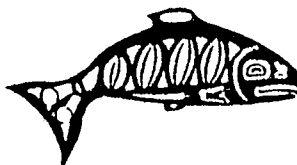


LIMBO

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1 INT / EXT SALMON LADDER - DAY 1

OPENING CREDITS play over SLOW-MOTION footage of SALMON, beat to hell by their long journey, struggling mightily to throw their bodies up the steps of an INDUSTRIAL SALMON LADDER. SPAWNERS struggle, rest, and in some cases, die, on every side. We SUPERIMPOSE the TITLE-

LIMBO

We hear a VOICE intoning a poetic travelogue-

ALBRIGHT (V.O.)

Welcome to America's Last Frontier.

2 INT / EXT VARIOUS SHOTS 2

As the rap continues we CROSS-CUT between travelogue-style shots of an enormous TOUR BOAT discharging its PASSENGERS into the dockside shopping area of Port Henry, Alaska, and SALMON being sorted, cleaned, gutted, processed and canned by WORKERS in a large CANNERY-

ALBRIGHT (V.O.)

Where the final, lumbering remnants of the Ice Age, the massive and awe-inspiring glaciers, calve cathedral-sized icebergs into the sea. Where Nature's bounty unfolds in a panoply of flora and fauna the like which is seen nowhere else on the planet. From the ocean depths plumbed by ageless cetaceans to azure skies where the mighty eagle soars, this land abounds with creatures great and small, strange and majestic. It is a land steeped in tradition, its mists redolent of the hardy souls of men who have gone to sea- Tlingit and Haida, Inuit and Aleut, Russian and Norwegian- their languages and deeds lingering on in the names of our countless islands and passageways. A land that for centuries has lifted its siren call to the bold and adventurous, to men and women willing to risk their lives for the promise of untold fortune, be it from fur or fin, from the Heaven-pointing spires of old-growth spruce or from the buried treasures of yellow gold or black, energy-rich petroleum.

The voice CROSS FADES with ANOTHER rougher, more ironic VOICE-

ALBRIGHT AND HARM

A land visited each year by the relentless and mysterious salmon as it completes its great cycle of life, each river and stream welcoming home the king and sockeye-

3 INT CANNERY - SLIMING TABLE

3

HARMON 'HARM' KING, a foreman at the plant, stands behind several MEN and WOMEN who are cleaning gurry off salmon and sliding them on toward the next step in the process. Only one of them, RICKY, is really listening to his oration-

HARM

-coho and dog, the pink or humpback that is smashed into cans and quick-cooked to give the colorful local folk something to do other than play cards and scratch their nuts all day. A land where that nice old lady from Fort Lauderdale who had the stroke three cabins down was probably parked next to the thawed halibut you're eating on board tonight while your floating hotel chugs through the Hecate Strait to deliver its precious load of geriatrics to the hungry, Visa-card-accepting denizens of our northernmost and most mosquito-infested state.

Harm stops talking and gives Ricky a look. Ricky keeps sliming fish-

HARM

So?

RICKY

What's 'redolent'?

HARM

'Having or emitting an odor.'

RICKY

People are gonna want to come here because it smells?

HARM

'Pleasantly fragrant.' At least that's what the crossword puzzle said.

RICKY

Not talking about this place.

HARM

Course they're not. The minute we shut down they'll make this place into a tourist attraction. They'll disinfect the joint and you can get a job in one of those cases, like in a museum, those displays-

Harm's wife, AUDREY, who is sliming fish, speaks up-

*

3.

AUDREY

Dioramas.

*

HARM

In one of those dioramas. They'll cover you with fake fish guts and put a label underneath- 'Typical Filipino Cannery Worker'. You just have to keep still and hold your breath till the tour group moves on.

RICKY

Probably pay better than this.

HARM

I'll be out on the water in my boat and every time I make a set there'll be one of those floating nursing homes with five hundred sonsabitches and their cameras, capturing the moment.

AUDREY

And what boat is that?

*

HARM

My boat.

AUDREY

You don't have a boat, honey. Remember?

*

HARM

Oh yes I do. I'm gettin it back. Today.

4

EXT PARTY GROUNDS - WEDDING RECEPTION

4

NOELLE, a high school girl dressed in a white steward's uniform, circulates among WEDDING GUESTS with a tray of hors d'oeuvres. An outdoor wedding RECEPTION is in progress, a BAND singing and playing from a bandstand in the BG-

NOELLE

Would you like some hors d'oeuvres? Excuse me, would you like some hors d'oeuvres?

JOE GASTINEAU, a handyman in his 40's, passes with a case of wine. He and Noelle have a friendly, flirtatious relationship-

JOE

Hey. Nice uniform.

NOELLE

The bride's parents said they wanted uniforms, so Frankie and Lou rented these. I look stupid.

JOE
You look like an angel.

NOELLE
I look like a little white maggot.

Noelle sees a GUEST approaching-

NOELLE (shifting gears)
Would you like some hors d'oeuvres?

The guest grabs a handful and a napkin and fades back into the crowd-

NOELLE
How come you don't have to wear one?

JOE
This is the official unemployed pulp mill worker's uniform-

NOELLE
Right.

We FOLLOW as Noelle wades back into the crowd. Joe continues with the wine-

JOE
Keep smiling.

NOELLE
Would you like a cheese ball?

Noelle brings us to the father of the bride, ALBRIGHT, and a logging executive, BAINES-

ALBRIGHT
Thank you, darling. What I'm saying is, you have to look at the big picture. You clear-cut the trees, what do you have?

We HOLD with the men as Noelle circulates-

BAINES
Hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of timber-

ALBRIGHT
But it's ugly-

BAINES
The point is to get the trees down without spending a fortune.

ALBRIGHT
You're thinking short-term, Phil. Like my mother always told me- You Don't Shit In Your Front Yard.

BAINES

Your mother said that?

ALBRIGHT

Constantly. Our people cruise by an island, got their binoculars out, the ones that can still see, God bless them- what do we show them? We show them a little Indian fish camp, some totem poles maybe, we show them a black bear foraging for breakfast in the early morning mist. We do not show them deforested hillsides and logging equipment, Phil. Heavy machinery they can see in New Jersey.

BAINES

The loggers have as much right-

ALBRIGHT

We all have to make our living, I'm not arguing that. Cut the trees in the interior, make it into a parking lot- just quit with the chainsaws when you get to where people can see. We're trying to develop themes for each area up here- 'The Whales' Causeway', 'Island of the Raven People', 'Kingdom of the Salmon', 'Lumberland'-

BAINES

That's us-

ALBRIGHT

That's a turn-of-the-century sawmill with a little water-powered generator and a gift shop. That's history, Phil, not industry. History is our future here, not our past.

Albright sees his daughter go by in her wedding dress-

ALBRIGHT (beaming)

Will you look at her? She looks like a million bucks.

NOELLE (returning)

Would you like some more, gentlemen?

ALBRIGHT

Find the little girl with the shrimp and send her over this way, would you? Thanks, honey. It's like with these kayak outfitters, Phil- I know the jellybean colors are easy to spot if there's trouble, but it spoils the ambience-

Noelle looks to the stage as the GUESTS APPLAUD as the band finishes its number. The woman singer, DONNA DE ANGELO, steps to the microphone-

DONNA

Thank you. Thank you very much.

STAGE

Donna, in her early 40's, is smiling but clearly upset about something-

DONNA

Thank you. This is kind of a special day for me- I know it's a special one for all of you- this is my last appearance with Randy Mason and the Pipeline-

POLITE APPLAUSE from the audience. The accordion player, glares at her as the other BAND MEMBERS exchange surprised looks-

DONNA

I'll be continuing my run as a solo performer at the Golden Nugget saloon and pocket billiard emporium, downtown Port Henry's answer to Carnegie Hall-

She looks daggers at the accordion player-

DONNA

While Randy will be rapidly sinking back into the relative obscurity that he so richly deserves.

A few NERVOUS TITTERS from the guests close to the bandstand-

DONNA

The time we've spent together has seemed- much longer than it probably was, and with that in mind I'd like to dedicate this next song to him. Fellas-

Donna turns her back to the audience, tells the players what she wants, and then turns back to launch into a SONG about a man who has broken a woman's heart one time too many. She is very good, able to control her strong, emotional voice, despite the obvious tension on stage. The accordion player sulks as Donna looks him straight in the eye-

NOELLE

We watch over Noelle's shoulder for a moment, then she turns to us, nearly in tears-

NOELLE

Dammit.

We FOLLOW Noelle toward the prep tables to refill her tray. Her employers, FRANKIE and LOU, are having a heated argument with Harmon King, in his street clothes now, as they rapidly prep bread baskets and side dishes for the meal-

LOU

I don't see where we have anything to discuss.

HARM

You're not gonna take that attitude if I show up with a lawyer-

LOU

A lawyer?

Noelle grabs more hors d'oeuvres and hurries away, realizing she shouldn't be hearing this-

LOU

You're threatening us with a lawyer? In schools now when they teach estates, when they teach contracts, you know who they use? Francine, here, that's who- she wrote the fucking book!

FRANKIE

It's not really a text book, Louise-

LOU

I, on the other hand, was a criminal attorney. Some of the business practices that you engaged in-

HARM

That's bullshit-

LOU

You see a couple dykes wander up from Seattle, you figure here's easy pickins-

FRANKIE

Louise-

LOU

When we bought these properties, which you had run to the ground-

HARM

That is not true-

LOU
When we bought them from you,
promises were made about plumbing,
about dry rot, about roofing
materials-

HARM
I had a cash-flow situation-

LOU
Promises which you did not keep-

HARM
I gave you my boat.

LOU
Yes, as collateral-

HARM
It's worth more than those repairs-

LOU
It is worth relatively little on the
market. We've had it appraised-

HARM
I gave you my license. That's worth
a--

FRANKIE
We're not fishermen, Harmon.

HARM
Exactly. That's why I'm saying I
take the boat, I go out, make my
limit, the cash goes to you, I get my
boat back.

FRANKIE
Whoah, whoah, whoah- we paid the
docking fees all winter, we had the
engine overhauled, and now that
there's fish again you expect to
waltz in, take our boat as if you
still owned it, like you never
defaulted on any of this stuff-

HARM
You're worse than the damn bank-

FRANKIE
We let you take advantage of us like
this, what does that say to everybody
in Port Henry? It says do not take
these women seriously-

HARM
You come up here, you bust people's
balls-

FRANKIE

If your balls are being busted,
Harmon, it's because you stuck em in
a vise and you yanked the handle-

LOU

The screw.

FRANKIE

What?

LOU

The jaws of a vise are moved by a
screw or a lever. You don't call it
a handle.

FRANKIE

Thank you, Louise. The point being,
Mr. King, if you're feeling pressure
on your testicles, you have only
yourself to blame.

HARM

So you're just gonna take the hit,
let my boat rot in the harbor-

LOU

You misrepresented the properties to
us, Harmon. You tried to swindle us
into keeping your boat from being
repossessed by the bank by assigning
the title to-

HARM

Look, you gals already said you're
not fishermen-

FRANKIE

The last I heard there was no
shortage of guys moping around town
willing to work for a piece.

LOU

A share.

FRANKIE

What?

LOU

On a boat, in, you know- nautical
terms, it's called working for a
share.

FRANKIE (curt)

Thank you.

LOU

Francine, if we're going to do this,
we should get the terminology right.

FRANKIE

In carpentry, Louise, I bow to your superior knowlege. You are a person who reads tool catalogues for enjoyment. Boats, however, you know as little as I do, which is next to nothing-

HARM

You think you're gonna find somebody in this town to take my boat out and fish on my license? You're both fucking crazy!

STAGE

Donna finishes her song and walks tight-faced off the stage. The accordion player instantly leads the band into a ZYDECO SONG-

NOELLE

Noelle watches from the crowd, unhappy-

5

EXT RECEPTION - PICKUP TRUCK - JOE

5

Joe slides cases of wine off the back of his pickup truck. He turns and finds Donna standing there, looking at his truck. We hear the BAND playing an instrumental in the BG-

DONNA

This your truck?

JOE

Uh-huh.

DONNA

You working here?

JOE

Yeah- got this wine to load in. Got to help break things down after.

DONNA

Think you could give me a ride?

There is an intensity about Donna that Joe finds a little scary-

JOE

I guess- after I- how far is it?

DONNA

Just into town.

JOE

Let me know when you're ready.

He lifts up a case of wine-

DONNA
I'm ready now.

JOE
I thought you were the singer.

DONNA
I was.

JOE
You're really good.

DONNA
Thanks. Listen, I just broke up with
this guy I've been living with and
he's here and if I'm gonna keep my
shit together and not make a scene
I've got to go right now.

JOE
Okay- I'll-

He indicates the cases. Donna nods, pulls out a lighter and
a pack of cigarettes-

DONNA
I'll wait here.

6 EXT RECEPTION

6

The meal has started and the guests are mostly sitting eating
the opening course. Frankie and Lou stand at the prep table
with their backs to the guests, prepping the next round. Lou
is in tears-

LOU
They hate us. They all hate us.

FRANKIE
Who hates us?

LOU
These people. They think we're
carpetbaggers.

FRANKIE
If anybody is a carpetbagger, Louise,
it's these people. The father is
from Portland, the groom is-

LOU
Not these people- I mean like Harmon
King, the people in town-

FRANKIE
What people in town?

LOU

The guys at the boat dock, the people who hung at the lodge before we bought it, the people who used to fish here-

FRANKIE

That's like a handful of losers. Listen, you-

LOU

Don't hand me that fucking eggs and omelets routine!

FRANKIE (very gently)

Louise, would I insult you with a cooking metaphor when you're this upset? Look at you, he's got you crying-

LOU

Twenty years I'm in court, my clients get sent away for life, they get the max, whatever, not a fucking tear. But here-

FRANKIE

Harmon King is fish-slime, come on-

LOU

It's not him. It's my fault.

FRANKIE

How is it your fault?

LOU

I want them to like me!

FRANKIE

They will grow to like you. They just don't know you yet.

7 EXT ROAD

7

We see Joe's pickup traveling toward town-

8 INT. PICKUP

8

Donna is brooding, angry and upset. Joe steals a glance at her-

JOE

I meant that before. You're really good. Singing.

DONNA

Thanks.

JOE
Especially since I- like- I never
heard of you or anything.

Donna gives him a look-

DONNA
You watch sports?

JOE (shrugs)
Basketball-

DONNA
There must be basketball players who
are really good that you've never
heard of.

Joe thinks for a moment-

JOE
No.

DONNA
No?

JOE
If they're professionals and they're
really good everybody has heard of
them.

DONNA
Well singing is different. It's a
matter of taste. And-- luck.
Whatever.

JOE
Oh.

Indicates her lit cigarette-

DONNA
You mind if I smoke?

JOE
No- go ahead.

Joe looks at her again. She is fighting not to cry-

JOE
You okay?

DONNA
Couldn't be better.

JOE
Your boyfriend was the guy with the
band? Randy whatsit?

DONNA

Mason.

JOE

I never heard of him either.

DONNA

Good.

A silence-

DONNA (points)

Stop here.

Joe looks out at a funky little house-

JOE

This is it?

Donna is already out of the truck-

DONNA

I'll be right back.

9 EXT RECEPTION - GLASSES

9

We see GLASSES being tapped with silverware, then TILT to see Albright standing with glass in hand, making a toast-

ALBRIGHT

When we came up to this country fifteen years ago, Margie was eight years old and convinced that we would all be eaten by grizzlies.

