

HART'S LOCATION

Written by

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INT. BENTON COUNTY JAIL CELL- MORNING

INDECIPHERABLE BRIGHTNESS. THE SUN'S RAYS SPLINTER INTO A MILLION PIECES ON THE SCREEN LIKE A HEAVENLY PORTAL. AS WE SLOWLY PULL BACK, THE RAYS SPIN THEMSELVES TOGETHER TO FORM ONE SOLID STREAK OF LIGHT, FORCING ITS WAY THROUGH THE SLIT-WINDOW REVEALED ON A BARREN SLAB WALL.

CUT TO:

EXT. OLD HOUSE- DAY

WE HEAR THE SOUND OF GRASS CRUNCHING UNDER FEET. AS IF WE ARE LOOKING THROUGH THE LENS OF A CAMERA, WE EXAMINE THE OLD HOUSE AND ITS SURROUNDINGS:

IT IS BATTERED BY WEATHER, PERCHED ON HUGE CEMENT BLOCKS WHICH RAISE IT OUT OF THE MUD BELOW. THE PAINT ON THE HOUSE HAS PEELED ITSELF AWAY, REVEALING THE ROTTED WOOD UNDERNEATH.

AN ANTIQUE CLAW FOOTED BATHTUB, THE YARD'S CENTERPIECE, IS FILLED WITH STAGNANT MURKY WATER. TWO OLD PLASTIC SWANS, ONE TOPPLED ON ITS SIDE, NEST BESIDE IT.

A RUSTY SWING SET, MINUS THE SLIDE, DANGLES AN OLD BRITTLE SEAT FROM ITS CHAINS. A CHILD'S YELLOW DUMP TRUCK IS PARKED UNDERNEATH IT, IN MID DIG.

BACK TO:

INT. BENTON COUNTY JAIL CELL- MORNING

IT IS YOUR STANDARD HOLDING CELL. CEMENT SLAB, NO MATTRESS. METAL TOILET. BLANK WALLS. THE CREVICE OF A WINDOW IS THE ONLY LUXURY HERE.

AS WE PULL BACK FURTHER, WE SEE JAIME JO HART (40), JO FOR SHORT, STANDING NEAR THE LEFT WALL OF THE CELL. PLAIN WHITE T-SHIRT, ORANGE PANTS, HER HAIR PULLED UP IN A SLOPPY PONYTAIL. THOUGH SHE IS STANDING AS CLOSE AS POSSIBLE TO THE BARS, HER GAZE IS INWARD. SHE IS WAITING.

BACK TO:

EXT. OLD HOUSE- DAY

ON THE RIGHT SIDE OF THE YARD, A CRIPPLED LOOKING TREE REACHES OUT ITS BRANCHES. UNDER THE TREE, A THREE-FOOT WOODEN STAKE PROTRUDES OUT OF THE GROUND. ON IT IS DRAPED A BLUE BUTTON-UP WORK SHIRT. WE HEAR IT FLAPPING CARELESSLY IN THE WIND.

THE FOOTSTEPS GROW STILL. WE ZOOM IN CLOSER ON THE SHIRT.

BACK TO:

INT- BENTON COUNTY JAIL CELL- SAME

WE HEAR THE SOUND OF BOOTED FOOTSTEPS APPROACHING. THEY STOP NEAR THE CELL. THE CELL DOOR SLOWLY SWINGS OPEN, THOUGH JO DOESN'T MOVE. HER EYES ARE INTENSE, SAD...

EXT. OLD HOUSE- DAY

THE WAVING BLUE SHIRT STILL FLAPS IN THE WIND. THE LENS FOCUSES AND REFOCUSES THEN...SNAP.

THE SHUTTER CLOSSES ON THE CAMERA, BLACKING THE SCREEN MOMENTARILY, THEN THE FRAME FREEZES WITH THE SHIRT IN MID-WAVE.

HART (V.O.)

It's not about reality... no. I
wouldn't say that at all. Reality.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. GALLERY- LOS ANGELES- DAY

We reveal Hart(70's), standing at a podium on a makeshift stage. He is a tall, handsome man with a white tuft of hair and the clearest blue eyes ever. He has the heir of importance, though it be casual. He wears a sports jacket over a T-shirt, a silk scarf tied around his neck.

HART

--and it's not a reflection or a
ghost of something that once
existed.

(MORE)

HART (CONT'D)

Actually that thought never entered my mind until just now. It's just a picture, it's-- it's not words! Words are words, they aren't pictures. They exist in two different worlds, see. It's not a statement or a judgement or anything else! I don't stand back and say 'Jesus, that's fascinating, does someone really live this way?!' No. I just take the picture and move on. I'm not here to save them. You have to save yourself. And that is what I suggest you do, now look and move on.

*

He stumbles off the stage with the wave of a hand, which triggers a roar of applause and camera flashes.

FADE TO:

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD- NOON

A sea of wildflowers bend themselves backwards in the wind as Jo walks along the empty two-lane road that runs through the center of the field.

When we pull behind her, we realize that she is headed for the tiny GREYHOUND station just up the road. She meanders up to the bus as it huffs and sputters smog.

CUT TO:

INT. BETTY'S HOUSE- DUSK

There is a definite Santa Fe theme going on in the decor. Somebody has a hankering for coyotes and prickly plants. The living room and dining room are filled with MOTHERS seated in a large circle.

BETTY ANNE (60's) is seated in front of the fireplace, next to the makeshift podium. She wears dainty jewelry, well applied makeup, and is quite stunning, the face of a regal debutante. She attentively listens to ADELE(50's) speak, offering a hand of support every now and then.

ADELE

And I said... I looked at him and I said "NO! I won't." -- But he was so sweaty and out of it-- It's like he can't hear a word I say...

(MORE)

ADELE (CONT'D)

he just stares back with black,
lifeless pupils... like the devil
got a hold of his insides and
ripped out where my Jeremy used to
be.

She erupts into quiet tears. Betty puts an arm around her,
holding her tightly.

BETTY

Now now... you know it ain't the
devil got'm. It's the devil's dust!
The Smack! Junk! And you just say
'Not in my house, you won't!'

ADELE

Where will he go? I just can't
think of him out there-- all alone--

More tears. The women around the room COO AND MUTTER in
understanding.

Just then, Jo, comes through the front door looking around in
confusion. Everyone looks back at her, equally surprised.

JO

Hey.

BETTY

JoJo... what are you doing here?!

JO

What's all this? An intervention or
something?

BETTY

No... no it's-

JO

Cuz if this is your idea of a
homecoming party, it's lacking,
ya'll.

BETTY

I didn't know you were getting out.
They didn't tell me you were- or I
would have-

JUDITH

It's Mother's Helping Mother's,
Hun. And... and we love and support
you! Welcome home, Jo!

A collection of 'yes' and 'love you's go off like fire works.
Jo goes red, averting her glance away from all the eyes.

CUT TO:

INT. BETTY'S HOUSE- A FEW MINUTES LATER

The last of the women are filtering out of the front door.
Betty stands near the doorway, handing out thank you's and
hugs as parting gifts.

BETTY

Next Monday at your house, Judith?
Okay now... Luanne, you goin' to
ladies night at the casino? Wanna
carpool?

She lets the screen door fall shut, her face falling with it.
Jo tears out from the hallway.

JO

Where's JJ?! Where's all his stuff?

BETTY

Now, calm down-

JO

Where is he?

BETTY

With your Aunt Ladonna in Mobile.

JO

What?! Why?!

BETTY

I ain't fit to raise a child.

JO

But you're fit to hold court over a
bunch of desperate crying women?

BETTY

It's a SUPPORT group.

JO

You and your fucking groups.

BETTY

Language! Now I know you are
disappointed-

JO

Disappointed?! Is that what I am?
The one thing I hang on to, for a
year, is seeing my son's face.
Holding him, kissing his hair. How
could you do this to me?

Betty straightens up a little, knowing that she must be firm.

BETTY

Can't you think of him for once?
Don't you think he'd have more fun
down there playing with his cousins
rather than sitting 'round here
with cripply me waiting for his
Mama to come home?

JO

No I don't. How'm I s'posed to get
him when I ain't got a car or any
money? Tell me that?

BETTY

Maybe you should have thought of
that before.

JO

Before? You think I chose this?

BETTY

Actions have consequences. You
wanna be around for your son, you
play by the rules.

JO

My God... you don't want me to get
him- you think I won't- I can't.

BETTY

I don't know what you're-

JO

That's why you sent him! You think
I'll leave him there for good.

BETTY

Now Jo- If you are gonna be-

JO

Who are you to judge me?! How good
did you do?

Jo twists the familiar knife in...

BETTY

My best.

JO

Well it sucked. Look at me.

BETTY

Jo, stop it-

JO

You failed! You failed me-

BETTY

I KNOW! You ungrateful-

JO

What, hussy? Jail bird? Junkie-

BETTY

CHILD! I was gonna say child...
You're just a big old child.

Betty begins to cry.

JO

Cryin' won't change anything. I'm
gonna get him whether you like it
or not.

BETTY

No one is against you but you, Jo.
I hoped after a year of sobriety
you'd think a little straighter.
But I guess not.

JO

Oh, so I sent him there?

BETTY

YOU KNOW WHAT YOU DONE!

Jo stares her down, then goes for the door.

EXT. ELMS MOTEL PARKING LOT -DUSK

Jo stands in front of room 1613 at the Elms, a roach shack motel where SQUIRREL is currently residing. The blinds in the room are closed, but one of the blades is permanently bent backward...a gap made for a paranoid inhabitant to watch for oncoming intruders.

She knocks. After a moment, the door opens a crack.

SQUIRREL
Say it ain't Jo.

JO
Open the door, Squirrel.

The door swings open, revealing Squirrel(30's) a skinny, boyish looking man with self-inflicted tattoos on his bare torso. His shaggy, greasy hair almost completely disguises his eyes. He gives Jo an oversized grin.

SQUIRREL
Damn woman, you look rude hot!

JO
Can I come in or not?

INT. SQUIRREL'S ROOM- CONTINUOUS

The room is in utter disarray, with things teetering on every surface. It is clear he has been living here a while.

Jo blows into the room, he follows.

SQUIRREL
I don't have much shit, but you're welcome to what I got. On the dresser.

JO
I'm not here for that.

SQUIRREL
Oh. Well well then...

He moves towards her with a swivel of the hips. She abruptly slaps his chest.

JO
Ten fucking years, you piece of shit! He got ten years!

SQUIRREL
Now hold on-

JO
EXPLAIN.

SQUIRREL
Well, there was other stuff...

JO

What am I supposed to do... I have nothing! I can't do it alone, I can't!

SQUIRREL

Just hol'on a second. I'll figure this all out, okay?

JO

You better. This is all your fault. You left him fucking hanging- For some reason you didn't do any time- you do the math.

SQUIRREL

I didn't clink because I got more brains in my head. Plain and simple. So don't skate for one second on the idea that I would sell out my own brother. I ain't that asshole. I'm an asshole, sure, but not that one so don't blame me.

JO

You got him into that shit. So I do blame you.

SQUIRREL

Now wait a minute, sweetie teets, who tol'm that he was being tailed? Huh? Who tol'm not to do the deal, to pull out? Oh that's right. Me. Oh and I guess I got that lil girl preppers too, yeh?

JO

What little girl...

SQUIRREL

Some squirt over in Elm Springs. Ain't even outta high school.

JO

What...

SQUIRREL

Yep. Said she didn't consent so... I think the ten years is a secret blessing. She gotta big ole scary daddy.

JO

Nobody told me...

SQUIRREL

Well I'm tellin' ya ain't I?

JO

Well it don't even matter. JJ's gone. Mama sent him to Alabama and I don't know how to even get him.

SQUIRREL

I'll help you.

JO

Everyone thinks I'm a terrible mother.

SQUIRREL

You?! That's moonshine and you know it.

JO

Maybe they're right. I can't ever get any better than who I was the day before. Just keep getting a little worse.

SQUIRREL

Now you hear me, you can't let them assholes control you, Jo. The only way for them to stay up is if they keep us down with all their benevolent bullshit.

JO

Well I have been thinkin of somethin'- a way out... but it's probably another bad idea.

SQUIRREL

I love your bad ideas. What is it?

JO

Gotta find somebody.

SQUIRREL

I got a guy that can find a guy. What you wanna find him for?

JO

Because he owes me.

SQUIRREL

Who's the sonbitch?

JO
My dad.

SQUIRREL
He worth findin'?

JO
I'll make it worth it.

Squirrel curls up a smile.

SQUIRREL
I'm in.

She pulls a wrinkled folded piece of paper out of her pocket and an old photograph. He unfolds and reads.

SQUIRREL (CONT'D)
Holy squirts, you got his name!?
Joe Hart. Hmph.

JO
That's all I got.

Studying the picture...

SQUIRREL
Nah. You got his eyes too. Damn.

JO
Whatever. You think you can find
him.

SQUIRREL
Can a squirrel find a nut? Heck yeh
he can.

EXT. BETTY'S HOUSE- NIGHT

The street is now shrouded in a country darkness, the lights of the neighborhood snuffed for the night. Jo stands around the side of the house, her face glowing with moonlight, listening for movement.

She makes her move to a side window, checking it first, then quietly sliding it open. She skillfully snakes her body inside without a sound.

INT. BETTY'S HOUSE- JO'S ROOM- MOMENTS LATER

Jo darts around the room with stealthiness, working by the soft glow of a tiny pocket flashlight.

She loads up a large duffel, pulling things from hiding places around what has now become a spare bedroom.

She picks up an old, worn-out stuffed elephant. She lifts it gently to her nose, inhaling it's musky scent...

The hall light flips on and the door flies open. Betty stands there in her night coat.

BETTY

What the H are you doing? Stealing now?

JO

This is my stuff.

BETTY

Then why didn't you come in the front door and get it? I almost called the cops.

JO

Go ahead. We're real close.

She crosses the room to Jo, staring into her eyes. She grabs her face in one hand. Jo flinches.

BETTY

And lookee here! You're stoned!

JO

No I'm not.

BETTY

Then why you flinchin'?

JO

Your fingernails!

BETTY

Your eyes are like god-danged space ships. You ain't even been out a day and you're already high! I can't have you in my house on that junk!

JO

Junk?! Is that what you learned to call it at your stupid meeting?

BETTY

Fine. Meth. Better?

JO
I'm leaving so relax.

She lets go. Jo continues to pack. Betty's mood shifts instantly.

BETTY
You can't get into no more trouble.
You can't! Please, Jo... get right
this time.

JO
I'm getting even. That's better.

BETTY
What kinda crazy you talkin-

JO
I'm going to find my dad.

BETTY
What?! Don't go messin' with that
bastard. He don't got nothing you
want.

