

THE BIG SKY

"Pilot"

Written By

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WRITER'S DRAFT

January 23, 2020

CAST LIST

CASSIE DEWELL
CODY HOYT
DANIELLE SULLIVAN
GRACE SULLIVAN
RONALD PERGMAN

Trooper Rick Legarski

Denise Brisbane

Jenny Hoyt
Justin Hoyt

Helen Pergman

Joanie Sullivan

Merrilee Legarski

Sheriff Harold Tubb

Mitchell Banks

Shelly

Jerrie
Bridgette

SONG LIST:

TAMMY WYNETTE - "STAND BY YOUR MAN"

THE BLACK EYED PEAS - "I GOTTA FEELING"

SET LIST

INTERIORS:

SULLIVAN HOUSE
- KITCHEN - DAY

HOYT AND DEWELL - DAY & NIGHT

FORD FOCUS - DAY & NIGHT

PETERBILT CAB - EVENING & NIGHT

JESTER'S BAR - NIGHT

LEGARSKI HOUSE
- KITCHEN - NIGHT

LEWIS AND CLARK SHERIFF STATION
- JAIL CELL AREA - NIGHT

CODY'S PICKUP - NIGHT

CODY'S HOUSE
- BEDROOM - NIGHT

PETERBILT TRAILER - NIGHT

FIRST NATIONAL BAR - NIGHT

SOMEWHERE - NIGHT

SET LIST

EXTERIORS:

GRANBY, COLORADO - DAY

YELLOWSTONE
- COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

HELENA - DAY
- DOWNTOWN HELENA - DAY

ROUTE 125, COLORADO - DAY

HOYT AND DEWELL - DAY
- PARKING LOT - DAY

TRUCK STOP - EVENING

I-90 - NIGHT

JESTER'S BAR - NIGHT

LEWIS AND CLARK SHERIFF STATION - NIGHT

YANKEE JIM CANYON - NIGHT

CODY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

HIGHWAY - NIGHT

FIRST NATIONAL BAR - NIGHT

HIGHWAY 89 - NIGHT

"THE BIG SKY"

FADE IN ON:

SNOW-CAPPED ROCKY MOUNTAINS OF COLORADO, a breathtaking, spectacular vista. God's work. AS THE CAMERA TRAWLS THE MAJESTIC LANDSCAPE, DRINKING IN THE CONTINENTAL DIVIDE, WE SETTLE ON A SMALL TOWN, about one-hundred miles north of Denver.

EXT. GRANBY, COLORADO - DAY

Residential neighborhood, upper-middle-class homes, well-maintained houses, lawns.

DANIELLE (O.S.)

This is so not right.

INT. SULLIVAN HOUSE, KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

DANIELLE SULLIVAN, eighteen, with her sister GRACE, sixteen, and mother JOANIE, forties.

JOANIE

Well, it is what it is.

(then)

I spoke to Justin's mom, she's--

DANIELLE

(mortified)

Oh my god. Mom.

(then)

I'm eighteen. And you're making me take my sister--

JOANIE

You'd prefer I go?

DANIELLE

I am eighteen.

JOANIE

And it's a twelve-hour drive, one you're not making alone.

DANIELLE

What girl takes her kid sister on a trip to see her boyfriend?

GRACE

You think I really want to go?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DANIELLE

Shut. Up.

JOANIE

Alright.

DANIELLE

This is so beyond embarrassing. And stupid.

JOANIE

Danielle. I am against this trip to begin with. But because you're so insistent, and yes, because you're eighteen, I am letting you do this. Against my better judgment.

DANIELLE

And there's the operative word right there. "Judgment."

(re: Grace)

You think she has it. And I don't.

JOANIE

I don't want you going on this trip alone. As I said, I am happy to join you.

DANIELLE

My mother or my sister.

JOANIE

Danielle.

As Danielle MOUTHS THE WORDS AS JOANIE SAYS THEM--

JOANIE (CONT'D)

It is what it is.

EXT. YELLOWSTONE, COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

MITCHELL BANKS, fifty-ish, is on the side of the road in his Tesla. He's stuck in mud. The wheels of the car are spinning away to utter futility. MUD AND DIRT FLYING. And then, lucky for him...

A MONTANA STATE POLICE SUV APPROACHES, PULLS TO A STOP ON THE SHOULDER.

TROOPER RICK LEGARSKI deborads, fifties, a big, burly bear of a man, and a bit of a Dudley Do-Right goofball. He takes a beat to suck in some mountain air, regards the majestic Rocky Mountains. It just never gets old.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Then he looks to the Tesla, frantically spitting mud out of its backside. He approaches.

LEGARSKI

Afternoon, sir, I'd say "good" afternoon, but this doesn't appear to be the case.

BANKS

No. I'm a stupid idiot. I pulled over to take a picture of some elk. Now I'm stuck.

LEGARSKI

Trooper Rick Legarski. Montana State Police.

BANKS

Mitchell Banks. California tourist.

LEGARSKI

We don't see many Teslas in this neck. Or electric vehicles of any kind. I suppose it's the way of the world. But if it's going to be the way of Montana, they better be good in snow and mud.

(then)

May I?

As Banks deboards--

BANKS

Please.

As Legarski climbs in, regards the fancy dashboard--

LEGARSKI

My, my, my. I suddenly feel like one of the Jetsons. People go on about your Mercedes-Benzes and German manufacturing. The Germans have nothing on American know-how, my opinion. Look at this.

(then)

What part of California you from, sir?

BANKS

San Francisco.

LEGARSKI

San Francisco. That's on my bucket list.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

LEGARSKI (CONT'D)

Okay, Mr. Banks from San Francisco, I'm going to give you a brief tutorial -- how to get unstuck out of mud. Step one, don't panic. Good thing to keep in mind in general, driving and life more often than not go hand-in-hand. Panic begets over-acceleration, which begets wheels spinning, which only makes the problem worse. Step two: do the wiggle-wiggle.

(as he turns the wheel
back and forth)

By turning the wheel, you create a little space, more important, you lessen the angle of ascent getting out. Step three: rock the boat.

And he maneuvers the car back and forth a bit.

LEGARSKI (CONT'D)

Creates a little momentum. The big mo.

(as the car rocks)

Here we go. Here we go. And then, nice and easy peasy.

AND HE EASES THE VEHICLE OUT OF THE MUD, BACK ONTO THE SHOULDER OF THE ROAD.

LEGARSKI (CONT'D)

Like *Sword in the Stone*.

BANKS

(impressed)

Wow.

LEGARSKI

And you, sir, are good to go.

And Legarski deboards.

BANKS

Thank you so much. Oh my god, can I pay you?

LEGARSKI

Pay me? Mr. Banks from San Francisco, I'm a Montana State Trooper. My reward is you having a better day, for having let me be a part of it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

BANKS

Wow again.

EXT. DOWNTOWN HELENA - DAY

Something familiar, nostalgic, pure Americana. Fourth of July, apple pie. Gold Rush town, Victorian architecture, a certain splendor to it all. Here is a place worth living. AS WE PAN THE AREA, WE SETTLE ON A STOREFRONT BUSINESS -- "HOYT AND DEWELL, PRIVATE INVESTIGATORS".

A FORD BRONCO -- with some character -- pulls up, parks. JENNY HOYT, forty-ish, Hispanic, a rugged beauty, deboards. She heads for and enters into--

INT. HOYT AND DEWELL - CONTINUOUS

CASSIE DEWELL is at her desk -- twenty-four, a long, flowing mane of brown hair, contagious good looks. Home-grown Montana pretty.

CODY HOYT, forty, is also present. Rugged, Montana tough: jeans, loose Carhartt thermal vest over his untucked long-sleeve shirt, a 40-sig-sauer.

DENISE BRISBANE, office manager, fifty. She's a fixture, pretty much den mother of this group. Don't mess with her. Ever. Jenny is loaded for bear, and the others immediately pick up on it.

DENISE

Jenny.

JENNY

Denise. Cassie.

CODY

(suspicious)

What's wrong?

We can feel the tension.

JENNY

What, I can't come by to just say hi?

CODY

You can. You don't.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JENNY

Well, here I am. Hi to you, hi to Denise, hi to Cassie. Especially Cassie.

Jenny goes to Cassie.

JENNY (CONT'D)

Cassie, Cassie, Cassie.

Uh oh. Exchanged looks between Cassie, Cody, and Denise.

CASSIE

I don't know where this is headed.

JENNY

Are you sleeping with Cody?

CODY

Hey!

