

p e a c o c k

(An Original Screenplay)

by

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EXT. SKILLPA HOUSE - BACKYARD - PRE-DAWN

The orange pre-dawn glow illuminates the six foot wooden fence enclosing this barren, simple backyard. A clothesline is affixed to the fence and the house.

The faint sound of a train whistle BLOWS off in the distance, signaling it's arrival.

TITLES READ - "Peacock, Nebraska 1952"

A door SLAMS.

A WOMAN scurries from the house.

She sets a laundry basket under the clothesline and starts hanging wet men's and women's clothes as fast as she can.

Every few moments she looks over her shoulder.

INT. SKILLPA HOUSE - HALLWAY - SAME

She closes the door behind her, locks it, takes a deep breath, presses her skirt and pats her hair. She's safe.

This is EMMA SKILLPA, 32, who looks as though she should be standing next to a washer/dryer combo on a golden age game show. Her hair, house dress, ear rings and make-up are impeccable.

Like Emma, her house is flawlessly appointed, nothing is out of place. All of the blinds and draperies are drawn shut.

Emma walks through the dining room into the kitchen as we hear the RATTLE of MILK BOTTLES from outside the front door, then the sound of the truck pulling away.

Emma stops in her tracks until the noise subsides.

She walks to the front door and peeks out the drape.

A perfect looking boy on a perfect looking bike rides by and tosses a newspaper on the front porch. It lands inches from the milk bottles.

She grabs the doorknob and we see the perspiration on her hand as she unlocks it, grasps the handle and twists.

The door opens and Emma darts out, retrieves the milk, the newspaper and quickly retreats inside.

Once inside - "CLANK!"

Emma locks the door behind her, she exhales and a calm comes over her face.

She walks into the dining room and lays the newspaper next to a single setting on the dining room table.

INSERT OF NEWSPAPER HEADLINE -

"Senator Wyatt - Out Of Touch With Nebraska?"

Then, the dutiful housewife walks into the kitchen, puts the milk in the ice-box and ties an apron around her waist.

The wall clock reads 7:00

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SKILLPA HOUSE - KITCHEN - LATER

The wall clock now reads 8:00.

The morning sun glows through the closed drapes.

Like she has a hundred times before Emma whips up eggs and bacon on the stove, removes a meatloaf from the oven, covers it and puts it in the icebox, then glides over to a grocery list on the counter, picks up a pen and writes on the top of it -

"Johnny. Make sure you stop at the market after work, then hurry right home."

She stuffs the note into a sack lunch and closes it up. She plates the eggs, bacon and toast, covers it with another plate and places it and the sack lunch on the dining table.

She glances at the clock, removes her apron, pulls a chair next to the front window, then peels back the drapes ever so slightly.

Outside the window idyllic 1950's Maple Street is alive.

Neatly dressed Mothers and Father's escort their perfect sons and daughters out of homes, adjust their clothes, hand them book bags and sack lunches then lovingly kiss them as they head off to the school bus.

Emma cranes her neck in every which way to grab all of these elements happening simultaneously.

Finally a small yellow school bus stops at the corner. The children board the bus and the women vanish inside. It's just another school day in Peacock.

Emma looks up at the wall clock which reads 8:30.

She grits her teeth gently, sighs, closes the drapes, returns the seat exactly to where it was, then turns to the stairs.

Just for a moment, Emma places her hand on the banister and takes pause.

As soon as she hits the first step there is a slight change in her posture. Her shoulders drop a bit and her gait slows as she reaches the top step.

INT. SKILLPA HOUSE - BATHROOM - SAME

Emma stares at herself in the mirror for a moment, rubs some cold cream on her face, then gently pulls a washcloth from the towel rack.

The make-up slides off with ease, staining the once pristine cloth.

She splashes some water on her face and removes her wig and places it delicately on a form.

Her hair is short, thick like a man's.

She glances at her watch and exits.

INT. SKILLPA HOUSE - BEDROOM - SAME

Emma enters this small, but well appointed bedroom. Two twin beds, separated of course, sit in the middle of the room while closets line one wall.

She throws open the closet doors to reveal perfectly arranged mens clothes on one side and women's on the other.

She lays out a men's suit, shirt, tie, shoes, socks and a hat on the bed.

Then, she begins to undress.

First the shoes, then the dress and finally the slip.

Emma has a flat chest, broad shoulders and thick calves.

It's here that we realize Emma Skillpa is really a man -

JOHN SKILLPA.

INT. SKILLPA HOUSE - DINING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

John sits at the table finishing his eggs and reading the paper. Once finished, he places his dirty dishes in the kitchen sink, then grabs the sack lunch Emma made.

He exits the door leading into the backyard.

INT. SKILLPA HOUSE - GARAGE - SAME

John enters from the side-door of the garage, newspaper tucked tightly under his arm.

One half of the overly neat and clean garage is dominated by a large bulbous sedan covered by a tarpaulin.

He walks to the garage door, puts his hand on it, but stops short of pulling it open.

The suited man makes an about face and exits into the backyard using the side door.

EXT. SKILLPA HOUSE - BACKYARD - SAME

John makes his way over to the porch and looks around to see if anyone is watching.

He then glances up at the second story window of the house.

John pulls up a plank from the porch where we see a collection of baseball cards and empty candy wrappers.

John shuffles them around and produces a check register and what looks like a fresh pack of baseball cards.

He jams the items into his pocket, then quickly goes back to the garage the way he came.

EXT. SKILLPA HOUSE - MORNING

John is slightly more beautiful than handsome in his suit and tie. Every move he makes seems deliberate, almost rehearsed.

John rolls his bicycle out of the garage. The bike has two BASKETS hanging from the rear. They hold John's sack lunch and his newspaper.

The neighborhood men start leaving for work in their cars.

He takes a right and falls in behind two sedans. The drivers are oblivious to John on his bike.

John pedals past two young mothers with strollers and vanishes around the corner.

EXT. PEACOCK - VARIOUS - SAME

John's morning bike ride to work introduces us to Peacock. He passes the diner, the barber shop, the hardware store. All look more imagined than real.

Eventually, John arrives in the Peacock Town Square, straight out of Mayberry -- complete with bandstand and white picket fence.

He bikes around the Peacock National Bank, a prominent stone building, takes a left and pedals into the alley.

EXT. PEACOCK BANK - REAR ALLEY - SECONDS LATER

John's leans his bike against the wall next to a row of metal trash receptacles.

He enters the rear door of the bank.

INT. PEACOCK BANK - CONTINUOUS

John rounds the corner of a pristine hallway and enters the main room of this stereotypical small town bank.

There are tellers on the left, desks on the right. A huge vault door is open with nothing more than a brass gate to protect it.

MACK, the rotund security guard, sits half-asleep in a chair.

Employee's talk amongst themselves as John makes his way to a stairwell in the corner.

There are no cordial "hello's" or "good morning's" exchanged with John. He is invisible and that's the way he likes it.

John steps into the stairwell and suddenly everything seems a bit more dull, dark and depressing.

Once at the bottom, he's greeted by a large brown door with the faded word "Basement" stenciled on it. Just below the word "Basement" is a newly stenciled word "File Room".

John opens the heavy door to reveal the worlds most depressing office space.

It's small, filled with old steel filing cabinets, one desk and no windows, very sterile and unwelcoming.

A slight smile appears on John's face.

John settles into his creaking leather chair and old desk. The in-box on his desk is full of deposit slips to process.

He tosses his sack lunch and newspaper into a drawer, takes the top paper out of the in-box and begins jotting on it.

He finishes and places it in the out-box.

We HEAR FOOT STEPS coming down the stairs.

EDMUND (O.S.)
Mr. Skillpa.

John sighs.

JOHN
Yes Mister French.

EDMUND FRENCH, the uptight bank manager, appears towering over John with a huge stack of papers in his hands. This guy wreaks of anal retentive order and repression.

Edmund drops another pile in John's already overflowing in-box and slaps the pile.

EDMUND
Three o'clock John. Lot's of
transaction slips to be processed.
Might have to skip lunch.

John looks at the huge stack looming over him.

EDMUND (CONT'D)
Great. Three o'clock it is.

Edmund tosses an envelope onto John's desk, then exits.

John opens the envelope to reveal his paycheck.

He reaches into his pocket and produces the check register and the pack of baseball cards.

John pinches the end of the baseball card pack and out pops a safety deposit box KEY.

INT. PEACOCK BANK - TELLER STATION - MOMENTS LATER

DORIS, the overweight twenty-something bank teller, cashes John's check while John waits patiently on the other side of the counter.

DORIS

Going to the party this afternoon,
John?

WANDA, the extra nosey middle aged teller, swoops in. The giddy twosome finish each other sentences.

John doesn't budge throughout.

WANDA

Mrs. Crill is putting it on for Mr.
Crill.

They both giggle.

DORIS

Three o'clock, in the town square.

WANDA

We're closing the bank early.

DORIS

That Fanny Crill sure knows how to
throw a party.

WANDA

Should be a to-do, cake and a few
folks.

DORIS

Ain't it something to have your boss,
also be your mayor?

John, lacking any sense of conversation, just nervously nods.

DORIS (CONT'D)

You should come Johnny.

WANDA

Get out, be social.

DORIS

Come on Johnny, come and mingle--

WANDA

It'll do you some good.

Doris slides the money under the bars to John.

DORIS/WANDA
Whaddya say Johnny?

They both glare at him awaiting an answer.

JOHN
(politely)
May I go now?

One nods, while the other shakes her head.

John scoops up the money and heads to the vault.

INT. BANK - SAFETY DEPOSIT ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

MACK, in his 60's, get's up from his chair as John approaches. His white hair and steely blue eyes give him an almost Santa feel.

He leans into John and speaks softly.

MACK
Don't mind those girls Johnny. You do
what you want to do. Okay?

Mack keys open the door to the safety deposit boxes. John stands over his shoulder.

MACK (CONT'D)
I'm sure impressed with your discipline.

JOHN
What do you mean?

MACK
Every week you put money away, that
takes discipline.

John lowers his voice and looks Mack in the eyes.

JOHN
Nobody can take it away from me.

John enters and places his key into a lock in one of the safety deposit boxes.

He pulls it out and goes into a small private room.

INT. PEACOCK BANK - PRIVATE ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

John opens the box to reveal a large sum of cash atop a white envelope.

He neatly places his pay on top of the massive stack of cash and counts out twenty dollars for himself.

He writes in the register.

CLOSE UP - MONEY REGISTER

It reads \$1,429.

EXT. PEACOCK - TOWN SQUARE - LATER

Next to the bandstand, all of the bank employee's and 20 more people laugh and eat cake under a homemade banner hanging from two tree's.

Banner reads - "Peacock Congratulates Mayor Crill"

John's appears from behind the bank riding his bike and glides past everyone.

Once again, he's invisible.

EXT. NEBRASKA COUNTRYSIDE - RIVERS EDGE - DAY

A single maple tree with a tire swing stands majestically next to a shallow ambling creek.

John's bike lays on it's side in the tall grass.

On the other side of the creek is the start of an endless corn field. And twenty feet or so beyond that is a scarecrow.

John stands under the tree, perfectly erect, with his unopened sack lunch in his hands. His tie is undone, two ends dangling around his neck.

John takes one giant step and kicks a rock towards the creek. A child at play.

John removes his jacket, drops it to his side and drags it until he needs that hand to grab the tire.

The jacket falls into the grass as John pushes the tire with all his might, watches it swing out towards the creek and back to him. He grabs it, puts both legs inside and unfurls his sack lunch.

John then reads the note from Emma, nods, smiles contentedly and devours his lunch, wiping food from his face with the back of his hand after every chomp.

As he eats he starts to rock in the swing, like a baby in his momma's arms. He gets lost in the rhythm of the swing, the sun and the solace.

EXT. PEACOCK GENERAL STORE - EVENING

John rests, straddling his bike across the street from the store. He watches as the last few shoppers exit, then glances down at his watch, it's 6:50 p.m.

As the last person leaves the store, John grabs the grocery list Emma made and heads in.

INT. PEACOCK GENERAL STORE - SAME

John enters, past a sign - OPEN 8 a.m. to 7 p.m.

KENNY, the teenage stock boy, sits idle at the counter. No one has ever looked so bored.

He looks up at John, then at the clock and shakes his head.

John quickly grabs a small basket and begins darting around gathering the items from the list.

Before entering an aisle John checks to see if anyone is in it first, then he proceeds.

Kenny see's this and nods in disapproval.

John stops in front of the candy, looks around to see if anyone is watching and then grabs two handfuls of candy bars.

John approaches Kenny at the counter.

Kenny hops off the counter to greet John.

As Kenny prices and bags John's items -

KENNY

How come you're always the last customer Mister Skillpa?

JOHN

Can you put the candy in --

KENNY

-- in a separate bag. Yes sir. Just like last week, and the week before.

John nods sheepishly and notices a newly opened box filled with unopened packs of baseball cards.

Kenny sees John eyeing the box.

KENNY (CONT'D)

And the baseball cards too?

John looks up at Kenny and what seems like a wee smile creeps out.

JOHN

Yes please. Five packs, please.

Just then, LOUISE RUMFORD, thirty-something town gossip and John's next door neighbor, rushes in with her son, JASON RUMFORD, 7.

John's head drops.

LOUISE

Not too late am I Kenny?

KENNY

Not at all Misses Rumford.

Jason walks over to the candy stand.

LOUISE

Oh, hello Mr. Skillpa.

John hands Kenny the twenty dollar bill as Louise scans John's bag of groceries.

LOUISE (CONT'D)

Your wife sure is lucky.

On "wife" John turns towards Louise.

LOUISE (CONT'D)

Well, while you're doing the shopping she gets to stay home. She must have a lot of free time. You know, come to think of it, I don't think I even know her name.

Jason walks up with two candy bars.

JASON

Mom, can I get these, please?

John takes the change from Kenny's hands and grasps the grocery bags, hoping for a quick exit.

LOUISE

Just a minute Jason, John was about to say something. John?

Jason, Kenny and Louise stare at John waiting for an answer.

JOHN

Emma. My wife's name is Emma.

LOUISE

Well, I'd love to meet her one of these days. John would it be okay if I knocked on your door while you're at work so I could say "hello" to Emma?

John quickly moves to the door as Jason turns to his mom.

JASON

Mommy, is that the weird guy who lives next door?

LOUISE

Jason, we don't say things like that.

