

# **DARK CARGO**

Pilot  
"The Starless Sky"

Written by  
Adam Reid & Max Reid

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DARK CARGO - PILOT - "The Starless Sky"

TEASER

1 EXT. WEST COAST CITY - DAWN 1

A wet morning. WE CAN SEE the Pacific Ocean in the distance. Seagulls drift in the sea breeze. WE DRIFT TOWARDS a massive FOOD DISTRIBUTION TERMINAL.

2 EXT. FOOD TERMINAL - DAWN 2

While most of the city sleeps, the terminal overflows with activity. Dozens of WORKERS hustle through the rainy mist and cigarette smoke. Forklifts ferry huge pallets of produce.

VENDORS move through the action with clipboards, barking instructions, directing the workers here and there.

The goods are loaded onto the trucks, their trailers backed against the vast line of loading bays like open-mouthed whales.

As the rain steams on the trucks' idling engines, a STRAY DOG weaves among mud flaps, stopping to sniff a lost cabbage in a puddle.

The dog opts to lap up the rain water, sending a cascade of ripples out from its snout.

3 INT. FOOD TERMINAL - MEN'S ROOM - AT THAT MOMENT 3

The sound of a truck ENGINE slowly rises to drown everything else out - from the bottom of a sink full of water, we watch as JOE DOBBS (late 30s, sensitive yet caustic, a soured idealist) slowly submerges his face below the surface coming towards us, eyes open the whole time. He stares right into us, the breath bubbling out of his nose and running up his cheeks. After a long moment he lifts his head out of the water.

He pushes back his wet hair and finds his eyes in the mirror. Joe stares at himself. Joe's blood-shot eyes fill the frame. Joe finally blinks.

He grabs his plaid work jacket off the counter and heads for the exit.

4 EXT. FOOD TERMINAL - LOADING BAY 17 - MOMENTS LATER 4

FROM ACROSS THE LOT WE FIND Joe standing by his truck, trying to smoke a cigarette in the rain. Joe's truck is a beautiful long-nose style red cab with a silver streaked trailer.

Two ASIAN MEN approach Joe. In spite of the overcast morning they both wear sunglasses.

Joe talks to the men but we're too far away to hear the conversation.

All we can hear is a mixture of the rain, muffled intercom announcements, and the distant whir of machinery.

Joe and the two men stand aside as a forklift carries a crate labelled 'dried shrimp' into the trailer. The trailer is full of the stuff.

The forklift exits the trailer and the two Asian men depart without another word.

Joe tosses his soggy cigarette into wet oblivion and swings the trailer doors closed.

The metal doors CLANG.

The engine RUMBLES to life.

The air brakes HISS.

5 EXT. WEST COAST CITY - DAY 5

WE FOLLOW Joe's truck as it makes its way onto the highway and out of the city.

6 EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAWN 6

The road cuts between tall pines, heading towards the mountains from the Pacific Northwest. On the asphalt a DOG is road kill. Almost unrecognizable.

A SEAGULL lands. It pulls at the gore, looking for a cheap meal. The Gull digs its beak in deep.

The Seagull becomes alarmed and takes flight.

SLAM.

The Gull is now a GORY SMEAR ACROSS THE GRILL of Joe's truck.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

As the rig rumbles past, onwards to its destiny, we:

FADE TO OPENING  
CREDITS.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

7 EXT. TRUCK STOP - DAY 7

The gas station/diner combo looks lonely yet beautiful against a vast blue sky and blanket of pristine snow.

8 INT. TRUCK STOP DINER - DAY 8

The thin sound of Kitty Wells' "It wasn't God who made Honky Tonk Angels" on the radio mingles with the sizzle of the grill.

The faint commentary from the hockey game enters the fray - courtesy of the television over the counter. A middle-aged WAITRESS snaps her gum, watching with half-interest.

WE FIND Joe sitting on a stool at the counter, eating steak and eggs. This is Joe in his natural state. Alone on the road. Anonymous and free.

Muted cheers. Joe pauses reading to glance up at the game.

A bell above the door chimes the arrival of a POLICE OFFICER, who walks over to the counter and finds himself a seat just down from Joe.

OFFICER  
Cup of coffee, darling.

Noticing the officer, Joe places his utensils on the plate and slides his meal away, half-finished. He fishes a twenty from his wallet and places it under his coffee mug.

The Officer turns to Joe, smiling.

OFFICER (CONT'D)  
What's the score?

JOE  
Sorry?

The Officer nods up at the TV.

JOE (CONT'D)  
I don't know who you're cheering for but we're down three zip.

Joe collects his jacket from its hook under the counter.

(CONTINUED)

OFFICER

Don't leave on my account.

JOE

Lost track of time.

OFFICER

10-4 on that. Say, you boys still use CBs?

JOE

Yeah.

OFFICER

In this day and age?

JOE

Nostalgia. They're still good for the conversation.

OFFICER

Well, you take it slow in this weather. Don't make me have to help pull your rig out of a ditch.

JOE

Wouldn't want that. Can't spare the time.

Joe sticks a cigarette in his mouth as he exits.

EXT. THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS - DUSK

Icy vistas. Tall pines. A small highway snakes through the cliffs. Joe's truck hums along on its journey.

INT. TRUCK CAB - NIGHT

Joe drives with his wife, AVA (early 20s, husky voice) on speakerphone. It's their nightly check-in. Joe watches his breath dissipate in the cold, and turns up the heat.

JOE

And then what happened?

INTERCUT WITH:

11 INT. JOE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - AT THAT MOMENT

11

As Ava leans on the counter the first thing we notice is how much younger than Joe she is. Well, that and her sultry beauty. CATHERINE (5 and a bit) draws at the kitchen table. It's a nice house but the design is twenty years out-of-date.

AVA

I looked down and the beef stock was all over the floor.

JOE

Devastating. And where was Wild Eddie while this was going down?

AVA

Being held back by Catherine.

JOE

Good girl. Bet that dog's tongue was going like crazy.

Ava looks at the DOG (WILD EDDIE) splayed out by his bowl.

AVA

He got more than his fair share in the end.

(then)

News says you're headed into a snowstorm.

JOE

Yep. But let's get back to the story here. What happened next?

AVA

Well... I grabbed the mop!

JOE

Yes?

AVA

And the bucket! And I mopped the beef stock up!

JOE

And then you squeezed it back out of the mop into the stew, right?

AVA

That's how I make it so good. It's all about that hint of floor polish and dog hair.

(CONTINUED)

JOE

I wish I had some of that stew  
right now. It's freezing out here.

AVA

There'll be plenty of stew waiting  
for you in the freezer.

Joe smiles. Beyond the windshield, only the road bordered by  
blasted out slates of rock is illuminated. No sign of other  
cars. No sign of anything.

AVA (CONT'D)

Where will you stop tonight?

JOE

I'm going to push on for a few  
hours yet. Maybe I'll try and drive  
straight through till morning.

AVA

Joe, don't do anything risky. Not  
in that weather.

JOE

Aye, aye, Captain.

AVA

And no hitchhikers. I don't care  
how lonely you get.

JOE

Right. Like I'm gonna find any  
company on this road.

AVA

Just be safe. Love you.

JOE

Love you, too.

END INTERCUT.

Ava hangs up and immediately dials another number. Seeing her  
daughter, Ava slips out of the room as she answers.

AVA (O.C.)

It's Ava...

The truck's headlights drift back and forth through the snow.



13 INT. TRUCK CAB - NIGHT 13

Joe notices a cluster of LIGHTS glittering on a plateau in the distance. Joe furrows his brow at the sight. A cabin? A compound? Whatever it is, it's isolated.