JENNY

I'll get to you next.

CODY

You don't get to charge in here and--

JENNY

I didn't charge in, I said "hi" first. And I do get to charge in because this office is a marital asset, which makes it part mine.

CODY

(let's go)
Outside.

JENNY

(to Cody)
Fuck off.

DENISE

(peacemaker)
Jenny.

JENNY

Denise. If you try to handle me, I will hit you.

DENISE

(sweetly)
Oh, honey. I'd hit you back.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JENNY

This does not involve you, Denise.
And if it did, then I would be
sorely disappointed.

(to Cassie)

I'd like an answer. You remember
the question?

CODY

Alright.

JENNY

(still to Cassie)

Are you?

Cassie looks ashen, and Jenny has her answer.

JENNY (CONT'D)

(to Cody)

You piece of shit.

And Jenny exits. Cassie is beyond shaken, looks like she
might dissolve into tears.

CODY

I'm sorry about that.

(no response)

Cass?

But Cassie just flees the common area, retreats into her
private office.

DENISE

You pleased with yourself?

CODY

Don't start with me, Denise.

DENISE

You never think, Cody. Always your
problem. You never think.

CODY'S POV:

JENNY IS STILL SITTING IN HER CAR.

RESUME

DENISE (CONT'D)

I see you thinking now. "Who to
apologize to first?"

It is what he's thinking. He exits to--

EXT. HOYT AND DEWELL - CONTINUOUS

He approaches Jenny.

CODY

Listen. I'm sorry. It's not something...

"Not something" what? He seems even more pathetic. She starts her car, back out, drives off.

For a life-long fuckup, he should be better at apologizing.

EXT. HELENA, MONTANA - DAY

A small, unloved house... outdoor antenna on the roof... a few cars, only one with an engine... RONALD PERGMAN, thirty-three, looks younger, loads some tools/supplies into the cab of an eighteen-wheeler -- a black 379 Peterbilt parked out front, flat-back, squared-off snout, the whole thing is stripped of chrome. Even the twin stacks are painted black, to eliminate any hint of flash. A trucker's truck. There's an odd, fastidious comportment to him. He's dressed in a coat and tie, he could pass for an accountant. But he's a long-haul trucker.

HELEN, late fifties, floral-print dress, emerges from the house. Approaches.

HELEN

You going back out already?

RONALD

I dead-headed back. Got a full load going out to Jackson Hole later.

We sense... not a close relationship.

HELEN

Ronald. Can you sit for a second?

She sits at the picnic table. Uh oh. That means it's a serious talk. He sits. Waits for it.

HELEN (CONT'D)

I worry about you. A mother's curse, I s'pose.

(then)

You're too solitary. Add to that, your job, always being on the road.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RONALD
(bridling)
What's wrong with my job?

HELEN
Don't get all sensitive.

RONALD
No, I would like to know. What's
wrong with my job?

HELEN
My point is you're alone all day.
You have no social life to speak
of.

Ronald is beginning to powderkeg. He is a proud long-haul
trucker.

HELEN (CONT'D)
I'm not seeing growth, Ronald. Not
in the career. Not in you.
(then)
I was talking to Kyle Landsted, you
know of Kyle Landsted Realty? And--

RONALD
You know what's wrong with our
country, Mother?

HELEN
(ugh, here comes the
lecture; to herself)
Here we go.

RONALD
The bigotry against the middle
class.

HELEN
I don't believe I'm guilty of that.

RONALD
I should be in real estate, not
trucking. A mother could be proud
of a son in real estate.

HELEN
I didn't say that.

RONALD
People like you don't admire or
respect the blue-collar workers.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

RONALD (CONT'D)

Do you ever pause to consider how all your material goods get to the stores so that you may consume them? By hard-working professionals like me. Imagine being pitied by the very folks who rely on us to be the conduits of their flat screens and cinnamon buns.

HELEN

"Cinnamon buns," what's that supposed to mean?

RONALD

I am the heartland. I am America. You hear me? I am America.

He's a nutjob is what he is.

EXT. ROUTE 125, COLORADO - DAY

LIKE A GOSHAWK, THE CAMERA SKIMS ALONG THE BLACK-TOP HIGHWAY, OPEN COUNTRY SPREAD OUT ON EACH SIDE; VAST, LIMITLESS GRASSLAND AND SCRUB -- AN EMPTY, BROWN AND GREEN SEA OF NOTHINGNESS. A RED 2010 FORD FOCUS, green Colorado plates, BUZZES ALONG; WE HEAR BLARING ELECTRONIC MUSIC. LICENSE PLATE "PLNTDNL" which stands for "Planet Danielle."

INT. FORD FOCUS - CONTINUOUS

Danielle drives, Grace rides shotgun; DANIELLE SINGS TO THE SONG. Finally, GRACE TURNS IT DOWN.

GRACE

Can I ask you a question?

(then)

You're driving like twelve hours to go see your boyfriend? He's the one who moved away. Why isn't he driving to see you?

DANIELLE

So you think I'm being desperate.

GRACE

It's just... you seem to be making most of the effort.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DANIELLE

I love him. Maybe more than he loves me, so what? Is there some rule it has to be even-steven?

GRACE

No.

DANIELLE

You and Mom always say I don't set goals. That I don't have discipline or structure or a plan. I have a plan, alright? I plan to marry him.

GRACE

What?

DANIELLE

Not today. But soon.

GRACE

Danielle. You're a kid.

DANIELLE

Exactly.

(then)

Here's the thing about love, Grace. It wears off.

GRACE

It wears off?

DANIELLE

Yes. It's temporary. Mom and Dad divorced. Justin's parents are split. Brad and Jen, Brad and Angelina. Leo and whoever. True love wears off, it's only for the young and stupid. I'm not gonna wake up ten years from now and go "shoulda woulda coulda". I'm eighteen. I'm stupid. This is my time.

Silence.

GRACE

Does he love you?

DANIELLE

He will.

EXT. HOYT AND DEWELL, PARKING LOT - DAY

Cassie is loading gear into the trunk of her car as Cody approaches.

CODY

Cass. I'm really sorry about that.

She just busies herself with her gear, doesn't look up.

CODY (CONT'D)

Not even gonna look at me?

And now she does.

CASSIE

You said you two were split.

CODY

We are. We're over.

CASSIE

Well, Jenny didn't seem to get the memo.

CODY

She's just holding out hope, that's all.

CASSIE

I maybe ain't yet figured out what I am in life, but I know damn well what I'm not. I ain't no home wrecker.

CODY

You had nothing to do with the failure of my marriage. Look at me.

She does.

CODY (CONT'D)

I destroy everything I touch, and I don't need anybody's help to do so.

CASSIE

Well, you won't be destroying me.

She climbs in her car, STARTS IT, DRIVES OFF. Leaves him standing there. That's twice he's been left in the dust today.

INT. HOYT AND DEWELL - CONTINUOUS

Denise is watching the above from the window.

DENISE
Good girl. Smart girl.

EXT. TRUCK STOP, MONTANA - EVENING

IF THE BIG SKY IS THE WORK OF GOD, THIS IS WHAT MAN HAS WROUGHT, A BLIGHT UPON THE LAND, FOUR MILES OUTSIDE OF HELENA, OFF THE I-15. ROWS OF SEMIS, REEKING OF DIESEL, IN THE PARKING LOT, TENDRILS OF STEAM RISING FROM THEIR ENGINES, UNDULATING WAVES OF HEATED EXHAUST ASCENDING LIKE A HELLISH CLOUD ABOVE THE BIG RIGS. THE PARKING LOT IS PACKED WITH THEM NOW, MOST REFLECTING THE LIGHTED HIGHWAY SIGNALS AND STREAMS OF HORIZONTAL RUNNING LIGHTS FROM THE PARKED TRUCKS THEMSELVES. Not much human activity, except for a smattering of prostitutes, locally known as Lot Lizards, working the trucks.

THE CAMERA CLOSES ON:

THE BLACK 379 PETERBILT.

INT. PETERBILT CAB - CONTINUOUS

Ronald sits, eyeing his side-mirror. A YOUNGISH PROSTITUTE IS MAKING HER WAY CLOSER. Ronald monitors his side-mirrors, watching her closely. He's discriminating; the Lizards with bad complexions, or no teeth... pass. He has standards.

HIS POV THROUGH THE SIDE-MIRROR.

AS THE PROSTITUTE APPROACHES, WE SEE SHE'S NOT SO YOUNG. SHE RAPS ON HIS WINDOW, he lowers it. BRIDGETTE is mid-thirties, worn, a lot of makeup. Trash.

