

BRIDGES OF MADISON COUNTY

Screenplay by

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BMC

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THE BRIDGES OF MADISON COUNTY

INT. TRAIN, KASHMIR PROVINCE - DAY

The woman leans back on the hard wooden seat. The few other passengers are Indian, Pakistani. But the woman is not. She is dark and lovely, and 54 years old. Just now, the eyes are younger. Perhaps with the memory that flickers.

She is FRANCESCA JOHNSON, eyes locked to a past that draws us somehow to her, for there is loss and longing. But eagerness as well. The ancient train RATTLES fiercely along its mountain pass, and her one bag shimmies on the seat beside her. So small to be her sole possession this far from wherever could be home. And across the aisle...

...a baby CRIES sharply, startling its mother awake. At first, even this cannot pierce Francesca's reverie. Then, her dark eyes fall upon the baby, and there is such kindness, such direct connection, that the baby is suddenly silent. Then...

...SHRIEKS again, louder than before. The mother embarrassed, as if the gentle foreign lady will be insulted. But Francesca laughs softly, thinks it's funny. And as her gaze comes up...

...it stops. For the train is through the pass now, slowing as it approaches an ageless, rickety STATION. And suddenly soaring into view...

...mountains, white, perfect, spilling to a bottomless blue-green valley. The beauty sucks our breath away. Francesca's fingers reach for the handle of her bag. Close around it. She is ready.

EXT. FARM, IOWA - DAY

A world away. Iowa farm in Iowa sun. Very quiet as we PAN, no one lives here, works here, loves here, now. No livestock, no chickens. A wind through tall grass, a pasture, silent barn, and finally to...

...a farmhouse. A rental car parked at the porch. Two figures just entering the darkened house...

INT. PARLOR - DAY

A house put to sleep. Sheets carefully arranged as dustcovers over the furniture. CAROLYN JOHNSON leads the way. She is slim, blonde, 25. A fresh, honest cast to her features, an inheritance from Francesca. She moves slowly, touching things, looking.

MICHAEL (O.S.)

I don't know why she'd drag
you all this way, it's a
one-man job.

Her brother MICHAEL is tall, solidly built, 28. His mother's dark coloring, a clear resemblance. But no grace to his gait, his manner.

CAROLYN

...Florida's just as far. Least I'm not leaving a wife alone with a newborn baby.

He's standing now, watching her wander the room.

MICHAEL

...I had to come, somebody has to do this.

Her little shrug, still not looking at him. A sense that they are no longer close.

CAROLYN

S'matter? Baby sister can't be trusted to sell one old farm by herself...

MICHAEL

...I don't know why Ma's selling. After all this time.

And Carolyn turns to him. Really?

CAROLYN

I'm surprised she waited this long.

The look holds. He hasn't gotten away with changing the subject.

MICHAEL

That what you think? I wouldn't trust you to sell it for her?

And he smiles, a genuine smile. It says she's right and he's sorry. So she smiles back, and they are kids again. In their mother's house.

MICHAEL

I think she's crazy. If she wanted to go to Italy, visit her family... but...run off like a gypsy...

CAROLYN

I thought it was romantic.

MICHAEL

...'I'm going everywhere everything is that I want to see, for as long as I want to.' Does that sound romantic to you?

She sighs. What a question.

CAROLYN

Good for Ma. Did you ever see her do one romantic thing her whole life?

He wouldn't know how to go about finding that answer.

MICHAEL

What's she going to do for money?

No response. She heads on through a doorway, leaving him to follow. He does, slowly, into...

...the KITCHEN. She is reaching up to a cupboard...

CAROLYN

She said there'd be a note. By the brandy bottle.

MICHAEL

Brandy? Since when is she drin...

...and stops. The cupboard is open. It contains only two small brandy glasses. The bottle. And the note. She opens, reads, smiles softly...

CAROLYN (reads)

'Hello, baby. Please read this in the kitchen. With your brother present.'

She glances up. So far, so good. He's intrigued, smiling.

CAROLYN (reads)

'Michael looks like me, but he is his father. Tell him I am thrifty, and will not spend all my money.'

And then, as she reads, her grin fades. She sets the letter on the formica table...

MICHAEL

What...?

But she has gone to the pantry, opened it. And found a large walnut BOX. She brings it to the table, her eyes fascinated, her brother ambling over from the doorway. The box is opened, carefully, and she lifts out...

...two CAMERAS. Each with a lens attached. They are battered, scarred. We can see the word NIKON. She looks down to the note, finds the place with her finger...

CAROLYN (reads)

'These were his cameras...'

And she looks up. Neither has the slightest idea. But they are disturbed, and that has drawn them together. Carolyn looks back to the note...

CAROLYN (reads)

'...everything else is in the bedroom dresser. Fourth drawer.'

Her eyes come up. Her lips part in wondering.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SAME KITCHEN - DAY

A rainy day, not long ago, in this same kitchen. Francesca sits cross-legged on a dropcloth, staining a small chest a rich rosewood color. As she works silently, we hear...

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

Last birthday I was 54. It rained so hard.

The storm is pounding. Her hands work expertly, painstakingly. But her eyes are given over to her thoughts.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

Friends drove out from Winterset, and brought me a cake. I fixed lunch, and we talked the talk of women our age and circumstance. Grandchildren. What to buy for Christmas.

She's finished working for now. Sets her brush to soak.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

It rained like this when my husband died. That was seven years, and I gave some of my thoughts to Richard this afternoon...

Lie going onto the can. Slow, precise.

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FRANCESCA (V.O.)

...his sturdy kindness, his steady ways.

She glances up to a clock. Four minutes to six. A flicker of impatience. Then, she shakes her shoulders free. Stiff from her work.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

I was 24 when we met. I was teaching at a private school for girls, and wondering about my life. Despairing of my choices, my lack of opportunities.

Rolling her neck, slowly, getting out the kinks.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

I had never been more than two hundred miles away from Naples.

Looking back at the clock. Still only four minutes to six. She's annoyed by this.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

Richard had been stationed in Italy while in the navy. And was now coming back to visit a friend in Pozzouli.

She stops glaring at the clock. And stands up.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

He always said that trip was his only fling. Impulsive, extravagant. And I had been his reward.

She leaves the kitchen now, climbs stairs.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

A cafe, sunlight off the water. Meet a stranger's eyes. And the life you would have known...forever exchanged for another.

Reaching the top...

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

...what would that life, all those alternative lives, have been?

She goes into a bathroom. Her things laid out carefully beneath the mirror.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

Richard assumed I was innocent. Which I was, except for the affair with Niccolo. That was dark and wild, and a little disturbing. And over for months. Months of loneliness, depression... 12

Stares into that mirror.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

Richard was kind, and...lost in me. There was tenderness. And the sweet promise of America.

Runs the tap. Washes her hands thoroughly, almost compulsively.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

So I bargained among my dreams. And came to Iowa.

She dries her hands, looks at a clock. One minute to six. Lets the air out slowly, for something is rising within her. And we can feel it.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

I came to have his children. To watch Michael play football on cold October nights. To take Carolyn to Des Moines for her prom dress.

She is gathering herself. There is something in her step as she goes to the simple bedroom.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

I did my part, I did my best. And we cared for each other. Although in different ways.

Her bed is perfectly made. She sits on its edge, facing her dresser.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

He never knew me. I assumed that was normal.

Her eyes go, almost desperately, to a clock. Six, straight up. A spark flickers through her. She is alive. She smiles.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

I like to wait for six.

And she reaches out. To her dresser. To the fourth drawer. Drawing out...

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

Of course, I did this only once a year. On my birthday.

...a manila envelope. Her breath a little faster now, uneven. And we can hear that.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

Otherwise, I might do it every hour. Of every day.

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She holds the envelope in her hands, but will not look at it. Not yet. She stands up, and...

...back down the hallway. Trying to keep her steps slow, measured. But they are quickened nonetheless. Down the stairs, the precious envelope in her hands. And into...

...the kitchen. She sets the envelope on the formica table. She goes to the cupboard. Reaches up. Two small brandy glasses. One bottle. She licks her lips absently, just seeing them again.

She pours herself a glass. Takes it to the table. Once each year. On her birthday.

She sits. And now her fingers brush slowly across the surface of this envelope. It is not a sigh. It is the soft breath of life. With her, we look CLOSE on...

...the postmark. SEATTLE, WA, Sept 12 '78.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

I always looked at the postmark first. That was part of the ritual.

Now the address. FRANCESCA JOHNSON, RR2, WINTERSET, IOWA. Written in longhand. Now PAN TO...the return address, scrabbled carelessly, BOX 42, BELLINGHAM, WA.. PULL BACK to see her staring, staring motionless...

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
I concentrate on the writing. For contained in it is the movement of his hands.

Her eyes are full now, first time. It warms and breaks our hearts to see it.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
When I could feel his hands touching me. I would open the envelope.

...and she does. One at a time, we see a single letter...two photographs...a complete issue of National Geographic along with separate clippings from other issues.

Her breath now ragged, but very quiet. A sip of brandy. We see one photograph...her, younger, in a pasture. Jeans and t-shirt. Luminous smile. Open the letter...

...the stationery is simple. It says ROBERT KINCAID, WRITER-PHOTOGRAPHER. And her fingertips reach. Touch the name. Tears well up.

Once a year. On her birthday.

DISSOLVE TO...

EXT. SHADED STREET, BELLINGHAM, WASHINGTON - MORNING

Dappled August shade on an ancient green Chevy pick-up. The passenger door is open, and we CLOSE on the cab...

...a man's HANDS, lean and strong, enter frame. Quickly packing the cab with knapsacks, a medium size ice chest, two tripods, a thermos...

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
Robert Kincaid was a magician, of sorts.

...cartons of Camels, a guitar case. The door shuts, solid. The crunch of his boots going around the cab.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
He made things appear. From nothing.

Driver's door opens. KINCAID slides in. He is 46, lithe, with long muscles and an easy grace. His graying hair curls long at the edges. His eyes are clear green. He reaches for a Camel...

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
August 8, sixteen years ago. He began our journey...

Lights it. Draws. Thinks a beat.

FRANCESCA (V.O., softly)
...what did we know?

Turns the key. The old truck won't start. Not even close.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
He was on assignment for the
National Geographic. For which
he mostly freelanced.

He never blinks. KICKS the pedal sharply, turning the key in
rhythm, and the engine BOLTS to life. No problem.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
He would start along the coast of
Puget Sound...wind through the
Cascades...and then to U.S. Route 2,
which would head him halfway across
the country toward Duluth, Minnesota.

He gently slides into gear. This machine and he are partners.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
He was as alone as it's possible to
be. Only child, parents gone, no
relatives he hadn't lost track of.
No friends to come back to from his
roamings about the earth...

He eases the green truck out from beneath the tree.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
Gypsies make difficult friends for
ordinary people.

Starts down the road.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
Pulling away, he thought...for
the millionth time, he later said...
he wished he had a dog. Just for
company.

We can still see him...

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
But being overseas all the time.
Wouldn't be fair to the animal.

Around the bend. And gone.

EXT. FARM - AFTERNOON

The Iowa farm. In Iowa sun. The green pick-up has rolled south
aways from Duluth, Minnesota. The truck coming slowly, as if the
driver were searching for something. And Kincaid stops...

...by a mailbox. At the end of the lane. It says RICHARD JOHNSON, RR2, and looking for direction, Kincaid turns up the path. At the far end of the lane is a porch. And a porch swing. In the swing, in the shade, with her cool drink...

...a woman rises slowly. Barefoot, jeans, faded blue workshirt with the tail out. Long black hair fastened up with a tortoise-shell comb. Francesca Johnson is no less lovely, and 38 years old. As the truck rolls toward a stop...

...she walks unhurriedly through the grass. Kincaid slides from the cab, his tan shirt dark with perspiration beneath wide orange suspenders. Without smiling, the face still conveys a kindness.

KINCAID

I'm sorry to bother you, but I'm looking for a covered bridge out this way. I think I'm temporarily lost.

He wipes the face with a blue bandana.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

He looked at me directly, and I felt something inside me jump. It wasn't perceived as something necessarily positive. Just something I noticed.

Sound of a car going past, then HONKING. Francesca looks up, waves back at a brown arm waving from a Ford...

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

That was Floyd Clark.

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When she looks back to the stranger, BMC

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

I surprised myself, by saying...

FRANCESCA

I'll be glad to show it to you, if you want.

He seems taken back by her offer.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

Why I did that, I never really knew.

She stands comfortably, looking directly at him with dark neutral eyes. He nods, grateful.

KINCAID

I'd appreciate that.

Said with respect. So she nods back, still unsmiling, and turns away. Walks back to the steps to pick up her cowboy boots...

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
I've thought and thought. All the
easy answers don't work. In fact,
they're the first reasons I would
have chosen to keep my silence.

Carrying her boots, she goes to the truck. He's leaning into
the passenger side, fussing with stuff, muttering...

KINCAID
...just take a minute here, make
you som. room...

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
He was awkward and shy about this.
I found that sweet and odd. Shy
about what?

In faded red paint, she reads: KINCAID PHOTOGRAPHY, BELLINGHAM,
WASHINGTON.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
Richard and the children were in
Illinois for three days. Showing
Carolyn's pig at State Fair.

Staring at the writing, her eyes harden slightly.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
I don't know why that came into
my mind at the moment I read his name. But I remember resenting
the implication. 12

The door of the truck suddenly swings SHUT, banging him in the
butt. His first instinct is to smile to himself, what a clumsy
jerk. And she's watching that. JWC

KINCAID
Okay, I think I can fit you in.

And he holds the door for her. She hops up easily, carelessly. He
shuts the door securely. Moves around the cab with his easy
leopard motions. She's watching that, too. Non-committal.

He slips in. Quick glance, flicker of a smile.

KINCAID
Which way?

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
Slowness and quickness. I noticed
that right away.

She gestures toward the right. He starts the truck, they ease off
down the lane, bouncing on the unpaved dirt. He reaches across to
the glove box, his forearm accidentally brushing across her lower
thigh. No one seems to notice this.

He draws out a business card. ROBERT KINCAID, WRITER-PHOTOGRAPHER.
Address. Phone number. Hands it to her, without looking.

KINCAID

I'm here on assignment for National
Geographic. You familiar with their
magazine?

FRANCESCA

Never heard of it.

And his eyes flick from the road to confirm this was really a dry
joke. He smiles with a subtle mouth. What a dumb question, huh?

KINCAID

The piece is about covered bridges
in Madison County. I've located the
first six, but I guess there's at
least one more...

