

CADILLAC
Why can't girls be more like
carburetors, and I could just
adjust 'em? I suck at this, Josie.
I'm messin' up our girls.

From the doorway, a pair of heart antennae toggle towards him - Hazel. She's holding something behind her back.

HAZEL
Hi Dad.
(beat)
You sad?

CADILLAC
It's been a tough couple days.

Hazel ambles towards him.

HAZEL
But we went roller skating.

If only it were that simple. Cadillac changes the subject.

CADILLAC
What have you got there?

Hazel pulls an old ratty tennis racket from behind her, holds it in front of her like a guitar.

HAZEL
I wanna sing you a song so you
won't be so grouchy.

Hazel begins strumming her tennis racket guitar, sings -

HAZEL (CONT'D)
*Now your sad, but you're not bad
 'cause your my dad, and I love you.*

Hazel makes guitar noises as she strums. A tear drops from Cadillac's eye. He quickly wipes it away.

CADILLAC
 You know what you need is a strap
 for that fine instrument.

He hunts around the garage, finds a shoe string. Hazel passes him the racket. He ties the string to each end, places it over her shoulders.

CADILLAC (CONT'D)
 There. Now you're set.

Hazel grins from ear to ear as she scampers off.

66

INT. CADILLAC'S FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN - MORNING

Hazel's bobbing antennae bounce as she pulls herself onto the counter. She grabs a bowl from the cupboard, the box of Captain Crunch, plops to the ground.

AT THE KITCHEN TABLE

Hazel eats, turns pages in a Curious George book, her tennis racket guitar slung over the back of her chair when Cadillac trudges in. Pours himself some cereal, sits absently beside her. Hazel munches and "reads".

HAZEL
 Mornin'.

Cadillac scoops up a spoonful from his bowl.

CADILLAC
 Mornin'.

Stella descends the stairs. Cadillac grabs his bowl, marches to the door. As he leaves, he says to Hazel and only Hazel -

CADILLAC (CONT'D)
 Weather's comin'. Make sure you
 bundle up.

The door slams behind him. Stella snaps -

STELLA
 You ready to go?

HAZEL

I'm ready.

STELLA

Where's your back pack?

HAZEL

My room.

STELLA

So you're not ready.

Hazel turns a page.

HAZEL

I'm going with Dad, not your problem.

Stella humphs -

STELLA

Does he know?

A horn honks in the driveway.

HAZEL

Just go, grumpy.

Stella leaves in a huff, slamming the door behind her.

67

INT. ANDREA'S CAR - MORNING

Stella drops into the seat next to Andrea. **"Sixteen Candles", the deconstructed Richie Venus version**, moans through the speakers. Andrea moves rhythmically to the dystopian sound, holding a cupcake.

ANDREA

Happy Birthday.

Stella groans.

STELLA

Not very happy.

Stella mellows a bit as she takes the cupcake.

STELLA (CONT'D)

At least you remembered. Thanks.

ANDREA

What are friends for?

Andrea peers out the window towards the house.

ANDREA (CONT'D)
Are we waiting for Hazel?

Stella tenses.

STELLA
She talked Dad into bringing her
again.

Andrea shifts into drive.

ANDREA
Her loss. Someday she'll realize
ridin' with the cool kids is where
it's at.

Stella stares blankly at the fallen cottonwood in the yard.

68 **INT. CADILLAC'S FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN - SAME**

Hazel closes her book. Climbs down from her chair and up the stairs to her room.

69 **INT. CADILLAC'S GARAGE - SAME**

Cadillac peers out the window as Andrea's car rumbles away. Barely audible music wafts towards him.

He turns to the VW Beetle, carefully spreads the tarp back over it. Moves some partially open boxes. In one of them, a photo album. He pulls it out. Slumps in his chair. Slowly turns pages.

Family memories, photos of the girls when they were tiny. He softens as he reminisces.

Stella, the day she was born. A baby announcement with her birthdate. He looks at his watch. The same date. Realization. Then panic.

CADILLAC
Oh my god!

He careens out of the garage.

70 **EXT. SCHOOL - SAME**

Stella and Andrea enter just as the first bell rings.

71 **INT. CADILLAC'S FARMHOUSE - HAZEL'S BEDROOM - MORNING**

Hazel pulls on a fluffy pink sweater, humming.

STAIRS

Hazel descends the stairs. Calls out -

HAZEL

Dad -

The house is quiet.

HAZEL (CONT'D)

Dad, I'm going with you.

Hazel searches. No Cadillac. Peeks out the window. No truck.

72 **EXT. FARMHOUSE - MORNING**

Hazel treks to the garage.

HAZEL

Dad!

73 **INT. CADILLAC'S GARAGE - MORNING**

Hazel looks around. Just an empty cereal bowl in his chair.

74 **INT. FARMHOUSE - MORNING**

Hazel turns on the tv and plops down in front of it.

75 **INT. STELLA'S AUDIO/VISUAL CLASSROOM - SAME**

Students sit scattered at tables. Some are tinkering with 35 mm cameras. Others edit video on computers. Stella slouches in the back, wearing headphones, zoned-out.

The teacher, MR. NOROÑA, a gray-haired sage, checks in with each of the students and their projects. He taps Stella on the shoulder. She removes her headphones.

MR. NOROÑA

Hey there, Stella. How's it going?

STELLA

Oh, you know...

MR. NOROÑA

I wanted to congratulate you on a job well done.

Stella perks up.

MR. NOROÑA (CONT'D)

I saw the video you posted on the internet. Really great work. That bit of old footage. You wove it in seamlessly. Wasn't that from the bar here in town?

Good feeling gone. Stella slumps in her seat again.

STELLA

Yeah.

MR. NOROÑA

It looks like it was from a while ago. How did you come across it?

STELLA

It was in my dad's stuff.

MR. NOROÑA

Very creative. You've done a fine job of juxtaposing the old with the new. Have you considered submitting it for extra credit?

STELLA

No. My dad hated it.

MR. NOROÑA

Really. Did he tell you why?

STELLA

He doesn't like people watching him sing.

MR. NOROÑA

But he let you use his video?

STELLA

Um, no...

MR. NOROÑA

I don't understand.

STELLA

I asked him, but he flipped out.

