



# B L A C K B I R D S

*"PILOT"*

by

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*Based on the novels by  
Chuck Wendig*

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# BLACKBIRDS

"PILOT"

FADE IN:

**EXT. INTERSTATE HIGHWAY - VARIOUS SHOTS**

Rusty TRUCK STOPS. Dusty TRADING POSTS. Not so convenient CONVENIENCE STORES. Seedy MOTOR COURTS. Sleazy MOTELS. All along the ribbon of highway known as INTERSTATE 40.

OVER WHICH we hear a striking FEMALE VOICE. Smoky, sexy. A voice laced with the mileage of too much booze and too many cigarettes. A voice like a match-strike off a sticky bar.

MIRIAM (V.O.)

Dear Diary. My Mom always said,  
'it is what it is...' Which was  
her way of saying, we are all stuck-  
in-traffic on this highway of life.

MORE SHOTS. Grid-lock around an ACCIDENT. A lonely REST STOP. Then... a WEIGH STATION. SEMI-TRUCKS lined up.

MIRIAM (V.O.)

No exits. No U-Turns. Destiny.

CUT TO:

**EXT. WEIGH STATION - ON RAMP - DUSK**

A YOUNG WOMAN walks *backwards* towards the highway. Eyeing the trucks exiting the weigh station. Flipping a THUMB, looking for a ride.

20-something. Cigarette DANGLING from chapped LIPS. Shock of bleached-blond HAIR, dark roots showing. Wearing dirty, torn JEANS. Tight-white TEE, no BRA. Greasy black-leather JACKET. Tattered MESSENGER BAG over one shoulder.

She could be a young HOMELESS GIRL, running from a troubled past. Or a PUNK ROCKER hitching a ride to her next gig. She looks a lot like what the long-haulers call a LOT LIZARD, slang for a Truck Stop prostitute.

MIRIAM (V.O.)

Keep in mind, my Mom also said,  
'don't hitchhike, drink bourbon or  
suck dick...'

But she's none of the above. This is MIRIAM BLACK. Who we will learn has quite a different reason for hitting the road.

As a rather garish MAC TRUCK -- all bullshit running lights and naked-girl mud flaps -- slows at the sight of her THUMB.

MIRIAM (V.O.)  
So maybe she wasn't right about  
everything...

As Miriam climbs aboard and the MAC TRUCK rumbles off... WE FADE TO BLACK. Then... a TITLE CARD FADES IN:

**THE DEATH OF  
DEL AMICO**

DISSOLVE TO:

**EXT. AZTEC MOTEL - NIGHT**

Looks like an Old-66 dive. Faded Native-American theme. Hourly, Daily, Weekly rates. Air-Conditioning and Color TV. Though a SIGN reads, "*Clean. Comfortable. Quiet*" nothing could be further from the truth.

IT FEELS like we're in someone's POV. A voyeuristic VIEW that lands on... the garish MAC TRUCK parked outside a room. "AMICO TRUCKING" emblazoned on the driver's door in tacky reflective LETTERING. Must belong to this *Del Amico* we just heard about. As WE PRELAP:

MIRIAM'S VOICE  
You look like... shit.

**INT. ROOM 9 - CLOSE ON MIRIAM**

Perusing herself in a dirty MIRROR. Now we get a closer look at our girl. Who truly looks *rode hard and put away wet*. Dark ROOTS visible on her bleach blonde locks. Last week's MASCARA clings to bloodshot eyes. As she talks to herself.

MIRIAM  
Makes sense. You feel like shit.

She snorts, tired of evaluating herself. Turns to scan the dark room, as WE GO...

**WIDER TO SEE...**

A cheap and sleazy motel ROOM. Cigarette-burned RUG. Ancient TELEVISION. Nasty-stained Earth-toned BEDSPREAD. Graffiti-scarred DRESSER. The kind of room one step above homeless. The kind of room where meth-heads go to die. The kind of room where you can't find any wire hangers... because they've all been used for abortions. *Enough said.*

MIRIAM  
This is not right...

She knits her brow. Something about the room seems *wrong* -- we're not sure why. It's not the SHOWER running behind the closed bathroom DOOR. It's something else.

**ANGLE ON - THE BEDSIDE CLOCK**

CLICKS to 12:39 AM. As the BEDSIDE LAMP is SWITCHED ON by... MIRIAM. Who looks about the room again. Half-satisfied.

MIRIAM  
Still not right.

She crosses to the circa-1980 Sony TRINITRON. Switches it ON. A BEAT to warm up... then CRAPPY TV appears.

MIRIAM  
That's better.

She sits on the edge of the bed. Waiting for something. Or someone. Maybe it's whomever's taking a SHOWER behind the paint-peeled bathroom DOOR.

It's certainly not... the COCKROACH. Who scurries out from the shadows... STOPS dead in the light. Miriam SMILES at it.

MIRIAM  
They say you'd survive Armageddon.

The bug WIGGLES antennae at her.

MIRIAM  
No worries. Tonight's not your night. It's his.

She means who's in the SHOWER. Presumably the trucker whose rig is parked outside, this *Del Amico*. As the CLOCK TICS...

**12:40 PM**

The shower goes OFF. Miriam gets rid of the cockroach...

MIRIAM  
Shoo!

As the creature SCURRIES from view, Miriam INHALES. Preparing herself for something. As you-know-who emerges from the steamy bathroom, towel-around-midriff.

DEL AMICO (40's). High-school athlete. Long-haul trucker. Asshole. Skinny, muscular, like turkey-jerky. He could hurt you if you let him. Or if you wanted him to. As he crosses to the dresser, to complete his trucker *toilette*.

MIRIAM  
Hey, Del Amico.

DEL  
How'd you know my name??

MIRIAM  
It's on your stupid fucking truck.  
And your stupid fucking chest.

He turns to reveal... "DEL AMICO" tattooed on his stupid fucking chest. Del smiles at her.

DEL  
Fuckin' A.

He turns back to the greasy MIRROR, begins to groom with a plastic COMB. Eyeing his young *catch* in the mirror.

DEL  
I thought you were going to change  
into something more... *comfortable*.

MIRIAM  
This is about as *comfortable* as  
it's gonna get, Del.

CLICK.

The time 12:41. DEL turns to her. Groomed and ready. DROPS his towel. Revealing his manhood to Miriam. Who LAUGHS.

MIRIAM  
Whoa there, big fella...  
(off his look)  
We don't fuck tonight. Sorry.

Del glowers. Picks up his towel, wraps it around his midriff. His face going red with anger.

DEL  
You sure about that?

MIRIAM  
(laughs)  
Deathly sure.

DEL  
Then why the hell --

MIRIAM  
I'm not a piece of road-ass, if  
that's what you think...  
(off his look)  
I've been following you.

Del SQUINTS at her.

DEL  
Following me??

MIRIAM  
Look. See what I found.

She means behind him. On the dresser. Set beside his sunglasses and watch... PHOTOS. Snaps of a WIFE and CHILDREN.

MIRIAM  
In your glove compartment. Hidden in the back. Photos of the fam. Nice girls. Nice wife.

Del BLANCHES at the sight. As if he doesn't want his sweet little family to see his debauchery.

DEL  
This. Is. None. Of. Your. Business...

MIRIAM  
Fuck around, Del? Truck Stops? Gas Stations? Any desperate Skank who'd take a twenty to suck your flaccid little...

SMACK!

Del surprises her. Backhands Miriam. Sends a trickle of blood from the corner of her mouth.

MIRIAM  
I guess I deserved that...

DEL  
My wife send you??

MIRIAM  
Naw. I'm just waiting.

Del is seething.

DEL  
Waiting. For what?

MIRIAM  
For you to drop fucking dead motherfucker...

SMACK! Del mistreats her once again. His M.O. it seems. Miriam takes the hit, falling to the greasy carpet. Looking up to see...

... the COCKROACH. Under the bed. Wiggling his antennae at her as if to say... *uh oh*.

For Del suddenly GRABS MIRIAM by her tee-shirt, pulling her to her feet, HISSING in her face...

DEL  
You think you're gonna kill me??!!

MIRIAM  
... not me...

Del TIGHTENS his grip on her throat. Miriam gasps, continues...

MIRIAM  
... a seizure...

Del lets her BREATH, her diagnosis giving him pause.

MIRIAM  
You got epilepsy, don't you, Del?

From the look in his eyes, she's right.

DEL  
... *how do you know?*

MIRIAM  
... let's just say, I have an *ability... an affliction...*

Miriam grins.

MIRIAM  
More like an addiction. All it takes is... *one touch...*

She reaches out... taps ONE FINGER on the DEL AMICO tattooed across his chest.

MIRIAM  
And this is how it goes...  
(off his look)  
Any second now, we'll hear a car honking out in the parking lot --

BEEP! BEEP! Indeed. A horn honks outside. Maybe a coincidence. Maybe...

MIRIAM  
Then, *your weekend forecast, hot-hot-hot...!*

Del keeps his GRIP... turns as... a local WEATHERMAN makes his prediction on the 80's-era TV.

WEATHERMAN  
Your weekend forecast, hot-hot-hot!

DEL backs away a step. Beginning to freak a little.

MIRIAM  
Now... an argument. Next door.

As if on CUE... CURSES, SHOUTS, a DOMESTIC DISPUTE heard through motel walls. Del's eyes go wide...

... then he gets deathly still, the calm before the storm. As Miriam forms her THUMB and FOREFINGER into a GUN... aims at the bedside CLOCK... which CLICKS as she "FIRES"...

**12:43**

MIRIAM  
Boom.

A SEIZURE hits Del Amico like a LIGHTNING STRIKE. The skinny trucker STIFFENS and FALLS HARD to the floor. Body TWITCHING. Mouth GURGLING. Eyes BULGING.

MIRIAM kneels beside him, gets down low. Whispers.