EXT. PEACOCK GENERAL STORE - SAME

Having just heard what Jason said, John rushes to his bike, tosses the groceries into the basket and peddles as fast as he can into the night.

INT. SKILLPA HOUSE - GARAGE - NIGHT

John hastily enters the garage, leans the bike against the wall and lowers the door.

Short of breath, he pauses to regain his composure.

John grabs one of the grocery bags and exits the side door out into the backyard.

EXT. SKILLPA HOUSE - BACKYARD - SAME

John sits down on the back porch.

As he slowly pries up a plank he looks towards the upstairs bedroom window.

The plank creaks and John cringes.

Too much noise.

He lifts it all the way off and places the candy, baseball cards and check register neatly into his secret hiding place.

John takes a candy bar and gobbles it down quick.

He takes pause at the night sky as bits of chocolate gather in the corner's of his mouth. He throws the empty wrapper into his secret hiding place.

John looks around, then quietly restores the plank before heading back to the garage.

INT. SKILLPA HOUSE - KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

John enters and places the groceries on the counter.

There, he discovers a note from Emma which reads -

"Meatloaf is in the ice box. Heat the oven to 350, and warm the meatloaf for 10 minutes. Don't burn yourself."

He studies the note, and nods.

He throws the meatloaf in the oven and begins unpacking the groceries. After he finishes he opens the stove to check on the meatloaf and burns his hand.

JOHN

Ouch!

A train whistle BLOWS, over -

FADE OUT:

EXT. OPEN FIELD - PRE-DAWN

Corn rows after corn rows span the horizon as the sun peeks it's head into the new day.

The only thing that breaks up the view is a set of train tracks that reach far into the distance.

Suddenly, the sound of steel wheels on steel tracks and belching steam pierces the morning quiet and a train moves on-screen at breakneck speed.

The train's length moves past and we follow the CABOOSE -- where red, white and blue banners flap furiously from the railing's and windows on the caboose.

One massive banner along the body of the caboose reads - "Re-elect Senator Wyatt".

Houses start to materialize on the horizon.

The train tracks ahead bend into a turn.

As the caboose reaches the turn we are CLOSE ON the cupeling that connects it to the adjoining car.

The houses are now full-sized.

Then, the main pin CRACKS and the cupeling gives way as the train finishes it's long, sweeping arc.

The caboose wobbles violently from side to side and the front right wheel POPS OFF the track catapulting the caboose across the open field towards the homes.

As the derailed caboose plows through corn we -

CUT TO:

EXT. SKILLPA HOUSE - BACKYARD - SAME

As Emma pulls a pair of now dry pants down from the clothesline the chaotic thunder of the train stops Emma in her tracks as the CABOOSE SMASHES THROUGH the BACKYARD FENCE.

She jumps out of the way, narrowly escaping certain death.

The caboose's nose digs into the earth and the doors fly open spraying the Senator's political paraphernalia all over the Skillpa backyard.

The caboose comes to a violent halt.

Political pamphlets, bits of flag and confetti float and flutter angelically through the air.

Emma lay in shock face up on the ground. Beads of sweat dot her upper lip as her chest pounds.

We HEAR the sound of concerned neighbors quickly approaching.

Emma's eye's widen.

She attempts to rise to her feet, but is immediately smothered by nosy Louise Rumford and her husband RON.

They both lean down and hover over Emma.

LOUISE

(out of breath)

Oh my god, are you alright?!

RON
Don't move! Stay still...

Emma is frozen.

Ron kneels down next to her, places his finger on her neck to feel a pulse.

Emma shivers.

RON (CONT'D)
Your heart is pounding.

Random NEIGHBORS and CHILDREN pour in from the side gate.

Emma's head darts back and forth, overwhelmed by all the people in her backyard.

Bits of colorful paper still flutter about the air, adding to the confusion and chaos.

LOUISE
Shhhh. Calm down, calm down.
(to Ron)
Ron, perhaps someone should call Doctor Ellis?

RON
Ma'am, can you--

LOUISE
Emma, her name is Emma.

RON
Emma, can you move your fingers and toes?

People start moving in around Ron and Louise.

The noose tightens around Emma's neck.

Emma wiggles her toes and fingers.

We over HEAR various comments from neighbors.

NEIGHBOR (O.S.)
I've never seen her either.

Emma tries to stand up, but wobbles back down.

Louise takes her arm.

LOUISE

Oh no you don't, you're going to stay right here.

RON

(to Emma)

You're quite banged up, why don't you let us care for you.

NEIGHBOR (O.S.)

I don't know anything about her.

LOUISE

(to Emma)

That horrible noise. I'll never ever forget that horrible noise.

RON

We thought you were a goner.

LOUISE

Emma, I'm Louise Rumford. It is a real pleasure to finally meet you--

RON

(to Louise)

Save it Louise, now's not the time. This young lady is lucky to be alive.

On "alive" Emma soaks in the entire crowd, her laundry strewn everywhere, kids on the train, people standing on her porch looking at a chunk of the train that damaged some of the planks.

Emma's eyes are spinning. She starts to hyperventilate.

The crowd becomes more and more animated.

BUCK LEWIS, an elderly man with a camera, approaches Emma.

BUCK

(to Ron)

Ron, I think some air would do her some good.

RON

Right you are. Could everyone please step back?

BUCK

(to Ron)

Is she okay?

Emma and Louise have a private moment.

LOUISE
Dearie, it's going to be okay.

Jason Rumford runs up to Ron, they embrace.

Emma stares at Jason, then Ron, Louise and the entire crowd of people now surrounding her.

EMMA
I really need to get inside.

Louise beckons her son.

LOUISE
(to Jason)
It's okay honey, no one got hurt.

Ron and Buck both step to Emma.

RON
Buck has a wise idea, Doctor Ellis should be here. Look Emma over?

Emma raises her hand to Louise.

LOUISE
I'll help you up darling.

Emma stands upright with the aid of Louise.

JASON
(to Emma)
Wow, you must be an angel.

Emma gives Jason a warm smile.

EMMA
I just need to get inside.

BUCK
We really should have Doctor Ellis take a look at you.

Louise grasps Emma's arm.

RON
Louise, Buck is right, the doctor--

LOUISE
(to Emma)
Honey, I'll take you inside your house.

Emma's eyes dart back and forth between Ron, Louise and the mounting chaos around her before settling on Jason.

JASON

Were you afraid?

LOUISE

Jason, why don't you run inside and get a chair for Misses Skillpa.

JASON

Yes mommy.

Jason bolts for the back door as Emma whips around to follow him.

He jumps on the porch and falls as he lands on a broken plank, John's plank.

Jason leans down and pokes around in John's stash.

Ron marches over and shoo's Jason away.

BUCK

(to Emma)

You should really be under Doctor Ellis' care.

EMMA

Doctor?! Oh, no. I'll just go back inside.

LOUISE

Where are my manners? Emma Skillpa, this is Buck Lewis.

BUCK

I think young Jason was right, you must be an angel.

LOUISE

Emma, Buck is Peacock's own resistance man...

RON

I think you mean renaissance, Louise.

LOUISE

Oh dear, what did I say?

EMMA

I really should be getting back inside.

Louise completely misses what Emma said.

LOUISE

He does a little bit of everything.
Painter, carpenter, even photography,
right Buck?

Buck produces a camera.

Emma wobbles a bit and holds her throbbing head.

Jason takes her hand to balance her and smiles up at Emma.

SNAP - the click of Bucks camera shutter sounds and captures the weighty image of woman, child and destruction.

Emma looks to Buck who's holding the camera like a smoking gun.

RON

Jeez, I almost forgot, where's your
husband? Where's John?

Emma locks up. Her body becomes stiff, her eyes hollow.

She pushes past everyone, steps on the porch, stops for a beat to stare curiously at the broken plank exposing John's secret hiding place.

She stomps it back into place and enters the house.

SLAM - the back door closes.

CLANK - the lock is turned.

INT. SKILLPA HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - SAME

Emma stands perfectly still. She catches her breath and scurries to the front door, locks it, and circles the entire first floor checking to see if all the drapes are closed.

Emma marches into the kitchen and puts the pad of paper next to the empty lunch sack and a shiny apple.

With shaky determination she writes a note to John - "Johnny, go straight to work. Don't talk to strangers!"

Emma runs upstairs.

INT. SKILLPA HOUSE - BEDROOM - SECONDS LATER

Emma frantically transforms into John. With each piece of clothing that gets removed, the calmer she appears to be getting.

DISSOLVE TO:

As we TILT up from Emma's clothes strewn all over the floor we see John calmly tying his tie and putting on his watch. He's clueless to the chaos and noise in his backyard.

Suddenly -

CHILD (O.S.)

Wooooooooow!

This pulls John out of his daze, he exits out of curiosity.

INT. SKILLPA HOUSE - MOTHER'S BEDROOM - SAME

It's a bedroom, nothing special at first glance, a single bed, night stand and vanity. The drapes are drawn in the front and rear facing windows.

John opens the door.

He removes his hat and as he walks to the rear window we see picture after picture of John, alone, at various ages.

John leans down, pulls back the drape and looks out into the backyard where the chaos of the train has now gathered even more townsfolk.

Shock rips across John's face as his eyes dart around his backyard and the faces of all the people.

He's seeing the accident for the first time.

A young girl runs with a Wyatt banner in her hand.

John runs downstairs.

EXT. SKILLPA HOUSE - BACKYARD - MOMENTS LATER

People continue their respective gawking and poking at the crash site.

The back door cracks open and John reveals himself. Soaking in the sight, John's speechless.

RON (O.S.)
Johnny, you okay?

John takes another step forward, unbeknownst to him, almost hitting the broken plank with his foot.

Ron steps up on the porch.

RON (CONT'D)
Another ten feet and your house would have been a goner.

John has no interest in dialogue with anyone.

LOUISE (O.S.)
How's Emma?

John's head snaps to look at Louise.

Jason climbs up onto the train.

Ron calls out to Jason.

RON
Jason, get down from there! Right now!

Louise takes John by the arm and leans in to him.

LOUISE
(softly)
I'll drop by while you're at work and check in on Emma.

John dead eyes Louise.

After a long pause he finally speaks.

JOHN
My breakfast is getting cold.

John turns and enters the house.

CLANK - the door locks.

INT. SKILLPA HOUSE - DINING ROOM - SECONDS LATER

John walks into the dining room and stares quizzically at the empty place setting.

He frowns slightly and lowers his head.

INT. SKILLPA HOUSE - KITCHEN - SAME

John enters and looks inside the empty lunch sack, then carefully reads the note from Emma.

He snaps to attention, nods "yes", picks up an apple and stuffs the note into his pocket.

EXT. SKILLPA HOUSE - GARAGE/FRONT STEPS - MORNING

John lifts the garage door, grabs the newspaper off the front step and gets onto his bike.

He drops his head and double-times it down Maple Street. At the end of the street John turns towards the bank.

A COP CAR pulls up next to John.

OFFICER MCGONIGLE, clean cut and about John's age, speaks to John through the passenger window.

MCGONIGLE

Hey John.

John stops.

JOHN

Did I do something wrong?

MCGONIGLE

No, not at all. We just heard about the train.

JOHN

Okay, well I'm late for work.

The Officer sits idle as John peddles away towards Peacock town square.

EXT. PEACOCK BANK - REAR ALLEY - LATER

John tries to open the back door of the bank, but it's locked. He checks his watch.

EXT. PEACOCK BANK - FRONT DOOR - SAME

As John rounds the corner of the building we see that Main Street is unusually empty. No cars. No people. Silence.

He gives the large front door a hearty tug.

Nothing.

John cups his hands and presses against the glass.

The bank is dark.

John checks his watch again and a new level of confusion comes over him. He looks down and see's that he has been carrying the empty lunch sack the whole time.

A car drives up and the DRIVER yells out to John.

DRIVER

Excuse me, do you know the fastest way to get back to Chesterton from here?

John turns around quickly and pulls Emma's note from his pocket. He holds it up.

JOHN

I can't talk to you.

John expeditiously makes his way back around the bank and into the alley.

EXT. PEACOCK BANK - REAR ALLEY - SAME

John takes a seat on an old milk crate and takes a bite of his apple.

For a long beat he stares off into nothing.

DISSOLVE TO:

The apple core sits at John's feet.

His jacket hangs neatly on his lap. He glances at his watch and as he drops his elbows to his knee's,

CLICK - the back door of the bank unlocks.

John rises and quickly dons his suit jacket.

The door OPENS and Edmund French peeks out.

Edmund is surprised to see John.

EDMUND

My god John, you're here?

JOHN

Morning Mister French.

John wedges past Edmund and enters the bank.

INT. PEACOCK BANK - JOHN'S OFFICE - SAME

John hustles to his office while rambling to a somewhat bewildered Edmund.

JOHN

I got here at ten after nine, well probably nine after nine. There was no one here, I even went around to the front. I'm sorry if I did something wrong, but like I said--

EDMUND

For jiminy sakes John, there is a train in your backyard. Everybody's talking about it. I heard your wife...

JOHN

Everything will be fine. The in-box is full and so I'd better get to work.

INT. PEACOCK BANK - JOHN'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

John enters and slams both fists on the closed door like a child who can't have a second helping of dessert.

The whack on the door opens it slightly.

He picks up the entire in-box pile and slams it down on his desk as he sits down.

John begins working at a frantic pace.

Doris pushes the door open and pokes her head in.

DORIS

My oh my John, we went to your house. I've never seen anything like it. Everyone was talking about how brave Emma was.

John raise his head and bores holes into Doris.

JOHN

I really need to get back to my work. I need you to get out of my office and...

RAY (O.S.)

There he is John Skillpa, the talk of the town.

RAY CRILL, the physically intimidating 50-year-old bank owner and newly crowned Mayor of Peacock, walks in.

DORIS
Morning Mr. Crill, I mean Mayor Crill.

RAY
Morning Doris.

Ray stops inches from John, with both hands on his hips and his cock at eye level with John.

JOHN
Mr. Crill?

RAY
I'll be damned. A train bucks the rail and lands in your backyard. And you come to work?

JOHN
I had to.

DORIS
How's your wife?

RAY
Banged up but not worse for wear is what people are talking about. Quite a woman you got there John.

John cringes.

JOHN
Oh, yes sir.

RAY
What can I do for you Johnny? Day off? Remember, we're all family here. Take advantage of it, anything you need.

JOHN
Nothing really, I was just about to...

Edmund enters holding a stack of papers, he sees Ray.

EDMUND
Oh, hi sir.