BRIDGETTE
Looking for some company?

RONALD
(tight)
I am not.

And Bridgette heads off. Ronald raises his window as his CELL PHONE CHIMES. INTERCUT WITH HELEN:

RONALD (CONT'D)
(answering)
Mom.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HELEN

Hey, honey. I'm sorry about having words earlier.

RONALD

S'okay.

HELEN

It's not okay. I have no right to judge you. Once you have a child, you worry, that's all. You'll understand one day.

Silence.

HELEN (CONT'D)

Call me when you get to Jackson Hole.

RONALD

I will.

And he CLICKS OFF.

And then... in the side mirror, ANOTHER PROSTITUTE. This one far more interesting.

ANGLE JERRIE, mid-twenties, BLUE SEQUINED DRESS, BIG BLONDE HAIR.

RESUME

Ronald's entire body begins to course with electricity. She's young. Stunningly beautiful. Deep rhythmic breathing, he waits. She heads his way. He waits. And here she is. A RAP ON HIS DOOR. He cracks the door open with his left hand.

RONALD (CONT'D)

Yes.

JERRIE

How we doing? Want to party?

He just stares back, a bit poleaxed by her beauty.

JERRIE (CONT'D)

You gonna let me in?

Ronald checks his side-mirrors, makes sure he's not being watched. Then he opens the door. Gets a better look at her: she's almost too pretty. Innocence on her face. SHE EXTENDS HER HAND; HE PULLS HER UP INTO THE CAB.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SHE WRIGGLES ONTO HIS LAP. Not much meat on her, and she can immediately feel how hard he is beneath her.

JERRIE (CONT'D)

Wow. You're really ready for me,
aren't you, Cowboy?

He holds a look. Stares, in fact. She can't be but twenty-five or twenty-six. And she oozes so much innocence it gives him pause.

JERRIE (CONT'D)

Something wrong?

RONALD

You're just so pretty. Are you
really a prostitute?

JERRIE

I'm sitting in your lap. In your
truck.

(then)

What, you think I'm a cop?

RONALD

It's just you might be the most
beautiful girl I've ever seen.

JERRIE

Okay. And that officially makes you
the sweetest truck driver I've ever
met.

And Ronald immediately conjures up all the movies he's seen, the disenfranchised outsiders who meet under the most unromantic of circumstances and fall hopelessly in love, happily ever after. Could it be?

JERRIE (CONT'D)

So what's it going to be?

RONALD

I'd like a kiss.

JERRIE

A kiss? Okay. You're traditional, I
like that.

RONALD

And perhaps your phone number.

JERRIE

Funny.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

RONALD

I'm being serious. I would like to meet you under different circumstances. Like in a mall, or at a coffee shop, or... And I would like to go on a date.

And now she's thrown.

JERRIE

A date?

RONALD

I don't mean to sound like a crazy person.

JERRIE

Well, you do.

RONALD

For whatever reason, you just don't strike me as a woman who's meant to do this sort of thing. I could be wrong. But on the slightest chance that I'm right.

JERRIE

(touched)
You really are sweet.

RONALD

I know a good person when I see one.

She holds his look, then caresses the side of his face.

JERRIE

Okay. The kiss is on the house. Then we'll talk business.

She then leans in... and they kiss. It's soft, it's tender...

And then, deftly -- he's done this before -- RONALD PRODUCES A HIGH-VOLTAGE STUN-GUN, PLUNGES THE TWIN PRONGS INTO HER NECK. ZAP. AN ANGRY SNAPPING SOUND OF ELECTRICITY; HER HEAD ARCHES BACK.

RONALD

Sorry.

THEN, AS HE BEGINS TO PULL HER BACK TO THE TRAILER, SHE SUDDENLY BEGINS TO CONVULSE. HE ZAPS HER AGAIN.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

HER ARMS AND LEGS JERK WITH SPASMS, ONE FOOT TWITCHES SO VIOLENTLY HER HIGH HEEL BOUNCES OFF THE CEILING. SHE THEN MAKES A GUTTURAL "UUUGH" SOUND... THEN SILENCE. SHE'S DEAD. WHAT THE FUCK? SHE'S DEAD. HE HOLDS A STUNNED LOOK.

RONALD (CONT'D)

What?

HOW COULD SHE BE DEAD? HE ROLLS THE BODY OVER... BLOOD.. AND THEN HE SEES IT. THE CRUSHED BONE HANDLE OF A KNIFE STICKING OUT FROM HER BREAST. RIGHT INTO HER HEART. SHE HAD A KNIFE, ONE SHE KEPT IN HER PURSE FOR PROTECTION. BUT THE FALL TO THE FLOOR... THE KNIFE PIERCED THE PURSE AND WENT RIGHT INTO HER HEART.

RONALD (CONT'D)

What?! This can't be. No. No.

HE LETS OUT A SCREAM OF PANIC AS WE--

SMASH TO BLACK.

END OF ACT I

ACT II

INT. PETERBILT CAB - NIGHT

Ronald Pergman is hard at work. WRAPPING THE DEAD BODY IN PLASTIC SHEETING; HE SECURES THE BUNDLE WITH HUNDRED-MILE TAPE. As he tapes away--

RONALD

(to the corpse)

You are a microcosm, that's what you are. People think they make themselves safer by arming themselves. And only put themselves in more danger by doing so. You are a dead microcosm.

TIME CUT TO:

INT. PETERBILT CAB - MINUTES LATER

HE SOPS UP THE REMAINING BLOOD ON THE METAL FLOOR; He's pissed off. The day started with his mother. And now this.

TIME CUT TO:

INT. PETERBILT CAB - LATER

He's behind the wheel. He releases the parking brake, SLAMS THE GEAR SHIFT INTO LOW... HE CRANKS THE WHEEL SHARPLY, TURNS, AND ROARS OUT OF THE PARKING LOT.

AND HE LETS OUT ANOTHER SCREAM OF FRUSTRATION/PANIC.

EXT. I-90 - NIGHT

THE FORD FOCUS MOTORS ALONG AS WE HEAR: "I GOTTA FEELING" BY THE BLACK EYED PEAS.

INT. FORD FOCUS - CONTINUOUS

THE GIRLS SING ALONG--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BLACK EYED PEAS

(singing)

*Tonight's the night, let's live it
up/ I got my money, let's spend it
up/ Go out and smash it...*

Sisters being silly.

DANIELLE'S PHONE RINGS: CALLER I.D. "JUSTIN"

DANIELLE LOWERS THE MUSIC.

DANIELLE

(clicking on)

Hey, baby.

(to Grace)

Justin.

(into cell)

Still in Wyoming. I'd say four more
hours.

(coquettish)

Can you possibly wait that long?

Just the tone is enough to make Grace gag.

DANIELLE (CONT'D)

(into cell; playfully)

What do you want to do when I get
there? When you first touch down on
Planet Danielle.

(then)

What?

(then)

Okay, can you text me that?

AND SHE CLICKS OFF.

DANIELLE (CONT'D)

Some big wreck on I-90. It's
closed.

GRACE

What?

DANIELLE

There's other routes. He's going to
text me.

GRACE

I'm not sure we should get off the
Interstate.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DANIELLE
(checking her texts)
We'll be fine. More adventure.

EXT. JESTER'S BAR - NIGHT

A serious old-school bar, located in a corner of a shambling historic store building, across from the Lewis & Clark County Coroner's office. A few Harleys sit outside, pointed toward the street, wheels cocked.

Cassie's pickup pulls into the lot out front. She deboards. Takes a big gulp of air for courage. Then heads for the bar AS WE HEAR "STAND BY YOUR MAN"--

INT. JESTER'S BAR - CONTINUOUS

Jenny Hoyt sits at the bar. Still stewing, only now with beer. A COUNTRY WESTERN SINGER, SHELLY, IS BELTING OUT "STAND BY YOUR MAN".

Cassie enters... quickly spies Jenny at the bar. She sucks in another deep breath. Approaches, garners some unwanted appreciation from a FEW BIKERS on the way. Jenny looks up... her eyes bore into her... Cassie visibly shivers a bit.

CASSIE
He told me you were split. Honest
to god.

Jenny says nothing.

CASSIE (CONT'D)
My father had an affair. I was
eleven years old. I swore to myself
I would never be that woman, to
break up a household.

JENNY
And look at you now.

