

**Homeward Bound**  
**THE INCREDIBLE JOURNEY**

Rewrite by  
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from a Screenplay by  
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Based on the novel  
by Sheila Burnford

March 15, 1991

FADE IN:

1

1 EXT. FRESNO - DAY

A crisp autumn afternoon. A brisk wind has blown away the smog making the rugged High Sierras to the east seem much closer than they really are.

The wind shakes a stand of trees whipping up a flurry of first autumn leaves. They gush down alleys like streams and blow through VARIOUS IMAGES of the city:

The few HIGH-RISES DOWNTOWN thrust up unnaturally next to OLD SPANISH BUILDINGS with facades from the early part of the century.

Gradually, the city becomes less urban more bedroom community.

Leaves plaster themselves against the chain-link fence of a small empty school yard.

WE proceed into a QUIET NEIGHBORHOOD: block after block of lots separated by fences and trees. Kids play in the yards...dogs chase bicycles...fathers wheel strollers...joggers wave as they pass.

Over this we hear the VOICE of a fourteen year-old boy.

CHANCE (V.O.)

I always felt like a stranger. That's the thing about being an orphan. People can take you in and be really nice.

TRACK TO:

THE BURNFORD HOUSE

At the very end of the block sits a brick house with white shutters and carefully trimmed shrubs. White balloons tied to the fence posts and a driveway overflowing with cars indicate a celebration in progress.

CHANCE (V.O. CONT.)

But you can never get past the feeling that you're crashing somebody else's party.

2 INT. THE ENTRANCE HALL

Photographs on the wall track the progress of three children growing up. An eldest boy with solemn eyes: a cute delicate little girl and a chubby toddler. Included in the photos we also see two family pets: a black Labrador and a Siamese cat.

CHANCE (V.O.)

Well, I couldn't anyway. Not back then.

3 THE LIVING ROOM

A wedding in progress. About a dozen people in attendance including the BRIDE'S PARENTS, her sister, the GROOM'S PARENTS, and his BROTHER. The bride and groom face the Minister. The groom, BOB, has never been married before. His scholarly world has provided him little contact with children but he's thoroughly in love with LAURA and fully prepared to take on the responsibility and role of father to her children.

CHANCE (V.O.)

It all started the day Jamie's mother got married.

3 cont'd.

2 3 cont'd

The bride is flanked by her three children from the hall photographs: sincere, responsible twelve year-old PETER and pretty, well-groomed, nine year-old HOPE who's holding the hand of a very bored six year-old JAMIE.

MINISTER

...as Laura and Bob exchange rings as a symbol of their commitment.

He pauses. There's a long uncomfortable beat. Hope nudges her little brother.

HOPE

(under her breath)

Jamie!

Jamie digs around in his pocket briefly...creating a ripple of anxious laughter through the onlookers. He finally comes up with the ring and drops it into his sister's hand. She passes it down to Peter who gives the ring to his mother. Relieved, Bob winks at Jamie.

CHANCE (V.O)

He was my best friend.

WE CONTINUE ON...past the wedding party...up the stairs and into the DEN.

CHANCE (V.O)

See he rescued me from the...well, back then when I was little I called it...The Very Bad Place.

4. THE DEN

4.

We MOVE THROUGH the furniture which has been covered with sheets past a pile of suitcases. One of the suitcases hasn't been closed properly. Pieces of clothing are sticking out.

CHANCE (V.O)

Jamie even gave me my name. Funny thing was... I didn't even know I was supposed to have one. I guess there were a lot of things I didn't know back then. Anyway, I had just turned one...

The VOICE fades out. We hear the sound of something ripping from behind the sheet-covered couch and out bounds a huge, galomping, gangly, monster of a puppy with what appears to be the remains of a women's silk blouse in his mouth. He growls playfully, humongous paws stepping on the tail of the blouse and shakes his head vigorously...ripping it even more. WE hear the same VOICE but much younger, perhaps around seven years old. The Puppy speaks through his mind rather than his mouth.

CHANCE

(growling)

*Take that you! I'll teach you to mess the Great Hunter of the Frozen North!*

5. The door creaks open and we hear a horrified gasp. The puppy freezes....caught in the act. The door widens further and we find that the intruder is the sleek Siamese cat from the pictures. SASSY is smart, independent, graceful and a perfectionist about her appearance. She's also slightly haughty and standoffish except when she wants something. Terribly spoiled by Hope, she's the epitome of "Because I'm worth it" and expects to be treated that way.

5.

SASSY

*Nice going! That's only her favorite blouse.*

5 Cont'd

3  
5 cont c

CHANCE

*The savage beast spots his helpless victim.  
He crouches....*

SASSY

*Oh, grow up!*

CHANCE

*He leaps!*

He bounds awkwardly toward her growling "ferociously." She hisses.

6. LIVING ROOM

6.

SHADOW, the black Labrador from the hall pictures lies at the bottom of the stairs watching over the ceremony like a loyal family servant. From the grey around his eyes and muzzle, we can tell that he's getting along in years. He's a dog of elderly dignity: a gallant creature, wise, with a loving loyal heart and eyes that understand...eyes with soul. Shadow was little more than a pup when Peter was born but he instantly appointed himself the child's guardian. Shadow's sole purpose in life is to serve and protect Peter, no matter the cost to himself.

MINISTER

*...now pronounce you....*

But the ceremony is interrupted by loud thumping, scrabbling of toenails, barking, yowling and several painful yips from above. It goes on sound serious if not downright bloody. The Minister hesitates. The guests look up at the ceiling nervously. Alarmed, Bob glances at Laura but she and the children don't even flinch. But Shadow is instantly on his feet.

SHADOW

*I'll handle this!*

But Peter stops him with brisk hand motion.

PETER

*Shadow...lie down!*

With a reluctant glance up the stairs, Shadow obeys Peter and lies uneasily back down. Laura nods to the minister as the ruckus continues. He continues...voice raised slightly to compete with the yowling, whining, banging, and yipping.

MINISTER

*...now..uh...pronounce you husband...  
and uh...wife. You may kiss the bride.*

Bob is still distracted by the hell-breaking-loose upstairs until Laura pulls him into deep heartfelt kiss. The kids make faces and roll their eyes.

7. INT. THE KITCHEN - LATER

CUT TO:

7.

The small kitchen is barely large enough for the catering crew who carry trays in and out. The chef removes a tray of hot hors d'oeuvres from the oven and rapidly arranges them on a serving tray.

7 cont'd

4

7 cont'd

CHEF  
(to the passing waiter)  
The salmon's ready to go.

In her hurry, she drops one of the hors d'oeuvres to the floor.

8. THE FLOOR - ON THE HORS D'OEUVRE

8.

Chance is there like lightning. Seemingly unscathed from his battle with Sassy, he inhales the hot morsel...chewing gingerly.

*H-h-hot!*

CHANCE

9. THE CHEF - HIS POV

9.

He looks up, panting and salivating, hoping for another accident.

CHANCE (cont.)  
(panting and salivating)  
*Come on dropanother one please?*

Ignoring the puppy, she finishes arranging the tray and hands it to one of the servers. Chance follows him out the door.

CHANCE (cont.)  
*Oh come on beanice guy and give me another one.*

10. DINING ROOM - CHANCE'S POV

10.

He dogs the server's heels, in and around the legs of the chatting guests who surround a large buffet table.

CATERER  
Sorry, fella. Not for doggies.

The caterer sets the tray on the table and goes back into the kitchen. Chance sidles up the table. He's so big his eyes peer over the edge. They go wide at the sight of: a large turkey, a platter of shrimp, salads, cheeses, breads. The puppy's eyes shift right...left and....

SHADOW  
*Don't even think about it.*

Chance turns to look at Shadow who's sitting, calm and patient, never taking his eyes off the younger dog.

SHADOW (cont.)  
*Stealing from the table's not tolerated around here.*

CHANCE  
*Why don't you mind your own business?*

Chance turns back to the food on the table, licks his chops and...

Shadow leaps at him, growling menacingly. Chance backs away.

CHANCE (cont.)

*Okay...okay...I just wanted to smell it*

Shadow sits back down, leveling his steady gaze on Chance.

SHADOW

*I'm watching you, pup.*

CHANCE

*Yeah and I'm really scared of some ol' gray-muzzle!*

A hand comes down to pat Shadow on the head. He glances up and thumps his tail at LAURA'S FATHER who leans over the table and heaps his plate with as much as it will hold. Standing nearby, Laura smiles at the overfull plate.

LAURA

You can come back for seconds, Dad.

LAURA'S FATHER

No, I promised your mother I'd only have one helping today.

He keeps piling it on layer after layer equal to about five helpings. She shakes her head and moves off as BOB'S FATHER approaches. He picks up a piece of jicama, tastes it, makes a face and looks around to see if anyone else is watching. Then he slips the jicama to Chance. Chance takes the jicama eagerly, chews for a second, has second thoughts, and spits it out onto the floor.

The father's exchange an amused grin.

Spotting the mess on the floor, Laura hurries over. She pushes Chance out of the way and scoops it up with a napkin

LAURA

Chance! Stop begging!

The puppy wags his tail submissively and moves off to beg somewhere else. As Laura deposits the napkin into the trash can., she's joined by GRACE, a sweet-faced elderly neighbor.

GRACE

Sure will be lonely around here without you.

LAURA

Look on the bright side. Your garden will finally have a fighting chance without dogs and bikes...

GRACE

Oh, I don't mind a few trampled flowers.

Laura slips an arm around her and gives her a squeeze.

LAURA

We'll miss you too, Grace.

GRACE

How long will this sabbatical of Bob's last anyway?

10 Cont'd (2)

10<sup>6</sup> Cont'd (2)

LAURA  
We'll be back in five months.

GRACE  
(distressed)  
Five months!

11. A CORNER OF THE DINING ROOM

The MOTHERS-IN-LAW stand together in a corner of the dining room eating from their paper plates. BOB'S MOTHER glances down at monstrous Chance who's gazing at her big pleading eyes. He licks his chops.

CHANCE  
*Oh please can I have some please can I can I huh?*

She waves a distasteful hand at him.

BOB'S MOTHER  
Shoo...go on...shoo!  
(a thought)  
They're not taking all these pets to San Francisco, are they?

LAURA'S MOTHER  
(explaining between bites)  
No, Laura has a friend from college who has a ranch up near Barstow. She's agreed to take the animals while they're gone.

Bob's mother glances uncomfortably down at Chance who hasn't budged.

CHANCE  
*Just a little bite oh come on don't be stingy.*

BOB'S MOTHER  
Shoo, I said!

When he doesn't budge, she takes Laura's mother's arm and they move away.

Chance watches them go...eager ears sagging.

SASSY (O.S.)  
*You're doing that all wrong, you know.*

Chance turns around to find the cat laying on top of a cabinet, back leg flung over the edge, front legs outstretched in front of her looking for all the world like a regal Queen of the Nile.

CHANCE  
*Who says?*

SASSY  
*The whole secret to getting what you want is to act like you don't want it.*

Sassy gracefully leaps to the floor and prances over to Hope.

## HOPE AND SASSY - CHANCE'S POV

Weaving her way in and out of Hope's legs, Sassy "meows" plaintively. She picks her up and buries her face in the soft fur.

HOPE (cont.)

Oh, Sassy, I wish we didn't have to go away.  
I'm going to miss you so much.

Sassy meows impatiently.

HOPE (cont.)

Hungry?

Hope picks up a large luscious shrimp and dangles it in front of her nose. Sassy sniffs it and looks away indifferently.

HOPE (cont.)

But it's shrimp! You like shrimp.

Hope dangles it in front of her again. Sassy deigns to sniff it once more. She yawns.

HOPE (cont.)

(forcing it on her)

Come on. It's good! You'll like it!

Sassy reluctantly sniffs the shrimp again and in two swift bites, it's gone.

HOPE (cont.)

Told you. Here...have another one.

Sassy glances smugly over at Chance.

SASSY

See?

CHANCE

(turning away)

Show-off.

He spots the Wedding Cake...all alone at the end of a small table. He glances over at Shadow who's sitting in the living room with Peter...then surreptitiously back at the cake.

## 13. THE LIVING ROOM

Peter sits on the couch feeding Shadow from his plate. Sensitive, less rambunctious than his younger siblings, Peter is the older, responsible one. Shadow is truly his closest friend. One bite for Peter, one for his dog. Shadow takes each bite with utmost care from Peter's fingers.

PETER

One for me and one for you and one for me.

Between bites, Shadow lays his chin on Peter's knee and studies him with deep soul-searching eyes.

SHADOW

Something's up. I can smell it. Something's going to happen.

PETER

And one for you and one for me.

SHADOW

*Don't worry. Whatever it is...I'll protect you.*

Bob approaches Peter with a big smile.

BOB

Shadow's going to love it in the country.  
Aren't you, boy?

He ruffles Shadow's ears. Bob's probably trying too hard. But this is all new to him and the situation is not helped by the impending move.

Reminded, Peter's face clouds over.

PETER

No, he's not.

BOB

(over enthusiastic)

Sure! He'll have fresh air and sunshine and  
lots of room to run!

PETER

I still don't see why we can't stay here.

Bob crouches down...doing his best to explain this one more time.

BOB

Because I have to be in San Francisco for  
a few months.

Peter won't look him in the eye.

PETER

You could go without us.

Bob glances over at Laura who's watching this exchange with a concerned expression.

BOB

But I'm part of this family now and families  
belong together.

PETER

Shadow's part of the family.

BOB

I know he is...and Sassy and Chance. But we'll  
be living in a townhouse and it doesn't have yard.

PETER

But Shadow won't understand. He'll think  
I abandoned him or something!

13 Cont'd (2)

13. Cont'd (2)

Peter chokes up, but he'd rather die than cry in front of Bob.

PETER (cont.)

(polite but stiff)

Excuse me.

He gets up abruptly and walks briskly away with Shadow trailing behind. Bob watches him go with a sigh as Laura approaches.

BOB

He's taking it pretty hard.

LAURA

They'll all feel better once they see that the animals have a nice place to stay.

BOB

I really hate dragging them away from their home and their friends.

She leans in to kiss him.

LAURA

I know. That's why I love you. Now let's go cut the cake.

14

#### THE DINING ROOM

14

Laura whispers to Bob as she leads him into the dining room. Bob claps his hands.

BOB

Attention please! My bride tells me it's time to cut the cake. Hope you've all saved room. The mother of the bride made it herself.

He gestures over to the cake at the end of the table. All eyes follow....

....and the whole room gasps to see that the wedding cake has been mauled by one large, icing-covered pup. Front paws up on the table, muzzle buried in cake, Chance looks over at Jamie who's been captured by his grandmother and "grins" blissfully.

CHANCE

*Jamie, you oughta try this stuff! It's great!*

Jamie stifles a giggle. Hope gives him an "Ummmm" look. Bob winces. Laura covers her face in her hands and her mother appears to be about to faint.

15

#### THE BURNFORD HOME - LATER

WIPE TO:

15

Only a few cars remain and the white balloons are beginning to sag on their tethers.

16

#### EXT. THE BACKYARD

16

It's an expansive yard complete with trees, swing-set and a shiny new teeter-totter. At the far end, the yard slopes up to encompass a small hill which leads out to an open field behind the house.

Peter plays Frisbee with Shadow.

PETER

Okay, Shadow...ready? Go get it!

Despite his age, Shadow can still leap and catch pretty well. But each time he brings the Frisbee back he's panting just a little more and when he comes down hard, we can hear a tired grunt. Jamie pulls Chance out the kitchen door by his collar.

JAMIE

Come on, Chance. Mom said I have to squirt you off.

Chance spots the hose and digs his feet in.

CHANCE

*Oh no....not the hose...not the hose.*

Jamie pulls and tugs but the puppy's almost as big as he is.

JAMIE

(struggling)

Peter...help!

Peter comes over to help. They drag Chance toward the faucet.

PETER

Come on, you big mutt or we'll send you back to the pound.

Jamie puts his hands over Chance's ears.

JAMIE (cont.)

Don't listen. I'll never send you back there!  
Never...never...never!

They manage to get the struggling dog close to the hose. Jamie holds him while Peter hoses him down. Chance whines piteously.

CHANCE

*Oh that's cold that's really cold!*

JAMIE

Okay, that's enough.

They release him and Chance runs across the yard...twisting and jumping like a frisky colt.

Hope comes out the back door carrying Sassy.

HOPE

Mom says we have to go pretty soon.

PETER

(tossing the Frisbee)

Go get it, Shadow!

And Shadow takes off again.

16. Cont 'd (2)

16 Cont<sup>11</sup> 'd (2)

Chance spots the Frisbee coming his way.

CHANCE

*I got it! I got it!*

He leaps, stumbles all over his too-big puppy feet, and goes down on his nose. Shadow is right behind.

SHADOW

*Optimist.*

He leaps high and catches the Frisbee perfectly. Chance is instantly on his feet, panting and eager to play. He grabs one end of the Frisbee and pulls...growling playfully.

SHADOW (cont.)

*Let go!*

THE KIDS

Jamie and Peter watch the dogs play tug-o-war with the Frisbee.

JAMIE

Are they gonna be all right while we're away?

PETER

I guess so.

Hope joins her brothers.

HOPE

*(brightly)*

Mom say there's lots to do in San Francisco.  
There's a zoo and boats and baseball games  
and a bunch of stuff.

Peter shrugs, unconvinced.

PETER

Still...it's not like being home.

Her shoulders sag...bubble bursting.

HOPE

Yeah, I know.

The children ponder the future for a brief moment in silence...dreading the changes that lie ahead.

Hope glances at the teeter-totter. The paint still shines.

HOPE (cont.)

We hardly even got to use our new teeter-totter.

She nudges her little brother.

HOPE (cont.)

Wanna play?

Jamie shakes his head. Hope knows better than to ask Peter who's way too grown up for teeter-totters.

HOPE (cont.)

(to Sassy)

Sassy will play with me, won't you?

# 17. THE TEETER-TOTTER

She carries Sassy over to the teeter-totter.

HOPE (cont.)

Now you sit here.

She puts Sassy down on the lower end.

HOPE (cont.)

And I sit over there.

But Sassy has no intention of sitting there. She hops off immediately. Hope retrieves her and puts her back.

HOPE (cont.)

No. Stay there.

# 18. THE HILL

Shadow has managed to wrest the Frisbee away from Chance and he trots back down the hill to Peter.

CHANCE

(calling after him)

Party-poooper!

But now Chance has spotted the cat.

# 19. SASSY AND HOPE - HIS POV

Sassy hops off the low-end of the teeter-totter again. Hope puts her back, getting exasperated.

HOPE

Sassy, you have to sit there or we can't play!

# 20. THE HILL - CHANCE

He barks and races down the hill toward Sassy.

CHANCE

Better run! I'm gonna get you!

Sassy sees him coming. Her back arches. She turns and runs straight up the teeter-totter which tilts slowly to other side with her light weight. She runs down the opposite side just as....

Chance hurls himself after her, landing with his full weight on the now upper end of teeter-totter which crashes to the ground, sending Sassy soaring through the air.

Arms spread-eagled, claws extended, she yowls with terror.

The kids watch with open mouths.

Shadow's ears go up as he watches the cat arc through the air.

Sassy lands on all-fours in the grass, stunned and ego-battered, but otherwise unhurt.

The boys fall all over themselves laughing as Hope races toward her. She sweeps her up in her arms.

HOPE (cont.)

My poor baby! Are you all right?

SASSY

*I have never been so embarrassed in all my life.*

HOPE

That mean nasty dog.

Hope runs into the house cuddling Sassy.

Peter grins and gives Chance a "thumbs-up."

PETER

Nice shot, Chance!

Hearing his name, Chance climbs woozily to his feet. He staggers a few feet and sits back down again, shaking his head.

Jealous that Chance has stolen the spotlight, Shadow paws at Peter's leg with the Frisbee in his mouth. Peter takes it and pats Shadow on the head.

PETER (cont.)

Good boy.

JAMIE

Can I throw one?

PETER

You never do it right.

JAMIE

Do too.

PETER

Do not.

With a flick of his wrist, Peter sends the Frisbee soaring all the way up and over the top of the hill.

PETER (cont.)

Get it, Shadow!

Shadow heaves himself up and races up the hill after the Frisbee. Chance watches him go...too woozy to follow.

Shadow disappears over the top. There's a moment as the boys wait for him to reappear over the rise. And another moment. They look at each other.

20 Cont'd (2)

JAMIE

Where'd he go?

PETER

He'll be here in a minute.

They wait...no Shadow. Bob emerges from the house.

BOB

Time to hit the road, guys. I want to get at least half way to Bishop by tonight.

Peter bites his lip, never taking his eyes off the hill.