Laughter-

CLOSER

ALBRIGHT

I'd like to say that so far none of us has lost anything other than the occasional backpack to the bears- and that this has been for us, like for so many other people before, a land of opportunity. A land where-

10 EXT RANDY MASON'S HOUSE

10

Donna steps out of the house, lugging too big a load of clothing and appliances. She dumps them on the ground, heads back in-

DONNA

There's just a couple more things.

Joe jumps out of the pickup to help-

JOE
I thought this was your house?

11 INT HOUSE

11

Joe enters the living room, concerned, to find Donna already rolling up an Indian rug. Other things have been piled into one section of the room-

DONNA
See if he can survive without the
fucking microwave-

JOE
You're taking his stuff?

DONNA
My stuff. My daughter's stuff.

JOE
You're sure?

DONNA
Look around you- you see everything
that looks like shit? That looks
like somebody with no taste and bad
personal hygiene would have it in
their house? That's his stuff. The
rest of it is out of here. Grab the
other end-

Joe obediently helps with the rug-

JOE
How long did you live here?

DONNA
Three weeks.

12 EXT RECEPTION

12

We start on the WEDDING CAKE, about to be cut. The cake is in the shape of a multi-storied cruise ship, with 'SS MATRIMONY' printed on the side and lots of candied lifeboats and other details adorning it. A plastic bride and groom stand at the top of the candy gangplank-

WIDER

The actual BRIDE and GROOM pose with the knife poised, smiling as CAMERAS FLASH!

13 EXT HOUSE

13

We FOLLOW Joe and Donna as they load household items from the front lawn onto the pickup-

DONNA

I used to gig with him when I was working in Spokane- he had this anorexic girl singer who'd get too shaky to go on stage, so I'd fill in. My booker talks me into a year up here, the money's real good, blah blah blah, and I run into Randy in Sitka and we hit it off.

JOE

So you move in.

DONNA

No- I tell him keep your distance, I got a kid, I'm older than you, I don't smoke as much dope as you, don't think I'm moving in or anything.

A pause as they continue to load-

JOE

So how does your stuff end up in his place?

Donna considers the answer-

DONNA

Unforeseen circumstances.

JOE

Oh.

Donna turns her attention on him, wanting to get off the defensive-

DONNA

You married?

JOE

No.

DONNA

Live with somebody?

JOE

No.

She gives him a suspicious look-

JOE (shrugs)

Sorry.

Donna looks at the house-

DONNA

Ten years ago I would have trashed the place.

JOE
That would be a bad idea.

DONNA (ironic)
I was still dealing with my anger.

JOE
Anger at who?

DONNA
At whatever jerk I was leaving ten years ago.

JOE
Uh-huh.

Joe lifts up an ironing board and iron-

DONNA
I told him he was gonna get bored, I told him he was gonna get itchy and start chasing little club girls, I told him my kid was gonna get on his nerves. I was right on every fucking count.

JOE
So why'd you move in?

DONNA
He said he thought he was a better person when he was with me.

She tosses something into the pickup-

DONNA
How can you turn that down?

14 EXT RECEPTION - DINING AREA

14

Guests are up and mingling, a few dancing to the BAND. Noelle and STACY, another teenager on the staff, move through collecting plates-

STACY
The guy is a climber.

NOELLE
A social climber?

STACY
Rock climber. You know- mountains, glaciers, whatever you can fall off of and break your neck. The best man and all his friends work up at Denali, guiding climbs for tourists.

NOELLE
I don't like heights.

Stacy's attention has gone to the band-

STACY

What happened to the singer?

15 EXT ROAD - TOWN

15

Joe's truck rolls into the outskirts of Port Henry-

16 INT TRUCK

16

Donna is watching Joe as he drives-

DONNA

You work for those two? Franny and Zoey?

JOE

Frankie and Lou. Yeah.

DONNA

How long?

JOE

Couple months. They're just starting out up here.

DONNA

Didn't think they had any men working for them.

JOE

I'm one of the few.

DONNA

Do they hit on the girls they hire?

JOE

No. Don't think so. They're a- you know. A couple.

Donna nods, thinking-

DONNA

So what'd you do before this?

JOE

Pulp mill. Till it closed.

DONNA

How was that?

JOE

How you think it was? It's a pulp mill.

DONNA

And before?

JOE
This and that, like most people.

DONNA
Trapping beavers and stuff-

JOE (smiles)
No-

DONNA
Fisherman?

JOE
I was.

DONNA
You like it?

JOE
While it lasted.

DONNA
You don't go out anymore-

JOE
No.

DONNA
Why not?

Joe takes a moment before he answers-

JOE
Unforeseen circumstances.

They drive in silence-

17

EXT GOLDEN NUGGET

17

In the REFLECTION in a window we see Joe's truck pull up in front of the GOLDEN NUGGET. Next to the reflection is a promo card with Donna's photo and 'Donna de Angelo - Appearing Nitely (2 Drink Minimum)' printed on it-

WIDER - STREET

Joe and Donna get out of the truck-

JOE
I should get back.

DONNA
If you just help me get it off the truck, the guys inside can take over-

JOE
You gonna stay here?

The Golden Nugget is the bar on the ground floor of an old
DOWNTOWN HOTEL-

DONNA

We did before. This is my regular
gig for the next month or so. Two
shows a night.

JOE

I'll come see you. Sing.

DONNA

Great.

She watches as Joe pulls a bedside table off the back-

DONNA (moodily)

My kid is gonna kill me.

18

EXT PARTY GROUNDS - WEDDING RECEPTION

18

The reception is breaking up, guests leaving on all sides-

NOELLE

Noelle, dressed in her street clothes now, stares at
something-

REVERSE

We shoot over her shoulder as she watches RANDY flirting with
one of the MAIDS OF HONOR behind the bandstand-

NOELLE

She turns, troubled, and we FOLLOW her toward the parking
lot. She passes Frankie and Lou, doing a party post-mortem
as they help clean up-

LOU

It went fine-

FRANKIE

They didn't like the ratatouille.

LOU

A lot of people don't eat eggplant.
Like me.

FRANKIE

You don't eat vegetables, Louise, and
don't tell me french fries. I'm
talking about normal people.

LOU (O.S.)

It went fine. Hey, the father wanted
to cater it on his cruise ship till
the bride put her foot down-

FRANKIE (O.S.)

We should have made more cheese balls-

Noelle brings us to Joe, who is dismantling the tent-

JOE

You out of here?

NOELLE

Time off for good behavior.

JOE

Saw all the groom's buddies checking you out.

NOELLE (a bit flattered)

Right.

JOE

I'm serious.

NOELLE

Bunch of preppie thugs.

JOE

You're a hard woman to please.

NOELLE

Catch you tomorrow.

JOE

Yeah.

19 EXT. PARKING LOT

19

Noelle steps out into the rapidly-emptying parking lot. She looks very small. She looks around, not seeing what she wants to. Stacy pulls up next to her in a battered old car, rolls the window down-

STACY

Need a ride?

NOELLE

Yeah, I guess I do.

STACY

Where you going?

NOELLE (thinks)

I'm not sure.

20 EXT RECEPTION - STAGE

20

Joe is beginning to dismantle the portable stage the band was on. He finds a stack of flyers-

CLOSER - FLYER

The flyers are for an upcoming appearance of Randy Mason and the Pipeline, featuring Donna de Angelo. There is a photo of Donna in a circle-

JOE

Joe contemplates the picture-

21

INT STACY'S CAR - EVENING

21

Stacy drives Noelle into town-

STACY

You know what they want to bring up here? Frankie and Lou?

NOELLE

What?

STACY

Alpacas.

NOELLE

For sweaters?

STACY

For hiking trips. They want to take people out on hiking trips for a week or so and have the alpacas carry all the gear. They do it down in the Amazon or something.

NOELLE

The Andes.

STACY

Huh?

NOELLE

The Amazon is a jungle river- they'd be too hot. It's probably the mountain range- the Andes.

STACY

Whatever. They get em up here, no way i'm cleaning their cages. These are some strange people we work with.

NOELLE

I don't know-

STACY

We've got the lesbo trail guides running the place, we've got the human pin-cushion in the kitchen there-

NOELLE

Rusty-

STACY

He looks like he took a staple-gun to his eyebrows. We got Eunice, the cashier, twenty six years old and still lives with her mother. We got the handyman there, killed two people-

NOELLE

He what?

STACY

Joe Gastineau. Mr. Dark and Moody.

NOELLE

He killed people?

STACY

Got em killed. Same thing.

CU NOELLE

STACY (O.S.)

Took em out fishing on his boat and they both drowned. How'd you like to carry that around with you?

22

EXT DOCK - EVENING - JOE

22

Joe stands on the dock by Frankie and Lou's lodge, looking out at a seiner moving up the channel, lost in thought-

FRANKIE (O.S.)

We're gonna be fine. It's just a lot hassle starting things up.

LOU (O.S.)

It's so much work-

REVERSE - JOE

Joe broods. We see the SILHOUETTES of Frankie and Lou through the screen window behind him-

FRANKIE

Two more weeks, things'll be up and running, we'll take a trip. Take the tent, the Coleman, the kayaks, row out to one of the islands and just chill, okay? Like the first time we came up here- just you and me, back in the woods again.

23

INT HOTEL SUITE - DONNA AND NOELLE

23

We hear VOICES of the BAR PATRONS downstairs as Donna, cigarette in hand, surveys their stuff piled in the middle of the living room. Noelle, stiff with resentment, makes trips to and from her mother's bedroom, replacing things-

DONNA

I'm sorry you got stuck at work. I just had to get out of there.

NOELLE

I'm used to getting home on my own. I just like to know where it is.

Noelle throws a handful of clothes back into the laundry basket-

NOELLE (pissed)

Half my clothes are missing.

DONNA

I grabbed everything I could see-

NOELLE

I had a load in the dryer.

DONNA

We'll get them back.

NOELLE

I didn't want to move over there in the first place-

DONNA

I know. It was a dumb idea. I'm sorry.

NOELLE (quiet)

He wasn't that bad.

DONNA

Compared to what?

NOELLE

Compared to Lyle.

DONNA

He whose name must not be spoken. I made a mistake about Randy, I'm sorry. I'll help you move your stuff.

NOELLE (mutters)

You're the mistake.

Donna just stares at her, hurt and angry. Noelle pointedly takes something into the bedroom. Donna waits till she wanders out again, tries to strike up a conversation-

DONNA

Your ladies did a nice job with that reception. I didn't eat, but it looked really good.

Noelle ignores her, putting up door hooks-

DONNA

Do you always wear that uniform or just when they're catering?

Noelle leaves for the bedroom-

DONNA (calling)

So is the cute guy at work who likes you the one passing the shrimp things? With the hair in his eyes?

She waits. It is a long moment before Noelle comes back out. She speaks in a frosty tone, not looking at her mother-

NOELLE

I didn't say he likes me, I said he was good-looking, and no, that's not him. That's Perry. Perry wants to be a break dancer when he grows up.

DONNA

I thought that was over.

NOELLE

Disco hasn't made it up here yet-

DONNA

Oh come on-

NOELLE

How could you think I think Perry is cute?

DONNA

I don't know- for a high-school kid- what do I know what you like?

NOELLE

Right. You don't.

A silence-

DONNA

So are you mad at me? About Randy?

NOELLE (shrugs)

S'your life.

DONNA

I mean did you like him?

NOELLE

It's hard enough to keep their names
straight- I'm supposed to like them?

DONNA

Don't be that way with me. I feel
like shit. I could use a little
support.

NOELLE

That's what therapy is for.

Pause. Donna looks around at their piled belongings-

DONNA

We'll have to rent the VCR again.

FADE OUT:

24 INT HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

24

A SCHOOL BELL RINGS. Noelle steps out of a throng of milling
high school KIDS. She pauses by a display case-

DISPLAY CASE

We move across several athletic TROPHIES till we settle on an
area devoted to young Joe. We TIGHTEN on a PHOTO of him in
his uniform-

NOELLE

Staring at the photo-

25 EXT LODGE - DAY

25

Joe does grunt work at Frankie and Lou's lodge as the women
pitch an idea to him-

FRANKIE

We have this job for you.

LOU

It's kind of different-

FRANKIE

We have this ship-

LOU

Boat-

Frankie gives her a look-

FRANKIE

We have this boat-

JOE

The Raven, yeah-

LOU
We had the engine overhauled, put a
new gillnet drum on it-

JOE
Harmon King's boat.

FRANKIE
It's ours now.

JOE
Uh-huh.

FRANKIE
And he signed his license over to us-

LOU
His entry permit-

FRANKIE
To pay off some of the money he owes
us.

LOU
We want you to go out.

JOE
Go out.

FRANKIE
Go out and catch fish.

JOE
I'm not a fisherman.

Frankie doesn't understand his reticence-

FRANKIE
But you used to be. You know what
you're doing on a boat.

JOE (tight)
I suppose.

FRANKIE
So you could if you wanted to.

JOE
If I wanted to.

LOU
We'll figure out some kind of
percentage deal-

FRANKIE
We don't know if this is an asset we
want to keep or to sell, but with the
season almost over and this license
so expensive-

LOU
You're not like tight with Harmon
King, are you?

JOE
Not especially, no.

FRANKIE
If you could go down to the marina
and look at it-

LOU
Check it out, tell us if there's
anything you'd need to be operational-

JOE
I haven't been commercial fishing for
twenty-five years.

FRANKIE
Has it changed that much?

JOE
More technology. But I just don't--

FRANKIE
This is really terrific. You're
really bailing us out on this.

LOU
It's a matter of credibility. If we
just let people walk all over us-

JOE
I have to think about it.

FRANKIE
Think about it. Go look at the ship-
the boat- figure out who you want to
have on your crew-

LOU
You think people will do that?
Knowing it's Harmon's boat?

JOE
You can always get somebody.

26 INT GYM - DAY - DONNA

26

We TRACK IN at Donna, furiously stepping away on a
Stairmaster machine. An AEROBICS CLASS runs through its
paces in the BG. Donna starts to cry. Angry at herself, she
grabs her towel and wipes the tears from her face-

27 INT LODGE, PANTRY - EVENING

27

Joe and Noelle are stacking food supplies from crates onto
the shelves in the walk-in pantry-

JOE

If the temperature of the water in the stream changes a couple of degrees, if it gets slightly more or less acid, any little change, it can mean the salmon won't return there.

NOELLE

Where do they go?

JOE

Probably they just keep looking along the coast till---

He shrugs-

NOELLE

So the whole run disappears?

JOE

It's been known to happen. They're pretty much hard-wired, fish, not many options. People, though, they've got bigger brains, they can guess at the future, make decisions-

NOELLE

They just do a really lousy job of it.

Joe smiles-

NOELLE

I hate it when they're stranded out in the air and their gills are working and they have that desperate look-

JOE

They're drowning. In air.

Noelle shoots a look at Joe, watching him work-

NOELLE

What do you think it feels like to drown?

Joe stacks a few more items before he answers-

JOE

I don't know. Never had the experience.

28

INT CANNERY

28

WORKERS with STEAM HOSES attack every surface of the cannery, blasting fish guts and grime down into the drains in the floor. One by one they turn the STEAM OFF-

VARIOUS SHOTS

We see various of the work stations- sorting tables, gutting tables, canning belts- all still and quietly dripping-

HARMON - WORKERS

Harmon and a half-dozen workers stand looking at the quiet, motionless cannery as the water settles-

HARM

That's all she wrote.

RICKY

They say the Chinese might buy it.
Pack the whole thing up, ship it over-

HARM

They're welcome to it. Who needs a drink?