14 EXT. ROCKY MOUNTAINS - MOMENTS LATER 14

Joe's truck passes a huge gated entrance to a long road, which leads to the lights.

15 EXT. MOUNTAIN ROAD - NIGHT 15

CLOSE ON a pair of feet in high heeled-shoes - very out of place as the Louboutins punch down into the deep snow.

A MYSTERIOUS WOMAN staggers into the road and raises her arms over her head. Joe's truck approaches, bathing her in light.

16 INT. TRUCK CAB - NIGHT 16

Joe squints at the figure ahead. He slows to see in his headlights,

The slim figure of a young woman waving her arms frantically, clad in a man's trench coat.

Joe exhales deeply, remembering Ava's caveat. He shakes his head - *sorry, kid* - and accelerates again.

17 EXT. HIGHWAY - AT THAT MOMENT 17

Joe's truck rumbles past the waving woman. She screams after him, but nothing can be heard over the truck.

18 INT. TRUCK CAB - AT THAT MOMENT 18

Joe punches the steering wheel, disappointed in himself.

19 EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT 19

The Young Woman watches the trailer's brake lights GLOW RED as the truck slows and pulls onto the narrow gravel shoulder. She runs for the truck, holding the trench coat closed.

20

INT. TRUCK CAB - MOMENTS LATER

20

Joe watches in the passenger-side mirror as the Young Woman runs and stumbles her way to the passenger side door.

The door swings open with a surprising force. Two high heels fly into the cab, followed by the Young Woman, who hoists herself in. She slams the door.

YOUNG WOMAN

Drive! Go!

JOE

Are you okay--

YOUNG WOMAN

Drive Goddamnit, DRIVE!

Joe throws the truck into gear and pulls onto the road. He accelerates, pushing the truck back into the night.

Joe steals a glance at the snow-soaked stranger occupying his cab,

Her mascara is streaked from crying. She has a SMALL GASH ON HER CALF. As the woman pulls the coat tight around her, Joe realizes she is naked underneath.

JOE

What the hell are you doing out here?

The Young Woman tries to catch her breath.

Joe watches her squeeze her fingers, trying to bring feeling back into them. There is fresh blood under the nails.

JOE (CONT'D)

There are some blankets in the back.

The Young Woman pulls her knees up into her chest.

YOUNG WOMAN

Just keep driving.

JOE

Clothes, too. Won't fit you but they'll be warmer than that coat. There's a thermos--

YOUNG WOMAN

Shut up and drive!

(CONTINUED)

JOE

That's it, I'm pulling over.

YOUNG WOMAN

Don't! DON'T!

Joe gears down the truck and starts to pull to the side. Thump thump as the tires meet the rumble strips.

The woman rocks in a blind panic, tears welling up.

YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)

No, no, no, we have to go...

(then)

Please. Drive. I'll make it worth your while.

Gene lets her trench coat fall open. Joe keeps his eyes on her face.

JOE

Stop that.

GENE

I'm expensive for a reason.

Gene reaches for Joe's crotch. Joe knocks her hand away, almost too roughly.

JOE

Stop it! Close your fucking coat.

Joe unbuckles his seat belt and ducks through the curtains into the sleeping cabin. He returns with a blanket. Joe tries to put the blanket around Gene's shoulders, only to be slapped away.

JOE (CONT'D)

Listen, lady, if you want me to keep driving you're going to put this blanket on.

She begrudgingly snatches the blanket. Joe sits back down behind the wheel and starts driving.

JOE (CONT'D)

Now, can you tell me what happened to you? How you ended up out here?

(then)

Were you up there? At that... compound place?

YOUNG WOMAN

Please drive. Just get me away from here.

JOE

You have a name?

GENE

G-Genie. My name is Gene and I want to get moving already, okay?!

JOE

It's not a prison, is it?

GENE

No, and I'm not dangerous.

JOE

(re: her nails)

Then whose blood is that?

GENE

A man's.

JOE

You're safe now, Gene. I'm gonna take you to the police.

GENE

NO!

JOE

Listen, they won't care how you make your money--

GENE

They are the police!

JOE

You were up there with cops?

GENE

No-- Yes-- It's not like that.

JOE

You're not making sense.

GENE

They're everybody. They own it all. They run it all. Nobody can save me.

Gene goes quiet, realizing:

GENE (CONT'D)

I'm dead. I'm already dead.

JOE

You're exhausted.

Joe CLICKS opens the glove box, but only lets the panel down halfway, obviously hiding something. He reaches in and pulls out a bottle of pills, and CLICKS the glove box closed.

JOE (CONT'D)

Take these.

Joe unscrews the top and places several pills in Gene's palm. He hands her a bottle of water.

JOE (CONT'D)

They'll help you sleep. You can use the bunk while I get us to the next town.

GENE

What's the point?

JOE

Just take the pills. We can figure this out.

After a long moment she places the pills in her mouth and swallows them with a slug of water. Joe smiles, relieved.

JOE (CONT'D)

I'll just turn down the bed and then we're back on the road.

Joe slips through the curtain.

The bunk cabin is compact but cozy. Joe stashes a dirty magazine under the bunk.

JOE

It's warm back here. And people say the engine's hum is better than a lullaby.

Gene reaches for the glove box. She quietly clicks it open, and guides the panel down.

A HANDGUN rests on a small stack of permits and licenses.

JOE (O.C.)  
Everything's going to be okay,  
Gene.

She picks the handgun up.

GENE  
No, it's not.

Joe slips back through the curtain into the cab as Gene puts the gun under her chin.

JOE  
Jesus, no, don't--

Gene pulls the trigger and paints the truck's cab with the contents of her head.

Loud ringing. Joe falls into the driver's seat. He scrambles against the door as if to escape the horror.

Gene's body slumps forward against the dash. Blood burps out of her shattered skull.

JOE (CONT'D)  
No. No.

As Joe covers his mouth, we:

CUT TO BLACK.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

23 EXT. MOUNTAIN ROAD - NIGHT 23

The truck looks eerily silent in the starless night, the light within the cab the only illumination for miles.

24 INT. TRUCK CAB - NIGHT 24

Joe stares at Gene's lifeless body. It's silent. Joe grabs the blanket that Gene's body is cloaked in, and tries to soak up the blood that pools around her on the seat.

The CB squawks to life. Joe jumps at the sound.

FRANK (O.S.)  
Hello?

Joe stares at the CB receiver. He can't believe it.

FRANK (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
I don't know about anybody else out there but I'm lonely and bored. Over.

Joe looks through the windshield, a spatter of blood has begun to run down the glass.

Joe looks around. He grabs some tissues from a plastic wrapper and wipes the blood in a circle.

FRANK (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
If we get more of this snow they're all predicting I just hope they get the salt shakers out there fast.

The blood smears across the glass - worse than before.

FRANK (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
I gotta lotta road to cover. Anyone got any reports for me? Over.

Joe looks at the blood pooling around Gene's body. He watches it soak into the blanket. It's as if the mess is growing. Joe holds his face in his hands, overwhelmed.

FRANK (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Come on, cold world. Ain't there anybody out there who can give ol' Frank a little bit of company?

(CONTINUED)

Joe closes his eyes. Joe takes a deep breath. He opens his eyes again and picks up the CB receiver.

JOE

I'm here. I can hear you, Frank.  
Over.

While Franks speaks WE SEE details of the crime scene inside the cab: Blood on the ceiling. Gene's dead right hand. Her high heels in a puddle of slush on the rubber mat.

FRANK (O.S.)