PETER

(under his breath)

Come on, Shadow.

Jamie turn his eyes back to the hill....just as Shadow appears at the top with the Frisbee in his mouth.

Peter grins with quiet relief.

PETER

There he is!

(calling to Shadow)

Good boy!

Shadow drops the Frisbee and barks in reply. As he picks it up again and runs down the hill we:

CUT TO:

21. EXT. THE FREEWAY - NIGHT

Bob's red Blazer cruises down the freeway.

22. INT. THE BLAZER

The kids are asleep. Sassy's wrapped in a towel in Hope's lap looking miserable. Shadow sits next to Peter with his nose out the window. Jamie and Chance are in the back with the suitcases. Chance's head rests on the seatback behind Hope.

SHADOW

*I knew something was going to happen.*

SASSY

*It's the vet. I know it's the vet.*

SHADOW

*It's not the vet. We'd be there by now.*

CHANCE

*What is it then?*

SHADOW

*I don't know. But it's not good.*

(studying Peter)

*Peter's sad...a 'going away' kind of sad.*

20 Cont<sup>14</sup>'d (2)

21.

22.

In the front seat, Bob glances over at Laura who's gazing out the window. Feeling his eyes on her, she smiles and squeezes his hand.

LAURA  
Hi.

BOB  
Hi.

LAURA  
Instant family, huh? You okay?

BOB  
I'm great!

She giggles surprised by his genuine enthusiasm.

### THE BACKSEAT

Peter's eyes are open. Listening to the adults, he suddenly seems very small, very sad and utterly powerless. Hope wakes up abruptly and pulls away from Chance, brushing at her neck.

HOPE  
Eeuuu! He's slobbering on my neck!

Jamie tries to pull Chance back but he's decided to head for the open window. He lunges over the seatback, landing awkwardly on Peter, Hope and Sassy. Sassy hisses. Jamie tugs uselessly on his collar from the back.

PETER  
Get him off me!

JAMIE  
Chance! Come on...

HOPE  
He's scaring Sassy!

PETER  
Get your stupid dog off me!

JAMIE  
I'm trying!

HOPE  
Owww! He's squishing me!

Laura flails at Chance from the front seat, snapping her fingers ineffectually.

LAURA  
Get back, Chance! Go on! Get in the back!

Peter pounds uselessly on Chance. Hope starts to cry.

BOB  
Let him have the window, Peter.

22 Cont'd (2)

22<sup>16</sup> Cont'd (2)

PETER  
But Shadow always gets the...

BOB  
Just until we get to the motel, okay?

PETER  
(reluctantly)  
Okay.

Peter pulls Shadow to the other side letting Chance have the window. The puppy sticks his head out and "grins" as the delicious wind blows his ears back.

#### THE FRONT SEAT

Bob glances over at his wife.

BOB  
How'm I doing?

LAURA  
You're a natural.

#### 23 EXT. MOTEL - NIGHT

23

A huge neon arrow flashes on and off as it points down at the motel. It flashes ghoulish green against the dark clouds of a coming storm. The Blazer idles impatiently outside.

#### 24 INT. MOTEL LOBBY

24

It's decorated ersatz rustic with a wagon-wheel motif. Bob argues with the night manager. Peter seems distressed.

BOB  
But the clerk on the phone said...

MANAGER  
That's the new day guy. We're still breaking him in.

BOB  
The point is...we were told by your employee that our pets could stay in the room with us.

MANAGER  
Sorry. It's against policy. But we got a nice cozy store room where they can stay. Never had a complaint yet.

He chuckles at his little joke.

PETER  
Have you ever slept there?

MANAGER  
Very funny.

24 Cont'd

Bob looks at Peter apologetically.

17

24 Cont'd

BOB

It's only for the night.

WIPE TO:

25. EXT. MOTEL - LATER

25.

Storm clouds boil overhead. The air is heavy and damp but the rain has yet to fall.

26. INT. STORAGE SHED

26.

The shed is piled high with boxes and supplies, no windows. Shadow studies the door. Chance paces the perimeter of the open space in the middle, whining and panting.

CHANCE

(panicky)

*I hate this. I hate being locked up. It reminds me of the Very Bad Place.*

Sassy's perched on a pile of boxes.

SASSY

*Where's that?*

CHANCE

*I don't want to talk about it.*

Shadow paws at the door. It swings open half an inch, stopped by a simple hook-and-eye type latch on the outside.

SHADOW

*Sassy, this is just like the lock on the pantry door at home.*

SASSY

*So?*

SHADOW

*You think you can undo the latch?*

SASSY

*Maybe.*

(toying with him)

*But first you have say it.*

SHADOW

*This is no time for games.*

CHANCE

*Say what?*

Sassy yawns and casually licks a paw.

SASSY

*You want me to undo the latch or not?*

26 Cont 'd

26 cont 'd.  
18

Say what?

CHANCE

SHADOW

*She wants me to say that cats are better than dogs.*

SASSY

(smug)

*Thank you.*

She gets up and jumps onto the pile of boxes stacked next to the door.

CHANCE

*What? No way!*

Sassy reaches out and paws at the latch...hitting at it from the bottom.

SASSY

*We're smarter, we're better looking and more talented.*

She knocks the hook up. It flies out...and the door swings open.

SASSY (cont.)

*See?*

27. THE MOTEL COURTYARD

27.

The neon arrow flashes catching the three inmates making their escape across the motel courtyard.

CHANCE

(to Shadow)

*How'd she do that?*

A crackle of lightning. Seconds later, the boom of thunder and the rain comes. They just made it. The rain pelts the motel parking lot. A late unprepared guest runs from his car holding a open magazine over his head.

DISSOLVE TO:

28. EXT. THE MOTEL - NEXT MORNING

28.

The storm has passed leaving a crisp clear fall morning in its wake. Bob knocks on the door to the kid's room. But it's already ajar. He frowns and pushes it open further.

Three kids, two dogs and a cat are piled into one bed. The other bed and cot have been deserted. Shadow's curled up next to Peter. Sassy's tucked into Hope's arms. Jamie's sleeping outside the covers and Chance is sprawled across the bottom half of the bed.

Bob reacts to the sight with surprise which changes to confusion and finally a soft smile with just a tinge of guilt.

29. EXT. BISHOP

WIPE TO:

29.

The Blazer passes a sign for "Bishop, CA" and they enter the town which is nestled in the Owens Valley between two rugged mountain ranges. We get a closer view of the majestic Sierras on the west as they loom over the small town. It's quiet. Most of the tourist trade has gone home-with the coming of fall.

29 cont 'd

The Blazer turns down a side street and heads up a small hill.

19  
29. Cont 'd  
30.

30. INT. THE BLAZER

It's unnaturally quiet inside.

Peter sits with his arm around Shadow...staring stoically out the window. Hope strokes Sassy's head. Chance and Jamie play tug-o'-war with the Frisbee.

31. EXT. KATE'S HOUSE

The Blazer turns up a dirt road leading to a country house.

32. INT. THE BLAZER

Shadow suddenly turns to look sharply at Peter.

SHADOW

*We're here.*

33. EXT. KATE'S YARD

Kate's country house has a rustic charm even though it could use a coat of paint. There's a small fenced front yard with a flower garden, a red barn with horses grazing in the corral, chickens scratching in a coop. Kate waves from the porch and comes through the gate to greet them.

KATE

Well, if it isn't the newlyweds!

The Blazer door opens and Chance tumbles out. Excited to be in a new place, he runs around...sniffing, smelling, rolling in the dirt.

CHANCE

*Wow! What is this place? There's about a million new smells here! And bugs! Lookit all the bugs!*

He snuffles along behind a rapidly-crawling beetle. Then he spots the chicken coop.

CHANCE (cont.)

*What are those?*

He runs at them barking wildly.

CHANCE (cont.)

*Run! Run whatever you are!*

The chickens go wild, flapping and squawking, which incites him to bark even more.

Laura, Bob and the kids climb out.

BOB

Chance! Get away from those chickens!

LAURA

(to the kids)

See! Isn't this nice?

They look around with interest but remain silent. Hope holds Sassy in her arms and Shadow sits at Peter's side. Jamie fiddles with the Frisbee.

Kate greets Laura and Bob with hugs and kisses.

KATE

How was the wedding?

LAURA

Lovely.

KATE

Wish I could have made it.

LAURA

I don't know how to thank you for doing this.

Kate waves at her horses and cows.

KATE

More the merrier! I just have to make that one little trip like we talked about.

PETER

(alarmed)

You're going away?

KATE

I help drive the horses to winter grazing every year. But it'll only take a couple of days.

PETER

But who's going to...?

KATE

My neighbor, Frank. He's always take care of the animals while I'm gone. Don't worry, he's trustworthy.

Peter looks worried nonetheless. Kate motions toward the house.

KATE (cont.)

Do you have time to come in?

BOB

Wish we could. But we've got a long way to go.

There's an uncomfortable moment. The adults glance down at the kids. This is it and the kids know it. Hope is the brave one.

HOPE

(introducing them)

This is Miss Kate, Sassy. She's a nice lady and she'll take good care of you.

(to Kate)

Won't you?

Yes, ma'am.

Satisfied, Hope gently lays Sassy into Kate's arms and steps back. Laura puts two large grocery bags of pet food on the ground.

HOPE

Make sure you warm her food up on the stove and then add some water and stir it up.

LAURA

(to Kate)

Straight out of the can will be just fine.

PETER

(to Shadow)

Come on, boy.

Shadow heels obediently as Peter goes up to Kate's porch for a final private farewell.

PETER (cont.)

Sit.

Shadow sits. Peter leans down and gives Shadow one last bone-wrenching hug.

SHADOW

*You are going away, aren't you?*

Peter whispers into his fur.

PETER

I don't want to do this. They're making me.  
But we'll be back to visit next week. I promise.

Shadow licks his face.

SHADOW

*I'll miss you.*

PETER

(struggling against the tears)

Be a good dog.

Jamie calls Chance who's still harassing the chickens.

JAMIE

Chance, come here boy! Chance!

Chance comes galomping over. But before Jamie can grab him, he crouches...thinking he wants to play. Jamie tries to entice him inside the fenced yard.

JAMIE (cont.)

Come on, boy. Come inside.

Chance yaps playfully. Bob can see they have no chance of snaring the playful pup. He glances at the Frisbee Jamie's still holding.

BOB

How far can you throw that Frisbee?

JAMIE

(fudging)

Pretty far.

BOB

Can you throw it as far as that field?

Jamie looks from Bob to the field and glances down at Chance. He's not fooled. He knows exactly what Bob's thinking. He holds the Frisbee up to Bob.

JAMIE

Maybe you better do it.

Bob smiles at him and takes the Frisbee. He tantalizes Chance with it.

BOB

Come on, Chance. Come on boy...

Chance barks eagerly. Bob rears back and throws the Frisbee as hard as he can across the field.

BOB

Go get it!

Chance barks enthusiastically and gives chase. Jamie watches him go.

JAMIE

(softly)

Hope he doesn't forget me.

Laura takes Jamie's hand.

LAURA

It's time, Peter!

Peter stands up abruptly. His voice cracks from the strain of hiding the sadness and anxiety that this forced separation is causing him.

PETER

Shadow...stay!

Jaw set, he turns abruptly and walks wordlessly past Kate to join the others as they climb into the car.

Shadow watches him go without moving a muscle. It's against every instinct in Shadow's body not to run after him. But he does what he's told. He sits stone-still as Peter climbs into the car without a backwards glance. The Blazer starts up and takes off. Holding Sassy, Kate waves good-bye.

34. INT. THE BLAZER

34.

Hope weeps softly. Laura reaches back to stroke her hair.

LAURA

Don't cry, Hopie.

Seeing his sister cry makes Jamie cry too.

34. Cont H

34 Cont 'd.  
23

BOB

We'll be back for a visit in a couple of weeks.

Peter glances at him, alarmed.

PETER

I told Shadow we'd be back next week!

Laura reaches over to pat his knee.

LAURA

He won't know the difference, honey.

PETER

Yes, he will!

HOPE

(through the tears)

Two weeks then? Promise?

BOB

Cross my heart.

Peter jumps into the back to look out the window at Shadow on the porch.

35

PETER - SHADOW'S POV

35

Peter puts his hand up to the glass in a silent farewell. His face gets smaller and smaller and smaller.

SHADOW

*Hurry back.*

Chance has finally recovered the Frisbee from the field and comes bounding back

CHANCE

*I got it! Took me awhile but I...*

(looking around)

*Where'd they go? Jamie?*

KATE

Here, Chance...bring it here, boy.

Chance turns in a circle, looking for Jamie, and sees the Blazer going down the road.

CHANCE (cont.)

(panicked)

*Wait! Don't leave me!*

He drops the Frisbee and races after the car...barking hysterically.

36

INT. THE BLAZER

36

Peter sees Chance coming after them.

PETER

Look!

36 cont 1d

Jamie turns around to see...

36 Cont 1d  
37

## 37. CHANCE - HIS POV

Tongue lolling, ears flapping, he's running his heart out trying to catch up.

Jamie rolls down the window and sticks his head out.

JAMIE

(through the tears)

Go back, Chance. Go back!

The puppy runs on heedlessly.

CHANCE

*Wait! Please...*

He stumbles over his big feet and goes down face first. He scrambles up again but, it's too late. The Blazer turns a corner onto the main road and disappears. Sides heaving, tongue lolling, Chance stares down the long empty road.

CHANCE (cont.)

*Come back.*

He turns around and trudges slowly back toward the house.

## 38. EXT. KATE'S HOUSE - LATER THAT AFTERNOON

WIPE TO:

38.

Shadow's sniffing around the yard, exploring his new environs. Chance has gone back to chasing the chickens. He races back and forth in front of the coop driving them into a frenzy. Shadow looks up from his sniffing.

SHADOW

*I'm telling you...she's going to get really mad if you don't cut that out.*

Right on cue, the kitchen window flies open and Kate leans her head out.

KATE

Chance! Get away from there!

Chance immediately stops barking and sniffs casually at the ground.

CHANCE

*I'm not doing nothin'.*

## 39. INT. THE LIVING ROOM

39.

Sassy's busy investigating every corner of the living room.

SASSY

(sniffing)

*Mmmhmm....I see...aaaha....nothing of interest there.*

39 cont 'd

She sniffs the antique rug and pulls back abruptly.

25

39 cont 'd

SASSY (cont.)

*Whoooh! Extremely ancient dog pee.*

She admires the recently upholstered couch.

SASSY (cont.)

*This is nice! Love the fabric.*

And she proceeds to sharpens her claws on it.

CUT TO:

40

EXT. KATE'S HOUSE - THAT EVENING

40.

Chance continues to torment the chickens relentlessly. Through the window, we can see Sassy on the windowseat, chasing a fly. Shadow has settled down on the porch, staring off down the road where he last saw Peter. As the daylight fades into night, Shadow sighs patiently and puts his head down between his paws.

SHADOW

*One day down...six to go.*

CUT TO:

41

INT. KATE'S KITCHEN - THE NEXT MORNING

41.

Sassy "meows" and weaves her way in and out of Kate's feet.

KATE

I know, I know. You're hungry. Chance!  
Come and get breakfast!

Chance explodes through the kitchen door.

CHANCE

*Breakfast! Ohboyohboyohboy!*

He whines, wags his tail furiously and jumps up on her.

KATE

Get down!

She stumbles backwards onto Sassy's tail. Sassy yowls and runs under the table. Shadow waits patiently....the eye of the storm. Kate pours dog food into the big bowls and puts it down for them.

KATE (cont.)

Here you go.

Chance pounces on his...gobbling and slopping messily. Sassy looks on with disgust.

SASSY

*You are such a slob!*

Kate opens the refrigerator and takes out a can of cat food. She dumps the contents into Sassy's bowl and bends down to speak to her under the table.

KATE

I'm sorry I stepped on your tail. Now come out and have your breakfast.

41 Cont 1d

26

41 Cont 2

She sets Sassy's food on the floor near the refrigerator.

Chance has licked his bowl clean. He looks hungrily over at Shadow's bowl. Shadow glances at him sideways, raises a lip and growls. Chance sits down and watches him finish with big jealous eyes.

Sassy sniffs at the cat food. She pulls back.

SASSY

*It's cold!*

Kate eats her own breakfast out of a cereal bowl.

KATE

What's the matter?

Sassy looks up at Kate as if she's committed a heinous crime.

SASSY

(indignant)

*You're supposed to warm it up.*

KATE

It's perfectly good cat food. Now eat it.

Sassy backs away from the bowl.

SASSY

*I'm not touching it until it's warmed up.*

KATE

Well, Miss Persnickety, that's all you're going to get.

Sassy paws at the linoleum as if she's trying to bury the unedible stuff.

DISSOLVE TO:

42 EXT. A SAN FRANCISCO NEIGHBORHOOD - A FEW DAYS LATER

42.

The "Mediterranean" condominium complex isn't terrible but it's not at all like the peaceful neighborhood they left. The metal fence and gated entry create a prison-like effect against the gritty bustling city outside. Buses pass, cars splash through puddles, truck drivers blast their horns, pedestrians scurry down the sidewalk: the city in high gear.

43 THE BURNFORD CONDO

43.

It's the two-story kind with a small balcony off sliding glass doors that lead into the kitchen. We hear Laura on the phone.

LAURA (o.s.)

The kids want to know how the animals are doing?

44 INT. BURNFORD KITCHEN

44.

Laura's on the phone with Kate. Peter and Hope sit at the breakfast counter listening eagerly. Jamie attempts to put together a toy from the cereal box. Laura puts her hand over the mouth piece and speaks to the kids.

44 Cont 'd

27  
44 Cont 'd

LAURA (cont.)

She says they're just fine.

45. EXT. KATE'S HOUSE - THE SAME TIME

45.

Shadow is sitting in the same spot on the porch waiting for Peter's return. We can see Kate's face in the window as she looks out at him.

46. INT. KATE'S KITCHEN

46.

KATE

But Shadow hasn't left that spot in three days.  
Poor ol' thing, he just sits there waiting for Peter.

(listening)

Okay, I'll call him in.

She whistles out the window.

KATE (cont.)

Shadow! Come in boy. Someone wants to say hello to you.

47. EXT. KATE'S HOUSE

47.

Shadow get slowly to his feet and trudges in through the open kitchen door.

48. INT. KATE'S KITCHEN

48.

KATE (cont.)

Go ahead, Peter.

She holds the phone down by Shadow's ear. We can barely hear the sound of Peter voice coming through the receiver.

PETER (o.s.)

Shadow! Can you hear me, boy? Shadow!

Shadow turns his head to the side quizzically.

SHADOW

*I never hear a thing when they do this.*

Sassy's perched on the kitchen cabinet.

SASSY

*Me neither. But you might as well humor her.*

Shadow barks enthusiastically into the phone. Kate puts it back to her ear.

KATE

Hear that? He said 'hello'!

49. INT. BURNFORD KITCHEN

49.

Peter grins happily and hands the phone back to his beckoning mother.

CUT TO:

50. EXT. SAN FRANCISCO NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOL - THE NEXT DAY

50.  
51.

51. The ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, an imposing Victorian structure, sits smack in the middle of the city, its bare asphalt playground surrounded by a high chain link fence.

Laura gets out of the car with the rest of the parents to wait for the children's release.

52. THE BELLTOWER

52.

The imposing CLOCK hits THREE and the bell rings.

53. EXT. KATE'S YARD - SAME TIME

53.

Shadow lays on the porch, chin on a paw, waiting for Peter. Sassy's stretched out in her sunny spot. Shadow instinctively springs to his feet.

SHADOW

*School's out!*

He wags his tail eagerly and looks around. Sassy eyes him skeptically as Shadow catches himself and lays back down with a sigh.

Chance galumphs around the corner and flops down near Shadow.

CHANCE

*Might as well give it up. They're not coming back.*

SHADOW

*Of course, they are. They'll be here in a couple days.*

CHANCE

*Take my advice and forget about them.*

Shadow turns slowly to level his steady gaze at Chance.

SHADOW

*You can forget about your boy...just like that?*

Chance has been really hurt by Jamie's abandonment but he refuses to show it.

CHANCE

*(bitter)*

*Serves him right for going off and leaving me.*

Shadow looks away.

SHADOW

*Pups these days...they don't know the first thing about loyalty. It's enough to make me sick.*

He gets up and moves away from Chance as if he doesn't even want to breath the same air. Chance watches him go then glances at Sassy

CHANCE

*What's his problem?*

53 Cont 'd

29

53 Cont 'c

SASSY

*Maybe Jamie didn't have a choice, stupid.*

Kate emerges from the cottage. She passes Shadow on her way to her truck and pats him on the head. His tail swishes slowly in response, but doesn't take his gaze off the road.