FRANCESCA

...it's called Roseman Bridge.

And as she stares straight ahead with calm eyes...

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

My voice belonged to someone else.
A teenage girl leaning from a window
in Naples...

She lets out some air. Watching the road.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

...looking down far city streets,
toward trains. And harbors.

FRANCESCA

Turn left here.

And he does. She watches his forearms turn the wheel. Noticing a
silver bracelet with intricate scrollwork clinging to his right
wrist...

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

That needs a good rubbing with
silver polish.

He pulls a pack of Camels from his shirt pocket, shakes one halfway
out. And offers it to her. Only a heartbeat before...

...she reaches.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

Now this is pure rebelliousness.
Because Richard hates it so.

He shakes out another, puts it between his lips. And flicks a gold
Zippo lighter into flame, holding it toward her, while keeping his
eyes on the road.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
...how many years? I didn't waste
the time to count.

And cups her hands around the lighter, against the wind. Touching
his hand to hold it steady. When she pulls back, he forms his own
wind cup to light his Camel, hands in perfect rhythm, leaving the
wheel for only a split-second.

She rests against the dusty truck seat. Smokes her cigarette.
Points...

FRANCESCA
There it is, just around the
curve.

There it is. An old bridge, peeling red, tilting slightly from all
the years. Spanning a small stream. A murmur, to himself...

KINCAID
...sunrise shot.

And she hears.

EXT. STREAM - AFTERNOON

Francesca sits on the gravel bank, nearly hidden by brush, and
smokes slowly. She watches him walking the site, prowling loose-
limbed, his eyes always moving, receiving, recording. A redwing
blackbird sits on a wire and looks at her. And upstream...

...Kincaid squats down. Stares through the camera. ¹² Then, off
again, disappearing inside the covered bridge. She snuffs out her
smoke, rises...

...glances around. Up the road. ^{BMC} Down the road.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
No cars.

So she walks toward the bridge. Across the open space.
Approaching, she can see his silhouette at the other end. Then,
he disappears down the incline toward the stream.

She enters the bridge. Pigeons burble in nests beneath the eaves.
Rural graffiti on the planks. She peeks through a large crack...

...he stands on a rock, in the middle of this small river, and
suddenly...

...waves at Francesca, which startles her a little, and she pulls
back. As if caught looking. She can hear his boots now, up the
gravel grade. On the wooden boards. She doesn't turn. His voice
echoes under the cover...

KINCAID
Real pretty.

And she nods, without looking.

FRANCESCA

We take these old bridges for granted and don't think much about them.

As she turns to see him coming, he holds out...

...a small bouquet of wildflowers. Black-eyed Susans.

KINCAID

Thanks for the guided tour.

Soft smile.

KINCAID

I'll come back at dawn one of these days, and get my shots.

She's looking at the flowers. He thinks maybe he hasn't held them close enough, so he reaches them out...

KINCAID

I don't know your name.

And she takes them. Her dark quiet eyes stay down on them. Casually...

FRANCESCA

Francesca.

The black eyes come up to his smile. It is only kind and friendly. No spin, no agenda.

KINCAID

I caught the trace of an accent. Italian?

FRANCESCA

Yes. A long time ago.

INT. TRUCK - AFTERNOON

Riding back. Clutching her flowers in her lap. Straight up, like a schoolgirl coming back from an outing. She stares ahead with those calm, relaxed eyes.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

There was blood in my face, I could feel it.

The farm is just ahead. The truck bouncing.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

I hadn't done anything or said anything, but I felt as if I had.

He turns the truck up the lane.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
I was angry at myself. I felt
ridiculous.

Seeing the mailbox...

KINCAID
Richard is your husband?

FRANCESCA
Yes. It's pretty hot. Would
you like an ice tea?

The green eyes come over. Respectful, once more.

KINCAID
If it's all right, I sure would.

FRANCESCA
It's all right.

Her head tosses slightly, her arm reaching to point...

FRANCESCA
You could swing around the back.

He nods, okay. As if it were the most natural request.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
All I needed was some neighbor man
to ask Richard, 'Havin' some work
done at the place? Saw a green pickup
there last week. Knew Frannie was
home, so I didn't bother to check on 12.

The truck eases around. Behind the house.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
I wanted a little more of him. A
little more of his time.

And slides slowly to a stop.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
I was a good person. This was
not wrong.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - AFTERNOON

Walking up the steps to the back porch. She glances to see he is
loaded with three knapsacks. Almost apologetic with...

KINCAID
Awful hot to leave the equipment
in the truck.

Despite the load, he moves effortlessly to reach the screen door
just soon enough to hold it for her, so that she passes through
without breaking the rhythm of her stride. An unconscious act on
his part, done as if undeserving of notice. It is noticed.

They are in the kitchen, and she walks to the refrigerator without a word. Her back to him, she empties ice from a tray. Pours sun tea from a half-gallon glass jug. She knows he is sitting, watching her.

FRANCESCA

Lemon?

KINCAID

Yes, please.

FRANCESCA

Sugar?

KINCAID

No, thanks.

She sets his glass before him on the formica table. And places her bouquet in an old jelly glass with Donald Duck on it. Then, leaning against the counter...

...she balances on one leg. Bands over. And removes one cowboy boot.

KINCAID

This is good. Thank you.

She nods politely. Not seeming to notice his eyes, she reverses the process, standing on one bare foot to remove the other boot.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

There had been no calculation whatsoever. But taking off my boots while he watched, suddenly felt so much like undressing. 12

The second boot hits the floor.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

...I wondered what it looked like.

Kincaid is watching. But we can't tell. She turns away from him, and takes an ashtray from a drawer. Sets it on the table where he can reach it. With this tacit permission...

...he pulls out his pack of Camels, and hands it toward her. She smiles, thank you. Takes one. No words, here. The gold Zippo. She touches his hand to steady it.

She sits back. From the look of it, the cigarette tastes wonderful.

FRANCESCA

What is it you do, exactly? I mean, with the photography.

He looks at his cigarette and speaks quietly...

KINCAID

I'm a contract shooter, mostly for them. It takes me all over, here, abroad.

FRANCESCA

Europe...?

He nods.

KINCAID

...Amazon, Thailand, North Africa. Not a lot of room for artistic expression, they're a pretty conservative bunch. But the pay is okay, steady, and...

The eyes come up...

KINCAID

...I make my own schedule, do other projects for my own satisfaction. How 'bout you?

So direct, she blinks.

FRANCESCA

Oh, gosh, nothing like you. I have a degree in comparative lit, and...

Shrugs.

FRANCESCA

...when I arrived from Italy, I got a credential. Taught high school, but...

Shrugs again. Suddenly, vaguely ashamed that...

FRANCESCA

Richard didn't like the idea of my working.

Not happy with her feelings, she goes for the pitcher. Refills his glass.

KINCAID

Thanks. How do you like it here in Iowa?

Steady green eyes see so much. No judgment, only genuine interest. Every question he asks, he wants to know the answer. She fills her own glass, thinking...then...

FRANCESCA

I'm supposed to say, 'Just fine. It's quiet. The people are real nice'. And they are. In certain ways.

She finds his eyes again. They are always there now.

FRANCESCA

That sounds so ungenerous. There are a lot of good things about the people here...

The people here.

FRANCESCA

...and I respect them for those qualities. But...

She finds she has looked away again, and she is self-conscious about that. She turns slowly to his eyes...

FRANCESCA

...it's not what I dreamed of as a girl.

Silence. This time, she won't look away.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

The words had been there for years. Now they were spoken...

He smiles. With enough sadness in it, to make a connection.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

...to a stranger with a green truck. From Bellingham, Washington.

He puts out his Camel. Watches its last smoke curl ¹² Draws a breath, for...

KINCAID MC

...the old dreams were good dreams. They didn't work out. But I'm glad I had them.'

He looks up. And his smile is smaller, but somehow wonderful. Somehow, just for her.

FRANCESCA

Who wrote that?

KINCAID

I did, I think.

She wrinkles her nose. You think?

KINCAID

Sometimes I hear 'em, and steal 'em without remembering. You ever do that?

Yah. She does that.

FRANCESCA

Would you like to stay for supper?
My family's away, so I don't have
too much on hand, but I can figure
out something.

He takes his time. What is he deciding? A soft...

KINCAID

Yes. I'd like that.

A small breath escapes her.

FRANCESCA

You like pork chops? I could fix
them with some vegetables from the
garden.

KINCAID

Oh, just the vegetables for me.
I don't eat meat.

She looks mildly astonished, so...

KINCAID

No big deal, I just feel better
that way. Unmanly, huh?

And now her smile. Because the issue is not intimate, she feels
free to let go. It is a smile of light, and it stops him for a
beat.

KINCAID

Well. I've got a few things to
get ready.

He stands up. Drinks the last of his tea. A little wave, and he
goes through the kitchen doorway to the porch. As he does...

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

...he didn't let the screen door
bang like everyone else did. He
caught it. And closed it, gently.

On the way across the porch, a collie is lying in his path. He
squats down to pet the animal. Who licks him, messily, along his
arms.

INT. BATHROOM - AFTERNOON

Francesca toweling off after a quick bath. She is peering over the
top of the cafe curtain, down at the farmyard. With her, we see...

...Kincaid washing up at the old hand pump. His suitcase is open
and his shirt is off.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

I almost told him to shower in the house if he wanted. Then, it seemed ridiculously familiar...then, ridiculous to worry about it...then, I just felt ridiculous. Then he was gone.

He uses his dirty shirt as a combination washcloth and towel.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

At least, a towel. I could have done that much.

He begins to soap his face. Razor laying on the cement by the pump. His body lean and hard, with a workman's shoulders. Belly flat as a knife blade.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

However old he was. He didn't look it.

As he begins to shave, his razor catches the sunlight. We PULL BACK to her face. Neutral, watching.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

After a moment, I realized. For the first time in my life, I was going to watch a man shave. All the way through.

INT. BEDROOM - AFTERNOON

Francesca in a mirror. White shirt, sleeves rolled up, fresh pair of jeans. Sandals. Hair bound with a clip, 12
3 1/2
spilling down her back.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

It wouldn't seem right to dress up. He'd be in working clothes.

She begins to attach gold hoop earrings. Studying her face with vague disapproval as she does.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

Richard says these make me look like a 'hussy'. A really irritating word.

She studies the effect. Tosses her head, just a little. To see the motion of the hoops. Then her eyes go to...

...a small bottle of perfume, Wind Song. Stare.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

Big debate.

Hesitantly, reaching...

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

Sparingly, then. To be polite.

EXT. GARDEN - AFTERNOON

Francesca in her garden. She has a dishpan done in cracked white enamel, gathering carrots and parsley. Some parsnips, some turnips. Two colors of onion.

INT. KITCHEN - AFTERNOON

She comes through the screen door with her vegetables. He is sitting with his knapsacks and his cooler, wearing a clean khaki shirt. On the table, three cameras, five lenses, a fresh pack of Camels.

KINCAID

Need any kinda help?

He hasn't looked up from caring for his cameras. Wiping and brushing and blowing.

FRANCESCA

I'm okay, I'll just fix a stew.

She moves by him to the sink. He does not glance up to watch her.

KINCAID

I have some beer in the cooler.

FRANCESCA

That would be nice.

And he rises. So quickly, so unhurriedly, he has two beers from the cooler, flicking off the caps with a church key, bringing them to her at her kitchen sink.

She looks up into green eyes. And accepts his beer.

KINCAID

To covered bridges in the late afternoon.

No spin. No seduction. Just a toast, a friendly grin. He raises his bottle in a half salute. So she does the same. And they drink.

KINCAID

I'm good at chopping vegetables.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

They stand side-by-side at the narrow counter. Two feet apart. Chopping vegetables. No talk, until...

FRANCESCA

I saw the guitar in your truck.

KINCAID

It keeps me company. My wife taught me, she was a folk singer of sorts.

Both chopping quietly. She's trying to keep her rhythm. Her dark eyes have stiffened.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

He had a right to be married, of course. It just didn't seem to fit him.

KINCAID

She couldn't take the long shoots when I'd be gone for months. She pulled out nine years ago.

Oh. No one has looked up. Only the dark eyes have changed texture. A soft voice...

FRANCESCA

You ever hear from her?

KINCAID

No, never.

No more words. Only quiet knives on cutting boards.

EXT. BACK PORCH - SUNSET

They sit on the porch swing, comfortably apart. The sky is coloring. They hold fresh bears.

KINCAID

...well, I get a little impatient with myself...

His eyes are down, he is smiling gently. She watches his profile.

KINCAID

...this grand talk of mass markets stifling creative work.

Shakes his head, just slightly.

KINCAID

We each do what we want to in the end. I mean, we do it, right?

Looks up at her so directly. She has to nod, slowly. It does seem right.

KINCAID

So when I'm done with Roseman Bridge, I'll have had some fun, no matter what.

A little twinkle. Against the editors of mass markets.

KINCAID

Lens choice, camera angle, general composition. And light, of course, that's all we really shoot is light. The objects are just there to reflect it.

Her eyes. Neutral. But rapt.

KINCAID

When I'm done. There'll be a poem in 'here somewhere. Even if only I can read it.

And drinks his beer.

KINCAID

So forgive my complaint. The reality is not what the song started out to be. But it's not a bad song.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

For him, this was everyday talk. To me, it was the stuff of literature.

She raises the bottle slowly to her lips...

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

Real life talk was farm prices and weather. New babies and funerals and athletic teams.

12

Deep swallow...

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

Not art and dreams. Or what keeps the music silent, the dreams in a box.

KINCAID

If you don't mind. Tell me a little about your life in Italy.

Her bottle comes away.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

And with those words, it hit me. He wanted to know.

She's looking in his eyes.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

He wanted to know me. And I almost cried with the sadness of how truly strange that felt.

Her eyes flutter down. Between them on the swing is his pack of Camels, with the Zippo resting on top. Thinking she wants them, he slides them over to her. She lets a soft breath out...

...shakes a cigarette free. Distracted by her thoughts, she fumbles a little with the lighter. It doesn't catch. Twice. So he reaches...

...takes it from her. Flips the flint wheel into flame. She touches his hand to steady it. As she leans toward the light...

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
Around other men, I felt graceful.

She draws deep. Turns the dark eyes toward him.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
So with light fading and stew cooking, I told him. My life in Italy.

She begins to speak slowly, MOS. As we CIRCLE them now, we see her earnestness. His full attention.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
My housewife mother, my bank manager father. The private schools, the nuns.

She is leaning forward. Pouring herself slowly. Into a waiting vessel.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
Standing at a sea wall. Watching ships from the world.