Finally somebody to talk to. Lemme tell you, if it ain't the dark you gotta worry about on these mountain roads it's the sharp corners. I hope you're coffee'd up. Me? I gotta Goddamn espresso machine in my cab. This is a five thousand dollar piece of Italian perfection-- Jesus, listen to me? 'Finally got myself a conversation and I'm hogging it. Apologies fellow wanderer. Over.

JOE

It's fine, Frank. Good... good to talk to you... Over.

FRANK (O.S.)

What's on your mind tonight, friend? What insights into the human condition hath this snowy day brought you? Over.

JOE

Oh I don't... I... Listen... I'm in something of a bad spot here, Frank.

FRANK (O.S.)

You in a ditch? Over.

JOE

No... it's something really bad. I don't think-- I can't tell you. I'm sorry, I'll go. Over.

Joe goes to hang up the receiver. Frank crackles through.

FRANK (O.S.)

Listen, son, I don't know what's troubling you.

(MORE)



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

Hell, I got no right to know. But I ain't a perfect man. I've done some things. Been on the inside. Seen that the world holds a lot of grey. So I ain't one to judge. Especially one of my trucker brothers. Shit. If we don't have the fraternity of the road, what the hell do we have? Over.

Joe fights back tears.

JOE

I'm a good man, Frank. Not perfect, seen the grey myself. I... I need help bad. I have a family.

(then)

But how can I trust you? Over.

FRANK (O.S.)

Well. The best way to find out if you can trust somebody is to trust them. Over.

Joe looks at his flipped-down visor where a PHOTO of Ava, Catherine, and Wild Eddie the dog resides.

JOE

Let's switch to a private channel, Frank.

A light goes on the CB radio. Joe presses a button and Frank's voice returns.

FRANK (O.S.)

Alright. What's the matter?

Joe pauses, struggling with what to say next. He swallows.

JOE

Frank, I've got a dead body in my cab.

Static. Then,

FRANK (O.S.)

Jesus, man.

JOE

It was this girl I picked up--

FRANK (O.S.)

Shit, what did you do?

JOE

Nothing! She was running from... I don't know who or what. I found her on the road. I was just trying to help her and she found the gun and she...

Joe holds his face.

JOE (CONT'D)

It doesn't matter what story I tell, it's only gonna look one way. A low-life trucker... a dead girl.  
(then)  
The gun's not registered.

FRANK

The cops these days look at blood spray, and gunshot residue and all that stuff. They can figure out if it wasn't you!

JOE

There's something else.

Joe finds his cigarette pack and fumbles one to his lips.

JOE (CONT'D)

I've got cargo, Frank. Cargo that can't be inspected.

FRANK (O.S.)

Jesus... uh... what did you say your name was?

Joe lights the cigarette and exhales.

JOE

Joe. It's Joe.

FRANK (O.S.)

You alone, Joe?

JOE

Except for her, there's no one for miles.

FRANK (O.S.)

Anybody see you and the girl together? Know where you are?

JOE

Nobody. No...

Static. Joe clenches a fist against his brow, waiting for Frank. Finally, a click.

FRANK (O.S.)

Okay, you listen to me and listen good because this is your one shot right here, the clock is ticking. You get rid of that body. You gotta clean the living shit out of that cab. And then you drive like hell.

Alone except for the static on the CB, Joe looks out his front windshield. Snow drifts through the headlights. The storm is coming.

WE CREEP IN ON Joe's face until finally,

JOE

10-4.

Carrying a flashlight, Joe returns from a small storage unit on the back of the cab with a folded blue tarp. In voice-over we hear Frank's instructions.

FRANK (V.O.)

Now first things first. A body, regardless of how small this unfortunate lady was, is gonna be heavier than you think. Do you have a tarp?

JOE (V.O.)

I do.

Joe turns at the brightening lights of an approaching car. He quickly tucks himself in tight against the cab. Still.

The car disappears into the blackness again.

FRANK (V.O.)

Good. You're gonna want to spread that out below the passenger side door.

Joe drops to his knees and unfolds the tarp on the snowy decline of the road's shoulder.

FRANK (V.O.)

Now if you're lucky, she's already against the door.

CLOSE ON Joe's reddening knuckles as he flattens the tarp out as best he can. He softly punches it down with his fists, the snow crunching underneath.

JOE (V.O.)

She's not.

FRANK (V.O.)

You're gonna have to lean her against it then. The idea here is to save time, and your back as well. You open the door and she should drop right onto the tarp.

Joe stands, brushing himself off. He places a hand on the passenger door handle and braces himself - *all or nothing time*.

FRANK (V.O.)

Given the snow, it shouldn't be too much trouble to pull her into the woods.

Joe opens the door. Gene's body falls down onto the tarp just like Frank said - only it keeps going, tumbling down the decline.

JOE

No, no!

Joe almost slips as he grabs the tarp and scrambles down the decline to Gene's body. Her trench coat has fallen open exposing her naked body.

Joe snatches the coat closed, then opts to button it up for good measure.

The lights of a car approaches.

Joe hits the dirt. Or in this case, Gene's body. He lies still on top of her as the car drifts into darkness once more.

Joe is quick to get back on his feet. He lays out the tarp and struggles to roll Gene's body onto it. The hard work isn't moving her, but getting the tarp to stay put. Finally he gets her body onto the tarp.

Joe folds the tarp and grabs both ends in his fists. He slips and slides as he drags her back up the other side of the decline, making no progress. Eventually Joe switches to pushing her up.

Finally, Joe gets Gene out of the ditch towards the woods. After catching his breath Joe retrieves his flashlight and grabs one end of the tarp.

WE RISE UP as Joe drags the tarp towards the woods, leaving a trail in the snow like a sled.

FRANK (V.O.)

Now you're lucky because of the snow coming. Whatever trail you leave will be covered in no time.

The flashlight beam stutters back and forth as Joe drags the tarp through the trees. The tarp catches on a stump, forcing Joe to yank it free with a grunt.

FRANK (V.O.)

Then you're going to bury her. Over.

JOE (V.O.)

Frank, the ground is frozen solid. I'll be impossible to dig through.

FRANK (V.O.)

Then just go far enough into the woods that no one will ever find her. It's not like this is a public park, you're in the middle of nowhere. The mountains.

Joe arrives in a small clearing and lets go of the tarp. He tries to catch his breath, the cold air fighting his lungs.

JOE (V.O.)

What if we burn the body?

FRANK (V.O.)

Are you kidding? Everybody will see it from the road.

Joe pulls Gene's high heels from inside his jacket and places them beside her.

FRANK (V.O.)

Every trace of her needs to disappear right alongside her. She had a drink? Take the mug.

Joe lays the water bottle down beside Gene. It's then that Joe notices Gene is wearing a large diamond ring.

FRANK (V.O.)

You cannot have a speck of this woman on your person. Not a hair.

Unable to fight temptation, Joe grabs hold of Gene's hand and yanks on the ring until it comes off. He stows the ring in his pants pocket.

FRANK (V.O.)

In fact, and I know you're not gonna like this one bit, Joe, but you'd be smart to remove her hands and teeth and ditch them someplace else.

JOE (V.O.)

I don't think I can do that.

Joe holds up a box cutter - the best blade he's got. He stares at Gene's thin wrists.

FRANK (V.O.)

I ain't a sadist, believe me, but on the off chance somebody actually finds the body, not being able to identify it is only gonna help your chances.

Joe stows the box cutter again. Joe moves over beside Gene.

JOE (V.O.)

I don't have a saw. Over.

FRANK (V.O.)

You're gonna have to improvise.

Joe looks around - it truly is the middle of nowhere. He can't even hear a sound from the highway. Joe looks up through the branches to,

The starless sky.

Snow falls on his face. His breath drifts up like smoke from a cabin chimney.

Joe gets to his feet and rolls Gene's body off the tarp.