MIRIAM  
Okay. Now you're wondering. Why won't she help me??

Del SHUDDERS. His damaged brain FIRING on all cylinders.

MIRIAM  
The thing is, Del. It's like my Mom said, *it is what it is*...

Miriam watches with grim fascination as... his CHEEKS go red. Then purple. Eyes ready to pop out of his head.

MIRIAM  
If I tried to help, it'd only make things worse...  
(then)  
Trust me, I've tried before...

As WE REALIZE this is not her first rodeo...

MIRIAM  
Say hello to your destiny, Del.  
(then)  
More like, say goodbye...



With a final GURGLE... froth BUBBLES over Del's ashen LIPS. The blood vessels in his eyes BURST. His rigid body goes LIMP. All the fight goes out of him. His wiry frame slackens, head tilts at a bad angle, cheek hits the floor.

Miriam takes a deep breath... and SHUDDERS. Then she watches with growing disgust as...

... the COCKROACH scurries out from under the bed. Climbs aboard dead Del, SQUEEZING its fat little body UP INTO HIS NOSTRIL before disappearing.

This is too much, even for Miriam. As she RUSHES toward the still-steamy BATHROOM... WE SEE a series of JUMP CUTS, to MUSIC. A MONTAGE of Miriam moments. Her *modus operandi*.

**JUMP CUT:**

MIRIAM kneels before the crusty motel TOILET... PUKING her guts out...

**JUMP CUT:**

MIRIAM fishes deep into her messenger BAG... pulls out a crumpled PACK of *Marlboro Lights*... taps one out, plugs it between her lips, LIGHTS up...

**JUMP CUT:**

MIRIAM pulls at Dead Del's CLOTHES... digs DEEP in a pocket, finds his WALLET... takes a small wad of CASH... grabs his MASTERCARD... returns the wallet to the dead man's pocket...

**JUMP CUT:**

MIRIAM digs into her bag again... finds a small black spiral-bound NOTEBOOK, red PEN tucked in the spiral. She FLIPS past pages and pages of black SCRAWL... finds a BLANK PAGE towards the end. Takes pen in hand. Pauses to consider today's entry... then, she dictates to herself, writing:

MIRIAM  
*Dear Diary. I did it again...*

SMASH CUT TO:

MAIN TITLES:

# BLACKBIRDS

After a MONTAGE of IMAGES...

... all *roadsides* and *ravens*... WE FADE TO BLACK.

Then... a TITLE CARD FADES IN:

MIRIAM BLACK  
MEETS  
FRANKENSTEIN

DISSOLVE TO:

**EXT. INTERSTATE HIGHWAY - NIGHT**

It's LATE... more like very early in the a.m. Looks like it just stopped RAINING. Must have been one of those high-desert monsoon deluges. Passing CARS *shoosh* and *hiss* by.

MIRIAM trudges along. Hitchhiking again. Looks like she got caught in it -- her hair hangs like a wet mop off her head. As HEADLIGHTS glance of her wet clothes, she sticks out a THUMB...

... WHOOSH! A LEXUS COUPE speeds past.

MIRIAM  
You're a dick.

Now... a RANGE ROVER rumbles by.

MIRIAM  
You're a *super*-dick.

When she spies a rust-fucked PICK-UP. Two guys in BALL-CAPS visible inside. Miriam seems *pleased*.

MIRIAM  
Here we go. A couple of red-neck,  
macho shitheads. Bet they're  
debating who gets sloppy seconds...

The Pick-Up SLOWS... the two inside craning their red-necks for a better look...

... then the Pick-Up SPEEDS UP again. The horn HONKS and an empty BEER BOTTLE sails past her head, SHATTERING when it hits the pavement. The Red-Necks LAUGH as Miriam DUCKS.

MIRIAM  
EAT DICK AND DIE, FUCKPIE!! --

SCREECH!! The driver hits the BREAKS. SKIDS backwards onto the SHOULDER. Miriam TENSES, sensing trouble.

MIRIAM  
Shit.

As two FRAT BOYS climb out. The BIG ONE is built like a fireman, clear mean eyes beneath a mop of blond. The LITTLE ONE is squat, fat, freckled cheeks. Northern Arizona University LUMBERJACKS BALL CAP over a pair of puckered butthole eyes. Both in clean, suburban white-boy clothes.

MIRIAM  
 (to herself)  
 Oops. Not red-neck, macho  
 shitheads. Frat Boy macho  
 shitheads...

As they approach, grinning like hungry hyenas, Miriam surreptitiously GRABS something from her messenger bag. Calls out to the pair.

MIRIAM  
 Nice truck. The Tetanus Express.

The Big Frat steps up to her. As Little Frat trundles up behind her. Cars continue to PASS, their HEADLIGHTS raking the trio. No one noticing the escalating mini-drama...

BIG FRAT  
 It's my dad's.

MIRIAM  
 It's a *real* nice ride.

From right behind her...

LITTLE FRAT  
 You need a ride?

His tone isn't friendly.

MIRIAM  
 Nah. I'm a sexy meteorologist.  
 Out here waiting for rain.

For a half-second, Big Frat is unsure she's kidding. Then he LAUGHS. Not a happy sound, an ominous predator-laugh.

**ANGLE ON - MIRIAM'S RIGHT HAND**

At her side. Now we learn what she pulled from her bag... as she quietly lets a set of KEYS protrude from her clenched FINGERS like a set of brass knuckles.

**MIRIAM**

Flinches a little as Big Frat gets in her face.

BIG FRAT  
 We'll take care of you.

MIRIAM

Listen. I know how this goes. You two think you're going to 'get some.' Maybe tag me at both ends. Get out the daddy-bought camera phones. Post your escapades on *SexualPreditor-dot-com...*

BIG FRAT

I like the way you use your mouth.

*Nice.*

MIRIAM

Last warning.

(off his look)

You see the black eye and you think I'm good to go...

She means the SHINER given to her by Del Amico.

MIRIAM

... but sometimes a girl lets herself get hit for all kinds of complicated reasons. I won't let that happen again tonight. You picking up what I'm putting down?

Apparently not, because Little Frat puts his sausage FINGERS on her HIPS. Miriam reacts.

As she SNAPS her head BACK... WE RAMP to EXTREME SLOW-MOTION... going CLOSE ON Little Frat's NOSE as the skull-hard BACK of Miriam's head POPS his fleshy proboscis.

CRACK!! A JET of BLOOD erupts from his NOSTRILS... at the same time SKIN TOUCHES SKIN and WE PUSH IN ON:

#### **MIRIAM'S FACE**

Her eyes go WIDE as she sees in her mind's eye, the manner and time of Little Frat's DEATH. Taking us to...

#### **TOUCH-VISION - THE DEATH OF LITTLE FRAT**

A visual representation of Miriam's ability. What she is seeing in her mind's eye when *skin-touches-skin* -- this kind of stylized MINI-MOVIE will become a series staple.

The SOUND goes WIGGY, dream-like, as the CAMERA moves with a ghostly FLUIDITY through a MONTAGE of JUMP CUTS:

We're in a SUBURBAN KITCHEN. Little Frat is now OLDER LITTLE FRAT (50's). Fatter than ever. Stained Lumberjacks T-shirt over beach ball BELLY. NOSE one big gin blossom.

*And he's YELLING at some careworn WOMAN in a yellow DRESS, SWEAT beading on his brow, FLECKS of SPIT flying out of his mouth, and suddenly he plants his FAT HAND on the kitchen COUNTER as the HEART ATTACK tightens the left half of his body, turns his every nerve ending into a roadmap of pain. As Older Little Frat HOWLS like a dying walrus...*

**WE FIND OURSELVES BACK...**

RAMPING TO SPEED. In the thick of it. Miriam versus the Frat Boys. THE SOUND RAMPS BACK as well, the dying HOWL of Older Little Frat MATCH-DISSOLVING to...

... the broken-nose HOWL of Little Frat. Who falls on his ass, holding his bleeding SCHNOZ in pain.

*Though we were privileged to Miriam's touch-vision... only an INSTANT has passed in real time.*

Knowing this, Miriam wastes no time, PUNCHING Big Frat in the THROAT with her FIST FULL OF KEYS.

**SLO-MO CLOSE UP - MIRIAM'S FIST**

Strikes hard. The sharp metal KEYS slashing at his THROAT, her KNUCKLES glancing off his CHIN. Which sends us into...

**TOUCH-VISION - THE DEATH OF BIG FRAT**

Another MINI-MOVIE. This one accompanied by some elegiac, almost religious MUSIC.

*WE START CLOSE ON... OLD BIG FRAT (70'S), whose gaunt face is practically unrecognizable. Mop of blond reduced to grey threads of hair. Mean eyes milky, glazed with pain meds.*

*WE PULL BACK to reveal a sad scene. Old Big Frat lies on his SIDE in a HOSPITAL BED, surrounded by the BOOPS and BEEPS of LIFE SUPPORT. His FAMILY is there, too. A YOUNG BOY grips his hand. An OLD WOMAN bends down to kiss his forehead. A BLONDE WOMAN (40's), peaceful look on her face, PATS him on the chest, and that's it -- Old Big Frat CRIES OUT and dies. Shitting BLOOD, which BLOOMS dark red on the sheets...*

SMASH CUT TO:

**BACK ON THE INTERSTATE...**

Miriam surveys the pathetic men around her. Little Frat WHIMPERS on the ground, nursing his broken nose. Big Frat is down on his knees, holding his throat. Practically crying.

MIRIAM

You think I come out here and I don't know how to protect myself?!

She SPITS at Big Frat... then TURNS, KICKING the *Lumberjack* HAT off Little Frat's head, sending it ROLLING out onto the Interstate...

MIRIAM

Assholes!