Mr. Noroña takes a seat on the table by Stella's computer.

MR. NOROÑA
And you used it anyway?

STELLA
Yeah...

MR. NOROÑA
What about the close up video? How
did you get that?

STELLA
I put a camera...in his garage.

Mr. Noroña groans.

MR. NOROÑA
I'm afraid to ask this, but I'm
going to do it anyway.
(beat)
You did this without his
permission?

STELLA
Yeah...

MR. NOROÑA
Let me guess. He didn't know you
uploaded it to the internet either.

Stella shakes her head.

MR. NOROÑA (CONT'D)
And you're mad at your Dad?

Stella wilts in her seat.

MR. NOROÑA (CONT'D)
Stella, we talked about ethical
filmmaking the first week in class.

STELLA
I wasn't seeing it from that angle.

MR. NOROÑA
That is quite obvious.
(beat)
You need to make this right.

STELLA
But how?

MR. NOROÑA

To start, I'd take down the video.
I think you can figure out the
rest.

Off a humbled Stella -

76

INT. NIGHT OWL LOUNGE AND GAS STATION - SAME

Cadillac enters in a panic. Miller is there, so is Jerry.

CADILLAC

It's Stella's birthday. I forgot.
What am I going to do?

MILLER

Seems like you're screwing up a lot
these days.

CADILLAC

No shit. You gonna help me or not?

MILLER

Ok. Calm down.
(thinks for a beat)
Does she like pizza?

CADILLAC

Doesn't everybody? What's your
point?

MILLER

I'll make 'em. You can bring 'em to
her, surprise her at school.

Cadillac dials down a notch.

CADILLAC

That could work.

JERRY

Yeah, girls like to feel special.
Maybe bring her some presents too.

Cadillac and Miller both regard Jerry.

MILLER

What do you know about what girls
like?

JERRY

Considerin' we're both single, I'd
say about as much as you.

CADILLAC
He's got you there.

MILLER
(to Cadillac)
Why don't you just shut your trap
and look around, find something
nice for a gift.
(to Jerry)
Get off your ass and go blow up
some of those balloons we have for
parties.

Miller heads to the kitchen. Jerry wanders to the back room.

Cadillac hunts. A vending machine with candy bars. He puts in
all the quarters he has, not enough. He yells to Miller -

CADILLAC
Don't you have keys to this thing?

Miller yells from the kitchen -

MILLER
Taped to the back.

Cadillac looks and sure enough there's the key. Opens it,
clears out the whole vending machine into some sacks.

Cadillac opens the soda fridge, clears them into sacks too.

Jerry bumbles out with several balloons, none of them
birthday themed, and a wad of pens from the office.

JERRY
Found these.

Cadillac looks at the assortment, confused.

JERRY (CONT'D)
Don't girls her age write in
diaries or something?

Cadillac considers.

CADILLAC
Ok, yeah, give 'em to me.

Cadillac add them to his sacks. Jerry jiggles a bottle.

JERRY
Also, I found Tums, fruit flavored.

CADILLAC
Are you part turnip?

JERRY
You forgot her birthday. She might
be upset.

Cadillac grabs the bottle, but instead of adding them to the gifts, tosses a handful into his mouth.

Miller exits with a stack of boxed pizzas. Jerry has the balloons. Cadillac all the sacks.

CADILLAC
To the truck.

They all trundle out the door. Cadillac grabs a potted cactus from the window sill as he exits.

77 **INT. SCHOOL - OFFICE - DAY**

Cadillac clamors to the reception desk juggling the stack of pizza, balloons, the rest of his loot. Evelyn eyes his chaos.

EVELYN
Cadillac! What do we have here?

Desperate for help -

CADILLAC
I screwed up.

EVELYN
Oh?

Cadillac confesses -

CADILLAC
It's Stella's birthday. I forgot.

In shame, he adds -

CADILLAC (CONT'D)
Her 16th.

Evelyn winces.

EVELYN
Oh, that is a problem.

She thinks for a moment, eager to help.

EVELYN (CONT'D)
I've got it.

She pats the counter, inviting him to put down his stuff. He does. She picks up the phone, thrusts it towards him.

EVEYLYN
Sing to her.

Cadillac recoils.

CADILLAC
What?

EVELYN
How charming would it be to sing
her happy birthday over the
intercom?

She holds the phone in his face. Cadillac tentatively takes it. Evelyn flips on the intercom.

Cadillac opens his mouth, but nothing comes out. Instead, shallow rapid breaths. Shoves the phone back at Evelyn.

CADILLAC
I can't.

Cadillac rushes out the door.

CUT TO:

78 **INT. FARMHOUSE - SAME**

Hazel switches off the tv. Bundles up in her winter clothes, dons her tennis racket "guitar" and treks out the front door.

79 **EXT. FARMHOUSE - DAY**

Hazel trudges to the fallen cottonwood, climbs up the jagged trunk like Curious George, surveys her kingdom. Clouds are forming on the horizon.

80 **INT. SCHOOL - HALLWAY - SAME**

Cadillac's on the floor outside the office door, his head in his hands. Evelyn approaches.

EVEYLYN
You gonna be ok?

CADILLAC
I can' sing to her. I just can't.

EVEYLYN
I just thought it would be really
sweet. You know, like your video.

Cadillac cringes.

CADILLAC
No. I'm not doing that.

Cadillac stands to his feet.

CADILLAC (CONT'D)
I'm just going to get my stuff.

Cadillac returns to the office.

81 **INT. SCHOOL - LUNCH ROOM - DAY**

Andrea and Stella sit across from each other at a lunch
table. Stella looks a lot like the floppy pizza on her tray.

ANDREA
It's going to be ok.

STELLA
(forlorn)
I don't know. I really screwed up.

CUT TO:

82 **EXT. FARMHOUSE - GRAVEL ROAD - SAME**

Hazel hikes along, stubbled fields of harvested wheat
blanketed in snow on either side of her.

83 **INT. SCHOOL - LUNCH ROOM - DAY**

Andrea sits facing the door. Stella sits across from Andrea,
her back to the door. Droning cafeteria sounds surround them.

STELLA
I just don't know what to do.

Andrea looks beyond Stella.

ANDREA
It's going to be ok.