27 INT. TRUCK CAB - LATER 27

Already beyond exhausted, Joe stares through the passenger window at the dark woods where he left Gene's body. The snow continues to drift down.

Joe retrieves the CB receiver. Gene's blood has frozen on his cheek. He smokes a cigarette.

JOE  
Okay, Frank. What next?

28 INT. TRUCK - SLEEPING CABIN - MOMENTS LATER 28

Joe slides a small box of cleaning supplies (Windex, Lysol wipes) out from under the bunk.

FRANK (V.O.)  
Well, my friend. How's your cleaning supply situation?

Joe holds a bottle of Mr. Clean to the light - there's barely a drop left.

JOE (V.O.)  
Not good.

FRANK (V.O.)  
That's okay. We can improvise.

29 EXT. SIDE OF THE ROAD - MOMENTS LATER 29

Joe sucks on a hose, siphoning gasoline out his tank.

FRANK (V.O.)  
Now you may not know this but gasoline is a pretty good cleaning agent.

Joe spits as the gasoline comes, and pours it into a bucket.

30 INT. TRUCK CAB - LATER 30

Joe sits with a container full of condiment packets collected from his life on the road. He uses his teeth to tear open vinegar packet after vinegar packet and pours their contents into a water bottle.

FRANK (V.O.)

Vinegar, too. Your cab is gonna reek, but drive with the windows open for a while and you'll be okay.

INT. TRUCK CAB - NIGHT

MONTAGE:

Stripped down to his underwear, DOG TAGS dangling, Joe opens packet after packet of salt and pours it on the blood stains on the passenger seat.

JOE (V.O.)

How'd you become an expert at cleaning up a crime scene, Frank?

Joe soaks a shirt with gasoline and wipes down the windows and dashboard. The blood streaks across the leather.

FRANK (V.O.)

How'd you think? A lot of hours on the road with a lot of talk radio.

Joe empties a MICKEY OF VODKA onto a rag and wipes his handgun free of Gene's prints.

FRANK (V.O.)

Lemme ask you a question, Joe. Why do you have a gun? I mean, I keep some wasp spray, but...

He dries the gun with an undershirt and puts it back in the glove box.

JOE (V.O.)

My wife gave it to me. In case I have to protect myself.

Unable to get all the bloodstains out of the passenger seat, Joe tucks a blanket around the chair as if for decoration.

FRANK (V.O.)

Now, you'll want to dump whatever you were wearing far away from where you are. Wrap it up airtight, then put it in the first dumpster you see when you get to a town.



32 INT. TRUCK - SLEEPING CABIN - NIGHT 32

Joe stuffs his dirty clothes in a plastic bag, ties it tight, and shoves it under his bunk.

END MONTAGE.

33 EXT. SIDE OF THE ROAD - DAWN 33

The sun crests the mountains. Joe, in fresh clothes, dumps out the bucket of gasoline and what's left of the vinegar.

Joe looks to the woods. Sure enough the snowfall, though now over, has covered his tracks. He squints at the horizon.

34 INT. TRUCK CAB - DAWN 34

Joe pulls himself into the cab. It's impressive how clean it looks, though Joe can barely keep his eyes open to notice.

FRANK (O.S.)  
Joe, you there, big guy?

Joe weakly reaches for the CB receiver.

JOE  
I'm here, Frank. I'm finished.  
Gonna climb in back and get some  
shut eye now.

FRANK (O.S.)  
Jesus Christ, Joe, are you crazy?!  
You can't sleep, you gotta move it--

JOE  
And fall asleep at the wheel? I  
don't think so.

FRANK (O.S.)  
Joe, you're fifty feet from the  
Goddamn body, you gotta drive!

It is now that Joe notices IN THE SIDE-VIEW MIRROR,

A POLICE CRUISER pulling in behind the truck.

JOE  
Shit. Shit. Frank, it's a cop.  
Radio silence until I speak again.  
Over.

35

EXT. SIDE OF THE ROAD - MORNING

35

The cruiser door opens and SERGEANT DOROTHY PLATT (40, amiable and folksy in an intentionally deceptive way) climbs out. She grins widely.

SERGEANT PLATT

Oh boy. What do we have here?

Joe climbs out of his cab, trying his best to look friendly and not like he's about to pass out.

JOE

Morning, officer.

SERGEANT PLATT

That's Sergeant. Sergeant Platt.

Sergeant Platt shoots a thumb at her name-tag.

JOE

Sorry, Sergeant.

SERGEANT PLATT

No sweat. I just got promoted and I'm proud to say 'Sergeant' out loud.

Platt is pleased with herself. Joe shivers.

JOE

Cold one isn't it?

SERGEANT PLATT

Ya get used to it. You okay, Mr...

JOE

Dobbs. Joe Dobbs. I'm fine, I just pulled in for some shut eye.

SERGEANT PLATT

You have some bad dreams?

JOE

No, why?

SERGEANT PLATT

Because you look like you didn't get a wink of sleep.

(CONTINUED)

JOE

Oh, yeah. You know. That bunk is murder on my back. I don't like to use it unless I have to.

Platt walks around the truck, admiringly. She WHISTLES. Joe trails behind her, lighting a cigarette out of nervousness.

JOE (CONT'D)

I've got my license if you want to see it.

SERGEANT PLATT

Pfft.

Sergeant Platt waves him off, more focused on the truck.

SERGEANT PLATT (CONT'D)

What a beauty. Love the paint job. And the long nose.

Sergeant Platt arrives on the passenger side.

SERGEANT PLATT (CONT'D)

I always wanted to drive a rig. The whole lifestyle seemed really romantic to me.

JOE

It's not all it's cracked up to be.

SERGEANT PLATT

Tell me about it. Dated a trucker for a while. All those hours on the road made him desperate for conversation. Would not shut up. Couldn't watch my shows in peace. No offence.

JOE

None taken.

She looks down into the ditch.

SERGEANT PLATT

Oh boy. What have we got here?

Sergeant Platt descends into the ditch. Joe holds his breath.

She reemerges with an empty mickey of vodka hanging off the end of her pen.

SERGEANT PLATT (CONT'D)

Joe. I don't suppose you've been self-medicating that back of yours?

JOE

That isn't mine.

Sergeant Platt steps close to Joe.

SERGEANT PLATT

Joe. It snowed all night. This bottle doesn't even have a snowflake on it.

(then)

You and I will get along much better if you're honest with me.

JOE

Swear on my child. I'm sober.

SERGEANT PLATT

You're slurring your words, Joe.

JOE

I'm just really tired, Sergeant.

The Sergeant sniffs the air.

SERGEANT PLATT

You don't smell right, Joe. I think I'm gonna need to see what you're hauling.

JOE

I don't see what my haul has got to do with--

Sergeant Platt holds up a hand.

SERGEANT PLATT

Joe. Piece of advice. Right now you need to indulge all my whims. Now open her up.

JOE

My keys. They're in the cab.

The Sergeant gives him a sweet smile.

SERGEANT PLATT

I'll be waiting 'round back.

35 CONTINUED: (3)

35

As Sergeant Platt drops the mickey back into the ditch and strolls to the back of the trailer, Joe pulls himself into the cab.

36 INT. TRUCK CAB - CONTINUOUS

36

Joe grabs his keys, his hands shaking. He goes to leave again but stops short, grimacing at his odds of survival. He takes several deep breaths, weighing his slim list of options.

Joe steels himself. He looks around the cab, spying the door bucket. He reaches in and grabs something.

37 EXT. SIDE OF THE ROAD - MOMENTS LATER

37

Sergeant Platt leans out from behind the trailer.