KATE

Poor ol' Shadow, you miss Peter, don't you?  
Want to go for a ride?

She lowers the gate at the back and whistles for the dogs. They both jump eagerly inside. Kate starts to climb in but Sassy meows plaintively from the porch.

KATE (cont.)

I suppose you want to go too.  
(going back for her)  
Oh all right, but no claws in my neck.

She puts Sassy in the cab with her and they take off.

WIPE TO:

54.

EXT. THE BURNFORD CONDO - THAT NIGHT - DINING ROOM

54.

Bob opens his mail at the table as Laura sits back down and continues writing a letter. He opens an envelope, takes out a brightly colored invitation and reads it with interest.

BOB

Look at this! They're throwing a party for me.

LAURA

Who?

BOB

John Maxwell and his wife.

LAURA

The head of the department?

He gives the invitation to her.

LAURA

(reading)

...a "Welcome Bob Barbecue." Isn't that nice?

BOB

When is it?

LAURA

Saturday, the twentieth. That's the weekend after next.

Bob gets up and goes over to the door adjoining the living room.

55.

THE LIVING ROOM

55.

The kids are sprawled on the couch watching television.

55 Cont'd

30  
55. Cont'd

BOB

How'd you guys like to go to a barbecue a week from Saturday?

They answer him with stone faces and accusing silence.

BOB (cont.)

(confused)

What'd I say?

PETER

That's the day you're taking us back to see Shadow, Sassy and Chance.

He winces.

JAMIE

You promised!

HOPE

Crossed your heart and everything!

BOB

How about we go the following Saturday?  
It's only a few more...

He trails off as they stare at him. Bob can see that this is a big moment...a moment which will go a long way in helping them learn to trust him. And he makes his first small sacrifice as a father.

BOB (cont.)

You're right. I promised.

56. THE DINING ROOM

56..

Laura looks up curiously as Bob sinks back down into his chair.

BOB

You think it'll ruin it if they have to throw the 'Welcome Bob Barbecue'...without Bob?

57. EXT. KATE'S HOUSE - EARLY MORNING - SATURDAY

CUT TO:

57.

Sassy is curled up on a chair on the porch. Chance chews on an old shoe. Shadow paces back and forth in anticipation of Peter's return.

SHADOW

*This is it! The day they're coming back.*

CHANCE

*Dream on.*

One of the horses has already been loaded into Kate's trailer which is hitched up to her truck.

8. INT. KATE'S TACK ROOM

58.

She's hurriedly scribbles a note on a scratch pad.

KATE

(to herself while she writes)

Thanks for feeding the animals as usual. The old dog seems really homesick so I've taken him and the other two...

She comes to the bottom of the page, rips it off and continues.

KATE

...into town with me in a few times. They love the ride. If you feel like it, take them with you some time too. Thanks again, Kate.

(to herself)

Gotta go..gotta go.

She puts the note on a shelf and rushes out the door. She doesn't notice the brisk breeze which comes in from outside and whisks both pages of the note into the air. The first page drifts back down to the shelf. But the second page swirls higher ...and sails under a saddle rack out of sight.

59. EXT. KATE'S HOUSE

She rushes past the animals on her way to the gate.

KATE

I'll be back in a couple of days. Frank's coming by to feed you later.

Chance sees her heading for the truck and leaps up.

CHANCE

*Oh boy, we're going for a ride!*

He comes running full tilt. But just as he get there, she closes the gate in his disappointed face.

KATE

Sorry. You can't come this time. Now stay in there and be good. Bye!

She leaps into the truck and drives off in a swirl of dust. Chance plops to the ground unhappily, a petulant kid. Shadow paces restlessly along the length of the fence...back and forth...back and forth.

60. EXT. BURNFORD TOWNHOUSE - DAY

CUT TO:

The city seems a touch quieter on the weekend.

61. INT. BURNFORD TOWNHOUSE - LIVING ROOM

An anxious Peter helps Bob hang a few pictures on the walls.

BOB

A few pictures up and it's already starting to feel like home.

(holding the picture up)

How's this?

No answer Peter's staring off into space, thinking about Shadow. Bob twists around.

BOB (cont.)

Peter?

PETER

I promised I'd be back by now. Shadow's going to think something's wrong.

Bob sighs and removes the picture. He takes a deep breath for patience.

BOB

Peter...we can't go running up to Barstow every weekend for the next five months. Now I've canceled the barbecue so we can visit the animals next Saturday. But we've both got to make some compromises here. All right?

Peter nods. He knows that's fair.

PETER

All right.

BOB

Good.

(holding the picture up again)  
Now how's this?

PETER

Fine.

But he's not even looking at the picture. He's watching the minute hand on the mantleclock which moves toward THREE O'CLOCK.

CUT TO:

62. EXT. KATE'S HOUSE -THE SAME TIME

Shadow's pacing has become more frantic.

SHADOW

*Where is he?*

The Grandfather Clock in Kate's front room chimes THREE O'CLOCK.

SHADOW (cont.)

*Something must have happened! Peter should be back by now.*

SASSY

*How do you know?*

SHADOW

(panicked)  
*I just know!*

Shadow stops pacing. He's made up his mind.

SHADOW

*Well, if he can't come to me, then I'll have to go to him.*

On the porch, Sassy sits up straight.

SASSY

*What?*

SHADOW

*I'm going home.*

Shadow hops off the porch and takes running start toward the fence. He starts to jump, realizes he won't make it and aborts the attempt.

SASSY

*But you can't!*

Shadow looks around for something to help him over and spots an old wheelbarrow sitting in the garden.

SHADOW

*Peter might be in trouble.*

He grabs onto the round wooden handle with his teeth and drags the wheelbarrow toward the fence. Alternately pushing and pulling, he shifts the wheelbarrow so it creates a ramp.

CHANCE

*That'll never work.*

Shadow backs up, gauges his distance, takes a few running steps up the wheelbarrow ramp and soars over the fence.

Chance's mouth drops open.

Shadow lands with an audible grunt on the other side and starts off, trotting purposely toward the dirt road.

SASSY

*Wait!*

Suspicious of the "ramp", she jumps from the ground to the railing on the top of the fence and from there, she hops down to the other side to trail after him.

## 63. THE ROAD

63.

SASSY (cont.)

*Listen, this is crazy. It's too far.*

Shadow doesn't even slow down.

SHADOW

*The way I figure...home's just on the other side of that mountain.*

Sassy looks ahead at the...

64. SIERRAS

34

64.

All she can see is a long ridge, not too imposing from this perspective.

35. KATE'S FRONT YARD

65.

Chance just sits there...stunned speechless.

CHANCE (V.O.)

There was more to the old boy than I'd given him credit for. I was soon to learn how much more. But even in that moment, I had to admire his faith...blind as I thought it was.

Shadow and Sassy have reached the end of the dirt road. They turn the corner and disappear.

CHANCE (cont.)

*Oh no! I'm not getting left again!*

He hops off the porch and studies the wheelbarrow.

CHANCE (cont.)

*If he can do it...I can do it.*

Chance backs up, licks his chops nervously, and takes off. He pounds up the wheelbarrow which rolls slightly from his heavier weight. Chance feels it starting to roll....

CHANCE (cont.)

*Uh oh.*

He throws himself awkwardly over the fence and makes it most of the way, but his hind leg hits the top railing causing him to do a belly-flop on the ground. He gasps for air, staggers to his feet and takes off after the others.

CHANCE (cont.)

*Wait for me!*

66. FURTHER DOWN THE ROAD

CUT TO:

66.

Shadow sets the pace...trotting steadily. Sassy's a little ways ahead. Prancing gracefully along a railing that runs alongside the road. Chance follows behind.

SASSY

*If home's just over that mountain. Why did it take us so long to get here?*

SHADOW

*We came the long way...around the mountain. But we'll take the short cut home, straight over the top. Be there before dark.*

CHANCE

*(excited)*

*We'll surprise 'em! I can't wait to see Jamie's face!*

Shadow glances over his shoulder.

66. Cont 'd

35

66 Cont 'd

SHADOW  
*Thought you forgot all about him.*

CHANCE  
*Oh. Well, I....*

He stops suddenly, sniffing something in the road.

CHANCE (cont.)  
*Hey look...a Twinkie wrapper.*

Shadow chuckles to himself and presses on.

WIPE TO:

67. INT. KATE'S TACK ROOM - LATE THAT AFTERNOON

67.

FRANK, the neighbor, comes driving up. He hops out of his truck and looks around at the remaining horse in its stall...the clucking chickens. He whistles for the dogs.

FRANK  
*Here dogs! Come on!*

No answering bark. No dogs racing around the house. He opens the gate and steps up onto the porch.

FRANK (cont.)  
*Kitty? Here kitty!*  
*(musing)*  
*Funny.*

Continuing to whistle for the dogs, he crosses the yard to the tack room next to the barn.

68. INT. TACK ROOM

68.

He finds the first page of the note on the counter and reads half aloud.

FRANK  
*(reading quickly)*  
*...thanks for feeding...old dog seems homesick...*  
*So I've taken him and the other two...*

He turns the note over looking for more. The other side's blank.

FRANK (cont.)  
*Taken 'em where? A cat on a stock drive?*  
*You gotta be kidding me.*

He turns, confused, looking for an explanation. And we see his boot heel tantalizingly close to the second half of the note under the saddle rack. The horse whinnies.

FRANK  
*Okay, okay, I know you're hungry. I'm coming.*

He shrugs and hurries out...and the lost page goes undiscovered.

CUT TO:

WE PAN UP the side of the steep mountain almost to the top where we hear the sound of Shadow's labored breathing and Sassy's voice coming through the thick trees of the pine forest.

SASSY (o.s.)

*Ow!*

WE PUSH in through the trees to find an exhausted Shadow leading the trio slowly up the last of a series of switch-backs on a rock-strewn trail. Sassy stops to shake her paw gingerly.

SASSY (cont.)

*You didn't tell me there were going to be so many rocks!*

SHADOW

*It's not much further.*

Chance plods along behind, head hanging tiredly.

CHANCE

*Can't we stop for awhile?*

Shadow turns back and taunts him.

SHADOW

*What's the matter, pup. Can't make it?*

Chance jerks his head up at the challenge.

CHANCE

*I was asking 'cause of Sassy.*

SASSY

*Let's keep going. I want to get off this stupid mountain.*

They turn and trudge onward....coming to a large boulder which has fallen in the path between two high banks on either side. It's impossible to go around. Shadow studies the boulder.

SHADOW

*We'll have to go over it.*

With one graceful leap, Sassy lands easily on top of the boulder. She sprawls out and stretches luxuriously like a bored sunbather.

SASSY

*(teasing them)*

*Coming?*

Shadow gathers himself and makes the leap. He makes it almost to the the top but has to scabble madly against the slippery rock before he manages to throw his weight forward enough to pull himself up. He stands up, trembling from the effort, and looks down at Chance.

SHADOW

*Need help?*

CHANCE

*I can do it!*

He runs a few steps and leaps. He makes it as far as Shadow did and clings desperately, claws digging uselessly into stone. But his heavier weight begins to drag him backward.

CHANCE (cont.)

(slipping)

*Whooa...*

Shadow doesn't budge.

SHADOW

*Need help now?*

CHANCE

*I'm slipping!*

SHADOW

*I see that.*

CHANCE

(giving in)

*Help!*

The older dog leaps forward and grabs Chance by the scruff of the neck with his jaws like a mother with her pup. He digs his feet into the rock and backs up. Chance scrabbles with his hind legs and finally, Shadow manages to heave him onto the top. Both dogs lay on their bellies, gasping for air.

SASSY

(smug)

*Told you cats were better than dogs.*

CUT TO:

## 70 CLOSE TO THE SUMMIT

70.

Sassy runs ahead of the others to the top of the ridge.

SASSY

*We made it! Hurry up! Maybe we can see our house from here!*

Shadow and Chance struggle up the last bit and stand on the summit next to Sassy. But instead of the quiet town of Fresno on the other side, the animals stare at:

## 71. A GIGANTIC MOUNTAIN RANGE

71.

It seems to go on forever and would be quite beautiful if it weren't so daunting. Ridge after mountainous ridge...some with snow-covered caps, some with stark faces of pure shale. WE PULL BACK to get the full perspective. The three domesticated animals on top of the ridge seem like tiny spacemen confronting the alien face of Mars.

The three gasp. It takes a moment for their situation to sink in. Sassy flicks her tail with irritation.

SASSY

*Great! You dragged us all the way up here just so we can turn around and go back.*

But instead of turning around, Shadow takes a step forward.

CHANCE

*Where are you going?*

SHADOW

*Home.*

SASSY

*You can't be serious!*

SHADOW

*You don't have to come.*

SASSY

*Shadow, be reasonable. You're not as young as you used to be.*

CHANCE

*(to Sassy)*

*It might be fun. We can chase squirrels and stuff.*

Shadow whirls around.

SHADOW

*This isn't some game, pup. If you're coming, you'll have to keep up.*

CHANCE

*(under his breath)*

*No problem.*

SHADOW

*And I don't want any whining or complaining ...understand?*

SASSY

*But I can't find the way back all by myself?*

SHADOW

*Just follow the trail.*

And he plunges downhill into the brush.

CHANCE

*Wait up!*

With an excited bark, he plunges down the hill after Shadow.

Sassy looks back the way they came. The trees cast long forbidding shadows on the trail. Branches creak in the wind. Leaves rustle. A crow CAWS raucously...spurring her to action.

SASSY

*This is a big mistake. I know this is a big mistake.*

And she leaps down the hill after the others.

71 Cont'd (2)

71 Cont'd (2)

39

We PULL BACK as Shadow leads the other two down the steep rugged face of the mountain.

CHANCE (V.O.)

And so began the most perilous journey of our lives.

72. THE SIERRAS - VARIOUS LOCATIONS

DISSOLVE TO:

72.

The three travelers pass through a winding canyon where a trickle of water snakes its way down the stark granite walls.

Further on, they skirt a crystal clear mountain lake, their reflections upside down in the still waters.

Following his own internal compass, Shadow leads them across a peaceful, river-threaded meadow. Spooked by the intruders, a group of grazing Mule deer dart away into the forest.

As the sun slips behind the tallest peak, Shadow leads them into the deep dark shadows of the seemingly impenetrable forest.

73. THE FOREST - TWILIGHT

73.

At this time of the year, only a few leaves remain on the cedar and dogwood and Aspen trees. The three travelers crunch through the thick carpet of yellow, red and gold leaves cover the forest floor. A jay stops pecking to scold them as they pass his sugar pine.

Shadow plods along ahead, head low, intent on his purpose. Sassy pads closely behind. Chance spots a squirrel and gives chase. The squirrel scurries up to a safe branch where it sits and scolds him. Chance stands with his front paws on the tree, yapping loudly.

SASSY

(mimicking him)

*Yap...yap...yap...yap! He's getting on my nerves!*

Chance gives up on the squirrel and comes prancing back to join them.

CHANCE

*Almost had that one!*

SHADOW

*Better pace yourself, pup. We've got a long way to go.*

Ignoring the advice, Chance spots another squirrel and takes off after it.

74. FURTHER ON

74.

Night comes quickly in the forest. The sun has slipped behind the tallest peak. Only a few minutes of brief twilight remain. Chance has completely worn himself out. He staggers behind the others two, tongue lolling. Sassy can see that Shadow will drive them until they drop unless she does something.

SASSY

*Shadow....Shadow! We have to stop.*

Shadow turns around reluctantly and glances at the other two. Sassy's usually pert tail drags on the ground. Chance is so tired he weaves on his feet.

*All right.*

WHUMP! Chance instantly collapses into the soft grass. Shadow approaches a tall pine tree with wide sheltering branches. He sniffs the ground for tell-tale signs of other animals.

SHADOW (cont.)

*We'll sleep under here.*

SASSY

*On the ground!*

SHADOW

*Yes, on the ground. With our backs to the tree for safety. Chance! Come under the tree.*

The exhausted puppy lays face down in the grass.

CHANCE

*I...can't....move.*

SASSY

(snooty)

*Well, you two can do what you want. But I'm not sleeping on the ground.*

Sassy leaps into the tree.

SHADOW

*Fine. Suit yourselves.*

He curls up with his back to the tree.

SASSY

(taunting them)

*It's nice up here...got a good view. Too bad you poor dogs can't join me.*

They ignore her. Darkness drops around them like a cloak. The nocturnal forest animals begin stir and with them the sounds of the night: the steady chirrup of crickets, an owl hooting close by, a lone coyote howling mournfully.

SASSY (cont.)

*It gets pretty dark out here.*

Shadow's ears perk up suddenly.

SHADOW

*Shh! I heard something.*

They listen, stone still. Sure enough, they hear something moving through the bushes toward them. It comes closer...and closer...heading straight toward Chance who's lying out in the open.

CHANCE

(panicked)

*What do I do?*

SHADOW

*Don't move!*

Chance stares into the darkness, frozen with fear, waiting for the creature to leap out at him. But it stops, a mere foot from Chance, and snuffles around in the dirt.

SHADOW (cont.)

(hushed)

*You're downwind. It hasn't caught your scent.*

Chance waits, holding his breath, until finally the creature shambles off the other way. After he's gone, all three let out a relieved sigh.

CHANCE

*What was that thing?*

SHADOW

*Moose...probably.*

CHANCE

*What's a moose?*

SHADOW

*Big animal...bigger than a cow with enormous horns.*

Chance is on his feet. He runs over and hides behind Shadow.

SASSY

*Can mooses climb trees?*

SHADOW

*The agile ones.*

*Thump!* Sassy jumps down and curls on the other side of Shadow. WE PULL BACK as they talk together for comfort in the darkness.

CHANCE

*I'm starved.*

SHADOW

*We'll look for food tomorrow.*

SASSY

*What do you mean 'look for'? Don't tell me you dragged us all the way out here without knowing how we'd eat!*

SHADOW

*Go to sleep.*

SASSY

(worried now)

*Shadow?*

SHADOW

*Go to sleep!*

DISSOLVE TO:

75. EXT. THE SIERRAS - MORNING

We are CLOSE on Sassy who's curled up into a tight ball sleeping peacefully. WE PULL BACK to discover that she's cuddled up with Chance.

SHADOW

*Well, isn't that cozy?*

Sassy's eyes blink open and she finds herself nose-to-nose with Chance. He licks her face. She hisses and leaps away like a shot. From a safe distance, she wipes her face with her paws.

SHADOW (cont.)

*I've found breakfast.*

CUT TO:

76. EXT. A QUIET STREAM - A FEW MINUTES LATER

The three travelers stand at the edge of small shallow stream. Chance and Sassy look at Shadow questioningly.

CHANCE

*Thought you said you'd found breakfast.*

SHADOW

*I did. Right there.*

Sassy and Chance look into the water to see that it's full of fish swimming frantically upstream.

SASSY

*(incredulous)*

*You mean we have to catch breakfast?*

Chance enthusiastically leaps into the water. He sloshes, splashes and snaps at the fish ineffectually. Sassy back away to keep from getting splattered.

SASSY (cont.)

*Not like that! You're scaring them off!  
Let me do it!*

Chance jumps back onto the bank and shakes off as Sassy steps out onto a rock and crouches down toward the water. She dips a paw in and pulls it out with a shudder.

SASSY (cont.)

*It's wet!*

The two dogs look at each other.

CHANCE

*No kidding.*

With a sigh, Sassy leans back down toward the water and studies her prey. She waits for her moment, statue still and strikes! She pulls out a struggling trout impaled on her claws.

CHANCE

*(impressed)*

*Where'd she learn to do that?*

Holding it with both paws, Sassy flips the wriggling fish toward the shore. Chance starts to go for the fish, but Shadow stops him with a growl. Sassy shakes the water from her paw, steps off the boulder and pounces on her breakfast. The dogs wait, watching enviously. She feels their eyes and looks up.

SASSY

*What?*

They just sit there looking hungry. She picks up on the hint.

SASSY (cont.)

*(a sigh)*

*Do I have to do everything?*

*(giving in)*

*Oh, all right, but first you have to say it.*

The dogs groan.

CHANCE

*Come on, Sassy! I'm starving!*

SASSY

*—Then say it.*

SHADOW/CHANCE

*(reluctantly)*

*Cat are better than dogs.*

SASSY

*Thank you.*

Sassy steps back onto the rock, fishes another trout out of the water and flips it onto the shore. Shadow is there first. He pounces on the fish, growling menacingly at Chance. Chance gives up on that one and stands at the shore ready to catch the next one. She strikes again...but misses this time. Chance whines with anticipation. Finally, a trout comes flying toward him and lands on the bank. He pounces, but it wriggles out of his paws. Chance awkwardly chases the flopping fish around the grassy bank. But just as he's managed to snare it...