STELLA
 (frustrated)
 How can you be so sure?

Andrea points. Stella slowly turns.

There's Cadillac, just inside the door, the picture of pathetic.

On his arm, bags overflowing with candy, soda, pens. Balanced on one hand, boxes of pizza, the ridiculous potted cactus clasped in the other, balloons bobbing.

His eyes dart around, desperately looking for Stella. He finally spots her. Stella approaches him.

CADILLAC
 (in humble resignation)
 It's your birthday...

Stella navigates through the gifts, goes in for a hug.

STELLA
 Dad, I should never have filmed
 you. I'm so sorry.

Cadillac embraces her with his bag-filled arm.

CUT TO:

84

EXT. FIELD - SAME

Pike's cattle dog, Gunner traipses across the snow, tracking a rabbit. He stops, stares into the distance. Spots Hazel.

ON HAZEL

Hazel hums and walks, in her own little world.

ON THE DOG

Gunner locks in on the unsuspecting Hazel, bounds through drifts of snow towards her.

ON HAZEL

Hazel hums as she hikes. But then, out of the corner of her eye, she notices the dog.

ON THE DOG

He's laser focused on Hazel. His muscular body begins moving fast towards her.

ON HAZEL

Hazel sucks in her breath. Her only hope of refuge, the tree house on the edge of the wheat field. She dashes towards it.

85 **INT. SCHOOL - LUNCH ROOM - SAME**

Cadillac offers the bags to Stella.

CADILLAC

I thought you could give some to your friends. I didn't know what everybody would like, so I brought a variety.

Stella smiles as she peeks in the bags.

STELLA

I see that. Thanks Dad. The cactus?

CADILLAC

Cause I've been a real prick.

Stella grins.

STELLA

Aah. Ba-dum-DUM. Good one.

Stella tugs a balloon string, one that says "It's a boy."

STELLA (CONT'D)

Hazel must have been the one to help you pick out the balloons.

Cadillac chuckles.

CADILLAC

Nope. Jerry.
(curious)
Besides, she was with you.

STELLA

Hazel told me she was riding with you today. You don't have her?

Cadillac's confused.

CADILLAC

No! You didn't bring her?

Both realize - **HAZEL IS MISSING**. They drop everything, race out. The balloons float up, tangle in the ceiling fan.

86 **EXT. FIELD - SAME**

ON THE DOG

Gunner's on the road, and he's really moving.

ON HAZEL

Gunner closes in. Hazel's at the tree, scrambles up the ladder, slips. Climbs back up, reaches for a branch.

Gunner's powerful jaws latch on to her "guitar". He thrashes. Hazel hugs the branch tight.

Hazel's shoe string strap gives way dropping both the tennis racket and Gunner to the ground. Gunner tears at the racket until it's in pieces. Hazel clasps the branch.

87 **INT. CADILLAC'S PICKUP - TRAVELING - SAME**

Cadillac drives like a bat out of hell. Stella beside him. Snow begins to fall.

88 **EXT. FIELD - SAME**

Hazel's tennis racket lies in pieces. Gunner refocuses on Hazel, goes for her dangling legs just as she lifts herself up onto the branch. He rips off her boot.

Hazel pulls herself up to a standing position. Hugs the trunk. Gunner jumps up, tries to grab her again and again, narrowly missing every time. Hazel screams in terror. Off Gunner's angry barking -

CUT TO:

89 **EXT. KAREY AND GABRIEL'S FARMHOUSE - SAME**

The Ski-Doo snowmobile growls to life. Fishing gear on board, Gabriel straddles his machine, zips across the snow.

MOMENTS LATER

Gabriel notices movement in the distance. He increases his speed. It's the dreaded dog. Gabriel turns to leave, but then spots Hazel in the tree.

Gabriel gulps. Shoves down his fear, speeds towards the grizzly scene.

Gabriel throttles to full speed. Rams into the dog, who turns his focus on Gabriel, attacks. Latches onto Gabriel's arm.

They tumble in the snow. Gabriel unsheathes his fishing knife.

Gabriel plunges his knife wildly into the dog. **Stab. Stab. Stab.** The dog falls off the bite, lays dying in the snow.

Hazel hugs the trunk, trembling. Gabriel studies his bloody and broken arm. Then to Hazel -

GABRIEL

You ok?

Hazel eyes the dog before climbing down to Gabriel.

HAZEL

You're hurt.

Gabriel wobbles to a stand, climbs on the puttering snowmobile. He holds his injured arm close to his body.

GABRIEL

Get on.

Hazel climbs on the back and wraps her little arms around Gabriel's waist. Off they go across the barren snow covered field. The wind is picking up.

90 **EXT. FARMHOUSE - DAY**

Cadillac and Stella jump out of the pickup.

CADILLAC

Hazel!

STELLA

Hazel!

Silence.

91 **INT. FARMHOUSE - DAY**

Cadillac and Stella split up, search every room.

CADILLAC

Hazel!

STELLA

Hazel!

Cadillac's in a frenzy.

CADILLAC (CONT'D)

Where would she go?

Stella looks to Cadillac. They race out the door.

92 **EXT. TREE HOUSE - DAY**

Cadillac brakes. Cadillac and Stella both jump out. Hazel's shredded tennis racket scattered all around. Her ripped boot in the snow. The dead dog and a bloody knife.

The snow's really coming down. Cadillac's beside himself.

CADILLAC
Tell Faye we need her home.

Stella's the voice of reason.

STELLA
Dad. She's not alone. Look.

Stella points. Barely visible snowmobile tracks. Cadillac snaps out of it, studies the dead dog. Gabriel's knife.

CADILLAC
Let's go!

They jump in the truck. Stella texts Faye as Cadillac drives.

CUT TO:

93 **INT. BISMARCK STATE COLLEGE - FAYE'S DORM ROOM - SAME**

The room is vacant aside from a lone cardboard box. On Faye's, desk a letter.

...We regret to inform you that you have lost your scholarship due to insufficient grades...

We find Faye curled in the fetal position on her bare mattress. Her phone vibrates with an incoming text.

94 **EXT. FIELD - DAY**

Gabriel and Hazel whir across the barren fields. The increasing wind and snow make it hard to see. The snowmobile putters to a stop as Gabriel crumples forward.