RAY
Edmund, what do we have for John? Work?

Wanda enters next, but makes an about face as soon as she see's Ray Crill.

John is suffocating with all these people in his office. He stands and grabs the stack of papers from Edmund to the amazement of all.

JOHN

I really just need to get this work done.

RAY

John, I don't care about the work and I know Edmund doesn't either.

EDMUND

Of course not, in fact I suggested John take the day off as soon as I saw him this morning.

RAY

John, go home. Don't worry about your pay. I'll take care of it for you. Go home, be with your wife. Let me know if there's anything I can do about the train. I know people.

John shifts in his seat trying to find the words.

He reaches into his pocket and pulls out the note from Emma. He holds it in his hand.

JOHN

I'll just get some work done, then go home for lunch. If that's okay with you, sir?

Ray seems bewildered by John's actions, but gives in.

RAY

Sure, but if you need time off, take it.

Ray exits shaking his head.

Doris follows.

Edmund leans in to John and pats the stack of papers.

EDMUND

These need to be done by three o'clock. Thanks.

Edmund exits.

John reads the note carefully, then walks over to close the door. Before he does he listens to the people talking about the train in his backyard.

He closes the door.

INT. PEACOCK BANK - JOHN'S OFFICE - LATER

It's noon and John's staring at the clock. The in-box is all in the out-box.

He opens his desk drawer, pulls out the empty lunch sack, crumples it and holds it in his hand.

With a heavy sigh and a hung head, John exits.

INT. SKILLPA HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - LATER

We HEAR bike tires SCREECH to a halt.

The MURMUR of neighbors voices are heard outside.

JOHN (O.S.)

No, I don't need any help.

We HEAR the garage swing open, and--

SLAM!

The door shuts.

John enters from the garage and just stands there, hyperventilating like Emma on a laundry run.

John goes to the kitchen, pulls back the drapes and through the window he sees CHILDREN in the backyard on the caboose.

EXT. SKILLPA HOUSE - BACKYARD - SAME

One KID climbs up to the top of the train and looks out.

The back door swings open, John steps out, again not noticing his broken plank under his feet.

He opens his mouth to speak but is cut off...

Officer McGonigle walking around the corner calling out to the kids.

MCGONIGLE

Okay kids, get down from there.

The kids on the train hustle down.

MCGONIGLE (CONT'D)

Come on, be on your way. Leave Mister Skillpa in peace.

John starts back inside as the kids scatter.

MCGONIGLE (CONT'D)

John Skillpa, do you mind if I talk to you for a minute?

John turns back to the cop.

JOHN

Yes officer.

MCGONIGLE

How's your wife? We knocked on the door this morning and no one answered. She doing okay?

John hesitates before answering.

JOHN

Yes, sir she's fine.

MCGONIGLE

Good to hear, good to hear. This morning when you saw me you acted like you've never seen me before. Hell, we went to elementary and high school together.

John is at a loss.

JOHN

Sorry officer?

MCGONIGLE

You can call me Tom if you like.

JOHN

Thank you.

The cop surveys the scene in the backyard and chuckles to himself before speaking.

MCGONIGLE

Wow, what are you going to do?

John stares blankly at the caboose.

JOHN

Sir, don't you deal with this kind of stuff?

MCGONIGLE

Not really, John. Have you called anyone at the Senators campaign office or the train company?

JOHN

No.

McGonigle slips into deep thought.

MCGONIGLE

(caring)

John, listen to me. No one's going to take care of this for you. You've got to solve this for yourself.

JOHN

Yes sir.

He looks at the train, then the house and then turns to John and speaks softly.

MCGONIGLE

It must have been really hard for your mom to do this.

JOHN

To do what?

MCGONIGLE

To raise you all alone.

John keeps looking at the train and McGonigle realizes he's getting nowhere.

MCGONIGLE (CONT'D)

Let me know if you need any help. Call somebody John.

Mcgonigle ambles back around the side of the house and out the gate.

INT. SKILLPA HOUSE - DINING ROOM - SAME

John grabs a phone book and the telephone and sets them on the table.

John finds the number he needs, dials and starts to nervously rock back and forth.

WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)

Good afternoon. Western States Rail.

JOHN
(into phone)
There's a train in my backyard.

Silence.

WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)
Excuse me?

JOHN
I'm John Skillpa. I live at twenty nine
Maple Lane, Peacock, Nebraska. There's a
train is in my backyard.

WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)
Oh my, Mister Skillpa. We had to look up
Peacock on a map. You'll need to speak
with Mister Clapp. Will you hold for a
moment please?

JOHN
Okay.

CLICK - John's placed on hold.

After a few beats.

MR. CLAPP (V.O.)
Mr. Skillpa?

JOHN
Yes sir.

MR. CLAPP (V.O.)
Nice to talk to you sir, my name is
Albert Clapp.

JOHN
Can you please get your train out of
my backyard?

MR. CLAPP (V.O.)
First of all I'd like to apologize for
any inconvenience we may have caused you.
Was anyone hurt Mr. Skillpa?

JOHN
No, I don't think anyone was hurt. When
could you have the train removed?

MR. CLAPP

I spoke with Mayor Crill down there and he said your wife was the only one on the scene?

JOHN

Fine, fine, everyone's fine. Now--

MR. CLAPP (V.O.)

Well, we'll have to send the inspectors down there, then the engineers. See what kind of machinery we'll need, repair that stretch of track and coordinate with city officials.

JOHN

I just want to have the train gone as soon as--

MR. CLAPP (V.O.)

It'll be a few days.

JOHN

How about tomorrow? I get home from work at five, or, I could come home on my lunch break.

MR. CLAPP (V.O.)

I don't think so, John. I'll be sending out a representative to assess the situation. Mark Higgins, helluva nice guy. We could possibly be there Friday.

JOHN

By Friday? No sooner?

MR. CLAPP (V.O.)

I'm a afraid not Mr. Skillpa.

John shifts in his seat and cups his hand over the phone.

JOHN

(softly)

I have money. Can I pay to have someone move it sooner?

MR. CLAPP (V.O.)

No sirrrreee, that there is private property. You cutting into that train car is the same thing as breaking and entering, that's a crime. Understand, Mr. Skillpa?

JOHN

Well...

Mr. Clapp snaps at John.

MR. CLAPP (V.O.)

You do not touch that train. Understand!

JOHN

Yes sir.

John hangs up the phone, defeated.

He looks to the stairs.

INT. PEACOCK BANK - JOHN'S OFFICE - LATER THAT DAY

John sits, diligently doing his work. He finishes the last paper as the clock hits 5.

He climbs the stairs and is met by Edmund.

JOHN

Mr. French. In a couple of days, one or two, Mark Higgins from the train company is coming to see about taking it away. And I was wondering if I could maybe...

EDMUND

Not come in that day?

John nods "yes".

EDMUND (CONT'D)

Won't be a problem. Mr. Crill said it won't be a problem, so, it won't be a problem.

JOHN

Thank you.

EXT. SKILLPA HOUSE - BACKYARD - NIGHT

The door swings open and John stands in the doorway.

For the first time today the backyard is people free. The train glows in the last of the sun.

John looks down and sees his mangled plank.

His eyes widen.

He pries it open, stops and looks in every direction.

He snatches up a candy bar. John pulls the wrapper off the candy bar with his teeth. He chows down and gazes at the wreckage.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. PEACOCK BANK - JOHN'S OFFICE - MORNING

John falls back into his chair and throws the newspaper down on the desk.

CLOSE UP ON COVER OF NEWSPAPER -

It's the PHOTO of EMMA and JASON Rumford holding hands in front of the train with the Senator Wyatt banner hanging in the background.

John jerks forward, his eyes glued to the front page.

INT. CRILL HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The finest house in all of Peacock. A piano in the corner is littered with photo's for Ray and Fanny.

A single PHOTO sits on the mantle of Fanny holding a BABY.

Ray sits in a rocking chair by the roaring fire, while he sips a scotch and reads the newspaper. An Irish Setter dozes at his feet.

FANNY CRILL, fifty-something, elegant even in an apron, walks in from the kitchen with a wooden spoon covered in chocolate frosting.

RAY

Connor should be here soon.

FANNY

I think I'll take your car to Lincoln on Friday.

She hands him the spoon and holds his Scotch as he licks some frosting.

FANNY (CONT'D)

There's a Professor of women's health issues at the University I'm going to talk into coming to the shelter.

Ray checks his watch.

RAY
Mmm hmm honey.

FANNY
Be good for the girls to get some real exposure to what faces them once they graduate. Sure wish the state would do more for us down there.

Ray looks up from his paper for the first time.

RAY
I must say Fanny. That frosting is why they coined the phrase have your cake and eat it too.

Fanny takes a sip of the scotch.

They swap scotch for the now licked-clean spoon.

RAY (CONT'D)
Friday? The car. (laughs) You and your girls.

They both linger in almost goofy puppy love for a moment.

FANNY/RAY
(both singing)
Lucky to have me.

They both laugh.

Ray extends his neck for a kiss -

KNOCK - from the front door.

JUMP CUT TO:

INT. CRILL HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MINUTES LATER

CONNOR BLACK, slick forty-something in suit and tie, sits facing Ray on opposing love seats by the fire.

Connor holds a rolled up newspaper in his hand while Fanny stands over Ray's shoulder.

CONNOR
Of course he would. In my twelve years with Senator Wyatt I can tell you that he is exactly the kind of man to do that.

(MORE)

CONNOR (CONT'D)

And the rally we have in mind, well, I don't have to tell you it is exactly the kind of thing to put Peacock, and it's leading citizens, on the map.

Connor sits back and crosses his legs.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

Might you run and get us some drinks Misses Crill, or may I call you Fanny?

Ray takes a deep breath as Fanny removes her apron and sits next to her husband.

RAY

Wow, well, it's not every day we have a Senator come to town. Under any circumstances.

FANNY

What my husband, the Mayor, is trying to say Mr. Black, is that we will make ourselves, and Peacock, available to whatever the Senator see's fit.

Fanny lays her hand on Ray's shoulder.

Connor sits forward. Fanny is not the woman he expected to meet in little old Peacock.

CONNOR

Connor. Please Misses Crill, call me Connor.

Connor, clinching the newspaper tightly, leans in to Fanny. She leans back.

FANNY

Of course, likewise, call me Fanny.

Connor unfurls the newspaper and then tosses it onto the coffee table.

All three stare at the photo that Buck took of Emma and Jason.

CONNOR

Now, what we'd like to do, with your help of course, is bring the eye of the nation to Peacock. This picture is worth a thousand--

FANNY

Votes.

Fanny smiles and Connor laughs.

RAY

What does the train have to do with it Connor?

CONNOR

That train crashing through that fence was a tragedy for Peacock. The Senator would like to make a wrong a right.

FANNY

Well, what's in it for us?

Connor points to the paper.

CONNOR

That's exactly the kind of thing Life Magazine puts on it's cover.

RAY

Wow... Life Magazine.

FANNY

Tell me Connor, what if my "women" could play a role in the rally?

CONNOR

Your women Fanny? I don't understand.

RAY

Fanny runs a women's shelter here in Peacock, has for some fourteen years.

FANNY

The Peacock Women's Shelter. It is my number one priority, my girls. Single mother's with nowhere to go, no support. We teach them life skills, parenting skills and turn hopeless women into thriving members of society.

CONNOR

Listen, I'm going to be frank. The more we can position the Senator next to popular issues, the better it is for his re-election campaign.

Fanny and Ray look at each other.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

I haven't told you everything. If I'm as good as I think I am, I've got a monumental surprise in store for the rally.

Ray and Fanny sit up.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

Presidential candidate, Dwight D. Eisenhower.

FANNY

Oh my.

RAY

Ike's coming to Peacock?

EXT. SKILLPA HOUSE - BACKYARD - MORNING

The trains glows in the early morning light.

The drape on the back door peels back to reveal Emma. She looks in all directions to see if anyone's around.

The coast is clear.

She opens the door and stares at the glowing train.

Emma glances down at John's plank and takes pause.

She kneels down to get a closer look, and pries it open. Emma plows through the baseball cards and candy, until her hand touches something...

The check register.

Her eyes glaze over as she scans the entries.

Emma drops one of the packs of baseball cards.

TING!

She opens it, and discovers the safety deposit box key.

Emma sits on the porch for a long beat, with key and register in hand.

Her gaze falls to the train yet again.

She carefully puts the items back into the porch and replaces the plank before going back inside.

INT. SKILLPA HOUSE - KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Emma stands at the sink drying dishes. A BIRD flutters on a branch just outside the window above the sink.

Emma dries the last plate, oblivious to the bird.

She removes her apron, fixes her hair and straighten's her blouse as she glides to the front door.

The door slowly opens -

Emma crouches down and from her POV we see two pairs of shoes, one women's and one men's.

As we TILT UP we're met by Connor and Fanny.

Connor holds the newspaper out for Emma.

Emma, still on bent knee, looks like a woman begging for her life.

Fanny extends her hand.

FANNY

It's okay dearie. Why don't you let me help you into the house.

EMMA

(hyperventilating)

Noo. No. My husband's not even--

Connor extends his hand.

CONNOR

Mrs. Skillpa, I'm Connor Black.

Emma takes the paper from Connor and attempts to retreat back through the doorway on her own.

Fanny takes a huge stride past Emma and ENTERS the house.

The BIRD flies in through the front door as Connor walks past Emma into the living room.

FANNY

I simply adore your home Emma--

Connor points to the bird and chaos erupts.

CONNOR

Ma'am!!!

Emma, Connor and Fanny realize the small bird has followed them in.

EMMA

(breathless)

My. Oh my no. No.

Emma rushes protectively to the stairs.

Connor opens his arms and attempts to shoo the bird towards the open door.

FANNY

My, my. Get it Connor.

CONNOR

Keep the door open.

Emma stands at the base of the stairs with one foot on the first step. She watches the two of them chase the bird around the living room.

Fanny covers her hair as Connor makes some progress driving the bird towards the open front door.

FANNY

(playfully)

Connor, I think you've got it--

CONNOR

It's a slippery little bugger.

Emma is frozen like a deer in headlights.

Connor gets the bird out and shuts the door.

FANNY

Oh, bravo Connor.

Connor mock bows.

FANNY (CONT'D)

That was exciting.

They both look at Emma, who still has the paper clinged in her hands.

FANNY (CONT'D)

Don't you think so Emma?

CONNOR

Not every day you have a real live wild bird in your living room.