12

As we keep circling, the sky grows darker.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
I was silent. About Niccolo.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Two at dinner. The formica table. Kincaid cleaning his plate, as she watches.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
He ate two helpings of stew with quiet good manners, and told me twice how fine it was.

He breaks off another piece of bread. He's doing the talking now, MOS.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
The watermelon was perfect. The beer was cold. The evening was blue. And somewhere in it, I began to wonder...

Watch her listening. And thinking.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
...how to manage the end of the evening. And if I'd gotten myself into something I couldn't handle.

He says something that makes her laugh softly. And he smiles to see that.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
Then I realized I was foolish to worry. Robert Kincaid was a gentleman, and far more unusual to me than I to him.

She reaches to put more food in his plate.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
He was respectful, even a little bashful. Which I liked. When the evening was over, he would just leave.

Watching him eat heartily, talk passionately.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
And that. Would be that.

EXT. PASTURE - NIGHT

CLOSE on Francesca, eyes down. Walking slow in moonlight.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
Suddenly, supper was done. And I wondered, what now? He took care of it...

PULL BACK to see him strolling beside her.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
'Would you like to walk?', he'd said. And held the door for me. And closed it gently.

She looks at the night sky. They walk in silence.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
It was an exotic pleasure. In real life, after suppers, there was the television news, and then the evening programs. Richard watched these. I would read in the kitchen. Books from the Winterset library, or the book club I belonged to...

She's staring up. As if reading her life in the stars.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
Sometimes, he would call, 'Frannie,
you've got to see this!' Then, I'd
go and sit with him for awhile.

KINCAID
'The silver apples of the moon/
The golden apples of the sun.'

She glances over. Quietly...

FRANCESCA
'The Song of Wandering Aengus'.

He nods. Eyes on the silver apple.

KINCAID
Good stuff, Yeats. Realism,
economy, sensuality, beauty,
magic. Appeals to my Irish
heritage.

And they keep walking.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
In those five words were all of
Yeats. I'd thought my high school
students could respond to that.
They were horny enough.

She's watching Kincaid now. Unseen by him, a sadness across her
eyes. 12

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
But they made jokes, pantomimed
the golden apples as breasts. And
the girls tittered and blushed.

She sighs. Looks down at her boots in the wet grass.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
They would live with those
attitudes all their lives. And
it was disheartening, despite the
outward friendliness of the place...

They are coming up on a barbed wire fence...

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
A good place to raise kids, they
liked to say a lot. And I wonder...

A farmhouse just beyond...

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
...is it a good place to raise
adults?

She takes the last step to the fence a little quickly, so that she
can reach first...

...and hold the wire down for him. He really likes that. Smiles.
And steps through.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

For no reason, I remembered the
brandy.

He's holding the wire for her now.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

A bottle I'd bought once. In
small hope of romance for our
country lives.

She steps through.

FRANCESCA

Would you like coffee? Or,
I have some brandy.

KINCAID

Is the possibility of both open?

His voice is smiling, playing.

FRANCESCA

But of course.

They walk away. Toward the brandy.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

It was my own voice that worried
me. It was the sound of easy
laughter. In a Naples cafe.

12

INT. KITCHEN NIGHT

The open cupboard. Two glasses. A bottle. Francesca, stretching
high on tiptoe...

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

I knew he was watching, and not
only my body.

She brings them down.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

He knew brandy had never been
poured. Into those glasses.

She is stripping the Iowa liquor seal from the top of the bottle.
Watching her own hands.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

Farm life did not permit long
fingernails. Until now, it
hadn't mattered.

She sets the bottle and glasses on the table. As she arranges the
coffee things, she watches him pour out two glasses.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

In how many good restaurants, in
how many private rooms with dim
light, had he poured brandy into
glasses....?

She has stopped. Just watching him.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

How many sets of long fingernails
had he watched delicately pointing
toward him around the stems?

He looks up to her. His relaxed, unassuming smile.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

How many pairs of blue-round and
brown-oval eyes have looked at him
through foreign nights. While
anchored sailboats rocked offshore.

When he raises the glass...

KINCAID

To ancient evenings and distant
music.

She is a little stunned.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

As close to reading my mind as
anyone would ever get.

He just keeps smiling. Holding his glass out.

12

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

My brain was screaming to my mouth,
'C'mon, say it! Ancient evenings
and distant music.'

But she only smiles. Lovely and enigmatic though it is...

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

There was the distinct feeling that
I had squandered the opportunity
of a lifetime...

She sips her brandy...

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

...Richard would not repeat this
toast. Anytime soon.

LATER...the lights are dim now. Just the small one over the
kitchen sink. The bottle is down a bit. Only dregs in the
glasses. Two strangers, with their cigarettes and coffee.
Then, as we watch...

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
My eyes went to the clock on the
refrigerator. Which made him say,
politely...

KINCAID
Roseman Bridge at dawn. I'd
better get going.

She smiles, and nods.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
It was 9:52. I felt relieved, and
was relieved to feel relieved.

He pushes back his chair. Soundlessly, not to scrape her floor.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
...which allowed me to indulge
in the disappointment. And the
confusion. Yes, please go. Have
some more brandy.

He is standing, swinging one knapsack onto his shoulder, putting
another on top of his cooler. She comes around the table, and his
hand...

...moves toward her, open, a civil handshake. She takes that.

KINCAID
Thanks for the evening, the supper,
the walk. They were all nice.

Still holding her hand, his voice softens.

KINCAID
You're a good person, Francesca.
Keep the brandy toward the front
of the cupboard. Maybe it'll work
out after awhile.

Bold advice, but well-meant. He holds her eyes, so she'll know
that.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
Humiliating. And thrilling. To
be seen so clear.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

She follows him out to the truck. Jack, the collie, trots along,
panting egregiously. Sniffing at this stranger.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
No great loss. A man excited by
light and poems. Who plays guitar.
Who earns his living by images and
carries his tools in knapsacks...

They've reached the old truck. He opens the door.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
Who seems like the wind. And moves
like it. Comes from it, probably.

Throws his stuff inside, as a farmer's wife watches.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
No, no loss. This was Iowa, you
see. Be another five just like
him through here tomorrow.

He turns to her.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
All I wanted him to shout was,
'For Christ's sake, Richard
Johnson, are you as big a fool
as you obviously seem to be...?'

He smiles.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
...and then my heart could burst.

But what he says is...

KINCAID
Good-bye. Take care.

In one motion, he is up and behind the wheel. Stomps ¹²the
accelerator expertly, and the ancient engine jumps uneasily
to life. He glances out the window...

KINCAID ^{3.10}
Tune-up required, I think.

And just drives off. She stands and blinks. As if she can't
believe he really left her. At the end of the lane, just before
he disappears in darkness...

...his left hand waves from the window. And so, she waves, too...

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
...even though I knew he couldn't
see it.

She stands, watches his tail lights, which are all that is left of
him. Jogs over to where the angle is best, and then the lights...

...disappear. Like magic.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Francesca's bare back as she stands staring into her full length
mirror. Over her shoulder, we watch her eyes examine the naked
form we cannot see.

She takes in every detail. In silence. And honesty.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Dressed once more, Francesca sits at the formica table. Staring at a half-sheet of blank paper. Staring. Staring. A breath.

Writing. In a moment, done.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

Running lightly across the ground. Under stars. The collie lopes after, as she reaches...

...her Ford pick-up. She jumps in, the collie does, too. She turns the key decisively. Whips back around. Shoots away into darkness.

EXT. ROSEMAN BRIDGE - NIGHT

The collie running on ahead in moonlight, checking things out. Francesca with her flashlight, walking briskly, purposefully, eyes set ahead into near, near future.

She tacks the note on the entrance to the bridge.

Walk away slow.

INT. TRUCK - JUST BEFORE LIGHT

Kincaid's old truck rolling past Richard Johnson's mailbox. The east is just getting ready to thin out the darkness. As he drives, Kincaid gnaws on a Milky Way bar, and looks toward her farmhouse...

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
Later, I learned his exact
thoughts at that moment.

There's a steaming cup of coffee between his thighs, and he lifts it. Still watching her place...

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
'Men are stupid. They could at
least drink the brandy...'

Watching it...

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
'...and not bang the screen door,
on the way out.'

Rolling past.

EXT. ROSEMAN BRIDGE - DAWN

Gray light. Camera screwed to a sturdy tripod. PULL BACK to see...

...Kincaid smoking, pacing. Eyes everywhere. We share his POV to click through...graffiti at the bridge's entrance...shifting light on the moving stream...tall trees framing the background...

telephone wires ominously near the bridge's sloping cover. And then...horizon...red, brightening, and...

...to the viewfinder. SEE the shot, perfect, no wires, no graffiti, filtered light, compositional tension. He hates it, lifts the tripod, three feet over, adjust the legs, moving really fast now, as...

...a rim of red sun APPEARS. Impulsively, he replaces the lens with a 105-millimeter, he is a panther in heat, all over this shot, adjust legs slightly, set lens to f/8, screw in cable release on shutter button, eyes flick to the light meter, and...

...PRESS the plunger. HOLD a full second. Sun 40% above horizon, as something...

...CATCHES his eye. Something white, small, fluttering in the new sun. He squints, mutters...

KINCAID

...wasn't there, yesterday.

...and BOLTS toward the bridge in dawn. Tearing up the gravel path, breath explosive now, at the entrance...

...RIP AWAY the note and thumbtack, stuff them in his vest while SPRINTING back toward his camera, the sun at 50% above horizon, 60%, the bridge warming red, and he is...

...back, SNATCHING up the plunger, press, HOLD. ^{two} full seconds. And once more. Breath easing, easing, and... **12**

INT. TRUCK - DAWN

Dust flying, Camel lit, bouncing past Richard Johnson's mailbox from the opposite direction. He's not looking, not looking, as if his mind is nowhere near her, and... **BMC**

...he looks. No sign of her. It registers.

EXT. HOGBACK BRIDGE - MORNING

Another covered bridge. Alone in fresh sunlight. No sign of anyone around, until we PAN...

...up a tree. There he is, thirty feet up. The camera rests on his vest, wedged into a tree crotch. One more glance at the light meter, sun slicing off the water, and...

...CLICK off two shots. Another. And reload now, reaching into his vest pocket for film, and...

...OW! The thumb comes out with thumbtack attached. He's forgotten all about that. And the note. He sucks the wound absently, as he finds...

...the slip of paper. Open it. Read.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
If you'd like supper again when
'white moths are on the wing,'
come by tonight after you've
finished. Anytime is fine.

And with no one there to see him, Kincaid's smile does him credit.
It is wise at the edges of its pleasure. And tender.

EXT. TEXACO STATION - MORNING

Kincaid's old truck stands in morning sun. The Texaco guy is
adding gas and oil at once. And over by the pay phone...

...Kincaid is thumbing through the thin phone book, greasy from
filling station thumbs. Find R. Johnson, two listings. One is a
rural number.

EXT. BACK PORCH - MORNING

Francesca feeding the collie. Stroking him, as...

...RRRING. Everything in her leaps straight to her eyes. Body
frozen. RRRING. And she is...

...through the screen door, which BANGS shut, as she SNATCHES the
receiver, with a dead-casual...

FRANCESCA
Mmm, 'lo...

An eternal quarter-second...

KINCAID (O.S., phone)
Hi, this is Robert Kincaid. I
got your note.

Yeh. Her eyes are steady, efficient.

KINCAID (O.S., phone)
...appreciated the Yeats. I'd like
to accept the invitation, but there's
one thing...

Licks her lips absently, concentrating. Wants so much to get all
of this right.

KINCAID (O.S., phone)
...I'm shooting this, uh...Cedar
Bridge this evening. So it could
be nine til I'm done...then I'll
need to clean up, so...

Holding on her. Dark eyes razor-keen.

KINCAID (O.S., phone)
...it might be ten. Is that
all right?

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
No, definitely not.

FRANCESCA
Sure, no problem.

Thin breath. Light with...

FRANCESCA
...work comes first. I'll fix
something I can warm up when you
get here.

Glaring through the screen door. At her poor collie. All her
concentration in...

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
Change your mind, Robert. Don't
make me wait like that.

KINCAID (O.S., phone)
...or, you know what?

Her eyes close.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
...more goddam like it.

KINCAID (O.S., phone)
If you want to come along while
I'm shooting, that'd be okay. I
could stop for you at...five-thirty.

12

Her mind racing.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
You have to assume you'll be seen.
And what in the world will you say
to Richard?

FRANCESCA
Why don't I come? Maybe I'll
learn something.

Maybe. And INTERCUT...

KINCAID on his end, hearing...

FRANCESCA (O.S., phone)
I'll drive my own pickup. So,
meet you there at...six o'clock,
okay?

He nods. Mostly to himself.

KINCAID
Should work out.

INT. CAFE - MORNING

Five boys at their regular booth. Near the back. Coffees, sweet rolls, something to tide them over.

TERRY

...photographer, no question.
Billy saw him at Hogsback Bridge
this mornin', about six different
cameras, taking pictures from trees...

BOB

...sign on the truck says he's
from Washington, out west.

They think about that.

STEPHEN

...guess long hair remains the
fashion over there.

They find that reasonably amusing. The not enough to laugh out loud.

BRUCE

...yah, Tom at the Texaco says he
got directions for all the covered
bridg...

TERRY

...well, what's the point of that?
They're all just fallin' down in
terrib...

...voice stopping. Face alerting the others that Kincaid has
emerged, walking from the restroom area directly behind their
booth. Everyone minds his own business for a beat. Kincaid
seems none the wiser.

He exits the cafe. We follow him across the street to the Texaco.
To the phone. We watch him dial. Watch him wait.

KINCAID

Hi, it's Robert Kincaid again.
Is this a bad time...?

INTERCUT Francesca, dressed for town.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

He can't come. He's called to
say that.

KINCAID (O.S., phone)

Let me be direct. If it's a problem
for you to come out with me tonight,
given the curiosity of small-town
people, don't feel pressured to do it.

The air comes out of her. Slow.

KINCAID (O.S., phone)
Either way, I'll come by later.
But I think I may have made a mistake
inviting you out, I'm not always
super-bright about people's reactions.

Even against her tension, she has to smile at that one.

FRANCESCA
I'm not worried about talk.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
Frightened, maybe. But I won't
let that worry me.

A beat.

KINCAID (O.S., phone)
Great. Just thought I'd check.
Well...looking forward to it...

Yeh. Well. A soft...

FRANCESCA
You have a good day.