HAZEL
Gabriel.

Gabriel's passed out over the steering wheel. Hazel curls against his back for warmth, tucks her bootless foot up underneath her.

And that's how Cadillac and Stella find them. They trudge through the snow. Cadillac reaches Hazel. Gathers her into his arms, squeezes her tight. Hazel clasps his neck, then -

HAZEL (CONT'D)
He bit Gabriel. Help him, Daddy.

Cadillac kisses Hazel, hands her to Stella.

CADILLAC
Put her in the truck. Keep her warm.

Cadillac examines Gabriel, discovers the bitten and broken arm. He calls to Stella who's carrying Hazel.

CADILLAC (CONT'D)
He's in shock. We gotta go.

He hoists Gabriel into his arms, carries him to the truck.

95

EXT. KAREY AND GABRIEL'S FARMHOUSE - LATER THAT DAY

Cadillac knocks. Karey opens the door, surprised.

KAREY
I thought you'd be home with Hazel.

CADILLAC
She kept hounding me about Gabe.
Wouldn't leave me alone.

KAREY
She must be ok, then?

CADILLAC
Doctor told her all she needs is rest, but that's easier said than done. Finally convinced her to lay down if I promised to come see him.

Karey smiles.

KAREY
Come in. You can ask him yourself.
He'll be happy for the company.

96

INT. KAREY AND GABRIEL'S FARMHOUSE - ENTRY WAY - DAY

Cadillac enters. We see Gabriel in the living room watching tv, his arm propped on pillows.

KAREY
I'll make coffee.

Karey heads to the kitchen.

LIVING ROOM

Cadillac enters.

CADILLAC
How're you holding up there, Gabe?

GABRIEL
My arm's broke.

CADILLAC
I know. Looks like the doctor's got
it all fixed up for you though.

Cadillac sits beside Gabriel.

GABRIEL
(wide-eyed)
I was scared, but he was hurting
Hazel.
(remorseful)
I killed him with my knife. It's
just for fish, not for dogs.

Cadillac places his big hand on Gabriel's shoulder.

CADILLAC
A man does the hard thing that has
to be done, even when he's scared.
You did good.

We hear the phone ring in the kitchen and Karey answer.

KAREY (O.S.)
Hello? Hi Faye.

This gets Cadillac's attention. He rises.

KAREY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Are you alright?

Cadillac strides to the kitchen.

KITCHEN

Cadillac moves to Karey and the phone.

KAREY (CONT'D)
Yes. He happens to be right here.

Karey hands the phone to Cadillac. He grabs it.

CADILLAC

Faye? Where are you? Why aren't you here?

After a few beats.

CADILLAC (CONT'D)

Hold tight. I'm coming.

97 **EXT. SIDE OF THE ROAD - DUSK**

We find Faye in the middle of the snow storm peering under the hood of the minivan, distraught. She retreats to the front seat, shivering.

98 **INT./EXT. CADILLAC'S TRUCK - TRAVELING - DUSK**

Cadillac drives in silence through the storm. He spots the minivan, comes up alongside.

99 **EXT. SIDE OF THE ROAD - DUSK**

Cadillac approaches Faye and the minivan. It's full of cardboard boxes. She opens the door.

CADILLAC

Hey.

FAYE

How's Hazel?

CADILLAC

She's a tough little monkey.
Already back to drivin' me crazy.

(beat)

What's with all the boxes?

Faye doesn't answer, but instead -

FAYE

(forlorn)

I don't know what's wrong with it.
It just lost power.

Tears begin to stream down Faye's face.

FAYE (CONT'D)

I can't do this anymore.

Faye rises and leans into her dad's chest. He wraps his arms around her.

CADILLAC

Don't worry. It's probably just the transmission. I'll get it running.

Faye begins to sob.

FAYE

Not the car, Dad. Everything. I'm not going to be a doctor. I lost my scholarship.

Cadillac holds his weeping daughter close to his chest. We know from his pained face, he's in as much agony as she is.

100 **EXT./INT. CADILLAC'S TRUCK - TRAVELING - DUSK**

Cadillac navigates his truck through the blizzard, a tow rope on the minivan, Faye behind the wheel, hazards blinking.

101 **EXT. CADILLAC'S FARMHOUSE - NIGHT**

Cadillac pulls into the driveway. Faye and the minivan in tow. They get out of their cars. There are no words. Faye trudges to the house. Cadillac watches her go.

102 **INT. CADILLAC'S GARAGE - NIGHT**

Cadillac's silhouette as he enters. The sound of a match striking across wood. He lights a candle illuminating a bottle of whiskey and a glass.

The hum of a guitar amp. Cadillac puts a slide on his finger, picks up his guitar, begins to play, a slow mournful ache from his soul, blues from the wordless place. Then -

CADILLAC

Happy Anniversary...

He drinks his whiskey. Quiet sadness.

CADILLAC (CONT'D)

(to Josie's chair)

You always knew what to do.

(in defeated resignation)

We're falling apart.

Cadillac blows out the candle. Darkness.

103 **INT. CADILLAC'S BEDROOM - NIGHT**

Cadillac lies in his sleeping bag on the floor, staring at the ceiling. All at once he rises, opens his bedside drawer. A .357 revolver. Underneath, the picture of Josie and him next to the VW Beetle. He takes the gun.

104 **INT. CADILLAC'S FARMHOUSE - HALLWAY - NIGHT**

Now dressed, his gun in his waistband, Cadillac peers into Faye's bedroom. She's asleep.

STELLA'S BEDROOM

Cadillac looks in on Stella, also sleeping.

HAZEL'S BEDROOM

Hazel is curled up in her bed, sound asleep. Cadillac removes her bobbing heart headband. Pulls up the covers around her, rests his hand on her little head.

105 **EXT. CADILLAC'S FARMHOUSE - NIGHT**

The storm has subsided revealing a full moon. Cadillac trudges through the snow.

106 **INT./EXT. CADILLAC'S TRUCK - TRAVELING - NIGHT**

Cadillac climbs into his pickup, setting his .357 revolver on the bench seat next to him. Drives down the country road.

107 **EXT. ABANDONED COUNTRY CHURCH - NIGHT**

Cadillac's truck halts. The enormous full moon casts its luminous glow upon the small country church. It's long narrow steeple pierces upward.