CASSIE
If I thought for a second that you
two were still a work in progress--

JENNY
Cassie. I blame myself, okay? I
knew who and what Cody was when I
married him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CASSIE

I don't exactly agree with your
characterization of him.

Jenny smiles.

JENNY

Well, whatever his faults, he's now
met you. And you'll be the woman to
change him.

(then)

Meantime, if you don't mind, I'd
like to drink my beer without
looking at the young and stupid
version of myself.

CASSIE

I don't appreciate that.

JENNY

Tough.

Cassie just stares. Holding her ground. They're like two
dogs on a playground.

CASSIE

I ain't afraid of you.

JENNY

Like I said. Young and stupid.

Cassie doesn't move. Doesn't like being insulted.

JENNY (CONT'D)

You do realize I'm an ex-cop.

CASSIE

And I'm ex-rodeo.

And now Jenny gets off her stool.

Seems Cody has a type. Tough women with good hair. And
these two... both are a woman's woman and a man's woman.
They have all the curves. And muscle. No skinny-ass
models here.

Jenny takes a step in to her. They're nose-to-nose.

JENNY

What, you going for world-record
stupid, Cassie?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CASSIE
(holding her ground)
Take your shot.

A beat. And SNAP. They both go. They grab hold of each other with their left hands AS THEY THROW REPEATED PUNCHES WITH THEIR RIGHT HANDS. It's like a heavyweight hockey fight, both are landing punches, neither giving ground. SHELLY TRIES TO SING HER WAY THROUGH IT, it's bar policy. Don't let a fight stop the music.

But these two women are quickly brawling, the rest of the patrons are out of their seats, watching, CHEERING THESE GLADIATORS. BOTH WOMEN ARE THROWING VICIOUS HAYMAKERS, giving, getting, giving, getting. THE PATRONS ARE SCREAMING WITH HORROR, DELIGHT, it's like Hagler and Hearns. This goes on 'til CASSIE CONNECTS WITH A HEAVY RIGHT TO JENNY'S JAW, STAGGERING HER BACKWARDS. JENNY PICKS UP A BEER MUG, holds it high.

CASSIE (CONT'D)
Oh, that's original.

JENNY SWINGS WITH THE MUG, CASSIE DUCKS IT AS SHE GRABS A CHAIR AND SMASHES IT OVER JENNY'S BACK. JENNY FALLS TO THE FLOOR IN A HEAP, BUT GRABS CASSIE'S LEG AND WHIPS HER TO THE GROUND. NOW THEY'RE WRESTLING, ROLLING AND PUNCHING, A HUMAN BALL OF WARFARE.

INT. LEGARSKI HOUSE, KITCHEN - NIGHT

Legarski and his wife MERRILEE, late forties, a bright dress, having dinner.

LEGARSKI
Good soup, Mother. I tell you, you can never get soup hot enough when you order it in a restaurant. This is wonderful.

MERRILEE
Glad to hear it.

He slurps some soup. She hates his slurping.

LEGARSKI
Did I tell you I rescued a stranded motorist today? Stuck in mud. Might still be there if I hadn't come along. It's a good feeling, Mother, to make a positive difference in a person's life. Good feeling.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MERRILEE

I don't like it that you call me
"mother."

(off him)

I'm your wife -- not your mother.

LEGARSKI

It's a figure of speech, Merrilee.
You raised our children.

MERRILEE

They're grown now. They're gone.
It's just you and me, Rick. Husband
and wife.

Legarski's not sure how to play this. He's pretty certain
he can't win. He slurps some more soup.

MERRILEE (CONT'D)

You need to touch me more. Like a
husband touches a wife.

EXT. LEWIS AND CLARK SHERIFF STATION - NIGHT

Cody's pickup pulls in out front. He gets out, heads for
the station.

INT. LEWIS AND CLARK SHERIFF STATION, JAIL CELL AREA - NIGHT

SHERIFF HAROLD TUBB, fifties, barrel-chested, escorts
Cody. Cassie and Jenny are in separate jail cells. Both
battered, bleeding some.

TUBB

Got your wife in that one. Your
girlfriend over there. You be
bailin' 'em both out?

EXT. LEWIS AND CLARK SHERIFF STATION - LATER

Cody, Cassie, and Jenny head for Cody's pickup truck,
they walk in silence. What's to be said, really?

As they near the truck, Cassie goes to the front
passenger seat, but Jenny cuts her off. She'll be riding
shotgun, not Cassie. And suddenly they are nose-to-nose
again, this is close to round two.

CODY

(seeing the above)
Oh, come on.

INT. CODY'S PICKUP - MINUTES LATER

Cody drives. Jenny rides shotgun. Cassie in the back. As they ride in silence--

CODY

Maybe the best thing is for us all to go some place and talk.

JENNY

I need to be home. Justin's girlfriend is due in late tonight, I need to be there when she arrives.

CODY

What girlfriend? He has a girlfriend?

JENNY

Danielle. From Colorado.

CODY

Colorado. Wait, the stupid one?

JENNY

Just take me home.

And they ride in silence.

INT. FORD FOCUS - NIGHT

GRACE

Does Justin know you cheat on him?

DANIELLE

I don't cheat on him.

GRACE

(are you kidding?)
Danielle.

DANIELLE

I practice, alright?

GRACE

You practice?

DANIELLE

Yes. My relationship skills, my sexual skills, my emotions. God sakes, we go to school all our lives to prepare for a career.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DANIELLE (CONT'D)

But for marriage? Maybe more of them would survive if people trained for them, you ever think about that? I just fool around with practice dummies, that's all. Makes me a better woman for Justin.

GRACE

Got it.

DANIELLE

Oh shit.

GRACE

Now what?

DANIELLE

The little red light is going on. The engine thingy.

GRACE

What?

DANIELLE

I think it gets hot sometimes.

And Danielle pulls over.

GRACE

You didn't think to maybe get that checked out before going on a road trip?

DANIELLE

It comes and goes.

As it goes off--

DANIELLE (CONT'D)

See? Gone. We're fine.

And as Danielle goes to pull the car back onto the highway... SUDDENLY, OUT OF NOWHERE -- A MASSIVE SEMI-TRUCK'S TOOTHY GRILL AND FRONT BUMPERS FILL HER WINDOW, JUST A FEW FEET AWAY. DANIELLE AND GRACE BOTH SCREAM. DANIELLE JERKS HER WHEEL RIGHT, GOES BACK ONTO THE SHOULDER AS THE PETERBILT BLOWS BY; THE SOUND OF THE HORN IS EAR-SPLITTING. AS GRACE SCREAMS--

DANIELLE (CONT'D)

Jesus!! He came out of nowhere!

GRACE

He could've killed us.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

And Danielle bears down on the accelerator, SCREECHES OUT.

GRACE (CONT'D)
What are you doing?!

DANIELLE
I'm going to pass that asshole.

INT. PETERBILT CAB - CONTINUOUS

Perhaps preoccupied with the day's events... the dead body back in the sleeper... he hadn't even noticed the little Ford Focus until it was practically in front of him. He's pushing his truck hard: the next five miles or so is a long, straight five-percent grade, which slows his rig a bit. The long haul is known to truckers as a "dragon fly" -- dragging up one side and flying down the other.

Then... in the driver's side mirror: HEADLIGHTS. THE LITTLE RED FORD... GAINING ON HIM. AS IT CONTINUES TO GAIN... HE CAN MAKE OUT THE OCCUPANTS: TWO PEOPLE. GIRLS. YOUNG GIRLS. Young girls thinking about passing him.

RONALD
What?
(then)
Oh, please.

Ronald glares into his mirror. Passenger cars, and the people who drive them are annoyances. A sub-species. They exist in a world far below him because he allows them to exist. He could so easily crush them, has fought his instincts to do so many times. Who do these young girls think they are?

INT. FORD FOCUS - CONTINUOUS

GRACE
Just get by him, will you please,
don't do anything crazy.

INT. PETERBILT CAB - CONTINUOUS

GLANCING INTO HIS REAR-VIEW MIRROR, RONALD CAN MAKE OUT THEIR FACES NOW. The driver is a looker. Oval face. Big pouty mouth. Both of them look to be of that "self-esteem" generation which he despises so. When the little car gets to within ten feet of his rear bumper, HE JERKS THE WHEEL HARD TO THE LEFT.

INT. FORD FOCUS - CONTINUOUS

THE DOUBLE WHEELS OF THE TRAILER SPRAY A BLINDING MIST; DANIELLE AND GRACE BOTH SCREAM AGAIN AS THE MASSIVE TRUCK SWERVES INTO THEIR LANE. DANIELLE SEES NOTHING NOW BUT GLARING TAIL-LIGHTS, THEN THE MIST, SHE HITS THE BRAKES.