SHADOW

*Chance, look out!*

He looks up from his fish to find himself staring up at a huge brown bear which has emerged from the trees. The bear lumbers toward Chance, intent on the fish.

CHANCE

*Oh no....you don't!*

He tries to grab the fish in his mouth but it's too slippery.

SASSY

*Chance, don't be stupid!*

SHADOW

*Let him have it!*

Chance growls at the bear and tries to corral the fish in his paws.

CHANCE

*No! It's mine!*

With a growl, the bear runs at Chance in hopes of chasing him away. But Chance won't back down. Barking and snarling, he places himself between the bear and his fish. The bear roars angrily and swipes at him with a claw-spiked paw. And suddenly, Shadow is there, snarling viciously. He dives at the bear...snapping at his flank...trying to draw his attention away from Chance.

SHADOW

*Run!*

In a rage, the bear swipes at him and catches Shadow in the leg with a claw. Shadow yips from the searing pain but rolls over and runs at the bear again. Out of the corner of his eye, he can see that Chance has finally managed to grab the fish in his jaws. With a last savage snap at the bear's flanks, Shadow turns tail and both dogs run at top speed down the grassy bank toward Sassy who joins them as they race past. The bear starts to give chase but gives up with a final frustrated roar.

ALONG THE RIVER BANK

The three run full tilt. Chance still clutches the fish as they run but Shadow begins to lag behind. Sassy looks back and slows.

SASSY

*Wait!**(to Shadow)**You're limping.*

Chance uses this opportunity to swallow his hard-earned breakfast.

SHADOW

*(stoic)**It's nothing.*

SASSY

*(firm)**Sit down!*

He sits down and she can see the two red streaks on his leg where the bear raked him.

SASSY (cont.)

*He got you good.*

She gently licks Shadow's wound as Chance comes back to join them.

CHANCE

*What's the matter?*

SHADOW

*(angrily)**That was a stupid move, pup! You could've got us both killed!*

Chance's ears droop at the sight of his wound.

CHANCE

*Sorry.*

Chance watches almost enviously as Sassy ministers to Shadow's scrapes.

SASSY

(to Shadow)

*It's not very deep, but you shouldn't walk on it for awhile.*

Shadow climbs to his feet with a grunt.

SHADOW

*I'm fine. Let's go.*

He limps painfully past them. On Chance's guilt-ridden face we:

## 77. THE BANKS OF A RIVER

WIPE TO:

77.

Storm clouds have gathered overhead darkening the sunny day. The stream has widened into a full-scale river. Limping ahead of the other two, Shadow stops and stares at the river...studying his options. The river's wide here but shallow and placid.

SHADOW

*Stay here.*

He limp ahead and disappears around the bend. Chance grabs the moment for a quick drink. He slurps thirstily at the water. Sassy crouches down and laps daintily.

## 78. FURTHER DOWNSTREAM

78.

Shadow limps along following the river downstream. He glances worriedly at a long run of churning rapids and stops when he sees the steam rising from the edge of a roaring waterfall.

## 79. THE PLACID SPOT

79

Shadow returns from his scouting trip.

SHADOW

*We better cross here.*

Sassy looks at him as if she didn't quite catch that.

SASSY

*Cross the river?*

SHADOW

*It gets worse up ahead.*

SASSY

*Do we have to? I mean, can't we go around?*

SHADOW

*Home's that way, Sassy.*

He takes a step into the river, gasps as the cold water hits his wound, and plunges across.

CHANCE

*Might as well get it over with. Here goes nothin'!*  
(plunging in)  
*Eeeehaaaa!*

Halfway across, the water reaches Shadow's knees. He turns back and calls to Sassy.

SHADOW

*There's a current, but it's not deep.*

Shadow continues across, slow and steady. Chance bounds past him and scrambles up the bank on the other side. He rolls playfully on the bank...feet flailing the air. Shadow reaches the other side. He climbs out and they look back at Sassy who hasn't budged. She just sits...staring dolefully at them.

SHADOW

*Come on. You can make it.*

Sassy turns and looks back the way they came. No help there. She looks up ahead where several rocks protrude above the water line, creating a zigzag path across the river.

SHADOW (cont.)

*You want me to come back for you?*

SASSY

*I can do it.*

She gets up and moves to a spot further down where the rapids begin to churn. Shadow can see what she's trying to do.

SHADOW

*No! That's not a good idea!*

Ignoring him, she leaps up onto the first rock. Carefully gauging her distance, she leaps onto the next rock and the next.

SASSY

*I hate this. I really hate this.*

Halfway across now, it looks like she just might make it. The other two watch anxiously. But the space between the third and fourth rocks is the longest yet. Sassy crouches, leaps...and falls short. She splashes into the water with terrified yowl!

SHADOW

SASSY!

She bobs to the surface, coughing, flailing with terror. The current is strong and she's swept downstream like a leaf.

Shadow races down the bank to get ahead of her and leaps into the water. Paddling to fight the current, Shadow catches sight of Sassy as she's swept toward him...eyes wide with terror. He tries to use his body as a barrier, but she spins around and bypasses him. He takes off after her, swimming for all he's worth, head held high, trying to keep an eye on Sassy as she's goes under and comes up again, coughing and sputtering.

Chance doesn't know what to do. He races along the shore to keep up...barking hysterically.

The raging river bashes Shadow into a boulder, but his feet hit firm ground underneath. He scrabbles for purchase and pulls himself ashore. He charges downstream in a flurry of flying sand and mud. He races past Sassy whose head appears again for an instant and leaps back into the white water. Shadow fights not to go under and catches sight of Sassy just as she swirls past him again.

SASSY

(a weak wail)

*Shadow!*

He tries to grab her in his jaws as she passes but he's sucked under by the force of the current. He comes up again, disoriented, gasping for air, and manages to cling onto a half-submerged log. He pulls himself up and scans for Sassy.

SHADOW

*Where is she...where is she!*

There! She bobs up again on a white crest at the edge of the falls. She glances his way and their eyes lock for a brief moment....

SHADOW (cont.)

SASSY!

Then she's gone.

SHADOW (cont.)

NOOOOOO!

He starts to go after her. But Chance steps out onto the log, grabs him by the scruff of the neck and forcibly pulls him up onto the bank.

CHANCE

*She's gone, Shadow.*

Half-drowned, sides heaving for air, Shadow jerks away and staggers ahead to the sheer drop at the edge of the falls. He stares down at the churning water below and his whole body seems to sag. After a moment, the old dog throws back his head and howls...an anguished sound full of pain and self-recrimination. As he pauses to catch his breath, Chance joins in. Their mourning cry fills the sky, blocking out all other sound and it almost seems as if the whole forest falls silent for a moment to share in their grief. Then, there's a crack of thunder and the rain comes down.

## 80. THE RIVERBANK - NIGHT

80.

Shadow and Chance spend the night under the protective bower of an old spruce near the spot they last saw Sassy. They lay with their heads on their paws...staring at the river that took their friend.

SHADOW

*It's my fault.*

CHANCE

*No.*

SHADOW

*I shouldn't have made her come.*

CHANCE

*You didn't make her.*

He lifts his head to look at Chance.

SHADOW

*Did you know why they call us 'man's best friend'?*

CHANCE

*'Cause we're loyal.*

SHADOW

*Because he's defenseless...no fur, no fangs or claws. A kitten can run faster. So, way back when, at the dawn of time, a few wild dogs took it upon themselves to watch over him. And we've been doing it ever since.*

CHANCE

*You mean, it's our duty?*

SHADOW

*More like a mission.*

The rain has stopped and the moon slides out from behind a cloud.

SHADOW

*But cat's are different. They're not bound by that. They have their own calling.*

*(painfully)*

*And I shouldn't have made her come.*

As Chance gazes at the older dog, he pulls himself up...sitting tall.

CHANCE (V.O)

*Looking at him then, with the moon shining down, he seemed wise and ancient, like the first dog that ever stalked the plain. And I was proud to be one of his kind.*

81. EXT. THE FOREST - THE NEXT MORNING

The two dogs wind their way slowly down the thick tree growth on steep side of the mountain. Shadow's limps along ahead. Now that there's only two of them, Chance stays close to his side.

CHANCE

*I'm hungry.*

SHADOW

*We ate yesterday.*

Chance stops dead as Shadow's limps ahead.

CHANCE

*Yesterday!*

*(he runs to catch up)*

*Ha..ha...very funny. You're kidding, right? Right?*

WIPE TO:

## 82. EXT. THE RIVER - FAR DOWNSTREAM- DAY

82.

The river has grown quiet again after it's stormy passage upstream. A lumpy mass of mud, sticks and leaves whirls in an eddy near the bank where and snags on branch near the river's rocky edge.

WE hear snatches of someone whistling as they approach the river. A MAN appears, walking with a spritely step and carrying a pile of clothes. Clean shaven with his long graying hair pulled back into a neat pony tail, QUENTIN has a warm youthful face that belies his age. He puts the clothes down on the bank, removes a shirt, dips it into the frigid water and begins to beat it clean on the smooth rocks. But something catches his eye...a muddy mass caught on a branch near the rock.

QUENTIN

What's that?

He moves across the rocks for a closer look and his face falls. The lump is a limp, sodden, mud-caked cat tangled in the twigs and branches...without a sign of life. Quentin shakes his head.

QUENTIN (cont.)

Dead cat. Poor thing. Well, I can't just leave you in the river.

He scoops Sassy up and carries her cold, limp, dripping body back up the side of bank. But the small flicker of life that's left inside flares...kindled by the warmth of his body...and Sassy stirs in his arms. Quentin stops, presses a hand to her chest and feels the faint beating of her heart.

QUENTIN (cont.)

You're alive?

He starts to run.

## 83. EXT. QUENTIN'S MOUNTAIN CABIN

83.

Holding Sassy tightly to his chest, he runs down a ridge that levels out onto a clearing where an old stone-and-log cabin with a trail of smoke curling out of its chimney sits on the side of a craggy snow-capped mountain overlooking the valley below. A fat goat wanders amongst the chickens in a small pen near a well-tended winter garden. The goat bleats as Quentin runs past.

QUENTIN

We got company, Aretha!

He takes the porch steps two at a time and runs inside.

## 84. INT. QUENTIN'S CABIN

84.

The one-room cabin is primitive and rustic...a throwback to another age. There's a small oak table in one corner under a window, a wood plank bed in the other, a wash basin, herbs hanging from the beamed ceiling, wooden buckets filled with fresh vegetables, sacks of cornmeal and flour, even a spinning wheel. Quentin is a serious back-to-nature type, a contemporary hermit. He's strung up ropes and pulleys to make a primitive mechanism to catch rainwater and recycle it. There are "How To.." books piled everywhere. A rocking chair sits in front of the stone fireplace with a hanging pot cooking over the flames. Quentin run in, grabs a blanket from the bed, sits down and tries to rub life into Sassy's limp form.

QUENTIN

Come on, baby...you're going to be all right,  
Don't die on me now. Come on...

84 Cont'd

Sassy sputters, coughs and sucks in a wheezing breath of air.

<sup>50</sup>  
84 Cont'd

QUENTIN (cont.)

There's a good girl.

Sassy groans and opens her eyes. She looks up at Quentin, mews faintly, and closes them again.

85

INT. QUENTIN'S CABIN - THE NEXT MORNING

WIPE TO:

85

Sassy's curled up on the foot of Quentin's bed, sleeping. He carefully gets out of bed, dressed in his long johns, and leans his head down to hear if she's breathing. He smiles.

QUENTIN

You made it through the night so I guess that means you're going to be okay.

86.

INT. QUENTIN'S CABIN- LATER THAT DAY

86

Dressed in homespun clothes, Quentin dips a wash rag in a bowl of hot water, squeezes it out and gently washes the still-sleeping Sassy. The caked mud comes off to reveal her beige coat and black-booted legs.

QUENTIN (cont.)

Siamese, huh? Now what's a classy dame like you doing way out here in the sticks?

Sassy stirs and looks up at him woozily.

QUENTIN (cont.)

Think you could keep some milk down?

He pours some milk from a pitcher into a bowl, dips a finger into the milk and holds it to Sassy's nose.

QUENTIN (cont.)

Here you go. Nice warm goat's milk. Compliments of Aretha. Take a lick for Quentin.

She sniffs the drop and licks it with her tongue. Quentin picks up the bowl and carries Sassy over to the rocker. He rocks her gently as he continues to dip his finger in the milk and let her lick it clean.

QUENTIN (cont.)

Can't for the life of me figure out how you got out here. There's no roads or campsites for miles.

He strokes Sassy. She rallies what little strength she has to purr lightly.

QUENTIN (cont.)

Maybe you ran away...left it all behind...like me. Is that what you did? Couldn't take the noise and the crowds and the pressure, huh? Yeah, I know what you mean.

86 Cont 'd

51 86 Cont c

He glances up at a group of photographs on the mantle. They're not typical family shots, but photographs of a younger Quentin playing the saxophone on stage or posing with other recording artists: Dizzy Gillespie, Quincy Jones, Miles Davis.

WIPE TO:

87. INT. QUENTIN'S CABIN - THAT NIGHT

The sun has gone down and the stars come out, but Quentin still holds Sassy rocking her gently as she sleeps. But now he carefully extricates himself from the chair without disturbing her and slides a case out from under the bed. He opens it and removes a saxophone. The shining metal instrument seems strangely out of place in this primitive environment. With a glance at Sassy, he tiptoes out the door.

88. EXT. QUENTIN'S CABIN - THE PORCH

Quentin stands on the porch and begins to play...a beautiful, melancholy lilting song that echoes off the canyon walls.

89. INT. QUENTIN'S CABIN

Awakened by the sound, Sassy lifts her head and looks out the window where she can see Quentin's silhouette as he plays his music to the stars.

SASSY

(groggy)

*I think I like it here.*

CUT TO:

90 INT. QUENTIN'S CABIN - THE NEXT DAY

Sassy wakes up and yawns. The shine has returned to her eyes. She looks around at the unfamiliar surroundings.

SASSY

*Well, there went Life Number Six...or was it Seven? No, I'm pretty sure I was still on Six.*

Her host is puttering in the kitchen, humming to himself. Sassy gets to her feet unsteadily and jumps to the ground.

SASSY (cont.)

*I wonder if this guy has any food on him. A nice juicy can of Seaside Supper would be good or Mixed Grill or Chicken Banquet.*

QUENTIN

Well, hello there. Feeling better? Think you can manage an egg this morning?

He cracks an egg into a bowl, adds a little goat's milk and sets it down on the floor for Sassy. She teeters a little on her feet as she goes over and laps it up. Quentin crouches down to pet her.

QUENTIN (cont.)

Wonder what your name is? Well, seeing as there's no way for you to tell me...I'm going to call you Ella. Okay with you?

She finishes lapping the milk and totters over to sunny spot near the window where she begins her daily bath. But she stops briefly to gaze out the window.

90. Cont 'd

SASSY (cont.)

*Wonder what happened to Shadow and Chance?*

*Probably long gone by now.*

*(convincing herself)*

*Well, that's fine. What do I have to go traipsing across the primeval forest for, anyway?*

She glances over at Quentin as he putters in the kitchen, humming the tune that woke her last night.

SASSY (cont.)

*I like this guy. Yeah, I could stay on here.*

*One home's as good as another.*

She looks out the window again.

SASSY (cont.)

*I'll probably stop missing them in a few hundred years.*

WIPE TO:

91

INT. QUENTIN'S CABIN - THE NEXT DAY

Sassy's alone in the cabin, batting at a ball of twine on the wood floor. She's better now, almost recovered. Quentin opens the door from the outside and leads the goat into the cabin. Sassy takes one look at the goat and shoots under the bed.

QUENTIN (cont.)

*(to the goat)*

*Come on in and meet Ella. She's going to be living with us now.*

Sassy peers out, ears flat, eyes dilated. Quentin bends down to speak to Sassy under the bed.

QUENTIN (cont.)

*I have to keep Retha in the cabin whenever I'm gone so the mountain lions don't get her.*

He goes to the door.

SASSY

*Wait...you're not leaving me alone with that thing are you?*

QUENTIN (cont.)

*Now you two be polite.*

He goes out and closes the door behind him. The goat stares blankly at Sassy who eyes him suspiciously.

SASSY

*One move and I'll scratch your eyes out.*

92

EXT. THE CLEARING

Carrying his axe over his shoulder, Quentin disappears around the bend and into the woods. There's a beat and then the cabin fairly rocks from the crescendo of CRASHING, HISSING, YOWLING AND TERRIFIED BLEATING.

92

93 EXT. QUENTIN'S CABIN - EARLY EVENING

53

93

Quentin returns home dragging a large pile of firewood tied with twine. He heaves it onto the porch.

94 INT. QUENTIN'S CABIN

94

Quentin comes in, exhausted from his wood-cutting.

QUENTIN

Sorry it took me so long, I....

He trails off as he gets a good look at the interior of the cabin. It looks like it's been hit by a hurricane. Chairs and table upturned, broken dishes on the floor, wash basin upside down, wooden buckets overturned, vegetables all over and the bed completely turned over where Aretha lays on her side, entirely tangled in her rope, unable to move. She *bleats* pathetically.

Quentin scans the debris for Sassy and finds her stretched out on the floor in the remaining sun. She lifts her head sleepily and yawns.

SASSY

*Back already?*

CUT TO:

95 EXT. A WOODED VALLEY - THE NEXT DAY

95

Shadow and Chance have come off the mountain on the opposite side and emerge into the valley below Quentin's cabin. Fatigue and hungry have taken their toll on both dogs. They've both lost weight, their coats dull and ragged. But Shadow age together with the wound have really slowed him down. Shadow spots a quail that's wandered out into the open.

SHADOW

*Get down.*

They duck behind a rock. But Chance is impatient. As the quail comes closer, he leaps out and the quail flies off without so much as a ruffled feather. Chance chases after it barking with frustration. Shadow emerges from his hiding place.

SHADOW (cont.)

*You rushed him too soon.*

CHANCE

*I can't help it. I'm starving.*

SHADOW

*Next time, wait until I give the signal. And no more barking. You'll attract undesirable company.*

They move on passing under a tree where a lynx sits in the branches watching them silently. After they've gone, the lynx slips stealthily down the tree and moves off after them....hunting the hunters

96 FURTHER ON - NEAR A HOLLOW LOG

96

A rabbit hops toward a hollow log nibbling on scattered blades of grass. We hear Shadow whispering from their hiding place behind the log.

SHADOW (O.S.)

*Don't move a muscle.*

96 Cont 'd

54 96 Cont 'd

CHANCE (O.S.)

*I won't.*

SHADOW (O.S.)

*If you blow this one....*

CHANCE (O.S.)

*I won't!*

97. THE LYNX

Behind them, the lynx slinks through the trees, sniffing the ground. It sees the dogs hiding behind the log and crouches....preparing its attack.

98 THE LOG

The rabbit hops closer to the log.

SHADOW (O.S.)

*Wait...*

Chance explodes over the log.

98. THE LYNX

The lynx pulls back....waiting for a better opportunity.

100. THE LOG

Chance chases the rabbit in circles, barking and growling, trying to trap it in his paws. Finally, the rabbit makes a dive for the hollow log and disappears. Chance tries to go after it, but he can't fit in the log. He stand back, barking and pawing at the dirt. Shadow stands up.

SHADOW (cont.)

*That's it! You're on your own.*

He limps away. Chance runs after him.

CHANCE

*All right, I'm sorry. I swear I'll do it right next time. I won't move. I won't make a sound.*

Ever-patient, the lynx slinks through the underbrush behind them.

CHANCE (cont.)

*Come on. Give me a second chance.*

SHADOW

*That was your second chance.*

The lynx follows closely behind.

CHANCE

*Come on, don't be like that. Can't we try again? I'm starving.*

100 Cont 1d

55 100 Cont c

Ignoring him, Shadow limps up to a clear pool and laps at the water.

CHANCE (cont.)

*Oh, I get it. You're not talking to me now.*

The lynx stealthily leaps up onto a large boulder overlooking the pool.

CHANCE (cont.)

*For an old dog, you can be really immature.*

Chance leans down to get a drink as well, but stops as he sees something in the water. He looks closer. It's the reflection of the lynx as it crouches, muscles tense, preparing to pounce.

CHANCE (cont.)

*(an urgent whisper)*

*Run.*

Shadow completely ignores him.

CHANCE (cont.)

*(panic rising)*

*I mean it! Run!*

In desperation, Chance nips Shadow's heel.

CHANCE (cont.)

*RUN!*

Shadow yips and leaps forward just as...