A large drift of snow envelopes the abandoned church. Cadillac trudges through the snow to the entrance. Struggles to pull open the door against the drift.

108 **INT. ABANDONED COUNTRY CHURCH - NIGHT**

Cadillac enters. The moonlight shines in through broken stained glass windows highlighting drifts of snow scattered among the pews.

Beyond them, a pulpit with an old rugged cross hanging on the wall behind. The creak of the floor boards as Cadillac makes his way there.

Once at the pulpit, he gazes down the aisle. His chilly breath in the night air.

A MEMORY

The soft glow of spring sun shines through pristine stained glass windows. Cadillac's bride, Josie, with her shimmering eyes and captivating smile slowly sashays towards him. Friends and family there witnessing this day of promise.

As Cadillac returns to the present, he falls to his knees at the base of the cross.

CADILLAC

God, I need your help. I can't do this anymore.

CRASH! Stained glass shatters to the floor.

109

EXT. ABANDONED COUNTRY CHURCH - NIGHT

Cadillac discovers Miller's truck smashed into the church.

Cadillac opens the car door. Beer cans tumble out. Miller's slumped over the steering wheel. Cadillac smacks Miller across the face hard. Miller moans in protest.

CADILLAC

Wake up.

Cadillac yanks Miller out of the truck and over his shoulder. Starts to move through the snow to his truck.

CADILLAC (CONT'D)

Pick up your feet. What the hell is wrong with you?

MILLER

(slurring)

X-wife says it's my fault, gettin' him that dog. But you're not better than me. Who leaves their little girl all alone in the snow?

Cadillac drops Miller like a sack of potatoes.

CADILLAC

Wha'd you say?

Miller wallers in the snow.

MILLER

You're not better than me.

Cadillac yanks Miller back up. Kicks him in the ass.

CADILLAC

Get to the truck, you miserable drunk.

MILLER

(in a drunken ramble)

I'm glad you quit playing. Now you're pathetic just like the rest of us. You don't know what it's like.

CADILLAC

You got that right. I'm not the one drinking myself to death.

They reach the truck. Cadillac opens the passenger door.

CADILLAC (CONT'D)

Get in.

Shoves Miller inside and slams the door. Cadillac treks to the driver's side. Gets in.

INSIDE CADILLAC'S TRUCK

Cadillac reaches to turn on the truck. Looks over at Miller. He's got the gun barrel in his mouth. Before Cadillac can stop him, Miller pulls the trigger. **CLICK**. No bullets.

CADILLAC (CONT'D)

Not enough I got to drag your ass out of the snow every other week, now you're gonna splatter your brains all over the inside of my truck? Give me that!

Cadillac yanks the gun from Miller.

CADILLAC (CONT'D)

Why're you the one feeling sorry for yourself? I'm the one with the kid your good for nothin son's dog almost killed?

MILLER

You're not better than me.

CADILLAC
Yeah, you've said that.

Miller opens his door, stumbles back towards the church.

MILLER
I didn't want any of this. I wanted
to do something with my life too,
ya know.

Exasperated, Cadillac follows after Miller.

CADILLAC
Nobody's stopping you.

MILLER
Dad stopped me before I ever got
started.

CADILLAC
For the last time, it was an
accident.

MILLER
Like hell it was. It's all a lie.

110 **INT. MILLER'S QUONSET - NIGHT - FLASHBACK**

A young Miller enters. Underneath a giant tractor engine on blocks, Miller's Dad with a sledgehammer in his hand.

MILLER
Dad?

MILLER'S DAD
It has to look like an accident or
you won't get the insurance money.
Take care of your mom and sister.

Miller's Dad swings the sledge hammer toppling the blocks that are holding up the engine, before Miller can protest.

MILLER
Dad!

On Miller as we hear a horrible thud and can see from Miller's expression that the unthinkable has just happened.

MILLER (V.O.)
It was that or lose the farm and
everything with it.

Miller makes his way over to his Dad, the sledgehammer still firmly in his grip. Miller pries it from his dead hands.

MILLER (V.O.)
So, I did what I had to do.

111 **EXT. ABANDONED COUNTRY CHURCH - NIGHT - PRESENT**

Miller's sitting on the front steps. Cadillac beside him.

MILLER
Been paying for it ever since.

After a few beats Cadillac puts his hand on Miller's shoulder.

112 **INT./EXT. CADILLAC'S TRUCK - TRAVELING - NIGHT**

Cadillac slows to a stop at the crossroads, engine idling like a beating heart. Behind him Miller's farm, to the left the church. Finally, Cadillac turns to the right.

Cadillac approaches his farmstead, the gun in the seat next to him. The moon high above, the silhouette of the giant trunk shard, a monument of grief, in the foreground as smoke wafts from the chimney of his farmhouse behind it.

113 **EXT. CADILLAC'S FARMHOUSE - NIGHT**

Cadillac approaches the jagged stump, pistol in hand.

Cadillac violently slams his gun again and again against the cottonwood trunk breaking it into two pieces. Gazes sorrowfully up at the trunk. His agonized voice utters -

CADILLAC
I have to let you go, Josie!

Cadillac buries his face in the wooden bark. Cries of anguish in the darkness -

DISSOLVES TO:

- The sound of a whirring chainsaw intermingled with the rising dawn.

114 **INT. CADILLAC'S FARMHOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MORNING**

Faye, Stella and Hazel observe from the window as Cadillac cuts the cottonwood stump at its base.

DISSOLVES TO:

A stack of cordwood forms as winter melts into spring.

115 **INT. CADILLAC'S FARMHOUSE - CADILLAC'S BEDROOM - NIGHT**

Faye absent-mindedly enters with a stack of Cadillac's folded laundry. She lurches to a stop.

Cadillac sits in bed, wearing a pair of reading glasses, engrossed in the book on grief he got at the school library.

FAYE

Dad! I'm sorry. I didn't realize
you'd be in here.

Cadillac looks up from his reading.

CADILLAC

Where else would I be?

FAYE

Um, the garage.

She eyes floor where his sleeping bag was. It's gone.
Cadillac fills in Faye's speechlessness with -

CADILLAC

Turning over a new leaf.