EMMA

What are you two doing here? In my home?

CONNOR

Emma, I'm Connor Black. Senior political advisor to Senator Jackson Wyatt. We're here to see John.

EMMA

(stoically)

John's not here. (beat) My name is Mrs. Skillpa.

CONNOR

Pardon?

Fanny crosses towards Emma.

EMMA

Call me Mrs. Skillpa.

Fanny gently takes Emma's hand with one hand and strokes it with the other. A comforting, slightly condescending moment between women.

FANNY

It is such a pleasure to finally meet you. I have heard so many wonderful things about you from my husband.

Emma's eyes finally meet Fanny's.

FANNY (CONT'D)

I must say there could be less odd circumstances to get acquainted.

Silence.

FANNY (CONT'D)

Don't you think so Connor? Isn't this a tad strange, to meet like this?

Connor opens his mouth to speak, but is cut short by Emma.

EMMA

Whatever business you have here is surely something neither my husband nor I would be interested in. I do have chores to attend to.

Fanny steps back, smooths her skirt over her hips and straightens her neck.

CONNOR
Fanny? I thought--

FANNY
Misses Skillpa. We are here because of
that monstrosity in your backyard.

CONNOR
Yes, indeed. That train was part of
Senator Wyatt's campaign whistle stop
tour.

More awkward silence.

CONNOR (CONT'D)
Well, let's not beat around the bush
here. We've got a big announcement coming
up and we want to do a rally right here
in Peacock, right here in your backyard.

EMMA
What?

FANNY
Why the whole town would be here, Emma.
Marching band, food and of course the
Senator.

EMMA
Why here?

CONNOR
Senator Wyatt's platform is all about
taking the wrong and making it right,
especially for the people of Peacock. So,
what better way to show his ability to
care and make a wrong a right, than right
here in your backyard.

FANNY
You and John, together with the Senator.

Fanny turns to Connor.

FANNY (CONT'D)
Do you mind if I speak to Mrs. Skillpa,
alone?

CONNOR
Sure. I'll see you in the backyard.

Connor exits toward the back door.

EMMA

How do you know my husband, Misses...?

FANNY

Crill. Misses Fanny Crill. My husband is John's boss and also the Mayor of Peacock.

Emma looks straight at Fanny in a bit of a daze.

EMMA

Will you please excuse me? I need to go upstairs.

Fanny gets a read on Emma.

FANNY

I know how all of this may be a tad overwhelming. People just rushing into your home. Now listen to me, darling. Life does not begin and end with housework. There's a whole wonderful world out there. And we ladies should have the opportunity to experience it, right?

Emma nods "yes".

FANNY (CONT'D)

You are your own woman Emma, remember that. Every good woman should discuss such things with her husband and that's what you should do, understand?

Long pause.

EMMA

I need to go upstairs.

FANNY

It was nice to finally meet you.

Fanny exits toward the back door.

Emma takes pause, then heads to the back door and locks it.

She turns to the stairs.

Emma's stands frozen for a moment at the base of the stairs, then climbs.

INT. SKILLPA HOUSE - BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The door slowly opens and Emma enters.

She seems pensive as she sits on the end of John's bed.

Emma's gently strokes John's suit, then turns to the window and peers out.

She watches the women of Maple Street doing their morning ritual of rushing the children off to school.

EXT. SKILLPA HOUSE - BACK YARD - MINUTES LATER

Fanny and Connor marvel at the shiny train.

CONNOR

Now this, this is a sight for Life Magazine.

FANNY

It really is something.

CONNOR

We need as much of the community here as we can.

FANNY

What we need is Emma and John Skillpa to say yes.

Louise Rumford pokes her busy-body head through the broken fence and double-takes at the sight of queen socialite Fanny Crill.

LOUISE

(waving intrusively)

Yoo-hooooooo Faaaaannny.

FANNY

Oh dear, Louise Rumford.

Louise's head quickly moves from Fanny to the back door, her eyes widen.

Connor and Fanny whip around, towards...

Emma standing in the doorway with a tray of lemonade and cookies, a slight forced grin on her face.

LOUISE

Emma. My stars, how are you feeling?

Fanny smiles to herself and winks at Connor.

FANNY

(to Emma)

What do you have there?

Emma, nervously, takes a step off the porch into the yard.

Connor takes a drink and a cookie, then smiles at Fanny.

CONNOR

Thank you Mrs. Skillpa.

EMMA

Emma, you can call me Emma.

LOUISE

Fanny, who is your handsome friend here?

FANNY

This is Connor Black, he's from Senator Wyatt's office.

CONNOR

Nice to meet you.

Louise adjusts her hair.

LOUISE

Fanny, I must insist you make me first on your list to volunteer for the women's shelter event this year.

FANNY

You sweet thing you. You know you are my first choice (winks to Emma) every year.

LOUISE

Emma, I'm sure you know all about Fanny's work with displaced women and children.

EMMA

Displaced children?

FANNY

We've been known to help place children in good homes, with the war you know, a lot of husbands didn't make it home.

(MORE)

FANNY (CONT'D)

We teach life skills, we mold the modern woman. The woman that votes, right Connor?

CONNOR

Loud and clear Fanny, loud and clear.

EMMA

Well, gee that's... that's so generous of you Fanny.

FANNY

I'm fortunate. I have a lot, so I give a lot. You should come by the shelter someday.

CONNOR

So, where are your children Emma?

Connor has hit a nerve with Emma.

She stares blankly into his eyes and says nothing.

FANNY

Now Mr. Black, I don't know how you folks do it in Lincoln, but in Peacock we don't pry.

CONNOR

My apologies Mrs. Skillpa, that was out of line.

FANNY

Emma, will you come with me?

Fanny walks with Emma over to the train while Louise and Connor nibble and sip.

Fanny puts her arm around Emma.

FANNY (CONT'D)

I'd love to hear you say "yes" to this rally.

Emma hesitates and looks at the house.

FANNY (CONT'D)

Is it John?

EMMA

Well, not really, I just-

FANNY

Only you know the best way to get through to John. So, get through. Understand?

Emma seems lost, a bit overwhelmed.

FANNY (CONT'D)

Here I go again. I get on my soapbox and I just can't get off. Did I say something inappropriate Emma?

EMMA

No, I like what you said. You're right.

FANNY

Good.

EMMA

I do have to talk to John.

FANNY

As I said before, get through. Modern women take advantage of moments like this, because it's moments like these that put us on the map. Just between you and me this train landing in your backyard is destiny.

Emma looks at the train, then Fanny.

INT. SKILLPA HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Emma sits in her chair, pushes back the drapes and watches Fanny and Connor drive away.

She's not frantic, or scattered.

She simply crosses her legs and watches.

Emma releases the drapes and settles into the old chair.

She appears to be consumed by her thoughts - calm.

RING! - The phone blare's.

She sighs and looks to the clock on the wall, it reads 9:30.

Emma causally walks to the phone, she watches the receiver vibrate with each ring.

Finally she answers it.

EMMA

(into phone)

Hello... yes Mr. French. John is running late, but I'm sure you don't mind, with all that's been going on around here. I'll have him off for work in no time.

Emma hangs up the phone and heads up the stairs.

INT. PEACOCK BANK - STAIRWELL/JOHNS OFFICE - LATER

John stealth's his way down the stairs to his office.

He turns the corner and for a nanosecond there's a look of comfort on his face.

RAY

Johnny! The man of the hour.

Ray sits in the chair behind John's desk, flanked by Connor and Fanny. John's already cramped office is full.

Plastered smiles abound.

John freezes, shrinks in the corner, suffocating.

RAY (CONT'D)

Connor, this is our guy. John Skillpa, meet Connor Black.

Connor extends his hand, they shake.

CONNOR

What a pleasure to finally meet you.

John looks down and sees a piece of paper on the desk with a rough drawing of his backyard and the train. Along one side is written - "Band, Food, Grand Stand".

John points to it.

JOHN

What's that?

Everyone ignores what John just said.

FANNY

We had such a lovely time with your wife, John. She is just the sweetest thing. And your house. I can see why your family loved it so much. It's divine, just divine.

JOHN

You met Emma?

FANNY

Yes, Emma. Why John, she is just dreamy.

JOHN

You were in my house?

RAY

We should get on with this. Connor, why don't we lay out the plan for John.

CONNOR

Sure thing.

John rocks back and forth twice.

JOHN

I don't understand. Have I done something wrong?

Ray is getting impatient.

RAY

Not yet.

CONNOR

Let me handle this Ray. John, let's be frank. I work for a very important man, Senator Jackson Wyatt.

John is a child at a cocktail party, his head is spinning.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

Anyway, that train of yours is just a tragedy, for you, your wife and everyone here in Peacock.

JOHN

Well, it'll be gone on Friday, Mr. Clapp said so. So I just...

Ray puts his hand out to stop John from speaking.

RAY

John. Hear Mister Black out.

JOHN

Yes sir.

CONNOR

What we'd like to do is bring the world
to your backyard.

RAY

A big rally, right in your backyard. A
band, food, balloons, a small grand
stand, even Life Magazine Johnny.

FANNY

Emma loved the idea. Doesn't that sound
exciting?

John looks at his feet while shaking his head "no".

Fanny feels what's coming and pipes in.

FANNY (CONT'D)

Emma seemed so excited about it John,
she...

JOHN

She's not the boss of me.

FANNY

I don't think...

JOHN

Mr. Clapp promised the train would be
gone. Everything needs to be back to the
way it was. And that's...

RAY

John. I spoke with Albert Clapp this
morning. The train's going to be there a
while longer. Period.

John snaps.

JOHN

It's my house! I don't know what my wife
told you, but she is not the boss of me.
I'm the man of the house. I make the
decisions, not Emma.

CONNOR

We're all in this together. Tell me what
I can do to make it right?

John just stares at the three of them, lost.

JOHN

It's my house! The train company is coming to take it away on Friday, so that's that!

Long silence.

RAY

Fanny, Connor, why don't you go to my office so I can have a word with John.

Connor and Fanny exit.

Ray comes around to the front of the desk and sits on the corner.

RAY (CONT'D)

Have a seat John.

John walks around the desk and sits in his own chair. This forces Ray to stand up and turn to face John.

RAY (CONT'D)

I don't understand how your wife can see just how big this is and you don't. The decision is yours, you're the man.

JOHN

Yes sir, but you don't understand. I've been...

RAY

You got a lot nerve talking to me like that. I suggest you think long and hard about this opportunity and what it means to Peacock.

John see's he's in deep shit.

JOHN

Well sir with all...

RAY

John, I don't want to hear another word from you. You need to sit here and think about this.

Ray storms out of the office.

John sits catatonic at his desk, his eyes tear.

INT. PEACOCK BANK - JOHN'S OFFICE - LATER

John sits at his desk, working away, he's in the zone.

He checks his watch, it reads 12:00.

John opens his desk drawer and looks inside, no lunch.

He slams the drawer shut.

INT. SKILLPA HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - LATER

John enters, picks up the phone and yanks the cord until it reaches the dining table.

He sits down and dials.

WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)

Good afternoon, Western States Rail.

JOHN

Yes, this is John Skillpa. Mister Clapp, please.

WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)

Well, John Skillpa, hold please.

John rolls up one of his sleeves.

MR. CLAPP (V.O.)

Mr. Skillpa. Surprised to hear from you.

JOHN

You promised me.

MR. CLAPP (V.O.)

Sir?

JOHN

The train. You promised you'd get it out of here, now the whole world is coming. There's not going to be a rally, so you can come and get your train now.

MR. CLAPP (V.O.)

It's a bit more complicated than that, John. Mayor Crill called me this morning. Sounds like there's a lot going on in your backyard.

John screams into the phone.

JOHN

It's my house! My house! Now you come
and get your train!

MR. CLAPP (V.O.)

That you'll have to take up with Mr.
Crill. Good day Mr. Skillpa!

CLICK -

Mr. Clapp hangs up on John.

SLAM -

The receiver bounces off the cradle.

John storms into the kitchen and produces a phone book.

He flips through it and returns to the phone.

He dials.

MAN'S VOICE (V.O.)

Murphy's Iron Works.

JOHN

How much to have the train cut up?

MAN'S VOICE (V.O.)

Excuse me?

JOHN

I have a caboose in my backyard. How much
to cut it up and get it out of here?

The man's laughter drowns John out.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Sir.

MAN'S VOICE (V.O.)

(to a co-worker)

Hey Mickey, get a load of this, that guy
with the train in his backyard is on the
phone.

John rolls up his other sleeve.

JOHN

Sir! Cut it up and get it out of here.

MAN'S VOICE (V.O.)

You're serious. Listen buddy, that's private property. The train company will have our hide if we--

JOHN

(fuming)

I have money, I'll pay whatever--

MAN'S VOICE (V.O.)

Wake up buddy, money is not the issue. I've got a lot of work to do. Love to help you, but--

JOHN

Fine! Okay! Okay! Okay! Fine!

John SLAMS the phone down and leaves.

EXT. NEBRASKA COUNTRY SIDE - RIVERS EDGE - DAY

John stands halfway between the tree and the creek. His tie is very loosely tied, the knot halfway to his belly button.

He picks up a rock and throws it across the creek into the cornfield.

John removes his jacket, curls it up into a ball, cocks his arm and tries to throw it through the tire swing. The jacket misses the hole, but sets the tire in motion.

He drops to his knee's, with his torso hanging through the tire, and sways back and forth. A child in thought, a child in trouble.

INT. SKILLPA HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

John enters and looks worse for the wear as he heads into the kitchen. The second John opens the refrigerator -

KNOCK, KNOCK -

At the front door.

John's shoulders slump as he marches to the door. He throws it open to reveal Louise Rumford holding a plate of cookies.

JOHN

No thank you!

Louise is totally put off, but sticks to being polite.

LOUISE

Well, okay, I just wanted to make sure
Emma-

JOHN

No thank you!

John shuts the door in her face.

EXT. PEACOCK - STREET - NIGHT

A weathered PICK-UP TRUCK stops at the corner. A YOUNG WOMAN exits the passenger side door, takes her TWO YEAR OLD SON son out of the front seat, waves to the DRIVER and shuts the door.

The trucks disappears.

MAGGIE (24) is a cute, down on her luck, farm girl.

JACK is Maggie's "cuter than words" son. He carries the weight of the world in his eyes.

They quietly walk down the deserted, dark streets of Peacock.