When... HEADLIGHTS rake, WE HEAR the HISS of hydraulic breaks, and a BOBTAIL -- the truck-part of an 18-wheeler, this one without its trailer -- PULLS off the highway and onto the shoulder. Gravel POPPING beneath massive tires.

Miriam shields her eyes in the glare. As...

**HER POV - THE DRIVER'S SILHOUETTE**

Climbs down from the cab. Whoever it is, he's a hulk of a man. Tall, wide. Big head, big hands. The gravel CRUNCHING under his approach.

MIRIAM

(to herself)

Holy shit. *Frankenstein* to the rescue...

As the DRIVER approaches, he SHOUTS over the ENGINE-RUMBLE.

DRIVER

Everything okay here?

MIRIAM

Just peachy.

Though we still can't see his face, the Driver's head cocks this way and that... as he spies the two FRAT BOYS splayed out on the shoulder. He looks back to Miriam. Shrugs.

DRIVER

You need a ride?

MIRIAM

Me? Or the two moaning assholes?

DRIVER

You.

Miriam considers her options for a half-beat.

MIRIAM

What the hell...

As she CRUNCHES her way across the gravel, making for the passenger side of the giant semi...

CUT TO:

**INT. SEMI - DRIVING - NIGHT**

Canned-Ham hands, shoulders like hunks of granite, a chest like a bunch of barrels strung up together.

But he's clean shaven, with a soft face and kind eyes, hair the color of beach sand.

MIRIAM

Anyone ever say you remind them of Frankenstein?

LOUIS

You mean... the scientist?

MIRIAM

Naw. The big dude. Made of other people's parts...

LOUIS

That's not Frankenstein. That's his monster.

MIRIAM

Whatever. Anyone ever say...

LOUIS

No.

They RUMBLE along in silence for a BEAT. Miriam scanning her surroundings. Noticing the truck is clean. Neat and tidy.

MIRIAM

You keep a nice clean truck.

LOUIS

Always have.

Beat.

MIRIAM

Kind of... too clean, if you ask me. Like obsessive-compulsive, anal-retentive, serial-rapist clean...

She's testing him. He gives her a look.

LOUIS

You've had a rough night.

MIRIAM

Typical Tuesday.

LOUIS  
It's Friday.

MIRIAM  
My point exactly.

He gives her another look. Confused a little.

LOUIS  
What's your name?

MIRIAM  
Dude. I don't want to be friends.  
I just want to get down the road.

An awkward BEAT. Louis gnaws on a lip. Taps on the wheel. Tense about something. Miriam picking up on this. Finally:

MIRIAM  
I do like your plastic Jesus.

She means his dashboard FIGURINE. A bearded figure in a green robe, staff in one hand. A small FLAME atop his head.

LOUIS  
It's not him. Jesus, I mean.  
(off her look)  
St. Jude. Patron Saint of Lost Causes. That about says it all regarding me, I guess...

He looks to her, smiles a wide Frankenstein smile. Miriam, something of a lost cause herself, can't help but smile back.

MIRIAM  
You win. You want to talk, sure.  
Let's talk.

He's surprised by this. Says nothing.

MIRIAM  
You want to ask me about the shiner.

LOUIS  
The what?

MIRIAM  
The bruise. The black eye. You saw it as soon as I stepped into this truck, don't lie.

LOUIS  
Of course, I saw it. But you don't need to tell me --



Miriam opens her BAG... grabs a CIG. Screws it between her lips, flicks a LIGHTER.

MIRIAM  
You mind if I smoke?

LOUIS  
You can't smoke in here.

Scowling, she puts the lighter away. Leaves the cigarette dangling from her lips.

MIRIAM  
Your truck. Your rules.  
(then)  
The black eye. That's what you want to talk about.

LOUIS  
One of those boys give it to you?  
We should call the police.

She snorts.

MIRIAM  
Does it look like those frat-fucks could give me a black eye? *Please.*  
(then)  
This was dutifully applied by my boyfriend...

She's lying. Something, we'll see, she likes to do.

LOUIS  
He hits you?

MIRIAM  
That's why I'm not going back to that motel. Cause he's there.

LOUIS  
You left him.

MIRIAM  
Left the *shit* out of him. Get this, he's lying on the bed, all smug after popping me in the eye and then popping his cookies -- at least he didn't pop his cookies *in* my eye, am I right? -- and the dumb fucker falls asleep. *Bad move...*

(then)  
So he starts snoring like a drunken bear with sleep apnea. So I grab a pair of handcuffs --

Louis knits his brow. Not sure what to make of all this.

MIRIAM

-- jerk-off likes to get *kinky*.

Um.

MIRIAM

So while he's sleeping, I handcuff one wrist to the bedpost. Take the key, chuck it in the toilet. Pee on the key for good measure...

Oy.

MIRIAM

But as they say on TV... *wait, there's more!* I take one of those little plastic bears, you know, the ones filled with honey?

Louis gives her a look.

MIRIAM

Jerk-off liked *food-play*, too. Whipped cream on my tits, lollipop in my mouth, hunk of broccoli up his ass, whatever...

(*wow...*)

So I take Honey Bear, and drizzle sticky golden goo all over his...

She indicates her crotch area. Implying his.

LOUIS

Christ.

MIRIAM

So when I blow out of there, I leave the door wide open. Whatever beastie wants to snack on his Honey Nut Cheerios, so be it. Flies, bees, stray dog, homeless guy...

Louis drives in silence for a long moment. Ponders this. When... *BAM!* He pounds his hands against the steering wheel.

LOUIS

GODDAMMIT...!

A flash of FEAR passes over Miriam's face -- *did I say too much? This guy is fucking big.*

MIRIAM

You want god to damn... *what??*

LOUIS

Men. Goddamn human males. We just don't realize how goddamn good we have it! We're like... children! No, not children, pigs --

MIRIAM

Pig Children.

LOUIS

We never see what's right in front of us. Any woman kind enough just to be in our lives, we treat her like garbage. It's nonsense. Plain nonsense.

He's on a roll. Which seems to resonate with Miriam.

LOUIS

And the ones who hit women? Take advantage of them? Don't appreciate what they have but *abuse* what's been given to them?

(then)

You're right, miss. Pig Children --

He HITS the steering wheel again. Something in what he said touched her. In ways we don't quite understand. Perhaps he reminds her of someone. Someone she lost, a long time ago.

Now he holds out his hand.

LOUIS

My name's Louis.

Miriam blanches. Just as she's starting to like the guy... *he wants to shake hands*. Touch her, skin-to-skin. Show her his demise. Which she's now not sure she wants to see.

MIRIAM

Keep your hands to yourself.

Oh. Louis slowly returns his meaty grip to the wheel. *Guess we're not going to be friends after all*.

Miriam sees he's hurt. Doesn't like him for that. Doesn't like herself, either.

MIRIAM

Pull over.

LOUIS

What?

MIRIAM  
 Stop fucking feeling sorry for  
 yourself. Stop fucking pouting.  
 Stop your fucking truck! --

LOUIS  
 I'm sorry, I...

MIRIAM  
 PULL THE FUCK OVER!!

**EXT. INTERSTATE HIGHWAY - NIGHT**

A lonely section of asphalt. As the BOBTAIL pulls off the highway. Louis kind enough not to punch the brake. He eases it in, slow. The hydraulics WHINE. He brings the truck over to the shoulder and lets it IDLE.

The passenger DOOR opens, Miriam grabs her bag, begins to climb out. Hesitating as...

LOUIS  
 Okay. Calm down.

MIRIAM  
 (through gritted teeth)  
 That's the worst thing you can say  
 to somebody who's not calm. It's  
 just gas on a fire, Louis.

LOUIS  
 Sorry. I'm not... trained in this.

MIRIAM  
*This??* I'm not trained in being  
 this way, either.  
 (then)  
 I have to go.

She jumps down. Louis calling after.

LOUIS  
 Wait!

Louis slides over to the passenger side and pops the GLOVE BOX. Miriam does wait, standing on the gravel below. Watching as...

... Louis pulls out a white ENVELOPE. Cracks it open to reveal... MONEY. Lots of it. All TWENTIES. He peels off five BILLS, hands the wad to her.

LOUIS  
 Take it.

MIRIAM  
Go fuck yourself.

LOUIS  
Get a motel room, some food...  
(then)  
You don't know what kind of crazies  
are out here at one o'clock in the  
morning...

MIRIAM  
You're looking at 'em.

She turns to walk away. Stops for a final thought.

MIRIAM  
You best forget you ever met me.

And with that, she's gone. Leaving Louis to wonder at all  
this. OFF him...

CUT TO:

**MONTAGE - TO MUSIC - VARIOUS SHOTS**

--MIRIAM walks a deserted TWO-WAY ROAD, looking for an off-  
highway MOTEL where she can spend some of Del's dough.

--AT A CLOSED GAS STATION. Miriam tries the door. LOCKED.  
Tries a VENDING MACHINE. OUT-OF-ORDER.

--TWO-WAY again. Middle of nowhere. CLOUDS are clearing,  
MOON begins to glow.

--MIRIAM trudges along. Spies something SHINY ahead... a  
half-crushed TAB CAN. She gives it a KICK just to keep  
awake. It CLATTERS ahead a few feet.

--ANGLE ON TAB CAN. Rolling to a STOP... until Miriam  
catches up and KICKS it again.

--MIRIAM smiles enjoying her little game of KICK-THE-CAN.

**HER POV**

The TAB CAN rolls a few feet ahead... coming to an abrupt  
HALT as a MAN'S BOOT KICKS THE CAN BACK AT US!

Miriam GASPS and our MONTAGE ENDS as... WE PAN UP from the  
BOOT to see the hulking SILHOUETTE of a large MAN right in  
front of us. How we didn't see him coming we don't know.

MIRIAM  
... *jesus-fucking-christ*...

As her heart starts beating again, she takes a closer look at the SILHOUETTE. Who SPEAKS.