Faye looks like she's just discovered a unicorn, doesn't want
to jinx it. Carefully takes the laundry over to his dresser.

FAYE

I'll just set these here. Don't
mean to interrupt.

CADILLAC

Thank you for washing my clothes.
You know I can help with some of
the house stuff.

FAYE

Ok, Dad. Thanks.

Faye turns to leave, but then -

FAYE (CONT'D)

I also wanted to thank you for, you know, letting me stay here while I get my stuff figured out. It means a lot.

Cadillac's voice is soft and tender.

CADILLAC

Take as long as you need.

FAYE

Thanks, Dad.

Cadillac's eyes are full of love as he watches Faye leave.

116 **EXT. MILLER'S QUONSET - DAY**

Cadillac putters up in Jerry's old clunky step van. Miller emerges, confused. Cadillac calls out -

CADILLAC

Lunch is on me tomorrow.

MILLER

I'm afraid to ask.

Cadillac pats the old clunker.

CADILLAC

Birthday present for Stella.

Miller shakes his head as he guides him into the quonset.

117 **INT. MILLER'S QUONSET - DAY**

Cadillac turns off the ignition. *What's This? There's actually some empty space, and some organization even.*

CADILLAC

What's going on? I can drive all the way in without runnin' into junk.

MILLER

Gotta lot more work to do, but turns out, the truth really does set you free. Who knew?

Cadillac and Miller share a moment.

CADILLAC
Speakin' of that, there's something
else I want to talk with you about.
But before I do, you have to
promise me you'll be calm.

Miller's eyes light up.

MILLER
Tell me.

CADILLAC
You have to promise.

MILLER
Yeah, yeah. I promise.

Cadillac slowly wades in.

CADILLAC
I think I'm ready to pick up the
guitar again.

Before Miller can catch himself, he lets out a big 'ol -

MILLER
Yowza!

Then he sees the look in Cadillac's eye. Miller holds up his
finger, one sec. Rushes out the door.

MILLER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Yippee! Yeehaw. We're on our way!

Miller returns to the garage.

MILLER (CONT'D)
Ok. I'm calm.

CADILLAC
What I was trying to say, I can't.

MILLER
(deflated)
What? Why?

CADILLAC
Every time I try to sing in public,
I feel like I'm going to die. A
book I'm reading says it's just a
panic attack. I thought if I tried
singing with just you and me, maybe
it'd build back my confidence.

MILLER

Hold up. You're reading a book?
That's a miracle all by itself.

Cadillac gives him the hairy eyeball.

CADILLAC

You gonna help me or not?

Miller, reins himself in.

MILLER

I'll be there.

118 **INT. CADILLAC'S GARAGE - NIGHT**

Cadillac sits down with his guitar. Miller joins him with his bass.

MILLER

Let's try somethin' simple.

Miller plunks. Cadillac strums.

CADILLAC

("I Believe In You" by Don Williams)

*I don't believe in superstars,
organic food and foreign cars. I
don't believe the price of gold,
the certainty of growing old. That
right is right and left is wrong.
That north and south can't get
along. That east is east and west
is west, and being first is always
best. But I believe in love. I
believe in babies, I believe in mom
and dad, and I believe in you...*

Cadillac crumbles. Miller puts a hand on his shoulder.

MILLER

I miss her too.

After a few beats, Miller resumes the melody.

MILLER (CONT'D)

Come on. Again.

Cadillac collects him self. Starts again...

119

INT. CADILLAC'S FARMHOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Faye, Stella and Hazel enter, chatting. They stop short, in awe. The house. It's clean. Or at least cleaner than they've seen in a very long time.

Cadillac emerges from the kitchen. He's wearing yellow latex cleaning gloves and Josie's apron.

CADILLAC
You're home!

The girls look around the house, amazed.

FAYE
What's happening?

CADILLAC
I'm cleaning.

A timer dings from the kitchen.

CADILLAC (CONT'D)
Oh, that's my lasagna.

FAYE
You made lasagna?

CADILLAC
Yeah -

Faye and Stella regard each other, in shock.

STELLA
You know how to make lasagna?

CADILLAC
Sure, your mom taught me.

HAZEL
What's lasagna?

FAYE
(to Hazel)
You're going to love it.

CADILLAC
Dinner in 15 minutes.

Cadillac disappears back into the kitchen.

120

INT. CADILLAC'S FARMHOUSE - DINING ROOM - EVENING

Faye, Stella and Hazel enter to discover a beautifully set table. Cadillac brings the lasagna.

CADILLAC

Let's eat.

Everyone sits down together. Faye smiles at Cadillac.

FAYE

This is nice. Really nice.

CADILLAC

See? All the food groups.

FAYE

And no ketchup as far as the eye
can see.

Cadillac chuckles.

CADILLAC

You wanna hear a funny story?

The girls nod.

CADILLAC (CONT'D)

You girls remember our bulldog,
Waylon?

Hazel shakes her head, no.

CADILLAC (CONT'D)

(to Hazel)

We had him when your sisters were
little, before your time.

FAYE

He used to slobber on me.

STELLA

So, what's the story?

CADILLAC

I remember one time your mom was
trying to talk to me, and I was off
in my own little world. You girls
don't know anything about that, but
it's a habit I used to have a long
time ago.

FAYE

Ancient history.

CADILLAC

So, your mom. She poured me a bowl of cereal. I was minding my own business munching along when I noticed Waylon staring at me.

Hazel listens as she eats lasagna.

CADILLAC (CONT'D)

Waylon was sitting in front of me with his head all tilted to the side, drool dangling from those big flappy lips.

The girls giggle.

CADILLAC (CONT'D)

I couldn't figure why he was looking at me that way. Finally, I looked down at my bowl. Realized your mom had fed me his dog food.

Faye and Stella gasp.

CADILLAC (CONT'D)

I'd eaten half the bowl. The only reason I stopped was Waylon had that look on his face, *"Why you eaten' my food? Get your own."*

The girls explode with laughter. Cadillac chuckles.

CADILLAC (CONT'D)

Your mom thought that was so funny. She never let me forget it either.
(beat)
She was ornery that way.

A nostalgic smile as Cadillac remembers. They all eat their lasagna, content in each other's company. After a few beats, Cadillac sobers.