INT. SKILLPA HOUSE - KITCHEN - LATER

John pulls a piping hot slab of meatloaf out of the oven and plops it onto a plate.

He pours himself a glass of milk, then heads into the dining room with food in hand.

EXT. MAPLE STREET - SAME

Maggie and Jack round the corner and walk along Maple street towards the Skillpa house.

Maggie stops, takes a breath, and kneels down in front of Jack.

MAGGIE

Honey, do you remember "quiet as a mouse"?

Little Jack nods "yes".

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

Remember, we put on our quiet feet and tip-toed around, quiet like a mouse?

JACK
Yes, momma.

Maggie kisses him on the forehead.

MAGGIE
Good boy.

EXT. SKILLPA HOUSE - FRONT DOOR - SECONDS LATER

Maggie stands alone in the doorway.

She looks down at her body and unbuttons the top button on her sweater.

INT. SKILLPA HOUSE - DINING ROOM - SAME

KNOCK - From the front door.

John sits idle at the dinner table.

KNOCK

John stomps his foot like an angry little boy, rises and makes his way to the front door.

As he whips the front door open,

JOHN
I said, no thank you!

John's eyes settle on Maggie, who gives him a sweet tender smile back.

MAGGIE
Hi John.

JOHN
Can I help you?

MAGGIE
John, it's me, Maggie.

JOHN
Yes, um, I just want to eat my dinner, so if...

John realizes who she is, then totally locks up, he can't find the words.

Maggie shifts her weight and leans into the door jam. She is using her breasts as a bargaining chip to gain entry.

JOHN (CONT'D)
(sternly)
What do you want?

Jack appears and stands behind his mother.

Maggie turns around to see Jack.

MAGGIE
Oh honey, I thought we were--

Jack darts inside, right past John.

John stares at Maggie for a beat.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
(to Jack)
Come to mamma honey.

She gently pushes her way past John into the house.

As Maggie moves into the house, John catches a glimpse of Louise, next door, standing on her porch spying on him. She quickly pretends to be checking the mailbox.

John, a bit nervous about what he has just seen, turns into the house.

Maggie corrals Jack, kneels down next him and the two look up at John. Jack smiles up at John.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
(to John)
Jack. This is Jack.

Maggie sees John's contemplation and takes advantage.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
He's real smart.

Maggie laughs nervously.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
You ain't ever seen a kid eat ice cream
like little Jack here. I mean bowl after
bowl. He don't get sick or nothing.

John shuts the door.

JUMP CUT TO:

INT. SKILLPA HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MINUTES LATER

While John and Maggie sit across from each other in the living room, Jack sits at the dinner table scarfing down a bowl of ice cream.

MAGGIE

Well, there just isn't any easy way to say this John, but Jack and me, we really need some help.

JOHN

What kind of help?

MAGGIE

Money help. I got to take two shifts at the diner just to keep my trailer. I don't know what else to do. I saw the paper and...

JOHN

Why are you asking me for money?

Maggie is desperate as tears well in her eyes.

MAGGIE

The checks, they just stopped.

JOHN

The checks?

MAGGIE

The checks. Ten dollars every month.

Jack runs over and stands next to John.

John shifts in his seat, his eyes can't focus.

He looks towards the stairs, then at Jack and then dead into Maggie's eyes.

JOHN

I wasn't sending you any checks.

Maggie struggles with what she is about to say.

MAGGIE

They were from your momma.

John is frozen.

JOHN

My mother is dead.

MAGGIE

Oh dear, I'm sorry John, I had no idea.

Maggie pulls Jack close to her.

JOHN

What were the checks for?

Maggie looks to Jack, but says nothing.

John turns to Jack and studies the young mans every feature. Something registers within John. Off of John's look -

MAGGIE

He's two now.

(tears swell)

I'm so sorry John. I honestly thought you knew. Your momma said that everything was fine as long as I stayed away.

John quickly rises and walks to the base of the stairs, beads of sweat dot his brow.

Maggie follows him.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

You okay? Where you going?

JOHN

(softly)

I just need to be alone. I just need to lay down for a minute.

John stops, and studies the woman's beauty.

MAGGIE

Well, umm, I guess-

JOHN

Don't go. I have my own money.

John climbs the stairs slowly.

Maggie is bewildered by John's disjointed statements.

INT. SKILLPA HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MUCH LATER

Maggie, with eye's closed, sits on the couch as Jack sleeps at her side.

She sighs then -

Glances at her watch, gently wiggles her way out from underneath Jack, and walks to the stairs.

She stands at the base of the stairs and calls out softly as not to wake her child.

MAGGIE

John?

No answer.

Maggie climbs a couple of stairs and calls out again.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

John? I'm coming up, are you okay?

She waits, still no answer, and climbs a few more stairs.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

John? I really think...

Maggie stops in her tracks, speechless.

After a beat.

EMMA (O.S.)

You really think what?

Emma towers over Maggie at the top of the stairs.

MAGGIE

Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't know there was anybody else home.

Maggie retreats down the stairs as Emma steps forward.

They stand face-to-face at the bottom of the stairs.

EMMA

I'm Mrs. Skillpa. John's wife. So what is it that you "think"?

MAGGIE

I'm sorry?

EMMA

A moment ago you said "I really think". Then you stopped speaking. So, what is it that you "think"?

MAGGIE

I was gonna say, I think I should really be going.

Maggie nervously collects her things.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
So, you're his wife. That's, that's just
terrific.

Maggie nudges Jack.

Emma sees Jack for the first time and studies him intently.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
Wake up honey, we've...

EMMA
Why are you here?

MAGGIE
John's an old friend. I just thought
I'd stop by and see how he was doing.
You know, the train and all.
(beat)
We'll be going now Mrs. Skillpa.

Maggie reaches into her purse, pulls out a set of KEYS,
then picks Jack up off the couch. She pulls him close to
her body.

Emma stares intently into Jack's sleeping, angelic face.

Maggie reaches the door and turns, breaking Emma's gaze.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
Well, I'm awfully sorry about all this
Mrs. Skillpa. Please say good-bye to
John for me.

Maggie opens the door.

Emma steps forward, searching for something to say.

Nothing.

The door slams shut.

All we hear is the sound of Maggie's hard soled shoes
CLICKING down the walk path outside, getting quieter and
quieter with each moment.

Emma shakes off her trance and opens the front door.

EXT. SKILLPA HOUSE - FRONT DOOR - SAME

She takes a step outside.

Then two, and three.

Before we know it she's standing on the sidewalk watching Maggie and Jack get smaller and smaller with each step.

Emma breaks her silence.

EMMA

(calling out)

Maggie.

Maggie, still holding Jack, stops and turns to see Emma briskly walking towards her.

EMMA (CONT'D)

Where is your car?

Maggie takes a beat to come up with a story.

MAGGIE

(nervously)

Oh, I let a friend borrow it for a few days. Her aunt in Lincoln is real sick or something. So Jack and me just been doin' a lot of walkin'.

Emma looks down at the keys in Maggie's hand, then stares into the eyes of this broken woman. Emma scans Maggie from head to toe.

EMMA

You don't really own a car, do you?

The blood drains from Maggie's face.

EMMA (CONT'D)

Now forgive me Maggie, I don't mean to pry or be rude, but where is his bed?

The young mother weeps.

EMMA (CONT'D)

Why don't you come back to the house.

(beat)

I'll drive you home.

MAGGIE

Why are you being so nice to me?

INT. SKILLPA HOUSE - LIVING ROOM/DINING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Jack sleeps on the couch.

Maggie and Emma sit at the dining room table sipping liqueur.

Maggie takes a slug of her drink as Emma daintily sips hers.

EMMA

Are you married?

MAGGIE

(almost laughing)

Uh, no ma'am.

EMMA

Oh, I see. What do you do?

MAGGIE

Uh, what don't I do? A waitress this week.

Maggie sips her drink before continuing.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

We all gotta do what we gotta do, right? I mean people don't just wake up one day with a bunch a money.

EMMA

That's true. I guess a bit of hard work helps.

MAGGIE

I guess so.

Emma refills Maggie's glass.

EMMA

Why did you come to see John?

Maggie's taken aback.

MAGGIE

Excuse me.

EMMA

It's okay Maggie, you can tell me.

Maggie downs her new drink, liquid courage.

MAGGIE

Well, I saw the paper and read about the train and all. I just wanted to stop by and make sure everything was okay. That's all.

Emma leans forward and gently places her hand on Maggie's.

EMMA

(softly)

It's okay honey, you tell me when you want. Us ladies have to stick together. I understand, I really do.

Maggie looks Emma in the eye over the top of her now empty glass.

Maggie pulls out a pack of cigarettes.

MAGGIE

Would you like a cigarette?

EMMA

No thank you. I don't smoke.

Maggie lights her smoke then leaves the pack on the table.

Emma looks to Jack.

EMMA (CONT'D)

What is he like?

MAGGIE

Well, right now he's Rip Van Winkle. Like the children's story.

EMMA

I love children's stories.

MAGGIE

There's a new one called Charlotte's Web. It's supposed to be fantastic. Have you read it?

EMMA

No. Do you read to Jack much?

MAGGIE

Sometimes.

EMMA

That must be... just wonderful.

MAGGIE
Children are...

EMMA
They change your life, right? Everyone
seems to say that.

MAGGIE
They sure do. You love kids so much, I
bet you're great with them.

Emma sips her drink as Maggie looks around the house.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
This place is so quiet, I guess you and
John don't have any kids.

Emma takes pause, her shoulders drop, her face goes long.

EMMA
Try as we might, we can't always do
everything for our men. Can we?

Maggie shakes her head "no".

MAGGIE
Oh, gee Mrs. Skillpa. I'm sorry.

Tears well in Emma's and Maggie's eyes.

JACK (O.S.)
Mommy?

Maggie smiles through her own tears.

MAGGIE
(to Jack)
It's okay baby, everything's okay.

JACK
More ice cream, momma?

Maggie laughs and wipes away her tears.

MAGGIE
No baby, I think we gotta get going
now.

Disappointment has never looked so pitiful as it does on the
face of Jack right now.

EMMA

You don't have to go. Just a scoop, it won't kill him.

Emma exits into the kitchen and grabs a set of car keys from a small key rack.

EXT. SKILLPA HOUSE - LATER

Maggie and Jack wait on the lawn.

The garage door opens and Emma stands in front of the car which has now been uncovered. Emma turns to the passenger side, stops and walks to the driver side.

INT. SKILLPA AUTO - GARAGE - SAME

Emma awkwardly slides behind the steering wheel and fumbles around to find where the key belongs. She puts it into the ignition and is startled as the car rumbles to a start.

The car creeps out of the garage, lunges forward and screeches to a halt at the end of the driveway.

Emma pokes her head out the window.

EMMA

You ready?

INT. SKILLPA AUTO - MOVING - MINUTES LATER

Emma's hands are clamped on the steering wheel as she tries to negotiate the open, empty roads of Peacock.

Maggie looks as white as a ghost sitting in the passenger seat as Jack bounces around giggling in the backseat.

MAGGIE

Do you, uh, drive much?

Emma is concentrating too hard on the road to listen.

Maggie reaches into her purse.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

Where are my cigarette's?

Maggie points out the front window.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
Turn right here!

The car SWERVES around a corner.

Maggie jostles in her seat.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
Emma, do you drive a lot?

Emma slows down and stops.

She smiles at Maggie and starts to giggle like a little school girl.

EMMA
You caught me.

Maggie starts to laugh.

MAGGIE
You don't drive?

EMMA
If John knew I was driving this car, he'd kill me.

The women share a good laugh.

Maggie adjusts herself in her seat.

MAGGIE
Well, it's time you learn. Now, only use one foot. Don't try to press down with one foot on the gas and the other on the brake. Just use one foot to go between the two peddles. Got it?

EMMA
Got it Maggie.

Emma puts the car in "drive" and sputters along.

Maggie pulls a single cigarette out of her purse.

MAGGIE
Huh, a lone bandit. I think it's enough to calm me while I teach you to drive.

EXT. MAGGIE'S TRAILER - LATER

The Skillpa automobile rumbles up a bumpy gravel road to Maggie's trailer behind a rundown roadside diner.

The cars headlights illuminate the battered old trailer, no home for a child.

Maggie exits, retrieves Jack from the backseat, walks around the car and leans into the open passenger window.

MAGGIE

(laughing)

Emma, I think you are ready for the open road. You did just great.

EMMA

Oh darling, I had a wonderful teacher.

MAGGIE

Sorry if I've caused you any problems.

EMMA

Oh, you haven't. Us ladies have to stick together, remember.

Maggie, sighs, looks at the trailer.

MAGGIE

I know we do.

EMMA

Let me help you in the house.

MAGGIE

Oh, no. You don't have to.

EMMA

I insist.

INT. MAGGIE'S TRAILER - MOMENTS LATER

Even though the trailer is somewhat rundown, it still looks like an honest attempt at creating a "home" for Jack.

Maggie, still holding Jack, enters the trailer, as Emma brings up the rear and closes the flimsy door.

Maggie heads straight to the back of the trailer while Emma pokes around.

MAGGIE (O.S.)

Have a seat, I'll be right out.

Emma takes a seat on the sofa without taking her eyes off her surroundings. She fixes her dress as Maggie returns.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

Can I get you a drink?

EMMA

Oh, just a little something would be nice.

MAGGIE

Jack can and will sleep forever in that bed. This place is not much, but that bed is something else.

Maggie goes to the kitchen, opens a cupboard and pulls down two glasses and a bottle of sherry.

EMMA

How long have you lived here?

MAGGIE

Not long.

Maggie pours the drinks, then pulls up a chair to sit across from Emma.

EMMA

Do you like it here?

MAGGIE

No not really, but sometimes we have to do things we don't like.

EMMA

It must be terrible to live in a home you don't enjoy.

MAGGIE

It's all I can afford right now. I just want to get me and Jack out of here.

KNOCK, KNOCK - On the door.

Maggie looks at the door, then let's out a "sigh".

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

(to Emma)

Excuse me.

Maggie OPENS the DOOR to reveal a FAT GUY with a greasy apron thrown over one shoulder. He slowly slides a five dollar bill out from between his teeth.

FAT GUY

I've got five bucks, if you've got ten minutes.

Maggie's slightly grossed out and totally embarrassed, but try's to turn on the sweetness. She pushes her breast's forward as she leans into the door.

MAGGIE

Not now cupcake, I've got company.

FAT GUY

What the hell!