SILHOUETTE

You're a real man-eater, Miriam  
Black...

She squints, recognizing the voice and the square-head.

MIRIAM

Louis...?

As if on cue, a CLOUD moves aside, letting the MOON illuminate the SILHOUETTE before her. Indeed, it is the long-hauler LOUIS. But there's something different about him. One of his EYES has been gouged out. Streaks of dark BLOOD, like sticky mascara, run down his CHEEK.

MIRIAM

*Shit*, what happened??

He ignores her. And his condition. Makes his point.

LOUIS

Del Amico. That old bastard in Barstow. Martin Cabrera in New Mexico. Ian Williams at the Indian Casino. Old Mr. Schnauz, the one you picked up at the adult book store...

Miriam seems to know what's going on now. This is not reality, it's some kind of *waking dream*.

MIRIAM

Stop it. You're not real.

LOUIS

(nonplussed)  
... and let's not forget the Little Boy, the one with the red balloon? So many dead boys. The names go on and on, all the way back to, what? Eight years ago. *Ben Hodges*...

MIRIAM

STOP IT!!! --

The CLOUD obliges again, moving over the moon, plunging Louis back to SILHOUETTE...

MIRIAM

-- YOU'RE NOT REAL!!

As if to prove her point, the SILHOUETTE suddenly BREAKS INTO PIECES. Pieces that FLY. As the silhouette becomes a FLOCK OF BLACK RAVENS, black birds FLUTTERING towards us...

**CLOSE ON - MIRIAM**

Who SHUTS her eyes as if to ward off these demons of her imagination. As the FLUTTERING SOUND fades away...

... she opens her eyes to see... she's ALONE AGAIN. Just the moon, the clouds and the highway. As Miriam starts walking again, mumbling to herself...

MIRIAM

Dear Diary. Another one of my brain-farts. Been a while. Hate it when that happens...

CUT TO BLACK.

A TITLE CARD FADES IN:

**ASHLEY IS A  
LITTLE GIRL'S NAME**

DISSOLVE TO:

**EXT. SWIFTY'S TAVERN - NIGHT**

Neon beer signs glow bright against the storm-tossed, late-night sky. As WE PRELAP:

BARTENDER'S VOICE

... fifteen minutes until close...

**INT. SWIFTY'S TAVERN - NIGHT**

The place isn't busy. A few TRUCKERS sit at a table, playing cards around a foamy pitcher. BIKERS mill around a lone pool table toward the back. Iron Butterfly growls from the jukebox. *Inna Gadda Da Blach-Blah, Baby...*

BARTENDER

... little girl.

He's addressing Miriam. Who has just stepped up to the bar.

MIRIAM

Cut the 'little girl' shit, please.

(off his look)

And if I've only got fifteen, then I want whiskey. Your cheapest and shittiest. Think lighter fluid meets coyote piss.

The Bartender considers her for a BEAT. Then... reaches under the bar, pours her something from a plastic JUG.

BARTENDER

Buddy of mine brews this up in Baker. He *calls* it bourbon.

MIRIAM

Now you're talking!

He POURS a shot of the caustic moonshine -- *it does look like coyote piss*. Miriam considers it for a BEAT. Then...

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

Gonna drink it, or is this just foreplay? --

She looks to... a handsome DRIFTER (30's) standing at the bar. Boyish face. Oily black hair in a tangle. Clear eyes. A boomerang smile with a sharp edge. Got a pretty voice, too. Lyrical, like he could sing the wings off an angel.

This is ASHLEY GAINES.

MIRIAM

I woo all my drinks.

ASHLEY

Drink that one, I'll buy you another.

MIRIAM

Just let a girl die in peace.

ASHLEY

You're too pretty to leave for dead. Even with the black eye.

She gives him a look. Then... she downs the shot in one gulp. Ashley GRINS, pleased. Calls out to the Bartender.

ASHLEY

Beer for me. Another *Draino* for the lady...

As the Bartender obliges, Miriam SLAMS her next shot. Ashley tips his beer bottle, his eyes on her. Miriam lets him stare for a beat... then:

MIRIAM

What do you tell a girl with two black eyes?



ASHLEY

Nothing you haven't told her twice already.

Miriam LAUGHS. He beat her to the punch line.

MIRIAM

Thought I had one up on you.

ASHLEY

Nope. Not me.

He smiles.

ASHLEY

Besides. I only count one black eye on you.

MIRIAM

Maybe I haven't learned my lesson.

He smiles again. Charming, disarming smile.

ASHLEY

My name's Ashley. Ashley Gaines.

MIRIAM

Ashley's a little girl's name.

ASHLEY

That's what my dad would say before he'd beat my back with a belt.

He says this, but the smile never leaves his face. *Charming.*

MIRIAM

Holy shit, dude. You know the punch line to my joke, then you come back with a knee-slapper about child abuse?

(takes another shot)

My name's Miriam.

ASHLEY

Miriam's a little old lady's name.

MIRIAM

Well, I do feel old.

ASHLEY

I can make you feel young again.

She rolls her eyes.

MIRIAM

And you were doing *so well...*

As he idly peels the LABEL from his sweat-slick beer.

ASHLEY

Tell you what, how about this one?  
I'm gonna go to the Boy's room.  
Paint the urinal a prettier shade  
of yellow...

MIRIAM

You gonna diddle your balls while  
you're in there?

ASHLEY

(ignores her)

When I'm done. If you're still out  
here, then it's on. I'll hit on  
you like kids on a pinata. And  
you'll come home with me.

He crumples the wet LABEL, shoots it into her SHOT GLASS.

MIRIAM

Ass.

As he walks away.

ASHLEY

That's what you're checking out  
right now. My ass.

As a matter of fact, she is. Smiles. *Not bad...*

As he's passing a trio of BIKERS playing pool... Ashley turns  
to catch her expression. SMILES his winning smile...

... then promptly BUMPS into a big-ass biker's CUE STICK.  
Just as the FAT DUDE was making a shot. His cue stick  
SCRAPES the felt, NUDGING the CUE BALL into a pocket.

FAT DUDE

You fuck, you fucked my shot.

ASHLEY

(smiles)

So shoot again.

FAT DUDE

Rules are rules, asshole.

The other two bikers -- a grizzled older rider we'll call  
GRAY PUBES and a fleshy one we'll call HOT DOG surround him.

Miriam's watching all this with growing trepidation. She realizes it's NERVOUS TIME as the Bartender disappears behind the bar. *Uh oh.*

Ashley tries to make peace.

ASHLEY

I'm sure your buddies be happy to let you take the shot over.

FAT DUDE

My boys don't fuck with the rules.

ASHLEY

(shrugs)

Okay. Then fuck you.

Now things happen *fast*. As Gray Pubes SPINS Ashley around, Fat Dude WHIPS the POOL CUE up and under Ashley's CHIN, lifting him UP OFF THE GROUND by his WINDPIPE.

FAT DUDE

I'm gonna squeeze the dogshit outta you...

Ashley's choking, his face turning BLUE... as Miriam saunters over. Tugs at Fat Dude's leather jacket.

MIRIAM

Excuse me. Giant man?

FAT DUDE

What?? --

MIRIAM

That guy you're choking to death? Um. He's my brother. He's got problems. First, his name is Ashley. A little girl's name.

Ashley's looking a bit BLUE. Miriam better hurry.

MIRIAM

And honestly... he's *at least* half-retarded. Though I'm willing to put money on two two-thirds, if you're up for a friendly wager.

Ashley's eyes roll back in his head.

MIRIAM

Now, if you'd be so kind as to stop choking him, let me know what you fine gentlemen are drinking, I think I have just enough cash to buy you another round before they close up shop for the night.

Miriam holds up two fingers.

MIRIAM

Scouts honor.

After a long BEAT... Fat Dude relents, letting Ashley fall to the floor, GASPING for breath.

MIRIAM

Thanks so much.

FAT DUDE

You should leash your brother. Get him a tard license.  
(off her nod)  
Beer. And Tequila shots.

MIRIAM

You got it.

Ashley's got the color back in his face. He looks up at her. And smiles. Miriam sees trouble coming.

MIRIAM

Oh shit.

BAM! Ashley PUNCHES Fat Dude in the GROIN.

FAT DUDE

AHHHH!

He SWINGS at Ashley... who DODGES the punch, the biker's FIST landing HARD on the edge of the pool table, BREAKING a couple FINGERS with a loud CRACK. As...

### **CHAOS ERUPTS**

Gray Pubes wraps his bony HANDS around Ashley's NECK... as Miriam KICKS a nearby CHAIR into the older biker's BELLY. As Gray Pubes doubles over...

... Ashley SHOULDERS Hot Dog's stubby KNEES, sending the guy to the ground. Then... CRACK! A pool CUE over Ashley's HEAD, wielded by Fat Dude with his good hand. A FIST is thrown, barely missing Miriam...

... Ashley's UP... and then he's DOWN, thrown against a TABLE by the still-powerful Fat Dude...

Miriam sees things get serious as Fat Dude WALLS on Ashley with the BROKEN END of a pool cue... then Gray Pubes DRAWS a KNIFE... as Hot Dog REACHES for Miriam...

... she pulls a small CANISTER from her pocket. Hitting Gray Pubes IN THE FACE with a stream of PEPPER SPRAY. He DROPS his knife, clawing at his own face in pain.

NOW she hits Fat Dude with the stinging STREAM... the behemoth DROPS to his knees, hands to eyes, WHIMPERING.

Finally Hot Dog gets his SHOT... GRABBING at Miriam as he falls. As his HAND touching HERS... WE...