SERGEANT PLATT

Come on, Joe. I ain't got all day  
and I'm sure you don't either.

Joe walks over to Platt, his eyes full of grim determination.

JOE

Be right there, Sergeant.

As Joe tightens his grip on the BOX CUTTER behind his back,  
we:

CUT TO BLACK.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

38

EXT. SIDE OF THE ROAD - DAY

38

Joe approaches Sergeant Platt at the back of the truck, one hand behind his back. Their breath drifts through the cold air.

JOE

I hope you like dried shrimp  
because you're about to see about a  
million of them.

SERGEANT PLATT

Love shrimp. Open her up.

Sergeant Platt motions to the trailer doors.

JOE

Where did I put those keys?

Joe plays at checking his various pockets, opens his jacket - all the while his hand behind his back, gripping the box cutter.

Suddenly Sergeant Platt points at Joe's shirt.

SERGEANT PLATT

Hold the phone, is that what I  
think it is?

Joe freezes, shock exploding in his chest - *Do I have blood on me?*

Joe looks down to see,

His dog tags have fallen half-out of his shirt.

SERGEANT PLATT (CONT'D)

You're ex-army.

JOE

I am.

Sergeant Platt breaks out into a big smile, tipping her hat.

SERGEANT PLATT

I knew it! I can always spot a  
fellow serviceman! You see any  
action?

(CONTINUED)

JOE  
Afghanistan. You?

SERGEANT PLATT  
Iraq. I was just a squirt. Man, I bet you've got some stories.

JOE  
One or two.  
(then)  
You want to take a look at the shrimp?

Sergeant waves a hand, dismissive.

SERGEANT PLATT  
Ah, I'm sure they're doing fine.

Joe gently stows the box cutter in his back pocket.

SERGEANT PLATT (CONT'D)  
Squashing scorpions in the sand to long-hauling through snow storms. Makes a change.

JOE  
I could say the same for you.

SERGEANT PLATT  
Oh, I'm never not going to have a job that doesn't involve a firearm. I found it too hard to give up the peace of mind.

Sergeant Platt admires her pistol in its holster.

JOE  
Sorry, but I gotta head out. Can't afford to fall behind schedule.

SERGEANT PLATT  
Damn companies. They use the threat of outsourcing to make people slaves. Well, you be safe, soldier.

JOE  
I'll try.

The Sergeant brightens again, all smiles.

SERGEANT PLATT  
How could you not be with me keeping the roads safe, right?

Sergeant Platt laughs a little too hard at her own joke.

Joe chuckles politely, then walks back to the cab. He exhales a deep breath of relief.

The Sergeant watches him go, looking a little disappointed to lose the company. She starts back to her cruiser.

FROM THE CRUISER comes an APB.

DISPATCH (O.S.)

Sergeant we've got a missing persons report filed on a young woman, aged 22. Filer is here at the station and he wants a word with you. Over.

Platt opens the door. She picks up the receiver.

SERGEANT PLATT

Roger that, momma bird. I should be back in twenty. Let's see what he's got to say.

Platt watches Joe's truck drive away, admiringly.

As Joe drives, he picks up the CB receiver.

JOE

Frank, this is Joe. Over.

Static.

JOE (CONT'D)

Frank, this is Joe. Over.

Static. Joe watches the CB as if staring hard enough will bring a response from Frank.

FRANK (O.S.)

Joe! Shit! I was getting worried, friend! Over.

JOE

I'm fine, Frank. We're good. I'm on the road. Over.

FRANK (O.S.)

Christ, man, didn't I tell you not to hang around?

(MORE)



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

We're just lucky the cop didn't notice anything. I don't know how you would have gotten out of that one.

Joe looks at the box cutter, discarded on the passenger seat like - *you're telling me.*

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

You gotta listen to me, Joe. Forget stopping. Forget sleeping. You gotta drive. Just motor. Over.

Joe stares out through the front windshield. Then - he's struck by a thought. Joe glares suspiciously at the receiver.

JOE

Frank, I've been at this now, what? Seven, eight hours?

FRANK (O.S.)

Thereabouts, yeah.

JOE

And you're on the road right?

FRANK (O.S.)

Where else would I be?

JOE

Where you going, Frank? Why aren't you out of range?

(then)

I'm sorry, Frank... I'm... I think I'm losing my mind.

Static.

FRANK (O.S.)

You're tired, Joe. That's the fatigue talking. You need rest, but sadly that's gonna have to wait a little while longer. You and me, Joe? We're in this together, right 'till the end. I'm not leaving you to dangle I promise that.

Joe leans into the steering wheel, struggling to keep his focus on the road.

JOE

I'm spent, Frank. I can't even see straight. I gotta sleep.

FRANK (O.S.)

Then you're gonna need some speed.

JOE

I don't carry speed.

FRANK (O.S.)

Caffeine pills? Red Bull?

JOE

Nothing like that.

FRANK

Well we're gonna have to figure something out here, Joe. Because we can't have you dozing off into a guard rail. Especially if you've got cargo people can't be finding--

An idea occurs to Joe.

JOE

Wait, I do have something. I'm gonna have to pull over to get it.

There is a long pause. Joe waits, pensive.

FRANK (O.S.)

Well, needs must I guess. But this time try and pull over somewhere secluded.

Darkness. We hear the clang of the trailer doors being unlocked. They swing open, and light falls across the crates.

Joe hoists himself into the trailer and moves between the stacks to the back, stopping at,

A pine box with a stenciled logo of a shrimp. The dark cargo.

Crowbar in hand, Joe jimmies a slat of wood off the box and tosses it aside.

In the faint light WE CAN SEE the box is full of inner tube-like packages - all stamped with a small Catholic cross. Joe takes one out and lays it on the box.

Joe takes out his box cutter and slides it along the package, it splits open like an over-stuffed pillow.

40

CONTINUED:

40

Inside is white powder. Cocaine.

Joe closes his eyes, cursing himself that it's come to this.

He scoops a small mound of powder on the blade of the box cutter and holds it to his nostril.

Joe snorts deeply.

41

INT. TRUCK CAB - LATER

41

Joe stuffs the black package in with his gun in the glove box and slams it shut again. Joe drives, his grip on the wheel tight as a drum. He is high as a kite. Joe sniffs and wipes at his nose.

Joe punches the roof of the cab a couple of time.

JOE

We ain't gonna pay no toll! It's  
time to put the hammer down!

Joe cuts through the highway traffic, receiving a few angry HONKS in the process.

Joe glances beside him as what looks like a fleet of BLACK SUVs come up around him and surround his truck.

The windows are too tinted to reveal the drivers.

The SUVs speed forward, leaving Joe behind.

Joe blinks rapidly, as if trying to blink away an illusion.

His cell phone RINGS in its perch, startling him. Joe shoots a wild look at the phone. The call display: AVA.

JOE (CONT'D)

Shit!

Joe takes a series of rapid breaths.

JOE (CONT'D)

Calm calm calm calm calm calm.

Joe answers the call and puts it on speaker phone.

JOE (CONT'D)

Hello?

INTERCUT WITH:

42 INT. JOE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - AT THAT MOMENT

42

Ava, in her pajamas, leans on the counter eating a bowl of cereal, receiver on her shoulder.

AVA  
Good morning, babe.

JOE  
Ava, hey, why are you calling?

AVA  
For our usual morning check-in,  
goose. How was your night?

JOE  
My night?! It was good, yeah really  
good. Good night all around.

AVA  
Somebody's had too much coffee.

JOE  
A ton of coffee. Hit the road  
early. Go go go.

AVA  
So what made it such a good night?

JOE  
Huh?

AVA  
You said you had a really good  
night? You manage to get some  
chickadee to bunk up with you?