He pokes his head in and sees Emma staring at the two of them. The guy smiles and nods to Emma, then turns back to a mortified Maggie.

He speaks under his breath.

FAT GUY (CONT'D)

You gotta come in early tomorrow. We gotta clean them grease traps.

He winks, then waddles away.

Maggie slowly closes the door then turns to see Emma staring right back at her. Maggie quickly looks away, then takes her seat at the table.

Maggie pours some sherry and gulps it down. Emma refills Maggie's glass.

The silence is deafening, tears roll down Maggie's face.

EMMA

Is that how you met John?

Maggie completely breaks down.

Emma takes Maggie's hand.

MAGGIE

I'm so sorry Emma, I'm so sorry. I guess you hate me now too.

EMMA

Shhhhh. Take a deep breath. I don't hate you Maggie. Now, just calm down. We've got to stick together. Right?

MAGGIE

Yes, ma'am.

Maggie lights a smoke and pours another drink.

EMMA

Sometimes a woman has to do what a woman has to do.

MAGGIE

I just want better for Jack. I saw the picture in the paper. I swear it's the only reason I came to your house. I went as long as I could without the money.

EMMA

What money? Was John sending you money?

MAGGIE

His mother was.

EMMA

I don't understand.

MAGGIE

She paid for the hospital bills and was sending me money. Emma, you won't understand. It's bad. Real bad.

EMMA

I insist you tell me everything. I won't judge you, please believe me when I say that. I must know.

Maggie shakes her head "no".

EMMA (CONT'D)

(softly)

Maybe I can help you. I just need to know. Please.

Maggie hangs her head.

EMMA (CONT'D)

Tell me, is that how you met John?

Maggie stares at her feet while she speaks.

MAGGIE
Yes... not exactly.

EMMA
What do you mean?

MAGGIE
His mother, I met his mother at a bar...
Long pause.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
(shamefully)
She paid me.

Emma's body straightens, her eyes open wide.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
She brought me to that house. I swore
I'd never go back there.

Emma leans forward to speak, but doesn't.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
I thought you were her at the top of
the stairs tonight.

Maggie, in tears, looks deep into Emma's eyes.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
John didn't want to do it, she made him,
I swear Emma. He really didn't want to,
she stood there in that bedroom and made
him. It's was so horrible. John was
cryin' and she was yelling and... pushing
us. How could she do that? To her own
son? Oh, Emma.

Maggie collapses forward, embracing Emma.

EMMA
It's okay, it's okay.

MAGGIE
I'm so broke Emma. I can't keep going
like this. She stopped sending the money.
I've been going for a couple of years now
without, but Jacks gettin' older. I'm so
sorry.

EMMA
Why was John's mother sending you money?

MAGGIE

Well, because...

Maggie looks towards Jack's bed.

There's a long pause.

EMMA

(softly)

Jack?

MAGGIE

I'm so sorry. Oh, I'm the worst person in the world. Emma, I just want to get out of here.

Emma collects her thoughts, then sips her drink.

EMMA

You'll do no such thing. Haven't you been listening to me? We've got to stick together.

MAGGIE

You don't know what it's like to have a kid and have to...

Maggie stops herself and drops her head.

EMMA

I may be able to help you.

INT. SKILLPA HOUSE - GARAGE - LATER THAT NIGHT

The garage door still open -

Emma sits in the car, hands on the wheel deep in thought.

INT. SKILLPA HOUSE - MOTHER'S ROOM - MINUTES LATER

The door creaks open and Emma's still body fills the frame.

After a brief pause she enters.

Emma sits on the edge of the bed and scans the various photos and antiques.

She slowly lays on the bed and gently closes her eyes.

FADE OUT:

INT. SKILLPA HOUSE - MOTHER'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Emma is where we left her, asleep on mothers bed.

Her eyes flicker open.

She sits up and looks to the open door across the room.

INT. SKILLPA HOUSE - BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Emma enters and stands over the sink gazing at her own reflection in the mirror.

She touches-up her hair and make-up before doing an about face out of the bathroom.

INT. SKILLPA HOUSE - KITCHEN - LATER

Emma is in the midst of her morning ritual- cooking, cleaning and setting the table. In no time at all she is done and removes her apron.

She walks toward the dining room. Her eyes drift across the newspaper, the plate of food and the silverware.

Emma slowly, but confidently takes a seat in front of the food, John's seat.

She gently places her elbow on the table and stares at what's before her.

RING! RING!

Emma flinches and stares at the phone from her seat.

She looks to the clock, it reads 9:40.

The phone RINGS again.

Emma just stares at it.

Her body straightens and her eye's fill with determination.

As the phone RINGS again, she places her napkin in her lap.

Emma delicately picks up the fork and knife.

She eats, reads the paper and continues to ignore the ringing phone.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SKILLPA HOUSE - DINING ROOM - LATER

Emma sits in front of a now empty plate of food. After a moment, Emma reaches for the pack of cigarettes Maggie had left behind.

She strikes a Blue Tip match and lights a cigarette. After a long exhale she rises, takes the car keys and her jacket, then exits.

INT. CONNOR BLACKS HOTEL ROOM - LATER

The finest room in Peacock's only hotel.

Connor sits on the bed with the phone to his ear.

CONNOR

(into phone)

It's quite a sight actually. The train lodged center stage in a couple's back yard, the Skillpa's are an interesting pair.

There's a KNOCK on the door.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

All the news stringers from the whistle stop will be here.

KNOCK, KNOCK

Connor cups his hand over the phone and calls out.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

Yes, one moment, please.

He goes back to the phone call.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

Bill I gotta go, but try Bartlett Simon at Life Magazine. This is the type of story they go for, and the colorful exposure I like. I'll call you later... bye.

Connor goes to the door and opens it to reveal Emma Skillpa.

Being somewhat seductive, Emma leans against the door-jam and pushes her breast's forward into the room.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

Mrs. Skillpa. My favorite Peacock.

EMMA

Oh that is so sweat of you to say, Mr. Black.

CONNOR

Please. Call me Connor. Only my mother-in-law calls me Mr. Black.

EMMA

May I come in?

CONNOR

Of course.

Emma enters and looks around.

She goes to the window.

EMMA

What a lovely room Connor. And it's quite a view.

Connor lights a cigarette.

CONNOR

Where are my manners, would you like a cigarette Emma?

EMMA

You're as sweet as a cupcake, but no thank you. Not very lady-like.

CONNOR

What can I do for you?

EMMA

The rally. We'll do it.

CONNOR

I don't know what to say.

EMMA

I would be happy, more than happy to do whatever you need to make Saturday a great day for Peacock.

CONNOR

So your answer is yes, fantastic.

EMMA

Yes.

CONNOR

This is great. What changed your husband's mind?

Emma smiles at Connor, but does not answer, then makes her way towards the door.

EMMA

It's going to be a great day. I'm off to the shelter to tell Fanny myself. Good day Mr. Black

CONNOR

Good day Emma.

After the door closes Connor stares at it with a wee Cheshire cat grin. He then picks up the phone.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

Senator Wyatt please.

INT. WOMENS SHELTER - FOYER - DAY

This old spacious Craftsmen style home is a sanctuary for displaced women.

The soft sounds of distant conversations and typing can be heard echoing throughout the house.

Fanny and KAREN, a young mother, stand in the foyer as Emma enters the shelter.

FANNY

Look who we have here. Emma Skillpa, don't you look lovely today.

Emma seems a bit bashful.

EMMA

Gee, thank you.

FANNY

I'm so happy you came by. This is terrific. Truly terrific. Where are my manners? This is Karen Longhorn, she's one of our guests her.

Emma and Karen don't speak, they just nod.

FANNY (CONT'D)

Karen why don't you go see Ruby about a private typing lesson?

KAREN

Okay.

Karen exits down the long hall toward the muffled sound of the typewriters.

Fanny turns to Emma and gives a bright smile.

INT. WOMENS SHELTER - KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Fanny and Emma sit at a long wooden table in this institutional size kitchen. They sip lemonade and chat.

EMMA

I want to do the rally.

FANNY

I know you want to, but what about John?
Because at the bank he put up a real
stink, I tell you.

Emma takes a beat before answering.

EMMA

Don't worry about John.

FANNY

Good girl Emma, good girl.

A little boy, BOBBY, bolts in holding a small stack of baseball cards.

FANNY (CONT'D)

Now Bobby what did I tell you about
running in the house?

GLENDA, Bobby's flustered young mother, runs in and stops upon seeing Fanny.

GLENDA

Oh gee Mrs. Crill, I'm sorry. I didn't
know you had company.

FANNY

How many times do I have to tell you,
call me Fanny.

GLENDA

Yes, ma'am.

FANNY

And keep your boy from running in this
house.

GLEENDA

Yes, ma'am. Come on Bobby.

Bobby hangs his head and follows his mother out.

Fanny turns back to Emma.

FANNY

Having children makes you ready for anything.

Emma looks down to her lemonade.

FANNY (CONT'D)

You okay?

A tear slides down Emma's face, landing gently on her hand.

FANNY (CONT'D)

Oh, darling.

Fanny places her hand over Emma's.

FANNY (CONT'D)

Why are you crying?

EMMA

Do you have children Fanny?

Fanny picks her hand off of Emma's.

FANNY

No, I don't. I had...

EMMA

I don't understand.

Fanny takes a deep breath.

FANNY

My son, James. He died. Fourteen years ago.

Emma's eyes fill with tears.

EMMA

Oh Fanny, I'm so sorry.

FANNY

You don't need to be sorry. Children give so much.

Emma drops her head, silence.

EMMA

(softly)

I'll never know. Try as we might we can't
always do everything for our men, can we?

Fanny sits in silence, then breaks.

FANNY

Emma, there isn't a single reason in the
world you can't have a child.

EMMA

I don't understand.

FANNY

(softly)

There are other options.

Emma wipes tears away with a napkin, while trying to
conceal her running make-up.

She locks her eyes on Fanny.

Fanny leans forward and whispers.

FANNY (CONT'D)

Adopt. I know an attorney that could help
you when the time comes. There's a lot of
paperwork involved, so you've got to have
someone who knows what they're doing. And
it can cost a lot of money. Know that...

Little Bobby darts through the door into the kitchen.

Glenda follows with an apologetic look on her face.

FANNY (CONT'D)

Go ahead Glenda.

Fanny turns to Emma.

FANNY (CONT'D)

So what changed John's mind about the
rally?

EMMA

I did.

FANNY

You got through?

EMMA

I got him all excited about the shelter and he thought it'd be a great day for Peacock.

FANNY

This is exciting. You are helping to do something very noble.

Fanny looks around to check if the cost is clear.

It is, she leans into Emma and speaks softly.

FANNY (CONT'D)

I'm going to let you in on a big secret. Ike's coming to the rally.

EMMA

Eisenhower?

FANNY

Yes, ma'am and I'm gonna put all my ladies from the shelter up there on that stage so people can put a face to the problem.

EMMA

That is a great idea Fanny.

FANNY

That Connor, he thinks this rally is for his boss. We'll show him.

Emma smiles.

EMMA

Fanny can I ask you a question? How does a women get to come stay here?

FANNY

Well, there are several ways, why?

EMMA

I want to bring you someone.

EXT. DINER - LATER

Emma's car bounces up the gravel road to the rundown diner.

Emma gives herself a good once over in the rear-view mirror, then exits the car.

INT. DINER - MOMENTS LATER

Maggie wipes down the counter as muffled country music plays in the background.

An OLD TRUCK DRIVER sits at the counter finishing up a plate of fatty food. The fat guy cleans out the grease traps.

Emma stands just inside the door frame, tall and still.

Maggie sees her and heads over.

MAGGIE

Emma. What are you doing out here?

EMMA

Well, I wanted to discuss something with you, if you have a moment?

Maggie looks around at the empty diner.

MAGGIE

Oh, I got plenty of time.

The two women settle into a booth.

EMMA

Now, do you know Fanny Crill?

MAGGIE

No ma'am. Why?

EMMA

She's the Mayors wife, in Peacock.

MAGGIE

You know the Mayor's wife?

EMMA

She's wonderful and she runs the most amazing women's shelter--

MAGGIE

(shaking her head)

No no no, I've got no time for that. Those places are for people without ambition. I got me ambition.

Silence, as Emma shifts and tries a new angle.

EMMA

Well, I think some time there would be good for you, and for Jack.

MAGGIE

Jack? What good comes out of putting Jack with a bunch of unambitious women?

EMMA

The ladies there are wonderful, and really motivated. They're not looking for a handout. You should give it a try, and come and see for yourself.

MAGGIE

I don't know Emma, I just don't know.

Maggie looks around at the depressing diner.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

I just want to get out of here.

EMMA

A week or two there could really help you.

MAGGIE

John could help me too.

Emma's eyes meet Maggie's.

EMMA

No Maggie, no he can't. Please, don't trust that man for anything, you hear me. Trust me, I should know. He's a child.

Maggie's slight nod meets Emma's warm maternal smile.

EMMA (CONT'D)

Everything's going to be just fine, don't you worry.

MAGGIE

Yes ma'am.

EMMA

Now, you trust me right?

Maggie smiles.

MAGGIE

Oh, you bet I do Emma.

EMMA

Okay sweetie. This is the best thing for Jack you know.

MAGGIE

I don't understand, what about coming to work?

EMMA

You can still come to work, there are plenty of ladies there to keep an eye on Jack.

MAGGIE

Emma, you promise this is the right thing to do?

Emma stands up and smiles down at Maggie.

EMMA

Let's get Jack, gather up some of your things and drive on over to the shelter. We'll try it for a week or two.

Maggie stands.

MAGGIE

Okay, Emma. I'll go to the shelter with you, but please understand. I don't want to let you down but I still would take John's help.

INT. SKILLPA HOUSE - BASEMENT - LATER THAT NIGHT

BLACKNESS quickly becomes LIGHT as Emma pulls the string on the exposed light bulb hanging from the ceiling.

Emma shifts a few boxes around until her eyes lock on her target, a MEDIUM SIZED BOX with faded writing on the side.

Her hands peel back flaps to reveal children's toys.

Emma, reminiscent, looks at the various toys.

She quickly reaches up and pulls the string, BLACKNESS.

EXT. PEACOCK BANK - REAR ALLEY - MORNING

John parks his bike and strides towards the back door.

He's never looked so bad, clothes are mussed and frumpy and his eyes are puffy and bloodshot.

INT. PEACOCK BANK - JOHN'S OFFICE - MINUTES LATER

John enters, the clock reads 9:20.