CADILLAC (CONT'D)

Speakin' of your mom...

Faye, Stella and Hazel look up from their plates.

FAYE

What is it, Dad?

CADILLAC

There's something I've gotta do, and I need your help.

121 **EXT. CADILLAC'S FARMHOUSE - DAY**

The spring breeze gently blows as Cadillac, Faye, and Stella lug Josie's chair, the one from the garage, across the yard.

As they do, an envelope slips from between the cushions. The wind blows it across the yard. No one notices, except for Hazel who chases after it.

Cadillac, Faye and Stella place the chair atop an alter of firewood fashioned above where the stump of the cottonwood used to stand. Hazel catches the envelope.

Faye and Stella stand back while Cadillac lights the fire. Flames engulf the chair. They watch reverently as it burns.

Hazel tugs at Cadillac's arm, hands him the envelope. "Cadillac" across the front in Josie's handwriting.

CADILLAC
Where'd you get this?

Hazel points to the burning chair. Cadillac opens the envelope. His girls gather around. Inside, the letter that Josie was writing at the beginning.

JOSIE (V.O.)
*Cad, my love, Your music is one of
my favorite things about you. I
know you'd never buy something like
this for yourself, so I did. I
believe in you. Let this always be
a reminder. Go take your place in
the world. All my love, Josie*

Cadillac finds another piece of paper tucked in with the letter. It's a ticket. To a music store.

122 **INT. BISMARCK, NORTH DAKOTA - MUSIC MAN MUSIC STORE - DAY**

A door bell chimes as Cadillac enters with Faye, Stella and Hazel. Musical instruments everywhere. Hazel rushes ahead.

HAZEL
Daddy, what's this?

CADILLAC
That's a tuba.
(patiently)
Come, hold my hand.

Hazel grasps Cadillac's large palm. Faye and Stella follow. They all make their way through a maze of instruments on either side and hanging above them. Hazel's head swivels, there's so much to see.

A SHOPKEEPER, 30's stands behind the counter. Cadillac approaches. Cadillac hands the man the ticket from Josie's letter. He inspects it.

SHOPKEEPER

Oh. Hmm. What are you picking up?

CADILLAC

I'm not sure. It was a gift.

SHOPKEEPER

This is from quite awhile ago.
Don't use this system any more.

(considers)

I'll get my Grandpa. This is his shop.

CADILLAC

Sure. I can wait.

Cadillac and Hazel wander hand in hand. Hazel points -

HAZEL

What's that Daddy?

CADILLAC

That's a clarinet.

The Shopkeeper returns.

SHOPKEEPER

He'll be out shortly.

Cadillac nods. Hazel spies a guitar she's never seen before, a child size electric guitar. She pulls away from Cadillac. Strums the strings before Cadillac can stop her.

SHOPKEEPER (CONT'D)

You want to try her out?

Hazel looks to Cadillac. His smile, all the permission she needs.

SHOPKEEPER (CONT'D)

Come with me.

He leads Hazel to a glassed in sound booth.

IN THE SOUND BOOTH

The Shopkeeper places the guitar strap across Hazel's little shoulders. He plugs in a chord. Hands her a pick.

SHOPKEEPER (CONT'D)

You ready?

Hazel nods. He plugs in the other end of the chord to an amp. A powerful hum fills the box as he switches it on.

SHOPKEEPER (CONT'D)

Go on. Play.

Hazel sweeps her pick firmly down. The sound booth fills with the reverberation of the electric strings.

Hazel's eyes light with delight, a devilish grin erupts. She's just been anointed by the gods of rock-n-roll.

The Shopkeeper laughs. Steps out, shutting the door behind him as Hazel goes wild.

BACK IN THE MAIN STORE

Cadillac, Stella and Faye watch Hazel play through the glass.

FAYE

I think we've just created a monster.

Cadillac beams with pride.

CADILLAC

That's my girl.

Behind them, a hunched over man, an arthritic older version of Willy Nelson shuffles into the room -

MUSIC MAN

How can I help you?

Cadillac, Faye and Stella join the MUSIC MAN at the front desk. Cadillac hands him the ticket. The Music Man studies it. Sudden recognition.

MUSIC MAN (CONT'D)

I remember this. A woman. She came in every month for years and put money down until it was paid off.

(beat)

So, you must be the lucky man.

The Music Man smiles as he remembers. Scans the shop -

MUSIC MAN (CONT'D)

Where is she? I wouldn't think
she'd miss this day for the world.

CADILLAC

She...She passed away a few years
ago. I didn't find out about her
surprise until yesterday.

MUSIC MAN

I'm so very sorry.
(a moment of empathy)
Let me go get it.

The Music Man disappears behind a curtain. Returns with a
dusty guitar case. He lays it reverently on the counter,
wipes away the dust.

MUSIC MAN (CONT'D)

I'm sorry for the dust. I had all
but lost hope that this instrument
would ever get played.

Flips the latch. He opens the lid, revealing a gorgeous
Martin guitar. The Music Man hands it to Cadillac.

STELLA

Wow.

Cadillac holds it tenderly in his hands.

FAYE

Dad, it's beautiful.

Cadillac admires this extravagant and unexpected gift.

MUSIC MAN

Only the best for her man. That's
what she said.

Tears fall shamelessly from Cadillac's eyes. Faye and
Stella's too. They wrap their arms around their father.

In the background, Hazel. Her eyes closed, entranced while
she thrashes on the electric guitar behind the wall of glass.

The muffled sound of the reverberation she's creating filters
through the sound booth.

INT. CADILLAC'S TRUCK - TRAVELING - DAY

Cadillac, Faye, Stella and Hazel smoosh close together.
Cadillac's new guitar case laid across the girls' laps.

A smaller guitar case on top of it. Stella spots a book store in the distance.

STELLA

Dad, would it be ok if we stopped in there?

Cadillac pulls up to the store entrance.

CADILLAC

I'll just drop you three off. I've got an errand of my own to run.

The girls slide out, enter the store. Cadillac drives away.

124 **INT. CADILLAC'S TRUCK - DAY**

Cadillac sits in his truck. The two guitar cases beside him. After a few moments he gets out.

125 **EXT. BISMARCK STATE COLLEGE - DAY**

Cadillac walks inside.