EXT. AVENUE, DES MOINES - DAY

Des Moines, the Big Corncob. A busy, unattractive city, with big-time traffic. Her Ford pickup is stuck in it.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
Des Moines was forty miles. Plenty
of time to think on the way.

INT. TRUCK - DAY

Francesca looking for a parking space as she cruises.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
My first goal, was to get to
where I didn't feel so guilty
toward Richard...

INT. STATE LIQUOR STORE - DAY

She is strolling down a rack of wine with limited selection. She reads every label. Clueless.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
I did that so well, it began to
worry me.

Stops. Stares at a label. Maybe. Nah.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
So I spent some time trying to
reverse that. Get a little more
in touch with the guilt...

Stops again. Valpolicella. Dry Italian red wine. Take one bottle.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

What made me the worse person?
What I wanted? Or how I felt
about it.

Take two.

INT. DRESS SHOP - DAY

Looking through a rack in a nice shop. The sign says BETTER
DRESSES. Concentrating.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

How much of this came down to
actual sex? Was that the bottom
line?

ANGLE...same shop. Standing, waiting at a full-length mirror.
Watching herself think.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

I was certain that it wouldn't
come to that. I didn't even want
the reality of it...the guilt of it,
the sin of it...

The SALESWOMAN approaches. Three items draped over her arm.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

I wanted the tease, the promise of
it. The possibilities.

12

The first one is a loser. Lose it.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

But wasn't that just as bad?
No, it wasn't.

BMC

The second one is a pink sundress. And Francesca's eyes flicker in
a spark that tells the saleswoman she's scored.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

Richard looked at women in magazines,
lingerie and 'worse'. And naked
actresses, of course. Was this so
different?

The saleswoman holds it up. No shoulders, thin straps. Scooped
low in back. And even in front.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

Sure, it was. Robert Kincaid was
real. Sort of. This was very
different.

Holds it up against Francesca's body. Francesca pouts in the
mirror. Too daring.

INT. SHOE STORE - DAY

Francesca trying on sandals. They are white and delicate, with fine work detailing the leather.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
Maybe Robert Kincaid wasn't even
in this. And it was all about me
and Richard.

She runs her fingertips over the leather. Really likes these.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
Like the beginning of a divorce
too long in coming.

INT. JEWELRY STORE - DAY

Silver hoop earrings are already on the counter. Turning in her fingers, a slender silver bracelet. As the salesman watches, closely.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
So I thought about sex. About
the absence of any that was
enjoyable for me, let alone
exciting...

Slip the bracelet on. Watch it move with her.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Back in work clothes. Ingredients laid out on the counter. Serious eyes doing serious work.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
Eroticism was subtlety. That
was its sin.

Tomato sauce, brown rice, melted cheese, chopped parsley.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
It involved understanding a
woman. Even putting her point
of view first...

Skillful hands. Blending these together.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
Therefore. It was unconsciously,
but universally, regarded as
subversive.

Holding the blend into smooth shapes with her bare fingers.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
Permit eroticism and God knows
what demands would follow, what
change in the comfortable order.

She stuffs the shapes into waiting peppers. Green and orange.
Red. And yellow.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
A woman's point of view is only
dangerous. If a man admits she
has one. That's Richard's theory,
I think.

Onto a tray. Neatly arranged.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
I wanted a day of hope. An
evening of possibilities.

Open the oven. Gingerly pull out the applesauce souffle. Hm.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
I was a person, too. I had my
dreams and my yearnings. Things
that I wanted for me.

Okay, she guesses. Set it aside.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
That would have to count somewhere.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

She sits on the edge of her bed. Sewing, something in her lap.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
And what if it came to sex? It
wouldn't, but what if.

She holds it up. We see it is the pink sundress. She bought it
after all, and is now shortening the hem...

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
Would everything wonderful collapse
in on itself?

A full three inches.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
And Robert Kincaid. Could I find
a way to remember him? For who
he truly was.

She stops sewing. Stops to wonder that.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
Well. That's what possibilities
are all about.

And carefully. Back to work.

INT. KINCAID'S TRUCK - LATE AFTERNOON

The old truck bouncing, raising dust. Around a bend now, to see CEDAR BRIDGE in sunlight. And there, leaning against her Ford pickup...

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

He was eight minutes late. I
hadn't seen him in twenty hours.

The same old jeans that fit her so well. A white cotton t-shirt. He waves, cheerfully, as he pulls up. She only smiles.

He dismounts from his truck, in that same fluid motion she's come to know.

KINCAID

Hi. Nice to see you. Pretty
hot.

Is he shy, or just busy, as he pulls knapsacks and tripods out for use.

FRANCESCA

Am I going to learn something?

Not suggestive, but warm, relaxed. A liquid confidence that he turns and looks at.

KINCAID

I don't know. But I'm glad you
came.

Her smile is lazy and small. But behind her eye **12**.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

Thank you, Robert, for saying
that. You are so good to me.

FRANCESCA

So what can I do?

He reaches out the blue knapsack. She takes it in one arm, and holds out the other. So he puts the tan knapsack in it. That's already quite a load. But, impulsively, he grins...

...loads a tripod on top. Checks her out. Adds the other tripod. Now they're both grinning. And it's very personal. Softly...

FRANCESCA

What about the cooler. You
might want a bear.

He lets his eyes and his smile linger for a comfortable beat. Then, walks out of frame...

KINCAID (O.S.)

How we doin' on light?

EXT. RIVER BANK - LATE AFTERNOON

She sits, watching him work, stalking his shot.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

The image was a leopard. He dominated nature, comfortably, naturally. Bending it to his will.

Peering through his viewfinder now, his back to her, he raises his hand in a simple beckoning gesture. Not a command. It says, please come.

...and she does. Stands silently at his side, with the two knapsacks. Watching his intensity. Watching him think. A murmured...

KINCAID

...may I have the camera with the blue strap, please?

He never takes his eye from the viewfinder. Reaches out, she holds the camera toward him, his fingers closing as he feels the lens. In his other hand, he holds the plunger cord, and...

...CLICKS the shutter. Never looking up, he reaches under the tripod head, unscrews the camera, replaces it with the one she's given him. As he fastens it...

KINCAID

Thanks. Could you stand over there, please?

He's pointing in front of him. And instinctively...

FRANCESCA

I'll be in the shot.

And now his eyes come up. That slow smile. It says, yeh, that's the whole idea.

KINCAID

Can't promise you the cover, tho. I don't make editorial calls.

She is embarrassed and pleased. Really? He gestures, over there please, ma'am. But she's still not sure if she wants to.

KINCAID

In another four hours, we'll lose the light.

Oh. Well...off she goes. To where he's pointed, to the river bank. The bridge is behind, to her left. She looks around, self-conscious about her t-shirt, where to put her hands...

FRANCESCA

There's nothing to...lean against,
or hold onto...

He's looking through the viewfinder.

KINCAID

Well, there's plenty of ground.
Why don't you keep the bottoms of
your feet on that, and the rest
of your body sort of straight up...

FRANCESCA

It's exciting. Working with
someone so professional.

Eyes in the viewfinder, he's moving her left, by inches. Left
again. Good. Silence.

FRANCESCA

What...what do I do?

And his eyes come up. In all innocence...

KINCAID

Uh. Look wonderful.

Which makes her smile. Which sends his eyes back to the
viewfinder.

KINCAID

...that's got it.

CLICK.

EXT. BACK PORCH - SUNSET

BMC

12

Pastel light. Two old friends walking slow toward the porch.
He's carrying some fresh clothes, khakis, shirt, sandals. Jack
the collie runs up from somewhere, sniffing his brains out.
Kincaid caressing the animal with friendly hands, as his eyes
glance to the old pump.

KINCAID

Okay if I wash up?

FRANCESCA

Oh, we have indoor plumbing now.

Up the steps, she's at the door first, but...

...waits. For him to reach. And hold it open.

INT. SECOND FLOOR LANDING - SUNSET

Climbing to the second floor, she's slightly ahead. They have to
walk through her bedroom to reach...

...the bathroom. As he enters, she dips to scoop clean towels from the cupboard beneath the sink.

FRANCESCA
Need anything you don't see?

He looks around.

KINCAID
If you can spare some shampoo.
Mine's at the motel.

She sets three different bottles on the counter. And reaches her arms out toward him. He blinks, not understanding the gesture.

FRANCESCA
I'll leave your things on
the bed.

He gives her his clothes, the sandals, she gathers them to her.

KINCAID
Thank you. For all the kindnesses.

Almost shy in the face of his simplicity, she ducks a nod. And leaves without a word. The door closes quietly.

INT. KITCHEN - SUNSET

Francesca enters the kitchen, opens the fridge to check on everything that has been prepared. As she takes inventory...

...from upstairs, a sound. The shower running. Her eyes stop their work.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
He's naked now.

And in a heartbeat, the phone RINGS. She lets it go, finishes checking on the spinach salad and corn bread. Pokes the worrisome applesauce souffle, confirming its questionable texture. Almost as an afterthought, she gets the phone. On the fifth ring.

MAN'S VOICE (O.S., phone)
Frannie...?

Hearing the voice, her face stops. There is no fear, and certainly no anger...

FRANCESCA (softly)
Hi.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
It was Richard.

...only interest. As if listening to this familiar voice for the first time. Wondering what it means to her.

RICHARD (O.S., phone)
Everything okay?

FRANCESCA
Yes.

A beat. Had the way she'd said one single word alerted him to something at some unconscious level? His voice does carry a hint of caution in...

RICHARD (O.S., phone)
Sweet Cheeks is gonna be judged on Wednesday. Then, there's other stuff to see, so...be home Friday.

FRANCESCA
All right, have a good time and drive carefully.

Too fast? Too casual?

RICHARD (O.S., phone)
Frannie, you sure you're okay?
Sound a little funny.

FRANCESCA
No, I'm fine, it's just hot.
I'll be better after my bath.

She waits for...

RICHARD (O.S., phone)
Okay. Say hello to Jack for me.

FRANCESCA (M.O.)
The words 'miss you' might have been appreciated. But that wasn't fair, I didn't say them either.

FRANCESCA
Sleep well, okay?

That was tender, genuine.

RICHARD (O.S., phone)
Okay, you too.

FRANCESCA
Kiss the kids for m...

But the CLICK has disconnected them. The BUZZ hums faintly. She glances through the screen at Jack the collie, gazing at her mournfully from the back porch.

FRANCESCA
Daddy says hello.

INT. STAIRCASE - TWILIGHT

Kincaid, freshly showered, coming down the stairs. Into the kitchen to see her...

...in a chair by the screen door. Gazing out at the changing light. She turns slowly at his footsteps, in a lazy, comfortable way.

KINCAID

Okay if I bring my gear in for a little cleaning?

FRANCESCA

Go ahead. I'm going to bathe.

As he opens the screen door.

KINCAID

Like a cold beer with your bath?

And glances back. She smiles, as if she's never thought of doing that before in her life.

FRANCESCA

If you have an extra.

INT. BATHROOM - TWILIGHT

Francesca soaking in a very hot bath. With a very cold beer. Relishing both.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

Two thoughts. Of equal weight.

She raises the glass to her lips. BMC An elegant sip.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

I was lying where water had just run down his naked body.

The glass comes away. Her eyes are dreamy...

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

And. He had washed the tub.

INT. BEDROOM - DUSK

CLOSE on Francesca's face in the mirror. The black hair has been swept back, held with a silver clasp. The silver hoops are in her ears. And as she applies pale lipstick...

...the new silver bracelet dangles softly. Her eyes are focused, intent on completing her work. We can see the excitement, but it is controlled, channelled. She is in command of herself. She is ready.

She stares now. Analytical, dispassionate. Honest.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
That's about as good as I can do.

A beat. Softer...

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
It's pretty good, though.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Outside the screen door, the evening is violet. Kincaid's beer sits while he repacks his cameras. At the sound of her sandals, he doesn't quite look up.

And then he does. Everything in his face just stops working. Except the eyes.

KINCAID (a breath)
Jesus.

With him, we see Francesca in the pink sundress. It's pretty good.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
This one moment, I thought,
was worth a lifetime.

She smiles prettily. No big deal.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
I've seen my love. Fall in
love with me.

It is what it looks like. He swallows visibly. It is funny and sweet and achingly real... B M 3

KINCAID
I mean. If you don't mind my
boldness, you look stunning...

She doesn't seem to mind his boldness.

KINCAID
I mean. Make-'em-run-around-
the-block-howling-in-agony
stunning.

Her eyes are damp. She can't help that. He's out of words, except...

KINCAID
You're elegant, woman.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
Bless his heart. Yeats can go
fish.

A phone is RINGING. But it's okay. No one seems to notice.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
I thought, well, it's God on the
line. He's going to say, 'time's
up!' And I'm going to say...

She moves now, toward the phone that rests a few feet behind his
chair...

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
'...thanks for not calling sooner.'

FRANCESCA (softly)
Excuse me.

And lifts the receiver.

FRANCESCA
Johnsons'. Oh, hi Marge...
sure, I'm fine...

She is standing less than two feet behind his chair.

FRANCESCA
Thursday night? Let me think...

And without thinking, she reaches her right hand. And rests it on
his shoulder. In the casual way that some women have with men they
care for. It was a river crossed. And easily.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
He said he's staying a week,
this is only Tuesday, so...

12

FRANCESCA
Actually, I'm going to be tied up.

And smiles. At the thought that brings her.

FRANCESCA
No, he called a little bit ago...
no, Friday, actually...well, they
have things to see...

Her hand stays lightly on his shoulder. Nothing could make her
lift it free.

FRANCESCA
No, Campfire sleep-away's not for
another week. Uh-huh, a week.
That's what Carolyn s...

Stops, listens. Her eyes sharpening...

FRANCESCA
...yeh, that was a man asking
directions.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
Floyd Clark. He'd honked and
waved and raced home to spill
his guts to the little woman.

Breathing slow. Easy.

FRANCESCA
Photographer, huh? Could have
been, I didn't pay much atten...
(stops)
...Roseman Bridge, is that right?
Maybe we'll be in the papers, huh.

Her hand hasn't moved. It never will.

FRANCESCA (laughing)
'Hippie'...??

She glances at the back of his head. It is shaking slowly, side-
to-side, in amused wonder.

FRANCESCA
...do they still have 'hippies',
anywhere at...well, I'm sure I
don't know what they call them
now, I'm not even sure who they are...

Enough is enough.

FRANCESCA
Well, he was polite, he only stayed
a minute or t...omigosh, I'm baking
a cobbler to put away for the boys
and it's bubbling over th...right...
right...you bet. BMC

And hangs up the phone. Her eyes go to...