29 EXT GOLDEN NUGGET - NIGHT

29

We hear VOICES of the BAR PATRONS inside-

30 INT GOLDEN NUGGET - NIGHT

30

It is mostly LOCAL PEOPLE in here tonight, but we start with DENISE, a cruise-line employee guiding a knot of ELDERLY TOURISTS around the periphery of the bar-

DENISE

This is the Golden Nugget Saloon, founded back in 1881 when Port Henry was the gold mining center of the Northern Territory. Prospectors, mining engineers, fishermen and loggers would congregate here for a stiff drink and a friendly game of cards-

She brings us to Harmon King, sitting with Audrey and Ricky * and another worker from the cannery-

HARM

They say nobody eats canned salmon anymore-

AUDREY

Do you eat it? *

HARM

Why would I eat canned when I can get fresh?

AUDREY

The people in Peoria are saying the exact same thing. *

HARM

That's a hell of a fucking note.
What am I gonna do?

AUDREY

What am I gonna do? Think you're the
only person up here out of a job? *

DENISE AND TOURISTS

Denise passes the pool tables with her charges-

DENISE

The first legal prizefight in the
territory and the only recorded bout
between a domesticated wolf and a
black bear were staged in this very
room. The reknowned English actress
Mabel Sinclair once visited Port
Henry, and it was in the Golden
Nugget that a fur trapper offered her
a thousand dollars worth of mountain
goat hides for her hand in marriage-

She brings us to SMILIN JACK and X-MAN, a pair of bush
pilots, shooting pool-

SMILIN JACK

He's in that little Cessna of his,
coming in with the wind steady and
the water is like glass and he's
doing the usual rap, the wilderness,
the wildlife, the glaciers- trying to
impress these two girls- he's still
got his wheels down-

X-MAN

Shit-

SMILIN JACK

Floats hit the water- WHAM! Those
wheels dig in and he flips tail over
head- SMACK! The Beaver is lying
belly up in the channel, the two
girls are unconcious and he's upside
down hooked in by his belt with water
pouring in from all sides-

HARM AND FRIENDS, VIC

VIC, the bartender, is holding forth about the charter
business-

VIC

-so I drop these people off the boat-
corporate executive, second-wife, two
kids by the first marriage.

(more)

VIC

They got heated tents, they got freeze-dried gourmet dinners, they're wearing four thousand dollars worth of Gortex- this is gonna be a bonding experience, right? Two hours they lasted, two hours before the exec gets me on the radio and says they've had it. I gotta call in a chopper from Anchorage, air-lift em off the island before they eat each other alive-

SMILIN JACK AND X-MAN

X-MAN

-Snuffy's up there spotting herring with every other bush pilot in the state, calling down to his boats in code if he spots something when WHAMMO! Head-on with some honcho in a Piper-Cub who's got his eyes down on the water too-

AUDREY

Audrey's turn to tell a story-

AUDREY

-it's so cold your spit's frozen solid before it hits the ground. And the metal on the truck has that tinny sound when you slam the door- like the whole thing's gonna shatter? So this is the day Pop chooses to make his run up to Barrow-

DENISE AND TOURISTS

DENISE

No, I don't believe there have been any shootings in here recently, but the Golden Nugget has been the setting for many a desperate confrontation-

SMILIN JACK AND X-MAN

SMILIN JACK

I can't see the front of my own damn plane, this fog is so thick, and I know there's mountain peaks all around me. But the minute I try to climb above it the wind catches hold of me, and with the stabilizer gone-

*
*
*

HARM

HARM

Harvest the goddam resource my ass.
A man goes out and he sets and he
catches fish goddammit, he's not a
goddam farmer. Got more regulations
than Carter got liver pills, got the
Russians and the Japanese out there
scooping up all our crab-

JOE

Joe passes through, beer in hand-

SMILIN JACK (O.S.)

Hey, Joe-

Joe turns to see Smilin Jack by the pool table-

SMILIN JACK

Long time no see-

JOE

Smilin Jack. What you doing down at
this altitude?

SMILIN JACK

Flew some medical supply salesmen in
from Cordova. There's a thousand of
em over at the Convention Center.

JOE

There's always something. Where you
living these days?

SMILIN JACK

Two steps ahead of the finance
company.

JOE (smiles)

See you around-

Smilin Jack watches Joe walk away. We see Donna setting up
with her players beyond him-

SMILIN JACK

Jumpin Joe Gastineau.

X-MAN

Friend of yours?

SMILIN JACK

Not exactly.

STAGE - DONNA

Donna is on stage, fixing her mike-

DONNA

Hello everybody, welcome to the Golden Nugget. For you out-of-town visitors, this is not the Gay Nineties Singalong Revue, that's at the Klondike Palace on Race Street-

She sees Joe sitting down, gives him a small nod-

DONNA

-so if anybody breaks into "Oh, Them Golden Slippers" during our set, you'll be escorted from the premises. Casey?

CASEY, the guitar player, starts off and Donna begins to SING-
JOE

Watching Donna-

31 INT HOTEL SUITE - NOELLE

31

We can hear Donna SINGING distantly from downstairs. Noelle is arranging things in her mother's room. She catches sight of herself in the dresser mirror, pauses. She finds a pair of scissors on the dresser, picks them up. She opens them, then, watching her reflection all the while, brings the point very close to her eyeball. She presses a blade hard against her cheek for a moment. She pulls it away, leans close to examine the mark it has left, frowning. She runs her finger down along the mark-

32 EXT GOLDEN NUGGET - NIGHT

32

Later. Harmon and Audrey exit the bar, Harm a bit unsteady-*

AUDREY

Don't torture yourself. *

HARM

I don't intend to torture myself. I intend to torture them.

AUDREY

That boat was nothing but a money pit and you know it. *

HARM

Fuckin she-men think they can come up here, take over the joint. People aren't gonna stand for that.

AUDREY

Joe Gastineau is working out there. *

HARM

Biggest fuckin loser in the Southeast.

We watch Harm and Audrey walk away-

HARM (orates)
Welcome to America's Last Frontier-

AUDREY
Give it a rest, Harmon-

HARM
-where the minute a white man gets a
pot to piss in they create a new
Federal agency in charge of yanking
it away from him. Where mighty
bureaucracies creep glacier-like
across the earth, levelling
everything in their path-

33 INT GOLDEN NUGGET

33

We watch Donna, done with her set, making her way through the
audience. She stops to chat with a CUSTOMER for a moment-

JOE

Sitting alone, watching her-

POV - DONNA

Donna looks around, finds Joe, then crosses over to stand by
him-

DONNA
Mind if I sit?

JOE
Please-

He moves a chair and Donna sits by him. He doesn't say
anything at first-

DONNA
So?

JOE
Terrific.

DONNA
Who do I remind you of?

JOE
Remind me of?

DONNA
Singers. People always go "You're
sort of like Judy Collins, but your
voice is deeper, or you're sort of
like Emmylou Harris, but your hair is
curlier- "

JOE
Screamin Jay Hawkins-

DONNA (smiles)
Really?

JOE
But I think he usually wore a bone in
his nose.

Joe indicates the stage-

JOE
Can you make a living doing this?

DONNA
Sort of. You make a living working
for the lodge ladies?

JOE
Sort of.

DONNA
It can be nice- one summer I did a
cruise ship in the Caribbean, got to
take my daughter-

JOE
You take her with you?

DONNA
Pretty much, yeah.

JOE
Her father is-

DONNA
Out of the picture.

JOE
Uh-huh.

DONNA
That was his choice.

JOE (nods)
So you've sung in a lot of places.

DONNA
Thirty six states and the territory
of Puerto Rico.

JOE
Wow.

DONNA
How bout you?

JOE
I been to Seattle a couple times,
Canada along the coast-
(shrugs)
It's real big up here, you go a long
ways without leaving the state.

DONNA
Right.

An awkward pause-

DONNA
So you must like it.

JOE
Don't think I'd do so well down south-
you know, cities.

DONNA
How come you're not married?

Joe laughs at her directness-

DONNA
Sorry, if you don't want to say-

JOE
No, no- it's probably the same reason
you're not married-

DONNA
Because such a high percentage of men
you meet are jerks?

JOE (smiles)
No-

DONNA
Because women are scarce and winters
are long-

JOE
That's true, but-

DONNA
Because you're looking for someone
fun to be with who understands your
bullshit but is still crazy about you-

JOE
That's a bit much to ask for.

DONNA
No it's not.

She means it. There is a brief silence-

JOE

So have you like- recorded songs?

DONNA

I made a lot of demos. I'm not exactly up here to try and be discovered. At my age--- it doesn't make a whole lot of sense- my so-called career.

JOE

Why do you still do it?

She struggles to give him an honest answer-

DONNA

Almost every night, doesn't matter where I'm singing, which song it is- all of a sudden I'll hook into it- I'll be feeling whatever it is the song is about and I can hear my voice, feel it, I can tell that I'm putting it across--- Moments of grace.

JOE

Uh-huh.

DONNA

You know what I'm saying?

JOE

I do.

DONNA

It's totally selfish.

JOE

Tough to walk away from something you feel that way about.

DONNA

I've put my kid through a lot- moving all the time. But when I take a straight job- bank teller, waitressing, whatever- I'm so-defeated- I don't want her to look at me.

JOE

But she thinks it's cool, you singing-

DONNA

She's convinced my only purpose in life is to cause her embarrassment and pain.

JOE

Teenager-

DONNA

Yeah.

Another silence. Joe takes the leap-

JOE

So would you like to do- something?

DONNA

Something.

JOE

It's real pretty country around here,
I could take you-

DONNA

I gotta warn you, there's certain
things- the one with the long skinny
boats and the paddles?

JOE

Kayaking-

DONNA

I don't do that one. Or anything
where if the spike pulls out of the
cliff you plunge to your death.

JOE

Climbing-

DONNA

In general, things where you wear
gear instead of clothing- I don't do
it.

JOE

Oh.

DONNA

I went out with this guy in
Wisconsin, he'd take me camping? He
had those rubber pants with the boots
attached-

JOE

Waders-

DONNA

I liked the walking around in the
woods part and I was a really good
sport about the rest, but I'm not
really the Outward Bound type.

JOE

That's good to know. What do you--
in the day, when you're not working-

DONNA
I read a lot-

JOE
Uh-huh-

DONNA
Go to the gym, punish myself on the
Stairmaster-

JOE
Uh-huh-

DONNA
If I'm involved with a guy I make
pathetic attempts to ingratiate
myself, often involving cooking and
cleaning activities. I listen to
music-

JOE
Mmmn-

DONNA
When my daughter was little I'd do
stuff with her.

JOE
And you don't anymore?

DONNA
No.

Donna doesn't want to think about this. She tries to be
cheerful-

DONNA
So, if you're willing, let's work on
this thing- this doing something
idea. You try to think of stuff,
I'll try to think of something-

JOE
Sure.

DONNA
Keep trying, really, okay?

JOE
I will-

The house band has tuned up and are doing somewhat impatient
riffs. Donna gets up-

DONNA
You know where to find me. Two shows
nightly.

Donna gives him a smile and Joe watches her walk to the bandstand-

FADE OUT:

34 EXT DOCK - DAY

34

We see a huge CRUISE SHIP docked in front of town-

DENISE (O.S.)
It was called 'Gold Fever' -

We TILT DOWN to see BOBBY GASTINEAU, some fifteen years younger than Joe, standing on the dock as Denise leads more elderly TOURISTS past-

DENISE
-and in 1897 the first wave of fortune-seekers swept through Port Henry on their way to Skagway, the Chilkoot Pass and the Yukon gold fields.

Bobby pushes through the stream of tourists into a CU. He seems nervous, checking around to see if anybody is watching him-

DENISE (O.S.)
They were desperate men, men willing to perish in search of the one Big Strike that every prospector dreamed of-

Bobby moves past us out of the shot as Donna follows a CRUISE DIRECTOR back toward the ship- *

CRUISE DIRECTOR
It could be the entire cruise, yes, or we might have you just do one leg, lay over at one of our stops, then work the next leg on a different ship- *

DONNA
How much time would I spend at home?

CRUISE DIRECTOR
We like to think of our vessels as a kind of home- *

DONNA
Not much, huh?

CRUISE DIRECTOR
It's a nomadic lifestyle, no question about that, but the rewards are- *

35 EXT CHANNEL - MORNING - HARMON

35

There is MIST hanging over the water. We PAN with a dozen KAYAKERS in day-glo colors as they paddle across the the water, then COUNTER-PAN as they make way for Harmon King in his motor skiff. Harmon kills the motor, drifts, then tosses an anchor overboard. He grabs a six pack of beer, crosses to his fishing gear and sits on some cushions. He carefully pushes earplugs into his ears, then turns a large BOOMBOX RADIO up full volume, a tape PLAYING country- western MUSIC. He begins to jig for halibut-

36 INT LODGE - MORNING

36

Lou is watching out the window. We hear the MUSIC, see Harmon drifting off anchor just a few hundred feet from the lodge-

LOU (calling)
He's back.

FRANKIE (O.S.)
There's nothing we can do about it.

LOU
He's going to make a feud out of this thing with his boat.

Frankie steps in next to her, looks out-

FRANKIE
Our boat. Doesn't he have a job?

LOU
They shut the cannery down. Dammit, there's a law against stalking-

FRANKIE
Stalking is on foot.

LOU
Skulking, then. There must be an anti-skulking ordinance.

FRANKIE
I'm starting to like that song.

37 INT HOTEL LOBBY

37

A hotel clerk runs a credit card through his machine-

BOBBY (O.S.)
Listen, if there's any calls for me, if anybody comes by asking if I'm here-

REVERSE

Bobby watches the lobby to see if he's been followed-

BOBBY

-just say I'm not registered, okay?

He turns and gives the clerk a charming smile-

BOBBY

I'm trying to surprise somebody, and
I don't want the word to get around.
Can you do that?

38

EXT STREAM - SALMON

38

We see SALMON throwing themselves up a stream, a few corpses
washed up to the sides-

DONNA (O.S.)

You get points for originality.

JOE AND DONNA

Joe and Donna stand watching the fish-

DONNA

You're the first guy who's ever asked
me to come and watch fish thrash
around and die-

JOE

It's-

DONNA

I'm not complaining, it's really
cool. I've seen it on TV, but in
person like this- they're so beat-up
looking-

JOE

They stop eating when they head in-

DONNA

My daughter did that for a while.
Almost had to put an IV in her.
Jeez, it's relentless, isn't it?
They don't stop.

JOE

Some of them do. They wear out, give
up-

DONNA

I'd make it.

JOE

Yeah?

DONNA

No sweat. I do this much every day
at the gym.

JOE (smiles)
I'm going to be gone a couple days.
It's sort of a job, sort of a favor-

DONNA
Uh-huh?

JOE
When I get back- it'd be great to see
you again.

DONNA
Okay.

JOE
Yeah?

DONNA
Yeah.

Donna is definitely pleased to be asked-

DONNA
So what's this trip, like a polar
expedition?

39 INT BANK - DAY

39

Bobby sits in a bank office with a LOAN OFFICER-

BOBBY
That's all?

LOAN OFFICER
A boat like yours, Mr. Gastineau, is
an unusual property. Its value
depends on its use in a certain type
of business. If nobody experienced
in that business is interested-

BOBBY
I don't want to sell it, I just want
to take a mortgage-

LOAN OFFICER
In view of your past financial
difficulties-

BOBBY
That was in San Diego.

LOAN OFFICER
A poor credit rating is a poor credit
rating, it follows you wherever you
go-

40 EXT GOLDEN NUGGET - NIGHT

40

Establishing shot-

41 INT GOLDEN NUGGET - NIGHT

41

Harm and Audrey sit at the bar with Ricky, surrounded by REGULARS. Vic muses as he works the counter-

VIC

It's just out there, waitin for the chance to fuck you over.