JOE  
Jesus, Ava, come on--

AVA  
Easy, babe, I'm just pulling your  
chain.

Joe fakes a laugh.

AVA (CONT'D)  
How's the powder?

Joe reacts - *does she mean the coke?*

JOE  
The what?

(CONTINUED)

AVA

The snowstorm. It's all over the news.

JOE

It's all hype, listen, honey, I gotta go. Sorry.

Ava puts down her cereal bowl, looking annoyed.

AVA

I didn't realize driving in a straight line is so riveting.

JOE

It's not that I don't want to talk, baby, it's just with this snow storm I need all my brain cells working the wheel, you know?

AVA

I thought it was all hype.  
(then)  
You need to stay clear-headed.

JOE

I am clear-headed.

AVA

You don't sound it.

JOE

Like I said. Too much caffeine on an empty stomach. Got the jitters.

AVA

How fast are you going? Next thing is you're pulled over for speeding.

JOE

I'm under the limit--

AVA

Because Joe, I don't fancy your odds at playing innocent with the cops. You've never been much of a liar.

JOE

I'm able to handle the police.

AVA

What's that mean? Have you been stopped?

JOE

No! No.

AVA

Don't mess with me here, Joe. Get your head back in the game. Are you hearing me on this?

Joe grips the wheel tightly, trying to stay quiet.

JOE

Yeah.

AVA

Stay on schedule. Don't take risks. I'm the one on the line here.

JOE

Hey, I'm the one driving the cargo.

AVA

For MY contacts. If anything or anyone fucks up, then it's on me. That cargo needs to be here on time and without incident. You've done this run before.

JOE

With cigarettes, not 500 kilos--  
(catching himself)  
This is a whole other level, Ava.

AVA

(smoldering)

And you are a whole other level of man, Joe.

Beat.

JOE

I'll be back with you and Catherine in no time.

AVA

I'll let you go.

JOE

Love you--

42 CONTINUED: (3)

42

Ava hangs up. Joe breathes a deep sigh and then shakes his head as if trying to shake out the crazy. There is a PING sound. Joe looks to see,

The low fuel light has come on.

43 EXT. GAS STATION - DAY

43

Joe stuffs his bag of clothes and his blue tarp into the garbage can beside the fuel pumps.

JUMP CUT TO:

Joe now pumps gas, hopping from foot to foot not so much to keep warm but because he can't keep still. Cars streak by on the highway. It sounds like ocean waves.

44 INT. GAS STATION - LATER

44

Joe arrives at the counter, dumping an armful of energy drinks, sandwiches, and evergreen car-fresheners.

Joe notices a small rack of trucker speed. He grabs several packets and adds them to the pile. He motions to the pumps.

JOE  
And pump seven.

45 EXT. GAS STATION - MOMENTS LATER

45

Joe walks back to his truck with a plastic bag full of supplies. He climbs back into the cab.

46 INT. TRUCK CAB - CONTINUOUS

46

Joe swings into his seat only to be startled by a voice,

ANTHONY (O.S.)  
Howdy.

REVEAL: ANTHONY (20, Korean, youthful, nervous energy and boy scout looks) sits in a fur-lined parka with his backpack between his legs.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)  
I was hoping you could give me a lift.

It takes Joe a moment to react.

(CONTINUED)

JOE

Out. Now.

ANTHONY

Oh, I can't do that.

JOE

You can and you will.

ANTHONY

If I get out now, you won't have a chance to tell me the story of why you have cocaine and a gun in your glove box.

JOE

Get the fuck out of my truck. Now.

ANTHONY

A gun that's recently been fired.

Anthony pokes at Joe's plastic bag of supplies, curious. He retrieves one of the sandwiches. Anthony snaps open the plastic and takes a half.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

I bet it's a good story.

(chewing)

Mmm. Egg salad. Thanks.

Off Joe's incredulous expression, we:

CUT TO BLACK.

END OF ACT THREE



ACT FOUR

47 EXT. MOUNTAIN HIGHWAY - DAY 47

Joe's truck speeds along as snow drifts across the dark road.

48 INT. TRUCK CAB - DAY 48

Joe is still wired from the cocaine, and nervous about his new travelling companion. His eyes dart between the road ahead and Anthony.

ANTHONY

I'm Anthony by the way.

Joe clenches his jaw, he's silent.

JOE

Can it with the introductions.

ANTHONY

I'm just being friendly.

JOE

Do you normally hitchhike by breaking into trucks?

ANTHONY

Your doors were unlocked.

JOE

What you did is illegal.

ANTHONY

So is that cocaine. And don't tell me that gun was used for something legal.

Joe pauses, watching the road.

JOE

I was sleeping at the side of the road and had to scare off a bear.

ANTHONY

A bear.

JOE

Look around you, we're in the mountains.

(then)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

JOE (CONT'D)

The coke... Look, you got your ride so why don't you shut up.

ANTHONY

A little conversation always helps to pass the time.

Anthony takes off his coat.

JOE

Don't get comfortable. Next town you're out.

ANTHONY

No. I think I'll be with you for a while.

JOE

You think you can blackmail me?

Anthony laughs as if he'd just been told a joke.

ANTHONY

Oh heavens, no.

JOE

You want to call the cops? Try and get me busted?

Joe grabs his cell and throws it at Anthony.

JOE (CONT'D)

Go ahead. The cops have got bigger fish to fry than some trucker with an eight-ball in his glove box.

The CB crackles to life.

FRANK (O.S.)

Joe, how you doing, big guy? Over.

Joe quickly turns off the CB.

ANTHONY

Don't you want to talk to your friend, Joe?

JOE

No.

Anthony looks around the cab.

ANTHONY

You sure do keep a clean cab. I've been in a few in my day, and gee, I hate to say it but they're usually a sty.

Anthony sniffs the air.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

Smells pretty strong though. What is that? Gasoline? And vinegar?

Anthony pokes at the plastic bag.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

That must be why you bought all these air-fresheners. Want me to hang one?

JOE

No. Just sit still and shut up.

ANTHONY

Joe, I hate to say this because it's going to make things awkward. But I don't buy the bear story.

JOE

Kid. You really need to stop talking.

ANTHONY

Want to know what I think? I think you killed somebody. Somebody who sat right here, just say, before this blanket got here. Then you cleaned up your cab, and that's why it stinks in here.

Joe stares at the road for a beat.

JOE

That's insane.

ANTHONY

Who was it? The person you killed.

JOE

I didn't kill anybody.

ANTHONY

You did kill somebody. In fact I'm one hundred percent positive you did.

JOE

What makes you so sure?

Anthony looks up and points to the roof. There, stuck directly above him is,

A single, tiny piece of bloody skull.

ANTHONY

You missed a spot.

Anthony takes down the piece of skull and examines it.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

That's gonna be worth something some day.

Anthony places the piece of skull in his breast pocket.

Joe reaches for his cigarette pack with a shaking hand. He takes a cigarette and lights it as if it's his last.

JOE

Listen, Anthony. You're wrong. I mean, I didn't pull the trigger. She did.

ANTHONY

I know what you mean.

JOE

I don't think you do. You have to understand--

ANTHONY

Oh, I understand completely Joe.

Joe flips down his visor and points at the photo.

JOE

See my family? They are my life. If you turn me in my life is over. My family is over. I--

ANTHONY

Joe, why in the world would I turn you in?

Joe looks at Anthony as if he's got two heads.

JOE  
Why wouldn't you?

Anthony smiles a Cheshire grin. Anthony happily eats the second half of his egg salad sandwich. The cell phone RINGS in Anthony's lap. Call display: AVA. Anthony answers.