The in-box is spilling out onto his desk.

He collapses into his chair.

We hear FOOTSTEPS coming down the stairs.

EDMUND (O.S.)
John Skillpa!?

Edmund appears in the door jam.

EDMUND (CONT'D)
Where were you yesterday!? I called
several times.

All the blood leaves John's body.

JOHN
What do you mean?

EDMUND
Yesterday, you were not at work all day.
Where were you? I know you have a lot
going on, but can't you or your wife pick
up the phone?

John sit's in a catatonic state as Edmund taps the in-box.

EDMUND (CONT'D)
This can never happen again!

Edmund exits.

John quietly walks over to the door and closes it. His body
shifts, fury and aggression fill his eyes.

John SNAPS, and SMASHES an open desk drawer with his foot.

Papers and office supplies go flying.

JOHN
(sotto)
She's not the boss of me.

He slumps down in his chair.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. PEACOCK BANK - JOHN'S OFFICE - LATER THAT DAY

John is right where we last saw him, sitting and staring.

No work has been done.

He hears FOOTSTEPS bounding down the stairs.

Doris pokes her head in and sees the mess on John's desk.

DORIS

John, everything okay?

JOHN

What do you want?

DORIS

You have a phone call.

JOHN

A phone call?

DORIS

It's a woman. I think it's your wife.

INT. PEACOCK BANK - MAIN FLOOR - SECONDS LATER

John stands over the receiver as it lays next to the phone.

He slowly picks it up and places it to his ear.

Suddenly Edmund appears and places his hand on John.

EDMUND

You make this quick and get back
downstairs. Immediately. Understand?

John nods yes.

As soon as Edmund clears out, Wanda and Doris shuffle over to eavesdrop.

John puts the phone back to his ear.

JOHN

(into phone)

Hello?

MAGGIE (V.O.)

John, it's Maggie.

John's eyes widen, he's tense throughout.

JOHN

Maggie, why are you calling?

John cups his hand over the phone and turns away from Doris and Wanda who have just heard it's Maggie on the phone.

MAGGIE (V.O.)

I really need to talk to you.

We hear CHILDREN LAUGHING in the background.

JOHN

Where are you?

MAGGIE (V.O.)

The womens shelter.

JOHN

The women's shelter?

MAGGIE (V.O.)

Emma brought me here. John, I really need to talk to you.

A long pause as John thinks.

JOHN

Stay right there. I'll come to you.

MAGGIE (V.O.)

When?

John slams the phone down.

EXT. PEACOCK - VARIOUS - MINUTES LATER

John peddles furiously through the streets of Peacock.

INT. SKILLPA HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - SAME

John, breathing heavy and sweating, quietly enters and heads straight for the key rack.

He reaches for the car keys.

They're missing.

Trying his best to not make any noise, he frantically scours the lower part of the house.

INT. SKILLPA HOUSE - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

John sees his mothers open door, then tiptoes down the creaky hall towards it.

RING - The phone blasts from downstairs, but it does not phase John, he continues.

He gently pulls the door shut and turns back down the hall.

RING

INT. SKILLPA HOUSE - BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The door slowly creeps open.

RING

John cautiously pokes his head in and takes a look around.

He enters and closes the door behind him.

The phone stops ringing.

Walking softly, John makes his way over to Emma's side of the bedroom.

He pulls open her dresser drawer and pokes around, nothing.

He walks to the closet, then slides Emma's side open.

He studies the closet until he sees a shelf with a few of Emma's purses.

John reaches into one, finds nothing, then opens the next.

John delicately removes the car keys.

He turns and sees Emma's clothes, still on hangers, neatly laid out on the bed.

John's body once again shifts to aggression as he stares at her clothing.

He grabs the clothes and throws them into the bottom of the closet and slides the door shut.

EXT. SKILLPA HOUSE - GARAGE - MOMENTS LATER

With the drivers side door open, John pushes the large Skillpa auto out into the street.

As John huffs his way along as two YOUNG CHILDREN stop playing Cowboys and Indian's across the street.

The children watch John push the car down Maple Street until it's out of view of the Skillpa house.

John jumps in the car, closes the door and fires it up.

EXT. PEACOCK - STREET - MOMENTS LATER

The Skillpa car careens around a corner, like drunk teenagers on a joy ride.

John grasps the steering wheel with both hands and turns the car onto a country road.

EXT. WOMEN'S SHELTER - LATER

Under a dust fury, the Skillpa car skids to a stop in front of the shelter.

John hops out, tucks in his shirt and fixes his tie.

INT. WOMEN'S SHELTER - KITCHEN - SAME

Maggie is washing dishes.

She bangs her finger against the spigot and cringes.

MAGGIE

Damnit!

She throws the drying towel against the wall and turns to see John in the doorway.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

(startled)

Oh John, you scared me.

JOHN

Can we go talk now, please!?

EXT. WOMEN'S SHELTER - MOMENTS LATER

Maggie strides out the door and stops.

John walks past her.

JOHN

Emma brought you here?

MAGGIE

Yes she did. John, I just really need to talk to you, about what we talked about before, the money.

JOHN

When did she do this?

MAGGIE

I met her the night I came to your house, she gave Jack and me a ride home. She saw the trailer and said that Fanny Crill...

JOHN

No no no. You can't let her do this.

MAGGIE

Do what John? Emma didn't do anything. She wants to help me get out of that trailer. She wants to help me and Jack.

John stands taller than we've ever seen before.

JOHN

You don't know her like I know her!

He looks deep into Maggie eye's for the first time.

JOHN (CONT'D)

I have to get you out of here. I'll give you the money.

MAGGIE

Are you serious?

JOHN

It's my money! She's not the boss of me!

Maggie takes a step towards John.

JOHN (CONT'D)

The only way I can get everything back to normal is to get you and Jack out of here, out of Peacock.

John stares at Maggie for a long beat.

INT. WOMENS SHELTER - FOYER - SAME

Maggie nervously swoops in and is surprised by Glenda.

GLEND A

Hey, Maggie what's going on?

MAGGIE

Um, Jack and me are going over to see my aunt in Lincoln.

GLEND A

Is everything okay?

MAGGIE

Oh yeah, I think we might stay the night, but I'm not sure. Either way I'll see you later.

Maggie blows by Glenda and into the kitchen to grab Jack.

EXT. MAGGIE'S TRAILER - LATER

The Skillpa car pulls up.

Maggie opens the rear door as John gets out and opens the trunk. He takes out a suitcase and a smaller bag.

MAGGIE

Will you carry Jack in? My finger still hurts.

JOHN

Hey Maggie?

MAGGIE

Yes.

JOHN

I can't go back to that place. You don't understand. I can't go back there.

MAGGIE

What? To your house?

JOHN
(softly)
Can I stay with you tonight?

MAGGIE
John, stop it. Emma's made a good home
for you.

Jack cries a bit as John walks towards the trailer.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
What are you doing?

JOHN
I'm staying with you tonight.

Maggie grabs Jack out of the back seat, bad finger and all.

MAGGIE
John, if you touch that knob, I will..

JOHN
I'll give you all the money, all of it!
I've got one thousand four hundred nine
dollars and sixteen cents. It's at work.

John puts his hand on the door knob.

MAGGIE
Okay John, calm down.

JOHN
I'll get it tomorrow.

MAGGIE
John, that'll be great, but please, for
Jack and me you need to go home.

Maggie removes John's hand from the door knob opens the
trailer door and enters.

She turns and speaks to John through the screen door.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
I'll call you tomorrow.

Maggie closes the interior door.

CLICK

The door locks and John stands there, staring.

EXT. NEBRASKA COUNTRY SIDE - TIRE SWING - NIGHT

The moon lingers over the tire swing. The Skillpa auto is parked a few feet from the supporting tree.

Off in the distance, HEADLIGHTS make their way down the country road.

As they get closer we see the faint outline of a POLICE CAR. It approaches, and stops next to the Skillpa auto.

Officer MCGonigle exits with a flashlight, looks through the car and walks towards the tire swing.

ANGLE ON John asleep in the fetal position under the tree.

Mcgonigle stands over him and shines the light in John's face until he stirs from sleep.

OFFICER MCGONIGLE

John...

John stares up at the cop, into the light, and his chin starts to quiver.

OFFICER MCGONIGLE (CONT'D)

Are you okay?

John's on the verge of tears throughout.

JOHN

I'm fine, but, please don't make me go.

OFFICER MCGONIGLE

What happened?

JOHN

It's bad, it's real bad.

OFFICER MCGONIGLE

Are you hurt?

JOHN

No.

OFFICER MCGONIGLE

Did you hurt somebody?

JOHN

No, no, I didn't, I swear.

OFFICER MCGONIGLE

Okay, okay...

Mcgonigle takes a moment, shining the light on the swing, and the creek.

He then takes a seat on a tree stump next to John.

OFFICER MCGONIGLE (CONT'D)

It's okay, everything's going to be okay.

JOHN

I like it here.

Mcgonigle picks up a rock and throws it into the creek.

PLOP -

He's reminiscing.

OFFICER MCGONIGLE

God, I haven't been here in twenty years.
My parents used to take me and my sister
here for picnics.

After a beat, John picks up a rock and also throws it into the creek.

PLOP -

JOHN

She held my head underwater.

Mcgonigle shifts nervously.

MCGONIGLE

Emma?

JOHN

No... when I was a kid.

Long pause.

MCGONIGLE

Your mother?

JOHN

She would have liked her. I met Emma the
day mom died.

Mcgonigle, not liking where this is going, jumps up.

OFFICER MCGONIGLE

Okay, buddy we need to get you home.

John doesn't budge.

OFFICER MCGONIGLE (CONT'D)

John, get up! You're going home.

John slowly rises.

Mcgonigle escorts John towards his car.

Each step John takes, the more upset he becomes.

JOHN

I can't go home.

Mcgonigle opens John's driver side door.

John looks at him.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Officer... please.

OFFICER MCGONIGLE

Get in. I'm going to follow you to make sure you get home.

EXT. SKILLPA HOUSE - LATER

Mcgonigle's car idles at the end of the Skillpa driveway.

John, white from head-to-toe, slams the garage door shut.

INT. SKILLPA HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - SAME

The door from the garage bursts open.

John quickly enters, sweat pouring down his face.

He dashes up the stairs.

INT. SKILLPA HOUSE - BEDROOM - SECONDS LATER

John throws a hanging bag on the bed and begins filling it with clothes.

INT. SKILLPA HOUSE - GARAGE - SECONDS LATER

John, with bag in hand, opens the garage door slowly to see if McGonigle is still there.

He's gone.

John slides into the car and throws it reverse.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT

The Skillpa auto moves along at a good clip until it pulls up to -

EXT. HUSKER MOTEL - SAME

This is a worn down single level travelers motel.

A light blinks "VACANCY" in the window of the dingy managers office.

The Skillpa auto pulls in front.

John hops out, the engine idles.

He peers in the window of the managers office it's dark.

He finds the "night bell" and RINGS it.

John tries to compose himself as the door from inside CLICKS.

The old male MOTEL MANAGER, in a dirty wife beater, squints at John.

MANAGER

Yeah.

JOHN

Hi, sorry. I need a room.

The man turns inside and flicks on the light.

INT. HUSKER MOTEL - RECEPTION - SAME

The man lights a cigarette as he slides a registration card onto the counter.

John looks quizzically at it, then begins filling it out.

MANAGER

Two fifty a night, fifteen a week, bring the sheets to the counter by nine if you want them cleaned.

Upon hearing "two fifty a night", John winces and begins rifling through his pockets, nothing. No money.

JOHN

Sir, may I pay you when I leave? I got plenty of money back at the bank...

The manager, still half asleep, tosses a key on the counter.

MANAGER

Number nine, on the left.

John slides the card back to the manager.

INT. HUSKER MOTEL - ROOM NINE - MOMENTS LATER

The darkened cheap motel room is nothing to write home about. A bed, a chair, a radio and a bathroom.

We HEAR the sound of the key entering the lock and turning.

The door opens to reveal John, holding the hanging bag.

He flips the light switch.

A slight smile of contentment comes over his face as he scans the room.

John lets out a sigh of relief as he closes the door, and hangs his bag in the closet.

He collapses into the chair and stares at the ceiling.

After a long contemplative moment, he gets up, goes to the bathroom and washes his face and hands.

John turns to the closet and reaches for the hanging bag.

He unzip's it -

John's face quickly turns from contentment to complete horror -

EMMA'S CLOTHING FILLS THE BAG.

EXT. PEACOCK - VARIOUS - DAWN

The town has yet to come to life. The morning sun beams down on Main street, the bank and the town square.

We HEAR the sound of a woman whistling -

INT. SKILLPA HOUSE - KITCHEN - MORNING

Emma whistles as she plates up some eggs and sausage.

She walks into the dining room and places the plate at a fresh setting.

Emma walks over to the door, opens it, and picks up the paper. She politely waves to the woman across the street and shut's the door.

She removes her apron and the phone RINGS.

Emma checks the clock on the wall, 9:10, and picks up the phone.

EMMA

Hello, Mr. French. I don't think John will be coming to work today.

FANNY (V.O.)

Emma, it's Fanny.

EMMA

Oh dear, how embarrassing. Hi Fanny.

Fanny sounds a bit frantic, out of sorts.

FANNY (V.O.)

Emma, is Maggie with you?

EMMA

No, why?

FANNY (V.O.)

Some of the girls said John was here yesterday and took Maggie and Jack to her Aunt's house. Do you know anything about this?

EMMA

No, I don't.

FANNY (V.O.)

The girls said she was acting strange,
like maybe she was not telling the truth.

EMMA

I'll call her at the trailer.

FANNY (V.O.)

Do you mind?

EMMA

I insist.

FANNY (V.O.)

Thank you so much Emma. Give me a call
later okay?

EMMA

Okay, bye.

Emma presses down on the receiver and dials quickly.

EMMA (CONT'D)

Yes, may I speak to Maggie please?

INT. DINER - SAME

The grease stained fat guy leans against a wall talking to
Emma on the phone.

FAT GUY

Uh, she ain't here in the diner right
now.

EMMA (V.O.)

Can you check the trailer, please?
It's very important.

FAT GUY

Yeah, hold your horses, I'll check.

He drops the phone and let's it dangle by the cord.

As he exits the kitchen, Maggie enters holding Jack.

FAT GUY (CONT'D)

(to Maggie)

Phones for you.

Maggie takes a beat.

MAGGIE

Who is it?