GRACE

Slow down!!

DANIELLE

What do you think I'm doing?!

Danielle, in fact, almost loses control of the car; as she hits the brakes too hard, the Ford fishtails; GRACE SCREAMS AGAIN. DANIELLE THEN GETS THE CAR UNDER CONTROL.

DANIELLE (CONT'D)

He did that on purpose!

GRACE

I think he did!

DANIELLE

What an asshole!

Danielle hits the accelerator again.

GRACE

What are you doing?

DANIELLE

There's a hill. I can pass him!!

GRACE

Danielle, don't be an idiot!

But Danielle is a girl possessed now.

DANIELLE

The hill's getting steeper. I'll just blow by him.

GRACE

(weakly)
Oh my god.

A crazy look of determination of Danielle's face as she leans over the wheel.

INT. PETERBILT CAB - CONTINUOUS

Ronald drives, still a bit preoccupied with the body in his trunk; and the necessary planning required to properly dispose of it. HE FIDDLES WITH THE RADIO; SWITCHES TO A NEW STATION. THEN GLANCES IN THE MIRROR. HOLY SHIT. HERE COMES THE FOCUS AGAIN. "Are you kidding me?" AND IT'S COMING FAST THIS TIME, IT'S QUICKLY ROARING UP ALONGSIDE HIM. He could easily force it off the road, considers doing so. And then... IT'S GONE. What the..? They've dropped behind. Ronald SLOWS HIS TRUCK; THAT'S WHEN THE FORD DARTS OUT AND IS SUDDENLY ALONGSIDE.

INT. FORD FOCUS - CONTINUOUS

DANIELLE LEANS ACROSS GRACE, her head is almost to Grace's open window. SHE FLIPS HIM THE BIRD.

DANIELLE
You fucking loser!!

INT. PETERBILT CAB - CONTINUOUS

RONALD'S POV

DANIELLE
You loser!!

And with that, the FORD PULLS AWAY. RONALD FLOORS HIS ACCELERATOR, BUT ON THIS GRADE... he's pretty much seeing nothing but tail-lights.

RONALD
(to himself)
Think I'm a loser, girlie-girls?
Let's see about that.

But there's no way he'll catch them on this hill. Fuck.

INT. FORD FOCUS - CONTINUOUS

GRACE
(to Danielle)
You didn't need to do that.

DANIELLE
Oh, yes, I did.

GRACE
On the downhill, he'll be able to catch us.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DANIELLE

I think we're safe.

(then)

There's our exit! Laurel!

GRACE

Thank god.

DANIELLE

Ya, baby!

AND DANIELLE TAKES THE EXIT, GETS OFF THE INTERSTATE.

INT. PETERBILT CAB - CONTINUOUS

RONALD'S PUSHING THE TRUCK AS HARD AS IT CAN GO; IT GRINDS UP THE HILL... FINALLY CRESTING... HE SEARCHES FOR THOSE TAIL-LIGHTS... BUT THE FORD FOCUS IS GONE. LONG GONE. He pounds his fist on the empty seat next to him. THE RIG GAINS SPEED ON THE DESCENT. He glares back at the sleeper... reminder: he's got a dead body back there. Then, AS THE TRUCK CONTINUES TO ROLL ALONG THE HIGHWAY, HE SEES THE EXIT: "LAUREL." Somehow he senses. Killer instinct perhaps. HE DOWNSHIFTS, SLOWS HIS RIG, THEN TAKES THE LAUREL EXIT. Oh, shit.

SMASH TO BLACK.

END OF ACT II

ACT III

EXT. YANKEE JIM CANYON - NIGHT

THE FORD FOCUS TRAVELS ALONG THE WOODED ROAD... NO OTHER CARS IN SIGHT. THE ROAD IS BANKED WITH THICK BLACK PINES.

GRACE (O.S.)

This is spooky.

INT. FORD FOCUS - CONTINUOUS

GRACE

Are you sure this is right? Do you even know where we are?

DANIELLE

Yankee Jim Canyon, we just left Yellowstone. That's the way Justin thought it would take us. We're fine.

GRACE

Really spooky.

DANIELLE

Damnit.

GRACE

Now what?

DANIELLE

(re: her phone)
I have no bars. AT&T.

GRACE

I have one bar... which is now gone.

DANIELLE

We could be going through a dead zone.

SHE ACCELERATES.

GRACE

The speed limit is forty-five.

DANIELLE

I don't care.

(re: the GPS)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DANIELLE (CONT'D)

According to that thingy, we got at least two-and-a-half hours to Helena. Besides, I agree with you, it's a little scary out here. If we get pulled over, I'll flirt with the cop and finesse a police escort.

GRACE

(suddenly)

Watch out!!!

DANIELLE SLAMS ON THE BRAKES. BRINGS THE CAR TO A HARD STOP.

DANIELLE

Oh my god! Giant pigs!

THEIR POV

A SMALL HERD OF BUFFALO ARE RIGHT ON THE ROAD.

GRACE

(incredulous)

They're buffalo. Wow.

DANIELLE

Buffalo? Aren't they extinct?

GRACE

Pull to the side.

DANIELLE

What? Why?

GRACE

Because I want to take a picture, pull over.

AS DANIELLE DOES--

DANIELLE

You're not going to get out of the car, are you?

GRACE

I want to take a picture. How amazing is this? Buffalo.

As Grace opens the car door--

DANIELLE

Be careful. They could attack.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Danielle hops out: a SELFIE, of course. What was she thinking? As she snaps off a few--

INT. JESTER'S BAR - NIGHT

Cody sits with Denise.

CODY

Tell me the truth.

DENISE

You already know the truth.

(off him)

She works for you. Add to that she's twenty-four.

CODY

She's not just any twenty-four-year-old.

DENISE

No. She's one who works for you. So there's disparity of power. She also admires you. So there's "common sense" disparity going on as well. I take it back. Maybe on common sense you're both running neck-and-neck.

Tough love.

EXT. YANKEE JIM CANYON - NIGHT

THE FORD FOCUS IS STILL PARKED. DANIELLE IS BACK INSIDE THE CAR; GRACE STILL SNAPS AWAY AS ONE BUFFALO, THE LAST HOLD-OUT, LINGERS ON THE ROAD.

DANIELLE

Okay, enough pictures. Let's go.

(to the Buffalo)

Time to shoo, Mark.

(to Grace)

I named him Mark Buffalo.

(HONKS HER HORN)

Shoo. Shoo.

The animal meanders off the road; Grace climbs back into the Ford.

GRACE

Okay. That was amazing.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DANIELLE

Do not be telling Justin I thought they were pigs. Sometimes he thinks I'm stupid.

DANIELLE PULLS OUT... THE FORD THEN LURCHES.

GRACE

What was that?

DANIELLE

I don't know.

She tries to accelerate; the car lurches again. Then again.

GRACE

What's going on?

DANIELLE

What's that smell? Something's burning.

GRACE

Do not tell me.

DANIELLE

Something's wrong with the motor.

AS SHE PULLS OVER TO THE SIDE AGAIN.

DANIELLE (CONT'D)

And the wheel is all stiff.

GRACE

That red light is back on. Oh, god, we better not get stuck out here.

DANIELLE

We still have power, all the electrical is working.

She tries to start the engine. To no avail. She tries again. Nothing.

GRACE

Wait, don't flood it. Give it a second.

DANIELLE

(meditative; sing-songy)
Everything's fine. The car will start. Everything's fine. Not to worry.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

She tries it again. Dead.

DANIELLE (CONT'D)

Shit!

GRACE

We're going to be out here all night. And we can't even text anybody.

DANIELLE

Alright, look. Somebody will eventually come along. We won't be the only ones traveling this road, especially since the I-90 is shut down.

GRACE

Well, it seems we are the only ones out here, if you discount wild animals.

(then)

You sure we didn't run out of gas?

DANIELLE

We have plenty of gas, it's the motor.

GRACE

Maybe we could walk back to Gardiner. It's only a few miles or so.

DANIELLE

At night? There's bears in Yellowstone, grizzlies.

GRACE

Well, what do you suggest we do?

DANIELLE

We wait in the car. Somebody's bound to come along.

And then... just like that... HEADLIGHTS COMING FROM BEHIND. Danielle turns.

DANIELLE (CONT'D)

You see? Thank god.