JO
Oh I bet he does. Where is he,
Mama?

BETTY
You think he's just gonna throw his
arms around you and apologize? He
won't!

JO
I'm not going for an apology.

BETTY
You ain't allowed to leave the
state, Jo.

JO
I'll be quick. I don't expect you
to cover for me if they come around
though. I'd hate to put you out.

BETTY
You're gonna risk everything for a
pile of nothin, Jo. It's just
foolish!

JO

Yeah yeah, I'm a fool. I promise you this though Mama, I'm gonna find him and I'm gonna take what's mine. I'm gonna take it and I'm gonna get my son and move far far away from all these hypocrites and you'll never have to worry about us again.

She tosses her bag out the window, then swings her legs out next. Betty grabs her arm tightly.

BETTY

Jo. Please. Do it the right way.

JO

What? You mean the front door? You said leave! Just can't make up your mind can ya.

BETTY

Don't go, Jojo. Don't. I'm begging ya.

Jo twists her arm free and is out the window.

JO

There is no right and wrong, Mama. Just will ya or wont ya. I will.

She disappears in the pitch of night. Betty puts a hand to the head and whispers-

BETTY

I know you will. Damn child.

EXT. GAS STATION- OKLAHOMA- MORNING

An old wooden sign swings back and forth in the wind, reading "We Got Gas!". Squirrel's TRUCK is pulled up to its pump and Squirrel holds the nozzle like he's taking a leak. He is adorned in Bermuda shorts, a wife-beater tank, and gelled back hair...ready for the beach.

Jo looks out of her big sunglasses down the impending highway.

SQUIRREL

Hey. Go inside and get yerself a twinkie.

JO

I'm not hungry much.

SQUIRREL

Then get me a pair. And some
Dorals, doll.

She grabs his wrist.

JO

You can hold it right there with
the doll shit.

SQUIRREL

Yes ma'am.

He flips her hand over and dumps a bunch of change into her
palm.

SQUIRREL (CONT'D)

Please, ma'am, git me some treats.

She turns and maneuvers her bare feet over the gravel.

INT. GAS STATION -SAME

JO opens her fist full of change over the counter, sending
coins spilling all over the place. The CLERK (50's), a
hardened county woman, sneers at the change, revealing a
space where two front teeth should be.

JO

Dorals.

CLERK

No shoes, no shirt, no thervice'n.
Shoe wearin'th comp'ny polithy.

Jo leans over the counter menacingly.

JO

Git me a pack of Dorals an' quit
lookin at my toes 'for I jump over
this counter an' kick the rest of
them god-damn teeth out... an you
ain't got a one to 'thpare'.

The clerk begrudgingly grabs a pack and slaps them on the
counter.

CLERK

Three twenty nine an' not one penny
leth. That ain't countin' the gath.

JO grabs a pack of twinkies from the shelf below her and
holds them up.

JO
And these. You got a payphone?

CLERK
Round back.

JO
I can see that.

Jo motions with her eyes to the clerk's backside, then grabs up a couple quarters and is out the door. The clerk fingers through the change, counting slowly.

EXT. GAS STATION- MOMENTS LATER

Jo pops a quarter in the pay phone. She waits...

JO (CONT'D)
Hey Aunt Ladonna... it's me- JoJo.
Yeah! Got out yesterday actually.
I'm good, real good... Um, is JJ
around somewhere? I was wonderin-
Oh-- No, don't wake him.

She sees the truck peel out of the parking lot and onto the highway, it slows for her.

SQUIRREL
Run woman!

JO
Just tell him... I'll call later.

She shoves the phone into the receiver and takes off for the car.

EXT.INT- TRUCK-I 40- DUSK

Jo stands on the side of the highway, stretching her legs. Squirrel comes wandering up from a nearby patch of highway shrubbery, zipping up his fly.

SQUIRREL
You don't gotta go?

JO
I can wait.

SQUIRREL
I figure we're bout half way to
Cali. If I keep on pushin it, we
will be there by morning.

JO
You feel okay to keep driving?

SQUIRREL
Oh hell yeh. That shit is rocket fuel. My nostrils feel like the Discovery just launched up there to my brain.

JO
I can drive some.

SQUIRREL
I said I got it.

JO
What if he don't got anything...

SQUIRREL
Well we're gonna find out, aren't we. He's a photographer, he's got sumpin.

JO
But what if-

SQUIRREL
And once he takes one look at you, he's gonna throw buckets of cash at you. Make it rain, baby.

JO
And if he doesn't?

SQUIRREL
Plan B. Get in.

INT. TRUCK- NIGHT

The truck devours miles of pitch black highway in the mid-night silence.

Squirrel steers with one hand on the wheel, the other outstretched over the back of the seat. Jo gazes up into the stars. They reflect off of her dilated, over-amped pupils like fireflies dancing the surface of midnight waters.

INT./EXT.- TRUCK- DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES- DAY

Squirrel stares out the windshield, brow furrowed with disappointment. Jo studies a piece of paper in her hand with a scribbled address on it.

SQUIRREL

I don't like it. Where's the fricken palm trees? Where's the sun?!

JO

Wait for me here.

CUT TO:

EXT. HART'S LOFT- MOMENTS LATER

Jo climbs the rickety metal stairs that lead to the entrance of an old warehouse.

The sound of her knuckles rapping on the metal gives a faint echo. Nothing happens.

She spots a small buzzer to the right of the door and rings. She waits awkwardly, her bag at her feet.

Finally the sound of dead bolt locks opening floods Jo's ears. She feels her face go red, she thinks of running.

The door slowly opens and Hart stands in the doorway. He wears cargo pants bulging with equipment and a photographer's vest. A vibrant scarf loosely hangs around his neck as well as a camera. He peers out from small circular specs, running a hand through his hair.

HART

(gruffly)

You the messenger? You're very late.

She stares back at him, the words just don't come. He gives her an exaggerated "duh" face.

HART (CONT'D)

Yes? No? Anything?

JO

No.

HART

Then what?! I'm very busy and I don't like solicitors. You selling something?

She studies his eyes, they are identical to hers. This is him alright.

Getting no answer, Hart begins to close the door in frustration.

JO
(softly)
I'm Jayme Jo Hart. Your daughter.

His knees give a little and he props himself on the door handle.

HART
Oh. I see. Why didn't you say so?

He begins to regain control of himself, standing straight again. They study each other.

HART (CONT'D)
Come in, come in...

INT. HART'S LOFT - CONTINUOUS

Jo steps inside, the door bangs shut behind her. She jumps.

BOSS, a tiny chihuahua belonging to Hart, steps out from behind his ankles and lets her have it with shrill yapping. He scoops him up and taps the dog's nose with the tip of his finger. It works like an off button, the dog falls submissively into the crook of his arm.

Jo looks around.

The warehouse is no warehouse at all. It is massive, lavishly furnished (yet not pretentious), and the walls are covered in huge, beautiful photographs. His Escalade is parked right in the living room.

Jo follows behind Hart, taking it all in as if she were in a museum.

In the middle of the 'den' section, a projector flashes a photograph of a woman against a mural sized canvas. CHASE (30's) paints around the image with an over-zealous hand. He wears scrub pants, a white tee, and is very handsome. He notices them and turns, shaking the hair out of his face.

HART (CONT'D)
This is Chase. He lives here with me. Artist in residence if you will.

Chase gives her a crooked smile and offers up his paint splotted hand.

CHASE
Hey, how are ya?

JO
Oh... fine.

HART
Chase, this is my daughter.

He makes no effort to hide his surprise. He holds on to her hand tightly, unconsciously.

JO
Hi. I'm Jo.

CHASE
I'm- Wow.

JO
Nice to meet you, Wow.

She pries her hand free. He smiles broadly.

HART
Quite the surprise, isn't it?

JO
I would have called but... the number I had was...

HART
No, no. That would have ruined everything. And I might have bailed. I love it!

JO
Oh. Good, I guess.

HART
I find surprise to be the greatest reason to live. It's just the effect of surprise often feels more like vomit than happiness. You thirsty?

JO
I'm okay, thanks.

It is as if he is looking into a mirror, no denying it. It makes him light headed and he sways off balance for a moment. Chase grabs his elbow, steadying him, which he stubbornly resists.

HART
 Watch the paint, damn it! I'm fine.
 Shall we sit?

He gestures to the couch grandly, then makes himself comfortable.

She joins him, awkwardly perching on the edge of the cushion.

HART (CONT'D)
 (to Chase)
 Get me a seltzer if you would. You
 want a Coca Cola, Water, Pom juice?

JO
 That's okay.

HART
 We don't have alcohol. Prohibition.
 I am sober.

JO
 I'm good really.

HART
 Have a coke. They're Mexican!

Chase disappears around the corner again. They sit in silence.

HART (CONT'D)
 So... here we are.

JO
 I like your house. Or whatever.

HART
 (waving it off)
 Everyone else designed it and fixed
 it up... I just wrote the checks.

They fall back into silence. He wipes his sweaty palms on his pants. Boss eyes her tensely.

JO
 You take all these?

She motions to the photographs.

HART
 Every one.

JO
 How long you been taking them?

HART

Ever since I could point a Brownie. Elvis, I called him. God rest his soul.

JO

That's a camera?

HART

My very first. Dropped it in a creek when I was 9. Never got over it.

JO

Oh, hm. You make pretty good money doin' it, I guess... taking pictures...

HART

This an interview? Should I put on a tie?

JO

No, I just am nervous I guess. I don't know what to talk about.

HART

That's all right, darling. Yes, I've done pretty well by my lens. Now, what about you?

JO

Oh, I don't have a job at the moment so-

HART

No, I meant- what about YOU.

JO

Me?

HART

Yes, that's you isn't it? What are you all about? What do you like to do?

JO

Knit.

HART

Oh. Interesting.

JO

I don't know why I said that.

HART
You don't knit?

JO
No, I do but I only just learned.

HART
I was gonna say- knitting as a
passion- kinda marmy. You don't
strike me as the marmy type.

JO
I don't know what a marmy is, but-

HART
No, I picture you more as a hatchet
sculptor... or a dancer perhaps!

JO
I don't really have a passion.

HART
What?

Chase reappears with drinks in hand. He hands her an old-fashioned coke bottle, then gives Hart his drink and a couple of pills.

As soon as Chase turns his back, Hart drops the pills in the crack between the cushions. He gives her a wink.

CHASE
I'll be upstairs if you need me.

HART
Yes, yes. So needing to be needed.

Chase grins at her and takes off.

HART (CONT'D)
So where were we- oh yes. You have
no passion.

JO
I didn't mean it like that- I just
meant I'm not good at anything
really.

HART
Impossible. You're just not good at
figuring out what you're good at.

JO
Oh.

HART

I often think that people who claim to be good at nothing are the very geniuses we are all waiting for to rise up and save us from our tragically mundane existence. But will they ever find it in themselves? *That's* the human race.

JO

I'm not a genius.

HART

That means you probably are. But I suppose you're not here to listen to my diatribe so let's just get to it.

JO

Get to what?

HART

How much?

JO

What?

HART

Just trying to make it easy, kid. How much are you asking for?

JO

Are you always this presumptuous?

His eyebrows arch.

HART

That's not why you're here?

JO

I don't know what to say... I'm-

HART

No need to be embarrassed.

JO

I'm not embarrassed- I'm... I have waited a long time for this and... you made it cheap.

HART

Well I apologize then.

JO
I don't want your apologies!

HART
No? Then what?

JO
I just thought we should meet.
Which was clearly a waste of both
of our time.

HART
Nonsense. Time doesn't exist.

JO
I gotta go.

HART
Go? You've only just arrived.

JO
I've got a bus.

HART
A bus?!

JO
My private jet has a flat.

HART
We've gotten off to a bad start.
Can we have a "do over"?

JO
I don't think so.

She stands.

HART
I didn't mean to upset you. I only
wanted to make things easy. I'm no
good at this.

JO
No, I don't want to hear your
diatribe! Maybe I wanted you to
hear mine!

HART
Well that's wonderful. Lay it on
me!

JO
I changed my mind.

HART

Not even the short version? Come on!

JO

I just got out of prison, okay? I am at a dead end and don't know what to do with my shitty life. I thought maybe if I met you... I would understand something.

HART

I see.

JO

But I don't. So... That's that.

HART

Mm hmm. Well, I'm glad you're here for whatever reason. Honestly. And I'll help you any way I can... Absolutely I will. We can talk about it all later. But if you'll excuse me, I need a little disco nap.

JO

What?

He gets up and shuffles towards the hallway.

HART

Lie down... I need to lie down.

JO

But- I can't wait. I gotta bus to catch.

HART

Well, I don't keep captives. But if you do stay, feel free to make yourself at home. Take a shower, go through my things, whatever. I won't nap long...

He disappears down the hallway.

She stares down a photo of an elephant bejewelled in circus garb. His ears are flat, his eyes unbearably sad, his trunk reaching for the lens... The photo next to it is a child wailing, the clowns looming in the background.

CUT TO:

INT. HART'S LOFT- BEDROOM- SAME

Hart's room is sparsely decorated and surprisingly void of photographs.

He perches at the edge of his bed, phone to his ear.

HART

I have my next leitmotiff. Just
knocked on my door. Daniel, this is
the one they will remember me by.
(beat) Fuck the book. This is IT.

There's a KNOCK at the door.

HART (CONT'D)

Call Terry and let him know there
is a change of plans. I'll start
tomorrow.

Another knock. He hangs up.

HART (CONT'D)

Yes yes. Come in.

The door gently opens and Chase slides in to the room.

CHASE

How ya doin?

HART

I feel great.

CHASE

What, uh... what are you starting
tomorrow?

HART

An enslavement camp for
eavesdroppers.

CHASE

Come on.

HART

What are you? My fairy godmother?

CHASE

I'm your friend- whose job it is to
make sure you take it easy.

HART

Easy is boring.

CHASE
It's not forever- just until-

HART
Don't tell me what I can and can't
do!

CHASE
Well then don't be an asshat. We
talked about this.

HART
I'm spending some time with my
beautiful daughter. That's all.

CHASE
She left, you know.

HART
Well then go get her! Or find
another geezer to bug the shit out
of.

Chase gives him a look.

HART (CONT'D)
I mean it. Go.

CUT TO:

EXT/ INT. SQUIRREL'S TRUCK -STREET- MOMENTS LATER

Squirrel jumps and shifts in his seat as a thud hits his
truck bed. Moments later, Jo appears at the passenger-side
window. The door is locked, so Squirrel rolls down the window
a smidge.

SQUIRREL
How'd it go? He got money?

JO
Open the door.

SQUIRREL
Show me the money.

JO
Unlock the door!

SQUIRREL
We cain't just pack up and leave
now. You gotta do what you came to
do.

JO
I can't. Okay?