...the lynx leaps! It hits the ground as the dogs explode across the pool. The lynx growls, furious at the missed attack and gives chase.

The dogs run for their lives. But Shadow's hindered by his wound. He limps along struggling against the pain and his fatigue but he can't keep up with Chance who bounds ahead.

Behind him, the lynx has chosen his prey, the older weaker dog.

Shadow limps blindly on, heedless to the sharp branches that tear at his hide, eyes wild with panic.

101

CHANCE

101.

Up ahead, Chance runs headlong through the underbrush.

CHANCE

*Did we make it?*

He glances back, no Shadow. He slows.

CHANCE (cont.)

*Shadow?*

102

SHADOW AND THE LYNX

102.

Shadow glances back, but the lynx is gone. He staggers to a stop, sides heaving, and sniffs the air. He stares into the deep green shadows.

SHADOW

*I know you're still here.*

He hears something and whips around. But it's only the wind rustling the trees and tangled branches. He sniffs again.

Suddenly, there's a flash of tawny brown. With a deep-throated yowl, as the lynx leaps out from behind a redwood. Shadow whips around and takes off again, but the lynx swats at his hind leg trying to topple him.

Shadow stumbles and goes down. The lynx yowls again. It has him now!

Chance bursts out of the bushes, snarling ferociously. He bares his teeth and snaps viciously at the predator. The lynx hunkers down, ears flat, yowling angrily. He takes a slow step back...and another...then turns and melts into the forest.

CHANCE

(surprised)

*I did it! I scared him off!*

Shadow watches the lynx go with grave expression.

SHADOW

*He'll be back.*

CHANCE

*What do you mean?*

SHADOW

*He knows I'm wounded so he'll keep tracking us until we stop to rest or sleep, then he'll move in.*

CHANCE

*What do we do?*

SHADOW

*Keep moving.*

Shadow limps off toward a clearing up ahead.

SHADOW (cont.)

*We'll be safer out in the open.*

Chance hurries behind.

CHANCE

*Isn't it supposed to be the dogs who chase the cat?*

## 103. A ROCKY CLEARING

103

They emerge into a clearing where a recent landslide has created a rocky landscape.

## 104. THE WOODS

104

As predicted, the lynx waits until they've gone before he reappears, sniffing along their trail, tracking them relentlessly.

105. THE CLEARING

57

105.

Shadow and Chance pick their way around the boulders and rocks and pass a large flat rock that's lying on top of a smaller round boulder. Shadow stops in his tracks.

CHANCE

*What is it?*

Shadow turns back to look at the flat rock they just passed. It's leaning, tilted, with the boulder situated in the exact middle, like a fulcrum. Shadow walks back to the rock to study it. He steps gingerly onto the downside.

CHANCE (cont.)

*What?*

Shadow takes a couple of steps up the rock toward the center. It tilts slightly with his weight. He looks at Chance.

SHADOW

*I have an idea.*

WIPE TO:

106. EXT. THE ROCKY CLEARING - A LITTLE LATER

106.

Chance has climbed up the side of the slope to a rocky outcropping above the tilted rock.

SHADOW

*It's all in the timing. When I get to here...*

CHANCE

*(impatient)*

*I know! I know! We've been over this fifty times.*

Shadow turns to go.

CHANCE (cont.)

*Wait.*

He stops.

CHANCE (cont.)

*Maybe I should be the one to go.*

SHADOW

*We both know you have a better chance of making it on your own than I do.*

Shadow turns and makes his way back across the rock-strewn clearing toward the edge of the woods.

CHANCE

*Shadow!*

Shadow turns around once more with a sigh.

SHADOW

*What?*

## CHANCE

*Good luck.*

Shadow flaps his tail in response and disappears into the thick woods.

## 107 THE WOODS

Shadow sniffs the air, trying to smell out the lynx. He sits down and howls painfully. He struggles to his feet and staggers forward a few steps.

## 108 THE BUSHES

Ears pricked, the lynx slinks through the bushes toward the sounds of a wounded animal. He stops and crouches to watch Shadow's faked show of distress.

## 109 SHADOW

He limps, falls, gets up, limps forward, falls again.

## SHADOW

*Come and get me, sucker. This is the oldest trick in the book.*

## 110. THE BUSHES

The lynx looks around for the other dog, sees nothing. He crouches...and springs, exploding out of the bushes toward Shadow.

## SHADOW (cont.)

*Here we go!*

Shadow turns and takes off, running as fast as his leg will allow. The lynx follows closely, letting his wounded prey run itself out.

## 111 THE ROCKY CLEARING

Chance's head pops up as Shadow bursts out of the woods into the clearing with the lynx trailing behind. Shadow scrabbles over the rocks and dodges around boulders. The more graceful lynx tracks him, steadily.

## SHADOW (cont.)

*You better be ready 'cause he's right on my tail!*

Chance stands up as Shadow approaches the teeter-totter rock.

## 112 THE TEETER-TOTTER ROCK

Shadow stumbles toward the seesaw rock. He runs halfway up and turns to wait for the lynx. The lynx slows...suspicious.

## CHANCE

*Here kitty....come on, kitty.*

The lynx sniffs, then moves cautiously forward. He put one paw onto the bottom end of the tilted rock....

112 Cont 'd

59

112 Cont 'd

SHADOW

(to Chance)

*Not yet.*

The lynx moves forward toward his prey, placing his full weight onto the down side of rock.

SHADOW (cont.)

NOW!

Shadow leaps sideways as Chance hurls himself off the rocky outcropping above.

Startled by Shadow's sudden movement, the lynx tenses as Chance lands with an audible grunt on the uptilted end of the rock. It slams down to the ground.

And...like before...the cat goes flying. The lynx yowls horribly, claws scrabbling at nothing as it arcs through the air and lands with a jarring thud onto ground. More dazed than injured, the lynx climbs to its feet, shakes its head and runs off with a mournful howl.

The dogs cheer and do a little doggy dance of joy. Barking loudly, crouching playfully, running in mad circles.

SHADOW

*You did good.*

CHANCE

*No, you did good!*

CUT TO:

113. EXT. QUENTIN'S MOUNTAIN CABIN - THE SAME TIME

113.

Quentin has moved his rocker onto the porch. Sassy's curled up in his lap with one wary eye trained on Aretha who's tied up at a safe distance in the yard. Sassy's ears prick and she lifts her head. She's heard something: the unmistakable sound of Chance's bark as it echoes through the valley.

SASSY

*I'd know that stupid bark anywhere!*

She listens. There it is again Two dogs barking this time.

SASSY (cont.)

*It's them! They're not long gone! I can catch them if I hurry!*

QUENTIN

(calming her)

*It's all right, Ella. That's just a couple of hunting dogs.*

She squirms in his lap.

SASSY

*Listen, I really like it here with you and I appreciate everything you've done for me. But that's my family down there!*

She tries to jump off his lap, but he holds her. She struggles to get away...yowling unhappily.

SASSY (cont.)

*Please...they're just dogs! They can't get along without me.*

Maybe it's the desperation in her cry that makes him let her go.

QUENTIN

All right....all right. I don't want to stand in your way if you got things to do. But remember, you always have a place to run to if it gets too crazy out there.

He crouches down and lets her slip out of his arms. Sassy scoots way, leaping from the porch to the ground. Quentin watches her go.

QUENTIN (cont.)

(wistful)

Guess it's just you and me again, 'Retha.

He turns and goes back inside the cabin. And just maybe that's a look of relief on the goat's placid face.

## 114. THE SLOPING HILL

114.

Sassy races down the sloping hill, leaping over rocks...running all out. Halfway down, the sound of Quentin's saxophone catches up with her. She turns briefly and glances back as his bittersweet music floats down the mountain to accompany her on her way.

## 115. QUENTIN'S MOUNTAIN

115.

Sassy's reached the bottom of the mountain. She pauses momentarily to listen.

SASSY

*Come on, keep barking. Let me know where you are.*

Nothing...just the sound of the wind in the trees. She sniffs the ground for a possible scent and plunges into the valley.

## 116. A CLEARING - LATER

116.

Swift and efficient, a ghost in the twilight, Sassy races across a clearing. A herd of stone-still deer watch her pass...ears tracking her like radar.

## 117. A GROVE OF WOODS

117.

She stops to sniff the ground near the fallen log where Chance chased the rabbit.

SASSY

*They were here all right.*

She races off, following their trail.

## 118. EXT. THE ROCKY CLEARING

118.

Sassy emerges from the cover of the trees. Sniffing the rocks and boulders, she picks her way across the clearing.

119. EXT. A MEADOW

The dogs are fantasizing about food to keep going.

CHANCE

*Remember..hot dogs? My favorite are ones that fall off the barbecue grill with a little dirt for flavor. Boy, do I miss hot dogs.*

SHADOW

*Me too, but not as much as steak bones. Chewing on a big juicy steak bone all night long...now that's what I call ecstasy.*

CHANCE

*Yeah, then burying it in the backyard and digging it up about a week later.*

SHADOW/CHANCE

*Mmmmmm.*

CHANCE

*(a dreamy sigh)*

*It doesn't get much better than that.*

120. EXT. HILLTOP OVERLOOKING THE MEADOW

Sassy bounds into view on top of the hill and stops to gaze out over the meadow.

121. THE MEADOW - HER POV

Two distant specks trudge onward shoulder to shoulder.

Sassy lifts her head and yowls, long and low.

122. THE DOGS

The sound stops them in their tracks. They cock their heads, listening. Another long meow floats down to them.

SHADOW

*Sassy?*

They turn around and look back the way they came.

CHANCE

*Couldn't be.*

Another meow. This time, Shadow sees something small and beige racing down the hill.

SHADOW

*SASSY!*

Chance bursts into frenetic barking and the dogs take off toward her.

Sassy bounds across the meadow...yowling at the top of her lungs.

They collide in a flurry of whining, licking yipping and purring. The dogs almost smother Sassy in their eagerness...words tumbling out.

SHADOW

*I can't believe it's you! I can't believe you're alive!*

SASSY

*I never thought I'd see you again!*

CHANCE

*We missed you so much!*

SASSY

*I missed you too!*

*(she looks them over)*

*But you look awful!*

CHANCE

*We were starving without you.*

123. EXT. A MOUNTAIN LAKE - DUSK

DISSOLVE TO:

123.

The animals lie next to a small pile of fish bones near the bank of a crystal blue mountain lake. Chance is telling the tale of the lynx.

CHANCE

*WHOOOSH! Right through the air! You should have seen it! Shadow was great!*

SHADOW

*You were no slouch yourself.*

CHANCE

*Yeah, but you thought it up. It was a true stroke of genius.*

Sassy watches them with a knowing look. They've come a long way since she left. But now Shadow's embarrassed by all this mutual admiration. He clears his throat and stands up.

SHADOW

*We can still make a few miles before dark.*

They animal heave themselves to their feet and press on, plodding alongside the lake.

SASSY

*(eagerly)*

*I can't wait to get home.*

But Chance has spotted something up ahead.

CHANCE

*Will you look at that?*

Shadow and Sassy follow his gaze to a PORCUPINE which has shuffled out into the open meadow. Nose twitching, Chance lowers his belly to the ground and stalks curiously closer.

SASSY

*What is it?*

CHANCE

*I don't know, but I'm going to find out.*

Shadow sniffs the porcupine's musty scent.

SHADOW

*(cautious)**Careful, Chance. It doesn't smell right and what are those...?*

Too late. Chance takes one step too close. The porcupine spins around with surprising speed for such a clumsy-looking creature and WHACKS Chance full in the face with its terrible tail.

He recoils with a howl of pain. Whimpering pitifully, Chance claws at the quills which have pierced one side of his cheek and barely missed an eye. Shadow instantly leaps forward placing himself between Chance and his bizarre adversary.

The porcupine shambles off...unfazed by the incident.

Chance howls in a frenzy of agony. He rolls around, rubs his cheek along the ground and when that doesn't work, tries rubbing it against a nearby tree. Sassy and Shadow try to get close but they can only look on helplessly as Chance flings himself around...whining and howling painfully.

SHADOW

*The lake, Chance. Dunk your head in the lake!*

The puppy looks up at Shadow with hopeful, agonized expression and leaps straight into the freezing waters of the lake. As Shadow and Sassy watch, he dunks his head under...comes up for air ...and dunks it again.

CUT TO:

124 THE LAKESIDE - LATER

A soaking, whining Chance lays shivering on the sandy bank while Sassy inspects the quills in his bleeding, swelling cheek.

SASSY

*They're in deep.*

She very carefully takes hold of one between her teeth and tries to pull it out. But the barbed ends cause Chance new agony. He howls. Sassy releases the quill.

SASSY (cont.)

*All right...all right.*

SHADOW

*That's just making it worse.*

Gasping from the pain, teeth chattering, Chance looks up at Sassy with the tortured eyes of a wounded soldier. She licks him gently.

DISSOLVE TO:

125 EXT. BISHOP - THE NEXT MORNING

64

125,

Kate's blazer turns up a dirt road leading to her house.

126 EXT. KATE'S HOUSE

126.

She pulls up in front and the horse in the stall whinnies a greeting. The horse in the trailer whinnies in answer. Kate jumps out and looks up at the porch expecting to see Shadow in the same place she left him. She steps through the gate.

KATE  
Shadow? Chance! Sassy! I'm back!

Frank comes across the field from next door.

FRANK  
Welcome home! I been watching for you  
all morning. How was it?

She takes off her hat and wipes her brow with the back of her hand.

KATE  
Every year that trail seems longer and  
longer. I need a long soak in a hot tub.

FRANK  
How'd the animals take to it?

She looks at him, confused by the question.

KATE  
The horses?

He glances at her truck....looking for the pets.

FRANK  
No, the dogs and the cat.

He glances back at her. She stares at him, speechless, with horror growing in her eyes. He gapes at her.

FRANK  
You mean, you didn't take them with you?

KATE  
You can't take pets on a stock drive!

FRANK  
That's what I thought. But your note said  
you'd taken them.

She's already moving across the yard to the tack room.

127. INT. KATE'S TACK ROOM

127.

She runs in with Frank on her heels and grabs the first page of the note from the shelf...scanning it in quickly. Frank points at the words on the bottom.

127 Cont'd

65  
127 Cont'd

FRANK

See...right there.

KATE

This is just the first page!

Trying to hold back her panic, she scans the tack room for the missing page and spots a corner of it sticking out from under the saddle rack. She picks it up and hands it to him. He reads the page with disbelief.

KATE (cont.)

(trying to sort it out)

When you came over that first day, they weren't here?

He shakes his head slowly.

KATE (cont.)

You never saw them at all?

He shakes it again and Kate rubs her hands over face.

KATE

Okay...okay...just think. Where would they have gone?

FRANK

Maybe they're at the animal shelter.

She runs to the house with Frank right behind.

INT. KATE'S KITCHEN - A LITTLE LATER

Frank paces while Kate talks on the phone.

KATE

Siamese. You know, white with black paws and face. The old dog's a black Lab and the puppy's big and sort of yellow with floppy ears. I think he's a mix.

(listening)

No. Okay, well, thanks. It was just a shot.

She hangs up. Frank stops pacing.

FRANK

What could happened to them? Could they have been poisoned...or run over?

KATE

Not all three at once.

She glances out the window at the imposing Sierras. She thinks for a minute, then shakes her head as if she doesn't want to consider that thought.

128

128

128 Cont'd

66

128 Cont'd

FRANK

What?

KATE

The old dog, Shadow, spent every day staring...just staring toward home.

FRANK

So...?

KATE

So, maybe, that's where they went.

FRANK

To Fresno? It's hundreds of miles!

KATE

But they wouldn't know that. They'd go the way their noses told them.

She gestures toward the mountains. He gazes out the window. The Sierras seem to glower down at them. Frank shakes his head.

FRANK

They'd never make it.

Kate picks up the phone again.

129 EXT. THE SIERRAS - RANGER STATION

A bearded ranger talks on the radio phone.

RANGER

No, ma'am. Not hide nor hair. And I gotta tell you, domesticated animals wouldn't stand a chance out here. We got bears and mountain lions and..

130 INT. KATE'S KITCHEN

Frank fills Kate's coffee cup while she talks on the phone.

KATE

Is there anybody else in the Park Service I can call?....Would you? I'd appreciate it. I gave you my number, didn't I?....Good. Thanks again. Bye.

She hangs up and shakes her head. He puts his arm around her consolingly.

FRANK

You've done everything you can.

She looks up at him with guilt, dread and trepidation in her face.

KATE

Not everything.

129

130

130 cont'd

130 cont'd  
67

She looks at the phone, takes a deep breath and picks it up.

CUT TO:

131. EXT. THE BURNFORD TOWNHOUSE - THE SAME TIME

We can hear the phone ring from the open kitchen window.

132. INT. TOWNHOUSE KITCHEN

Peter's making himself a sandwich. The phone rings again. He picks it up.

PETER

Hello.

(his face breaks into a grin)

Oh, hi! You're back! Mom said you'd be getting home today. How's Shadow?

Momentary concern flickers across his face. Kate's obviously ducking the question.

PETER (cont.)

Yeah, sure.

He puts the phone down and goes to the kitchen door.

PETER (cont.)

Mom! Telephone!

Peter turns around and stares at the phone lying on the counter top. He heard something in Kate's voice and an awful feeling of dread is creeping up his back. Laura rushes past him on her way to the phone.

LAURA

Who is it?

He doesn't answer. She frowns at him and picks up the phone.

LAURA

Hello? Kate! You're home! The kids are dying to see the animals. We thought we'd come up tomorrow...

She trails off at something Kate says. Her pleasant expression freezes. She glances at Peter and turns away so he can't see her face.

LAURA (cont.)

(a choked whisper)

When?

But it doesn't matter. Peter already knows that something terrible has happened.

133. INT. TOWNHOUSE LIVING ROOM - LATER

CUT TO:

Laura sits on the sofa cradling a sobbing Hope with a comforting arm around Jamie. Jamie wipes the tears away with the back of his hand and tries to encourage others.

133 Cont'd

68  
133 Cont'd

JAMIE

Don't worry. They'll make it home. They will!

Laura's face crumbles at this and her tears flow. Bob doesn't know what to do or say. He stands apart, feeling helpless.

BOB

(feebly)

They might. You never know.

Bob glances at Peter who sits stares mutely straight ahead...utterly stricken.

134.

PETER'S ROOM - LATER

134.

Peter sits on the floor with a shoe box full of photographs in his lap. He scrabbles through the pictures searching for a certain photograph. Finally, he finds it: a photo of himself as a baby sitting on top of a much younger Shadow, kicking his heels into the patient dog's ribs and tugging on his ears. Peter holds the picture to his chest, struggling against the tears.

135.

INT. UNIVERSITY CAMPUS - BOB'S OFFICE - DAY

CUT TO:

135

Bob types frantically on a computer in his office. His research assistant pokes her head in the door.

RESEARCH ASSISTANT

They're waiting for you, Professor.

Bob looks up at her blankly.

BOB

Who?

She can't believe he's forgotten.

RESEARCH ASSISTANT

Dean Maxwell and the uh...grant committee.

BOB

(remembering)

Oh my God!

He does something else on the computer, then jumps up and stands impatiently over the the printer.

BOB (cont.)

Come on, come on! Print! You stone-age piece of...

The paper slowly oozes it's way out. He grabs it and sits back down at his desk where he hurriedly cuts something from a photograph and scotch-tapes it onto the printed page.

RESEARCH ASSISTANT

Professor...

BOB

Okay...okay.

He leaps up, grabbing up a pile books and papers and shoves the taped page into her hands.

135 Cont'd.

135. Cont'd.  
69

BOB (cont.)

Will you make fifty...no, a hundred copies of this for me, please...as a personal favor. I'd really appreciate it. Thanks.

And he's out the door...sprinting down the hall. She looks down at the paper in her hands. It's a LOST ANIMALS flyer with a picture of the pets, cut from a wedding picture. The flyer promises a substantial reward...\$\$\$\$.

136. INT. THE BURNFORD TOWNHOUSE - THAT EVENING

CUT TO:

136

The family eats their meal in silence. All three children pick at their food. The tension hangs in the air.

LAURA

Eat your Lima beans, Hope.

HOPE

I hate Lima beans. I don't see why you always have to make them.

LAURA

Because they're good for you.

BOB

Do as your mother says, Hope.

Peter slams his fork down.

PETER

You can't tell her what to do! You're not her father!

Jamie and Hope gape him. Laura is stunned.

LAURA

(angrily)

Peter! Apologize to Bob, right this minute!

Peter gets up, toppling his chair, and runs up the stairs to his room. Laura starts to go after him, but Bob puts a restraining hand on her arm. His look says: "This one's my responsibility." She sinks back down and lets him go upstairs to deal with his son.