THE SET OF HEADLIGHTS ARE APPROACHING FAST. THERE'S A LONG STRING OF AMBER RUNNING LIGHTS TRAILING BEHIND.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

DANIELLE (CONT'D)

It's a truck.

AS THE BIG RIG GETS CLOSER--

GRACE

Danielle. It's that truck.

BRIGHT HEADLIGHTS LIGHT UP THE INSIDE OF THE FORD AS THE GRILL OF THE BLACK TRUCK FILLS THE BACK WINDOW. WE HEAR THE HISSING OF AIR BRAKES. THE LIGHTS THEN GO OUT. A beat.

GRACE (CONT'D)

Lock the doors.

DANIELLE

Look. If it is him, I just apologize and say--

GRACE

Lock the fucking doors.

Danielle complies. WE HEAR THE THUNK OF THE ELECTRIC LOCKS; THANK GOD THE BATTERY HAD ENOUGH POWER. THE CAR NEARLY SHAKES FROM THE TRUCK'S VIBRATION.

GRACE (CONT'D)

(weakly)

I can't believe this.

DANIELLE

(fear in her voice)

Maybe he'll help us. Everybody gets angry on the road. But that doesn't mean... What did Dad always tell us: "Never underestimate people's capacity to be good."

SUDDENLY, THE DRIVER'S SIDE WINDOW EXPLODES INWARD. THE GIRLS SCREAM AS TWO HANDS REACH INSIDE, TAKING HOLD OF DANIELLE. SOMETHING IN HIS HAND... AN ELECTRIC CRACKLE. DANIELLE'S BODY STIFFENS, HER EYES ROLL BACK.

GRACE

Danielle!!

GRACE FIGHTS WITH THE LOCK ON HER SIDE, SHE SCRAMBLES TO GET OUT AS SHE GETS A GLIMPSE OF HIM... A FORM, MOVING RIGHT TO LEFT IN FRONT OF THE CAR. THE WINDOW ON THE PASSENGER SIDE EXPLODES. GRACE BEGINS TO CRAWL OVER TO HER CONVULSING SISTER, TRYING TO GET OUT OF THE DRIVER'S SIDE.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

WE SEE THE HAND, THE ELECTRIC DEVICE... THE SENSATION IS SUDDEN, MASSIVE, AND DEBILITATING. ZAP! AND GRACE NO LONGER HAS CONTROL OF HER BODY.

TIME CUT TO:

RONALD PERGMAN IS DRAGGING THE TWO CONVULSING TEENAGERS TO THE BACK OF HIS TRUCK.

TIME CUT TO:

HE LIFTS DANIELLE'S TWITCHING BODY AND PUTS IT INSIDE THE TRAILER, NEXT TO THE PLASTIC-WRAPPED CORPSE WHICH HAS BEEN MOVED. HE THEN HOISTS GRACE'S BODY, PUTS HER INSIDE. HE REACHES UP, GRASPS THE NYLON STRAP, AND PULLS. THE TRAILER DOOR SLIDES DOWN ITS DUAL TRACKS WITH THE SOUND OF ROLLING THUNDER. HE THEN YANKS THE HANDLE OF THE LOCKING MECHANISM, THEN HEADS BACK TO THE CAB.

WE STAY ON THE TRAILER DOOR... WE HEAR THE TWO CONVULSING TEENAGERS FLOPPING ABOUT ON THE HARD METAL FLOOR, LOCKED SHUT. THUMP. THUMP. THUMP. THUMP.

SMASH TO BLACK.

END OF ACT III

ACT IV

EXT. CODY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

A hand-hewn log cabin, Montana tough. The pick-up truck is in the driveway.

INT. CODY'S HOUSE, BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

CODY, DEAD ASLEEP. Then... CODY'S CELL BEGINS TO VIBRATE ON THE NIGHTSTAND. He begins to stir... wakes... and he answers.

CODY
(into cell)
Hello?

WE INTERCUT WITH JUSTIN HOYT, EIGHTEEN, ON HIS CELL, IN HIS KITCHEN. HIS MOTHER, JENNY, IS THERE, TOO.

JUSTIN
Dad?

CODY
(shaking cobwebs)
Justin?

JUSTIN
I got a problem.

Cody sits up.

CODY
What's going on?

JUSTIN
Danielle -- she and her sister were on their way here. And they never showed.

CODY
Danielle?

JUSTIN
They should have been here hours ago. Something had to have happened to them. And I'm getting freaked out.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CODY
(voice of calm)
Okay, hold on, she coulda gotten
lost.

JUSTIN
She couldn't have gotten lost. I
gave her directions. Plus, she's
got GPS.

JENNY
(to Justin)
Let me talk to him.

Justin passes the phone to his mother.

JENNY (CONT'D)
(into phone)
Hey. They should have been here
long ago, they're not answering
texts or calls -- they had to
detour off the I-90 because of some
road closure. Their mother is
calling me, obviously worried sick.

CODY
Could they have run out of gas?

JENNY
In which case, why wouldn't she
call?

CODY
Okay. Let me get on the horn. Stay
tight, I'll get back to you.

And Cody CLICKS OFF.

CODY (CONT'D)
Jesus.

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

THE PETERBILT RUMBLES DOWN THE ROAD.

INT. PETERBILT TRAILER - CONTINUOUS

Danielle is unconscious. Grace is awake, rubbing her
mouth on the steel-floor bed, trying to get the duct tape
off. Fighting off nausea; she knows if she vomits she
could drown in her own puke.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A couple of dry belly-heaves... she then continues to rub her mouth on the floor. She finally manages to get the duct tape off.

GRACE

Danny? Danny?

Nothing from Danielle but A SOFT MOAN. Thank god she's alive anyway.

GRACE (CONT'D)

Well, you're not dead, thank god.

Grace begins to chew on the duct tape around her bound wrist. Like a caged rat, she viciously chews away.

INT. PETERBILT CAB - CONTINUOUS

RONALD DRIVES; AS THE CAMERA CLOSES ON HIM. TIGHTER. TIGHTER.

INT. CODY'S HOUSE, BEDROOM - NIGHT

Cody's getting dressed, he's on the phone with Cassie.

INTERCUT

CASSIE

You're going out there? Now?

CODY

Those roads are so remote. Not a lot of people travel through Yellowstone this late in the fall, especially at this time of night.

Upon which, THE PHONE BEEPS.

CODY (CONT'D)

Hold on a sec, I got Denise calling.

(answering)

Hey.

INTERCUT WITH DENISE, AT HER DESK, BACK AT THE OFFICE--

DENISE

I checked with State Dispatch and NPS Emergency. There are no reports of accidents involving a car of that description -- either on the State highways or in Yellowstone.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DENISE (CONT'D)

I asked the Troopers at the I-90 roadblock to look for a car of that description. Nothing yet so far. No one has called in anything on a red Ford Focus with Colorado plates.

CODY

See if the police can put out an alert. They'll probably say it's premature but we can ask. Wyoming and Idaho, too, just in case they went out another park entrance.

DENISE

I also called a State Trooper I know who is stationed between Livingston and Gardiner. Used to be married to my cousin, Sally Grant, you met her once. His name is Rick Legarski, nice guy. I left a message on his voicemail, gave him your cell number.

CODY

Thanks, Denise. Keep me posted.

And Cody clicks back to Cassie.

CODY (CONT'D)

I'm driving out there. You mind manning the office in case I need you?

CASSIE

I don't mind.

CODY CLICKS OFF, takes a deep breath, he's visibly worried.

INT. PETERBILT TRAILER - NIGHT

Grace continues to gnaw away at the duct tape on her wrists, finally manages to BITE THROUGH IT, FREEING HER HANDS. She then rolls her sister over to face her.

GRACE

Danny? Danny?

ANOTHER SOFT MOAN FROM DANIELLE. GRACE REMOVES THE DUCT TAPE FROM DANIELLE'S MOUTH.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GRACE (CONT'D)

I'm right here, Danny. I'm right here. We're both okay.

GRACE THEN BEGINS TO WORK ON THE DUCT TAPE BINDING HER FEET. This is one tough sixteen-year-old.

DANIELLE

What happened?

GRACE

We got snatched is what happened. We're kidnapped.

DANIELLE

By that trucker?

GRACE

He hit us with a stun-gun or something.

Grace then spies Danielle's purse lying next to her. She quickly goes through it, pulls out a comb. A box of condoms.

GRACE (CONT'D)

He took our phones.