SQUIRREL
No, not okay. Go back in there and-

JO
(screaming)
I CAN'T! He's taking a NAP! Forty years and it's fucking nap time!

SQUIRREL
A nap? That's great! Tired, old bastard. Get in there and wait for him to wake up!

JO
I'm tired of waiting!

CUT TO:

INT. HART'S LOFT- BEDROOM- SAME

Hart stands at the window, camera in hand.

He lifts the camera to his face. The shutter clicks. He snaps again. And again.

CUT TO:

EXT./ INT. SQUIRREL'S TRUCK -STREET- MOMENTS LATER

Jo leans against the truck, her head in her hands. Squirrel leans across the seat to be near her window.

SQUIRREL
Hey baby, come on. Look at me...
This is the last time you'll have to wait for anything. This is your chance. I ain't gonna let you blow it cuz you're frustrated. (beat)
What the fuck you lookin at?!

Chase stands in front of the truck, his eyes dart from Jo to Squirrel.

CHASE
Jo? Everything cool?

He notices her tears.

CHASE (CONT'D)
Did he hurt you?

SQUIRREL

Fuck you, chump.

JO

I'm fine. I was just... askin for a ride. But never mind.

CHASE

Come on. I can take you wherever you need to go.

Chase scoops up her bag and puts a hand on her back, escorting her away.

Jo looks back at Squirrel, who looks shell shocked.

CUT TO:

EXT. HART'S LOFT- MOMENTS LATER

They reach the stairs that lead to the door. Chase holds the door open, then turns back to her when she doesn't enter.

She is sitting on the steps.

CHASE

Coming in?

JO

How long is he gonna sleep?

CHASE

Not too long. He has a short attention span even for sleeping. A couple things are just out of the poor guy's control nowadays.

JO

A couple things?

CHASE

Hey, I got something that might make you feel better. Medical grade...

CUT TO:

EXT. HART'S LOFT- PATIO- MOMENTS LATER

Chase and Jo huddle near the wall of the patio. They pass between them a half smoked joint.

Jo is a little more relaxed, but still in control. Chase is all grins, but keeps his eyes on the door.

JO

He not know yo smoke?

CHASE

I don't know. The kid in me still likes to hide it.

JO

Are you his...

CHASE

What? Lover? No! Oh my God.

JO

How would I know.

CHASE

I take care of him- he takes care of me.

JO

Why does he need taking care of?

CHASE

He's just older. You know.

JO

And you? Why do you need taking care of?

CHASE

Let's just say that I used to take a lot of things and care wasn't one of them. So we watch out for each other.

JO

So which one are you- a painter, a nurse, a dooper, what?

CHASE

None of them actually. You staying for dinner? I'm making lasagna. He's more coherent after a meal.

JO

Can't. I have to catch a bus.

CHASE

There will be more.

JO
More what?

CHASE
Buses.

JO
Well I am pretty sure there will be more lasagna too.

CHASE
He won't just hand it over. Nothing comes free with him.

JO
What's that supposed to mean?

CHASE
He won't just give you money.

JO
Fuck. You are just as bad as he is.

CHASE
No judgement, I swear. Hell, if I could stick it to my old man, I would. Believe me, I get it. Bottom line is- he's got it to give. But you have to give a little to.

JO
I got nothin'.

CHASE
Well, lucky for you, that's his favorite thing. Artistically speaking.

JO
It really isn't just about money.

CHASE
I know.

JO
I'm kinda out of options.

CHASE
Well here's an option- You stay for my lasagna, you talk things over with Hart, then you come with me to my gig.

JO
Your gig?

CHASE
Yeah I am playing a club tonight
and if there is not at least one
person in the bar they probably
won't let me play.

JO
Sounds fun and all but-

CHASE
Start saying yes more. Helps with
options.

JO
You used to always getting your
way?

CHASE
No. You?

JO
No.

CHASE
Well let's start now. Deal?

CUT TO:

INT. HART'S LOFT- NIGHT

The windows have grown dark and now the loft takes on a
little more of a warehouse vibe.

Jo assists Chase with clearing the table. Hart is still
seated, deep in thought. Boss perches on his lap, eating
tidbits from Hart's plate.

Chase remains in the other room as Jo goes for the last dish
on the table.

HART
Where are you headed?

JO
Excuse me?

HART
On the bus.

JO
To Mobile. Alabama.

HART
Good lord! By greyhound? No no. I'm taking you myself.

JO
What? No. No thank you.

HART
I have a talk I'm doing at the University of Texas in a few days, I'll just drive. Plus I've been working on a collection for a book that really needs to hit the old road. In other words, you're on the way.

JO
On my own way.

HART
I thought you came for help.

JO
Not that kind.

HART
Then what?

JO
I need a little... loan.

HART
I don't do loans. They lead to nothing but animosity.

JO
Well then, back child support.

HART
Child support?! I stopped paying that when you were nineteen!

JO
What?

HART
Listen, Jo... the one thing I've learned is that throwing money at a problem doesn't solve anything. You have to sort it out.

JO

There is nothing to sort. I just got out of prison, I don't have a home-- or a car-- and no one will give me a job. I need money.

HART

You're hired! You can help with my book. Be my assistant, my extra pair of eyes.

JO

I don't have time to be eyes.

HART

No? Well I see your dilemma then. You don't want to work, you don't make money.

JO

It's not that I don't want to work, I don't have time to work. And I don't need a ride...just money.

HART

Then go to a bank! Look, I'd really like you to join me. Misery loves company! But it's your choice.

She slowly turns on the water works.

JO

I have to get my son, okay? They took him away.

HART

Your son?

JO

They say I'm an unfit mother. I can't wait or they will take me to court for custody.

HART

He's in Mobile? The boy?

JO

At my aunt's. My mother sent him. He's five. JJ- Joe Jr. After you.

HART

I see. Well, my job offer stands.
You can stay the night and let me
know in the morning. I'd like you
to join me.

She looks at him for a moment, darkness flickering in her eyes, then disappears into the kitchen.

He bites at a cuticle, gives an eyebrow a flick, then dips back into the recesses of his mind.

CUT TO:

INT./EXT. HART'S LOFT- PATIO- NIGHT

Jo stands in the sliding glass doorway to the patio, darkness all around her. She has changed into a "going out" outfit and her hair is pulled up. She looks really pretty.

She picks up a pair of old military field binoculars nearby and peers through them.

CHASE

Peeping Tom?

She jumps.

CHASE (CONT'D)

Those things work better when they
aren't pointed at walls.

She turns around. He is wearing nothing but jeans and two different colors of converse shoes. A guitar in a soft case is slung over his back.

CHASE (CONT'D)

Ready to go?

JO

Aren't you forgetting something?

CHASE

Shirt's in the dryer. Lazy man's
wash. You look pretty.

JO

You sure I'm not over-dressed?
Should I leave my shirt behind? Is
that how ya'll do things here?

CHASE

I wouldn't complain.

He smiles cutely, scratching at his scruff.

INT. CAT CLUB- LATER

The CROWD of about thirty people or so mill around the bar.

Jo sits at the bar. She sips a beer, looking around at everyone's attire. Typical LA under-dress. She looks down at her own outfit, feeling like a transplant.

Chase and Joans (female, 25) sit on their designated stools on stage, acoustic guitars on their laps. They are mid-set, mid-song.

Joans sings 'My hands are tied', as Chase strums passionately on his guitar.

As they finish the song, the audience gives a polite applause.

Jo slowly sips her beer.

JOANS

Thanks everybody. We're Dark
Matter. He's dark, I matter.

She laughs at her joke as a cat call whistles from the crowd. She sets her guitar by her stool.

JOANS (CONT'D)

Chase is gonna take this one if
it's okay with you guys...

More cat calls.

His hands begin, slowly picking out chords, his pinky highlighting individual notes. His eyes are closed, the music moves from his guitar like a trickling brook. He is a Star.

Jo watches, the light reflects off his face as his mouth twists and puckers with the music. Her eyes take in his hands, they are almost crippled looking, contorting to hang on to the chords.

He gently sings-

A dark figure enters the bar, watching Jo from the back. It is Squirrel, ducking in the usual shadow.

The song plays on as we FADE TO:

EXT. HART'S LOFT- NIGHT

Chase has Jo pinned against the steel walls of the warehouse. She holds him tightly to her as they kiss passionately. Her hands run through his hair, up the back of his shirt. His caress her softly, a hand slowly making its way up her exposed thigh.

JO
Should I let him take me?

CHASE
(still kissing her)
Is that your inner monologue? Yes.

JO
Hart. Should I go with him?

CHASE
Gear shifter. Wow.

JO
I'm sorry. I just-

CHASE
Well it will kill him if yo do and
it will kill him if you don't.

JO
Win win.

He looks at her. She grins, then pulls him back to her.

CHASE
Hey- go.

JO
Okay.

She wraps her arms around his neck and kisses him with power. And they are back at it.

FADE TO:

INT. HART'S ROOM- SAME

An outline of a man stands in the window, the nearby street lamp illuminating an "aura" around his figure. Hart stares down to the pavement, a large camera to his face.

The sound of the shutter repeatedly closing echoes in the darkness.

INT./EXT. HART'S LOFT/ PATIO- MORNING

The stillness in the loft is suddenly overtaken with a THUNDEROUS SOUND , followed by a rush of blinding sunlight.

Hart watches as the last of the warehouse door curls itself up into the rafters.

Jo wanders into the room with her bag.

Hart is busily loading the back of the Escalade with tons of camera equipment. He doesn't notice her. She tries to make her way to the bathroom, distancing herself from Chase's domain.

Boss spies her, barking maniacally and nipping at her heels. She gives him a tiny kick with her heel.

Hart calls out from behind the car.

HART

No tolerance for animal cruelty.
None whatsoever.

JO

Morning.

HART

At least you're prompt. And here!

JO

Can I put my bag in?

HART

Of course you can. You can do
anything you put your mind to!

She goes around to put it in the back, only to find it packed with his things.

JO

Jesus. Where's your suitcase?

He pats a tiny suitcase that is squashed under a bin of equipment.

HART

Just enough for my diapers and my
socks. Only kidding. I don't wear
socks. You can put your bag in the
back seat. There's room in the
floor board.

She tosses it in, a sinking feeling now taking over. He closes the door like an exclamation to her thought of dashing.

HART (CONT'D)
First things first.

He reaches in to his pocket and hands her five one hundred dollar bills.

HART (CONT'D)
Today's pay. Now get in.

He climbs in the driver's seat. Jo reluctantly opens her car door, only to find Boss in her seat.

HART (CONT'D)
Just scoop him up. He won't bite.
Scoop him right up.

JO
I'm allergic.

HART
No you're not.

JO
How do you know?

HART
Because you're not! Now scoop him
up!

She slides herself onto the seat, scooting the dog over with her rear end. Annoyed, he crawls into Hart's lap.

He hands her a map.

HART (CONT'D)
You're in charge of this but you
can fold it up for now. I know
where I'm going today.

She looks at it, every inch has been marked to death in all different colors of marker. She eyes his GPS system on the dash.

JO
Why don't you use that?

HART

Because every time I go the way the lady tells me, I miss the happenstance. Technology is the worm in the apple in my opinion.

JO

Then why do you have it?

HART

You ask a lot of questions. I like that.

INT./EXT. ESCALADE- STREET- SAME

Jo subtly looks for the truck as they back out, but Squirrel is nowhere in sight.

Hart rubs the scruff on his face and pulls around to the backside of the Loft, the entrance located a street behind.

HART (CONT'D)

We just have to pick up Susan B.

JO

Who?!

CUT TO:

EXT/ INT. EMPTY WAREHOUSE- MOMENTS LATER

Hart gives a rap at the warehouse garage door and it slowly begins to raise. A pair of feet appear, then legs, then Chase.

He shields his eyes with one hand and waves with the other.

Next to him is an impeccably shiny 26 ft. '67 Airstream Overlander trailer. It's a beauty.

Hart goes to it, arms outstretched. Jo gets out of the car, frowning.

HART

Hello old gal. You ready to ride?

JO

No way. That's not coming.

HART

What are you talking about- of course she's coming!

JO
We'll have to drive like thirty
miles an hour!

HART
(laughing)
What? It's not a double-wide, it's
a land yacht built to navigate the
frog and toad as they say! That
way, wherever we are- we're home!

JO
That ain't home.

HART
Susan's coming. Chase has been
getting her ready all morning...
that's why you didn't get any
breakfast in beddy!

Hart gives her a wink as her cheeks go deep red. Chase stares
at the pavement.

HART (CONT'D)
Now, getting hitched is in order,
don't you think?

Chase looks stunned, but Hart just nods to the literal hitch
on the Escalade.

FADE TO:

EXT. STREET- MOMENTS LATER

With SUSAN firmly attached to the back of the Escalade, Hart
and Jo are strapped back in the car. Chase leans against her
window but looks to Hart, Boss cradled in his arms.

CHASE
Don't be an ass. And check in.

HART
Yes, Mother Hubbard.

CHASE
I mean it. If he gets out of line,
or if you need anything, call me.
Any time.

He hands her a piece of paper with chicken scratch all over
it. Hart strains to see.

HART
You think she can read all that?

CHASE
Any time. Okay?

Hart begins to roll up her window.

JO
Thanks...

He walks to Hart's window, letting Boss lick all over his face before passing him off.

CHASE
Bye little buddy. Keep an eye out... or tongue in your case.

Jo laughs. Boss stares back, bug-eyed and tongue out- his typical face.

HART
Until we meet again, kid.

He smiles and slowly drives away.

Chase watches as the trailer toddles down the street, the sun reflecting off of it like a make-up compact on wheels. Out of the corner of his eye he also sees a blue truck slowly duck around a corner in the distance...

INT. ESCALADE- DAY

They stare straight ahead at the daunting road in front of them. Silence presses in from all corners. Hart cuts through it-

HART
So. Did you find you have a lot in common with Chase?

JO
Yeah, I guess so.

HART
I should hope so. He's your brother.

JO
WHAT?!?!

HART
Ice breaker. Now where should we
start?

JO
That was not funny at all.

HART
(laughing)
For you or for me?

She stares straight ahead, still recovering.

HART (CONT'D)
You are absolutely stunning when
you blush... Good guy though, no?

JO
I am not talking about this with
you.

HART
Fair enough.

He flips on the stereo, Moody Blues croons from the speakers.

CUT TO:

EXT. GALLERY - LOS ANGELES - DAY

The Escalade is parked outside a storefront gallery. The windows are frosted glass, but you can make out photographs hanging on the walls. The words "IMAGES OF HART" cover one window in white block letters.

They stand at the front door as a bookish looking man, DANIEL (30's) unlocks the door. His energy is excitable, his eyes crawl over Jo.

The door opens.