...the hand on his shoulder. She has to take it away now. Not
happy about that, but she does it. Walks around his chair, around
the table, to the kitchen counter...

...flicks ON the radio. Country music. Turns the dial until a big
band sound comes on. She looks back for his vote.

KINCAID
Tangerine.

Hean?

KINCAID
The song. It's called 'Tangerine'.
About a woman from Argentina.

FRANCESCA
Are you hungry? I can have your
supper anytime you want it.

A long held look. It's rising in our stomachs now. Here we go.

KINCAID

We could dance, if you like.
The music's pretty good for it.

His shy, serious ways.

KINCAID

I'm not much of a dancer.

Jack the collie scratching to get in. He has no chance.

FRANCESCA

Okay, but I don't dance much
either. Anymore.

He rises.

FRANCESCA

...I did when I was a young girl,
in Italy. Now it's pretty much
New Year's Eve, and then only a
little bit.

They move toward each other...the music stops.

RADIO ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

It's your Tuesday night dance
party from WGN, Chicago. We'll
be back after this.

She laughs. He smiles. But he reaches anyway, and takes her right
hand in his left. She appreciates that, and they lean back to rest
against the counter, side by side.

12

FRANCESCA

...oh, yeh. One second.

Leaving go of his hand, she goes to the cupboard. Two white
candles. A small brass holder for each. She puts them on the
table.

He lights each one carefully with the Zippo, while she snaps OFF
the overhead light. The world is dark now, except for two
fluttering flames in a farm kitchen. The music returns. It is
AUTUMN LEAVES. Her eyes finding his.

She feels comfortably awkward. So does he. He takes her hand,
puts his arm around her waist. She moves into him. The
awkwardness vanishes. He pulls her closer. They start to move.

KINCAID

Very nice perfume.

Bringing their hands in to lie on his chest, near the shoulder.

FRANCESCA

Thank you.

There are locusts, a collie's whimper, an old phonograph record.
And two friends dancing slow. Legs touching, stomachs brushing.
Him bending, to put his cheek against hers. And then...

FRANCESCA

I never danced with a cowboy.

So he looks at her. She's made him think.

KINCAID

Is that what it is I am?
I guess.

Dancing. Gazing at each other.

KINCAID

If cowboys are dinosaurs. Hey,
I admit it...

Very soft here...

KINCAID

I'm just trying to make some
good pictures, and get out of
life before I'm completely
obsolete. Or do some serious
damage.

And looking up. With all her heart behind...

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

Do it. Serious damage.

And as if he's heard her. Because he has. They kiss.

FRANCESCA

Oh, my God.

Because it is more than she imagined. She is kissing back.
Longtime soft kissing, a river of it.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

I was a woman. I was turning
for home.

And spinning. Forever slow.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

There was room to dance again.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Moonlight through a long window that stretches nearly to the floor.
The glow spilling across a naked man, more in silhouette than
light. He is undressing a woman. Admiring her as he goes, with his
hands, with his mouth. Her head thrown back. Time stopped still.

ANGLE...Kincaid over her, as they make love. He swoops above her, across her belly, her breasts, kissing her mouth, her ears, running his tongue along her neck as a great cat would possess and honor his mate.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
It was impossibly beautiful.
And that was the least of it.

In the dim light, the outline of her features as he moves above her. She is lost in this.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
This one thought kept coming. And
I would laugh each time, and he would
soothe me, shush me...

He is whispering in her ear as he moves rhythmically, perfectly...

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
The thought was...this is spiritual,
and this is deeply moral and right.
I tried to laugh it down. But it
never went far away.

In a single motion, he rolls them over, and her silhouette is above him now. His hands supporting her as she rides deep, faster, losing control...

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
I wondered...what part of me would
I let him take along forever. And
what part would I keep for myself,
my family...

12

She shudders in an ecstasy so violent that his hands comfort her. As if it were pain.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
...but he simply took it all.
Took it all. Far away.

ANGLE...lying side-by-side in darkness. His hands, his mouth, never quite still. His words for her ear alone. Never quite stopping loving her.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
I asked what he found attractive.
In a woman.

She stretches, like a cat. And he lets her.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
Intelligence, he said, passion
in life...

Then she turns to him. Nuzzles close for warmth.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
...and the ability to be moved.
By subtle things.

ANGLE...making love again, endlessly, powerfully, transported.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
I had images, visions. I smelled
rivers and woodsmoke. Heard steaming
trains chuffing out of long-ago
winter stations...

Deeper, longer thrusts...

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
The leopard kept sweeping over me,
a long prairie wind. And every time
I thought I had lost myself to him...
I found I had more to lose.

ANGLE...moon through the long window. They sit on the floor,
surrounded by down comforters. He is tuning his guitar softly.
She watches with rapt eyes, eating strawberries from a bowl.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
Loving me gave him visions, too.
Blowing sand, he said, magenta
winds. And brown pelicans riding
the backs of dolphins moving north
along the coast of Africa.

See her delight in him, as she eats a strawberry.

12

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
I was highly complimentary

He strikes a chord. She settles in, eager as a child.

KINCAID
Requests...?

She thinks.

FRANCESCA
Uh. Look wonderful.

He considers that. And begins a bluegrass breakdown. Notes
falling harsh, faster...

KINCAID (singing)
From the great Atlantic Ocean,
To the wide Pacific Shore...

His voice is thin and pleasant, rolling clear...

KINCAID (singing)
From the ones we leave behind us,
To the ones we see once more...

Watching the fingering...

KINCAID (singing)
He's mighty tall and handsome,
And known quite well by all...

Grins out at the moon...

KINCAID (singing)
How we love the choo-choo of...
The Wabash Cannonball!

Finishes with a flourish. Turns to a simple...

FRANCESCA
More. I don't know it.

His eyes moving over her face. They are so happy in this moment.
The notes begin again, the voice louder...

KINCAID (singing)
Listen to the jingle,
The rumble and the roar...
As she glides along the woodland,
Through the hills and by the shore...

She's beaming. He throws back his head...

KINCAID (singing)
You hear the mighty engine,
And pray that it won't stall... 12

EXT. FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

BMC

From across a field. A darkened house. A window pouring...

KINCAID (O.S., singing)
Racin' home to Dixie on
The Wabash Cannonball!

A woman's laughter. It turns to a delighted shriek.

Silence. Moonlight.

INT. KITCHEN - SUNRISE

PAN a counter filled with breakfast waiting to happen. French
toast soaking in eggs, pancake batter in a bowl, raw omelette in a
skillet next to a mound of diced vegetables. Keep PANNING to...

...the kitchen table. Francesca sits polishing a heavy silver
bracelet with delicate scrollwork. Working hard, real elbow
grease. Red Wing field boots enter, she keeps working.

Kincaid carries clothes and sandals. Strolls by the counter, checks it out. Over to the table now, sits across from her...

KINCAID

You sure we have enough breakfast?

FRANCESCA

I was indecisive. And euphoric. Both factors contributed.

She's trying not to smile. But her eyes are dancing, and he's watching that.

FRANCESCA

You have to eat everything, or I'll be insecure.

She glances up, his eyes are right on her. As admiring as they were last night. That thrills her.

KINCAID

How did you get that bracelet off me?

FRANCESCA

I'm devious, skillful. Motivated.

He leans back. Stretches his body.

KINCAID

Are you gonna use all the words in the dictionary? Before breakfast.

FRANCESCA

I may. I'm in a mood. What's that...?

12

He puts the clothes on the table carefully, respectfully. Francesca's jeans. Her t-shirt. Sandals.

KINCAID

It's what you wore yesterday. I need to ask you a favor.

FRANCESCA

Yes, you can keep them. But they won't fit.

But he reaches his hand, caresses her face. Smooths her hair so tenderly. Her playful smile forgotten. Her eyes hungry for the feel of him.

KINCAID

I want a picture of you, just for us.

She loves that.

FRANCESCA
I'll do my hair and stuff.

But he shakes his head slightly. His eyes flick to the sunrise out the door. And back.

KINCAID
You're always perfect. But
the light comes and goes.

Her eyes linger. Linger. And then she nods. Guess so.

EXT. PASTURE - SUNRISE

They walk together where they walked Monday night. Now their hands are loosely twined. Ahead, a rising sun.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
So I walked to the pasture
thinking, well, now I know
who he is...

He stops walking. Motions her forward, and she goes.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
The light. That comes and goes.

He's setting up his tripod. Swiftly, carefully. Slowness and quickness.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
That was wishful thinking.

As she walks, she's been looking back for guidance. His hand rises slightly, so she stops.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
The light comes back. BMC

He is screwing a camera onto the tripod now, thinking as he goes.

FRANCESCA
What about some hand-held shots?
Like for high fashion?

She's only being playful. Perhaps in his concentration he hasn't heard.

FRANCESCA
Where the woman swings her body
and keeps changing her look,
and you just snap away like crazy?

And without looking up...

KINCAID
Oh, I've done that...

Switching the lens now. A last-second change of heart.

KINCAID

...when I was a kid.

Looking only through the viewfinder. Moves her a little left.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

Another secret. I tried to
imagine him in London, luscious
models...

KINCAID

I don't know, creating a lot of
stuff, just to throw it away...

He shrugs down at the viewfinder. But the distaste is real and
important.

KINCAID

Let's keep this like the rest of
life. Imperfectly striving for
perfection.

He is motionless, thinking. So she calls out...

FRANCESCA

Okay, let's.

He sets the shutter at f/16.

KINCAID

Anyway. One of anything is
always better.

And lifts the plunger.

FRANCESCA

Should I just look wonderful
again? It's so tiring.

He looks up.

KINCAID

Think of the best thing. That
you're never going to know.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

Tough call.

Her dry smile.

KINCAID

...that's got it.

CLICK.

12

BMC

INT. BARN - MORNING

Livestock. Animal noise. We can smell it from here.

FRANCESCA

Maybe we don't do chores today.

She looks uneasy surveying the inevitable.

KINCAID

Give the chickens a day off
from eating, huh?

Right. She sighs.

FRANCESCA

But anything we do together is
going to be fun, right?

KINCAID

Are you crazy?

And he looks at her as if she is. Walks on over to the huge sacks
of feed...

KINCAID

Boy, if we can't tell what fun
isn't, how are we gonna know
what to do with it when we trip
over some?

He notices something. It was made of wood. Now it's shattered.
He touches it...

FRANCESCA

It was a bird feeder, mostly for
cardinals. Michael sort of used
it for a pinata. B.M.C.

Ah.

KINCAID

So this would be a shrine, then.

FRANCESCA

Well, it's there to goad Richard
into building me another. But he
hasn't. I don't think he likes them
around.

KINCAID

Where's your tools?

Said so simply. When no answer comes, he turns to see why. She is
just staring at him.

FRANCESCA

Where would I tell Richard it
came from? Santa Claus?

His eyes sharpen a bit. The look holds.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
It was a look that said, 'does
that really matter, now?'

And holds. Then, he turns away. Toward the feed.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
It was a knife through me.

EXT. BACK PORCH - SUNSET

They sit on the porch swing, comfortably together. The sky is coloring. They are each reading from slim volumes as she nestles absently into him.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
Time was precious, why did I
so want us to read together?

She turns a page. We see her volume is poems by Rilke.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
It made us seem permanent, I
suppose. And that was the only
dream left.

Thinking on what she's read.

FRANCESCA
How did you come to understand
women?

KINCAID
Oh, I don't. I admire them.

Said as if that is quite different. gmc

KINCAID
You have to, if you're honest.
Women are better than men.

She looks around at him. He's still reading. And he's quiet.

FRANCESCA
I can't imagine why I'm enjoying
this, but somehow I want to hear
more.

He looks down at her. Really?

KINCAID
Men have no inner life. They
don't want to know how they
work inside, at least not for
its own sake.

12

Said so simply. Just stating the obvious.

KINCAID

An inner life brings doubt.
Makes you less effective in
getting what you want.

(smiles)

Men. Are result-oriented.

She reaches into his pocket. Fishes out the Camels. He's stopped talking.

FRANCESCA

Is there more?

KINCAID

That's why they can't love.

She shakes a cigarette free. Offers it to him.

KINCAID

Men choose to stay children,
emotionally. And children are
narcissists.

He pulls one free.

KINCAID

They think they love their money,
but that's only because she makes
them feel good and safe. What they
really love is themselves.

FRANCESCA

'Choose', you said. A conscious
choice?

12

KINCAID

Well, men don't choose to be
conscious about emotion. It
interferes with achievement.

BMC

She's got her own Camel now. Back fishing in his pocket. Pulls out the Zippo.

FRANCESCA

You mean achieving money,
power, success...?

He shrugs. Not quite that limited.

KINCAID

It's more...a picture in their
head. Of the way life is
supposed to be.

She CLICKS the flame to life. Reaches it toward him. He leans forward...

KINCAID

A picture where they'll always
be strong enough to get what
they want. And to be safe. A
child's picture.

Draws the flame. Settles back.

KINCAID

So there's a woman in there
somewhere. The picture won't
work without her.

She's lighting her own. Looking at the flame, as...

FRANCESCA

But we're better, huh?

No answer. She draws the smoke. And settles back.

KINCAID

Woman want to love. They want
to know...themselves...their
man. Even if it hurts.

He raises a finger. That's the whole point.

KINCAID

That distinguishes women from
men. And makes them easy to
damage.

Her eyes are glistening now. Taken very personally.

FRANCESCA

We're not...result-oriented then.

KINCAID

Women are process-oriented. It's
about the quality of the journey,
not the destination.

He lifts her leg into his lap. Slips off her sandal.

KINCAID

Which shows that women understand
the secret of life.

FRANCESCA

Do they.

Oh, yes. He's stroking the bottom of her foot, each of her toes.

KINCAID

The destination of life is death.
And the unknown.

And looks up. Straight to her eyes.

KINCAID

So the whole thing. Is just
about the journey.

What could be simpler? And in a moment...

FRANCESCA

So. You're a woman, huh?

No smile. None at all.

KINCAID

I don't deserve that. But
thanks, anyway.

EXT. PASTURE - TWILIGHT

Light is blue, perfect. Breeze in tall grass. Is there
another sound? A breath? HOLD on the shimmering grass until,
in distance...

...Francesca's head rises above it. Her bare shoulders. The head
tilts back as her body moves rhythmically, powerfully, carried on
the wave, her lips fighting to suppress the sound, she finally...

...SHRIEKS to twilight, ear-splitting and sudden, it startles us.
Seems to echo. Fades to silence.