JOE (CONT'D)  
Give me that phone!

ANTHONY  
Howdy! This is Anthony.

JOE  
Give that to me!

INTERCUT WITH:

49 INT. JOE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

49

Ava stands with the receiver, now dressed.

AVA  
Anthony?! Where's Joe?

ANTHONY  
Joe? Oh he's right here. Let me put you on speaker phone.

Anthony presses speaker phone.

AVA  
Joe, what's going on?

JOE  
Nothing, honey. I'm just giving someone a ride.

AVA  
Joe. Tell me this is a joke.

JOE  
Ava--

ANTHONY  
No joke, ma'am. I'm a minister and my car broke down while returning from a Bible retreat.

(MORE)

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

If Joe hadn't found me on that mountain road, well, I would have been food for the wolves.

AVA

Joe. What's going on? He sounds a little young to be a priest.

ANTHONY

I am young at that. The lord calls on men of all ages.

JOE

Uh, Father Anthony, was in a bad spot, babe. He didn't even have a cell phone to make a call.

ANTHONY

I was surviving off the heat of a candle on my dashboard.

AVA

Jesus-- Oh, I mean... Excuse me, Father.

ANTHONY

Technically I'm a reverend but I appreciate the sentiment.

JOE

I'm just taking the reverend to the next town. Then sadly, I'm solo again.

ANTHONY

Well, I'm not sure if the next town is ideal--

JOE

Why are you calling, honey?

AVA

Uh, it can wait. I'll leave you and the reverend to it. Nice to meet you, Anthony.

ANTHONY

Lovely to meet you, Ava. God be with you.

Ava hangs up. She pauses, staring at the phone for a beat.

AVA  
Goddamnit, Joe...

Ava's gaze move to the window over the sink which looks out onto the front driveway. Beyond, parked on the road is,

A BLACK CAR. The windows have a limousine tint, rendering all inside dark and obscured. But it's clear she's being watched.

50 INT. TRUCK CAB - DAY

50

Anthony returns the phone to its perch.

ANTHONY  
Well I think that went well.  
(yawns)  
You know what? I'm pooped. Mind if  
I crash on your bunk for a spell?

Joe looks at Anthony like - *are you kidding me?*

ANTHONY (CONT'D)  
Don't worry about the radio, I'm a  
sound sleeper.

JOE  
You and I need to talk.

ANTHONY  
We can talk later.

Anthony stands, then remembers. He reaches into his backpack.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)  
Here. These will keep you company.

Anthony winds up a pair of novelty teeth and places them on the dash. He slips through the curtain into the cabin. Joe watches the teeth chatter on the dash. Laughing at him.

Off Anthony's wind-up teeth, we:

CUT TO BLACK.

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

51 EXT. MOUNTAIN HIGHWAY - DAY 51

Joe's truck weaves along a mountain pass.

52 INT. TRUCK CAB - DAY 52

Joe drives. He holds the CB receiver, back on with Frank.

FRANK (O.S.)

Hmm. For the life of me I can't seem to figure it, Joe. You just don't strike me like the type to resort to crime.

JOE

The money we make for the hours we put in... I don't even own my own truck.

FRANK (O.S.)

There's got to be more to it than that. To take that risk. You got debts, Joe?

JOE

Who doesn't.

FRANK (O.S.)

No, I mean, do you gamble? Drugs? Something else?

JOE

It was nothing like that. Really. You want to know the simple truth. Why I'm hauling this cargo?

(then)

It's because she asked me to.

Joe looks off, lost in a memory...

53 INT. DIVE BAR - NIGHT (FLASHBACK) 53

Years ago. *GAME OF DIAMONDS* by Deerhunter plays as WE DRIFT IN SLOW-MOTION through the crowd of DRUNKS, BARFLY WOMEN and SHIT KICKERS towards the bar. Smoke drifts up past the neon beer signs and dust-covered sconces.

(CONTINUED)



53 CONTINUED:

53

The crowd parts as WE ARRIVE upon a YOUNG AVA, a vision in an electric blue dress, perched on a stool like a dive bar Cleopatra.

JOE (V.O.)

From the moment I first set eyes on  
Ava I knew I'd do anything she  
asked me to.

A number of necklaces hang around Ava's elegant neck, running like golden rivers into her cleavage.

Her index finger circles around the top of a beer bottle.

Ava's deep red lips spread into a smile and we get exactly what Joe means.

54 INT. TRUCK CAB - DAY (BACK TO PRESENT)

54

Joe turns his attention back to the road. Frank's voice crackles over the CB.

FRANK (O.S.)

Listen, Joe, I've been thinking.  
About that girl last night.

Joe cautiously glances back at the curtains to the sleeping cabin.

JOE

Yeah.

FRANK (O.S.)

Whatever that place was up in those  
mountains it was inhabited by some  
very powerful people.

JOE

Maybe. She barely made sense. I  
think she was high.

FRANK (O.S.)

Joe, you told me yourself this girl  
wasn't any lot lizard. She was high-  
class. And a long way from home.

JOE

Where you going with all this,  
Frank?

(CONTINUED)

FRANK (O.S.)

These people, whoever they are,  
were scary enough to make her do  
what she did.

Joe gives another glance to the cabin curtain.

JOE

So what, Frank?

FRANK (O.S.)

My point is you need to be real  
careful Joe. Forget avoiding the  
police. You keep an eye on  
everyone. You can't trust anybody.

JOE

That include you?

FRANK (O.S.)

Especially me.

(then)

Now you've been good so far. I  
don't know your last name, where  
you are, or where you're headed. In  
fact, I'm not sure we should even  
keep talking.

JOE

You worried they could be listening  
in?

FRANK (O.S.)

No. I just don't like the odds of  
me staying quiet if they break out  
the pliers.

Static.

JOE

You there, Frank?

Static.

JOE (CONT'D)

Frank?

Joe hangs up the CB receiver, a little frustrated and a  
little worried. Joe glances at the cabin curtain once more.  
Joe turns the stereo on, searching for a song. He checks his  
side mirror where,

A police cruiser drives behind him, its siren flashing.

JOE (CONT'D)  
(quiet)  
Shit.

Joe gears down the truck and pulls the truck to the side. He rolls down his window and watches the side mirror: Sergeant Platt gets out of her cruiser, fixes her hat, and walks up to the cab. Joe forces a smile.

JOE (CONT'D)  
Hey, there! I didn't think we'd see each other again so soon, Sergeant.

SERGEANT PLATT  
I'm sorry about this, Joe, but I'm gonna need you to hop out of the rig.

55 EXT. THE TRUCK - DAY

55

Sergeant Platt watches Joe climb down from the cab.

JOE  
What's the problem, Sergeant?

SERGEANT PLATT  
Let's talk in the cruiser, Joe.

JOE  
Am I in trouble here?

SERGEANT PLATT  
Absolutely not. If anything, I'm about to get you out of trouble.

Platt looks to the woods as if they are being watched.

SHERIFF PLATT  
But it's best if we talk in the cruiser.

56 INT. SERGEANT PLATT'S POLICE CAR - MOMENTS LATER

56

Joe sits in the back looking more than a little pensive. Platt is turned around in the driver's seat.

JOE  
If I'm not in any trouble, why am I sitting in the back?

SERGEANT PLATT

It's just protocol. No civilians up front.

JOE

So what is this about?

SERGEANT PLATT

Joe, things are going to work a lot better if we're straight with each other.

JOE

I'm being straight--

SERGEANT PLATT

I know what's going on. I know what you're doing.

Joe studies Platt closely - *has she figured out about the cargo?*

SERGEANT PLATT (CONT'D)

You picked up a girl. I need to know where you dropped her off.

This catches Joe off guard.