HART
Thanks for meeting us, Daniel.
Sorry for the last minute-

DANIEL
Not at all, not at all!

CUT TO:

INT. GALLERY - LOS ANGELES - CONTINUOUS

Jo studies the photographs on the walls, warped images of down-and-out Los Angeles from tent city to a deflated temp behind a desk. The photographs are on stretched but unframed canvas- rugged, like their subjects.

Hart motions Daniel to the back.

HART

If you'll excuse us darling, I'll just be a minute.

JO

Sure.

Daniel smiles and disappears into a back office, followed by Hart. The door closes behind them.

She takes in another photograph, then sneaks out the front door.

EXT. GALLERY - LOS ANGELES - CONTINUOUS

Jo shades her eyes from the blinding sun and strolls casually to the end of the block. When she peers around the corner, she finds what she is looking for.

Squirrel hunkers down in the front seat, returning a smile.

She throws a glance over her shoulder and skates across the street.

SQUIRREL

Better be good...

JO

I think our ship might have finally come in.

SQUIRREL

I knew it! What'd I tell ya, sugar butt! That warehouse was too obvious.

JO

One thing though...

He squints in response. He knows "one things" are usually mammoth from her.

JO (CONT'D)

He's takin' me.

SQUIRREL

Where?

JO

To get J.J.. It's the only way.

SQUIRREL

Well, that ain't gonna work.

She looks to the trailer.

JO

Does it look negotiable?

SQUIRREL

It'll take two weeks to get that bitch to Mobile.

JO

I'll stay on him.

SQUIRREL

Better be worth it.

JO

Do I mess around if it isn't? I mean, you don't have to follow...

SQUIRREL

Don't be stupid.

Jo reaches in her pocket and pulls out a couple of bills. She tosses them in his lap.

JO

Gas money. Pay from now on.

He studies the bills then tries to give her hand a kiss. Jo pulls away. *

SQUIRREL

My brother is a moron. I'd follow you anywhere. Straight to hell if I had to.

JO

Good. That's exactly where we're headed.

CUT TO:

EXT. GALLERY- LOS ANGELES - CONTINUOUS

As Jo comes back around the corner, she see's Hart shaking hands with Daniel. They notice her. Daniel hands Hart a large envelope. *

She hurries back to them.

HART

I was wondering where you ran off to- though fleeing from my work is rather common I regret to say.

Daniel laughs.

JO

I was just checking out the scenery. Never been to a big city like this. Doubt I'll be back.

Hart's face falls a bit before he catches it. Daniel just nods.

DANIEL

Wouldn't blame you. The City of Angels has lost a her halo in my opinion. But weather's good!

JO

If you don't like snow.

Daniel gives her a look of total agreement.

HART

So we are all straight then. Take care Daniel.

DANIEL

Best of luck to you ya. I mean that.

His face is earnest, somber. Jo catches it before she climbs in to her seat. She shuts the door.

Boss crawls around on Hart, licking his chin and nose.

HART

(sweetly)

You miss me little buddy? Huh lil guy? Oh... who's the Boss? Who's-

JO

Why was that guy so morose?

HART

Who, Daniel? He's just a milk toast. Always like that. These people that make a living off of artists, Jo, always feigning great emotion as if that's all we relate to. Just talk about the Lakers for Chrissakes!

JO

Is he your boss?

HART

(laughing)

My boss?! I'm my boss. Right Boss?! He couldn't boss an old blind hooker on a qualude if you know what I mean. Milk toast.

JO

Lovely image.

HART

I think her image is in there actually...

He laughs at his own joke as he pulls out into the road. She looks back toward the building. Daniel waves enthusiastically.

CUT TO:

INT. ESCALADE - DAY

The car crawls along the Pacific Coast Highway traffic. The sky, beautiful and clear, stretches right down and turns into ocean.

"Snow Bird" by Anne Murray trickles from the radio, much to Jo's dismay. She stares out at the water as he hums along.

HART

Are you getting hungry?

JO

Not really, we're not even out of LA yet. But if you're hungry then get something. Don't wait on me.

HART

Do you not eat very often as a practice?

JO
What practice is that?

HART
You didn't eat dinner last night.

JO
Yes I did.

HART
I think we should eat something. Do you like breakfast? I love breakfast. French Toast... Do you like that?

JO
No.

HART
No! Awwhh. How about Flapjacks?

JO
Not really, no.

HART
You don't like maple syrup?!

JO
I didn't say that.

HART
I could drink maple syrup from a flask.

JO
Yes, everything tastes better out of one of those, doesn't it.

HART
Not orange juice, because of the acidity. But chocolate milk, however... What do you eat for breakfast then?

JO
I don't. Eating first thing in the morning makes me feel heavy.

HART
What about when you eat breakfast for dinner?

JO
I don't know. How far is Death
Valley from here?

HART
Look on the map. If you measure the
distance in miles using the little
ruler there, you can figure the
time assuming we go 60 miles an
hour. A mile a minute.

JO
How about you just tell me instead.

HART
Come on. A mile a minute...

JO
Forget it. It doesn't matter.

HART
Yes, it's all relative isn't it-
time? Do you like lunch?

CUT TO:

EXT. PACIFIC COAST HIGHWAY - DAY

The Escalade slowly pulls across the road and slows to a stop at the edge of a small cliff overlooking the ocean. Surfers bob up and down in the crystal waters. Hart hops out and goes to the back of the car, opening the trunk. He grabs two different cameras, a 35MM and a RANGE-FINDER.

Boss looks on inquisitively from the driver's seat.

Hart goes to her side, motioning for Jo to get out. She gives him an incredulous look, then opens her door.

JO
What are we doing?

HART
Take this one. Come on.

He holds the range-finder camera out to her as she gets out. She does not accept.

JO
Why are we stopping again?

HART
Well, you haven't seen it, have you?

JO
Seen what?!

HART
The Pacific Ocean! I think you should start with this little lady. She's one of my favorites. Debbie.

He pushes the camera into her hands.

JO
I don't want to start anything. I don't want to *assist* you.

HART
Then why did you accept the pay? Besides, I would never let an assistant shoot on that camera.

He goes to the edge of the cliff and looks out, then walks towards a winding path.

HART (CONT'D)
There's a path over here. Follow me.

JO
No! I don't want to go down there.

HART
The faster you go the faster we leave.

JO
I don't like mind games.

HART
Well, what do you want to do Jo?

JO
Leave Los Angeles. Get my son. Get back to my life.

HART
We're going to get your son. But if that is really all you want, then why didn't you just go straight to Mobile instead of detouring all the way to California?

JO
You know why.

HART
Then come on and quit wasting my
time... or we'll never get out of
here.

He disappears down the path. She silently implodes, then follows after. Looking over her shoulder she notices Squirrel drive by. He throws his hands up in the air puzzled and frustrated! She shrugs her shoulders in response.

CUT TO:

EXT. BEACH - MOMENTS LATER

When Jo finally makes her way to the bottom of the winding path, Hart has already made his way over to the SURFERS.

They have gathered to greet him. Their ages range from 20's to 60's.

HART
(shouting)
Jo, these are my cronies.

JO
You surf?

They laugh.

HART
This is my long lost daughter,
boys. She's never seen the ocean.

JO
(embarrassed)
Yes I have. I'm Jo.

HART
We're heading to Mobile to collect
her son, my *grandson* from the
talons of evil family members.

Jo stares out to the ocean, hating the private information shared. Her eyes take in the surfers in the water.

Hart picks up his camera and begins snapping photo's.

HART (CONT'D)
I love this shit! Catching a wave
is like catching a moment.
(MORE)

HART (CONT'D)
You're one second too late, and
it's lost in the tide.

** note- Hart takes a photo of Jo coming down the path*

CUT TO:

INT. ESCALADE - A LITTLE LATER

Hart steers with one hand, listening to the 'Moody Blues'. Jo is just waking up from a nap. Boss is fast asleep on her lap.

She gently nudges him awake. He moves onto Hart.

HART
Did you have a nice nap?

JO
I was just resting.

HART
That's called a nap. You were out
for a while. I looked over and saw
you dreaming.

JO
You should be watching the road.
You can't see someone dream.

HART
Of course you can. (beat) I wish I
would spend the same amount of time
in my dreams figuring out what my
waking life means as I do in my
waking life, figuring out my
dreams. Don't you?

JO
I don't remember mine.

She fiddles with the satellite radio, hoping to locate a source for normal music.

HART
Doesn't work.

JO
I can probably fix it.

HART

That's okay. I unplugged it myself!
Don't worry, I have a million tapes
in the back. I have the Hot Red
Chili Peppers! You like them?

JO

Red *Hot* Chili Peppers.

HART

One of their names is Flea! I love
that.

He grins, pleased at their commonality.

HART (CONT'D)

Maybe you should keep a notebook by
your bed. I heard that helps with
dreams. I never tried it because I
don't have that problem. I remember
everything.

JO

It isn't a problem if you don't
want to remember.

HART

Why? You have nightmares?

JO

No. I just sleep. I don't really
care what my brain does with it's
free time.

HART

What about your waking life dreams?

JO

What about them?

HART

I hope you remember those...

JO

Of course I do.

HART

Oh good! What are they?

JO

Private.

HART

Oh.

JO
Just take it slow. Don't get greedy.

HART
Hey, I get it Jo. One frame at a time.

FADE TO:

EXT. WILD ROSE CAMPSITE- DEATH VALLEY - DUSK

The Escalade and trailer are now parked amongst a few other RV's and trailers at the beautiful campsite. A light glows from inside the trailer.

INT. TRAILER- NIGHT

Hart sits on the sofa of the surprisingly hip inside of 'Susan'. The floors are hardwood, the walls- metallic mint green and dark wood. Everything is sleek and new, from the mini kitchen to the black and white tiled bathroom. A pull out pen for Boss is attached to the wall.

Jo stands in the middle of the hallway, stunned. It was not the dump she was expecting to walk into.

HART
Gutted the whole thing about five years ago. Old girl needed a bit of a face lift in her old age. Now she's young again.

JO
There's only one bed.

HART
Yes, well you can take it of course. This couch is fine for me.

JO
You can't fit on that. It's too short.

HART
Well, neither can you with those stilts, my dear. I insist.

JO
And I insist we skip the camping thing and go somewhere civilized.

*
*

HART
(laughing)
Civilized?! Really now!

Jo's face turns to vinegar.

JO
You mean because I'm a felon, I'm
not civilized?!

HART
No no. I mean you're a *rebel*.
Sometimes, that bites you in the
ass...you have to go back to
square one. Or- end up where you're
headed.

JO
I don't have time to go backwards
with you. I have to get my son
while I still can.

HART
(harsher)
Get real, Jo. It doesn't matter
when you show up to get the kid.
It's how you show up to get him...
and who you show up as.

JO
Advice from someone who never
showed up?

HART
Exactly.

She gives him the coldest stare she can put together, though something in her eyes tells him that she heard him.

JO
And what makes you think that
you're the one for the job? That
you, who have been absent for
thirty seven years, have the
credentials to piece me back
together and deliver me to Mobile a
decent human being and a passable
parent?

HART
I don't. But what was I supposed to
do? You rang my bell, kid. You
asked for my help. I didn't make
any promises and I don't do magic.

(MORE)

HART (CONT'D)

I'll help you, but if you want my money, you will have to work for it just like I did. Because Jo, I am a lot of things-- an asshole, yes, a son of a bitch- definitely! But a fool and an 'easy take', I am not.

He ducks out of the trailer.

CUT TO:

EXT. WILDROSE CAMPSITE - NIGHT

The fire warmly reflects off the faces of those who sit around it, roughly a dozen CAMPERS, Hart included. The atmosphere is jovial, full of the tipsy chatter of strangers bonding.

Jo meanders up to the circle. Everyone turns to take her in.

JO

Hi...

Hart hops up and offers his seat.

HART

This is Jo, my daughter I spoke of.

They nod, smile, welcome her.

JO

I'll stand. You're legs are old.

A bubble of laughter. He hesitates then sits back down.

HART

I don't have a clue where that stubborn streak came from.

JO

My mother.

Another laugh. They are beginning to turn into a sideshow...

MAN CAMPER 1

So what brings ya'll out to the desert.

HART

We are working on a book together... coffee table book!

MAN CAMPER 2

(to Jo)

Are you a photographer as well?!

HART

She's better than me!

JO

No I'm not.

WOMAN CAMPER 3

Now, which one is being modest here?!

JO

If lying is modesty, then him.

Another laugh. She likes it.

MAN CAMPER 1

What's ya'lls book about?

Hart looks to Jo to answer...

JO

Getting to Mobile.

MAN CAMPER 2

Ah, I like it. But, why you goin' North? *

JO

North?

The lasers that glow from her eyes burn imaginary holes right through Hart's flesh.

HART

It's not about getting there fast. The photos are the story of the landscape between A and B, with A being Alice and B being Bob. Surviving that distance, that desert between two strangers and becoming one highway. That way, no matter which way you travel, you are going home. You become the map and the map becomes you.

The campers are momentarily dumbfounded. Jo rolls her eyes.

HART (CONT'D)

Say, you all don't want to be in the book, do you?

Of course they do. Hart hands his camera to Jo and nods.

HART (CONT'D)
From behind.

Without answering, she walks behind the crowd.

It's funny how, even from the back, their enthusiasm for being photographed is unavoidable. Hart takes off his hat and his white hair glows in the fire light. The mountains loom in the moon glow.

HART (CONT'D)
Count to three Jo.

She snaps.

FADE TO

INT. AIRSTREAM- NIGHT

Hart is peacefully sleeping on the couch, face up, legs dangling off the end. A gentle snore bubbles from his lips.

An amber light steals in from the slatted windows and falls on Jo's face, illuminating her in the darkness. She sits on the edge of her bed, staring across the length of the Airstream, her eyes fixed upon her sleeping father. She watches his chest rise and fall... This is really him. She clutches her son's elephant tightly.

CUT TO:

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT TO MORNING

TIME LAPSE

Of the stars disappearing and the sky changing colors over the Panamint Mountains.

CUT TO:

EXT. DESERT- MORNING

Squirrel stands with his back to us, buck naked, staring towards the campsite. A mesmerizing sunrise is happening all around him.

He holds a bottle of water in one hand, which he takes a swig of before dumping half of its contents on his head, then the rest on his manly parts.

He runs a hand through his wet hair, then collects his clothes from his makeshift tent.

CUT TO:

INT. AIRSTREAM- MORNING

A beam of sunlight gleams in the tiny window of the bathroom. Jo is contorting herself to fit under the head of the tiny shower. It is difficult, her elbows bang against the walls.

Spitting out curses, she manages to rinse her hair.