The head disappears. The silence remains.

ANGLE...in his arms, the grass surrounds them, wrapped in their
comforter. A long, dreamy stillness.

FRANCESCA

Okay, I'm ready.

He glances down at her. Whatever for?

FRANCESCA

The women. I want to hear all
your women. Start with the
fashion models.

Oh. Then. He says nothing. So she rolls over...

FRANCESCA

You going to tell me you didn't
sleep with tons of exquisite and
exotic models?

KINCAID

They don't come by the ton,
they're skinny.

Oh.

FRANCESCA
Intelligent?

KINCAID
Some of them, sure.

FRANCESCA
Did they take passion in life?

KINCAID
One of the best things they did.

I see.

FRANCESCA
Moved by subtle things...?

He just leans to her. Kisses her mouth. She enjoys that for awhile. Then...

FRANCESCA
Let's get this all on the table.
Now, all over the world you have
these conquests, right?

KINCAID
Do you enjoy that thought?

FRANCESCA
Silk merchant's daughter in
Bangkok, swimming naked in
secret pools. Not to mention
Somalia, Brazil...

She's smiling. He's reading deeper.

KINCAID
All women are easy to damage.
Some go looking for it.

A heartbeat before...

FRANCESCA
But I'm the only one. You
ever loved.

Her eyes are dancing, she's trying so hard to keep this playful.
But he's heard the question.

KINCAID
I do love you.

Now. The words stop her breath.

KINCAID
And it isn't the first time
I've loved. And it's always
different. But what makes this...

12

BMC

...and he stops. A word he can't find. Or chooses not to say.

KINCAID

...it's not just the way we love
each other. It's the way we
love...us. I've never had an us.

Needs her to hear...

KINCAID

It's what I didn't know I was
waiting for.

And she looks in his eyes...

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

But I always did. So that's
funny. Maybe women are better.

INT. BEDROOM - LATE NIGHT

Moonlight through the long window. Two lovers, one guitar. No
strawberries tonight. Just brandy and cigarettes. She's drinking,
he's fiddling with chords.

FRANCESCA

What kind of music do you grow
up with in Ohio? Country music?

He nods. Keeps strumming.

KINCAID

I was difficult, tho. I was
always partial to jazz. And
particularly...the saxophone.

FRANCESCA

You play it?

KINCAID

Just listen. A lot. Coleman
Hawkins, Charlie Parker, Ornette
Coleman, and...

Here he smiles. Still hasn't looked up.

KINCAID

...I go to clubs.

FRANCESCA

Clubs.

KINCAID

Wherever I am. If there's a
club where a guy plays saxophone,
if he's any good, I'm there.

12

BMC

He looks up and smiles. Sweet, almost shy about it. As if he's told a secret. She loves that.

FRANCESCA
Can you play jazz on the guitar?

KINCAID
Nope. I'm just a cowboy.

She sips her brandy.

FRANCESCA
Play a cowboy song.

His fingers keep moving. While he's thinking.

KINCAID (singing)
Desperado...

And looks up. Does she know this one? She nods crisply, likes it. Smokes.

KINCAID (singing)
Why don't you come to your senses?
You been out ridin' fences,
For so long now...

He has to smile. More irony than he can leave unacknowledged.

KINCAID (singing)
Oh, you're a hard one,
And I know that you got your reasons...
These things that are pleasin' you,
Can hurt you somehow.

Strumming, staring at her. Maybe too close to the bone to continue.

KINCAID
Anyway. I always forget the middle.

FRANCESCA (softly)
So play the end.

She wants it. Okay...

KINCAID (singing)
Don't your feet get cold in the wintertime,
The sky won't snow and the sun won't shine.
It's hard to tell the nighttime from the day...

He stops playing. Right here.

KINCAID (singing)
You're losin' all your highs and lows...
Ain't it funny how the feeling
Goes away...

Straight to her now. Almost chilling.

KINCAID (singing)
Desperado. Why don't you come to your senses?
Come down from your fences...
Open the gate...

Tears stand in her eyes. Because she knows the rest.

KINCAID (singing)
It may be rainin'...
But there's a rainbow above you.
You better let somebody love you...

He stops. But she's waiting. She'd wait forever. Almost a whisper...

KINCAID (singing)
...before it's too late.

Eyes hold. Hold. Then go back to his instrument. He noodles a soft little finish, while she dabs at her eyes. When he looks up, she's sipping brandy.

FRANCESCA
What's up for tomorrow?

He thinks about that.

KINCAID
I don't know. You ever been
to Paris?

She swallows hard. Shakes her head softly, nope, never have. And though everything hurts right now. She won't leave his eyes.

INT. BATHROOM - DAWN

PAN floor level of her bathroom in early light. HEAR a soft splashing. Reach the tub, as a small glob of soap suds slithers down the side...

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
I woke up so frightened.

SEE her now in her bubblebath. She is alone.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
I thought, well, I'll take an elegant bath. But everything frightened me more.

A soft KNOCKING at the door. Such pain in her eyes. But her voice lies perfectly, calling...

FRANCESCA
Whoever you are, I'm naked.
Come on in.

And the door opens. A mask of contentment slides across her face, and she looks past us. His bare back steps into frame...

KINCAID

Are you always going to wake up first?

FRANCESCA

Are you always going to keep me waiting?

A woman's smile. The lie holds. The back of him climbs past us and INTO her tub. She hadn't expected this, and her delight is genuine, as...

...water and suds slosh out onto the floor. He lifts her easily into a sitting position atop his legs. It's funny, awkward, but it works somehow. They are very close, his arms around her.

KINCAID

Now what?

Said innocently. She leans forward, squints at his eyes. As if trying to look through to his brain.

FRANCESCA

Do you have any faults?

KINCAID

Sure.

FRANCESCA

I need to hear them.

No smile. She means that. So he settles back a little. Well...

KINCAID

I'm arrogant, that's the obvious one.

Maybe not to her.

KINCAID

I've always got an opinion. And it's not always right. But I don't always know it.

She thinks about that one. Nods.

KINCAID

I'm intolerant of fools.

FRANCESCA

Not really.

KINCAID

Just because I'm polite?
Ignoring someone and his ideas is the rudest thing you can do to a human.

FRANCESCA
It's the same as the first
fault, so there's still only
one.

Okay. Okay.

KINCAID
I'm selfish.

She grins. But...

KINCAID
I live alone because I want to
please myself. Do what I want,
when I want, why I want.
(beat)
You don't do that.

And her face changes. Subtly. But clearly. A softer voice...

KINCAID
...and it does you credit.

Silence. Just above a whisper...

FRANCESCA
I can't go with you to Paris,
today.

That lingers. He's smiling comfortably. But he's watching her
eyes.

KINCAID
So how 'bout a stroll down Main
Street, then? We'll eat and
shop and hold hands.
(beat)
We don't even have to be naked.

She shakes her head so slightly. Holding his gaze.

KINCAID
How 'bout...if it's Main Street...
Des Moines?

She draws in a narrow breath. And nods her head, sure. So he
strokes her face. As if he understands everything, and...

...lifts her body. Into position. And she...

...YELPS with surprise. Her troubles have melted from her lovely
face, as she wriggles down into him. Biting her lip with devilish
pleasure. He leans into her...wraps both long arms around her
neck...

...kisses her slow. Slow.

INT. DES MOINES AIRPORT - DAY

Busy little airport. Kincaid at a shipping window. Francesca to one side, her eyes never leaving him.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

He always sent the first few rolls of film to New York, so the editors could look at what he was getting. And the technicians could check whether his shutters were working properly.

EXT. RESTAURANT TERRACE, AIRPORT - DAY

A table at a railing. Light planes take off below. There is wine and food. They hold hands across the table, their fingers never quite still, always reminding each other.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

He bought me lunch. And began the talk. It was disguised, a little...as talk of places...

Our view rotating slowly. Only he speaks...

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

...but it was, of course. Talk of us.

See her listening. Not dewy-eyed, but sharply attentive.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

Love in real desert sand, brandy on balconies in Mombasa while dhows from Arabia run up sail in the first wind of morning...

The face of a woman thinking.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Walking with their bodies touching, so comfortable and slow. Shops and people and cars go by. He tells her, close, for her ears alone...

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

...an old French city on the Bay of Bengal with a rooftop restaurant... trains that climb mountain passes in Peru...little inns run by Basques in the high Pyrenees...

INT. SHOP - DAY

Strolling among housewares. Like any couple. She plucks a soup bowl from a place setting...

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
He was courting me. He still
thought he had to. I was touched
by that.

Shows it to him, what do you think? He's not sure.

EXT. RIVER BANK - DAY

A grassy spot. A tree, a dark slow river. They sit alone in wind.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
He said he knew finally the meaning
of all the small footprints on all
the deserted beaches he had ever
walked...all the curtained faces
that watched him pass down winding
streets of twilight cities...

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Supper for them alone. One candle, the only light. They are
nearly done.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
...he saw the light of his home
campfires now. His loneliness
dissolved at last. At last. He
had come so far, he told me.

He pushes his plate away. Sets down his wine.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
Now. I would tell him.

She lifts her chin. A sadness from her soul crosses her eyes. And
when he sees that...

...he knows this is the moment.

KINCAID
What are we going to do?

Said so quietly. There is no answer.

KINCAID
Look, I'll stay here if you want,
or in town, whatever. When your
family comes home...

FRANCESCA (V.O., whispered)
When my family. Comes home.

KINCAID
...I'll simply talk with your
husband. And explain how it lies.

Very strong with this. No meanness in it. But he will protect
her.

KINCAID

It won't be easy, but I'll get it done.

She draws a breath. Holds it.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

I could hide. I wouldn't even have to be there. He would just...get it done.

But what she says is...

FRANCESCA

Richard could never get his arms around this, it's a foreign language. What we experience, he never will.

A hopelessness. But a clarity.

FRANCESCA

That doesn't make him inferior. It's just too far removed from anything he's ever felt or thought about. He has no way of dealing with it.

And straight back. In a quiet tone...

KINCAID

He'll deal with reality the same way we all do. The best he can.

12

Her silence. It is an answer to the question he hasn't asked. It says she is not coming.

KINCAID

Do we let all of this go, then?

BMC

She licks her lips.

FRANCESCA

You said there's an 'us' now.

Searching his eyes...

FRANCESCA

Where does that live when we're apart?

He swallows. But his voice is unmistakably kind...

KINCAID

In dreams. Of being together.

Tears pool in her eyes.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
He was comforting me. Had he
given up? I didn't want him to.

FRANCESCA
I have children. We don't talk
about them, but they are twelve
and nine. And very, very real.

He's watching her eyes. Watching her mind.

KINCAID
Families change, like people. And
everything else. You won't lose
your babies...just be sure you
don't lose you.
(smiles)
Anyway. I expect they'll like me.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
That's right. Fight for me.

KINCAID
Richard Johnson deserves happiness,
but not at the price of yours.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
C'mon, fight, do it!

Fire and passion in her eyes. But just then, he leans back.
Processing what he sees.

KINCAID
Will you do me one favor?

A beat. A murmured...

FRANCESCA
Yeh. I'll do you one favor.

That was fragile enough to shatter.

KINCAID
Whatever you say next. Make it
about you.

FRANCESCA
My responsibilities. Are about me.

She folds her hands together. Looks down at them.

FRANCESCA
My life is boring. It lacks romance,
eroticism, dancing in the kitchen.
You represent...

And she looks up...

FRANCESCA

...all my dreams. Everything I've longed for. And I was sitting here begging you to fight for me, because I haven't the strength to resist, given my feelings for you.

Tears welling now. From her heart.

FRANCESCA

So I give you the responsibility of loving me. Don't turn me against my true self.

The tears won't fall. She reaches for the wine glass.

FRANCESCA

I make a promise to my children every breath they take that I will be there for them. You don't live in Winterset, Iowa, or any one place, and if you tried for me I would hate me more than you would have a right to.

Brings it to her lips. One sip.

FRANCESCA

If I abandon Richard Johnson that will destroy the center of him, whether you think it will or should or not, and he will live his life with whispers...that's Richard Johnson, his hot little Italian wife ran off with some long-haired photographer a few years back... 12

She's choking on it now, fighting for breath...

FRANCESCA

...and I will not do that to him, and if it seems a trivial reason for throwing my own happiness away, there it is.

She stops. Because tears are in his eyes now. She's never seen that before.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

God damn him. He loved me for it.

Staring at him. Lost in him.

FRANCESCA

We have one night.

All her longing in...

FRANCESCA

So fill me up, my love. Take
me to that tiger preserve in the
South of India...that special
place on that island in the middle
of that lake...

At the edge again. But she won't cry.

FRANCESCA

Give me all of it, give me every
dream there is. So there will be
a place for us to live. While
we're apart.

Silence. Silence. We can barely hear...

KINCAID

Let's get started.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Full moon tonight, silver and strong through the long window. We
hear their love before we see it. And it is different, somehow.
Lyrical and lingering...

...watch them now, on an exquisite edge where they can stay
forever. Their breath, their rhythm, no past, no future. Only the
perfect moment.

INT. BEDROOM - LATER

They sit by the long window. He eats ice cream from a deep bowl.
She is wearing his shirt, way too big, but just now it is keeping
her warm. Across her lap...

...his guitar. She is trying chords, and he stops his eating to
reposition her fingers. She concentrates. As if she will master
this in one night. We watch them. They are happy.

She STRUMS a chord. Loud. He acts startled. She sings in a soft
Country twang...

FRANCESCA (singing)

From the great Atlantic Ocean,
To the wide Pacific shore...

Changing the chord. Pretty good.

FRANCESCA (singing)

From the ones we leave behind us...

...and stops. Smiles at him, because she'd forgot that line was
coming. He smiles back, it's all right. Everything is all right.
She folds her arms across the guitar, and begins to sing a haunting
madrigal, centuries old...

FRANCESCA (singing)
Joys of love,
Are but a moment long.
Pain of love endures...
The whole...life...long.

A fragile, lovely voice. High and clear.

FRANCESCA (singing)
Your eyes kissed mine,
I saw the love in them shine.
You brought me...heaven right then,
When your eyes kissed mine.

Brave smile. Can you take this?

FRANCESCA (singing)
My love...loves me...
And all the wonders, I see.
A rainbow...shines in my window,
My love...loves...me.

Her tears just come. Neither of them seems to notice.

FRANCESCA (singing)
And now...he's gone.
Like a dream that fades into dawn.
But the words...stay...locked in my heartstrings,
My love...loves...me.

Her smile so genuine through the silent tears.