AUDREY

You personally. *

VIC

Whoever. One second you're skimmin over the surface, not a care in the world, then one little thing goes wrong-

HARM

Like Rudy Bannister-

VIC

Rudy Bannister- he's up in a fiord longlining when the whole front of the glacier breaks off- it makes this wave- four, five stories high by the time it hits his boat. Gone.

RICKY

Fucked.

HARM

Fucked from a height. And Stretch McCarthy-

AUDREY

Stretch- *

HARM

Gets caught in the riptides trying to shortcut through Rimski Channel. They hit the rocks- two guys jump, two guys stay on board. Stretch and the other guy who stood on board bought it. Could have gone the other way.

RICKY

Luck.

VIC

Luck, nothing. The ocean wanted him. Hell, I'm glad I'm not going out there anymore. It can be quick, like that deadhead Timmy Grogan hit, punched through his bow and sunk him in five minutes, or it can sneak up on you when you're not even looking.

AUDREY

Like Joe Gastineau-

*

HARM

Joey- fuck- if ever there's a guy had the world by the balls it's Joey. He was out haulin web by the time he was ten years old. His old man, Claude, run the Ice Maiden for Old Man Torgeson-

AUDREY

Till he drunk himself out of a job.

*

RICKY

This is the basketball player, right?

AUDREY

Best one that ever come out of Port Henry-

*

HARM

Headed for a full-jolt scholarship to some university in California, then he tears his knee up senior year. Kiss that goodbye.

AUDREY

Had a jump shot that'd make you weep-

*

DONNA

Donna sits at a table a couple yards away, a drink and a bowl of pretzels laid out in front of her, eavesdropping with her back to the bar-

VIC

He gets on with one of Torgeson's crab boats up north, back when that was a fuckin gold mine, makes enough in one season to put a down-payment on this little gill-netter, the Arctic Dawn-

HARM AND FRIENDS

VIC

Gets a couple friends of his, Lester Pope, who used to work with his father, and this kid Oley-

AUDREY

Jack Johannson's little brother-

*

VIC

Who'd never been out fishing, he's just like a high school buddy, played hoop with Joe. They're gonna go out with Joe and make a big score.

EXT MARINA - NIGHT

We see Joe on the float, staring at something-

VIC (V.O.)

He gets the gill netter into the water, it floats, he's got an entry permit for the silvers coming in from Icy Strait.

We PAN to see the object of his gaze. It is the Raven, Harm's old fishing boat-

VIC (V.O.)

They get out there with the usual crowd, I was on the Cape Fox then, and we hook into this run- we're barely moving, just throwing fish into the hold as fast as we can so we can set again.

INT BOAT - ENGINE

A floor panel is lifted. A FLASHLIGHT BEAM plays over the rebuilt ENGINE of the Raven-

VIC (V.O.)

Everybody's makin out, even Joe with this little gill-netter.

JOE

Joe examines the engine-

VIC (V.O.)

By nightfall we're plugged and waitin in line to download into the tender. There's six boats in front of us, maybe eight behind, and Joe is the last one, and it's party time.

INT GOLDEN NUGGET - VIC

VIC

Everybody who's not unloading drops anchor and we start boat-hoppin, the beer comes out, Joe figures he's made his year and then some, he can pay off the boat, really get into business fishing. A day like that, you feel like you're gonna live forever.

EXT RAVEN

Joe examines the drum, the net-

VIC (V.O.)

Joe gets back on board his outfit, it's one, two in the morning, he and the Johannson kid go below to sleep it off and Lester racks out on deck. They figure it'll be morning before the tender gets to them. So- maybe the boat was out of the water too long, things dry up, you get cracks, maybe they were just so plugged the water-line rode up where it had never been before, whatever-- Without a sound, the boat fills like a sponge and sinks.

INT GOLDEN NUGGET

Ricky reacts to the story-

RICKY

Damn-

VIC

Joe wakes up and he's down in the cabin and it's black and he's under water, right, he's banging around, but he knows the boat and he bangs into something that gives him like a reference and he swims out through the hatch and yells loud enough to wake me up on the Cape Fox-- we fished him out okay, but other two- not a trace.

DONNA

Donna listens-

RICKY (O.S.)

Lost-

VIC (O.S.)

Lost his friends, lost the catch, there's no insurance on the boat, that's gone, and Joe-

EXT RAVEN

Joe stands at the helm, hands resting on the wheel, lost in thought-

VIC (V.O.)

-Joe, he's not the same guy-

INT ROOM ABOVE SALOON - NOELLE

We start on a pad of lined paper covered with a story Noelle has written. PLOP! A drop of BLOOD falls onto it, instantly soaking in.

We TILT to see Noelle, a razor blade in hand, studiously examining the underside of her upper arm, where she has made three parallel cuts into the skin. She watches the blood roll down, then drip onto the paper-

FADE OUT:

49 EXT MARINA, FUEL PUMPS - EARLY MORNING

49

It is four in the morning, the float and moored boats rocking gently-

PUMP

Joe stands with KOSLOW, a weathered man in his sixties, who writes out the bill as Joe pumps fuel. Beyond them his mate preps the Raven for the day's work-

JOE

Gastineau. G-a-s-t-i-n-e-a-u.

KOSLOW

Related to the Gastineau who sank the Arctic Dawn?

JOE (hesitates)

Nope.

KOSLOW

Whatever happened to that guy?

JOE

Just disappeared, I guess.

50 INT. HOTEL SUITE - DONNA

50

Donna comes out of the bathroom in her nightgown. She peeks into the living room. Noelle is awake, sitting up in her t-shirt, looking out at the eerie northern light-

DONNA

You can't sleep, baby?

NOELLE

It doesn't get dark.

DONNA

Yeah. It's tough to get used to. You okay?

NOELLE

Yes.

DONNA

You want to talk?

NOELLE

No.

DONNA
I wish you did.

A moment. Noelle keeps her voice flat, ungiving-

NOELLE
I know.

Conversation over. Donna, worried, goes back to bed-

51 EXT CHANNEL - DAY - VARIOUS SHOTS

51

We hear Donna SINGING as we watch Joe at the wheel positioning the Raven to set, watch him working in tandem with his mate, hurrying back to pick the net and help clear the deck of writhing, flopping salmon. He is totally into the work, with no time to doubt himself or his abilities-

52 INT GOLDEN NUGGET - NIGHT

52

Donna FINISHES her SONG. She steps down of the stage to a smattering of APPLAUSE. Smilin Jack raises a drink from his table-

SMILIN JACK
I already got you one.

Donna looks at the drink, considering-

DONNA
How'd you guess?

SMILIN JACK
Been keeping my eye on you.

Donna sits, takes the drink-

SMILIN JACK
Like your singing.

DONNA
Thanks.

SMILIN JACK
You really class up this joint.

DONNA
I've played worse.

Smilin Jack offers his hand-

SMILIN JACK
Jack Johansson-

Donna shakes, lights up a cigarette-

DONNA
I've been warned.

SMILIN JACK

Uh-oh.

DONNA

A lot of formerly-married women took flying lessons from you.

SMILIN JACK (laughs)

Yeah, well- a lot of formerly-married women are suing me for alimony. I'm thinking of getting out of the bush pilot game, find something more lucrative.

DONNA

Let's see- fast food service, camp counselor-

SMILIN JACK (smiles)

You live here?

DONNA

One year tour of the Frozen North.

SMILIN JACK

Out on your own?

She considers for a beat, then shuts him down gently-

DONNA

No- I'm- I'm hooked up with a guy.

SMILIN JACK

Musician?

DONNA (shakes her head)

He's a fisherman.

53 EXT RAVEN - NIGHT

53

Joe walks the deck of the boat at anchor, checking that everything is fine. He looks out at the water, the sky. He seems, for the first time since we've met him, to be at peace-

FADE OUT:

54 EXT CHANNEL - MORNING - HARMON

54

Harmon is on his skiff in front of the lodge, reeling something in with great effort, the RADIO BLARING-

HARM

Christ-

The head of an enormous HALIBUT appears above water, Harmon's line taut with its weight. He reaches down for something-

55 INT LODGE - DAY

55

Lou is watching from the lodge, a screwdriver in her hand-

LOU
Oh my God-

HARMON

Harmon has a PISTOL in his free hand. He hauls the halibut a little further out of the water- POP! Shoots it between the eyes-

LODGE - LOU

Lou, shaken, crosses to find Frankie at a table going over the menu-

LOU
He just shot a fish.

FRANKIE
Shot it?

LOU
A halibut. It was like a gangland execution.

FRANKIE (considers)
We could use some fresh halibut.
When's Joe getting in?

55A EXT STAIRWAY - DAY

55A

Bobby climbs up a long wooden stairway toward Joe's house. He pauses to rest-

55B EXT JOE'S HOUSE

55B

A modest wooden house built into the side of a steep hill. Bobby stands on the porch deck rapping on the door-

BOBBY
Joe? You home? Joey!

He crosses to peer in a window-

56 INT DINING ROOM - LODGE - AFTERNOON

56

A pretty good crowd for lunch. We start on Noelle, pausing next to the agonized face on a decorative TOTEM, then FOLLOW as she brings four plates of fresh halibut to a table. She passes Bobby, seated talking to his waitress, Stacy-

BOBBY
But he still works here?

STACY

On and off. He's out on a fishing boat right now.

BOBBY

Fishing? Joe?

STACY

Uh-huh. Can I tell you about our specials?

Noelle brings us to the next table where Albright is entertaining a trio of INVESTORS-

ALBRIGHT

What are you buying when you get on a roller coaster? Not risk, because nobody but fringe consumers want that, but the illusion of risk- being hurled to the edge of danger but knowing you'll never have to cross it.

Noelle lays the plates out--

ALBRIGHT

Mr. Disney's innovation was to put those carnival rides and attractions into a story context, where you could imagine yourself a character in one of his cartoon epics as you floated through a Plaster-of-Paris jungle. The obvious next step- and this is the core of our proposal- is not bigger and better facsimiles of Nature, but Nature itself.

57 EXT MARINA - EVENING

57

We see the Raven pulling into the dock-

ALBRIGHT (V.O.)

Think of Alaska as one big theme park-

Frankie and Lou are waiting on the float as Joe eases the gillnetter into the slip-

LOU (calling)

How'd we do?

JOE

All right.

The mate jumps out to tie the boat off and Joe steps down onto the deck-

FRANKIE

We caught something?

JOE
Made our limit.

FRANKIE
In three days?

JOE
They were running pretty fair-

LOU
Oh my God-

Joe hefts a huge salmon-

JOE
Kept a few out for the restaurant.

58 INT GOLDEN NUGGET - NIGHT

58

Bobby blows into the bar flashing a confident smile at the late-night crowd. The bartender, VIC, recognizes him-

VIC
Bobby-

BOBBY
Jesus, look at this place. You're all right where I left you six years ago- same barstools, everything. Hey, Harmon, Audrey, lookin good- does somebody come in and dust you once a week? *

HARM
How's the charter racket, Bobby?

BOBBY
Can't complain. I'm thinking of bringing my Glacier Bay clients in here- 'See Port Henry's Wax Museum, amazingly lifelike figures posed in various stages of drunken stupor-'
(to bartender)
Set up a round for these characters, Vic.

(to patrons)
I just come up from Baja- chitchat the clients, lay on the cerveza, go out and harrass a few whales-

HARM
You like that?

BOBBY
I like not freezing my nuggets off here all winter, waitin to see who goes shacky wacky and blows their brains out first-

AUDREY
You know Roscoe Karnes? *

BOBBY
Roscoe with the voice box?

He sticks his thumb against his trachea-

BOBBY
Drinks like this so it doesn't leak
out of his windpipe?

AUDREY
Blew his brains out February. *

BOBBY
I rest my case. Vic, I heard my
brother's been coming in here-

HARM
Fuckin sellout-

AUDREY
You would have done the same thing. *

HARM
No fuckin way. Shoved a stake right
into my heart-

VIC
He's right in the corner, here, Bobby.

Bobby turns and sees Joe-

BOBBY
Jumpin Joe. The man himself.

JOE

Joe sits back by the pool table, beer in hand, waiting for
Donna to come on-

BOBBY (O.S.)
Hey, bro.

Bobby stands across the pool table from Joe-

JOE (cautious)
Bobby-

BOBBY
Hear they shut the pulp mill down.

JOE
And the cannery.

BOBBY
Tough break.

JOE (shrugs)
Town smells better.

BOBBY
They told me you were out working for
a couple of button nibblers at Harm
King's old lodge-

JOE
That's right. How you been?

Bobby comes around, sits on the edge of the table closer to
Joe-

BOBBY
Terrific. I've been terrific. Took
this National Geographic crew out to
do a piece on the sea lion rookery
just before I came up. Getting lots
of repeat clients, computerized my
navigation-

JOE
Teresa- ?

BOBBY
Teresa and the kids are cool, Joaquin
hits kindergarten at the Montessori
this year-

JOE
Great.

BOBBY
You got to come down some time,
expand your horizons.

JOE
Some time.

BOBBY
Listen, somebody said you were out
fishing-

JOE
Yeah. I just got back.

BOBBY
What's the story?

JOE (shrugs)
Frankie and Lou have a boat, got a
license, they asked me to go out.

BOBBY
Back in the saddle again.

JOE
So to speak.

BOBBY

So things are okay with you?

JOE

Can't complain.

Bobby nods, sits in a chair next to Joe-

BOBBY

I'm sorry I couldn't get up for the Old Man-

JOE

No problem-

BOBBY

I had these people- Hollywood real estate honchos-

JOE

You couldn't make it. I didn't have a ceremony or anything. Just did the paperwork and put up a headstone-

BOBBY

You got my check-

JOE

Yeah, thanks.

BOBBY

I called my mom, let her know-

JOE

How'd she take it?

BOBBY

Changed the subject.

JOE

He was who he was.

BOBBY

Died in bed, man. I always figured he'd freeze to death in the parking lot outside some joint-

JOE

You know the laundromat over in Wrangell where you can take a shower?

BOBBY

The guys who come off the boats-

JOE

Two, three years ago I was in there, got my soap, got my towel- and back in the steam I see this old guy.

(more)

JOE

I say to myself 'That is one beat-to-hell human being'. The guy looks up and it's the Old Man.

BOBBY

He talk to you?

JOE

He said stuff. The last years- he wasn't really with the program any more. That's the last time I saw him.

BOBBY

The Old Salt. The Old Prospector. I tell my clients stories about the Old Man- colorful shit, you know, the tour guide part of the job. How he lost those fingers, how he got through the quake and all the tidal waves on that tender- you've heard em all-

JOE

Yeah-

BOBBY

But the guy I was scared shitless of when I was little, nobody wants to hear about him.

JOE

No.

BOBBY

Joey, I got to ask you a favor-

JOE

Me?

BOBBY

Have I ever asked you for anything?

JOE

What is it?

BOBBY

I got a situation- it's a finesse thing with a client. I got to go pick him up in Skagway? I need somebody to crew for me, bring him back down.

JOE

You always run your operation on your own.

BOBBY

This is just for appearances. It's a business deal, see, and I need to impress this guy, I need to look less like a captain and more like- like-

JOE

Like an admiral.

BOBBY

Exactly. It's a milk run, and since you're on the water again-

JOE

I've gone out once-

BOBBY

I can trust you. This deal- business deal- it's sensitive. Word can't get out.

JOE

When would we go?

BOBBY

Day after tomorrow. I just got to set a few things in motion-

JOE

I'll see if I can get off work-

BOBBY

Hey, you're saving my ass, man, I appreciate it. You and me, we're-

JOE

Practically strangers.

BOBBY

We're the Gastineau brothers, man.

JOE

Half-brothers.

BOBBY

Right.