SMASH IN TO:

**TOUCH-VISION - THE DEATH OF HOT DOG**

*A baby DEER wobbles out onto a lonely TWO-LANE. As the HEADLIGHT from an approaching CHOPPER appears.*

*HOT DOG is too busy tongue-kissing the SKANK on the back of his BIKE to see the DEER IN THE HEADLIGHTS. Turning at the last SECOND, seeing the IMPACT that's about to occur, TERROR in his eyes. As HOT DOG SCREAMS...*

SMASH OUT TO:

**EXT. SWIFTY'S TAVERN - BOOM!**

The DOOR bursts open, Miriam, then Ashley, racing from the bar, both GIGGLING like school kids post-prank.

ASHLEY

This way!

He heads for a white, late-80's Ford MUSTANG, fumbles in a pocket for KEYS.

ASHLEY

Get in!

She does. As he turns the key, the car STUTTERS... but doesn't start.

MIRIAM

What the fuck? C'mon!

ASHLEY

I know, I know!!

As he TRIES AGAIN... the TAVERN DOOR bursts open again, FAT DUDE stumbling out, his face RED and FOAMY from pepper spray, SHOTGUN in hand.

MIRIAM  
GO, GO, GO! GUN!!

It's as if the Mustang heard her request. The muscle-car RUMBLES to life. As Ashley FLOORS it... BLAM!! The shotgun FIRES, taking out the BACK WINDOW as they kick up GRAVEL, FISHTAILING it to the HIGHWAY, escaping into the dark night.

DISSOLVE TO:

**EXT. RANCH HOUSE - NIGHT**

Post-War, suburban Kingman, Arizona *Ranchette*, lit by a sickly-yellow STREET LAMP nearby. A white MUSTANG parked outside. Bullet-holes dot the chassis.

It's desert-quiet out here. Nothing but WIND in the palm fronds and the HISS of nightbugs. Then, from inside...

**INT. RANCH HOUSE**

... the JINGLE of keys from just outside the dark ENTRYWAY. Then, CLANG... someone DROPS the keys. Someone else GIGGLES.

ASHLEY'S VOICE  
... *shit*...

The KEYS are back in the lock now. More JINGLING. More FUMBLING. Then... CLICK.

The door FLIES open, nearly rocked off its hinges. Two SILHOUETTES framed in the barf-yellow LIGHT.

ASHLEY  
Ladies first.

As Miriam stumbles forward through the dark entryway, Ashley REACHES for her. Miriam DODGES his groping fingers.

MIRIAM  
(playful)  
Don't touch. Not yet!!

More GIGGLES as they BUMP into a table, MAIL knocked to the floor, a framed PHOTO follows suit, glass SHATTERING.

Ashley's HAND finds a STEREO RECEIVER. Switches it ON. Its soft GLOW providing enough illumination for what's to come. The MUSIC something moody and vaguely country, off-beat and ironic. Not your usual romantic fuck-tune, but somehow strangely appropriate, considering the SEX.

For we'll play a MONTAGE of IMAGES now, intercutting the hot-and-heavy, button-popping, horny-ness of two wasted lovers on the hump...

... with Miriam's twisted TOUCH-POV of her partner's demise.

IN THE DIMLY-LIT LIVING ROOM... they circle each other like wrestlers. He grabs a half-drunk bottle of TEQUILA of a WET BAR... takes a sip. Hands it to her, she takes a long slug, then drops the bottle, their two bodies COLLIDING with mad-gravity, lips meet lips, teeth on teeth, tongue on --

-- OLD ASHLEY sits in a WHEELCHAIR in a welfare REST HOME. His hairless scalp a checkerboard of liver spots. His frail hands rest atop a blanket the color of Pepto-Bismal, and --

-- tongue, and she BITES his lower lip and he BITES back. She takes off her SHIRT in one fell swoop. His hands grab one breast, then another. Her hands groping for --

-- an OXYGEN TANK sits on the floor next to him, the tube snaking up under the PINK BLANKET and back out, up to his nose. He's small, weak, with something on his mind. It's like he knows he's not long for this world. Wants to see --

-- now it's all SKIN on SKIN, as they topple into bed. She BITES his ear. He PINCHES her nipple. She digs nails into his back. He grabs her ass. She grabs his ass. He shoves her thumb in his mouth... she shoves his...

-- Old Ashley leans FORWARD. Though it may cost his last breath, he must see. Pulls at his hospital GOWN, leans over to peer at his left LEG... which ends in a STUMP. No FOOT. Why he wanted to see, we don't know. As last breath WHEEZES out, the exiting SPARK leaves a BAG OF BONES behind.

... as Miriam SHUDDERS an ecstasy of sex and death...

DISSOLVE TO:

**CLOSE ON - MIRIAM**

Looking at herself in a bathroom mirror.

MIRIAM

Dear Diary. Five men. One death.  
A whole lotta violence. A banner  
night for Miriam Black...

She takes a drag on a Marlboro, blows smoke at her reflection. Ponders this all.

MIRIAM

All told, it's the orgasm that  
really bothers me.

(MORE)

MIRIAM (CONT'D)

This Ashley set off some serious fireworks. 4th of July, Christmas Morning, a Supermarket Grand Opening all rolled into one...

She takes another drag. This really bothers her.

MIRIAM

God knows, it's not the sex. Had plenty over the last eight years, more than I can count. But can't remember the last time I...

She takes another drag. Laughs bitterly at herself. Then presses her head against the mirror.

MIRIAM

It's official. You're totally, utterly *broken*. Unfixable.

Looks like she means it for a second. Then, a sly grin crosses her face. She stands up, looks herself in the eye.

MIRIAM

So what are you going to do, Miriam Black? Cry in your Cornflakes?

(then)

Naw. When in doubt, dye your hair!

As she digs into a plastic CVS BAG...

CUT TO:

**INT. BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER**

Ashley lies back on the bed. Heavy lids half-closed. TV playing *Spongebob*. As the bathroom door CREAKS open.

MIRIAM

Long day at the office, dear?

ASHLEY

What time is it?

MIRIAM

Nine-thirty. Ten. Shrug.

ASHLEY

Did you just say shrug instead of actually shrugging?

Miriam ignores the question, moving closer. With two BOXES of cheap-punk HAIR DYE, one in each hand.



MIRIAM  
*Blackbird Black or Vampire Red.*  
 Pick one...

ASHLEY  
 Pick one what?

MIRIAM  
 (sighs)  
*Hair color, retard. I'm dyeing my*  
*hair. Ready for a new me. What do*  
*you think?*

ASHLEY  
 What's wrong with the *old-me*?

She ignores his question -- *there's plenty wrong.* Holds the BOXES before him. Makes them dance in the air.

MIRIAM  
 Black, red, black, red...

ASHLEY  
 I actually couldn't care less.  
 It's way too early for this shit.

Miriam is nonplussed by his attitude. Considers one box.

MIRIAM  
 Vampires are in, right? All back  
 leather and sexy. Then again, all  
 that Goth and emo shit gives me a  
 rash...

She holds up the other box.

MIRIAM  
 Blackbirds, on the other hand, are  
 cool. Mythological symbols of  
 death. They say blackbirds are  
*psychopomps*. They help shuttle  
 souls from the world of the living  
 to the world of the dead...

ASHLEY  
 How do you know all this?

MIRIAM  
 Wikipedia.  
 (then)  
 So?

He shakes his head.

MIRIAM

Dude, seriously. You have a chance to sway my fate. The power to shape my destiny...

ASHLEY

Fine. Vampire Red.

MIRIAM

Fuck that.

She HURLS the Vampire Red box at his head.

MIRIAM

I was always gonna choose black, dumbshit. You can't sway fate. And that, dear boy, is the lesson we learned here today...

With that, she disappears into the bathroom, SLAMMING the door shut behind her.

WE STAY with Ashley, who slowly rises from the bed. Still groggy...

... until WE HEAR the FAUCET go on in the bathroom. Now he seems somehow clear-headed. A man on a mission. He crosses the room, grabs her MESSENGER BAG and begins rifling through it, dumping its CONTENTS onto the bed:

LIP BALM. Hair TIES. A small MP3 PLAYER, scratched and dinged. A pair of tawdry ROMANCE NOVELS of the Fabio variety. Clark's TEABERRY GUM. A SQUEAKY TOY for dogs.

Then, WEAPONS. A CAN of PEPPER SPRAY. A BUTTERFLY KNIFE. Another CAN of PEPPER SPRAY.

Finally, what he's looking for. The well-worn NOTEBOOK DIARY. As he begins to FLIP PAGES...

WE CATCH GLIMPSES of... dog-eared pages, all colors and styles of pen. Each page dated. Each page starting with *Dear Diary* and ending with *Love, Miriam*.

MIRIAM (O.S.)

So what about you?

Ashley JUMPS, startled. Realizes she's talking through the closed door. He calls out.

ASHLEY

What about me, what?

MIRIAM (O.S.)  
Where you from? What do you do for  
a living? *Who are you?*

He makes small talk while continuing to SCAN the DIARY.

ASHLEY  
Uh, I'm from Boise. I'm, uh, kind  
of, uh, traveling salesman...

MIRIAM (O.S.)  
Yeah, right. And I'm a circus  
monkey.

ASHLEY  
Never had sex with a circus monkey  
before...

MIRIAM (O.S.)  
Now why don't I believe that.

He FLIPS a few more PAGES, eyes darting over words... WE SEE  
SNIPPETS: "... *what fate wants, fate gets...*" "... *I am a  
spectator at the end of life...*" "... *shattered his pelvis  
and died in a culvert, \$215 in his wallet, gonna eat good  
tonight...*"

And, finally, yesterday's, "*Dear Diary, I did it again...*"

MIRIAM (O.S.)  
I'm from California. Placerville.  
A little town near Sutter's Mill.  
Gold country.

ASHLEY  
Find any?

MIRIAM (O.S.)  
What?

ASHLEY  
Gold.

MIRIAM (O.S.)  
Wouldn't be out here if I did.