137. INT. PETER'S ROOM

137.

Peter lays on his bed...staring at the photograph he found earlier. Bob appears in the half-open door.

BOB

Peter?

Peter whirls around...surprised by the intrusion. Without his mother to restrain him, Peter lets loose at Bob with all the anger and blame that he's got pent up inside.

PETER

(accusing)

I told you he'd think I abandoned him!  
But you made me come anyway!

(yelling)

It's your fault! It's all your fault!

137 Cont'd

70

137 Cont'd

138

He gets up and slams the door in Bob's face.

138 INT. THE HALL OUTSIDE PETER'S ROOM

The door has missed his nose by a bare inch. Bob squeezes his eyes shut..

139 INT. PETER'S ROOM

139

He sits on the bed talking to the photo of Shadow.

PETER

I didn't abandon you. I didn't...I didn't.

140 EXT. THE EDGE OF THE SIERRAS - DAY

DISSOLVE TO:

140

The three animals climb up a steep rocky hill...panting from the effort. Snow lays in scattered patches on the ground. Sassy's further up the hill than the dogs. She's looking thinner and ragged now too. Sick and feverish, his cheek swollen and infected, Chance heaves himself up behind her. Further back, Shadow struggles slowly up the the hill, legs shaking from the exertion. Chance turns back to wait for him..

CHANCE

*You all right?*

SHADOW

*Yeah.*

Further up, Sassy makes it to the crest. As she turns around to wait for the other two, she glances down to see a highway below...snaking back to civilization.

SASSY

(a stunned whisper)

*We made it.*

She turns back to the other two.

SASSY (cont.)

*We made it!*

The dogs' ears prick up. With a sudden surge of engery, they scramble, shoulder-to-shoulder, the rest of the way up the hill. At the top, Chance glances back at the terrible, awesome vastness through which they've come.

CHANCE (V.O.)

Even now...I don't know how we did it. But there we were...somehow...impossibly on the other side...looking down at the road home. And we just knew the worst was behind us.

141. THE OTHER SIDE

141

Giddy from their victory, they stumble, run, and limp down the other side of the hill toward the highway.

142. EXT. THE HIGHWAY - A LITTLE LATER

71

Weak and shivering from his fever, Chance scrambles up the gravel scree and walks out onto the center of the multi-laned highway.

CHANCE

*All we have to do is follow this and we're home.*

The other two climb into view.

SASSY

*Look out!*

Chance turns to find himself staring at a herd of cars heading straight for him. With a yelp, he throws himself out of the way as the cars ZOOM past.

Shadow limps by him.

SHADOW

*You been in the sticks too long, pup.*

CUT TO:

143. EXT. THE HIGHWAY - FURTHER ON - LATE AFTERNOON

The pets travel single-file in the trough below the shoulder of the highway. Above them, the traffic speeds by.

144. EXT. MOTEL - NIGHT

CUT TO:

Shadow leads the way as they march steadily along the shoulder of the highway. Behind them, the neon signs of several roadside motels blink in the waning light. They press on toward a familiar neon arrow that points to a motel in the distance.

145. EXT. MOTEL PARKING LOT

The other two watch Shadow curiously as he sniffs the cars and trucks parked in the lot.

SASSY

*What are you doing?*

SHADOW

*(giving up)*

*I thought maybe they'd come back here.*

*(disappointed)*

*Wishful thinking, I guess.*

CHANCE

*(shivering)*

*So what do we do now?*

SHADOW

*Find a place for you to get warm.*

146. EXT. MOTEL ROOM

Sassy paws at the window of the room they stayed in before. It slides open and the three wayward travelers slip inside.

147. INT. MOTEL ROOM

It's clean and ready for new guests. Chance dives for the bed...scraping back the covers and wriggling under the blanket. He moans and thrashes, unable to get comfortable or escape the pain of his infected cheek.

SASSY

(to Shadow)

*His fever's getting worse.*

Shadow's so exhausted, he weaves on his feet.

SHADOW

*I saw a dumpster out there. Do you think you could find us some food?*

SASSY

*Sure.*

(still the smart-aleck)

*But first you have to s....*

Shadow looks at her...eyes rimmed red with fatigue. She trails off.

SHADOW

*What?*

SASSY

*Nothing.*

She heads for the door.

SASSY (cont.)

*I'll be back.*

148. EXT. MOTEL DUMPSTER - NIGHT

CUT TO:

WE hear the sounds of her digging around inside: sniffing, munching, tasting, sorting.

SASSY (O.S.)

*Hmmm....yum....what's this? Broccoli...yuck!**I can't believe the things people eat! Wait a minute...**now that's more like it.. They're going to love this!*

149. INT. MOTEL ROOM - MORNING

CUT TO:

The room is strewn with empty, chewed fast-food wrappings and containers: Big Macs, Egg McMuffins, McFish Sandwiches, french-fry containers, shake cups, Whoppers, Apple Turnover boxes, etc.

And lying among the discarded ruins of their debauchery, are three sleeping, bloated animals. Even Chance is dead to the world, his swollen cheek resting carefully on the pillow.

The door opens and light streams into the room. A man in silhouette drags his suitcase over the doorstep.

Then animals snap awake.

149. Cont 'd

As the man's eyes adjust to the light, he stops.

73  
149. Cont 'c

GUEST

What a mess!

(yelling to the manager)

Hey! I thought you said this room was ready!

The animals are on their feet but have trouble getting traction on the layer of plastic-coated wrappers. They slip and slide past the astonished man and out the door before he knows what hit him.

150. EXT. SAN FRANCISCO - NIGHT

WIPE TO:

150.

The lights burn inside the townhouse.

151. INT. THE BURNFORD TOWNHOUSE - PETER'S BEDROOM

151.

Peter's trying to concentrate on his math homework. Frustrated, he glances up at the photo of Shadow that's now sitting on his bureau. His mind wanders for a moment then he shakes the thought off and goes back to work. He attempts to erase something but the eraser on his pencil has worn down to nothing. It tears a hole in his paper.

Peter angrily throws the pencil across the room. He opens the drawer to his desk and scrabbles through the contents in search of another pencil. When he doesn't find one, he gets up and marches out the door...

152. EXT. THE HALLWAY

152.

...down the hall, the stairs and past Bob in the living room who's pouring over a huge academic volume. Bob glances up as he passes but Peter averts his eyes until he's out of sight.

153. THE DEN

153.

Peter marches into the den and yanks open Bob's rolltop desk. He rifles through the stuff inside, spilling a stack of papers onto the floor. As he reaches down to retrieve them, he sees that they're the Lost Animals flyers Bob made earlier. Peter very carefully picks one of the flyers up and studies it.

154. INT. THE KITCHEN

154.

Laura's doing the dishes when Peter comes in and stands in the doorway with the flyer in hand.

PETER

Mom?

She turns around as he holds up the flyer.

PETER (cont.)

Who made these?

Laura turns the rinse water off.

LAURA

Bob. He sent them everywhere, to rangers, veterinarians, every library between Bishop and ...

154 Cont'd

74  
154 Cont'd

PETER

Why didn't he say anything about it?

LAURA

Well, honey, he didn't want to get your hopes up.

Peter studies the flyer again.

PETER

Has anyone...called?

LAURA

No, but give it time.

Peter looks up again and his eyes have filled with tears.

PETER

I can't stop thinking about all the terrible things  
that could happen to them.

She comes over to hold him. Peter leans his head against his mother.

PETER (cont.)

I miss Shadow, Mom. I really miss him.

DISSOLVE TO:

155. EXT. R-V CAMPGROUND - DAY

155.

Several behemoth vehicles are lined up in the sprawling lot. Braving the autumn cold, one family barbecues outside. In a grassy field next to the lot, a group of bundled kids play kickball. Their breath vaporizes in the freezing air.

Alone and unescorted, a little girl, MOLLY, toddles toward the big kid's kickball game, fascinated. She laughs and claps her hands as an athletic boy kicks the ball high in the air.

MOLLY'S MOTHER (O.S.)

Molly!

The little girl doesn't even look around at her name as she toddles on toward the field.

Moments later, the alarmed mother rushes into view and spots her little girl.

MOLLY'S MOTHER (cont.)

Molly!

She runs to catch her and sweeps her up as the little girl giggles with mischievous delight.

156. A WOODED HILL

156.

Shadow watches the goings-on at the campground from a nearby wooded hill as Molly's scolding mother leads her back to the r-v.

MOLLY'S MOTHER

You can't go wandering off by yourself! Hear me?

Shadow sighs...missing Peter and the family. From a nearby pine tree, Sassy sniffs the tantalizing smells floating toward them from the distant grill.

SASSY

*Mmm...smell that? Barbecue chicken.*

Tortured by his flaming, infected cheek, Chance digs down into the ground under the tree and nose-dives into the soft, moist earth.

CHANCE

*Aaaaaaah...that's better.*

Shadow glances at the suffering puppy and back down at the people wandering in the campground.

SHADOW

*(to Sassy)**He needs help.*

CHANCE

*(over-hearing that)**No...no strangers. I'll get help at home.*

SHADOW

*You can't afford to wait that long.*

Chance slowly rises from the cooling dirt.

CHANCE

*If we go down there, they'll catch us and put us in the Very Bad Place. And I'm never going back there. So just forget about it.*

He turns and tromps off into the woods away from the campground. Sassy and Shadow exchange a look, then hurry to catch up.

SASSY

*What is this 'Very Bad Place', anyway?*

Chance turns around and looks at them with utter seriousness.

CHANCE

*(the voice of doom)**Dog-and-cat jail.*

Sassy and Shadow's ears prick up with surprise.

SHADOW

*They have that?*

SASSY

*(to Shadow)**Naaaaw, he's making it up.*

CHANCE

*(smug)**You two don't know everything, do you?*

157. EXT. THE WOODS - SUNSET

76

157.

The sky is clear, but the temperature has dropped and with the setting of the sun, it's dropping even further. The animals breathe puff out from their nostrils as they turn off a well-worn hiking trail and crunch through the frost-brittle undergrowth. Water ribbons down a cliffside. Somewhere way behind them, barely audible, people are calling.... "Molly!"

158. A ROCK FORMATION

158.

Shadow noses into an alcove formed by the bulbous rocks looking for shelter. Sassy sits next to him...shivering from the cold. Chance has collapsed on the ground.

SASSY

*I'm freezing and it's not even dark yet.  
You think it'll snow tonight?*

Shadow sniffs the air.

SHADOW

*No...just a heavy frost. If we sleep in here  
and stay close, we ought to be all right.*

From somewhere behind them, they hear the sound of a child crying. All three animals prick their ears and freeze, stone-still. The crying child is nearby, panicked and terrified. Shadow instinctively limps toward the sound. The other two don't protest.

159. A CLEARING

159.

Shadow steps out of the rustling undergrowth to discover the little girl, Molly, weeping and shivering from the cold huddled up with her back to a large tree.

MOLLY

(crying)

Mommy! Mommy!

She shrieks when she sees the dog and runs to the other side of tree. Shadow very cautiously approaches...head low, tail wagging slowly, moving slightly sideways in the most non-threatening way she can manage. Molly peers around the side of the tree. Unsure what to do, she watches him approach with wide half-curious/half-terrified eyes.

Shadow comes to within a few inches of the child, then he sits and lifts his paw in a shake gesture designed to let her know that he's civilized.

MOLLY (cont.)

Doggy?

She carefully reaches out to shake the offered paw. But instead of taking it, she flings herself onto his soft neck and sobbing piteously, buries her face in his fur.

160. THE ROCK FORMATION - THE NEXT MORNING

CUT TO:

160.

Molly sleeps peacefully snuggled amongst the animals in the rocky alcove. The overnight frost has dusted them with a thin icy layer. In the distance, the voices start calling again...much more urgent now. A woman's voice among them wails with desperation.

Shadow lifts his head from the pile. He carefully untangles himself without disturbing Molly and steps out into the open to listen. His coat is white from the layer of frost.

160 Cont 'd

77 160 Cont 'c

The searchers call again but their voices are further off now. Shadow barks in answer.

161 THE SEARCHERS

161.

Molly's father holds her mother as they walk along behind the a group of people, including the local Sheriff, Park Rangers and some volunteers. The sound of Shadow's bark floats toward them.

PARK RANGER

Hear that?

SHERIFF

What is it...a dog?

Shadow barks again and the group hurries curiously toward the sound. They call again. He answers...leading them to the lost child.

CUT TO:

162 EXT. THE R-V CAMPGROUND - LATER

162.

A large crowd has gathered around Molly, her relieved parents, the Sheriff, Shadow, Sassy and Chance. In the back, kids jump up to try and get a glimpse of the animal "heroes."

In the center of the crowd, Chance huddles close to Shadow, eyes darting nervously, trembling from his fever. Thin, haggard Shadow sits up tall with as much dignity as he can muster, wagging his tail at the curious onlookers. Sassy purrs and rubs up against one of the female members of the search party who crouches down to pet her.

Molly's mother talks quietly to her daughter as the Sheriff and Molly's father confer.

MOLLY'S FATHER

You'll make sure they're taken care of? I owe my little girl's life to those animals.

His voice is hoarse from exhaustion and long night of emotional strain.

SHERIFF

You're right about that.

MOLLY'S FATHER

I wish we could take them but...

(a helpless shrug)

...it's just not possible.

SHERIFF

Well, don't worry. These animals are the first real live heroes we've had around here in a long time. I'll see to it personally that we find good homes for all of them.

He reaches over to pat Shadow on the head.

SHERIFF (cont.)

I'd keep this ol' fella myself but the wife's allergic.

Molly's mother has finished quietly explaining it all to Molly.

MOLLY

They're not coming with us?

162 Cont'd

78  
162 Cont'd

MOLLY'S MOTHER

I'm afraid not, honey. Now say bye-bye.

Molly's mother puts her down and Molly flings her arms around Shadow one last time.

163 EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - LATER

CUT TO:

163

The Sheriff's pickup truck cruises slowly down the road toward the small town of North Leverett. He's tied ropes around the dogs' neck and secured them into the back of the pickup truck. Sassy rides up front in the cab with him.

164 INT. THE CAB

164

Yowling loudly as is her wont when she travels in any vehicle, Sassy climbs onto the back of the seat, walks across the sheriff's lap to look out the driver's window and jumps down onto the floor under his feet.

SHERIFF

All right Missy, calm down, no...don't do that.  
Come on now, stay on the seat.

He bends down to get her out from under his feet....

165 EXT. THE BACK

165

...and the truck swerves wildly forcing the dogs to cling to the slick, metal floor, legs splayed for balance.

CHANCE

*Told you. Told you they'd take us to the  
Very Bad Place.*

Chance's cheek is still swollen and full of quills but someone has tied a bandage around his head in an effort to help him.

SHADOW

*Relax. Everything's fine. Just as long as we  
stay headed in the right direction.*

166 EXT. NORTH LEVERETT

166

The Sheriff's pickup cruises down the main drag past the array of franchises that, by and large, now compose small town America.

It pulls into the parking lot of a Veterinarian's office.

167 EXT.. THE BACK

167

The minute they stop, Chance's eyes shift suspiciously.

CHANCE

*This is it. The end of the line.*

168 INT. THE CAB

The Sheriff opens the door and Sassy makes a dive for it. He pushes her back as he climbs out.

SHERIFF

Not so fast, Missy. I'll be back for you in a minute.

169 EXT. THE PICKUP

He comes around to the back, lowers the gate and unties Chance.

SHERIFF

(to Chance)

Come on, pup. We're going to have the vet take a look at that cheek.

This is one word all pets know.

CHANCE

(relieved)

*Is that all? It's only the vet.*

(it sinks in)

The vet!

He whines, whimpers and struggles uselessly as Sheriff drags him toward the dreaded Vet's office. The Vet's nurse/receptionist opens the door for them.

SHERIFF

(struggling with Chance)

There's two more in the pickup. Think you can bring them in?

170 INT. VET'S OFFICE - WAITING ROOM

It's a very small office consisting of the waiting room, reception area and a single examining room. The Sheriff drags Chance across the slick linoleum floor toward the examining room. Chance is more than reluctant. He's gone stiff beyond the point of paralysis and howls melodramatically like some ancient hero in his death agony.

Behind them, the receptionist brings in a much more docile Shadow and Sassy. They watch empathetically as the VET comes out and helps the Sheriff drag Chance into the dark reaches of the examining room.

171 THE EXAMINING ROOM

Chance scrabbles on the cold metal table, trying to work his way into the Sheriff's lap. He shivers, more from fear this time than his fever.

VET

Hold on, boy. Let me take a look at you.

He steadies Chance's face in his hands, examines the sores, feels his glands. Chance is now beyond protest. He goes limp, staring mutely up at the vet with big pleading eyes.

VET (cont.)

This is one lucky pup...easy, guy. The infection should have gotten into his glands but it hasn't.

171 cont 1d

He lightly touches one of the quills.

80

171 cont

VET (cont.)

These quills are sure in there, aren't they? They're barbed, the more you fuss with them, the deeper they go.

He pats Chance and rummages in various drawers. The Sheriff rubs Chance...soothing him.

SHERIFF

It's all right, boy. You're going to be all right.

VET

I heard about that little girl.

SHERIFF

She would have froze to death if it weren't for these fine animals. No doubt about it.

The Vet finds what he's looking for, essentially a pair of needle-nosed pliers.

Chance spots the pliers and he freezes, eyes wide.

CHANCE

*What are you gonna do with those?*

The vet focuses on the unpleasant task at hand.

VET

Think you can hold him steady?

The Sheriff adjusts his grip. The vet takes hold of one of the quills with his pliers.

CHANCE

*No...hey, don't touch that..*

## 172 THE WAITING ROOM

172

Holding Sassy in her arms and keeping a hand on the rope around Shadow's neck, the receptionist sits under the office bulletin board. One of the flyers Bob sent out about the lost pets is tacked amongst the many notices.

Shadow never takes his eyes off the examining room door. Chance whines from behind the door. Shadow's instantly on his feet.

SHADOW

*What are they doing to him?*

He rushes the examining room door, jerking the rope out of the receptionist's hand, and hurls himself against it with all his weight....barking furiously.

## 173 INT. EXAMINING ROOM

173

The vet delicately extracts a quill and plinks it amongst the others in a saucer on the table.

VET

Almost done.

173 Cont 'd

81

173 Cont 'd

SHERIFF

(crooning)

Good boy...you're such a good puppy.

Chance whimpers quietly. There's another thump on the door. It rattles under the impact of Shadow's weight.

SHERIFF

What's wrong with him?

VET

He's worried about our friend here.

(calling to Shadow)

It's okay...old boy. We're almost finished.

Chance whines again.

Frustrated with his failed attempts to break through, Shadow jumps up to look through the window in the upper part of the door. He barely manages to peek through before he drops out of sight again. Like a basketball, he bounces into view, and out of view, into view, out of view as the operation continues.

174 INT. WAITING ROOM

174

The receptionist has her hands full as she tries to hold Sassy and corral the bouncing Shadow.

RECEPTIONIST

Come on, here, stop it.

She grabs him and tries to pull him away from the door but he evades her. A chase ensues. Sassy slips out of her arms and hides under the chairs.

The receptionist finally manages to grab Shadow's rope. But now, Sassy's under the chairs and won't come out.

RECEPTIONIST (cont.)

Here, kitty, come on.

She gets down on her hands and knees and forcibly drags Sassy out from under the chairs. Holding the cat in her arms, she stands up and, in doing so, comes face-to-face with Bob's flyer. She sees it, looks away, looks back, glances down at Sassy in her arms and leans in for a closer look at the xeroxed photograph.

RECEPTIONIST (cont.)

It's them! The same ones! The...the...dogs and the cat!

CUT TO:

175 EXT. UNIVERSITY LIBRARY - DAY

175

It's a tall, grand imposing building where Bob spends most of his waking hours.

176 INT. THE MICROFILM ROOM

176

He sits front of a microfilm screen in the dark room, scanning pages and jotting down notes. The door opens to reveal his research assistant.

RESEARCH ASSISTANT

Professor...Professor?

176 Cont'd

82

176 Cont'd

He turns...a little impatient at the interruption.

BOB

What is it?

RESEARCH ASSISTANT

There's an urgent phone call for you.

Alarmed, Bob rises from his chair and hurries out the door, leaving the microfilm machine running, books and papers unattended.

177

INT. MAIN FLOOR RESEARCH LIBRARY

177

It's very quiet. The librarians speak to students in hushed tones.

BOB

What is it? My family?

RESEARCH ASSISTANT

(hedging)

Well...sort of.

She looks like she's dying to tell him something and it's all she can do to keep from blurting it out. Completely panicked now, Bob starts to take off across the main floor toward his office in another building, but she motions him toward one of the library offices.