And awkward moment between them, then Bobby gets his second wind-

BOBBY (rising)

Listen, I got to run, bro- I'm on a schedule here. I'm down at the South Marina-

JOE

The Orca Princess.

BOBBY
 Sunday morning, seven sharp, we catch
 the tide-

Joe watches him cross to the bar. We hear the band warming
 up-

BOBBY
 -it'll be a blast.

BAR

Bobby lays a fifty on the counter, nods at the patrons on the
 stools-

BOBBY
 Water the plants again for me Vic.
 One more round-

HARM
 Stoly on the rocks!

BOBBY
 Fuckin-A. Take it easy, folks.

AUDREY
 See you, Bobby. *

They watch Bobby walk out of the bar-

VIC
 Kid always had a lot of pizazz.

DONNA (O.S.)
 Good evening ladies and gentlemen-

DONNA

Donna stands with microphone in hand, surveying the sparse
 first-set audience-

DONNA
 -I'm Donna de Angelo and this is the
 Golden Nugget.

She sees Joe, smiles-

JOE

Joe watches from his corner-

DONNA (O.S.)
 I see some familiar faces in the
 audience-

DONNA

Very happy to see him again-

DONNA
Welcome back.

FADE OUT:

59 EXT BUILDING - MORNING - NOELLE 59

Noelle sits on a stone stairway in front of a house, school books in her lap. We hear SCHOOL KIDS yakking in the distance. She turns to peek over the stair wall-

POV - SCHOOL, KIDS

HIGH SCHOOL KIDS gather in groups of two or more, talking before they have to go into the building. The BELL RINGS, and they start heading for the door-

NOELLE

Noelle stands, hesitates, preparing to make the plunge-

60 EXT JOE'S HOUSE - DAY 60

The modest house on the side of the hill-

61 INT JOE'S HOUSE - DAY 61

Donna is checking out Joe's living room for clues as she talks to him-

JOE

There's a lot of factors. There's tide- is it with you, are you plowing into it, is it slack, where's the moon in its cycle- there's wind, which can jump around on you when you're ducking in and out of these islands- there's the size of the channel you're going through, the configuration of the bottom-

DONNA

You still know all this stuff?

JOE

Yeah- as much as you can know it. It's like you spend enough time with somebody, even if you don't see them for a long while, you still recognize their moods.

DONNA

Mmmn.

(indicates room)

This isn't what I expected.

JOE

What'd you expect?

DONNA

Some guys, they live alone, it can get--

JOE

I had the Health Department over this morning, they sprayed the walls down.

She smiles, indicates his CD collection-

DONNA

You listen to a lot of different stuff.

JOE

Yeah.

DONNA

That's good. I mean, you see a whole wall of nothing but the Butthole Surfers-

JOE

Or Beethoven-

DONNA

Yeah, that can be its own problem. And you read books-

JOE

Some.

DONNA

So you're either a very nice, quiet guy who lives alone or you're a serial killer.

Joe laughs-

DONNA

I mean, my track record for consciously choosing men is so horrendous- if I ever hook up with somebody good it'll be pure luck.

She steps to Joe, kisses him, steps back to look at him-

DONNA

But the odds have got to be in my favor by now-

They kiss again, rapidly getting excited and making out standing up. They waltz over to a wall for some support, starting to breathe hard and pull at clothes till Donna breaks for air, looking at Joe again-

DONNA

Careful. I'm being careful, okay?

JOE
Okay. Me too.

They resume, a little more cautious-

62

INT CLASSROOM - NOELLE

62

Noelle sits at her desk-

TEACHER (O.S.)
Noelle, why don't we start with
yours. Noelle?

Noelle seems to snap out of a trance. She rises and self-consciously steps to the head of the room. She takes her story from the teacher's hand, turns to face the class-

NOELLE (softly)
'The Water Baby. The midwife knew at
first look it wasn't a normal
delivery-

TEACHER (O.S.)
A little louder, Noelle-

NOELLE (speaks up a bit)
'The midwife knew at first look it
wasn't a normal delivery. The
newborn was cold as it struggled and
gaped in her arms, wet and cold with
a bluish pallor that did not change
once she cleared its throat with her
finger. It fought for air but did
not open its mouth. The mother,
sweat-soaked in her bedsheets, the
father, video camera dropping away
from his apprehensive face, her
assistant, already on the phone to
the life support unit- all seemed to
move in a heavy slow-motion, as if
under water. The midwife was halfway
down the hall with the newborn before
she noticed them- a tiny, half-moon
slit below each ear, lined with a
deep crimson membrane. Gills- '

63

INT HALLWAY, SCHOOL

63

We TRACK with Noelle as she walks through a crowded hallway.
There is NO SOUND but her breathing-

POV - KIDS

We TRACK through the KIDS from Noelle's paranoid vantage,
every glance and laugh seemingly directed at her-

NOELLE

We FOLLOW Noelle as she ducks into the GIRLS' ROOM, heading straight to the stalls. She enters, slams the door on us-

64

INT JOE'S BEDROOM

64

Donna and Joe lie on Joe's bed after making love, not totally undressed. Donna is thinking, sniffing a bit and wiping her eyes. She speaks out of the blue-

DONNA (reflective)
I never slept with a drummer.

JOE
Is that good?

DONNA
Probably. It probably indicates a certain level of self-respect that I've never sunk below.

JOE
So ex-fishermen rate higher than drummers?

DONNA
There are certain kinds of fungus that rate higher than drummers.

Joe nods, ponders-

JOE
What brings this up?

DONNA
I don't know if my daughter is a virgin or not.

JOE
She's going out with a drummer?

DONNA
No. I was just- you know- thinking.

JOE
Have you asked her?

DONNA
I don't want to know that badly.

JOE
Oh-

DONNA
If I ask her if she needs new underwear she considers it invasive.

JOE

Mmmn.

DONNA

She's been a major babysitter since she was thirteen, always wanted her own money, her own room-

JOE

Independent.

DONNA

Yeah. It's good, I guess. You don't have any kids, do you?

JOE

No.

DONNA

But you were married?

JOE

Yeah.

DONNA

I knew it.

JOE

I was twenty-seven, she was twenty-
(shrugs)
Bad idea.

DONNA

She was too young-

JOE

Yeah, and I was- there's a whole decade back there that's pretty fuzzy-

DONNA

Substance abuse-

JOE

Major-

DONNA

Why'd you stop?

Joe has to think about this-

JOE

I didn't have the guts to ride it all the way down.

Donna files this bit of information-

DONNA

It's good you didn't have kids to fight over.

JOE

Mmmmnn.

DONNA

When's the last time you were involved with somebody?

JOE

Bout a year ago.

DONNA

Somebody from the pulp mill?

JOE

Aerobics instructor.

DONNA

Not Corky-

JOE

You know her?

DONNA

She works at my gym. So who dumped who?

JOE

She thought I was too- downbeat.

DONNA

She used that word?

JOE

Among others.

DONNA

Well, she's a real sparkplug, that Corky-

Donna gets up, sniffs, starts to button up to hit the street again-

DONNA

Listen, Joe, there's something I have to tell you-

JOE (with trepidation)

Yeah?

DONNA

I'm allergic to wool.

JOE

Oh.

DONNA

Like a carpet, even if it's a blend, or in a blanket or clothes-

JOE
I can get rid of whatever-

DONNA
No, you don't have to- just if you
see me itching-

JOE
It's not that big a deal. I already
bought new sheets- in case you came
over-

DONNA (pleased).
Really?

JOE
Yeah.

Donna considers him, the wheels turning-

DONNA (quietly).
Uh-oh.

65 INT HOTEL SUITE - DONNA AND NOELLE - NIGHT

65

Noelle, still in her work clothes, hooks up a rented VCR to the hotel TV set as Donna paces behind her, smoking, dressing for her set. Their stuff is pretty much in order by now-

DONNA
So maybe this is a terrible idea, you
can veto it if you want-

NOELLE
Some guy.

DONNA
He's very nice.

NOELLE
They're all very nice, right up until
you say they're scum and shouldn't be
allowed walking the streets-

DONNA
This will be fun- it's like a Nature
thing-

NOELLE (put upon)
Please-

DONNA
You like him, you don't like him,
whichever, you don't really have to
deal with him again. It is totally
my business.

NOELLE
Then why do I have to go on a trip?

DONNA

Consider it a favor to me. It's important he knows you're more than a rumor-

NOELLE

I'd rather stay a rumor.

DONNA

Anyhow, you already know this guy- at least you've seen him around- you work with him-

Noelle tightens, staring at her mother-

DONNA

Joe Gastineau? Who works for-

Donna feels the instant frost from her daughter-

DONNA

Is there some problem with him? He seems really nice.

Noelle just turns away, shaking her head. She is really upset-

DONNA

Is there something I should know?

NOELLE (quietly)

He's fine.

Donna tries to get around and see Noelle's face. It dawns on her-

DONNA

He's not the guy you liked out there? Noelle?

Noelle stonewalls her-

DONNA

Honey, he's my age. Older. What did you think could happen?

Nothing from Noelle-

DONNA

Nothing did happen, did it?

NOELLE (put upon)

Give me a break.

Donna sits, trying to figure out how to deal with this-

DONNA

Maybe this is good, maybe it's a sign-
we don't usually go for the same
type guys-

Noelle gives her a stifling glare-

DONNA

If I had known you were interested in
him, honey, I- but I didn't know,
did I? So you can be mad at me, but
not too mad, okay? This is not a
willful boyfriend-swiping type of
thing, it's- it's something
different.

Noelle settles in a chair far away from her mother, moodily
looking out the window-

DONNA

If you do this for me, I'll love you
forever.

66 INT HOTEL ROOM - BOBBY

66

Bobby is packing his suitcase. He lays a PISTOL on top of
the clothes. He sits, stares at it-

FADE OUT:

67 EXT MARINA - MORNING

67

Donna sits on Bobby's boat, the Orca Princess, watching Joe
get it ready to take out-

JOE

I don't know- I work with her. She's
a nice kid. She's-- funny-

DONNA

Really?

JOE

In a morbid kind of way, yeah.

DONNA

So you find her attractive?

JOE

I never gave it much thought. She's
a kid. Noelle!

He waves to Noelle, who comes down the float carrying a bag
with her stuff for the trip-

NOELLE (waves)

Hey.

DONNA (sotto voce)
Am I sharing sleeping quarters with
you or with her?

JOE
Up to you-

DONNA
You two know each other. I'm going
to get things squared away below here-

Donna climbs into the hold, too nervous to hang with Joe and
Noelle. Joe can tell that Noelle is mad at him as she steps
aboard-

JOE
Some coincidence, huh?

NOELLE
Yeah.

JOE
You like boats?

NOELLE
I don't know. Never been on them
much.

JOE
We're just gonna cruise up north a
ways, maybe see some whales, there's
seals, sea lions-

NOELLE
My mother hates boats. Anything you
do outdoors that's fun, she hates it.

JOE
Uh-huh-

NOELLE
And she's allergic to wool.

JOE
Yeah, she told me.

Noelle is still sulking, working hard at it-

JOE
You allergic to anything?

NOELLE
My mother's boyfriends.

Joe takes this in stride. Donna pops back up between them-

DONNA
It's terrific down there.

JOE
Yeah. Bobby's got a nice operation
going.

She looks to Noelle, trying to be cheerful-

DONNA
I love boats

FLOAT - BOBBY

Bobby looks back behind him to see if anybody is watching, then turns and hurries down the float toward his boat, lugging his overnight bag and a sack full of supplies. He slows as he sees Joe on deck with Donna and Noelle. Joe sees him, sees the confused look on his face-

JOE
Bobby-

BOBBY
Hey, terrific, you made it-

JOE
This is Donna de Angelo- her daughter
Noelle-

BOBBY
How you doing?

DONNA
Hi.

NOELLE
Hi.

Joe grabs Bobby's gear and Bobby steps aboard-

JOE
They're going to come along for the
first leg of the trip.

BOBBY (surprised)
Oh- great, terrific- we'll go the
scenic route-

JOE
I brought some extra groceries.

BOBBY (recovering)
Guy's been reheating beans on a
hotplate for twenty years, I hate to
see what he bought. You ladies can
stake out your territories below
while I get my charts on-line. Nice
to have you aboard.

68 EXT WATER - DAY

68

We watch the Orca Princess motoring out from the marina, Port Henry in the background-

ON BOARD

Bobby starts by the wheel, talking to the others-

BOBBY (well-rehearsed)
 Okay- safety lecture. Falling overboard is highly discouraged here on the Orca Princess, however if for any reason you should unintentionally enter the water, scream your lungs out and thrash around as long as is feasible. If you observe one of your shipmates taking the plunge, please do not attempt to dive in and save them. Throw one or more of the various floatable items you see around you toward the swimmer and inform your captain or your first mate- that's Joe. If the immersed party has been reasonably good company on the voyage we will come about and attempt a rescue at sea. Life preservers are located-

69 EXT SEA - DAY - VARIOUS SHOTS/COMPUTER CHARTS

69

We see the boat passing through channels, by glaciers, great scenery, etc. The natural world is very big up here-

70 EXT BOAT - BOW - AFTERNOON

70

Under sail. Joe, Noelle and Donna sit up in the bow, eating lunch. They're all tense. Joe tries to make conversation-

JOE

The first night maybe you throw some water on your face, take your clothes off, crawl under the sheets-- it seems like minutes before they yank you out of bed again. You pick the money fish out of the web, ice em down, make another set- the second night you sleep in your boots, maybe take your jacket off, on top of the rack. The third night you might not make it below- by the end of the week you just find someplace safe to lean on and close your eyes for a few minutes. I've slept on fish.

DONNA

Sounds like Hell.

Joe shrugs, a bit embarrassed-

JOE

People get hooked on it.

DONNA

God knows why.

JOE

It's the thing itself- you know? You go out, you find the fish, you pull em out of the ocean. You're right there with it. Everything else is like second-hand- people work in canneries, they sell real estate, they sell t-shirts, whatever. What if you couldn't sing anymore, you had to- what- work in a record store?

DONNA

So you liked it.

JOE

Yeah.

DONNA

And it's dangerous, you got off on that.

JOE (reflective)

Yeah. I guess I did.

Donna looks over to where Noelle sits, raises her voice a little-

DONNA

Noelle's studying to be a nuclear physicist.

NOELLE

Very funny.

DONNA

You could if you wanted to. You're smart enough.

NOELLE

Right.

DONNA

She kind of gave up on math and science-

NOELLE

They're boring.

DONNA

Almost every year she's been in a different school system. She's a really good writer.

NOELLE
How would you know?

DONNA
I've read your stories.

NOELLE
When I was twelve-

DONNA
But you still write, don't you?

No response from Noelle. Bobby calls, starting to take the sails down-

BOBBY
Weather service says we got a gale coming down at us. We're not going to make it to the Narrows.

DONNA (to Joe)
Is that bad?

71

EXT SEA - ORCA PRINCESS - LATE AFTERNOON

71

The Orca Princess plows ahead through gale winds and high seas-

CABIN

Joe and Bobby stand by the wheel, the roof zipped over their heads. Bobby is scrolling through the computer charts of the islands and passageways ahead--

BOBBY (pointing)
If we can put in back around here the mountains will knock down a lot of the wind-

JOE
Not a great anchorage-

BOBBY
You been in there?

JOE
Nope.

BOBBY
If we stay out here we're gonna get hammered.. How's the kid?

72

INT CABIN - DONNA AND NOELLE

72

Donna sits with Noelle, who holds her head between her legs-

DONNA
You want some water? Wash your mouth out?

NOELLE
No.

DONNA
We could try another one of those
pills-

NOELLE
No. I'll be alright.