EXT. DESERT- MORNING

Crouched down behind the desert brush about a hundred feet from the site, Hart stares through the lens of his range-finder. He has a beige scarf draped over his head, the back of his T-shirt is already dampening with sweat.

He shoots wildly, in a panic of sorts. He wipes his forehead and neck with the scarf, then suddenly, a hand taps his shoulder. Startled, he falls backwards against Jo's legs, taking her down with him.

She catches herself with her arms.

JO

Jesus... what are you doing?!

HART

Sorry darling. You startled me.

JO

It's Jo. What are you doing out here?

HART

Just catching the morning light...

JO

We can't keep doing this.

HART

Doing what? I was waiting on you late riser! If you're ready to roll out, just say so!

JO
I'm ready.

He struggles to his feet.

HART
Okay then! You know what lies about
twenty minutes from here dontcha?

JO
You need help?

Finally he stands, stretching out his knees, stiff from
squatting too long.

HART
Barker Ranch. Manson family
hangout. Any interest in a driveby?

JO
Why would I be interested in that?

He shrugs.

HART
Just in case you're looking for a
hiding spot when you bury my body
in the desert.

She looks at him incredulously. He arches an eyebrow and
heads for the camp.

CUT TO:

INT. ESCALADE- SALT FLATS - DAY

In perky spirits, Hart drives along, humming to the radio. Jo
stares out the window through tired eyes.

JO
Why'd you say we were making a
book?

HART
We are.

JO
No we aren't. This ain't some
fucked up family vacation.

HART

Human beings are very complex, Jo.
We are capable of doing many things
at once. Without even trying.

JO

You said it because you're
embarrassed.

HART

Embarrassed? Of what?

JO

That we don't know each other- That
I just got out of jail- That we're
getting my kid-

HART

I don't get embarrassed. And if I
did, it would never be because of
you. I told my guys on the beach
the truth and you snarled at that,
then I tell these people something
different and that's no good with
you either. So why don't you do
all the talking from now on.

JO

Really?!

Momentary silence.

EXT. BADWATER BASIN - CONTINUOUS

They stare out into a sea of white.

BADWATER BASIN

HART (V.O.)

That's Badwater Basin. Lowest point
in North America...right here. 282
feet below sea level.

*

JO (V.O.)

That didn't last long.

BACK TO:

INT. ESCALADE - CONTINUOUS

JO

Is there anything you aren't an expert at?

HART

Sure. In the whole world, only the Dead Sea is lower than this spot.

*

JO

Just when I thought I couldn't get any lower, you bring me here. Thank you.

HART

You could be very funny if you wanted to be.

JO

I can be a lot of things.

HART

That's the spirit!

JO

Just hurry up and take your picture if that's where all this is leading.

HART

You don't mind? Thank you darling.

The car slows to a stop.

HART (CONT'D)

Grab the cameras.

JO

Just get out and take it.

HART

Are you going to argue with me every time? I have never had a more difficult assistant. Except for that Puerto Rican. Now get the cameras. I'll carry Boss.

Reluctantly, she retrieves the cameras.

HART (CONT'D)

One thing's for sure, we can only go up from here kid!

With a roll of the eye, she gets out of the car. Hart sneaks a pill into his mouth, grabs his water bottle and Boss, and follows her.

CUT TO:

EXT. SHOTS OF DEATH VALLEY

IMAGES OVER SCREEN of different aspects of Death Valley i.e.; Telescope Mountain, desert flowers, salt flats, etc. *

These could be photographs or moving images.

FADE TO:

EXT. WAFFLE HOUSE - DAY

The Escalade pulls into an empty Waffle House parking lot, parking next to the big glass windows. Hart hops out, camera in hand, and heads for the doors babbling all the way.

Jo lingers a half a step behind, stealing a glance over her shoulder.

Squirrel's truck is parked in the gas station lot across the street.

CUT TO:

INT. WAFFLE HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Jo slumps in a small booth next to the window. She studies the paper place mat, which flaunts different pictures of plates overflowing with greasy breakfast fare and a super sized font of GOOD MORNING across the top.

Boss perches on Hart's lap, he wears a little orange vest. Hart reads the menu, then does his best "Debbie Reynolds", tapping Boss's feet on the table to the melody.

HART

(singing)

Good Mornin, good mornin! It's
GREAT to stay up late, good-

JO

I have a headache.

HART

Oh! My apologies. Boss be quiet.

JO
I wouldn't draw attention to him if
I were you.

HART
(winking)
Certified. Perfectly legal.

A sloppy WAITRESS appears, hovering at the edge of the table.

WAITRESS
How are you this morning?

HART
In fine fettle. And you?

WAITRESS
Oh, not so good.

HART
No?

WAITRESS
Think it's that flu bug going
around.

HART
Oh your kidding...

Jo is repulsed.

WAITRESS
Got me a real bad headache, in my
sinus.

HART
(pointing to Jo)
So does she!

JO
I'll have eggs runny and white
toast. Coffee black. And you
shouldn't point.

HART
I was just telling my daughter here
that you all wouldn't mind my
companion being in here as long as
he's certified... Am I correct in
thinking that?

She studies the vest on Boss.

HART (CONT'D)

He is a stroke dog. With me at all times.

WAITRESS

I guess that should be fine then...

He smiles triumphantly.

HART

In that case, I'll have the french toast then. Extra batter, extra butter, extra syrup! And the biggest coke you have.

*

JO

Jesus.

She turns to the kitchen, yelling-

WAITRESS

EIFEL-TOWER-DOUBLE-DIPPER! I'll get your drinks.

HART

Oh! And a water and a side of bacon crispy for the little guy.

She nods and yells...

WAITRESS

PIG ALL THE WAY!

...then disappears.

Jo glances out the window, her hands muffling her ears.

JO

I'll be right back.

HART

Where ya going?

JO

(pointing to the gas station)

Tylenol.

HART

Shouldn't point!

She slides out of the booth and is out the door, the bell ringing at her exit.

He glances out the window then fidgets with his camera. The waitress appears with the drinks.

WAITRESS
You takin' pictures?

HART
Yes. I'm a photographer.

WAITRESS
That's an old one.

HART
They don't make them like they used to. Everything is automatic, plastic parts, plastic lenses...you don't even need hands anymore!

WAITRESS
I know what you mean.

HART
They fit in your pocket, they're light as a feather. And people wonder why their pictures have no *weight*. And don't even get me started about the disposables. Now, this-- *this* is a camera with a soul.

He hands her the camera to check out.

WAITRESS
I used to take pictures too. For J.C.Penny downtown-- of the little ones.

HART
Youth is a difficult thing to capture.

WAITRESS
Yeah, they move. That's why I'm here.

Hart smiles warmly as she tries to hand the camera back.

HART
Go on, darling. Pull the trigger.

She looks through, aiming at him and snaps the picture.

CUT TO:

EXT. GAS STATION - MOMENTS LATER

Squirrel slumps down in his seat, sipping on a red bull. Jo pops up in the passenger window.

JO
(in a whisper)
Hey...I gotta hurry...I'm "buying
Tylenol".

SQUIRREL
Why are you whispering? You think
he's gonna hear you from in there?

JO
I don't know-- Listen, I'm sorry
for all this...

She gestures to the highway. Her eyes remained fixed on the road.

SQUIRREL
S'alright. But I gotta tell ya, I
got nervous as fuck when he
hightailed it to the desert. I
don't trust him.

JO
He's fine. Listen, I think you
should go.

SQUIRREL
Go? Where?

JO
Home. It's too risky to have you
tailing like this.

SQUIRREL
Hell no! He ain't gonna see me, I'm
a professional. And he's like a
hun'erd 'n forty.

JO
I just think it's best.

SQUIRREL
You think I drove all this way and
I'm just gonna take off?

JO
I'll be fine.

SQUIRREL
 (directly in her eyes)
 Oh, I know. I'll make sure of it.

CUT TO:

INT. WAFFLE HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

A plate of french toast rises out of a sea of syrup in front of Hart. He is too busy to notice. He is in a full on photo shoot.

The waitress now poses with Boss across the table. She feeds him bits of bacon from her palm. Jo sits beside them, struggling to remain ambivalent.

HART
 That's lovely dear. Lovely...

He snaps a picture, then watches as Jo scoops up a forkful of egg.

HART (CONT'D)
 Ah, atta girl. Finally eating something.

Jo gives him a menacing look, then sets her fork down.

JO
 I'll wait for you in the car.

As she leaves, the waitress looks to Hart.

WAITRESS
 She real mad or something?

HART
 (sighing)
 No. She's just real tired of being mad.

She nods slowly in understanding and goes back to loving up Boss. He gives a half hearted smile then glances out the window.

CUT TO:

INT. ESCALADE - MOMENTS LATER

Jo sits in the passenger seat, working her knitting needles she has removed from her bag.

Hart crawls in and sets Boss on her lap.

JO
He smells like bacon.

HART
Yummy. Maybe we will eat him up
later! Or if you don't like the
smell...

He makes a sweeping gesture, removing something from under his shirt. He places a large bottle of NEUTRA AIR spray in the cup holder.

JO
What the heck is that?

HART
Air freshener. And it kills
airborne bacteria. I took it.

JO
You stole air freshener?!

She cracks up laughing...

HART
I take what I need.

JO
(trying to recover)
Oh my God... that is... oh my
god...

HART
Look at that cute little hat!

JO
It's a sweater.

HART
Tiny.

JO
I'm not done. I told you I'm not
that good.

HART
Maybe you'll knit one for me one
day! I'd like that.

JO
Don't hold your breathe.

His smile disappears.

JO (CONT'D)
I've been working on this for a
year.

He glances at it.

JO (CONT'D)
Started over a lot.

HART
Oh! Well... I want mine in blue.
And a little bigger.

CUT TO:

INT. ESCALADE - DAY

The sky has begun to fade as they drive through Nevada.
Leaving the Hoover Dam.

Her sweater is coming farther along.

HART
You really should have at least
taken a peak over the edge.

JO
It's a dam.

HART
It's one of the greatest
engineering works of art in our
history. I'd never seen it.

JO
Still a dam.

HART
It's the best damn dam there is!

JO
What about the Three Gorges?!

HART
What's this now?

JO
You mean to tell me that YOU, Mr.
Egghead, don't know about the Three
Gorges dam in China?! Because I
hate to tell ya, it's the biggest.

He studies the shape of his head in the rear view mirror,
making her smile.

HART

Well look at you. I had no idea you
were into academia!

JO

Who said I was? Common knowledge.

HART

Ahhhh.

JO

We aren't all idiots in those hills
you know.

HART

It is Eggy, isn't it.

JO

And pointed.

HART

Do you know where the term egghead
derives from?

JO

Disgruntled chicken?

HART

In the '52 election, Adlai
Stevenson was running against
Dwight. He was the smarter, better
candidate but lost the race because
Nixon coined him as an Egghead and
not a "man of the people".

JO

Where do you come up with this
shit?!

HART

Adlai was a forceps baby- with a
protruding pointy forehead. Dwight
didn't have any room to laugh
though. What an ugly son of a
bitch that was. Nixon however...

JO

Oh Jesus-

HART

That man had game. Big time White House game. He porked the whole staff over there with that weasel-dick nose and nobody gave a three gorge dam. Billy Clinton couldn't even dream that stuff up.

JO

Well done on the dam.

HART

Word association. Little trick. Now, tell me something about yourself that I don't know

JO

That would pretty much be everything wouldn't it?

HART

I'll start then. I'm petrified of clowns. One time, when I was five, my parents took me to the circus. We were all dressed up- people got dressed up back then. I had just bought a cotton candy and here came the bastard clowns... on those tiny bikes. And I wet myself.

He laughs nervously. She doesn't.

HART (CONT'D (CONT'D)

Right there. In front of everyone. In front of my father. He acted like he didn't notice. They both did. We didn't leave, I just sat there the whole time with wet trousers...

JO

I've never been to the circus.

HART

Never?!

JO

And I think it's ridiculous to be afraid of clowns.

HART

I can never tell if they're really happy under all that. Scares me to death.

JO

I took a pair of mom's gardening gloves to show and tell in the second grade. I put them on and told everyone they were yours-- that you were a gold prospector and that we were actually really rich. They called me Goldy after that. Some still do.

HART

Goldy. I like that! You are shiny. Can I call you-

JO

No.

HART

Okay. I called your aunt. Told her I would kill her if she tried to take your kid away. And thanked her for watching him of course.

JO

What?!

HART

I said we'd be there in a few days and to have his things ready... But not to tell him.

JO

She'll probably call my parole officer.

HART

She's not calling anyone. Trust me.

JO

You should've asked.

HART

Well, I thought you wanted my help?!

JO

You can't keep using that. I didn't mean swoop in and control my life. You're too late for that.

HART

Oh. Okay... I'll call her back if you want. And I'll run everything by you. Which, speaking of...

(MORE)

HART (CONT'D)
 we got offered a fifty thousand
 advance for our book- apiece.

JO
 What? From who?

HART
 The publishers. They love it
 incidentally.

JO
 Love what? We haven't even done
 anything...

HART
 All it entails is our photos by the
 end of the month and the bank
 account number you want the money
 wired to. We'll get the rest when
 we go to print.

JO
 The rest?!

HART
 Then our share of the profits of
 course. So, what do you think?

CUT TO:

EXT. PICNIC SITE - ARIZONA - DAY

The pottery-like mountains of Arizona teeter in the
 background as Jo and Hart observe the topography.

A Tachihara 4x5 camera is set up on a tripod in front of
 them. It is large, old fashioned looking, and resembles an
 accordion.

Hart guides her through the almost dance-like series of
 setting up the shot, checking the light and shadows, loading
 the film, etc. Boss moves in circles around their feet.

Jo ducks under the cloth hood to observe the shot, then pops
 back out.

JO
 Why aren't we shooting those picnic
 benches? Everyone's seen the
 Mountains.

He ducks under the hood. His hand shakes noticeably as he
 lifts the cloth.

JO (CONT'D)

That's the real hero. Supporting America's fat butts while they eat their picnics and talk about hiking that mountain one day.

HART

By God you're right... how's this then?

They switch places, she ducks back under.

JO

Looks dark.

HART

Really? Check the gauge... let me see.

They switch again. He hands her the light meter and she walks to the benches.

HART (CONT'D)

Just point it at the bench. That's it...

A cloud overhead passes and it becomes bright again.

HART (CONT'D)

Never mind. Perfect. Come take it.

JO

Just do it if it's perfect.

HART

I want you to.

She swaps places once again. He focuses his Nikon on her and takes a picture. Her legs look like another tripod poking out from the camera.

JO

Why aren't there any down-and-outs in our book? Most of your photography is miserable people or decrepit looking animals if I'm not mistaken.

She comes out from the cloth.

HART

Well, that's what everybody wants from me. My niche. "

(MORE)

HART (CONT'D)

Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free—" Just call me Lady Liberty.