Now he finds... a ratty DATE BOOK. Takes off the RUBBER BAND  
that holds the pages together. FLIPS through...

#### **THE DATEBOOK**

Where most days appear EMPTY. Some have NAMES written in  
them. Dates, times and CAUSES OF DEATH:

"June 6, Rick Thrilby / 4:30PM / heart attack..."

"August 19, Irving Brigham / 2:16 AM / lung cancer..."

"October 31, Jack Byrd / 8:22 PM / eats bullet, suicide..."

**ASHLEY**

Seems intrigued by these entries. FLIPS more pages to peruse MORE entries. And MORE. When:

MIRIAM

Find anything interesting?

Startled, Ashley DROPS the date book and looks up. Miriam stands at the half-open bathroom door. Hair mostly BLACK, she narrows her eyes, her gaze darting between HIM, the DIARY, her POSSESSIONS spread out on the bed.

ASHLEY

Listen...

THWAP! She moves fast, SWINGING HARD with a straight CLIP to the mouth that SPLITS his lower lip. Then... POP. Another PUNCH rattles his teeth.

MIRIAM

You're a cop. No. Not a cop. A stalker. A psycho.

He mumbles around the PALM pressed to his bleeding lip.

ASHLEY

... been following you since Flagstaff...

MIRIAM

Like I said. *Stalker. Psycho.*  
You know what? Fuck this.

She pushes him aside, grabs her books, her armory, her stuff. DUMPS it all into her MESSENGER BAG, makes for the door. OFF Ashley, watching her go...

CUT TO:

**EXT. FRONTAGE ROAD - DAY**

A bright yellow SUN hangs over a dusty stretch of off-highway. Miriam squints as she trudges along, passing a chain-linked JUNK YARD of rusty AUTO PARTS, dead APPLIANCES.

Miriam slows, shielding her eyes with a hand, gazing ahead to see...

... nothing but DESERT and DIRT ROAD for the foreseeable future. Miriam SQUINTS again, in a sour mood. FLIPS OFF the bright daylight that's getting in her night-owl eyes.

MIRIAM

Fuck you, Sun.

Then, FLIPS the bird toward the beautiful BLUE SKY above.

MIRIAM

You, too, Blue Sky. You and the sun can go blow each other in a dirty bathroom...

She sighs. Continues on, her boots STOMPING down the deserted back road. Slowing again as she hears...

... a CAR approaching from behind her. The RUMBLE of a V-8, the rolling CRUNCH of tire on gravel. Something in her gut tells her this is trouble. She keeps walking, purposefully not turning to see...

THE WHITE MUSTANG. Ashley's. Pulling up beside her, keeping pace, the passenger window OPEN. Ashley behind the wheel, his smile gone, all serious-faced.

ASHLEY

Get in.

MIRIAM

Suck mine.

ASHLEY

You got no where to go, girl.

MIRIAM

Oh, I got a place to go.

ASHLEY

Where's that?

MIRIAM

Anywhere you're not.

Ashley laughs at this.

ASHLEY

I know who you are. I know what you do.

This stops Miriam in her tracks. The Mustang follows suit. Miriam leaning in the open window. Speaking in a level tone.

MIRIAM

Whatever you think you know damn sure isn't the half of it.

ASHLEY

Get in the car, don't be a twat.

Miriam smiles. Then... she reaches in her BAG. With a quick pivot of her wrist, her butterfly KNIFE is out; metal gleams, and the BLADE flies free of the split handle.

ASHLEY

Hey --

WE STAY with ASHLEY as Miriam disappears from view, moving toward the back of the muscle car.

Ashley checks his REAR-VIEW, then sticks his head out the WINDOW... in time to HEAR the HISS of escaping AIR...

ASHLEY

-- the hell??

Now Miriam appears from behind the Mustang. Kneels down beside the rear tire...

ASHLEY

-- no, no, NO!

One THRUST and the knife PUNCTURES the other back TIRE, slicing a new mouth in the rubber. It too leaks with a steady HISS. As she walks past him...

MIRIAM

Don't go driving on those. You'll dick up the rims.

Then she gives him the FINGER and JOGS away, leaving the hobbled Mustang, and a pissed Ashley, behind.

TO BLACK.

A TITLE CARD FADES IN:

**THE STICK AND THE CARROT**

DISSOLVE TO:

**A RAVEN**

Picking at a sticky-mess of ROAD KILL. Prairie TWO-LANE, middle of nowhere. WE HEAR a RUMBLE, then a black OLDS CUTLASS CIERA appears, out-of-focus in deep background. Coming this way.

As the bird PULLS something SINEWY from an eye-socket on the unidentifiable carcass... the Olds SWERVES, crossing the DOUBLE-YELLOW LINE, seemingly AIMING for the bird...

... which PULLS at it's disgusting lunch, eyeing the approaching auto, unwilling to give up yet. Whomever's driving the Olds GUNS the engine...

... as the RAVEN FLUTTERS OFF at the last second and the Olds ROARS RIGHT OVER US... WE PAN to reveal a ROAD SIGN:

**HOLLISTER, IDAHO**  
**Population: 278**

CUT TO:

**EXT. DOUBLE-WIDE - DAY**

A rusty, rundown mobile-homestead on the Southern Idaho Prairie. Equally rusty CHEVY TRUCK up on blocks. Broken BIG WHEEL lying in dead-brown GRASS.

A familiar RUMBLE... and the OLDS CUTLASS appears. Slowing to a stop before the broken-picket FENCE that surrounds the decrepit property.

The DRIVER emerges. Moves to a mud-covered metal MAILBOX. Scrapes off some CRUST to reveal the address. "513."

A hulking Native American man, coal-black eyes, hands like hams, perpetual scowl on his face, he looks like the kind of dude who'd swerve to hit a bird. The dark slacks and purple POLO SHIRT emblazoned with the logo of an Indian Bingo & Casino do little to soften his image.

This is FRANKIE. Former Casino BOUNCER. Reservation Drug Runner. Currently MUSCLE for his passenger. Who he calls out to now.

FRANKIE

This is it.

HARRIET emerges. Former Flight Attendant -- in her day, she was called a *Stewardess*. Though well in her 60's, she still dresses *très décolleté*, tight-white button-down shirt over a healthy rack, hair winged in a *Farah Fawcett* do. Don't let her look fool you, though. This former sex kitten did hard time for cocaine smuggling in the 80's. Lung cancer thin and hard as a tumor, her voice a fingernails-on-chalkboard rasp.

HARRIET

You ready, Tonto?

FRANKIE  
I've told you and told you. I  
don't think that's funny.

Harriet LAUGHS. A sound like a dying bird.

FRANKIE  
How'd you feel if I call you  
*paleface??*

HARRIET  
I'd get myself a spray-on, *ke-mo*  
*sah-bee.*

FRANKIE  
Fuck you.

As they step up onto the double-wide's "veranda." Harriet  
KNOCK, rattling the closed SCREEN DOOR. The odd-couple share  
a look. Harriet smiles. Speaks like a stereotype.

HARRIET  
*How.*

FRANKIE  
Fuck. You.

Harriet KNOCKS again. Now WE HEAR the RATTLE of a walker,  
the SQUEAK of some rubber-wheeled medical device. Then...

MRS. GAINES appears. Elderly, liver-spotty, body wracked by  
disease. Tube snaking from her nose to a green OXYGEN TANK  
mounted on the WALKER she leans on.

MRS. GAINES  
Go away. I don't want your stupid  
magazine...

HARRIET  
We're not *Jehovah's Witnesses.*

MRS. GAINES  
What are you, then?

FRANKIE  
F.B.I., Ma'am.

He FLIPS a BADGE like they used to do on *Dragnet.*

MRS. GAINES  
You look like a native.

FRANKIE  
(sighs)  
Five-eighths Choctaw, Ma'am.



MRS. GAINES  
 Didn't know they let natives in the  
 FBI...

HARRIET  
 I'll make sure he doesn't scalp  
 anybody. May we come in?

MRS. GAINES  
 What's this about??

HARRIET  
 Your son. We'd like to talk to you  
 about Ashley.

CUT TO:

**INT. DOUBLE-WIDE - MOMENTS LATER**

DOILIES on the COFFEE TABLE. OLD TV REMOTES on an END TABLE.  
 SNOW GLOBES and HUMMEL FIGURINES on the WHAT-NOT-SHELF. The  
 Old Woman in her RECLINER. The "FBI" on a SOFA covered in  
 PLASTIC. Mid-scene:

MRS. GAINES  
 I've not heard hide nor hair from  
 him. Not a peep. He's gone. Took  
 off years back when I got the  
 emphysema, and I guess he's never  
 coming back. We done?

HARRIET  
 Mrs. Gaines. I'd hate to think  
 you're impeding our investigation.  
 We are trying to help him, you  
 know. We're trying to protect your  
 son from some very bad people...

The old woman's lip quivers. Her brows darken.

MRS. GAINES  
 You leave him alone. He's a good  
 boy. He sends me money.

FRANKIE  
 Money? How much??

MRS. GAINES  
 Enough for my treatment...

She nods toward a CARD TABLE full of PRESCRIPTION BOTTLES, a  
 spare OXYGEN TANK, various MEDICAL SUPPLIES. Frankie spies  
 something of interest, reaches over with a meaty hand...

FRANKIE

Why you naughty, naughty old girl!

Frankie grabs what's best described as a RUBBER CARROT. About a foot long, reddish in color. Frankie WIGGLES the rubber carrot at Mrs. Gaines, like a giant finger-wag.

FRANKIE

What have you been up to, lady??

MRS. GAINES

You put those down!! --

There's MORE of them, rubber carrots of various lengths and sizes. Wiggles them at her.

FRANKIE

I know what these are, you naughty old girl. Bet you like *porn*, too!!

He obviously thinks these are *dildos*. Harriet knows they're not. Shouts over the woman's PROTESTS.