Donna notices something on the inside of Noelle's arm-

DONNA
What are these cuts?

NOELLE
What?

DONNA
These-

NOELLE
Just cuts.

DONNA
How'd they get there?

Noelle shrugs indifferently, not wanting to get into it-

NOELLE
Maybe I got them at work.

Bobby pops down, dripping wet-

BOBBY
We're gonna pull up into an inlet
here and drop anchor for the night.
When it calms down a little I'll
throw some steaks on the grill-

Noelle ducks her head again-

NOELLE
Oh God-

73 EXT INLET - BOAT - NIGHT

73

The wind has abated but there is still a rolling swell. We see the Orca Princess anchored near shore in a protected inlet-

74 INT GALLEY

74

Donna sits watching as Bobby puts steaks in the little broiler-

BOBBY

'Frosh Phenom Cans Thirty in Overtime
Upset'. 'Soph Sensation Leads St. K
Cagers to State Finals'-

DONNA

He's got those scars on his knees-

BOBBY

Hey, this is Jumpin Joe Gastineau
we're talkin, the Houdini of the
Hardwood, the Beethoven of the Bank-
Shot-

DONNA

He was good?

BOBBY

John Wooden sent a scout up to look
at him-

DONNA

That's somebody I should know?

BOBBY

In basketball that's like God sending
the Angel Gabriel down to check out
your moves. Joey graduated, they
retired his number, they retired his
locker, they bronzed all his old
jockstraps and put them in a trophy
case-

JOE (entering)

High school.

BOBBY

Hey-

JOE

Game's changed a lot since then. Now
I'd just be another guy.

BOBBY

Right. This tofu burger thing- she
likes it mealy, medium mealy, black
and crispy- ?

DONNA

I don't think she's hungry.

BOBBY

When this was still a Territory, it
was a hanging offense to eat anything
made of bean curd-

DONNA

She's picky with food-

BOBBY
No meat?

DONNA
No meat, no fish, no dairy-

BOBBY
Food Nazi. I could scrape some of
the green stuff off the anchor chain,
heat that up for her-

75 INT FORWARD BEDROOM

75

Noelle sits on the bed, listening-

DONNA (O.S.)
At home, I scramble eggs in the
morning, she makes me feel like a
criminal.

BOBBY (O.S.)
Hey, if your own kid can't make you
feel like shit, what's the point,
right?

76 EXT DECK

76

Bobby sits up on deck after dinner, looking out over the
water, uneasy. He glances up as Joe joins him-

BOBBY
Listen-

Joe listens to the night. Nothing but waves and breeze-

BOBBY
You hear anything?

JOE
No.

BOBBY
I thought I heard a motor.

JOE
Nobody comes back here.

Bobby looks toward the companionway-

BOBBY (sotto voce)
We got a problem, Joe. The girls
there-

JOE
I'm sorry, I should have asked-

BOBBY

Don't get me wrong, they're really nice, they're terrific- but this guy I'm meeting- guys, actually-

Bobby doesn't want to spit it out-

JOE

What's going on?

BOBBY

It's complicated-

JOE

Tell me.

BOBBY

I was in a situation- I invested in some real estate, it didn't come out the way I hoped- there was a cash-flow squeeze. I had these clients- they own an organic food business? I took em all the way up from Baja to Glacier Bay, they're high the whole time but nice, right? We got along really good, and at the end they give me a bonus- it's a pound of hash-

JOE

Bobby-

BOBBY

Primo stuff. They say how if I wanted to, if I was that kind of guy, how easy it would be for me to- you know-

JOE

Oh, Christ-

BOBBY

So they connected me with somebody who connected me with somebody else and I brought a couple loads up the last few years. It's a piece of cake, right, and the money gets me out of a jam. It's just hash- it's not crack or heroin, it's something I might do myself, recreationally. Lots of good people do it-

JOE

Are you carrying drugs on board?

BOBBY

No, I'm not Joe, and that's the problem.

(more)

BOBBY

The last time up, I'm off Cape Caution, the Canadian patrol boat comes racing out at me, I get paranoid. I dump the whole batch.

JOE

Aww-

BOBBY

Hundreds of thousands of dollars, I get nervous and it's fish food. Turns out they had me confused with another boat, somebody reported them running too close to a pod of humpbacks.

Bobby is very shaky now-

BOBBY

These guys, Joe, I don't know that much about them, but they don't fuck around. They think I sold it on the side, that I'm holding out. They arranged a meet in Baja, I got nervous again, I smelled a set-up, and I didn't show. I come up here- my home turf- I contact them, arrange a meeting, tell them we'll work it out.

JOE

That's where we're headed?

BOBBY

I got it all worked out- a payment schedule, mortgage on the boat, mortgage on the house- I figure they'd rather get their money back than- these are businessmen, right?

JOE

What am I supposed to do?

BOBBY

I told Teresa, Joe. She left me. Took the kids, went across to Tijuana to stay with her sister. You got to help me out of this thing-

JOE

You bring me on board, you don't tell me shit-

BOBBY

I can't- I can't do this alone. I need somebody to back me up- just for them to see somebody behind me, I got family, whatever. Who else can I trust?

Joe doesn't answer this. He looks toward the cabin, light coming up from the galley-

BOBBY

But the women- we go by Tenakee Springs first thing tomorrow, right, we drop them off. They were gonna fly back anyway, you have the plane pick them up there.

Joe continues to brood-

BOBBY

Joe?

JOE

Stay up here for a bit. I'll figure something out to tell them.

BOBBY

You're saving my ass on this, Joe.

JOE

You don't deserve it.

Joe heads for the cabin. Bobby listens to the night-

77

INT FORWARD BEDROOM

77

Donna and Noelle arrange things so they can fit in the bed-

NOELLE

Why don't you go in with him?

DONNA

I feel funny-

NOELLE

Cause of me?

DONNA

I don't know. I just feel funny.

NOELLE

Not as funny as I'm gonna feel sleeping in the same bed with you.

DONNA

You used to all the time. It wasn't that long ago.

NOELLE

It was that long ago. It was in another lifetime.

DONNA

It could be kind of fun-

NOELLE

Look, if we weren't trying to impress some guy we wouldn't even be here.

DONNA

What do you mean 'we'?

NOELLE

You know what I mean-

JOE (O.S.)

Hey?

DONNA

There's no room, but come on in if you want.

Joe opens the door and looks in-

JOE (to Noelle)

How you feeling?

NOELLE

A little better.

JOE

The wind's coming down, so it should be pretty calm tonight. Tomorrow we're going to swing over to Tenakee, drop you off there-

DONNA (hearing)

What's that?

JOE

It's this little town with a-

DONNA (pointing)

No, that- upstairs-

Joe turns and they hear VOICES, raised and angry-

DONNA

Somebody came on board?

JOE

No--

POP! A GUNSHOT rings out and Joe immediately pushes into the little room, shutting the door behind him-

DONNA
What's happening?

POP! POP! Two more shots!

JOE
Follow me! Just- whatever happens,
follow me-

He is up kneeling on the bed unlatching the little square plexiglas hatch overhead-

DONNA

Donna peeks out the door-

POV - LEGS

A man's LEGS, not belonging to Bobby, start down the ladder from the cabin-

DONNA

She shuts the door, looks to Joe, who is climbing up through the hatch-

78 EXT DECK - JOE 78

Joe stays as low as he can, crawling out from the hatch, then reaching down and grabbing Noelle to pull her up-

79 INT FORWARD BEDROOM 79

Donna pushes to help Noelle out, then takes Joe's arm-

VOICE (O.S.)
They're in the back here!

80 EXT DECK 80

Joe helps Donna through and pulls them both by the hand to the side of the bow closest to the shore-

VOICE (O.S.)
Shit! They're up here!

Joe pushes Noelle, then Donna, then dives- POP! POP! as more SHOTS are fired-

81 EXT WATER - NIGHT 81

SPLASH! Joe hits the water and comes up, finding the two women treading water-

JOE
Swim! Come on!

POP! POP! POP! The three swim for shore as GUNSHOTS ring out over the black water.

About halfway to shore a FLASHLIGHT BEAM begins to play over the water, searching for them-

82 EXT SHORE

82

Joe reaches the shore first and helps the others up over the rocks. POP! POP! Wild SHOTS are fired from the boat. Joe hurries the women into the trees. Noelle doesn't have shoes-

83 EXT TREES - NIGHT

83

Joe, Donna and Noelle move back into the thick woods, climbing awkwardly. Finally they stop, breathless, wet and shivering, supporting themselves against the bole of a fallen tree. Joe immediately starts pulling his clothes off, wringing them out and laying them on the tree-

DONNA

What the fuck is going on?

JOE

Somebody shot Bobby.

DONNA

Who shot him? Why?

JOE

I don't know- he told me he was in trouble, just now- I don't know how they found us-

DONNA

What are we gonna do?

JOE

Take your clothes off-

DONNA

What?

JOE

We've got to get the wet things off and huddle up together or we'll freeze. Hurry-

DONNA

We have to get help!

JOE

There's nobody on this island. Help Noelle-

Noelle is shivering uncontrollably-

NOELLE

I'm cold.

Donna bends to help take Noelle's clothes off-

JOE

If they come after us we're going to have to move, so put your shoes back on-

NOELLE

I don't have any-

DONNA

I don't believe this. This can't be fucking happening-

They get the last of Noelle's clothes off. Joe wrings them out and lays them out on the tree. Donna lifts Noelle in her arms, hugging her close. Joe puts his arms around both, sandwiching Noelle-

JOE

The night doesn't last too long this time of year. We're gonna be alright.

WIDER

We see the three people crouching, huddled together up against the tree-

FADE OUT:

84

EXT INLET - BOAT - MORNING

84

The Orca Princess sits anchored in the early morning mist, water calm now. A CHARTER BOAT is anchored beyond it. We see two MEN stepping down into a little SKIFF. We SHIFT to see that we are looking over the shoulder of Joe, crouching behind a tree-

REVERSE

Joe, wearing only underpants and shoes, creeps back into the woods-

WOODS

Joe returns to the fallen log to find Donna and Noelle starting to dress in their damp, cold clothes. They are all drawn and shivering-

JOE

They're coming in.

They all turn as the WHINE of SKIFF MOTOR starts up. Joe goes to one knee-

JOE (to Noelle)

Hop on.

Noelle gets on his back and he stands, then begins to climb diagonally through the trees. Donna grabs the rest of the clothes and follows-

85 EXT SHORE 85

The prow of the skiff bumps the little beach. LEGS appear as the MEN drag it ashore-

86 EXT WOODS - VARIOUS SHOTS 86

Shots of the men, separately and together, searching through the woods. We never see above their waists. One carries a handgun, the other a hunting rifle-

WOODS

The legs of one of the men pass through the frame. We HOLD, then TRACK IN till we see Noelle, terrified, lying under a fallen branch, trying not to shake-

VOICE (O.S.)

Hey-

VOICE 2 (O.S.)

Yeah?

VOICE (O.S.)

This sucks. I've had it with this shit.

VOICE 2 (O.S.)

One more sweep.

VOICE (O.S.)

Fuckin mosquitos eatin me alive-

Noelle closes her eyes. The man, turning back, steps only inches from her face-

VOICE 2 (O.S.)

Let's go back a different way than we came.

WOODS - SUN

We see the SUN high in the sky, framed by TREETOPS. We TILT DOWN to see Donna and Noelle sunning in an open patch, looking beat. They have staked out some of their clothes on sticks to dry better. Joe steps into the clearing, kneels by them-

JOE

The boats are gone.

He sits and pulls off his shoes and socks-

DONNA

You think they'll come back?

JOE
No way to know. Listen, I'm sorry--
I had no idea till last night that
something was wrong-

NOELLE
You think they killed him?

JOE
Yeah.

DONNA
Where are we?

JOE
Little inlet on the backside of
Kuleshov Island-

DONNA
And that's like up Shit Creek without
a paddle?

JOE
Pretty much. I figure we should head
around toward the channel while it's
still light, hope we run into a
stream. We'll be okay without food
for awhile, but water-

He wads a sock into the toe of one of his shoes and hands it
to Noelle-

JOE
Try this.

NOELLE
What are you going to use?

JOE
I'll be careful where I step. Go
ahead.

Noelle sticks her foot into the shoe, starts to lace it up.
Donna holds her head in her hands-

DONNA
This is not happening to us. This is
only a dramatization of somebody
else's pathetic story.

JOE
It could be worse. It's not so cold
yet- I've got my knife-

Donna digs in her pocket and produces her cigarette lighter-

DONNA
We can have a fire tonight.

Joe takes the lighter, rolls it in his fingers-

JOE

I don't know-- the smoke. They might not be too far.

DONNA

I'm not gonna let her freeze like that. Not again.

87 EXT WOODS - AFTERNOON

87

Joe, Donna and Noelle walking through the woods, the water visible just down the slope beyond them. Noelle has Joe's shoes on. Joe steps carefully, watching the ground-

88 EXT WOODS - STREAM

88

A stream a few yards wide runs down the side of the hill. We PAN, following the current, till we come to Joe and Noelle on their knees, drinking-

DONNA (O.S.)

There's a place to cross down here!

Joe stands and we FOLLOW him down to where Donna stands at the foot of a rotted plank-and-rock bridge spanning the stream-

DONNA

We don't have to get wet again.

Joe kneels to examine a rotted plank-

JOE

These have been milled.

DONNA

People made this thing, right?

JOE

A long time ago.

89 EXT WOODS - PENS

89

Overgrown, falling down PENS stand under the trees, bits of wire and wood tangling as the walls sag this way and that. We PAN to see Joe and Donna checking it out-

JOE

People used to raise foxes- for the pelts. It was a big deal for awhile.

DONNA

Why come out here?

JOE

Land was available, I guess. People would hunt, fish, try to grow some things-

NOELLE (O.S.)

Over here!

NOELLE

Noelle stands at the edge of an overgrown clearing, staring at something. Donna and Joe appear behind her, seeing-

REVERSE

We shoot past Noelle toward a falling down wreck of a HOUSE-roof caved in, debris scattered on and around the rotted-through porch. Weedy trees have grown up all around the fireplace and chimney, which are still standing-

NOELLE, OTHERS

NOELLE

Somebody lived here.

90 EXT HOUSE - NIGHT

90

We see FLAME through the boards and sections of roofing that have been fashioned into a kind of lean-to, anchored by the fireplace-

91 INT HOUSE

91

A FIRE of sticks and splintered wood laid in an old washtub smokes and CRACKLES. Noelle sits as close to the fire as she can while Donna fans the smoke away with a shingle. Joe has his knife out and is trying to make a pair of sandals from piece of ruined carpet. The interior of the house is a chaos of gutted furniture and sagging walls. Donna coughs from the smoke-

DONNA

Tomorrow they'll miss us. Noelle won't be in class-

NOELLE

Nobody'll miss me in school.

DONNA

They'll miss you at your job. And Joe. And I'm supposed to sing at the Nugget.

JOE

Be a few days before anybody's likely to start calling around for us. Bobby wasn't keeping radio contact, nobody knows he cut over this way.

NOELLE

How long does it take you to starve?

Joe glances at Noelle-

JOE

I don't know- depends on what shape you're in, what else you're doing.

DONNA

Remember I did that fast when we were in Idaho? How many days was that?

NOELLE

You cheated.

DONNA

I did not. I had some tomato juice-

NOELLE

Then it isn't a fast.

DONNA

Well I'm starving now. How far do we have to walk?

JOE

Couple days, maybe more-

DONNA (dismayed)

Days-

JOE

I think we should hang here where we've got some shelter for a while, make sure those guys don't come back, then make a signal fire on the shore.

DONNA

People come in here to fish?