JOE

No, I didn't.

SERGEANT PLATT

Just tell where she is. This is your only chance right here.

JOE

I...

SERGEANT PLATT

Joe. The people she was with, they are powerful, dangerous people. And they will stop at nothing to find her. They will not hesitate to come after you. Or your family.

(then, nicely)

I'm here to help you, Joe. We're not going to let these guys get to them.

JOE

I was just trying to do the right thing, she was naked in the snow...

SERGEANT PLATT

It doesn't matter now. Where is she?

JOE

She's dead. She killed herself. She was hysterical, rambling about these people she had been with. Before I knew it she found my gun and shot herself.

SERGEANT PLATT

Oh my God. How long before she killed herself? Did anyone else see her?

JOE

No. She was in my cab maybe five minutes. Who are these people, Sergeant?

SERGEANT PLATT

What did you do with the body, Joe?

JOE

I hid it in the woods.

SERGEANT PLATT

Do you still have the gun?

JOE

Yes.

SERGEANT PLATT

Here's what's going to happen. You're going to give it to me. Then you're going to drive away and this never happened.

JOE

Really? Are you serious?

SERGEANT PLATT

I'm gonna handle this situation. I have to.

JOE

The gun is in my glove box.

SERGEANT PLATT

Then let's go get it.

56 CONTINUED: (3)

56

Joe smiles at Platt, looking like one tonne just got lifted off his shoulders.

57 EXT. SIDE OF THE ROAD - MOMENTS LATER

57

Platt opens the door for a relieved Joe. He gets out and immediately sobers at the sight of,

Sergeant Platt points her gun at him.

SERGEANT PLATT

I'm sorry, Joe. I really am. But  
I'm going to need you to walk out  
to the woods with me.

58 EXT. THE WOODS - MOMENTS LATER

58

Sergeant Platt marches Joe through the deep snow.

JOE

How far we going?

SERGEANT PLATT

You can stop here, Joe.

JOE

Why are you doing this?

SERGEANT PLATT

I'm sorry, Joe. But could you  
please get on your knees?

Joe looks back over his shoulder at the Sergeant. She means business.

Joe drops to his knees. She points the gun at the back of his head.

SERGEANT PLATT (CONT'D)

I'm sorry it was you that picked  
the girl up. I'm sorry I have to do  
this.

JOE

Stop apologizing. You don't have to  
do this--

SERGEANT PLATT

I do. I really do.

(CONTINUED)

JOE

Who are they? Why are they doing this?

SERGEANT PLATT

They didn't tell me anything. They didn't have to.

JOE

This is crazy--

SERGEANT PLATT

But she's dead now. And soon you will be and this will be over.

Joe is silent. He looks around at the woods, terrified. Sergeant Platt pushes her gun into Joe's skull.

SERGEANT PLATT (CONT'D)

You gotta understand, Joe. This man, he came into the station, came into my office. You weren't there. You didn't hear the words he said. You didn't see his eyes.

(beat)

It's you or my kids, Joe. I have two boys. I don't wanna think about what that man can make happen.

Sergeant Platt strengthens her resolve.

SERGEANT PLATT (CONT'D)

I can kill you. For my sons.

JOE

My daughter is five.

SERGEANT PLATT

And your wife will take care of her. My boys don't have anybody but me.

JOE

I... I'm hauling something. It's worth a lot of money--

SERGEANT PLATT

Stop talking.

JOE

I know you don't need this to be any harder and I'm not trying to make it worse, I just want you to know your options.

SERGEANT PLATT

This man made it clear that I don't have any options. I'm truly sorry, Joe...

Sergeant Platt steadies her aim on Joe's head. Joe looks up.

The snow sits heavy on the branches. Everything is so quiet and still.

Anthony rises up behind the Sergeant looking like a perversion of Puck from A Midsummer Night's Dream.

Anthony reaches around the Sergeant's neck and, in one smooth motion, runs the blade of Joe's box cutter across her throat.

She lets out a GURGLE. There is a crimson waterfall.

As she drops the gun in the snow, Anthony guides the Sergeant's body to the ground.

ANTHONY

It's okay, Joe.

Joe turns around, shaking. He staggers to his feet and observes the triumphant Anthony - haloed by the light of the setting sun coming through the trees. He looks angelic.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

We need to bury the body.

JOE

The ground is frozen.

ANTHONY

We can cover it in snow and hide her cruiser somewhere up the road.

Joe nods at the logic.

JOE

Can you drive?



59 EXT. FOREST ROAD - LATER 59

Anthony drives the police cruiser down a rough wooded road until it's deep within the tree-line.

60 EXT. SIDE OF THE HIGHWAY - MOMENTS LATER 60

Exhaust drifting on the icy air, Joe's truck idles at the side of the highway, near the entrance to the forest road.

Joe looks at the highway - *what would happen if I just drove off?*

Joe's eyes fall on the novelty wind-up teeth on the dash.

Anthony emerges from the woods and jogs out to the truck.

61 INT. TRUCK CAB - LATER 61

Joe drives, a cigarette dangling from his lips. Anthony fiddles with his wind-up chattering teeth.

ANTHONY  
How far are we going?

JOE  
The coast.

ANTHONY  
I've always wanted to go out east.  
I think lobsters are just  
wonderful. Don't you?

Joe looks at Anthony. A beat.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)  
You can't say 'no', Joe. Not  
anymore. I'm with you now until the  
end. But that's okay. Because  
you're the first person I've met  
that's the same as me.  
(then)  
We're both killers.

Anthony makes a mock grimace and giggles.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)  
I'm just glad I figured it out  
before I killed you!

Joe reacts. Anthony holds up a calming hand.

(CONTINUED)

61 CONTINUED:

61

ANTHONY (CONT'D)  
But now? I'd never do anything to hurt you.

62 EXT. GAS STATION - DUSK

62

WE SEE THAT Joe has let Anthony pump the gas this time, which he does happily while pulling his fur-lined hood up against the cold.

WE FIND JOE around the corner, on his cell phone.

JOE  
Yeah, he's gone, babe. Dropped him off in town.

INTERCUT WITH:

63 INT. JOE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

63

Ava holds the receiver.

AVA  
I get why you stopped, I really do, but you can't do that. No more unexpected stops or strangers.

JOE  
I know, babe. How's Catherine--

AVA  
She's fine. Did you hear me, Joe?

Joe stares into the wind.

AVA (CONT'D)  
Joe, are you there?

JOE  
Yeah. Don't worry, Ava. My head's back in the game.

AVA  
Good. No more surprises.

64 EXT. SIDE OF THE ROAD - AFTERNOON

64

WE WATCH a WOLF sniff at the mickey of vodka that Sergeant Platt found.

(CONTINUED)

64 CONTINUED:

64

Losing interest, the wolf turns its attention to the PACK, who trot into the woods. WE FOLLOW the wolf as it catches up.

65 EXT. THE WOODS - MOMENTS LATER

65

The pack of wolves glide through the trees silently. Their eyes gleam in the late afternoon light.

Finding something, they dig in the snow. Soon, we see Gene's corpse - blue - revealed under the snow and dirt.

The wolves pick. They pull. They chew. They GROWL. We hear CRUNCHES - snow or bone? The wolves shake their jaws, wrenching her limbs up from the frost.

66 EXT. MOUNTAIN ROAD - MOMENTS LATER

66

A wolf wanders back out into the road with Gene's severed right hand in his jaws. WE SEE the tan line where her ring used to be.

Headlights hit the wolf. It starts away, dropping the limb.

As the car slows to a stop, DANDELIONS by Daughn Gibson plays. And we:

FADE TO CREDITS.

END OF EPISODE