MRS. GAINES

... those are my carrots, you put them down...!!

HARRIET

The emphysema, you dumb fucking blanket-head...

Now Frankie looks askance at the rubber carrots. Harriet explains, MIMICKING to help him understand.

HARRIET

Widens her windpipe. Helps her breath...

Now he gets it. And is even more disgusted.

FRANKIE

Talk about *Deep Throat*...

As he drops the rubber carrots... Frankie spies SOMETHING ELSE. A POSTCARD on the table. Picks it up... as Harriet leans close to Mrs. Gaines. Her voice an ominous rasp.

HARRIET

Where is Ashley, Mrs. Gaines?

MRS. GAINES

I don't know! He said he's a salesman, now. A traveling salesman...

HARRIET  
 You're lying to me, Mrs. Gaines.  
 Just like we were lying to you.

The old woman sucks in oxygen, her anxiety growing.

MRS. GAINES  
 You're not with the F.B.I.??

Harriet LAUGHS her death-rattle laugh.

HARRIET  
 Tell us where he is...

MRS. GAINES  
 I don't know...

HARRIET  
 Did he leave anything valuable with  
 you? Maybe a *silver case*?? --

MRS. GAINES  
 ... no, no...

HARRIET  
 (flashes anger)  
 WHERE IS ASHLEY, MRS. GAINES??  
 WHERE THE FUCK IS HE??!! --

FRANKIE  
 -- Bakersfield.

Harriet turns to Frankie, who brandishes the POSTCARD.

FRANKIE  
 (reading)  
*Howdy Mom, from Bakersfield  
 California! --*  
 (then)  
 Postmarked three days ago.

Harriet rises. Taking the card, making for the door.

HARRIET  
 Great. I'll call Ingersoll...

MRS. GAINES  
 ... Ashley's a good boy, you leave  
 him alone!! --

HARRIET  
*Shut her up, will you Frankie??*

Frankie grabs the largest rubber carrot, an idea on his mind.

FRANKIE

May I?!

HARRIET

Sure. Have fun.

Frankie moves close to the old woman. RUBBER CARROT in hand.

FRANKIE

Open wide, lady...

CUT TO:

**EXT. DOUBLE-WIDE - HARRIET**

Exits, stops just outside the door. Pulls out a BURNER FLIP-PHONE, dialing a NUMBER as...

... WE WATCH through the RATTY SCREEN DOOR. FRANKIE takes hold of the old woman's HAIR and proceeds to SHOVE the rubber carrot DEEP down her THROAT. It's not easy going -- *clearly this is not what these things were meant for.*

Frankie PULLS UP then POUNDS DOWN like a PILE-DRIVER. As the dying woman SHUDDERS, her body desperate for oxygen -- and getting none...

As Harriet's CALL goes through. She speaks to someone in *authority*, though we can't hear the voice on the other side.

HARRIET

Yes, sir. Bakersfield, three days ago. Yes, sir. We'll be there by morning...

CLICK. She hangs up the call. Takes the BURNER, BREAKS it in half. Tossing the pieces into the overgrown YARD.

As one final GURGLE can be heard from deep in Mrs. Gaines, then the shudders STOP. Frankie stepping back, leaving the fat end of the orange rubber CARROT just poking out of the dead woman's *too-wide-open* MOUTH...

FRANKIE

That was fun.

CUT TO BLACK.

A TITLE CARD FADES IN:

**THE PROPOSAL**

DISSOLVE TO:

**EXT. WAFFLE HOUSE - DAY**

An Arizona franchise of the ubiquitous Southern sit-down-fast-food chain. Parking lot CROWDED on an early desert morning.

**ANGLE ON - A CHOCOLATE-CHIP WAFFLE**

On a plate with the works. Bacon. Ham. Grits. Smothered hash browns. Breakfast of Champions.

WAITRESS (O.S.)  
Here you go, sweetie.

A *zaftig* WAITRESS sets the breakfast special down before...

**MIRIAM**

Whose EYES open, snapping out of an impromptu nap. She looks tired. Beat. Burnt. The Waitress looks kindly on our hero.

WAITRESS  
Anything else I can get you?

MIRIAM  
More coffee.

WAITRESS  
Hard week, sweetie?

MIRIAM  
Hard life.

*Enough said.* As the Waitress retreats, Miriam grabs a fork. Pokes at the mountain of food. Not really hungry. When...

... SOMEONE SITS across from her at the small TABLE. Though we don't yet see who it is... Miriam knows without looking up. As she fingers her fork...

MIRIAM  
You got one chance. To get the fuck out of here. Before I stab you in the neck with this fork.

Indeed... it's ASHLEY. Smiling his charming SMILE.

ASHLEY  
Or I could just call the cops on your pretty little ass.

MIRIAM  
They won't believe you.

ASHLEY

Maybe not. But they'll believe  
this...

He digs into a pocket, produces... a SMART PHONE. Flips  
through PHOTOS... showing her ONE OF A SERIES.

**HER POV**

A camera-phone SNAPSHOT. Night scene. A DEAD GUY lies next  
to a wrecked BIKE. Yellow STREET LIGHT shows MIRIAM  
crouching over the body. Picking the dead guy's POCKET.

**MIRIAM**

Reaches for the phone -- Ashley SNATCHING it from her grasp.

ASHLEY

Sorry.

(then)

I can place you at three different  
crime scenes...

MIRIAM

I didn't kill them.

ASHLEY

But you rolled them seconds after  
they croaked...

(off her look)

And what's your defense? You  
*magically* knew when they were going  
to eat it?

(then)

No jury will ever believe you.

MIRIAM

I didn't kill them.

ASHLEY

I know. Read enough of your diary.

MIRIAM

But you don't believe.

ASHLEY

(shrugs)

I dunno. Since my mother got sick,  
she been into all kinds of mystical  
bullshit. Maybe some of it is  
true. Maybe I want to believe...

The Waitress appears, tops off Miriam's coffee.

WAITRESS  
Coffee, hon?

She means Ashley. Who shakes his head.

ASHLEY  
No thanks. This is the twelfth  
diner I been to this morning...

As the Waitress moves on...

MIRIAM  
How'd you find me?

ASHLEY  
I just told you. I been prowling  
every dive from here to Tucumcari.

MIRIAM  
No. How did you find me.

He taps his SMART PHONE. Meaning the PHOTOS.

ASHLEY  
The bike messenger. The one in  
Bakersfield...

She puts two-and-two together.

MIRIAM  
You were working that dude, right?  
You were going to pick his pocket.  
You were going to roll him.

Ashley smiles, nods. Caught.

ASHLEY  
He was dirty. Delivering packages  
for all kinds of shady types. I  
was running a scheme, trying to  
convince him we could take one of  
those *packages* and sell it to a  
higher bidder...

MIRIAM  
But, in reality, you would've taken  
the package *and run*...  
(off his nod)  
You're a con-man.

ASHLEY  
I prefer con-*artist*.

Miriam LAUGHS at him. Takes a big bite of WAFFLE. Talks  
with her mouth full.

MIRIAM

So you see what you see. Why follow me for two months??

ASHLEY

Well. At first, it was kind of professional curiosity. Watch a fellow artist at work...

(then)

I saw how you only took what was in their wallets...

MIRIAM

I don't get greedy.

Now its HIS turn to mock HER.

ASHLEY

That's cute. I like that. A little ointment for the soul never hurt anybody...

She GLOWERS. Takes another BITE.

ASHLEY

What I couldn't figure was *how you knew*. How you could be there at just the moment they died...

MIRIAM

Well now you know. Now what?

Ashley SMILES again. Leans close.

ASHLEY

Do me.

MIRIAM

I *did you* last night.

ASHLEY

I mean, your whole *voodoo death-touch vision* thing.

MIRIAM

(rolls her eyes)

That's what I mean. *I did you*. Skin on skin. That's all it takes. (off his look)

And, no way, dude. I ain't telling you how you're going to die. Won't give you the satisfaction.

(then)

Believe me, you don't really wanna know. It ain't gonna be pretty.



Ashley can't help but FLINCH. She got to him. He inhales. Clucks his tongue.

ASHLEY  
That's cool. You know what, I  
don't want to know...  
(then)  
Do her, then.

He means the Waitress, who's approaching.

MIRIAM  
You're serious??

ASHLEY  
Make me a believer, Miriam Black.

Though she's not sure why, Miriam obliges him.

WAITRESS  
You need a top off, sweetie?

MIRIAM  
Sure.

Miriam NODS. Then, as Ashley watches, Miriam HANDS her CUP to the Waitress. As the woman TAKES it, Miriam makes sure their HANDS MEET. Which makes us...

SMASH IN TO:

#### TOUCH-VISION - THE DEATH OF A WAITRESS

*A HONDA HATCHBACK barrels down a hilly desert HIGHWAY, our WAITRESS behind the wheel. Happy. Carefree. Singing along to some annoying POP on the radio...*

*... as the Honda heads down a steep HILL... the Waitress HITS her BRAKES... which SQUEAL but don't ENGAGE. She PUMPS the PEDAL, loses CONTROL and PLOWS INTO A TELEPHONE POLE...*

#### GASP!!

It's Miriam. Who inhales sharply, as if punched in the gut -- or slammed into a windshield. HEADS TURN as other PATRONS wonder if she's okay. Ashley leans close, eager.

ASHLEY  
So? How does it happen?

Miriam takes a deep breath. Her face ashen.

MIRIAM  
I need to go to the bathroom.

She rises, pushes her way through the restaurant. Making for the RESTROOM across the way. As she staggers amidst the DINERS and WAITSTAFF, Miriam inadvertently BRUSHES an ELBOW here or an ARM there. REELING from a series of FLASH-VISIONS showing future DEATHS...

--A TRUCKER SCREAMS as his cab is ENGULFED IN FLAMES...