JOE

No. Nobody does anything on Kuleshov.

Donna looks around the ruined interior-

DONNA

Except the lunatics who built this place.

FADE OUT:

92

EXT SHORE - MORNING

92

Joe scrapes mussels off the rocks with his knife as Donna wades thigh deep in the water, pulling up seaweed-

DONNA

How bout this stuff?

JOE

I don't think so. Just take that batch you've got and rinse it in the stream.

She heads for a pile of darker green seaweed left on a rock-

DONNA

We gonna make that signal fire?

Joe looks out at the inlet-

JOE

I think we can risk it tomorrow. We find a spot that doesn't go under when the tide is in.

93

EXT HOUSE

93

Noelle steps out with an armful of trash that she tosses to the side of the house. She heads back in-

94

INT HOUSE

94

Still a mess but they've cleared more space for themselves on the solid part of the floor. We FOLLOW Noelle to a sodden mass of rags and papers, stuffed into the fireplace, that she begins to toss wad by wad onto a section of carpet. She pauses, coming up with a small, leather-bound book with a clasp on it. She undoes the clasp. The pages are damp but still intact-

NOELLE (reading)

'My Diary- '

She looks around, crosses to a spot on the floor where light is slanting in from a hole in the roof, sits and begins to read-

95

EXT HOUSE - DAY - CU SEA CUCUMBER

95

Joe knife slices into a dull purple sea cucumber, a long, turd-like creature, cutting it into strips-

DONNA (O.S.)

We gonna eat that thing too?

WIDER

Noelle and Donna sit on sections of the ruined porch, chewing on mussels and washing them down with stream water from a battered metal pan. Joe is butchering the sea cucumber on a plank-

JOE

Sea cucumber. Lots of protein.

DONNA

Right.
 (to Noelle)
 Pass me some of that algae-

NOELLE

Kelp.

DONNA

Kelp. These mussels are like rubber.

NOELLE

Frankie steams them in white wine
 with ginger.

Donna gives her a look-

NOELLE (shrugs)

On a bed of saffron couscous. It's
 one of the appetizers. I memorized
 them.

JOE

If we're here for a while I'll rig
 something up for cooking.

Donna makes a bitter face and coughs out something green-

DONNA

Sorry.

He hands Noelle a small piece of the sea cucumber-

JOE

Chew this, really slow-

96 EXT INLET - NIGHT 96

Ripples in the water-

97 EXT WOODS - NIGHT 97

The trees stir slightly with the breeze-

98 INT HOUSE - NIGHT 98

Noelle's face is lit by FLAME as she reads-

NOELLE (reading)

"My name is Anne Marie Hoak, and this
 is my diary."

JOE AND DONNA

Joe and Donna sit on the floor on the other side of the smoky
 basin fire from Noelle, listening-

NOELLE (reading, O.S.)

"Papa and Mother and I have come here to make a go at the fox farming trade. If this pans out, says Papa,"-

NOELLE

NOELLE (reading)

"-next year I can go back to finish with school. I offered to get on at the cannery to help out when we were in town, but Papa says there is too much trash working there. He was a logger but fell while he was topping and now has headaches and dizziness that prevent him from many of the trades other men pursue. This way, he says, we can live in the Great Outdoors and operate our own business at the same time, which is every man's true desire. Mother doesn't care for it."

WIDER

NOELLE (reading)

"We have transported a dozen breeding pairs of the blue-pelt foxes and put them in their pens. They are lovely to look at but nervous and I need to mind my fingers when I am near them. When the vixens are ready to bear we will separate them to be alone with their litter. Papa is building a fish trap in the stream, as he hopes to catch the returning chum for fox-food. I expect it will be a hard life, but work is scarce back in town and Papa's spirits were getting low. The people who built our little house tried to make it fishing and rowing out for stray logs to sell back to the mill, but they gave up after a few seasons. Mother goes on about how she will miss female company and that I will have to be her special friend. I know that Papa thinks he has been a disappointment to her, and sometimes she doesn't do much to hide it. I will be lonely here, I can tell, but it should be a great adventure, like Caddie in Caddie Woodlawn. I will try to be a faithful writer, Dear Diary, and tell you my innermost thoughts."

Noelle puts the diary in her lap looks at them-

DONNA
Wow. Read some more.

NOELLE
Tomorrow night.

DONNA
We may not be here tomorrow.

NOELLE
I found it. I'll read it when I want
to.

They stare at each other for a moment. Neither blinks--

JOE
We'll have something to look forward
to. Like a soap opera.

DONNA
Whoah. It sounds like we're moving
in-

JOE
There's no telling how long it's
going to be.

DONNA
Wonderful.

She looks at Noelle, at the ruin around her, fighting back
tears-

DONNA
We're going to be alright, aren't we?
We're gonna be fine.

Nobody seconds her. The fire crackles-

FADE OUT:

EXT SEA - BLACKNESS

We slowly FADE IN from complete BLACKNESS to see the surface
of the sea at night. WHOOSH! Joe, younger, bursts to the
surface, gasping to fill his lungs with air. He treads
water, looking about frantically, then calling-

JOE
Lester! Oley!

Nothing. We drift around to see a FISHING BOAT, the Cape
Fox, anchored thirty yards away- *

JOE
Hey! Somebody! Help! Help me!

It is Vic, younger, who raises his head over the side of the
boat. He is drunk and sleepy-

VIC
Who the fuck is that? *

JOE
They're on the boat! Lester and Oley!

Vic stands unsteadily, looks past Joe, puzzled- *

VIC
What boat? *

CU JOE

Joe treads, circling. No sign of his boat or his friends.
He takes a deep breath, dives under. BLACKNESS-

100

INT HOUSE - NIGHT

100

Joe wakes with a gasp, as if he's been holding his breath.
Donna wakes beside him. All three are sleeping around the
embers of the fire-

DONNA
You okay?

JOE
Yeah-

Donna looks over to Noelle, still sleeping, huddled up
against her under Joe's jacket-

DONNA
All I want is for her to be happy and
safe. She's not either.

Joe disentangles himself from them, squats to feed the fire-

DONNA
People must have always smelled like
smoke.

She watches Joe for a long moment-

DONNA
What's the matter?

He doesn't answer, brooding-

DONNA
What?

JOE
You can't always save people.

They exchange a look, then Joe moves to cover Noelle's feet-

101 EXT SHORE - MORNING

101

Noelle struggles to drag driftwood across the rocks. We PAN to see Joe and Donna piling wood and trash from the house at the edge of the woods-

CLOSER

Joe lights a stick with some dry moss wrapped around it with Donna's lighter. Noelle arrives and lays the wood down. Joe lights several sections of the pile. It begins to smoke, then flames start up-

JOE

We need to feed this a couple times a day. When the sky's like this it won't be easy to spot, but on a clear day-

DONNA

What if it rains?

JOE

It rains, or the tide comes in too high, we'll probably have to start from scratch.

DONNA

And we hope somebody sees this and wonders what the story is.

NOELLE

Somebody who doesn't want to kill us.

Donna gives Noelle a hard look-

JOE

It's a possibility.

DONNA

You two are a great match. Gloom and Doom.

NOELLE

There's no use pretending-

DONNA

Yes there is. We're camping here. Like survival school camping. This is what they mean by quality time, right? No distractions, no media stuff, we get to know each other, gnaw the bark off the trees- people pay money to go on trips like this.

They are both looking at her now-

DONNA

You assume that bad shit is gonna happen, bad shit happens.

She roughly throws some more branches of the fire-

DONNA (mutters)

I don't see the point.

102 EXT WOODS - AFTERNOON

102

Joe is trying to make a fish-trap from pieces of the old fox pens as Noelle looks on-

JOE

The fish go in through here, then they can't turn around and get out. That's the idea, anyway. This wire is kind of brittle.

NOELLE

Where'd you learn all this stuff?

JOE

My old man taught me.

NOELLE

You did lots of stuff with him?

JOE

When he had something to do and he needed somebody to swear at he took me along.

Not the answer Noelle wanted to hear-

NOELLE

My father's a composer. My real father.

JOE

How long did you live with him?

NOELLE

I didn't. She split up with him- you know- before.

JOE

Oh.

NOELLE

Bobby was your half-brother?

JOE

Uh-huh.

NOELLE

You ever live together?

JOE
No. We saw each other around. He was a lot younger- different friends, different life.

NOELLE
I've got two half-sisters and a half-brother.

JOE
What are they like?

NOELLE
I never met them. They're pretty little, still. I saw them in a picture- he was in People Magazine, my father.

JOE
So you don't visit?

NOELLE
She doesn't want me to.

JOE
So you write letters, phone calls- ?

NOELLE
No.

Joe glances at her, doesn't pursue it-

NOELLE
You don't think we're gonna get rescued, do you?

JOE
We have to stay strong until somebody comes. We need to stay warm, find things to eat. Just concentrate on that.

She fingers the mesh on the trap-

NOELLE
Think we'll catch anything?

103 INT HOUSE - NIGHT

103

Diary time again. A fire in the fireplace. Each of them has some kind of improvised seat-

NOELLE
"The house is small, but cozy now that we have cleaned it up and made it our own.

(more)

NOELLE

I have my own room, and at night I can hear the owls calling back in the woods and our foxes yipping when something wild comes by. Yesterday I saw whales feeding in the inlet, going under for awhile then bursting up through the surface with a great spouting of air and crying of gulls. There are blueberries everywhere. My fingers are stained purple with them, though Mother insists I will be attacked by bears if I stray too far from the house. Papa's headaches are better and I help him clear the fish trap and prepare the feed for the animals. It is unpleasant, sticky work, but must be done. I have gotten stronger handling the skiff and Mother chides Papa for making a boy of me, but I don't mind. The days it doesn't rain are God's glory and most of our vixens are close to giving birth. Some days I will go for hours without speaking, and feel I am changing, perhaps possessed by the soul of some long-dead Indian girl, or perhaps the spirit of a she-wolf. This morning I snuck up on Papa felling a spruce for the fireplace and watched him for a long time without him seeing me. Perhaps I shall learn to become invisible.

I made

blueberry pancakes. Mother says if she eats any more fish she will grow fins and swim back to town. At night she has me kneel with her to pray."

Noelle lays the diary down-

DONNA

Sounds like Mom's not the Wilderness Family type.

JOE

Sounds like it might be in the Depression. That's what- fifty, sixty years ago-

DONNA

You gonna read us more?

Noelle considers, then opens the diary again-

NOELLE

"The terrible birthing has begun. We think one of the vixens has eaten her litter. The kits, the ones that survived, are lovely once their eyes open. Papa told me not to handle them but when he is off sometimes I do. Their heads are squarish and fluffy."

She closes the diary and shuts the clasp with finality-

DONNA (smiles)

Fox babies.

FADE OUT:

104 EXT SHORE - MORNING

104

Noelle is picking her way across the tidal mud, poking into air holes with a long stick to dig out clams. We see the plume of SMOKE from the signal fire far behind her. She suddenly CRIES OUT, almost stepping on something. She steps back, frightened, then approaches slowly. We see that it is Bobby's corpse, half-buried in the mud, CRABS chewing on it. Noelle contemplates it for a long moment. She flicks one of the crabs away with the stick. Feeling shaky, she sits on a rock-

105 INT WOODS - AFTERNOON

105

We FOLLOW Joe, lugging a large rock. He bends and places it on a pile of similar rocks, filling up a depression in the forest floor. Donna and Noelle stand watching-

DONNA

Isn't that enough?

JOE

Don't want the bears to dig him out.

(to Noelle)

I'm real sorry you had to see that.

DONNA

Killing somebody for money-

JOE

By the middle of the winter up here people kill each other cause they're bored. He took a risk and it didn't work out for him, that's all.

He lifts up another stone, heaves it onto the pile-

106 EXT SHORE - DAY

106

We hear Noelle read softly from the diary, her voice flat as we watch Joe walking moodily along the shoreline-

NOELLE (V.O.)

"Winter has locked us in its icy embrace. The pelts of the animals are thick and bluish and our home is blanketed with snow. Papa calls it Limbo, because it sure isn't Heaven and it's too cold to be Hell. Mother wondered about Purgatory, but he said no, Purgatory has an end to it. Don't torture me so, said Mother.

NOELLE

Noelle sits up by the treeline, crying, watching Joe in the distance-

NOELLE (V.O.)

The salmon we dried have run out. The kits are eating solid food now and it is hard to keep up with them. Papa went to the far side of the island and shot a pair of sea lions, but could only bring one back without tipping over in the skiff. I had to help him with the cross-cut saw, breaking it down to pieces that we keep frozen in the shed. Papa said it's just meat but I tried not to look at what I was doing. The other sea lion had been gotten to by a bear when Papa rowed back.

DONNA

Donna sits by the signal fire, watching the sky-

NOELLE (V.O.)

We put a piece of the frozen meat in each of the pens and the foxes fight over it and gnaw at it and the outside melts from the heat of their little tongues. Mother won't deal with them anymore. She has grown silent with the shorter, darker days, and only now and again will she break out into one of her Bible songs. She asks me to join her, but we don't harmonize well.

107 INT HOUSE - NIGHT

107

Noelle reads by the fire, Joe and Donna listening in moody silence-

NOELLE (V.O.)

I have a dream about Fox. He is a young man who comes for me on snowshoes, dressed in the blue pelts.
(more)

NOELLE (V.O.)

His skin and hair are dark but His eyes are ice-blue. All the others here are paired, He says, Papa and Mother, the sires and the vixens, but I am alone and He can't let that continue. Sometimes in the dream He stays with us, but usually He picks me up and carries me to His own island.

Papa says if we can get the animals through the winter they are a Gold Mine. He says fortunes have been started on less. He says if he keeps having his dizziness I will have to go hunting with him the next time. The burns from where Mother hit him with the bacon grease are only pink now, healing, though the hair doesn't grow on that part of his jaw. I am sewing a sampler."

She closes the diary. Donna and Joe watch the fire, thinking-

108 EXT STREAM - MORNING

108

Time has passed. Noelle, standing thigh-deep in the stream, yanks the jerry-rigged fish trap to the surface. There is a very large salmon caught in it, flapping desperately as it hits the air. She CRIES OUT and drops the trap, then gets her courage and hauls it up again. She smiles-

109 EXT WOODS - MORNING

109

Joe and Donna embrace leaning up against a tree, holding tight, rocking a little, clinging like their lives depend on it-

NOELLE

Noelle stands back in the trees, watching mutely, the salmon slung over her shoulder with a cord through its gills-

110 EXT SHORE - AFTERNOON

110

Joe pulls a flat stone out from the embers of the signal fire, blows the ash off it. He lays thin strips of the salmon meat on it-

JOE

You don't worry about burning it up this way-. just flip it over after a minute-

We SHIFT to see Donna and Noelle. Noelle sits away from them, sulking, shivering slightly-

JOE (to Noelle)

You laid the trap back in?

NOELLE

Yeah.

JOE

Indians used to smoke everything they couldn't eat, hope that it lasted the winter.

Donna is looking at the sky-

DONNA

Good day for planes.

NOELLE

Nobody's coming.

DONNA

Don't be negative-

NOELLE

In two weeks how many planes have we seen? Zero.

DONNA

We heard that one.

JOE

There would have been more if they were searching for us here.

DONNA

What does that mean?

JOE

Bobby may have told people at the dock we were headed in a different direction. He thought people were after him-

NOELLE

People were after him-

JOE

Yeah. Anyway, they may be searching in a totally different area.

NOELLE

Stupid-

DONNA

Noelle-

NOELLE

Trying to impress your boyfriend, drag us out on a boat-

DONNA

That's enough.

NOELLE

It's true.