And then, GRACE SEES IT. IN A CORNER; AN OBJECT. SOMETHING WRAPPED IN PLASTIC. SHE CRAWLS TOWARD IT.

GRACE (CONT'D)

What the...

SHE TRIES TO SEE WHAT'S WRAPPED INSIDE. THE CROWN OF A HEAD. THE JUT OF A CHIN. IT'S A PERSON. A CORPSE. Horrified, Grace recoils, falls back.

GRACE (CONT'D)

(to Danielle)

Okay. We got to get out of this truck.

INT. CODY'S PICKUP - NIGHT

He's on the road now. HIS CELL CHIMES.

CODY

(answering)

Hello?

LEGARSKI (V.O.)

Cody Hoyt?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CODY

Speaking.

WE INTERCUT WITH RICK LEGARSKI, NOW IN HIS KITCHEN, IN T-SHIRT AND PAJAMA BOTTOMS, WITH BED-HEAD HAIR. HE'S ON THE PHONE.

LEGARSKI

(on phone)

This is Trooper Rick Legarski of the Montana Highway Patrol. I got your number from Denise Brisbane in Helena. I used to be married to her cousin, Sally. Sally Grant. Great lady. Perfect, in fact for two and a half years.

He's a talker.

CODY

Thanks for calling me back.

LEGARSKI

Denise said you're looking for a couple of missing teenagers.

CODY

That's right. Last seen in a red Ford Focus, Colorado plates. Somewhere in Yankee Jim Canyon.

LEGARSKI

I haven't been down that road tonight. I was dispatched up to a roadblock on I-90 most of the night.

CODY

I'm sorry to bother you at home.

LEGARSKI

Part of the deal. A Montana State Trooper is always on call.

Cody rolls his eyes. State Troopers are a trip.

CODY

We're running down the usual possibilities. Breakdown, accident, cellphone outage, wrong turn somewhere. There can't be that many roads to check.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

LEGARSKI

(taking some umbrage)

Well, there aren't many paved roads. But there are plenty of unpaved navigable thoroughfares. And if those girls took one of them, that opens up a multitude of possibilities.

CODY

These girls were in a hurry to get to Helena, they wouldn't have detoured off. They might be broken down somewhere in Yankee Jim Canyon where the cell service is bad.

LEGARSKI

(sensing)

You want me to take a drive down there, have a look?

CODY

Would you mind?

LEGARSKI

A Montana State Trooper is always on call.

CODY

Thank you. I really appreciate it. If they do check in and we hear anything, I'll be sure to call you.

LEGARSKI

Okay.

(then)

Listen.

(a beat)

There's one other thing we should maybe talk about.

CODY

(a bad feeling)

What?

LEGARSKI

Well. How do I put this? This isn't the first.

Cody can feel his scalp crawl.

CODY

What do you mean?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

LEGARSKI

We've had the occasional young
female vanish around here.

(then)

I'm going to send you a link.

OFF CODY, a very sick feeling, we:

CUT TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

THE PETERBILT RUMBLES DOWN THE HIGHWAY.

INT. PETERBILT TRAILER - CONTINUOUS

Grace is unwrapping the corpse, tearing away at the
plastic.

DANIELLE

What the hell are you doing?

GRACE

I have an idea. Plus, who knows,
maybe this woman had a phone on
her. We can't just sit here and
wait.

As she tears away, revealing more of Jerrie--

DANIELLE

Grace...

GRACE

(mind racing)

It looks like she's wearing high
heels. We can use them as weapons
maybe. And these hoop earrings, we
can maybe--

And then suddenly... JERRIE'S EYES OPEN AS SHE MAKES A
GUTTERAL GASP. GRACE SCREAMS.

GRACE (CONT'D)

She's alive!

And then, a GURGLING. Jerrie is struggling for air. It's
a horrible sound.

GRACE (CONT'D)

Oh my god.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Jerrie begins to convulse a bit, as if she's getting no air. And then, THE AIR EXPELS OUT OF HER AND SHE GOES LIMP.

GRACE (CONT'D)
What the...?

DANIELLE
Is she dead?

GRACE
I don't know!!

AND GRACE BEGINS TO DO CPR. Chest compressions, mouth-to-mouth. And then... JERRIE PROJECTILE VOMITS BLOOD RIGHT INTO GRACE AS SHE'S DOING MOUTH-TO-MOUTH.

Grace falls off of Jerrie, blood and vomit all over her face. DANIELLE SCREAMS at the sight of it, a scream that perhaps Ronald hears, THE TRUCK SLOWS DOWN.

DANIELLE
Oh, oh god, no.

BUT THEN THE TRUCK REGAINS SPEED. Grace goes back to Jerrie. STARTS DOING MORE CHEST COMPRESSSIONS. BUT NOTHING. She checks for a pulse.

DANIELLE (CONT'D)
Is she dead?

Grace notices a pool of urine forming below Jerrie.

GRACE
She is now.

SMASH TO BLACK.

END OF ACT IV

ACT V

INT. LEGARSKI HOUSE, KITCHEN - NIGHT

Legarski is now dressed in uniform, as Merrilee enters.

MERRILEE

What are you doing?

LEGARSKI

Some teenagers have gone missing
out on Yankee Jim.

MERRILEE

It's two-thirty in the morning.

LEGARSKI

A Montana State Trooper is always
on call.

MERRILEE

You're not the only State Trooper,
Rick.

LEGARSKI

I pretty much am in this neck.

MERRILEE

For god's sake.

LEGARSKI

Merrilee, people could be in real
danger out there.

MERRILEE

Somebody's always in danger
somewhere; it doesn't have to
always be you going to the rescue.

LEGARSKI

What are you talking about? I never
get anything. I might as well be a
park ranger. This here? It could be
my number getting called. Finally.

MERRILEE

Your number?

LEGARSKI

My opportunity for greatness.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MERRILEE
(muttering to herself)
Oh, give me strength.

LEGARSKI
I have a feeling about this,
Merrilee. This could be my number.

INT. HOYT AND DEWELL - NIGHT

Cassie at her desk, hovered over the computer, on her cell phone. INTERCUT WITH CODY on his cell, in his truck.

CASSIE
(re: her computer)
Church of Glory and Transcendence.
Yeah, here it is, got it. Shit.
Lot of stuff.

CODY
I'd heard about it. Rumors about it
being a cult. I never knew it was
in that area.

CASSIE
A lot of articles.
(then)
Listen. Remember the stuff with the
missing prostitutes from various
truck stops?

CODY
Nothing ever came of that.

CASSIE
Well, they never investigated it,
from what I'm told.
(then)
These girls have been passing truck
stops, right?

Silence, as Cody's scalp resumes crawling.

CASSIE (CONT'D)
Cody?

CODY
Call Jenny. I think she worked on
that some when she was with the
department.

CASSIE
You want me to call Jenny?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CODY

We're a little pressed here,
Cassie. And I haven't got much for
cell service.

INT. PETERBILT CAB - NIGHT

Ronald drives, a sick intensity on his face. And then...
A BANGING. What the fuck are those girls up to? THE
BANGING CONTINUES. He pulls the truck over to the side of
the road. Deboards to--

EXT. YANKEE JIM CANYON - CONTINUOUS

Ronald heads for the back of the trailer. FLASHLIGHT IN
ONE HAND, TASER IN THE OTHER.

He opens the back door, SHINES HIS LIGHT ON DANIELLE.

DANIELLE

(weakly)

Please. Let us go. Please.

And then RONALD SHINES HIS LIGHT ON JERRIE.

DANIELLE (CONT'D)

We unwrapped your little package. I
don't think she's dead. We need to
get her to a hospital.

RONALD

What the...?

How can she not be dead? Ronald climbs into the trailer
to get a closer look at Jerrie. As he leans over her, UP
COMES JERRIE.

SHE PLUNGES HER SHIV STRAIGHT INTO HIS FACE. HE SHRIEKS,
STAGGERS... AS HE STUMBLES BACK, A BROKEN PLASTIC COMB
PROTRUDING FROM HIS FACE, DANIELLE IS SUDDENLY ON TOP OF
HIM, SHE'S GOT A HIGH HEEL WHICH SHE'S SWINGING WITH. SHE
PLUNGES THE HEEL RIGHT INTO HIS EYE. BUT HE'S HARDLY
DISABLED; HE TASES ONE, THEN THE OTHER IN A NANO-SECOND,
AND THEY'RE BOTH CONVULSING ON THE GROUND AT HIS FEET. HE
THEN DELIVERS A MIGHTY KICK TO DANIELLE'S MID-SECTION.