--A CHEMO-BALD WOMAN flatlines, LOVED ONES at her side...

--A STREET TOUGH lies on wet pavement, hands to his BELLY as a GUNSHOT WOUND blossoms red...

--A TROUBLED TEEN leaps from atop a tall WATER TOWER, plummeting to his suicidal death...

AS WE PRELAP:

**WWWRETCHE...**

Miriam on her knees in a graffiti-scarred STALL. Dry-heaving into the stained TOILET.

Then, she falls back on her ass, leans against the metal stall-wall. Wiping drop-sweat from her forehead. Trying to catch her breath.

Now... spying her twisted REFLECTION in the shiny side of a paper-toilet-seat-cover DISPENSER. Considering herself.

MIRIAM

Dear Diary. We've got to stop meeting like this.

JUMP CUT TO:

**SPLASH!!**

Miriam palms cold WATER to her face. Still getting over her latest, troubling vision. She looks at herself in the greasy MIRROR, letting droplets drip from her face.

She's alone in the dingy unisex bathroom. A RATTLE at the door indicates someone impatiently wanting in.

MIRIAM

It says occupied, asswipe!

Now she leans over again. SPLASHES more water on her face. As Miriam LOOKS UP, she's SHOCKED to see...

LOUIS standing behind her. Reflected in the mirror. Clearly, this is DREAM-LOUIS, some product of her warped imagination...

MIRIAM

Shit --

Miriam SPINS, startled.

LOUIS

It's like the Bible says. You're gonna reap just what you sow...

MIRIAM

That's Lou Reed, not...

Now she notices his FACE. BOTH EYES gone now. Creepy. Even for Miriam, who's seen it all.

MIRIAM

... go away...

LOUIS

As you wish... but...

MIRIAM

I get it, careful what you wish for...

Another RATTLE at the door draws her attention. Then she looks back to see...

Dream-Louis is GONE. Thank God. As she makes for the exit...

CUT TO:

**INT. WAFFLE HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER**

As Miriam slips into her seat, Ashley picks up where they left off. Nodding toward the nearby WAITRESS.

ASHLEY

So??

MIRIAM

About three months from now. Driving a Honda hatchback. Brakes give out. Slams into a telephone pole. Killed instantly.

Ashley eyes her for a BEAT. Then, CALLS OUT to the Waitress.

ASHLEY

Excuse me, I think I'll have that coffee after all...

She turns to him.

WAITRESS

Of course, hon.

Before she can retrieve a fresh mug, Ashley charms her with his patented smile.

ASHLEY

You drive a Honda, don't you? The one with the squeaky brakes?

WAITRESS

Yeah, yeah, I know. Been putting off getting them fixed...

(then)

You from around here?

ASHLEY

Passing through. Saw you drive in this morning. Heard you, too.

They share a SMILE.

ASHLEY

You should get those fixed. Bad brakes can kill you...

WAITRESS

You're right. I gotta get that done...

ASHLEY

Don't want to take any chances...

As the Waitress disappears across the diner...

MIRIAM

Nice try. Only it don't work that way...

(off his look)

Say she gets her brakes fixed. Her time comes, she'll *still* be driving down the same damn hill, and *something else* will send her sailing into the telephone pole. Drunk driver. Rhino escaped from the zoo...

(then)

*Fate gets what fate wants.* Nothing we can do about it. Trust me, I've tried...

Ashley PONDERs this for a long BEAT. Then:

ASHLEY

You and me. We should work together...

MIRIAM

Work...?

ASHLEY

Like a volleyball team. You set 'em up, I spike 'em down. Let's be frank, Miss Black. You need my help something fierce...

MIRIAM

I need neither shit nor *Shinola* from you. Not that I know what *Shinola* is...

ASHLEY

Together we can fleece a dead guy for more than just walking-around money! We'll get what's in his bank account, his safety deposit box, his investment portfolio...

MIRIAM

I told you, I don't get greedy.

She reaches for the CHECK, intent on paying up and LEAVING.

MIRIAM

This is where we part ways. Thanks for last night. The violent monkey sex? Good times. But I'm done here. You have a great life...

He SNATCHES the CHECK from her hand. Smiles.

ASHLEY

Are we in business together?

MIRIAM

I hate you.

ASHLEY

You love me because we're the same.

She considers him for a long BEAT.

MIRIAM

You are *something*, Ashley Gaines. Even with a little girl's name...

Ashley smiles, sealing the deal. *That damn smile.*

ASHLEY  
I got this.

He means the check.

ASHLEY  
Meet you outside. The Mustang with  
the two new tires? That's us.

CUT TO:

**EXT. WAFFLE HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER**

Miriam emerges. Digs in her bag for a Marlboro, LIGHTS up. Eyeing the MUSTANG parked nearby. Indeed with two brand-spanking-new tires.

As Miriam ponders what she's getting into... WE NOTICE a SEMI pulling into a jumbo PARKING SPOT nearby. The DRIVER climbing out of the cab, approaching. As we recognize...

LOUIS  
I'll be damned...

She turns. A realization slowly moving across her face. *Holy shit. It's Frankenstein.*

LOUIS  
What are the chances we run into  
each other again, huh?

MIRIAM  
Must be fate.

LOUIS  
I don't believe in fate. But I  
believe in luck...  
(then)  
You're a happy accident.

MIRIAM  
I've been called worse.

She offers him a cig, then withdraws the offer. Remembering.

MIRIAM  
You don't smoke.

LOUIS  
Never did.

MIRIAM  
Good for you. You'll live longer.

She takes a long drag.

LOUIS  
Listen. For some reason we got off  
on the wrong foot...

MIRIAM  
Sorry. All my fault...

LOUIS  
You damn right.

This is said with a smile the size of Texas. Miriam can't help but laugh.

LOUIS  
I mean, you were like some psycho-  
crazy-woman...

MIRIAM  
Still am.

LOUIS  
I'm not so sure.

This gives her pause. She considers him. Takes the last drag on her cig, tossing the burning butt aside.

LOUIS  
I know how the road can make you  
crazy. I'm a little crazy myself.

MIRIAM  
Somehow I don't believe that.

LOUIS  
Oh yeah. Crazy enough to ask...

He takes a deep breath, as if ratcheting up his courage.

MIRIAM  
Ask me what?

LOUIS  
Well. I'm running a load up to  
Flagstaff tonight. Be back  
tomorrow. If you're around. I  
mean, here. Maybe we could... do  
dinner. Or a movie.

He's sweet. Miriam appreciates that. She smiles at him, a breath of decent air in her desert of despair.

MIRIAM  
I'd love to. If I'm around.

Louis smiles broadly. Extends a hand.

LOUIS

Great. I don't think we ever  
really met. I'm Louis. Louis  
Pressburger...

MIRIAM

Miriam. Miriam Black.

She takes his hand for a shake. As *skin-touches-skin* we  
suddenly find ourselves in...

**TOUCH-VISION - THE DEATH OF LOUIS PRESSBURGER**

A *DESERT SUNSET* reflects off a big white *RECTANGLE*. Like a  
movie screen, only stuck in the middle of red-rock *NOWHERE*.

*WIDER*. The *RECTANGLE* sits above a sea of *STICKS*. As *WE PULL  
BACK* we realize... the *STICKS* are rusty metal *POLES*. Which  
once cradled *SPEAKERS*. Wires hang from some of them.  
Evidence of a long-abandoned, desert *DRIVE-IN THEATER*. Which  
this spot evidently once was.

There's something quite different about this vision than the  
others we've seen. Where before we found ourselves in a  
cutty mini-movie about the subject's death...

... now we are clearly in *SOMEONE'S POV*. *WE'RE WALKING* into  
the decrepit *SNACK BAR*... *MAKING OUR WAY* up rusty *STAIRS*  
into...

the decrepit *PROJECTION BOOTH*. A disaster-area of old  
*PROJECTOR PARTS*. Rusty *FILM CANISTERS*. Decayed *FILM STOCK*.

There's *LOUIS*. Strapped to an old wooden *CHAIR*. *Speaker-  
WIRES* binding his wrists and legs to the chair. *Electrical  
TAPE* pinning his head to the back of the rusty *PROJECTOR*.

*WE WATCH* as a tall *FIGURE* approaches. We don't see much of  
the man, except for skinny arms and what appears to be a  
hairless head. In one spidery *HAND*, he holds a bladed  
*SPLICING TOOL*. Left over from the good-old-days when they  
actually cut *FILM*.

LOUIS

(gurgles, stammers)

... I don't have it... I don't have  
what you want...!!

The creepy-lithe *Figure* *SPEAKS*. A strange, high-pitched  
voice. With a nebulous, vaguely European accent.

*FIGURE*

That no longer matters.



The Figure moves FAST, STABS LOUIS IN THE LEFT EYE WITH THE TOOL. Not so deep as to kill, but deep enough to hurt, BAD.

LOUIS SCREAMS. The Figure withdraws the tool, which makes a SUCKING SOUND as he extracts it. Louis' good eye DARTS to somewhere over the Figure's shoulder...

... and LOOKS RIGHT AT US. Recognizing us. Desperately glad to see us. Clearly, for the first time, Miriam is a participant in a touch-vision. She's there and we're seeing exactly what she sees.

LOUIS

... Miriam... MIRIAM...!!

Too late. The Figure STABS him again, THIS TIME THROUGH THE RIGHT EYE, AND THIS TIME, ALL THE WAY TO THE HILT. All the way to the brain. AS WE...

SMASH CUT TO:

**MIRIAM**

Reeling. She's had a lot of visions in the last eight years. None as earth-shattering as this.

This dude Louis is going to die. In an unspeakable way. And she is going to be there...

OFF Miriam Black. Head-spinning. Her already crazy, upside-down world somehow more *super-fucked* than ever before...

CUT TO BLACK.

THE END