FRANCESCA
Isn't that nice?

He is there, smiling too. Nodding, as his fingertips dry the tears. Kiss them away. It is very nice.

EXT. PASTURE - LATER

LONG ANGLE...two figures hand-in-hand, walking in moonlight. She is animated, pointing at stars. They are talking, alive. Oblivious. Timeless.

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

CLOSE on Francesca asleep. A light smile, a pleasant restful pose. Nothing special. PULL BACK to see...

...she sleeps alone. From somewhere, a million miles away, a truck door CLOSES. And her eyes open. The other door closes, softer.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
It flooded through me. He was
leaving without good-bye. He
would think that best.

...and OUT of bed, BOLTING for the door, the hallway, we are behind her now, FLYING down the staircase in only his shirt, to the kitchen, the screen door...

...stop. He is only loading the old truck. Slowly, methodically. His face is pain, unconcealed, worn quietly. She watches his body move, holding her breath. Then...

...steps through the screen door onto the porch. So carefully, she closes it behind her with a soundless click, which...

...he hears. Turns. She sends a sad little wave with a brave smile behind it. He just stands, drinking her in with the same admiration as if she were wearing a pink sundress and silver jewelry. And then...

...he walks toward her. Slow, proud. Every step the stride of a hunter coming to claim his own. She starts trembling, but doesn't know it. And he is...

...there. Not a hunter's face. Just a sweet, strong smile. He reaches out. Lifts her in his arms. Carries her slowly through the screen door, which...

...bangs this time, and makes her laugh. He sets her down carefully. Precious cargo. Her eyes are shining.

FRANCESCA

I want to be pretty. Will you wait til I'm pretty?

Breaks his heart. Right here. But it can't break his smile.

KINCAID

That long, huh?

She nods, slowly. That long.

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

Her face in her mirror. She is an open wound. Finishes the lipstick, carefully, carefully. Breathing slow. Stands now. She's chosen her t-shirt and jeans, her hair is swept back with the clasp we first saw her in. She lifts...

...his shirt. Folds it with tender hands. As if packing her child's lunch to send away with him on the bus.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

She enters, clutching the shirt like a present. He's made coffee, and holds out a mug. They exchange the shirt and mug, a little awkwardly. Which only makes her smile.

FRANCESCA

God, we're bad at all this.

She sips her coffee, like a steadying drink of whiskey. His gaze is taking her in. All over.

FRANCESCA

Do you want a keepsake?

KINCAID

I'm doing that just now.

With his eyes. She smiles. And lets him. Then...

KINCAID

Is it okay if I write you sometime?
I want to send a photo or two.

FRANCESCA

It's all right. I'll make some
excuse for getting mail from a
hippie photographer. As long as
it's not too much.

Not too much. The words hang there. A prison door closing.

KINCAID

You have my Washington address
and phone, right?

FRANCESCA

I'm not sure if I can bear to...

...use them. He knows. Just the same, he reaches a slip of
paper...

KINCAID

This is National Geographic. 
editorial offices know where I
most of the time.

He puts the paper in her jeans pocket. She catches his hand in
hers. Brings his fingers to her lips. Kisses them.

KINCAID

Don't hesitate, if you want to
see me or talk. You've made a
decision that's yours, not ours...
and I respect that...and the
character behind it...I'll never
try to make you change it...except...

Except.

KINCAID

...that you know I'm there.
Dreamin' you might.

She nods. Swallows. She knows that, all right. And then...

...he draws a breath. His eyes mist over. And so quietly...

KINCAID

You're doing right.

Her face, her eyes, the hand still holding his. All stop for that.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
...such a gift. His beautiful,
perfect lie. I would take it out
for years...polish it, admire it...

She licks her lips.

FRANCESCA
Saddled up, cowboy?

He guesses he is. Holds her hand tight. They amble off through a
screen door...

...toward an old truck. A collie comes loping over, sniffing like
crazy, to say good-bye. A woman is sending her man off to work.
Must be happening like this all over America just now, hell, the
world.

They reach the truck. He opens the door. Puts his neatly folded
shirt inside.

FRANCESCA
You're not leaving town, are you?
You're still shooting.

He turns back to her. Thinks about his answer, but only for a
second.

KINCAID
...couple, three days, yeh. I
got behind schedule.

Staring at each other. He takes both her hands. Their eyes move
across each other's face, sending, receiving, imprinting forever.
She murmurs...

FRANCESCA
We're looking at us.

When he draws a breath, it has a ragged sound. So he smiles
against that...

KINCAID
Aw, hell. One more dance.

And she loses it, right there. Her lovely face crumbling into
tears, and he takes her in his arms. She is sobbing openly, but he
holds her close. Close. He begins to sway their bodies, to dance,
to hum close to her ear...

KINCAID (singing softly)
...feet get cold in the wintertime...

She is crying from her heart, moving with him, clutching her arms
around his neck.

KINCAID (singing softly)
...sky won't snow and the sun won't shine...

He kisses her hair. She kisses his neck. And they stop. And...

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
...for the last time. He let me go.

A fleeting glance he is barely brave enough to take, and he is UP behind the wheel. There are tears on his face.

FRANCESCA (V.O., screaming)
Don't leave, Robert Kincaid!!

A frozen instant.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
So delirious in that moment, I
wondered if I'd said it aloud.

The key turns the ignition OVER.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
I guess not.

He closes the door. Looks out at her.

KINCAID
I'll be in southeast India next
month. Want a card from there?

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
You can't let go. God bless
your heart.

She shakes her head. He nods, understands that...

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
It would be too much for Richard
to find in the mailbox.

He slides the truck into reverse. Gives a wave, and...

...backs into the farmyard, crunching across the gravel, chickens scattering from his wheels. Jack the collie begins to bark. The truck starts forward, down the lane...

...another wave. Sunlight glints off a polished silver bracelet. The truck rolls off, and she hurries now, to where she can see all the way to the road. She watches, watches...

...sinks. To sit cross-legged in the dust.

Her head in her hands.

INT. BATHROOM - MORNING

A bathroom in glaring sunshine. REVERSE ANGLE TO...

...Francesca in the doorway. She has a pail, cleaning things. Her eyes are dead. And wild beneath it.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
I thought, well, I'll clean
the house.

She goes to the toilet bowl. Sinks to her knees. Lifts the lid.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
Something to do.

She squirts liquid under the rim, along the bowl. Her breathing shallow, very controlled.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
It felt like drowning.

The eyes close.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
Slow.

EXT. FRONT PORCH - AFTERNOON

A woman in shade on an empty swing. She sips a cold drink. Her eyes are colder still.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
I could have washed every wall
and polished all the ceilings.
Richard was taking his time.

12

Her left hand absently strokes the collie, who leans, panting, against her legs.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
This gave me the leisure to
rethink, remake, reverse one
decision ten million times.

Sips her drink.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
Still, I supposed the solitude
was best.

Swallows. Squints out at the road.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
I had a lot to get used to.

INT. KITCHEN - TWILIGHT

Two large skillet, each sizzling with porkchops. Golden brown, inviting. Hands enter frame with a spatula, turning them expertly.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
Once the sun went down, I knew
enough to start supper.

See her now, the rest of the meal. Mashed potatoes, green beans,
gravy. Biscuits.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
They wouldn't come so late as to
miss it. And they'd want it ready.

Wiping hands on her apron. Taking inventory. And...

...a van. Comes down the lane. Throwing gravel. Her eyes
register the familiar sound.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
I wouldn't even have to put it
in the oven to warm. My lucky
day.

The van is stopping now. At the back porch. There is a small
mirror by the stove. She glances at herself. A strand of hair
is down...

...we can hear CHILDREN, slamming a van's door, arguing
pointlessly. She pulls back the strand of hair. Gathers
herself. Turns, and...

...through the screen door, as Carolyn comes RUNNING. She is nine
and blonde and perfect, beaming with complete rapture...

CAROLYN
Mommy, we WON!

12

Stumbling a little on the steps, as Francesca sinks down to receive
a full-force ONRUSHING collision. There is a heartfelt smile, a
deep, deep kiss. This is her baby.

CAROLYN
We won, we won, we w...

FRANCESCA
...Sweet Cheeks won a ribbon?

As if it would be impossible. Which it was.

CAROLYN
No, no, no, no, he lost in the
FIRST ROUND!

Sweeping wave of her delighted hand...

CAROLYN
He was BLOWN AWAY!

Cheerful about it. Her mom blinks.

CAROLYN
Daddy won the TOP GUN prize.
Shooting BASKETS!

Baskets. Mom nods, vaguely.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
I'd forgotten. He was great
at that.

She glances up to see MICHAEL, a sullen 12-year-old, scuffing his high-tops up the steps. His eyes are down in a pout with attitude. Maybe he's going to walk right by her. She sends a soft...

FRANCESCA
...you okay?

And he looks up, hesitantly. His mother's voice has shamed him into a nod of greeting. He murmurs...

MICHAEL
What's for supper?

FRANCESCA
Pork chops.

He nods. Acceptable. Waves her a small wave, goes on in. BANGS the screen door.

CAROLYN (pleased)
Really? Pork chops?

Her mother nods. Arms still around her baby, touching with affection, smoothing her jacket...

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
Her favorite supper. I wondered,
just where did she think Sweet
Cheeks was carted off to after
the Fair? Some seaside resort?

They share a mother-daughter smile.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
This was a strange land, where
children lavish affection on pets
who are given up for slaughter.
They 'adjust' of course, at some
secret cost I could not imagine.

She lets out a narrow stream of breath.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
See, a whole thought. With no
relation to him. Someday, there
would probably be another.

CAROLYN

Daddy shot eight-for-eight.
He won a Walkman.

She unzips her jacket to produce the prize.

CAROLYN

...and he bought me my own
tape for it.

She glances back adoringly, and Francesca finally looks up to see RICHARD JOHNSON, coming from the van with a large suitcase, duffles slung over each shoulder. A plush stuffed turtle under one arm.

He is tall and wide-shouldered, in his late 40's. And although the hair is thinning, although he carries twenty pounds he shouldn't, we see the man she married. Still attractive and strong, with a sense of humor lurking behind the thin-lipped smile...

FRANCESCA

Eight-for-eight, huh?

He grins modestly. Pantomimes a little shot with his free hand. And as he clomps past her...

RICHARD

Don't mind Mikey. He had to
spend too much time with the
little kids.

He manages to fit all the bags through the screen door, which, of course, BANGS viciously on the way back. She stares at the door.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

Goddamn me. Work at this!

12

She stands, leads Carolyn inside. Then goes alone down the hall to the parlor. Richard is just setting down his load. Her voice comes softly...

FRANCESCA

Hi.

He turns. In time for her to touch his arm. Lean her face up...
...kiss his mouth.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

Say you missed me, Richard.
Please.

RICHARD

Was that pork chops?

She nods. It was pork chops.

RICHARD

Did you miss me?

She gazes up into his friendly smile. Her eyes linger appraisingly.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
Close enough.

EXT. FRONT PORCH - NIGHT

Cool evening. She is alone on the swing, clutching a drink. From the house, we can hear Richard's television. Her legs move the swing in a small, steady arc. Back and forth. Her face fights for calm, but fear has seized it.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
At first, I thought, well, I'm going to survive this. Everything felt familiar, even oddly comfortable...

Licks her lips. Rueful.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
I could make the other...like a dream that never happened, a charming fantasy.

She stares down into her glass.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
That phase lasted almost an hour.

Brings it to her lips...

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
During supper, the panic began to rise. Couldn't eat, couldn't speak. I couldn't look at Richard.

Sip. Slowly.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
I kept smiling like a madonna, and mumbling about a stomach bug. Richard did the dishes.

The glass comes away. She stares at darkness.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
I knew only one thing. This could never, never work. I had plunged myself and my poor family into a desperate situation which would destroy everyone's life.

The screen door opens...reflexively, she tenses for the bang...

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
I was all my fault.

...it closes quietly. Which makes her blink in surprise. Richard sits next to her.

RICHARD
Feelin' any better...?

She bites her lip, shakes her head, not really.

RICHARD
Look at me.

And she does. Her eyes moving over his face.

RICHARD
Bein' sick agrees with you.

FRANCESCA
Thank you.

That was soft. She manages a smile.

RICHARD
I'm turnin' in. You comin' up?

FRANCESCA
Not for a bit. The cool air feels nice, I might sit awhile.

He nods. Keeps looking at her.

RICHARD
Maybe I should just turn in.
I'm pretty tired.

She smiles wanly. Maybe that's best.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
He wanted sex. He knew somehow I couldn't handle it. And he was being kind.

He leans to her. Kisses her lips softly. Holds her hand.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
I loved him for that.

RICHARD
Nothin' on your mind...?

She shakes her head. Not a thing. He nods, disbelieving, but willing to let it go.

RICHARD
Night, Frannie.

She smiles. He goes. Hear the screen open, close quietly.

She is alone.

12

EXT. GROCERY STORE - DAY

Dark sky, about to rain. Francesca emerging from the Super Value, with two full carts.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
For four days, I avoided going
into town, praying Robert would
leave. Praying he would stay.

She glances at the threatening sky.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
By Wednesday, we were out of
groceries.

A horn HONKS, startling her, as...

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
Hey, there.

An instant's turn of wild hope and fear, to find it is...

RICHARD
I need to run on up to the
implement place. Come along?

He is just behind her, wearing his Allis-Chalmers cap and his
friendliest grin. Climbing out of the van...

RICHARD
We'll get an ice cream, comin'
back.

And starts loading her groceries into the van. Rain begins. He
loads faster...

RICHARD
Go on, scoot in.

But she stays. To help him finish.

INT. VAN - DAY

Raining hard now. Richard driving up U.S. Route 169, the main
street of Winterset. Francesca rides in silence, as half a block
ahead...

...a PICK-UP rolls out of the Texaco station, and onto the road
ahead of us. It is green and old. We know the letters on its
side. Kincaid Photography, Bellingham, Washington. And sitting
beside her husband, Francesca Johnson has frozen to stone.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
What was God telling me? My
brain was racing blood...

Our momentum carries us right up behind the green pick-up. Close
enough to see the license plate...

RICHARD

This fella's a long way from home.

And tunes in the noon livestock report. The green truck surges ahead, and a battered Ford slides between us, blocking our view. She cranes her neck...

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

At first, I was only trying to see him. The back of his head through the rain, a last glimpse I would file away and cherish.

We're driving too slowly. A jeep cuts in now, behind the Ford...

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

Then, it flooded through me. How badly I had underestimated my longing. And one thing more...