126 **INT. BISMARCK STATE COLLEGE - DEAN'S OFFICE - DAY**

Cadillac stands at the secretary's desk.

CADILLAC

I'd like to speak to the dean.

127 **EXT. CADILLAC'S FARMHOUSE - DAY**

Cadillac replaces the living room window as he hums "**Our House**" by Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young.

Miller drives up in the step van. Cadillac nearly falls off the ladder motioning for him to take it behind the garage.

MOMENTS LATER

Miller comes around the corner just as Fay emerges from the house.

FAYE

Oh, Uncle Miller. I didn't know you were here. Are you staying for supper? It's ready.

MILLER
Sure. I'll stay.

Cadillac gathers his tools.

CADILLAC
I'm just finishing up here. Before
we eat, I've got a little surprise
for Stella. Get your sisters and
meet me in the living room.

Faye returns to the house, curious.

128 **INT. FARMHOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY**

Cadillac ties a blindfold around Stella's head as Faye, Hazel
and Miller observe. She has a big smile across her face,
vibrating in anticipation.

CADILLAC
Hold still now.

STELLA
What is it, Dad?

CADILLAC
Just hold on.

Cadillac leads her outside. Miller, Faye and Hazel follow.

129 **EXT. CADILLAC'S FARMHOUSE - DAY**

Cadillac positions Stella.

CADILLAC
I know it's late.

Takes off her blindfold.

CADILLAC (CONT'D)
For your birthday.

Reveal Jerry's old van. Stella turns to Cadillac and squeals.

STELLA
Is this for real? It's really mine?

CADILLAC
All yours, Miss Hollywood.

Stella races to the van and opens the sliding door.

STELLA
Look at all this room! It's
perfect!

She runs back to Cadillac and gives him a great big hug.

STELLA (CONT'D)
Thank you, Dad!

MILLER
Watch out Spielberg, here she
comes.

Stella returns to admire her new wheels. Cadillac, to Faye -

CADILLAC
Think she's happy?

FAYE
Uh, yeah.

CADILLAC
That reminds me. Fixed your car.

Faye eyes the ragged minivan in the driveway. She sighs.

FAYE
The good 'ol mom-mobile.

Cadillac scoffs.

CADILLAC
What? No. That car's a piece of
shit.

Faye looks to Cadillac, bewildered. He holds her gaze, pushes
the button on the garage door opener he just happens to have.

It slowly opens to reveal Josie's yellow Volkswagen Beetle
has been completely redone. Cadillac hands Faye the keys.

CADILLAC (CONT'D)
Don't want you growin' old before
your time.

Faye gasps.

FAYE
This is Mom's car.

CADILLAC
It'd give her such a thrill knowing
it's yours now.

Faye notices a vanity plate on the VW Beetle - *DRFAYE*. She looks back at Cadillac, confused, a little hurt even -

FAYE

Dad?

CADILLAC

Silly me. I forgot.

Cadillac hands Faye a letter.

CADILLAC (CONT'D)

Came from the college.

Faye reads *"After much consideration, we have decided to put you on conditional reinstatement of your scholarship..."*

Faye looks again to Cadillac. *This is too good to be true.*

FAYE

Dad? How?

CADILLAC

I took the liberty of talking to the dean. A very understanding man. You start back up next semester.

Faye throws her arms around her Dad. Cadillac embraces her. A beat later, Hazel saunters into the garage.

HAZEL

What's goin' on?

Faye wipes tears from her eyes. Cadillac points.

CADILLAC

Why don't you go take a look over there.

Hazel wanders over, and on the other side of the VW Beetle, a child sized pink ATV.

CADILLAC (CONT'D)

All my girls get a car today.

Hazel squeals and jumps on.

CADILLAC (CONT'D)

This does not mean you can joy ride all over creation. Stay in the yard. Understand?

Hazel salutes.

HAZEL
Aye, Aye, Captain!

She drives off past where the stump of the cottonwood tree used to be. A young sapling sprout in its place.

130 **EXT. THE NIGHT OWL LOUNGE AND GAS STATION - NIGHT**

Headlights shine down main street. Cars parked all up and down. A jolly group of people.

131 **INT. THE NIGHT OWL LOUNGE AND GAS STATION - NIGHT**

The place is packed, buzzing with anticipation. Cadillac, Miller, Jerry, on stage. Karey introduces them.

KAREY
Can I have your attention please?

The place quiets.

KAREY (CONT'D)
It's been a long time coming, but
tonight we've got 'em back. Please
welcome The Slingin' Guns!

The crowd roars as Cadillac moves to center stage strumming his exquisite guitar. The crowd goes quiet.

CADILLAC
Sometimes, the devil will do
everything he can to put out the
fire in us. But you gotta say, not
today. Not today. Take your place
in this world.

They begin to play "Holy Ghost Fire" by Paul Cauthen.

CODA:

132 **EXT. KAREY AND GABRIEL'S FARMHOUSE - DAY**

A caravan of trucks park in the farmyard one by one. Men get out. Shut their doors. Karey peers out the window, perplexed.

AT FRONT DOOR

Cadillac knocks. Karey answers. Gabriel close behind. Karey looks past Cadillac at the other men leaned up against their trucks.

KAREY
What's going on?

CADILLAC
I'm here to see the man of the house.

Karey's curious. Gabriel approaches Cadillac.

CADILLAC (CONT'D)
You're in.

Gabriel's eyes widen.

GABRIEL
I'm in?

Cadillac hands Gabriel a folding lawn chair.

CADILLAC
We all took a vote, and you're in.

Karey's eyes glisten.

CADILLAC (CONT'D)
What are you waitin' for? They've landed. Lets go!

A huge grin erupts across Gabriel's face as he rushes out the door. Karey mouths to Cadillac -

KAREY
Thank you...

Cadillac winks to her before following Gabriel to the truck.

(pre-lap)
The sound of honking geese.

133 **EXT. FIELD - DAY**

Cadillac, Gabriel, Miller, Jerry and the others are all spread out in their lawn chairs, heads back, mouths open. Gabriel's mouth is open the widest.

The honking grows louder as **"Country As Fuck" by Paul Cauthen** takes us through the credits. Splat, splat, splat.

ROLL CREDITS