RESEARCH ASSISTANT

I had them transfer the call to that phone in there.

178

INT. OFFICE

178

He rushes into the office and grabs the phone.

BOB

Hello?

179

INT. VET'S OFFICE

CUT TO:

179

The Sheriff is on the receptionist's phone holding the flyer.

SHERIFF

Is this a Robert...

(checking the name)

...Skinner?

180

INT. THE OFFICE

180

BOB

(confused)

Yes.

As he listens, a look of rising anticipation grows on his face.

180 Cont'd

83  
180 Cont'd

BOB

(listening)

Yes....yes. Two dogs and cat.

(excitement growing)

You do?...They did?...When?

(overjoyed)

That's them! You found them!

181. INT. VET'S OFFICE

181.

The Sheriff's grinning too. He winks at the receptionist.

SHERIFF

The vet here in North Leverett doesn't have room for them. So I've made arrangements with the animal shelter in Pineville to hold them until you arrive. That's the Pineville Animal shelter off Route 90. I'll drive them over myself.

182. INT. THE LIBRARY OFFICE

182.

Bob's research assistant breaks into a huge grin as Bob puts the phone back in the cradle. He stares at it for a moment as if he can't believe what he's heard. And then he lets out an ear-splitting WHOOP!...

183. THE RESEARCH LIBRARY

183.

...that echoes triumphantly through the silent library causing librarians to frown and students to look up curiously.

184. EXT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - DAY

CUT TO:

184.

Bob's empty Blazer idles, double-parked, in front of the school.

185. INT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - HALLWAY

185.

A little girl hums to herself as she saunters down the long hall. She holds a note in her hand and does little dance steps as she makes her slow way toward a door at the far end.

186. INT. PETER'S CLASSROOM

186.

The sixth grade classroom is decorated for Hallowéén. The male teacher drones on...scribbling hyroglyphics on the blackboard.

PETER'S TEACHER

Therefore, the five hundred fifty-five divided by five is...anyone?

The students sink their chairs, trying to become as small and inconspicuous as possible. Ignoring the proceedings, Peter doodles on his math paper...drawing stick-figures of two dogs and a cat climbing an impossibly steep mountain.

The teacher's attention is drawn to the sound of Peter's pencil scribbling on the paper.

PETER'S TEACHER (cont.)

Peter?

186 Cont'd

He looks up without a clue as to what the question was.

PETER  
Uh...what was the question?

The teacher strolls down the row of desks toward Peter.

PETER'S TEACHER  
Five hundred fifty-five divided by five.

Peter glances hopefully at the others students but no one offers any assistance.

PETER  
(squirming)  
Uh...five hundred fifty five divided by five...

The teacher arrives at his desk and looks down at the paper with Peter's drawing. He reaches down, snatches the paper and crinkles it into a ball.

PETER'S TEACHER  
We're waiting.

PETER  
(sweating it)  
Uh...

The door opens and the little girl prances in. She gives the note to Peter's teacher and prances out. Peter's teacher reads the note, glances at him and sighs.

187. INT. HALLWAY

As the little girl saunters back down the hall, the door to Peter's classroom explodes open and he bursts out with a look of utter, indescribable joy on his face. He races down the hall past her.

As he approaches the staircase, he's joined by Hope who flies down the steps wearing the same indescribably joyful expression on her face. Peter grabs her hand and they race to the main office where Laura and Bob are waiting.

188. INT. SCHOOL AUDITORIUM

The little kids are rehearsing for a Halloween pageant. Jamie's on stage, standing awkwardly around a large pumpkin with the rest of the first graders. Their teacher directs them.

TEACHER  
All right, Evil Sorcerer...Evil Sorcerer! That's you, Hal.

A large boy's head jerks up.

HAL  
Huh?

TEACHER  
Pick up the magic pumpkin and give it to the Elfin Prince.

Hal picks up the large pumpkin easily, hoisting it with both hands.

188 Cont'd

85  
188 Cont'd.

HAL

Who?

TEACHER

The Elfin Prince.  
(losing all patience)  
To Jamie...give it to Jamie!

Hal dumps the heavy pumpkin, happy to be rid of it, into the much smaller Jamie's hands. Jamie struggles to hold it. The other kids giggle.

The door at the back of the auditorium bursts open and the rest of Jamie's family rushes in.

LAURA

Jamie!

Still struggling with the pumpkin, Jamie squints to see who's calling him.

JAMIE

(confused)

Mom?

PETER

They found them!

The teacher holds her hand up to shield her eyes from light.

TEACHER

What? Found who?

But Jamie knows. His face breaks into an enormous grin and he releases his tenuous hold on the magic pumpkin. It smashes to the floor of the stage with a sickening THUD, cracking, oozing pulp. The little kids make grossed-out sounds. The teacher groans.

BOB

Let's go!

Laughing, Jamie leaps off the stage and races up the aisle to join his family.

CUT TO:

189. EXT. SHERIFF'S PICKUP - SAME TIME

189.

Shadow and Chance are tied in the back again as the Sheriff's pickup jostles over a bumpy country road heading away from town. Chance's nose already looks better. The quills are gone and the swelling and fever have lessened. But Shadow's concerned about their direction. He looks back toward town...extremely agitated.

SHADOW

(distressed)

*This isn't right! We've turned around. Home's the other way!*

190. INT. THE CAB

190.

The Sheriff's still wearing that broad grin. He reaches over to pet Sassy who's hunched unhappily in the passenger seat.

190 Cont 'd

86 190 Cont 'd

SHERIFF

So your name's Sassy, is it?

Her ears prick up at her name.

SHERIFF (cont.)

I get more and more impressed with you three animals by the minute. I don't know how you made it over those mountains. If someone told me, I'd have said it was impossible.

191

EXT. PINEVILLE ANIMAL SHELTER

191

The Animal Shelter consists of an old squat building with a chain-link fence running around the asphalt perimeter. The whole place has a run-down appearance, clearly not high on the taxpayer's lists of priorities.

The Sheriff's pickup pulls up outside the gate and he gets out to open it. In the back, Chance studies the building and sniffs the air suspiciously.

CHANCE

(with rising panic)

*It's the Bad Place. He's brought us to the Very Bad Place! I can smell it!*

Shadow sighs, more concerned about their direction than Chance's paranoia.

SHADOW

*You ever hear of the 'Pup Who Cried Wolf'?*

The Sheriff gets back in and drives the pickup to the front of the building where an ANIMAL CONTROL OFFICER steps out to greet him. He wears a beige uniform with a patch over the pocket that reads 'Pineville Animal Shelter' and his name KIRKWOOD embroidered over that. The Sheriff gets out.

KIRKWOOD

Afternoon, Sheriff.

Chance takes one look at Kirkwood's uniform and his hackles raise. He growls low.

SHERIFF

Afternoon. Now you won't have to keep them long. Mr. Skinner said they'd drive straight through. So my guess is they'll be here by tonight or tomorrow morning.

KIRKWOOD

We don't have the best accommodations in the world. But I think we can make them comfortable. Hey there, pup-pup.

Kirkwood reaches out to pat Chance's head. But he pulls back with a snarl.

SHERIFF

Poor guy had a pretty rough time at the vet's.

Kirkwood attempts to untie Chance but he growls viciously.

CHANCE

*Keep away from me!*

Kirkwood tries to calm him.

KIRKWOOD

Okay, boy. It's okay. Nobody's going to hurt you.

FOOTE, another Animal Control Officer comes out, armed with protective gloves and two muzzles.

SHERIFF

I don't think you'll need those.

FOOTE

Better safe than sorry.

Kirkwood tries once more to untie Chance who's in a frenzy now. He lunges at them, snarling and snapping. Kirkwood nods to Foote who moves in with the gloves and together, they manage to slip the muzzle onto the struggling Chance. Shadow growls and barks angrily.

SHADOW

*What are you doing? Let him go!*

The Sheriff frowns, shaking his head.

SHERIFF

I can't figure out what's gotten into them all of a sudden.

Kirkwood and Foote grab Shadow as well and slip a muzzle on him. The dogs struggle to get away, whining and snarling, clawing and scratching.

Sassy's head appears at the top of the window to see her two friends being dragged away by the strange men. She gasps, horrified.

SASSY

*Shadow! Chance!*

Shadow glances back at Sassy in the window.

SHADOW

*(desperate)**Get away if you can, Sassy! Go on without us!*

Sassy watches helplessly as the men drag the struggling, muzzled Shadow and Chance into the building.

SASSY

*(stunned)**So there really is a dog-and-cat jail.*

The door opens and the Sheriff lifts Sassy into his arms.

SHERIFF

Come on, Missy. Your turn.

191 Cont'd (2)

191 Cont'd (2)  
88

She yowls, utterly panicked and struggles to get away.

SASSY

*No! Let go of me! Let go!*

It's all the Sheriff can do to keep hold of the howling, wriggling cat as he carries her into the Shelter.

SHERIFF

Calm down! It's going to be all right! Ah!  
Watch the claws!

192 INT. ANIMAL SHELTER

192

The Sheriff steps inside the door but Sassy's too slippery. She twists out of his grasp, leaps to the floor and scoots away down a long hall, yowling like a banshee.

193 INT. THE KENNEL

193

Shadow has stopped resisting. But Chance struggles for his life, whining piteously, as the men drag them down an aisle between a row of pens.

CHANCE

(desperately pleading)

*Don't put me in there please let me go please!*

They pass a number of empty pens...no other residents except the newcomers.

CHANCE (cont.)

(panicked to Shadow)

*Don't let them separate us!*

Kirkwood leads Shadow to a pen. He removes the muzzle and the rope.

KIRKWOOD

That's a good boy. You're family's going to be here real soon.

Foote's got his hands full with Chance. He whines and struggles to get away as Foote shoves him into a pen.

FOOTE

Come on, pal. No one's going to hurt you.  
Get in there!

Chance whips around and growls viciously through the muzzle.

KIRKWOOD

Take the muzzle off.

FOOTE

Right and lose two fingers in the process.  
I think I'll wait until he calms down a little.

While Kirkwood's distracted, Shadow dives out of his grasp, leaps across the aisle and slides past Foote into the pen with Chance.

193 Cont'd

89  
193 Cont'd

FOOTE (cont.)

Hey, what are you...?

Once inside, Shadow sits looking up at them through the wire and wags his tail submissively. Kirkwood comes over and bends down to talk to Shadow.

KIRKWOOD

Don't want to leave your pal, huh, old fella?  
Well, I guess it's okay.

FOOTE

You know that's against regulations.

KIRKWOOD

If they're happy together, they'll make less noise, right?

Foote shrugs.

FOOTE

Fine. They're not going to be here that long anyway.

He wanders off.

KIRKWOOD

(to Chance)

Come on, pup-pup. Let's get that muzzle off.

He opens the pen and very gingerly removes Chance's muzzle. Chance growls but he doesn't bite.

194 EXT. MAIN HIGHWAY - THE SAME TIME

CUT TO:

194

Bob's Blazer cruises down at the highway at just barely legal speed.

195 INT. BOB'S BLAZER

195

Too excited to sit still, Bob leads all three kids in a version of "Love Me Do." Watching Bob, Laura smiles. She reaches out and places a warm hand on his arm. He glances her way, singing loudly, and winks at her.

196 INT. ANIMAL SHELTER - LATER

CUT TO:

196

Kirkwood and Foote are searching high and low for Sassy...in the hall, the front waiting area, the office. They call, click their tongues and make kissing sounds to entice her out.

KIRKWOOD

Here, kitty! Here, kitty, kitty! Come on out now.

Foote searches less enthusiastically.

FOOTE

Here, kitty. Here, kitty.

WE PAN UP to Sassy who's hidden in between several large black ledgers on top of a bookshelf in their office. She watches them search with a superior expression.

196 Cont 'd

90  
196 Cont 'd

SASSY

*I can never understand why they make those  
stupid moronic kissing sounds.*

197

INT. THE KENNEL

CUT TO:

197

Two bowls of dry dog food have been placed in the pen with Shadow and Chance. Chance scarfs his, but Shadow turns away and lies down on the cold cement floor. Chance finishes his food and looks at Shadow's uneaten meal.

CHANCE

*You should eat. Keep your strength up.*

Shadow doesn't respond. He stares despondently out the mesh door. With a great effort of will, Chance leaves Shadow's food untouched and goes over to lie down next to Shadow.

CHANCE (cont.)

(worried)

*You all right?*

Shadow's faith in mankind has been seriously shaken.

SHADOW

*I'm sorry I didn't believe you about this place.  
But I never knew there were people like that.  
I just never knew.*

CHANCE

*I thought they were all like that before I went  
to live with Jamie and the family.*

He gets up to stare down the long row of empty pens toward the office.

CHANCE (cont.)

*I bet some people think the same thing about us...  
that we're all vicious or rabid killers or something.  
Guess they don't know that it all depends on the dog.*

He glances back at Shadow.

SHADOW

*Good point. You've come a long way, pup.*

198

EXT. THE ANIMAL SHELTER

198

While Kirkwood and Foote continue to search, Sassy investigates possible escape routes. She jumps up onto a window sill....checks out a side door.

SASSY

*There's always a way out. Just have to keep  
looking until I find it.*

She pads silently down a hall and discovers a set of stairs leading to the basement.

199

## THE BASEMENT

91

199

She sniffs her way around the basement and discovers an open vent leading to the outside. One corner of the net screening covering the vent has come loose.

SASSY (cont.)

*Ah, here we are.*

She paws it open and wriggles through.

200 -EXT. THE ANIMAL SHELTER

200

Sassy pulls herself out of the vent and saunters across the parking lot away from the building. She scouts the perimeter of the chain-link fence, looking for an opening.

SASSY

*Okay, not so lucky with the fence.*

She begins to dig her way under the fence.. But not in the frenzied way dogs dig, Sassy scrapes at the frozen ground. When one paw gets tired, she switches to the other one. A neat pile of dirt slowly grows behind her.

SASSY (cont.)

*Can't believe I'm out here digging in the dirt like a dog.*

201 INT. THE OFFICE - A LITTLE LATER

201

Foote and Kirkwood have given up the search. They're playing cards in the office. Behind them, a small brown animal, caked with dirt and mud, pads silently past the open door.

202 THE KENNEL

202

Chance lays next to the Shadow. Neither dog is sleeping.

CHANCE

*I bet Jamie and Peter are going to come here looking for us. I bet they're going to walk through that door any minute now.*

But it's not Jamie or Peter who come prancing up to the pen. It's a very dirty cat. She meow's softly. The dogs look up and see Sassy watching them from behind the mesh.

SASSY

*If you two aren't the most pathetic...*

The dogs are on their feet, whining and licking and wagging their tails. Sassy looks back toward the office.

SASSY (cont.)

*Shhh. Keep it down.*

SHADOW

*I told you to go on without us.*

202 Cont 'd

92  
202 Cont 'd

SASSY

*Yeah...right...like I was almost going to run off and leave you.*

Sassy reaches up with a paw to investigate the lock.

SASSY (cont.)

*Now we just have to figure out how to get you out of there.*

SHADOW -

*Can you undo it?*

She drops back down....stumped.

SASSY

*Not that kind.*

SHADOW

*There's no choice then. You'll have to go on without us.*

Chance paces the pen nervously. He stops, remembering something.

CHANCE

*Wait...I just remembered something. There was this collie I knew once who told me how he escaped from a place like this.*

203 THE OFFICE - LATER

CUT TO:

203

Tired of playing cards, Foote dozes while Kirkwood reads a paperback. Sassy appears at the open door. She sits, waiting for them to notice her.

SASSY

*Uh, hello. Yoohoo.*

Finally, she yowls loudly to get their attention. Foote wakes up with a jerk. Kirkwood looks up.

KIRKWOOD

*There you are! How'd you get so dirty?*

Very slowly so as not to spook her, Kirkwood puts his book down and tries to approach her.

KIRKWOOD (cont.)

*Come on, kitty. Come on.*

Sassy disappears from the door...then reappears again.

SASSY

*(impatiently)*

*What's it take? Chase me already!*

Kirkwood takes off after her.

204

## ANIMAL SHELTER - VARIOUS LOCATIONS

93

204

Sassy easily eludes him, speeding up, slowing down, stopping to lick and taking off again, keeping just out of reach.

205

## THE OFFICE

205

Foote's decided to let Kirkwood handle it and he closes his eyes again. But suddenly, from the direction of the kennel, he hears vicious barks, snarls and yelps: the sound of a dog fight in progress. Foote jerks awake.

FOOTE

Now what?

206

## THE KENNEL

206

He marches down the kennel toward Shadow and Chance's pen, muzzles ready in his gloved hands.

FOOTE

(mimicking Kirkwood)

If they're happy together, they'll make less noise, right?

Chance and Shadow appear to be in a serious to-the-death fight. They circle each other, hackles raised, teeth bared.

FOOTE (cont.)

Okay, come on, cut it out.

The dogs leap at each other like roaring bears. Their sharp teeth clang together as they try to get a grip on each other's throat. Chance howls in mock agony. They roll, snarling, snapping, clawing.

Foote opens the door and steps cautiously inside. In the throes of the bogus battle, Shadow's eyes dart to the open door. Foote comes closer and boots Chance away from Shadow.

SHADOW

Go!

Both dogs drop the act and dart past Foote who whirls, confused.

FOOTE

Hey!

They scramble out the open door. Chance accidentally bangs into the mesh gate on the way causing it to swing shut. Foote dives for the door...yelling for his partner.

FOOTE (cont.)

Kirkwood!

While he fumbles to get his keys in the lock, Shadow and Chance shoot down the kennel and out the door that leads into another part of the building.

207

## THE OFFICE

207.

The dogs look in the office.

CHANCE  
*Where is she?*

SHADOW  
*She was supposed to keep him busy not disappear!*

Foote's got the pen door open and they can hear him pounding down the kennel toward them. Ahead, they also hear the sound of Sassy's distressed yowl.

SHADOW (cont.)  
*There!*

The dogs run down the hall to find that Kirkwood's got Sassy by the scruff of the neck, holding her midair. She twists...angrily yowling and scrabbling at the air.

KIRKWOOD  
Calm down, I'm not going to hurt you.

He looks down to see the two strays staring up at him. They growl. He gapes at them.

KIRKWOOD (cont.)  
How did...?

SASSY  
*HELP!*

Growling menacingly, the two dogs advance on Kirkwood who backs up into the wall. He's got no rope, no muzzle, no protective gloves. Sassy swipes at his arm with her sharp claws, raking his wrist. He yelps and releases his hold on her. She drops to the ground.

SASSY (cont.)  
*This way!*

She takes off the other way. The dogs whip around to follow her.

KIRKWOOD  
(to Foote)  
Get them!

The three animals thunder straight toward Foote on a collision course.

FOOTE  
Come here you..!

BOOM! They bash into Foote, knocking his legs out from under him. He goes sprawling.

208 EXT. THE ANIMAL SHELTER

208 Sassy dives out the broken mesh screen. Shadow pulls himself out behind her. Chance has a little more trouble, but he finally manages to wriggle out the small opening.

SASSY  
*This way! I dug a hole under the fence.*

They race across the parking lot to the small neat hole Sassy dug under the fence.

CHANCE

*No way I'm fitting under there...lookout!*

He shove past them and digs madly at the frozen dirt.

The Animal Shelter door bursts opens. Kirkwood and Foote run out. They look around for the animals, spot them digging under the dirt and take off toward them.

Chance digs in a frenzy, dirt and mud fly up behind him in a storm. Sassy glances back.

SASSY

*They're coming!*

SHADOW

*That's good enough...let's go!*

Chance backs away to let Sassy slip under first.

CHANCE

*You're next.*

SHADOW

*No...*

CHANCE

*I can hold them off better than you! Now go!*

As much as it wounds his canine pride, Shadow knows he's right. He wriggles under the fence as Chance turns to protect his back. After Shadow's made it through, Chance dives for the hole...but Foote leaps for him and catches his tail. Chance howls and struggles to get away. Barking ferociously, Shadow whirls himself against the chain link fence...startling Foote who stumbles backward, releasing Chance.

He wriggles through and emerges on the other side. Scraggly, thin, coats matted, ribs showing, the three animals don't even bother to run. They saunter away, heads high. Sassy flicks her tail with disdain.

CHANCE

*We saved your butt back there.*

SASSY

*So?*

CHANCE

*So...now it's your turn to say it.*

SASSY

*(feigning ignorance)**Say what?*

CHANCE

*Come on, say it. Fair's fair.*

SASSY

*I don't know what you're talking about.*

208 Cont'd (2)

CHANCE

208<sup>96</sup> Cont'd (2)

(frustrated)

Yes, you do!