JO

I think it's a cop out. I think you're too afraid of being uninteresting. So you hide behind the backs of the weary.

HART

I prefer to look at it more like a super power.

JO

Of course you do.

HART

I see Beauty where others see deformity. And strength where others see hardship. Freedom in poverty.

JO

And I think you're more full of shit than the livestock barns at the Texas State Fair.

HART

You're on to me, kid. You're on to me. There aren't any weepers or one legged dogs in the pictures now though...

JO

Not yet.

CUT TO:

EXT. RV CAMP 2 - NIGHT

The night is pregnant with a thousand stars that hang over the camp. A couple of RV'S and MOTOR HOMES are scattered on the lot.

The trailer glows once again, it's door propped open to display, Hart bustling around the tiny stove.

Jo emerges from the doorway and sits on the step.

JO

Smells good.

HART
Garlic! I love garlic... but it
keeps the blood suckers away.

JO
And that's a bad thing?

HART
Depends on whether you want to live
forever or not.

JO
Well, I don't.

HART
Clearly.

JO
What's that supposed to mean?

HART
Inanition, kid. You're not exactly
a health nut.

JO
How the hell do you know?!

HART
I've been there.

JO
Been where? I don't know what
you're eluding to.

HART
I used to be an alcoholic. Well, I
still am technically.

JO
I'm not an alcoholic.

HART
Maybe it's alcohol, maybe it's
pills, maybe it's heroin-

JO
What!? God-

HART
There are some of us that must deal
with this burden inside, this pull,
whatever way we can. And the others
who have never stood in that
quicksand, don't understand.

(MORE)

HART (CONT'D)

It's about getting through the day.
After day after day...

JO

What is so hard about your days?

HART

Me? Some days I can not bear to be
in my own company-- to hear my
voice.

JO

I know how you feel. About you
anyway.

He laughs at this.

JO (CONT'D)

No. I know what your saying.

HART

Outlaws, you and me. How done do
you want yours?

He nods to the skillet.

JO

How ever you make it is fine.

He slides a good looking steak out of the pan and onto a
plate already dressed with a baked potato. He grabs his plate
as well and joins her outside.

HART

Meat, madam. Meat.

They sit in their two camping chairs with their dinner on
their laps.

Hart cuts himself a bite, savoring it. Jo is digging in.

HART (CONT'D)

It's funny-- when you eat under the
stars, there's just no need for
steak sauce.

JO

It's delicious. JJ would love this.

HART

He likes steak?

JO

No. This.

She looks out over the horizon, not a single light on for miles... just stars and a big goofy moon.

HART

Well, you'll have to take him
sometime. (beat) Where's the dad?

She looks down at her plate.

JO

Funny enough, he's not around.

HART

Nothing funny about it.

JO

He's in the state pen... JJ will be
13 when he gets out.

HART

I'm sorry Hun.

JO

Probably wouldn't have been around
anyway-- He's a loser.

HART

He did one thing right-- the little
guy's a good egg, isn't he?

JO

Yeah...he's a good boy.

HART

That's a point in dad's corner,
isn't it?!

JO

Let's just eat okay?

CUT TO:

INT. TRAILER - NIGHT

It is deep in the night and inside the trailer everything is a dead calm. The trailer door creaks open ever so slightly then pauses. No sound. It opens all the way.

Hart emerges through the door frame slowly.

HART'S POV: Jo is sleeping soundly. Boss is curled up under her chin, she clings to him.

He watches, smiling, in awe of her. His eyes are big, watery- for a moment a look of regret passes through him. His camera is in his hand at his side, but he shows no intention of raising it.

CUT TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

The Escalade tumbles along the open road.

We REVERSE down the road a little further to find Squirrel.

INT. SQUIRREL'S TRUCK - DAY

Squirrel is looking a bit on the oily side and his manner is tweakish. He mangles a Slim Jim between his teeth, finishing it in two bites, then reaches for the can and pulls out another. He tosses the empty can in the floorboard where it lands amidst a graveyard of other fallen Slim Jim containers.

He lights a cigarette and puts it to his lips, which are still harboring the meat treat. He goes back and forth between the two until he accidentally tears into the butt of the cigarette instead. Sparks from the cherry fall down his chest.

Cursing and tossing them both out the window, he speeds ahead, barreling into the horizon.

CUT TO:

INT. ESCALADE - DAY

Hart veers off onto an exit which leads to a dirt road.

Jo looks up from her knitting.

JO

What're you doing? We outta gas?!

HART

I just want to see something.

JO

Seeing is out. We're in the middle of nowhere!

*

HART

The highway's just behind us.
Don't be so dramatic.

CUT TO:

I/E. OLD BARN - DAY

A battered old barn stands alone in the distance. It's doors hang off kilter, open. The car and trailer are parked on the side of the road.

Hart makes his way awkwardly through the field. Reluctantly, she follows with the cameras.

JO

How did you know this was here?

He continues onward.

HART

There used to be this old barn over in Elm Springs...you got the cameras?

JO

Yes.

HART

I always passed it going to work and for some reason, I just loved it. I looked for it every time I passed by and I always said I was going to stop and take a picture of it. But I was always running late or something or other. Then one day, I was driving by and I looked over...and there was just a pile of wood where the barn used to be. It had fallen in, just wiped out forever. And nobody cared.

They approach the doors of the barn, he turns back to her. She is surprised to see the emotion he wears on his face, his eyes wet with tears.

HART (CONT'D)

I know this isn't that same barn, but at least we're here for this one...

He enters through it's open doors, she follows him inside...

He moves about the barn, the fresh sunlight splintering in through the cracks. He peers through his lens. Jo points her camera towards the loft, focusing.

JO

Last night I dreamed I was back in jail.

HART (V.O.)

Excellent! Did you keep a notebook by your bed?

JO

No, I just remembered.

HART

What happened?

JO

I thought I had a visitor, and I went to the visitation room and no one was there, empty. There was no one in the entire jail. Just me. An' when I talked it just kept echoing. Then I realized I could just leave but I didn't know how to get out. So I just sat there.

*

*

HART

I know that feeling.

JO

How come you never ask me why I was in jail?

HART

I figure you'll tell me if you want to.

He pauses, looking down to the ground covered in hay.

HART (CONT'D)

You don't have to prove anything to me, Jo.

JO

I know.

He puts his camera back up to his face.

HART

How long were you in?

JO

A year.

She pauses, then-

JO (CONT'D)

I was making lunch for JJ. I remember I was trying to get the lid off the jelly jar, my hands were wet so I went to get a paper towel and when I looked up I saw a black 'n white roll to a stop in front of the house.

HART

Sneaky bastards.

JO

Shane was in the back taking a nap-- That's the dad. I knew he had stuff on him-

*

HART

Drugs?

JO

Um, yeah. I yelled for him to wake up, then I grabbed J's hand and went out the back door. I didn't want him to see Shane get busted, so I just started running.

HART

And he could keep up with you? The boy?

JO

Yeah, surprisingly. He's a fast little sucker. We'd ran nearly two blocks when I realized he didn't even have any shoes on his little feet. Poor guy was just haulin.

HART

Really?! Pretty brave.

JO

Oh, he thought it was a blast. He looked up all out of breath and said "Mama, ain'tcha gonna let me win?"

They both laugh at this, but suddenly a quiet cry catches Jo by surprise from within.

HART
It's okay Jo...

She fights through it,

JO
I shoulda stayed put. I shoulda
just made the fucking sandwich, I
know. But I didn't.

HART
It's over now...

JO
The cops were waiting for us when
we got to the next street. One
swooped in and snatched up JJ,
scaring him to death, the other
tackled me to the ground. I kept
playing like it was a game so he
didn't get scared... but he knew.

HART
And what about Shane?

JO
He split. They saw me run through
the back yard and chased me
instead. (Pause) He didn't come
back to say it was his shit, or to
check on J, nothing.

HART
Son of a bitch.

JO
They caught up with him later. With
a sixteen year old. A pregnant one.

HART
Jesus H...

JO
I put up with a bunch of bull shit
because I never wanted my kid to
grow up without a father. But now
I know, fathers are over-rated.

She smiles...

HART
Built up to be every kid's hero,
and sometimes they just barely pass
as men--

Something flutters in the loft above them, startling Hart out of his shoes. He throws his arms over his head for cover. A white dove escapes through a crack in the ceiling, into the sunlight. He peers out from his arms, in awe.

HART (CONT'D)

Would you look at that! A white dove taking refuge in this old thing. This barn isn't forgotten after all.

He turns back to her to see that she has just lowered her camera.

HART (CONT'D)

My God, did you get that?!

JO

It could have been a pigeon.

HART

It wasn't... Unbelievable. You got a draw like Billy the Kid.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. RV CAMP 3 - NEW MEXICO - DUSK

Hart busily works at "setting up camp", preparing the trailer. Jo looks to the nearby Wood.

JO

I'm gonna take a walk...

He puts a hand up and continues working.

She carefully navigates down a darkening pathway, then finally catches sight of what she's looking for.

She slowly approaches Squirrel's car. He is on the hood, smoking.

JO (CONT'D)

Nice night...

SQUIRREL

He brainwashing you or somethin?

JO

No.

SQUIRREL

Then did you not notice we are moving at a snails pace, stopping to take pictures of every monkey's butthole?!

Noticing he is high as a kite.

JO

I haven't seen a monkey yet. I said you could go.

SQUIRREL

And I said I'm not leavin' ya.

JO

What exactly are you expecting in return?

SQUIRREL

What do you mean?

JO

Money? A Fuck? What?!

SQUIRREL

Jeez-- I love you... I'm in love with you, and I have been since the eighth grade. I just been waiting for my brother to blow it like I knew he would...

JO

I'm sorry I said-

SQUIRREL

Marry me.

JO

What?

SQUIRREL

I don't got a ring, but... you can hold onto this until I do.

He hands her his lucky rabbit's foot. She takes it reluctantly in disgust and tries to leave. Squirrel quickly grabs her wrist tightly.

SQUIRREL (CONT'D)

You can think about it! Think about it...

Jo aggressively pulls her arm back and walks backward, escaping.

JO
I gotta go.

CUT TO:

EXT. RV CAMP 3 - LATER

The trailer now glows, door open. Jo meanders up to it... Boss growls at her from his pen, then lays back down upon recognizing her.

JO
Any survivors?

HART (O.C.)
I'm almost ready!

JO
For what?

HART (O.C.)
To teach you to run the ship!

JO
What ship?

He appears in the doorway, grinning.

HART
This one... Welcome to our darkroom!

She steps inside and sees that the back has been transformed with hanging strings, chemicals and tubs, red light bulbs, silver reflective curtains...

HART (CONT'D)
It's like an undercover lab! I thought we would take a look at some of our stuff!

JO
You can do that here?

HART
Sure, it's easy. I've been developing my own photos since I was nine!

JO
Wouldn't it be easier to get a
digital camera?

He scowls...

HART
Life is a process. And hopefully a
lengthy one. When you cut corners,
you miss out on the real reward.
You miss the magic!

JO
I was only kidding...

HART
Now come back here so I can pull
the curtain.

She stands next to him and he slides the thick curtains
across the trailer and fastens them. It is pitch black.

HART (CONT'D)
There we go.

A red light flicks on.

HART (CONT'D)
You always want to work with a
fifteen watt red bulb. Anything
else will ruin your film.

JO
Last time I saw this many chemicals
in a bathroom, it blew up.

He looks at her.

JO (CONT'D)
Kidding...

HART
Okay, what we do first is make sure
the developing tank is clean.

He examines it, she follows suit.

HART (CONT'D)
And then, we add the chemicals.
Grab that jug. Now pour till I say
so...

FADE TO:

INT. AIRSTREAM - MONTAGE

Hart teaching Jo about the negatives, loading the film onto the spool, the temperature of the water, the different solutions...They wave papers back and forth from the tubs and hang dripping prints up on the string with wooden clothespins.

The papers dangle and drip behind them as they close the silver curtains where her bed used to be.

CUT TO:

EXT. RV CAMP 3- NIGHT

The back windows of the trailer have now gone dark, the door closed. Hart prepares a cot in the open air of the camp grounds, stretching a sleeping blanket across it.

JO

You sure you don't want the couch?
I can sleep out here...

HART

No, no. I love it. The fresh air
will do me good. Unless you want
it?

JO

No! That's fine. Well, night...

HART

Night, Darling.

She retreats inside as Hart lays his head on the pillow.

CUT TO:

INT. TRAILER - LATER

Several hours later... Jo lies awake, staring up at the ceiling. She quietly makes her way to the back, opens the curtain, and flips on the red light.

Pictures have begun to take over the pages that dangle above her. She studies them closely...the photograph of the barn, the dove taking flight. It is beautiful. She smiles.

CUT TO:

EXT. RV CAMP 3 - MORNING

The sun has just begun to rise, the dew still clinging to the windows of the trailer. Jo emerges with Boss in her arms. She sets him down on the ground.

JO
Do your potty...

She looks at Hart, still sleeping, for a moment. He stirs.

HART
What's that?! I was just dreaming I lived on my own little island and I was waited on hand and foot by pygmy marmosets...

JO
Even straight out of sleep you're a Mortimer.

HART
Or maybe they were baboons... Yes, pygmy marmosets with baboon butts.

JO
It was a dove.

HART
What time, you say?

JO
In the barn yesterday. It was a dove.

He grins widely, finally awake.

HART
I knew it. How bout that for beginners luck.

JO
I've actually taken a photography class before.

His smile fades.

HART
Oh... why didn't you tell me?! I wouldn't have bored you with all the lessons-

JO

It was just one semester in high school. When I found out what you did, I thought maybe-- but I sucked. I mean, I never paid attention really.

HART

Well that's what high school is for-- not paying attention so you have something to blame your failure on later!

CUT TO:

INT. ESCALADE - DAY

Hart drives as Jo studies the map. Boss sits quietly in her lap.

HART

See if you can find Dripping Springs on there. That's where we'll stop.

JO

Can't we just stay in Austin?

HART

Much better campsite, trust me. You know I went to college there.

JO

How would I know that?

HART

Well I just told you. Then again, where else is there to go to school besides Texas?!

JO

What's wrong with the Razorbacks?

HART

Nothing unless you like winning.

He smiles.

JO

I don't care. Not like I went there or anything.

HART

No?

JO

Couldn't afford it... couldn't afford anywhere.

HART

Well that's what loans are for.

JO

I don't do loans. Nothing but animosity comes from 'em.

HART

God you got a mind like a steel trap, kid.

JO

That was only a couple of days ago.

HART

You want to go to college?

JO

Now? I can't go now. It's too late.

HART

I'll speak with the Dean and-

JO

I don't want to go! I'm 40!