RONALD (CONT'D)

You stupid little...

AND ONE MORE KICK FOR JERRIE. AND THE WIG FALLS OFF. AND
WE SEE AS RONALD SEES... THE ASSAILANT IS GRACE. DRESSED
AS JERRIE.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RONALD THEN SHINES HIS LIGHT ON THE REAL JERRIE, THE CORPSE, LYING AT THE FRONT OF THE TRAILER BED. Ronald, bloodied, looks at the convulsing sisters.

RONALD (CONT'D)
Well. Call me impressed.

INT. HOYT AND DEWELL - NIGHT

CASSIE IS ON THE PHONE WITH JENNY, INTERCUT:

JENNY
They were all prostitutes at the truck stops. Our theory was he, she, or they were grabbing girls who wouldn't likely be reported as missing.

CASSIE
Okay...

JENNY
You don't think...

CASSIE
We have no idea. We're just... If they didn't get lost or break down, which is still the most likely... But if they didn't...

JENNY
Check the VICAP base. Punch in long-haul truckers.

EXT. HIGHWAY 89 - NIGHT

CODY'S TRUCK TRAVELS DOWN THE DARK ROADWAY; no other cars or signs of life in sight. There's remote, and there's remote.

DARKNESS. BLACK.

GRACE COMES SLOWLY INTO FOCUS. SLOWLY WAKING. At first, she can see nothing.

INT. SOMEWHERE - NIGHT

GRACE
Hello?
(nothing)
Hello?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Nothing. Silence. A FIGURE LYING NEXT TO HER. FETAL.

GRACE (CONT'D)

Danielle?

DANIELLE

(weakly)

Grace.

DANIELLE COMES INTO BETTER FOCUS AS SHE SITS UP. They are somewhere in a darkened room.

DANIELLE (CONT'D)

Are you okay?

GRACE

My ribs might be cracked. Are you okay?

DANIELLE

I think. Where are we?

GRACE

I don't know. We were in the truck. But we're not in a truck now. Feels like we're in a basement or something.

DANIELLE

What... how did we get here?

GRACE

We were tased again.
(adding)
I stuck him right in the face. I know that.

DANIELLE

I got him in the eye.

A beat.

DANIELLE (CONT'D)

So now what?

EXT. FIRST NATIONAL BAR - NIGHT

CODY PULLS INTO THE PARKING LOT; A SIGN ON THE ESTABLISHMENT READS "FIRST NATIONAL BAR. EST. 1902." Only one other car in the lot, a Montana State Trooper vehicle.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CODY DEBOARDS, gives his phone a quick check for messages, then heads for the bar. The door opens, Rick Legarski is there to meet him.

LEGARSKI

Cody? Rick Legarski. Montana State
Patrol. Pleasure.

They shake hands.

CODY

I really appreciate that.

LEGARSKI

C'mon in.

INT. FIRST NATIONAL BAR - CONTINUOUS

The place is closed, and otherwise empty. As they move to a table--

LEGARSKI

The place shuts down after the summer. But I know the owner, he gives me the keys. I come in to help myself from time to time, usually coffee, but I've been known to poach a beer or two. You interested?

CODY

No, thank you.

LEGARSKI

You see anything on your trip down?

CODY

No. You?

LEGARSKI

No.

(then)

Look, before we get started, a few ground rules. This is kind of delicate. But I live up here and I know everybody. Sometimes it's a fine line between being in the town and of the town, if you get my meaning.

CODY

I do.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LEGARSKI

I'm involved in civic organizations like Kiwanis and the Lions' Club. I see these folks from the valley every day. So I can't let it get out there that I've got a hate for any of them.

CODY

Whatever you tell me stays with me.

LEGARSKI

Uh huh. I've heard some things.

CODY

Like what?

LEGARSKI

That you can be renegade. Fired from three different departments, which is why you're working private.

CODY

All in the past.

LEGARSKI

Uh huh. Well, I have a couple of years left until I retire with full benefits.

CODY

Got it.

LEGARSKI

I got to cover my ass some. So for the record, you have no authority or jurisdiction here. This is my football.

CODY

Understood.

LEGARSKI

You read them links I sent you? On the Church?

CODY

Most of that was discredited.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

LEGARSKI

Some of it yes, some of it no. Around two-thousand and eight, members began to drop out in droves. Maybe the financial crisis, I don't know. They got new management. New leader goes by the name of William Edwards. Believes the key to building the membership back up is young attractive women. If he can persuade them to join, men will follow. Not exactly an original strategy, but it works.

CODY'S PHONE VIBRATES; he checks the message:

LEGARSKI (CONT'D)

Something interesting?

CODY

You familiar with VICAP?

LEGARSKI

FBI?

CODY

The Violent Crime Apprehension Program. Basically a database for missing persons.

LEGARSKI

I've heard of it. Never used it.

CODY

They show twelve missing females within a hundred-mile radius of where we're sitting. All in the last two years; most of them last seen at truck-stops.

LEGARSKI

Really?

CODY

Mostly prostitutes. The cases that go unreported.

LEGARSKI

We do have a few truck-stops along the way. You think these girls pulled into one?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

CODY

I don't know.

(then)

What kind of data do you have on this church? The membership include long-haul truckers?

LEGARSKI

Long-haul truckers?

CODY

There's some reports there's a faction of truckers mixed up in sex trafficking.

LEGARSKI

I seriously doubt the church could be into that.

CODY

How do you feel about driving up there?

LEGARSKI

To the church? Now?

CODY

You got kids, Rick?

LEGARSKI

Say no more.

EXT. FIRST NATIONAL BAR - MINUTES LATER

As Legarski and Cody emerge; head for the pickup.

LEGARSKI

Okay if we take your pickup? Them dirt roads brutalize my chassis. Plus, should things go haywire, I'd rather not be seen in my cruiser.

CODY

Fine.

LEGARSKI

You gonna end up costing me my pension, I'm sure of it.

CODY

I promise to behave.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LEGARSKI

(with a chortle)

Yeah, that ain't exactly the book on you. Let me get my camera and sound equipment and shit, in case we have to document something.

CODY

Good idea.

CODY CLIMBS INTO HIS TRUCK.

INT. HOYT AND DEWELL - NIGHT

CASSIE

(into phone)

The church? Tonight?

INTERCUT WITH CODY:

INT. CODY'S PICKUP - NIGHT

CODY, ON HIS PHONE WITH CASSIE.

CODY

It's a long shot, I know. But I'm out here. I got a State Trooper with me, he knows the area.

CASSIE

Be careful, Cody.

CODY

Always. I'll call you if I learn anything.

CODY CLICKS OFF AS LEGARSKI THEN CLIMBS INTO THE PASSENGER SEAT.

LEGARSKI

Okay. It's about thirty minutes or so. You need to pee or anything before we go?

CODY

I'm good.

LEGARSKI

And just to review. The likelihood is we're gonna come across people I know, good people. So we're gonna keep our manners in play.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CODY

I promise.

LEGARSKI

If I may ask, where'd you hear about these truckers being tied to slave trade? 'Cause I never heard that.

CODY

Nothing official. Cop-to-ex-cop grapevine shit.

LEGARSKI

I guess that's the problem with being a State Trooper. Nobody talks to us.

AS CODY STARTS THE TRUCK, HE HEARS THE RUSTLE OF FABRIC FROM THE SACHEL ON LEGARSKI'S LAP, FOLLOWED BY A SHARP INTAKE OF BREATH FROM THE TROOPER. AS CODY INSTINCTIVELY LOOKS--

HIS POV:

THE GAPING, SILVER-RIMMED MUZZLE OF A SNUB-NOSED, LARGE-CALIBER REVOLVER, AN INCH FROM HIS FACE. A POP, A LARGE EXPLOSION OF LIGHT: A FLASH OF JUSTIN IN HIS FOOTBALL UNIFORM, SMILING. A FLASH OF CASSIE, SMILING BACK AT CODY. AND A FLASH OF JENNY.

EXT. FIRST NATIONAL BAR - CONTINUOUS

Legarski emerges from the passenger side, blood spattered all over him. CODY IS SLUMPED OVER THE STEERING WHEEL; WHAT'S LEFT OF HIS HEAD IS BLEEDING OUT EVERYWHERE.

STAY WITH LEGARSKI as he walks toward his vehicle, dialing his SAT PHONE--

RONALD (O.S.)

Yeah.

LEGARSKI

Ronald. You've been sloppy.

SMASH TO BLACK.

TO BE CONTINUED