Kirkwood watches the three escapees disappear over the rise and shakes his head.

KIRKWOOD

If I didn't know better, I'd think they planned that.

209 INT. BOB'S BLAZER - LATER

WIPE TO:

209

They're still singing. Laura's joined in now. Unabated jubilation fills the car. The kids have the song memorized and they're belting their lungs out. The Blazer's as buoyant as a balloon.

210 EXT. AERIAL SHOT OF BLAZER AND SURROUNDING AREA - SAME TIME

210

As WE PULL UP AND AWAY from the Blazer streaking along the ribbon of highway, the frame gradually takes in the surrounding countryside including three tiny specks off in the distance.

Tiny, barely discernable, the three animals toil along a parallel ridge, traveling in the opposite direction from the Blazer. The family and pets unwittingly pass each other.

211 THE RIDGE - ON THE ANIMALS

211

Leading the group, Shadow stops suddenly. He lifts his head as if he's heard someone call his name. He glances back over his shoulder toward what we know is the passing Blazer.

SASSY

*What is it?*

He sniffs the air.

SHADOW

*I don't know. I got a funny feeling all of a sudden. Like something tugging me back the other way. Weird.*

Chance moves past them.

CHANCE

*Must be old age.*

Sassy snickers and Shadow playfully nips at Chance's heels. As they continue on we:

212 EXT. PINEVILLE ANIMAL SHELTER - DUSK

CUT TO:

212

The Blazer pulls into the parking lot. Bob hops out, followed by Peter. Inside, we can see Laura struggling to quickly get coats on Jamie and Hope. Peter glances back at the car and takes the time for a private moment with Bob.

PETER

If you hadn't made those flyers, we probably never would have found them.

BOB

It was a long shot, but we got lucky.

212 Cont'd

Peter gathers his courage to say this.

PETER

Before we go in, I just want to you to know that...I'm really sorry about what I said before... about it being your fault.

BOB

I know, son.

Bob ruffles Peter's hair as the Blazer door opens and the other two children pile out. Everyone hurries toward the Animal Shelter...

213 THE ANIMAL SHELTER - THEIR POV

213

...just as Kirkwood and Foote come out to intercept them. At the sight of their long faces, the family slows.

214 EXT. ANIMAL SHELTER PARKING LOT - NIGHT

DISSOLVE TO:

214

Night has fallen. The phosphorescent lights give an eerie, unsettling tone to the deepening dark.

Peter, Jamie and Hope are huddled together in a mute circle, stricken. Too stunned and heartbroken to speak. Bob speaks to them quietly, defeated, voice cracking from the strain of the incredible emotional letdown.

BOB

I'm sorry. I wanted so much to get them back for you. But all I've done is disappoint you again. Some father I turned out to be.

The children look on helplessly, eyes wide with worry. Laura starts to reach out to him but Jamie takes a step closer. He wraps his arm around Bob's legs comforting him in the only way he knows how. Hope steps up and wraps her arms around him as well. And finally, Peter joins them. Moved almost to tears, Bob shares a heart-felt look with his wife.

DISSOLVE TO:

215 EXT. MADERA - DAY

215

A small city not far northwest of Fresno. The animals approach from a country road which winds around through a vast expanse of crop fields and an occasional farm house. They have fared worse since they left the shelter. No rivers for Sassy to fish in. No campers. They're very thin, their fur is dull and ragged. Shadow's eyes are rimmed with fatigue. He's very frail, his ribs are showing and his limp has become a permanent handicap. Sassy's tail drags on the ground. Chance's nose is much better, but he's lost all his puppy chubbiness. They plod along through a fine dusting of snow.

Sassy tiptoes distastefully through the cold wet stuff. Shaking each paw daintily with every step.

SASSY

*Where does this stuff come from, anyway?*

Shadow slows and sniffs the air.

SHADOW

*Town up ahead.*

215 Cont'd

Chance puts on a smidgen of speed.

98  
215 Cont'd

CHANCE

(eagerly)

*Towns have dumpsters...and dumpsters have food.*

SASSY

*I never thought I'd look forward to eating garbage.*

216 EXT. MADERA - DAY

CUT TO: 216

The three animals trudge along in the street. A truck turns the corner suddenly, skidding alarmingly close, and splatters them with muddy, icy slush.

CHANCE

(to the driver)

*Hey, watch it!*

Shadow and Sassy retreat to the sidewalk just as a city bus comes up behind Chance. The driver lays on his horn, startling Chance who barely makes it onto the sidewalk before the bus roars past.

SHADOW

*This way.*

They turn into an alley.

217 THE ALLEY

217

They duck under the ramp of a moving van and dash quickly across the path of an oncoming car. The driver slams on the brakes to avoid them, then leans out the window to yell at the movers.

Further on, they spot a dumpster. Sassy leaps into the dumpster and fishes around noisily as Shadow and Chance huddle together for warmth. Finally, she gives up and leaps out again.

CHANCE

*Find anything?*

SASSY

*Nothing, not even an empty tin can to lick.*

As the three hungry travelers move on we:

218 INT. TOWNHOUSE - LAURA AND BOB'S BEDROOM - DAY

DISSOLVE TO: 218

Laura and Bob are making the bed together. She moves through the task rapidly, whip-cracking the sheet, moving him out of her way. Bob has a hard time keeping up as he fills her in on the status of the search for the animals.

BOB

So the Missing Pet Service in Barstow's covering that area. We've got the Forestry Service still on alert. I've hired another Pet Service out of Fresno. They'll work their way north. And I'll start down the call list of city animal shelters again tomorrow.

He remembers something and digs around in his pocket for a folded paper.

BOB (cont.)

Oh...and I found this flyer on my car today. What do you think?

He unfolds the half-page flyer and hands it to Laura. She glances down.

LAURA

A psychic?

BOB

They've had a lot success with them in police investigations and I thought....

LAURA

Don't you think it's time we admitted it to ourselves? It's been three weeks!

(despairing)

Where are they? What's happened to them?

She sinks down onto the bed.

BOB

Wish I knew.

Laura gestures out the window to the cold, slate grey sky.

LAURA

Have you noticed how much the temperature's dropped in the last couple weeks? I don't know how they could survive the weather....not to mention all the other things that could happen.

BOB

They're resourceful. They'll find warm places like sheds and people's garages and...

She just looks at him. He trails off with a helpless shrug.

BOB (cont)

We can't give up.

LAURA

But don't you see how hard this is on all of us? How long can we keep this up? How long can the kids keep hoping?

She reaches out to take his hand.

LAURA (cont.)

I know you feel responsible but you've done everything you can. I miss them too. But we've got to face the truth.

He sits down on the bed next to her.

218 Cont'd (2)

218 <sup>100</sup> Cont'd (2)

BOB

How about this? How about we move back home at the kids' Thanksgiving break? It's a few months early but...

She looks at him...barely breathing.

LAURA

Would you do that? Would you really?

BOB

Of course I would. I can do the rest of my research from there. I'll just have to come back every other...

She reaches over to hug him impulsively.

219

INT. JAMIE AND HOPE'S BEDROOM - LATER

CUT TO:

219

The door bursts open. A stream of light pours in on Jamie and Hope who are asleep in their little beds. Jamie stirs and groans. Hope wakes up... shielding her eyes from the light. She can barely make out Peter's silhouette in the doorway.

PETER

We're going home!

Laura squeals.

LAURA

When?

PETER

At Thanksgiving break.

Jamie's fully awake now. He jumps up and down on his bed.

JAMIE

We're going home, we're going home!

220

EXT. OUTSKIRTS OF MADERA

DISSOLVE TO:

220

The animals have made it through the city and their path brings them to a housing tract that's under construction on the outskirts of town. As they proceed, we can see that Shadow's so exhausted it's a struggle to put one foot in front of the other.

CHANCE

Which way now?

Shadow uses the opportunity to sit down for a moment. His breathing comes in rasping gasps as he sniffs the air. He nods off in the direction of a vast expanse of flat land on the other side of the construction site.

SHADOW

That way.

Shadow pulls himself up. But he weaves on his feet and sits back down again.

*You all right?*

SASSY

SHADOW

*(lying)*  
*I'm fine.*

He pulls himself up again and stumbles on, head low, every ounce of energy needed to keep him on his feet.

## 221 THE CONSTRUCTION SITE

221

The crew has gone home for the day. The animals pass through half-built houses, veer around large pieces of machinery, huge mounds of dirt and piles of tarp-covered lumber.

CHANCE

*(to Shadow)*

*Are we getting close to home? Please say we're getting close.*

SHADOW

*We're almost there.*

CHANCE

*What? You're kidding? Really? We're almost home? I can't believe it! Hear that, Sassy? We're almost home!*

The good news livens his step and he runs up to nose her playfully.

SASSY

*Ah! Your nose is freezing! Cut it out!*

She bats him away.

Shadow glances back over his shoulder toward them and accidentally steps on the end of a piece lumber that's laying diagonally across the corner of large rectangular pit dug in the ground. The lumber shifts causing Shadow to stumble and his hind legs slip off the slick side of the open hole.

Scrabbling madly for purchase, Shadow yelps as he slide/falls down the eight feet into the mud and slosh at the bottom.

SASSY

*Shadow!*

They race to the side of the pit.

## 222 IN THE PIT

222

Shadow's lying at the bottom with one leg twisted painfully under him.

CHANCE

*Are you okay?*

He looks up to see them peering over the edge at him.

SHADOW  
(gasping from the pain)  
*My leg hurts pretty bad.*

SASSY  
*Is it broken?*

Shadow groans painfully as he shifts the leg out from under him.

SHADOW  
*Just twisted I think.*

Chance traces the rim of the hole looking for the best place to climb out.

CHANCE  
*It's not as steep over here. I'm pretty sure you  
can climb out.*

Shadow groans again as he pulls himself to his feet, mud dripping from his belly. Holding the wounded leg off the ground, Shadow stumble/hops toward Chance.

CHANCE (cont.)  
*See...the dirt's piled up so the angle's not so steep.*

Sassy slips around to join Chance as Shadow takes a deep breath and starts to up climb up the steep, muddy side of the pit. Slowly, claws digging into the slick mud, Shadow crawls about a third of the way up.

CHANCE (cont.)  
*That's good. You're doing great. Just keep coming.*

Muscles trembling from the effort, grunting from the pain and the exertion, Shadow crawls up another foot, but he shifts his weight unconsciously onto his wounded leg. The pain causes him to yelp involuntarily. He loses his tenuous grip and slides back down to the bottom where he lies, face down in the mud.

SASSY  
*Shadow?*

Chance and Sassy exchange a worried glance.

SASSY (cont.)  
*Shadow!*

The old dog slowly lifts his head. Chance wags his tail with relief.

Shadow gathers his energy for another effort. Using his forelegs to do most of the work, he begins to crawl up the muddy side once more. But he doesn't even make it as far as he did the first time before his muscles give out and he slides back down again.

He lays still, sides heaving for air.

CHANCE  
(gently)  
*Try again.*

Shadow tries to get up but he can't. The will is there, but his strength is gone.

222 Cont'd (2)

CHANCE (cont.)

103  
222 Cont'd (2)

*Come on. Try again.*

Shadow tries again. His whole body shakes with the effort, but his legs buckle and he collapses once more.

SHADOW

(gasping)  
*I can't make it.*

CHANCE

*Yes, you can.*

SHADOW

*I can't!*

Shadow lifts his muddy head and looks up at Sassy. There's something in his eyes that frightens her...some finality that she's never seen before.

Chance sees the look as well. There's a long moment....and then Chance takes a step forward and plunges down the side into the pit.

223 THE PIT

223

Chance slides most of the way on his backend and comes to a stop near Shadow.

CHANCE

(angrily)  
*You're just going to give up? Just like that?*

The aged dog lays there, utterly defeated, his will finally broken.

SHADOW

(painfully)  
*Do you think it's easy for me to admit that  
I can't do it?  
(with helpless frustration)  
But there's nothing left! I'm whipped!  
(weakly)  
I can't go on....anymore.*

Above on the rim, Sassy's heart breaks to hear this.

Chance studies Shadow for a moment.

CHANCE

*You know, out there in the woods, even in  
the worst moments, there's a part of me that  
always believed we'd make it because I thought  
you were too stubborn to quit!  
(fiercely determined)  
Well, you're not going to let me down! Not now!  
Not when we're this close! Now try again!*

Shadow lifts his head and their eyes lock. They stare...locked in a battle of wills which has finally become a battle of equals.

WIPE TO:

224 EXT. BURNFORD HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

104

The snow falls in earnest...big, greeting-card snow flakes. The lawn and the roof are cheery white.

225 INT. BURNFORD HOUSE

Thanksgiving Day. The house is decorated with construction paper turkeys and pilgrims. A Horn o' Plenty adorns the table which has been set for the big dinner.

The doorbell rings. Laura comes in from the kitchen to open it for, Grace, the elderly neighbor we met at the wedding.

LAURA

Grace! Come in.

Grace steps in and hands her a pumpkin pie.

GRACE (cont.)

I can only stay a minute. It's a Welcome Home pie.

LAURA

Thank you.

Grace looks around the seemingly empty house.

GRACE

Where are the kids?

LAURA

In the backyard with Bob. I just know he's going to break his neck.

Grace's voice grows quiet with concern.

GRACE

How are they doing?

LAURA

Better now that we're home.

GRACE

I wanted to clear it with you first, but what would you think if I got them a new puppy for Christmas?

Laura smiles softly.

LAURA

Oh. I think it's too soon...but thank you.

Grace moves to the door.

GRACE

Well, let me know. I'd love to do that for them.

CUT TO:

Peter's on top of the backyard hill sitting in a round metal "flying saucer" with Jamie in his lap. The hill provides just enough of a slope for sliding. Bob and Laura wait at the bottom.

PETER

Ready?

Jamie grip the sides.

JAMIE

Ready.

PETER

Look out below!

He pushes off. Laura screams and claps her hands as they slides down the hill. Jamie shrieks as Peter lets loose with a rebel yell. They spins to a stop and tumble out, shrieking and laughing. Hope immediately jumps up and down for her turn.

LAURA

We're next...we're next!

PETER

(to Bob)

You're up.

Bob hesitates.

BOB

I think I'm too old for this.

Laura grabs his hand and tugs on him.

LAURA

Please oh please? Come on, Daddy...you can do it.

The word hangs in the air. Laura looks stunned. It just tumbled out. Jamie and Laura shoot looks at each other. Bob is just as surprised as they are. No one is quite sure what to do next. Finally, it's Peter who breaks the moment. He grins at Bob.

PETER

Yeah. You can do it.

Bob smiles...a warm glow creeps into his cheeks.

BOB

Okay, but I haven't done anything like this since high school.

Laura cheers. Bob picks up the "flying saucer" and follows Laura as she scampers up the small hill.

Bob sits in the disk and Laura piles into his lap.

BOB  
Don't let go, whatever you do.

HOPE  
I won't.

BOB  
Here goes nothin'!

He pushes off. They wobble and then begin to pick up speed.

PETER  
Look out for the teeter-totter!

They're headed straight for it.

BOB  
(panicked)  
How do I steer this thing?

PETER  
Lean!

They lean. Hope screams and laughs, trying to stay aboard, as the disk barely misses the teeter-totter and wipes out in a pile of snow.

JAMIE  
Wipe-out!

Through Hope's laughter and Bob's groans, we hear a dog bark in the distance. Jamie whips around, suddenly alert.

JAMIE (cont.)  
Did you hear that?

The dog barks again. Hope gasps as she brushes the snow from her knees. Peter looks up toward the hill. Bob's still getting creakily to his feet.

BOB  
Hear what?

HOPE  
It's a dog.

Laura comes out the back door.

LAURA  
The turkey's almost ready. Why don't...

PETER/HOPE/JAMIE  
Shhhh!

Confused, Laura looks at Bob. What?

The children listen with tense, hopeful expressions. Jamie takes a few steps toward the hill in the direction of the sound.

Chance? JAMIE

Laura closes her eyes briefly, pained at their useless hopes.

LAURA  
Oh, Jamie, honey. It's not.

Jamie continues toward the hill, eagerness growing.

JAMIE  
Here, Chance! Here boy!

The dog barks again. Jamie breaks into an awkward run up the hill. Hope jumps up and down.

HOPE  
I know that bark! It is him!

Jamie churns up the hill, holding his hands over his mouth like a megaphone.

JAMIE  
Chance! Chance! Here boy!

His voice rings out loud and strong...and it's answered by a joyful bark!

The others look up at the sound as....

...as a dirty, straggly, bone-thin Chance hurtles over the white rim of the hill, barking hysterically. He hits Jamie square in the chest and they roll backwards in a tangle of arms, legs, slurping tongue and wagging tail.

Laura gapes, struck by the impossibility of what she's seeing.

Boy and dog tumble gleefully to the bottom as the rest of the family runs toward them.

There's a yowl from the top of the hill. Hope gasps! Her hands fly to her mouth. She looks up as Sassy's small matted head peers over the top of the hill. Hope squeals.

HOPE  
Sassy!

Hope run/crawls up the hill as Sassy, yowling nonstop, picks her distasteful way down through the snow. Hope reaches her halfway up and scoops the cat up in her arms...tears streaming down her face. Sassy purrs ecstatically, a rumbling motorboat, as Hope buries her face in her straggly fur.

HOPE (cont.)  
I'm never letting go of you. Never...never....  
never.

SASSY  
*It's so good to be back! I missed you more  
than I ever knew!*

She squeezes her so tight that Sassy squirms.

SASSY (cont.)  
*Hope, Hope...I can't breathe.*

Jamie and Chance romp...a happy heap in the snow.

JAMIE

I knew it was you! I knew it! I knew it!

CHANCE

*I never thought I'd see you again! I missed you so much  
...you won't believe all the things that happened to us!*

Peter watches the reunions with a happy but cautious expression.

Tensed, everyone looks to the top of the hill, waiting for Shadow. The moment stretches painfully. They wait. Peter bites his lip, eyes glued to the hill, as if he can make Shadow appear by sheer force of will.

PETER

(under his breath)

Come on, Shadow.

But the old dog doesn't show up. Laura shoots a worried glance at Peter, then back to the hill.

They wait in tense silence. And finally, Peter drops his eyes.

PETER (cont.)

He was old....it was too far. He was just too old.

The daylight is fading as Peter turns, swallowing back the thick lump that's crept into his throat. Laura reaches out for him.

LAURA

Oh, Peter....

He waves her away. If she mothers him, he'll break down. He just wants to be alone, to deal with the finality of it all.

The others watch helplessly as Peter trudges toward the house, shoulders slumped, head down, utterly alone.

A lame, hobbling dog appears at the top of the hill: The frail silhouette gazes silently down at the boy.

The others see Shadow on top of the hill. Bob opens his mouth to say something...

...but Peter's already felt it. He stops dead in his tracks. And very slowly, with a hopeful dawning in his eyes, he turns around.

On top of the hill, the silhouette barks, one froggy worn-out woof!

Unbounded joy fills Peter's face. Like his dog, he barely manages to get out one word.

PETER

Shadow.

The old dog throws himself headlong down the hill, legs churning under him, snow flying up behind.

Peter races toward his dog but he slips and plunks down in the snow. He holds his arms wide and Shadow throws himself into them. He jumps all over Peter, whining, licking, tail whipping furiously. Peter hugs him desperately, face tipped skyward, eyes closed, brimming over.

## CHANCE (V.O.)

It was Shadow's victory really. His belief was the thing that got us through. The journey may have brought me a long way towards growing up. But watching Shadow in that moment, I saw the years lift from him.

Peter laughs as Shadow leaps away, body twisting with joy. He crouches and yaps happily. Peter lunges for him, but Shadow hops away, feinting and crouching again.

## CHANCE (V.O. cont)

He was a puppy again ...reunited with his best friend.

Overcome, Laura looks over at Bob whose face has crumpled. Joyful tears stream down his cheeks.

WE PULL UP AND BACK to encompass the family as they turn to go into the house.

Laura and Bob walk together, arm-in-arm.

Jamie and Chance run around in crazy circles.

Hope carries Sassy, warm and secure in her arms.

Shadow limps at Peter's side, tired head held high and proud.

## CHANCE (V.O.)

As we turned to go inside the house...a strange, unfamiliar feeling came over me.

The others make their way inside, but Chance holds back...gazing up at the house.

## CHANCE (V.O. cont.)

The hunger and fatigue melted away. I felt suddenly strong...protective.

Jamie turns at the door to beckon him inside.

## CHANCE (V.O cont.)

At last, for the first time in my life...I was home.

Chance barks and sprints in the door. As it closes behind him and the exterior light blinks on WE:

FADE OUT.