HART

Well if you change your mind-

JO

I won't.

HART

-then it's on me.

JO

Gee thanks.

She glares out the window...

HART

Sorry kid.

JO

I don't want your apologies. My life is too fucked up to even think about an education. I can't even keep it together as it is.

HART

I wish you didn't feel that way. It's never too late.

JO

Horse shit. It's too late for a lot of things so just deal with it and quit pretending it isn't.

HART

Alright Jo. Alright.

The car grows quiet as they travel on.

CUT TO:

EXT. RV CAMP 4 - DRIPPING SPRINGS - LATE AFTERNOON

This camp is lush, quiet, and surrounded by rolling hills.

The trailer is set up on a secluded lot that backs right up to the trees. They have just finished setting up camp.

HART

I figure I can knock it out in an hour or so if I stay on point.

JO

I wouldn't bet on that happening.

HART

You think I wander? In my mind?

JO

You don't?

HART

Well...I do take my ginko. You're welcome to come if you like, but as I said, it's just me rambling on to a disinterested class of wannabe photographers with digital cameras.

JO

You make it sound so fun.

HART
Just being honest.

JO
I'll come.

HART
Oh! Good.

CUT TO:

EXT. COLLEGE LAWN- EARLY EVENING

Hart makes his way across the beautifully landscaped lawn, carrying a bulky black book filled with slides. He has put a sports coat on over his T-shirt. Jo lags a step behind.

HART
I hope I have on appropriate attire
for this shin-dig.

JO
The egg salad on your sleeve is a
nice touch.

HART
Oh, they'll love it. I can hear it
in the photo journals now...'Hart,
just barely alive for his lecture,
still managed to bathe himself in
egg salad beforehand. What-a-kook!'

JO
They'll write about you?

HART
Probably not. I'm just a geezer to
them now. They've moved on to the
next great thing.

Hart and Jo come to approach the building. Hart pauses before opening the door.

HART (CONT'D)
You want a seat up front?

JO
I'll just stand in the back.

As she continues on, the sound of LOUD APPLAUSE floods the night air as he makes his entrance. She smiles to herself.

CUT TO:

INT. LECTURE HALL - A LITTLE LATER

The hall buzzes with the chatter of budding students and faithful fans of Hart's work.

The photograph of the shirt on a stick glows on the screen.

Hart stands behind the podium, projection clicker in hand. He leans forward to the podium's microphone. *

HART

Any questions out there? Are you all still awake?

Laughter brews. Hands shoot up. He points.

STUDENT

Mr. Hart, I am really blown away by this Hometown Collection. I think it is quite possibly my favorite and so different from your other work.

HART

Oh! Thank you very much!

STUDENT

My question is this, how did you keep an unbiased lens when you were clearly in a place filled with great emotion for you? You didn't ever feel obligated to slide towards the sentimental?

Hart smiles at this.

HART

It is not my job to be sentimental. That is not why people commission me, that is not why you buy my books, that is not why I take pictures. I am simply there as a reflection, a moment. Like this photograph, it is the house I grew up in.

There is a collective "Ahh" from the audience.

Jo stands at the back of the room, crushed. He was in town...

HART (CONT'D)

It would have been very easy for me to go around the back of the house, remove the wood panel second from the bottom, and snap my name carved into the house with my granddad's knife. But I found the shirt much more truthful. Much more free.

Another hand goes up in the back.

HART (CONT'D)

Yes, I see a hand in the back. Go ahead.

JO

When were they taken?

Hart squints his eyes to clarify that it is Jo. It is.

HART

Ah! I thought that was you. Everyone, this is my daughter, Jo Hart. We are working on a book together...

The audience turns to see Jo. She is mortified.

HART (CONT'D)

As I was saying, my job is not to be sentimental not-- not to drag you through a revisit of my past-- But to act as a mere reflection of how life went on in my hometown without me. I don't meddle.

He looks to where Jo stood, but she is gone. Out of words, he slowly sips at his water and gazes out at the sea of strangers, they morph together into one unfocussed blob. His eyes close, his breath catches...he slowly opens them again, focus slipping back into place.

HART (CONT'D)

Next.

CUT TO:

EXT. COLLEGE PARKING LOT- NIGHT

Hart maneuvers across the parking lot, politely shaking off students as he goes. His eyes scan for Jo but she is nowhere in sight.

He reaches the Escalade and pops the back open to put away his slides. A dark figure sits, resting against the tire of the car, her silhouette illuminated from the street light.

HART

Jo?

She doesn't move.

HART (CONT'D)

You didn't like them...

JO

You should've told me what this was about. You should have told me they were of home!

HART

Well I wanted you to see them.

JO

Then why didn't you just stop by and show me while you were in town instead of ambushing me in front of a bunch of strangers.

HART

I wanted to show you that I heard what you said about my work. You were right, I'm a fraud... a leech. I have never shown these publicly to anyone.

JO

When were you there?... I mean, how could you not see me when you were right there?

HART

I'm a coward. This was the best I could do.

JO

And you still have yet to answer the question. When were you there?!

HART

Last week.

JO?

What-

HART
Funny, I had just gotten back--
then you showed up.

JO
That's not funny!

HART
I've taken a million pictures of
that place but failed every time to
have the guts to take the one I
really came for.

CUT TO:

INT. ESCALADE - NIGHT

They drive back to the campsite in silence. Thoughts play themselves out on Hart's face. Jo is an ice sculpture, vacant of any emotion.

HART
What about the photographs?

JO
What about them?

HART
Did you like them, I mean?

JO
Now you're fishing for a
compliment?

HART
No... your honest opinion.

JO
Honestly, you're blinker has been
on for a half a mile and I'm
wondering if you're ever gonna
notice. It's driving me nuts.

HART
Oh. Sorry.

She goes back to staring out the window.

HART (CONT'D)
I spoke with the publisher today.
Incidentally, you never gave me the
account for the wire transfer.

JO

What is incidental about that? The blinker is still on. You can't hear that clicking?!

*

HART

I'm old Jo, I can't hear a lot of things... Things start to go, what do you want.

JO

I want it in cash.

HART

What?

JO

The money. I want it in cash. I don't have an account.

HART

Oh. Well, I guess we could work that out. I'll just have them... transfer it to mine and I'll write you a check for cash.

JO

Fine.

CUT TO:

EXT. RV CAMP 4- DRIPPING SPRINGS - NIGHT

Hart unlocks the trailer door and scoops Boss out of his pen. He slips a leash around his neck. Jo waits for him to emerge before she enters.

HART

I'm going to take the little guy on a walk. Wanna come?

JO

I'm going to bed.

HART

Alright. I figure we'll get an early start tomorrow. We should be to Mobile by Tuesday if the weather's good.

JO

Good night.

She disappears inside the trailer.

HART

Jo...

There is no answer. Without anything more to say, he turns and takes off on his walk.

INT. TRAILER - SAME

Jo sits on her bed, her head in her hands, shaking with a silent, relentless cry that has been bottled inside since she was a little girl.

CUT TO:

I/E. AIRSTREAM - NIGHT

Jo watches Hart's chest rise and fall with slumber, Boss cuddled next to him.

Like a ninja, she slips out of the bed and across the room in one fluid motion. She hesitates by the door, her hand on the handle.

Neither stir.

She slowly swings the door open and disappears in the night.

CUT TO:

EXT. WOODED AREA - NIGHT

The sky is dark, menacing, void of any distant stars. Squirrel leans against the back of the his car. Jo walks up.

SQUIRREL

I've gotten kinda used to it. Man versus wild... It's really freeing! I think when we get JJ back, we should take him camping. And then to Disney World!

JO

Squirrel wait...

SQUIRREL

Sure! Get him a pair of those ears with his name stitched right on the back. Maybe I'll get me a pair of them too. And-

JO
Shut up for a moment.

SQUIRREL
What's wrong?

JO
(listening)
Shut up...

CUT TO:

EXT. WOODED AREA - CONTINUOUS

Hart stumbles over a low lying shrub on the path, his hands grasp to catch him. He recovers, brings his camera to his face and CLICKS.

BACK TO:

EXT. WOODED AREA - CONTINUOUS

Jo is frozen listening to the sound of the camera.

JO
Son of a bitch! Stay here!

SQUIRREL
Hey! Where you going?!

She takes off toward the sound of the clicks through a dark maze of trees, the path barely visible, winding. She stumbles several times but never slows her pace.

She emerges from the trees and rushes for the trailer.

Its door lies open.

She charges inside-

Hart lies asleep in the same position as before. She watches him. His back is turned from the door, his face to CAMERA. He holds his breath.

JO
I heard you! I heard you out there...

He pretends to wake up, looking dazed.

HART
Jo? What is it-- are you okay?

JO
You were out there. I heard you.

HART
I don't know what you're talking
about. Out where... I was asleep...
Where were you?

She stares at him. He is not going to give.

JO
Why was the door open?

HART
It was? I have no idea... Where is
Boss?

They look around the room, panic creeping in. Hart dashes
outside...

HART (CONT'D)
BOSS! HERE BOSS!!

CUT TO:

EXT. RV CAMP 4- DRIPPING SPRINGS - DAWN

The sky has just begun to change from night to day.

Jo sits, motionless, in the camp chair. Her eyes are peeled
on the trees, waiting.

Hart pops his head out of the trailer.

HART
I'm going to take a shower.

JO
Fine.

HART
You haven't slept yet?

JO
No.

HART
Well, why don't you just close your
eyes for a bit. Staying awake out
there won't help anything.

She gives no reaction as an answer.

HART (CONT'D)

In that case, the coffee's on.

He ducks back inside.

After he is gone, she stands and heads for the trees once again. She searches through the maze of trees. She isn't just looking for Boss, but sort of "ghosting" through the wilderness and her life. She is running, searching, hiding, all at the same moment.

CUT TO:

EXT. RV CAMP 4- DRIPPING SPRINGS - LATER

When she arrives back at the trailer, it is hitched to the truck. Hart awaits, ready to move out.

JO

He come back?

Hart looks out past her.

HART

No.

JO

Then why are we leaving?

HART

What do you mean? He's gone Jo.

JO

We can't just leave him here!

HART

He's not coming back.

JO

How do you know?

Jo is quickly growing hysterical.

HART

I know him! He would be back by now if he was coming. Trust me, he's trained to-

JO

What if he's lost? Or hurt?!

HART

If it would make you feel better to wait a bit-

JO

How do you do that?!

She moves aggressively towards him. He stumbles backwards a bit, startled by her reaction.

HART

What do you-

JO

How do you just leave? How can you just-- pack up and leave?!

*

She stands face to face with him, her body firm-demanding an answer, but her face giving in to the desire to cry.

He places his hands on her shoulders.

HART

Jo listen to me. I trained him, I have spent every moment with him since he was a pup. I just know- he's gone. And waiting is too painful.

She shakes away from him, fury taking over her flailing arms.

JO

If you love something, you don't just leave! You don't just run off because it's convenient! You are supposed to stay!

HART

What are we talking about-

JO

Is there a heart in there or are you just EGO?!

HART

If you want to talk about it-

JO

How do you sleep at night... Knowing you have a family out there- - And now I find out you didn't just leave once... you came and went all the time!

HART
Not all the time...

JO
I was waiting for you!

HART
You mean to tell me you have never had the thought that maybe JJ would be better off without you?

JO
Oh is that what you've been telling yourself?! That you were doing me a favor? You selfish prick.

HART
Yes... I know. But that's the decision I made. What can I do about it now?

JO
Nothing. Just keep leaving.

HART
Hey I will accept responsibility for the pain I have brought on you. I was wrong. But you can't keep blaming me for everything.

JO
Fine. Take off. But I'm not leaving the dog.

He looks at her a moment, she is resolved. He nods and goes inside the trailer, closing the door.

FADE TO:

EXT. RV CAMP 4- DRIPPING SPRINGS - DAY

Jo lays on a blanket in the sun, her eyes looking towards the clouds.

Hart approaches her cautiously.

HART
As long as we're here, I thought I might go into town, then for a short hike if you want to-

JO
I don't. I'll wait here.

HART
Ok darling. Well...

He climbs into the car, starting it.

She waits until he is gone, then gets up and goes inside the trailer.

CUT TO:

INT. TRAILER - CONTINUOUS

It starts slow, her snooping process... carefully going through the drawers, the bags... then begins to grow more manic. She discovers a drawer under the couch. Pulls out a large envelope. She finds pictures of her in Los Angeles next to Squirrel's car, an intimate picture of her and Chase, it goes on. She realizes she's been the subject all along.

She snatches up his camera and pulls out the film.

CUT TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

Hart drives toward town and notices Squirrel's truck in an open ravine.

CUT TO:

EXT. RAVINE- SQUIRREL'S TRUCK - DAY

Squirrel is passed out with his mouth open, drooling after many days without sleep.

UT TO:

EXT. RAVINE- SQUIRREL'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Squirrel wakes up frightened and confused to a gun in his mouth.

HART
Don't even think about it.
(chuckling)
I've always wanted to say that
mother fucker. Now...slowly hand
me your wallet. Now your keys.

Squirrel starts shaking.

HART (CONT'D)
You're acting like a little old
bitch right now Mr. Squirrel.

CUT TO:

EXT. RAVINE- SQUIRREL'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Hart opens the car door. Gun still in Squirrel's mouth.

HART
Get out. Kneel down.

Hart forces Squirrel to kneel next to his car. Hart presses
the gun to the back of Squirrel's head.

CUT TO:

EXT. RAVINE- SQUIRREL'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

CLOSE UP ON SQUIRREL WITH GUN AGAINST HIS HEAD

HART (V.O.)
I knew you were following us since
we first left L.A. I saw you. I
know that your name is Dale Ray and
that you have quite a wrap.
Traveling out of state without
notifying your parole officer is a
big no no, isn't it? I believe it's
a violation that activates your
suspended sentence of ten years.
You can join that piece of shit
brother of yours. If I ever hear
you're around my daughter again,
I'll kill you.

CUT TO:

EXT. RAVINE- SQUIRREL'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

The piercing sound of a gun goes off. Hart points and fires
again.

CUT TO:

EXT. RAVINE- SQUIRREL'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

CLOSE ON TIRE DEFLATING

CUT TO:

EXT. RAVINE- SQUIRREL'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

CLOSE on rear of Escalade. Escalade pulls out of ravine. CAMERA PANS right, BOOMS up, and WIDENS out revealing Squirrel still kneeling, trembling, and the truck shot up.

CUT TO:

EXT. RV CAMP 4- DRIPPING SPRINGS - A LITTLE LATER

The Escalade slowly backs it's way into the parking spot.

Hart climbs out wearily.

HART

Jo?

No answer.

He makes his way to the trailer, peeking inside.

He gasps, freezing in place...