DONNA

Look, I am cold, I am hungry, I am dirty, and I am scared shitless, just like you. But I'm trying to help us get through this thing-

NOELLE

I shouldn't be here. I shouldn't be in this state, I shouldn't-

DONNA

Nobody is to blame for this-

NOELLE

Yeah, right-

DONNA

When you are of age, Noelle, you are free to go fuck your own life up. Until that day, I'm afraid, it's my job to fuck it up for you!

A silence. Donna looks to Joe-

DONNA

You could help me with this-

NOELLE

He's not my father.

DONNA

Thank God for that.

NOELLE

What's that mean?

DONNA

Your father would have gone off picking berries or something and that's the last we'd have heard from him.

NOELLE

That's not true.

DONNA

How would you know? He was in the same room with you maybe twice-

NOELLE

You wouldn't let him-

DONNA

If you cross his mind once a year, max, I'd be surprised-

NOELLE
Every Christmas-

DONNA
Oh Noelle-

NOELLE
He sent me a bike, he sent me a
watch, he sent me a dollhouse-

DONNA
I sent the watch!

This shuts Noelle up. She had no idea. Donna isn't happy
she let it out-

DONNA
I sent the bike- all of it. I
figured when you were little, you had
Santa Claus, the Easter Bunny, you
might as well have a father in
California who sent you stuff.

Noelle glares at her, tears in her eyes. Joe flips the
salmon, hoping to stay out of the crossfire-

NOELLE (muted)
I hated that dollhouse.

DONNA
I know, honey, but you wouldn't let
me exchange it, cause it was from
him. Remember?

She sees that Noelle is shaking-

DONNA
Are you okay?

NOELLE
I'm great. I'm kickin-

DONNA (moving)
Let me feel your forehead-

Noelle pushes her hand away-

NOELLE
Leave me alone!

Donna backs off. She uses a piece of seaweed to pick up the
hot stone, offers Noelle the salmon-

DONNA
Eat something.

111 INT HOUSE - NIGHT

111

Noelle reads solemnly, slowly. She is by the fire and wrapped in Joe's jacket, but still trembling with a fever-

NOELLE

"I was the one who found them. It was time to clean the scat from the pens so I had the shovel and the buckets and then there was blood everywhere in the snow. All of them torn and smashed, even my little kits. A bear, says Papa, though when has a bear got into a half-dozen different pens without breaking the gates? Mother says nothing, but she is only a black spot these days, and refused to celebrate Christmas. The pelts are ruined, of course, worthless, and our long care is for naught. Papa couldn't speak when he saw them. He says his head hurts trying to think a way out of our dilemma.

Joe shoots a look at Donna to see how she is taking this-

NOELLE

I dreamed that Fox came and was angry for what we let happen, that He held me down on the snow and I felt His hot breath on my face, felt it bitter in my throat, and felt his ice-eyes cutting into me. I wish He would come soon.

Mother sleeps with me now and it is cramped and tense. You would think another body under the covers would bring warmth, but I wake feeling drained, like she has pulled all the heat from me. I am doing the cooking now and my eyes are always red from the smoke. The wood is too big for the cookstove, but the axe has gone missing and we can't break it down.

Mother says Hell is a cold place. Maybe I am the soul not of a she-wolf, but of a soaring bird that flies south every winter, and my heart is so sick because I am not supposed to be here in this cold, this dark, this wet. Maybe I am like the air in this house, the air that does not move when Papa and Mother pass in silence, dead, smoky air that smells of wool and old bacon.

Tears begin to roll down Noelle's cheeks as she reads-

NOELLE

We threw the animals on the rocks for
the tide to deal with. Papa cried."

FADE OUT:

112 EXT SHORE - DAY

112

Noelle is feeding the signal fire. She hears something,
stands shakily to look up, shading her eyes-

WIDER

Over Noelle's shoulder we see a FLOAT PLANE flying over the
other side of the inlet. Suddenly it banks and heads right
toward her-

NOELLE

Excited, she starts to yell-

NOELLE

It's coming! It's coming!

113 INT WOODS - AFTERNOON

113

Donna is dragging fallen branches toward the shore. She
hears Noelle's VOICE, drops the branches and begins to run-

114 EXT SHORE

114

Donna breaks out of the woods and begins to run toward the
signal fire. Joe comes out of the woods behind her, looks to
the sky, then follows running-

JOE

Donna! Careful!

NOELLE - PLANE

Noelle is in the FG as the float plane lands in the inlet and
taxi straight toward her-

115 INT PLANE - POV

115

We see through the windshield as the shore approaches. A
young girl by a fire, joined by an older woman and man-

116 EXT SHORE - TRIO

116

Noelle and Donna are beaming, Joe worried-

REVERSE

The little float plane slows as it nears the shore. Joe
wades out into the water to grab hold of the float tether as
the engine cuts off and the prop stops turning. Smilin Jack
steps out onto the float on his side-

SMILIN JACK

You folks picked a hell of a spot for a clambake.

DONNA (stepping forward)

We've been stuck here forever! We've been stranded!

SMILIN JACK (looking past them)

Any more of you?

DONNA

Just us. We were on Bobby's boat- Joe's brother? And he was- murdered.

Joe shoots Donna a look. It's clear he doesn't totally trust Jack. Jack looks at Joe-

JOE

I'm not sure who did it. We jumped off at night-- there were a couple fellas came in looking and we hid, then they pulled anchor-

He shrugs-

SMILIN JACK

Damn. How long you been here?

DONNA

A week and a half? We found what was left of an old house, we've been holing up there at night.

SMILIN JACK (shakes his head)

And I was hoping you people could help me. My radio's shot, I'm low on fuel and I'm heading into bad weather.

JOE (suspicious)

Your radio's gone?

SMILIN JACK

Crapped out on me a half hour back. Not even static.

He looks to the sky, looks at the water-

SMILIN JACK

Tide's going out fast. I'm gonna have to turn this thing around and try to get out of here, send help-

DONNA

Take my daughter, then. She's sick-

SMILIN JACK (grave)
I'd love to, but I can't handle the weight. Believe me, it'll be safer here-

DONNA
She barely weighs a thing-

SMILIN JACK
I got to jettison whatever I can to have a fighting chance. Sorry ladies.
He pulls off his jacket, tosses it to Noelle-

SMILIN JACK (to Joe)
You want to give me a hand with this?
He reaches in and starts tossing things on shore-

SMILIN JACK
I got a first aid kit in here- no food though-

DONNA AND NOELLE

Noelle is shaking again. Donna puts her arms around her, grim-

DONNA
We'll have to spend one more night out here. honey, that's all. Then they'll come and get us-

JOE AND SMILIN JACK

Joe helps Jack wrestle the tiny plane around to face out to sea. They speak quietly enough that the women can't hear-

SMILIN JACK
I'm real sorry to hear about Bobby, man. I used to party with him up in Haines-

JOE
What's the story?

SMILIN JACK
What's what story?

JOE
Who sent you?

Jack meets Joe's eyes for a long moment, then gives a furtive look toward the shore-

SMILIN JACK

Couple guys- Mr. Smith and Mr. Brown- never seen em before but I don't think they're up here to save the whales. They laid some serious money on me to poke around, see if I could spot three people roughing it in the boonies.

JOE

And if you saw them?

SMILIN JACK

Just go back and tell them where.

JOE

Why'd you land, then?

SMILIN JACK

I'm on the level about the radio and the rest of it, Joe. I was hoping to find some sport fishermen with a short-wave and a cooler full of brew.

DONNA AND NOELLE

Donna and Noelle watch, Donna reassuring her daughter-

DONNA

We'll sit in a hot bath for a day or so while people bring us everything we want to eat and drink and then we'll get into a soft bed with clean sheets and just hibernate-

PLANE, MEN

Smilin Jack gets into the pilot's seat and buckles up-

SMILIN JACK

If I'd known the deal with Bobby I'd of turned em in- you have to trust me on that.

JOE

Right.

Jack leans out and calls out to the women on shore-

SMILIN JACK

Hang in there, ladies! I'll be back with the cavalry tomorrow!

He looks to Joe-

SMILIN JACK

Wish me luck, buddy.

Joe says nothing. Jack grins, shuts the door, gives Joe thumbs up. Joe steps off the float and moves away as Jack revs the engine and begins to taxi away-

SHORE

Joe joins Donna and Noelle as the plane gathers speed and takes off from the water-

DONNA

We're saved. We're gonna make it.

JOE

Yeah.

117 INT HOUSE - NIGHT

117

The three sit around the fire. Joe speaks carefully, not wanting to dishearten them, but deeply troubled. It has begun to RAIN outside-

JOE

The last I heard he was flying out of Anchorage, kicking square halibut out of a cargo plane-

DONNA

What's that?

JOE

Marijuana bales. You fly over a spot on the water, somebody signals with lights or gives you a code over the radio, and you dump your load. The people in the boat below fish the bales out and take them to the next stage.

DONNA

He's a drug dealer.

JOE

He's whatever pays best and he can get away with. He's got balls and he's never gotten caught or bought the farm. Bad weather, bad company- you got the cash Smilin Jack's your man.

DONNA

He hit on me a couple times at the bar. He seemed like a nice guy.

JOE

I didn't say people don't like him. I said I don't trust him.

NOELLE

You think he might tell those men?
And bring them back here?

JOE

I don't know. I didn't believe him
about the radio- and we've got some
personal history-

DONNA

Like what?

JOE

His brother drowned on a fishing
boat. It was my fault.

Donna ponders this a moment-

DONNA (deciding)

He wouldn't do that to us. He's not
a killer.

NOELLE

How do you know?

DONNA

I've looked in his eyes. I can tell
things about a person-

NOELLE

Like you could tell that Dwayne in
Colorado Springs wasn't cheating on
you with the cocktail waitress-

DONNA

This is different-

NOELLE

Or that Lyle would never hit you-

DONNA

Once, he hit me once and I walked-

NOELLE

But you didn't see it coming, did you?

DONNA

We don't have any choice! You're
sick, it's getting colder, we can't
stay here!

She turns to Joe for support-

DONNA

Can we?

JOE

Nobody's coming for a while if it keeps up like this. Not in a boat, not in a plane-

Donna looks at the rain pouring down outside-

DONNA

It doesn't look so bad. They'll be getting the rescue team together by now.

DISSOLVE TO:

118 EXT SHORE - DAY 118

RAIN blasts the signal fire pile, no longer even smoldering, as high seas blast the rocks in the BG-

119 EXT WOODS - DAY - VARIOUS SHOTS 119

RAIN beats down-

120 EXT HOUSE - DAY 120

We see the little lean-to house through a torrential DOWNPOUR-

121 INT HOUSE 121

Noelle, wearing Smilin Jack's jacket, sleeps by the fire, WHEEZING in the early stages of pneumonia. Donna crouches by the opening to the outside, watching the RAIN blast down-

DONNA

It's got to stop sometime.

JOE

Sooner or later.

DONNA

Humor me, okay?

JOE

It was worse yesterday. And the day before. We just have to hang on.

DONNA

The signal fire is probably out-

JOE

As soon as it clears we'll get it going again.

Donna crosses to Noelle, feels her forehead, worried. She sees something, digs- comes up with the diary. Joe watches as she opens the clasp, starts to thumb through the pages. She frowns-

DONNA

It's blank.

JOE

What?

DONNA

The pages are blank after the first couple entries. The foxes haven't even had their babies yet.

They both look at Noelle. Donna closes the diary, clasps it shut, carefully replaces it-

122 INT HOUSE - NIGHT

122

We start on the FIRE, a bit smoky but comforting against the sound of the RAIN still pelting down. We PAN to Noelle, wrapped in as many layers as possible, eyes bright with fever as she ceremoniously opens the diary and fixes Joe and Donna with a look. She reads softly-

NOELLE

We won't bury her on the island. She made me promise. She whispered it, hissed it in my ear one night when she was laying hard beside me in bed. "Promise me". She wouldn't listen to anything else.

We had come back from looking for deer, Papa and me, signs at the salt lick but nothing to shoot at. I was putting his rifle back where he hid it in the shed roof when I heard him cry out. He wouldn't let me in at first, though I hollered and struck at the door. He opened up when he'd got her down on the table, but I saw the black mark around her neck where the cord was. The fire had gone out, so our breath was showing, Papa and me, and it was like long white sighs of grief in the room and her mouth open and hair crispy to the touch. We wrapped her in the afghan, then I got the fire going while Papa just sat. Nothing to say. Later we found the note and she told how the animals were Satan's handmaidens, how their sharp little eyes would not give her peace so she killed them and threw the axe in the woods. 'We have looked into ourselves,' she wrote, 'and what is there condemns us.'

We'll take her off the island come first thaw. If Fox comes then, padding through the trees to be my mate, He will find us gone.

Donna and Noelle lock eyes for a long moment-

DONNA
That's it?

NOELLE
That's it. The last entry.

Donna nods-

DONNA
Poor thing.

NOELLE
Who?

DONNA
Litte Anne Marie there. Her mother
didn't love her enough to stick
around.

NOELLE
She was crazy.

DONNA
She still left her daughter in the
lurch. I'd never do that. No matter
what.

Donna and Noelle stare at each other. Noelle fights not to
cry-

123 INT HOUSE - NIGHT

123

Joe sits by the fire. Donna SINGS softly as she holds Noelle
asleep on her lap. She stops, strokes her daughter's hair--

DONNA
I kind of look forward to her being
sick. It's the only time she lets me
hold her anymore.

JOE
It's some kind of fever.

DONNA
It's in her lungs. We have to get
her out of here.
(sad)
You really think he might bring
people to kill us?

JOE (nods)
I hope I'm wrong.

DONNA
If we- when we get back- I've still
got these tour dates up north. I'd
only be gone for-

JOE
She could stay with me.

Donna looks at him-

JOE
You both could- if you wanted-

DONNA
You're not sick of us?

JOE
If you're not sick of me.

DONNA (considers)
Hey- there's nobody in the world I'd rather be stranded in desperate circumstances with. Really. But we should- take our time with the furniture-moving part. We come with a lot of baggage-

JOE
Hey-

DONNA
She pretends not to, but she gets her hopes up for me. You know? And when it doesn't work out---

JOE
I'll take care of her.

They look at each other, closing the deal-

124 EXT SHORE - MORNING

124

A clear morning, finally. Calm water. The signal fire is burning again-

WOODS

Donna, Joe and Noelle stand at the edge of the woods, bodies half behind tree trunks, watching the sky. Noelle is shivering, wearing Smilin Jack's jacket. Donna sees, points-

DONNA
There it is.

POV - SKY, PLANE

A float PLANE is a tiny dot in the sky at first. We hear a distant BUZZ-

TRIO

Watching with a mixture of fear and hope-

DONNA
It's bigger.

JOE
Yeah.

DONNA
Room for all of us.

NOELLE
Or those men.

Donna looks at her daughter, then at Joe. The BUZZ of the plane gets louder. Donna looks to the plane, approaching, and makes up her mind-

DONNA
The hell with it. I'm not staying here.

She steps out into the open-

JOE
Donna-

DONNA

Donna marches out and stands in front of the signal fire-

125 INT PLANE - POV 125

Still quite a ways off, we see a small figure standing in front of a tiny fire-

126 EXT SHORE - DONNA 126

Donna tries to keep a firm jaw as she watches the plane-
WOODS

Joe hesitates, then starts out for her-
SHORE

Joe steps up by Donna. They exchange an uneasy look, then look back to the plane. The BUZZING gets louder. Noelle appears between them, shivering. Donna puts her arm around her. Joe does the same. The lost family watch the approaching plane as the BUZZING gets louder. We SLOWLY FADE TO WHITE. The BUZZING gets louder, louder, louder-

END CREDITS - MUSIC