FAT GUY

I don't know, but hurry up and get to work.

Maggie reluctantly picks up the receiver.

MAGGIE

Hello?

EMMA (V.O.)

(angrily)

Maggie, what are you doing there? Why aren't you at the shelter?

MAGGIE

Emma, please don't be mad at me. Please don't be mad. Okay?

EMMA (V.O.)

Darling, I'm not mad. I just want to know what's going on.

INT. SKILLPA HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - SAME

Emma, holding the receiver to her ear, stands like a statue listening to Maggie.

MAGGIE (V.O.)

John came by the shelter and said he'd give me what I'd asked for.

EMMA

The money?

Emma is visibly upset.

MAGGIE (V.O.)

Yes.

EMMA

Oh Maggie, I'm at a loss for words. You were doing so well at the shelter.

MAGGIE (V.O.)

I'm sorry, you and Fanny are so... no one has ever been that nice to me, but the shelter, it's just not for me. Besides, John said he'd get me the money.

EMMA

Maggie, be careful. John is, well, John can be very...

MAGGIE
Very what Emma?

Emma changes the subject.

EMMA
Just remember, you're always welcome at
the shelter. I wish you and Jack nothing
but the best.

MAGGIE (V.O.)
Thank you so much Emma.

EMMA
Bye.

Emma sets the receiver down, and takes John's chair at the table.

She studies every inch of the table setting, then slowly, methodically begins to eat John's breakfast again.

INT. SKILLPA HOUSE - DINING ROOM - LATER

The clock on the wall reads 10:10.

Emma is right where we left her. The plate is now empty, and a lone cigarette hangs from her lips. A contemplative stare fills her face as she takes a long drag.

She stands.

INT. DINER - SAME

The kitchen phone blares, and once again our fat guy cook picks it up.

FAT GUY
Yeah.

JOHN (V.O.)
Yes, may I please speak to Maggie.

FAT GUY
Make it quick.

The fat guy drops the receiver and calls out -

FAT GUY (CONT'D)
Hey, Miss popular, phones for you.

Maggie rounds the corner and we see Jack sitting at the counter eating cereal.

MAGGIE
Hello?

JOHN (V.O.)
Hello Maggie.

MAGGIE
John.

JOHN (V.O.)
Listen. Let's meet tonight.

MAGGIE
Are you still going to help me?

JOHN (V.O.)
Yes.

MAGGIE (V.O.)
Oh, John. Thank you so, so much.

JOHN (V.O.)
It's important that no one knows
what's going on here Maggie.

MAGGIE (V.O.)
Of course.

INT. SKILLPA HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - SAME

Emma stands as stiff as steel, the receiver pressed firmly
against her ear.

When she speaks she uses John's voice.

EMMA
So meet me at the Husker Motel, nine
o'clock, room nine.

MAGGIE (V.O.)
The motel, why the motel?

EMMA
Listen to me, very carefully, it's
important that no one knows what's going
on. Husker Motel, understand. And
Maggie...

MAGGIE (V.O.)
Yes?

EMMA

Please don't bring Jack. Leave him at the shelter.

MAGGIE

The shelter?

EMMA

I don't think I can handle seeing him tonight. Please?

MAGGIE (V.O.)

Well, okay John. Whatever you say.

Emma calmly and methodically hangs up the phone, then exits towards the back door.

We STAY CLOSE on the PHONE as we -

HEAR the back door open.

Then we HEAR the sound of John's plank being RIPPED up from the porch.

EXT. PEACOCK BANK - LATER

The Skillpa car flies into a parking spot in front of the bank and screeches to a halt, barely missing a parked car.

John, sits in the driver seat, he raises a cigarette to his lips, lights it, inhales and reaches up to adjust the rear view mirror for a quick vanity check.

He smiles, takes one more drag of the cigarette, grabs his sack lunch and exits the car.

John stands and puts on his hat, as two MOTHERS push baby buggies along the sidewalk.

JOHN

Good morning ladies!

He leans into one of the strollers.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Don't grow up too fast young man.

MOTHER #1

Someone's come out of their shell.

John stands up.

MOTHER #2
How's the train?

JOHN
Fine, just fine. I hope to see you
both at the rally on Saturday.

John checks his watch.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Can't be late for work, big day at the
bank.

John nods and smiles to the ladies.

INT. PEACOCK BANK - MAIN LOBBY - SAME

The bank is bustling.

Doris and Wanda attend to customers while Edmund stands at
Ray's office door.

Louise Rumford turns from the teller window and almost walks
right into John.

LOUISE
Excuse me... oh my, John?!

Edmund takes notice, checks his watch, then strides toward
John and Louise.

JOHN
Louise, hi!

EDMUND
Excuse me Mrs. Rumford. Morning John, why
did you come through the front door?

JOHN
(to Louise)
Don't you look divine today Louise,
just divine.

EDMUND
Excuse me Mrs. Rumford. John, may I have
a word with you?

John continues his chat with Louise.

JOHN
Oh Louise, Emma told me how neighborly
you've been.
(MORE)

JOHN (CONT'D)

She is a bit frazzled I'm afraid, not herself, not every day a train lands in your backyard.

LOUISE

How is Emma?

JOHN

Emma's fine, she feels, and I must say that I agree completely, that that train landing in out backyard was destiny.

EDMUND

John! The "in box" is rather full today.

LOUISE

Well, I won't keep you.

Louise marches out of the bank while John scans the area for what could be his desk. He finds nothing.

Edmund turns to John.

EDMUND

Follow me, I've got a load of paper on my desk for you.

They arrive at Edmund's office and there's a huge stack of paper's waiting for John.

JOHN

I'm sorry, but I seemed to have pulled my back. You know the train and all. Would you mind carrying these to my desk?

EDMUND

Under any other circumstances, no.

Edmund picks up the stack.

JOHN

Thank you so much, sir.

John follows him downstairs to his office.

EXT. PEACOCK BANK - NOON

With lunch sacks in tow, Doris and Wanda hustle off to the town square. Mack, the security guard, flips the sign in the window--

CLOSED FOR LUNCH

INT. PEACOCK BANK - JOHN'S OFFICE - SAME

John sits idle at his desk.

The in box is full, nothing has been touched.

The bank registry and pack of baseball cards sit on the desk in front of him.

INT. PEACOCK BANK - VAULT - MOMENTS LATER

Mack sits outside the vault while, John stands in front of the wall of safety deposit boxes, pulls the key from the pack of baseball cards, then finds the corresponding box on the wall.

His sack lunch is clinched in his right hand.

INT. PEACOCK BANK - SAFETY DEPOSIT BOX ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

John enters with his safety deposit box and sack lunch.

He keys the box open.

John opens his lunch sack, it's empty.

He starts stacking cash neatly and placing into the sack.

As the last of the cash is pulled out, something in the box catches his eye.

An envelope.

He opens it, the top of the document reads --

"Birth Certificate"

INT. SKILLPA HOUSE - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Emma lathers up her eyebrows, and shaves them off.

She wipes her forehead clean and pencils in "high-brows".

With her face inches from the mirror she delicately applies fire red lipstick.

She SMACKS her lips and pulls back.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT

The heavy moon hangs above endless cornrows along a lonely stretch of one-lane road.

The Skillpa car dust trails towards a neon encampment in the distance.

A neon sign flickers --

TAVERN

INT. TAVERN - NIGHT - MINUTES LATER

The bar is hopping with weathered FARM HANDS and skanky trailer park HOOKERS.

The door swings open and Emma enters.

Emma surveys the men, then walks to the bar and situates herself between two middle-aged farm hands.

BARTENDER

Ma'am. Not sure I've seen you in here before.

Emma laughs to herself.

EMMA

Silver Ridge. About forty miles down the road.

BARTENDER

You lost?

A hooker walks by and gives Emma the evil eye.

EMMA

No, not really, why do you ask?

Emma straightens up, runs her eyes the length of the MAN to her left, then tosses her hair.

EMMA (CONT'D)

Aren't one of you two gonna buy a girl a drink?

Bartender laughs.

BARTENDER

These two are lucky to be drinking
themselves, never mind buying one.

Emma eyeballs the bartender.

EMMA

Double shooter of Wild Turkey, barman.

BARTENDER

Yes ma'am.

The bartender reaches for a shot glass, places it on the bar
and fills it.

Emma slams the shot.

EMMA

Once again, if you please, barman.

He smiles.

BARTENDER

Yes ma'am.

Emma turns to the man to her right and stands erect.

EMMA

How tall are you?

MAN

Reckon I'm about your height in these
snake boots, ma'am.

He stands up straight and Emma notices they are exactly the
same size.

She leans into him, turning her back on the other in men in
the tavern.

EMMA

Where are you from, cupcake?

MAN

All over ma'am. Not really rooted
anywhere.

Emma brushes her hand against his and smiles.

EMMA

My name's Maggie.

EXT./INT. HUSKER MOTEL - ROOM NINE - LATER

The Skillpa auto is parked in front of room number nine.
Maggie walks into the light and raps twice on the door.

She straightens her skirt, unbuttons her blouse one button,
takes a deep breath and wrings her hands.

The door opens.

MAGGIE
(shocked)

Emma?

Emma puts her arm around Maggie.

EMMA
(calmly)

Come in...

Maggie takes a half step in,

MAGGIE
...it'll all make sense in a few
moments.

Emma looks out into the darkness and gently CLOSES THE DOOR -

Maggie inches forward into the room.

From Maggie's POV...

--first, she see's a liquor bottle, and two glasses on a
table next to the wall.

--then, a pair of snake-skin boots, laying at the end of
the bed.

She cautiously steps forward,

--the man from the bar, now wearing one of John's suits,
lays deathly still on the bed.

Blood halo's from under his head, against the cheap white
motel pillow.

MUSIC BLARES from the radio.

Maggie frantically whips around,

Emma wields a BLOODY TIRE IRON,

She SMASHES Maggie in the face.

Maggie drops to the floor.

Emma bludgeons her twice more.

Maggie lays still, blood spurts from her face.

Emma, calmly stands over Maggie as she takes her last breath, then forcefully drags her up onto the bed, and lays her next to the man.

Then, she retrieves a GAS CAN from the closet.

EXT. PEACOCK - DAWN

The rising sun is imperfect.

A single billow of SMOKE wafts directly into it.

INT. SKILLPA HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - LATER

Emma sit's perfectly still on the sofa.

Her eye's suggest a place of deep thought.

KNOCK, KNOCK is heard on the front door.

Emma, rises and takes a moment to adjust her dress and take a deep breath.

She opens the door to reveal -

A PRIEST, Officer McGonigle in the doorway and Fanny standing at the end of the walkway.

MCGONIGLE
Mrs. Emma Skillpa?

EMMA
Yes?

PRIEST
May we come in?

Emma locks eyes with a visibly upset Fanny.

INT. SKILLPA HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Fanny, McGonigle and the Priest sit on the sofa.

Emma sit's across from them in her chair.

MCGONIGLE

The fire chief said it was probably
caused by John smoking in bed.

Tears fill Emma's eyes as she speaks.

EMMA

Why would he be there? It doesn't make
any sense.

Mcgonigle searches for the right words.

MCGONIGLE

Well, ma'am, it's a place where men go to
find...

Fanny blurts out.

FANNY

Maggie was with him.

Emma stands up and turns her back to the trio.

EMMA

Oh, what am I going to do? What am I
going to do?

Fanny stands and puts her arm around Emma.

FANNY

Emma, you're going to go on with your
life. You're going to stand up and be
strong.

Sensing the tension, the Priest pipes up.

PRIEST

We all have different ways of grieving
Mrs. Skillpa. Why don't we start with a
prayer for John?

EMMA

Yes, yes.

EXT. SKILLPA HOUSE - BACKYARD - RALLY - DAY

The MARCHING BAND, the PRESS, and the people of Peacock fill the Skillpa backyard.

As CAMERA PANS along the make-shift stage in front of the train where we see all the women we met at the shelter and their children,

IKE (O.S.)

Senator Jackson Wyatt will always make a wrong a right and that's why I came to Peacock. Thank you for having me.

The crowd CHEERS as the CAMERA MOVE ends on Emma.

She's holding Jack in her arms.

SNAP -

The photo is taken of all the ladies, including Emma, standing with Ike and the Senator.

As the sound grows louder, the scene becomes a bit more chaotic -

Emma, holding Jack tightly, slips off the stage and heads into the house.

INT. SKILLPA HOUSE - BACK DOOR - SAME

SLAM, CLANK

Emma closes and locks the back door.

The band's patriotic music is muffled by the walls of the old house.

She glides into the kitchen and draws the drapes above the sink with ease.

Emma continues her march.

CLANK

She locks the heavy front door.

Emma slides all of the drapes closed in the front room.

EXT. SKILLPA HOUSE - BACKYARD - SAME

Fanny, on stage, looks around and see's that Emma is missing from the group.

She leans over to Glenda and tries to speak over the blaring music.

FANNY
Have you seen Emma?

Glenda shakes her head "no".

Fanny makes her way off-stage and over to the back door.

She tries to turn the handle.

Nothing, it's locked.

She KNOCKS hard and calls out.

FANNY (CONT'D)
Emma?! It's me.

She POUNDS again.

FANNY (CONT'D)
Open up Emma.

Fanny steps down off the porch and looks up at the second story window.

We FOLLOW HER as she turns and walks around the side of the house towards the front door.

She sees that all of the drapes have been closed.

She can't see in.

Fanny KNOCKS on the front door.

Again, nothing.

INT. SKILLPA HOUSE - DINING ROOM - SAME

KNOCK, KNOCK, KNOCK

Emma ignores it as she passes the dining room table, Jack still locked tightly in her arms.

On the table we see adoption papers.

Next to the papers we see the opened envelope from John's safety deposit box, the birth certificate lays near by.

It's JACK'S BIRTH CERTIFICATE.

As Emma stares at the paperwork -

We HEAR Fanny's muted voice calling out.

FANNY (O.S.)

Emma? Are you there?

At the base of the stairs is the box of toys we saw Emma get from the basement. Emma, with her free hand, carefully kneels down and picks it up.

She slowly climbs the staircase as Jack rests his head on her shoulder.

KNOCK, KNOCK, KNOCK

From the front door.

FANNY (O.S.) (CONT'D)

You're missing it Emma. It's wonderful.
Open up.

KNOCK, KNOCK, KNOCK

With child resting peacefully, Emma continues her ascent.

FADE OUT.

T H E E N D .