HART (CONT'D)

JO?

She is gone. The evidence, scattered on the floor.

CUT TO:

EXT. RV CAMP 4- DRIPPING SPRINGS - LATER

The trailer is hitched to the Escalade. Hart wanders around the site, picking up any trash, checking once again for any sign of Jo.

He tosses the bag in the receptacle, then climbs into the car.

HART

Little Buddy?! Boss? I'm leaving now...

He waits a long moment, but is only granted silence. He is officially alone.

CUT TO:

EXT. CAR DEALERSHIP- DAY

The Escalade and Airstream are parked across four parking spots in the small dealership.

The DEALER (20's), big guy with a young looking face and a sports jacket that is too small, wanders out to meet him.

DEALER

How can I help you pal?

HART

I wanna leave that 2011 Escalade and that mint '67 Airstream in your possession. If I don't return in seven days... they are both yours.

He tosses him the keys. The dealer looks dumbstruck.

HART (CONT'D)

No time for paperwork. But, um-- how fast will that go?

The dealer follows Hart's eyes to a car in the distance.

CUT TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

We see a black 2011 CAMERO absolutely fly past a sign:

WELCOME TO ARKANSAS

CUT TO:

EXT. BETTY'S HOUSE- AFTERNOON

Hart stands on the porch. He is white, sweaty...

He rings the bell, clutching the manila envelope in his other hand.

After a moment, the door opens. Betty stares out, bewildered. She collects herself.

BETTY

Well, look what the kitty done drug in.

HART

Hello Betty.

BETTY

That wasn't so hard was it? Out of thirty six years, you get her for a couple of days and manage to break that girl. Well done. Though I expected nothing less.

HART

But you did-- a heck of a job, Betty. Heck of a job.

BETTY

Oh...

HART

No no, I mean it... She's beautiful. Smart. Talented-

BETTY

Save it. You're too late.

She starts to close the door, he catches it with his foot.

HART

I need to talk to her.

BETTY

She's not here, Joe.

HART

Okay...Can I just-- give you this then?

He offers up the envelope. Hesitantly she takes it.

HART (CONT'D)

It's my assets. All of them.

She stares him down long and hard.

HART (CONT'D)

They were all hers thirty minutes after she arrived. I was just waiting for the right opportunity. But after a little time, some-- concerns... came into play.

BETTY

Concerns, that what you call it.

HART

People change.

BETTY

Mmm hmm.

HART

I may be a lost cause... but she's not. We can't give up on her now. Look at this-

He hands her a photo.

She looks at him, the emotion pooling in his eyes. Her demeanor softens.

HART (CONT'D)

She took it.

BETTY

She is an awful lot like you, ya know.

HART

I know. Sorry about that.

BETTY

Well, better come in then.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOLIDAY INN - NIGHT

Hart knocks on the hotel door.

JO

(opening door)
Get outta here!

HART

Please hear me out.

She stops, then turns and walks right up to him. She slaps him hard across the face.

HART (CONT'D)

Fair enough.

JO

How dare you show up here! You got what you needed.

HART

It's not what it looks like-

JO
They are pictures! They're EXACTLY
what they look like!

HART
I didn't want you to see them until
I was finished because you wouldn't
understand-

JO
Understand!? You know what I
understand, what you taught me?
That photographs are a cheap
imitation of the real thing. That's
what you gave everything up for. It
may last longer, but it will never
love you back.

HART
I know that.

JO
Why are you here? I got noting for
you.

HART
I wanted to give you these- and
this.

He holds up the pictures with one hand then gives her a check-
which she immediately shreds.

JO
Why are you here?

He stares at her.

JO (CONT'D)
What do you want?!

HART
I'm dying.

She observes him coldly.

JO
Finally. Honesty. Well sorry,
you're just gonna have to die by
yourself because I'm not
interested.

HART
I want to see my grandson.

JO

Well that's gonna be hard.

HART

Please, Jo. Let's finish what we started...

JO

I am finished.

HART

What about the boy?

JO

What about him? He's better off. I'm following in your footsteps! That must make you feel proud.

HART

My footsteps lead off the edge of a cliff! I'm the fuck up Jo! A selfish, bastard, charlatan who wasted *EVERYTHING!*

He wavers off balance. She remains still.

HART (CONT'D)

But I am proud. You are the one thing I have to be proud of. You are so good.

She laughs.

JO

(laughing)

Good?!

HART

You will make such an amazing mother. I'll do everything in my power to make that a possibility for you- No more games. Just tell me what it's gonna take, Jo.

JO

That's the point. I don't know.

HART

Can I just show you something? Will you just look- Then I'll leave.

He earnestly hands the photographs to her.

She looks at the first, then the second, the third...

HART (CONT'D)

They were all double exposed-- see both images? I wanted to show you how astonishing you were in my eyes as well as reflect how you saw yourself. It doesn't make what I did right, I know that. But now you know. Yes, you were the book. But amazingly enough, you rewrote yourself. You have such a force in you, such a current, that even the strongest willed can't resist your love.

She stops on the last one. A photograph of her curled up with Boss.

HART (CONT'D)

I didn't dare touch that one. It's perfect.

She hands them back.

JO

I'm sorry you're sick... but my hands are tied.

HART

No they aren't. Not yet. I'm here, better late than never.

She rolls her eyes.

HART (CONT'D)

I mean, look at you. Look at this place. Is this what you want?! Why settle for the rat's nest when you can have the moon? I believe in you, kid. I really do. You have so many gifts-

JO

Gifts? Gifts?! I have never been gifted at anything in my whole life. Everything I have, I've had to work for. Even you...even you made me earn it.

HART

You're right. I manipulated you, I belittled you...lied. I get it. But trust me, I'm getting mine.

(MORE)

HART (CONT'D)

The worst thing, Jo, is to come to the end of the road and realize what it was you were searching for all along is actually right where you left it.

Jo avoids his eyes.

JO

I don't know...

HART

You know the best way to get out of a hole? Stop digging.

She looks at him- they communicate with their eyes in that way that only fathers and daughters can.

HART (CONT'D)

No pictures, no stops, just straight there and back.

JO

I drive.

He tosses her the keys.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOLIDAY INN- PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Hart leads Jo in the direction of a parked Camero. Jo scans the parking lot for the Escalade and Susan.

JO

Where's Susan?

HART

I traded for speed.

CUT TO:

INT. CAMERO - NIGHT

Her eyes are fixed on the road. He stares out into the night.

HART

Do you want me to read the map?

JO

Sure.

He digs it out of the glove box.

JO (CONT'D)
But I know where I'm going.

CUT TO:

EXT. FREEWAY - NIGHT

CLOSE ON A FREEWAY SIGN: MOBILE 250 MILES

CUT TO:

INT. CAMERO - NIGHT

Jo drives and eats a cheeseburger at the same time.

Hart is busy indulging in french fries and a milk shake.

HART
So, are you up for my side of the
story?

JO
That depends on the story.

HART
The leaving story.

She takes another bite, thinking.

JO
I'm not sure.

HART
I'll start and you can honk or
something if you want me to stop...
You were three years old and we
were still living with your
mother's parents. I had just gotten
a freelance job for a magazine. It
was a big deal, national
publication. I went to the magazine
and asked for an advance to put
down on a house. And I came home
with Susan instead...

JO
Oh my God-

HART

Yes, that's what your mother said. I thought it was romantic. A home on wheels to chase our dreams wherever they took us. To see the world and get out of that town. It was my ticket out. Your mother took one look at it and said "That thing or us." She wasn't coming and I wasn't staying. My dreams were bigger than that town. I couldn't give them up- that's death. So I left. No horn... pretty good.

JO

That's it? That's what I have waited all this time to hear?

HART

That's all I have. I wasn't built to be a parent. I just don't have it in me.

JO

Well you sure didn't give it much of a go.

HART

No, I suppose not. (Pause) You know, I was holding you the very first time you opened your eyes. We were in that little hospital room in Springdale, the nurse had just left... and I looked down at your face, you had little scratches on your cheeks from your fingernails. I could tell right away you were a fighter. And then your little eyelids scrunched together and opened. And I saw this tiny pair of blue eyes staring at me... and I realized that I was the first thing you ever saw. Me. I felt so unworthy of that honor. I knew I was gonna just let you down, disappoint you... and I whispered 'I'm sorry'. I couldn't bear it. I handed you off to the first pair of arms I came across. You started to cry. I guess that's when I really left. It was all me. Just like how if you hadn't decided to get JJ it would be all on you.

Jo's eyes are flooded with tears.

FADE TO:

EXT. RIVER BANK - PRE DAWN

The Camero peels down a dirt road and stops in a meadow. Hart is fast asleep. She nudges him awake.

JO

Get out.

HART

What are we doing?

JO

You said we'd do things my way...
So get out.

He gets out slowly, the pitch of night evaporating into pink all around them.

Her door slowly opens, she gets out as well.

HART

What... what is this?

JO

You want to know how I used to see
myself? It's right there.

She nods in the direction of an old dead tree with broken branches.

JO (CONT'D)

We used to come here every summer
on our way to Aunt LaDonna's. We
swung off one of the branches until
it broke. I fell hard. After that I
never swung again because I was
afraid of falling. That tree is me.

HART

You can't be afraid of falling
Jo... because its bound to happen
if you're really living. Look at
rain, and snow... stars! They fall
and it's beautiful. It's the best
part about them.

JO

Stars fall because they are dying.

HART
No. They are becoming new again.
That's the way it is...

They sit for a moment and watch as the colors in the sky change.

CUT TO:

INT. CAMERO - DAY

Jo looks at her watch. Hart is in thought.

JO
Maybe I should call?

HART
I hope he likes me.

JO
Don't worry. He won't.

He looks startled, which makes her laugh.

JO (CONT'D)
I'm kidding. Jesus.

HART
Can you pull over darling. My
stomach's not right... too much
dairy too fast.

She swerves into a Wal-Mart parking lot.

CUT TO:

EXT. WAL-MART PARKING LOT - DAY

Hart gets out immediately, trying to walk it off. Breathing heavily.

HART
Jo?

JO
What?

HART
Could you get out...

JO
Why?

He doesn't answer... she gets out and looks at him.

HART

It occurred to me that we don't
have a picture together.

JO

We're at Wal-Mart.

HART

I know. It couldn't be more
perfect.

He waves a WOMAN headed back to her car over to him.

HART (CONT'D)

Good afternoon Ma'am-

WOMAN

Yer car broke? I ain't got no
cables.

HART

No, no...I was wondering if you
could take a picture of me and my
daughter real quick?

The WOMAN hesitates, finding this a very odd request. She finally obliges and takes his camera from him.

HART (CONT'D)

Just push this.

WOMAN

Like 'at?

She snaps a picture.

HART

Yes, just like that. Now, come
here Jo.

He pulls her close to him, leaning into her and she struggles to support his weight.

JO

Easy...you're gonna pull me over.

HART

Sorry...sorry.

WOMAN

Ya'll ready?

JO
Yes, take it.

HART
Count to three.

WOMAN
Okay...One...

HART
I love you Jayme Jo.

WOMAN
Two...

HART
Please remember that...

Jo looks at him. He is pale, balmy-- and his eyes are distant.

WOMAN
Three!

The camera SNAPS.

JO
You okay? You look-

HART
I'm fine. Just the dairy. Thank
you, ma'am.

He collects his camera. His hands shake terribly.

HART (CONT'D)
Thank you.

They begin to walk back to the car. He walks a few paces behind her.

She hears the camera hit the pavement. Hart collapses on the ground.

JO
Hart? Hart!

She rushes to him.

JO (CONT'D)
Dad...Help... Help!! Please...

The parking lot is silent.

JO (CONT'D)
HELP ME! 911...

Finally, the same WOMAN from before darts around a car to JO's aid.

JO (CONT'D)
He just fell...I don't know...

WOMAN
Just stay calm, hon. Stay with him. I'll go get help. Stay calm. Talk to him...

The WOMAN rushes quickly in the direction of WalMart, disappearing inside.

JO
Look at me...look at me! Wake up right now! Open your eyes! You are not going to do this to me. You can't leave- It's not fair! Open your eyes, god damn it!

Hart does slowly open his eyes for a moment, looking up at her. He smiles softly out of one side of his mouth. His eyes close and his face goes soft again.

She stares at him for a moment, then scoops the camera from the pavement.

She raises it up to her face and begins to shoot.

The WOMAN re-emerges from the store with several of the WORKERS. They rush towards the two.

WOMAN
The ambulance is on the way! What the hell are you doing?!

Jo's hands continue to fire away, but her face is frozen in fear. One of the workers tries to pry the camera away but she fights him off like a savage.

JO
Get the fuck away from us! Get away!

Red and blue lights flash in the distance. The ambulance approaches.

FADE TO:

EXT. WAL-MART PARKING LOT - NIGHT

It is deep in the night. Jo slowly walks across the desolate lot until she reaches the car. She climbs inside.

CUT TO:

INT. CAMERO - CONTINUOUS

Jo tosses a clear bag of his 'possessions' onto the passenger seat. She starts the ignition... 'Snow Bird' begins to play through the speakers. She turns off the music abruptly.

She looks around the car. Hart's things are still in the back seat, his milk shake in the cup holder...

CUT TO:

EXT. WAL-MART PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Jo jumps out, grabs the shake and hurdles it across the lot. She pulls everything out of the car that was his and puts it in a pile on the pavement.

CUT TO:

INT. CAMERO - CONTINUOUS

Jo gets back in the driver's seat and throws the car into drive and heads for the road.

His camera still sits in the seat beside her. She missed that one. She scoops it up, rolls down the window, but finds herself unable to let go. Everything inside her is suddenly released all at once and she weeps.

She gives in and hits the brakes. She does a U turn and heads back. She is crying.

She pulls back into the spot, trying to breathe.

JO (V.O.)

This isn't a salute. Or a
compilation from a happy ending. I
don't even think happy endings
exist- because they're endings.

She gets out and goes to his pile of things, then carefully loads each one back in and closes the trunk.

We reverse out of the car- out of the lot- exposing the highway that lies before her as the stars gaze on in wonder.

FADE INTO:

INT. GALLERY - NIGHT

Jo standing behind a mic, images of their trip surrounding her. She looks fantastic, happy. She speaks to a crowd of people sipping wine and hanging on her every word.

JO

It's just a window into our time together on the road...finding our heart's location. Thank you for coming... And as dad would say- just look and move on!

A rumble of laughter and applause... Jo smiles.

JJ sits in a chair playing with Jo's camera. Next to him Chase, Betty and Daniel stand applauding. Everyone is smiling.

CUT TO:

EXT. GALLERY - CONTINUOUS

We reverse out of the gallery window to reveal it is the same gallery in LA as before. The window reads " Two Harts"

THE END.