As we reach the stop for Highway 92...the Ford and the jeep peel to the right lane, and...

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

I had the last chance to save my life.

...we roll up. Right behind him. A four-way stop, with heavy cross-traffic. She is fighting for breath.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

I could do it. I would.

And her hand slips onto the door handle.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

Throw open one door, and run.

Breath coming harder. Richard looking out his side window at the rain, the cross-traffic...

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

And whatever came after. Would be all right. He would make it all right.

Only now, do tears stand in her eyes. And at the door handle...

...her fingers fall slowly away.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

So I began to beg Robert Kincaid. For his forgiveness.

His left turn signal comes on.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

I was wrong, Robert, I said in my heart. I was wrong to stay... but I can't go...

The green truck edges into the intersection...

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

Let me tell you why again, why
I can't ever go...and you tell
me why I should, and...

...makes a hard left and ZOOMS OFF into the rain, as a GASP escapes from her, and Richard turns. Sharp as if he'd been shot. His wife's face...

...is streaming tears. He sits and stares at her. As she sobs helplessly, sick with sorrow and guilt and regret. Begging now, wordlessly, for his forgiveness.

RICHARD

Frannie, will you please tell
me what is wrong with you?

She nods her head, through her tears, and from the misery of her twisted mouth...

FRANCESCA

I'm crazy, is what's wrong.
But I won't be anymore, Richard,
I promise...

Horns BLARE behind them. But Richard Johnson sits and stares. Angry and powerless. And only dimly aware that he is frightened. Her body trembles, but her frail voice rings with whispered conviction...

FRANCESCA

Promise.

HOLD on that. DISSOLVE TO...

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Another rain. Sixteen years later. Through a kitchen window.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

I never kept that promise.

PAN now to see Francesca, once more 54, her memories and her heart spread out on a table.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

...but my husband thought I did.

Her fingertips smooth out the letter. She has waited another year to read it once more.

KINCAID (V.O.)

'Dear Francesca. Enclosed are two photographs. One is of you in the pasture at sunrise. I hope you like it as much as I do. The other is of Roseman Bridge, the one I took with your note still fluttering...'

She looks at that one. The covered bridge in red light. Touches the tiny scrap of white at its entrance.

KINCAID (V.O.)

'...I look down the barrel of a lens, and you are there. I am walking around with another person inside of me...'

Her eyes have gone to the other photo. A woman in love. Sailing in a pasture. T-shirt, jeans. Luminous.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

And so I had my picture taken.
With another person inside of me.

No smile. Only her analytical eye.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

No wonder it looks like this.

Her fingers go to the brandy glass now.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

One letter, two photos. And he never wrote again.

She turns the glass in her hand.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

I thought, well, he's realized the risk this letter brings me. And he is too fine a person, and loves me too much, to send another.

12

Lifts it.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

Never for a moment did I fear he had forgotten.

A deep swallow.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

Never have I opened my mail box.
Without a flutter.

The glass comes to rest gently near the copy of National Geographic. The cover is Hogback Bridge. Taken from a tree.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

I bought a subscription. When they ran his material, his photo would be on the back page...

See the clippings now. Photos of the photographer. Loving fingers assemble them in order, and Robert Kincaid ages gradually before our eyes. She singles one out now...from the middle.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
This was the first one. With
the medallion.

He is by a river in East Africa, sitting on his heels to get a
shot. The medallion swings free.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
I noticed it immediately, but had
no idea why. For some reason it
obsessed me, until...

And now she smiles. For the first time.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
I pulled out Michael's magnifying
glass. From his stamp collection.

We CLOSE on the medallion. But not close enough to see...

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
It says Francesca.

HOLD on it. HOLD.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
The last picture of him in the
magazine. Was eight years ago.

PAN to his craggy, intent features. Studying his shot.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
This ended my fantasy. That we
were in contact.

12

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM, DES MOINES - NIGHT

Spare, dimly-lit room in a violent storm. Two men in hospital
beds. Only one has a visitor.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
One year later, a valve in Richard's
heart betrayed him. A betrayal I
couldn't mask with empty promises.

Richard's skin is grey, he is near the end. Staring up at the
stained ceiling. Francesca close by his side, watching him.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
That was Carolyn's freshman year,
and we lived alone at last.

Without thinking. Her fingers reach. Smooth back the few matted
strands of hair. Wipe the perspiration from his forehead. Such a
tender gesture, that he turns...

...looks up at her. He blinks. Stares so intently.

RICHARD
Francesca...

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
He never called me that.

It makes her hand slide down. Twine her fingers through his. The storm is pounding.

RICHARD
I know you had your own dreams, too.

Her eyes are glistening. She holds his hand so tight.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
My God, had he found the letter?

He licks his lips. From his heart...

RICHARD
I'm sorry I couldn't give them to you.

She bites her lip. Fighting back tears. She brings his fingers up to her mouth. Kisses them, as she had Kincaid's so long ago. She bends close...fierce and loving conviction in a whisper...

FRANCESCA
You have nothing. To be sorry for.

INT. KITCHEN - TWILIGHT

Late afternoon. Francesca alone at her formica table, staring resolutely at a single object before her. It is a telephone. 12

FRANCESCA (V.O.) BMC
After the funeral, when the children had gone back to their schools...

From her lap, she brings up the manila envelope.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
I thought about calling Robert Kincaid.

Opens the envelope with slow, respectful hands. Draws out the letter. Her finger traces the words...

KINCAID (V.O.)
'...I look down the barrel of a lens, and you are there. I am walking around with another person inside of me....'

She closes her eyes now, against the emotion. Or perhaps, to feel it more deeply. But her fingertips continue to move across the words, as if reading in Braille...

KINCAID (V.O.)

'...A few weeks ago, I felt self-contained, reasonably content. Maybe not profoundly happy, maybe a little lonely, but at least content. All of that has changed...'

Her lips move silently, along with...

KINCAID (V.O.)

'...I am stalked by us.'

And the eyes open. The hand reaches for the phone. Lifts the receiver. Tracing the number from his letterhead, she dials...

...waits. On the second ring, she draws a ragged breath. On the third, fear settles in her eyes. On the fourth...

WOMAN (O.S., phone)

McGregor Insurance.

Her heart sinks, sinks. Her mouth is dry.

WOMAN (O.S., phone)

Hello...?

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

And then I realized. Of course, I had misdialed. In the excitement.

WOMAN (O.S., phone)

Is anyone th...

FRANCESCA

...is this 206-589-1813?

WOMAN (O.S., phone)

Yes it is, how may I help you?

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

A question. I couldn't answer.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Francesca lies awake. Staring up at darkness.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

Nothing in Bellingham information. Or any other area code remotely near Seattle.

Her stare is hard, lost. Thoroughly awake.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

The magazine's offices were closed. I would simply wait for morning. No problem.

12

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Coffee boiling on the stove. The clock says 8:01. PAN TO find her, clinging to a phone...

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
I was transferred four times.
At last, to an editor who had
been there 20 years...

Her eyes straining as she listens. As if there were something to see.

EDITOR (O.S., phone)
...hell of a photographer, if you'll
excuse the language. He was kind of
cantankerous...

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
...not a word I could fit.

EDITOR (O.S., phone)
...I don't mean nasty, just...
persistent. He was after art, and
our readership wants something a
little more accessible.

A little chuckle over the line.

EDITOR (O.S., phone)
Robert was not your average
accessible guy.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
All in one's point of view, I
suppose.

EDITOR (O.S., phone)
But he was a pro. Send him
anywhere and he'd deliver. Then
we'd argue about every editorial
decision, and that's, uh...

FRANCESCA
...why he left you.

Said so simply, with such quiet assurance.

EDITOR (O.S., phone)
Why, yes. Actually.

A rustling of pages.

EDITOR (O.S., phone)
The, uh...last number we have is
in Bellingham, Washington. If you
haven't tried that.

She gathers her pain together. Quiet dignity in...

FRANCESCA

I have, thank you. And thank you
for the photos of him in your back
editions.

In the silence...

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

I hoped that hadn't seemed pathetic.
But the photos were all I had, and
I needed to thank someone for them.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Francesca lies awake. Moonlight through the long window.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

So. Call information at every
area code in the world. How hard
could that be?

She stirs. Restless as a leopard.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

A dark part of me was glad I
would never find him.

She licks her lips.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

And so I lay. And imagined what
I would never find. Robert at
peace...

Throws the covers aside...

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

...in another woman's arms.

Out of bed, quick. Too agitated to stay in her skin.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

Maybe. Take a little walk.

Stalks from frame. Only moonlight in her bed.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Francesca on a stool. Carefully tacking a large poster to the
bathroom wall. We can't see it.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

I went through several stages of
insanity.

She steps back, judging whether it is straight.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

An early one, was my American
Express phase...

12

BMC

It is a forest in purple and blue. White script scrawls BENGAL. And in the darkness, a tiger lurks. As she steps back, we see another poster in the tiny bathroom...VICTORIA FALLS glinting in primal mist.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

Every place I could match to one of his stories, was another fantasy. Another moment's imagining of us together...apart from a disinterested world.

She backs into her bedroom now. Posters line the walls, Paris and Peru, Java and Tangiers. Sri Lanka. Norway. Hudson Bay.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

Only upstairs, of course. Where visitors were not invited, to speculate and question.

She backs out of frame.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

We psychotics are a sensitive bunch.

EXT. LAWN - DAY

Ladies garden party. Tables set for lunch beneath striped awnings. The noise of plates and chatter.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

There was my denial phase.

At a far table, Francesca with five ladies. She listens, eats. Her dark eyes attentive.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

...pretending I'd survived.

EXT. FRONT PORCH - NIGHT

Francesca standing motionless. At the head of the lane.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

A time when I was obsessed with visions...

Staring out toward the road.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

Staring into night until I could see, or imagine I saw, his tail lights. Bobbing away down the path.

EXT. RESTAURANT TERRACE, DES MOINES - AIRPORT

A crowded lunchtime. A waiter moving through tables, a glass of wine on a tray...

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
In a year, the madness had settled.
I contented myself with pilgrimages...

...to the table by the railing. Light planes take off below. He sets the glass before the dark-haired woman dining alone.

EXT. ROSEMAN BRIDGE - DAWN

A red sun just showing its crown above the horizon. Bathing an ancient covered bridge with its glow. Only one soul to watch this.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
People saw me at these bridges
so often, they were forced to
comment.

Her eyes taking in everything. As his once did.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
'I'm odd', I mentioned.

She sinks to sit on her heels. All the time in the world.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
This discouraged follow-ups.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Francesca at the formica table. A single candle, her only light. She is writing carefully in a large leather-bound volume of blank pages.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
Then I began to set down the
details of our love. And my
thoughts about him.

12

BMC

She thinks. Returns to writing, slowly, every stroke confident. An affirmation.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
Our four days. Filled three volumes.
Counting the commentary.

EXT. PASTURE - NIGHT

Starry night. Walking alone in the pasture.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
Sell the farm, people suggested.
More people than you could imagine.

Shaking her shoulders free. Breathing the air.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
You should begin seeing men, it
was advised. Don't pine away for
Richard. The world is filled with
men.

It's chilly. She gathers her jacket around her.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
Of course, it is. Men who are
intelligent, refined, loving. Men
who would close every door...with
care. And respect.

See her face now. Tears filling dark eyes.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
But I am stalked by us.

Bites her lip. Lets the feeling come.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
And where does that live? While
we're apart.

The tears fall now.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
In dreams. Of being together.

She comes to the barbed wire fence. No one to hold the wire for
her.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
Sell the farm...?

She holds it for herself.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
Where else could he find me?

And steps through neatly. Walks off. Toward an empty house.

EXT. GARDEN - DAY

Francesca kneeling in dirt. Tending her vegetables.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
Each birthday, the ritual had
been the same. For sixteen years.
Just as on my 54th, in the heavy
rain, a few months ago.

HEAR wheels now. Kicking up gravel.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
But my next birthday. There will
be a difference.

12

And she turns. The truck says UNITED PARCEL SERVICE. As she stares at it...

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

Puzzling. I hadn't ordered anything
I could recall.

She brushes the dirt from her hands. Goes to the truck. A young DRIVER is sliding down, holding a clipboard and a thin, flat package. He wears a ski parka. Hip-hop on his radio, reasonable volume.

DRIVER

Hi.

He is attractive and knows it. Handing her the clipboard and a ballpoint pen. Showing her where to sign.

DRIVER

Aren't you cold like that?

Signing, but her eyes locked to the package. Thin and flat and square.

FRANCESCA

I'm fine, thank you.

DRIVER

I'm freezing.

He hands her the package. And disappears from her mind. She holds it. Stares as if she could see through the brown wrapping paper. He watches that for a beat.

DRIVER

Thanks.

12

He gets in his truck, drives away. But she doesn't move. Alone now, her hand runs over the surface of the package.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

The longer I stand here. The longer
before it's opened. The longer it
could be from him.

Faint smile. Foolish woman. She heads back.

There is no collie to follow her up the steps. Into the house. Through it, to the kitchen, the formica table.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

The return address was a law firm
in Annapolis, Maryland. Why is my
heart racing?

So with careful hands, she unwraps the paper. To find out.

It is a phonograph album. Jazz, saxophones. ORNETTE COLEMAN...
TOMORROW IS THE QUESTION. She slides it from the sleeve, and...

...something falls out. Onto the floor. A scrap of folded paper.
As she lifts it, opens it...

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
A claim check. From a train
depot. In Des Moines.

INT. TRAIN STATION, DES MOINES - DAY

An old station, the noise of trains, people in motion. TRACK
through to...

...the window. The dark-haired woman waiting. Her hands folded
together. And then a man with round glasses and straw-colored hair
hands her...

...a large box. She stares only an instant, her hands take it up,
gather it to her. She thanks the man. Turns away...

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
All the way to Des Moines, I told
myself...whatever this is...it will
wait til I'm home...

Walking faster now, but there's no one to notice.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
Home at our table. With our
brandy. And a cigarette.

She reaches a bank of old leatherette chairs. There are people
everywhere. An empty seat... 12

...she takes it. Eagerly.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
Waiting was out of the question.

Taped to the box is an envelope. She starts with that.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
The same law firm. Annapolis,
Maryland.

Unfold the letter, avid eyes...

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
'Dear Ms. Johnson. We are sending
these materials as the last request
of our former client, Robert Kincaid.'

Everything. Stops. There is life everywhere around her, but she
cannot see. Her heart is white hot in her throat, her head bows as
if under a weight...

FRANCESCA

Oh, Robert...Robert...no...

The words murmured aloud. No head turns to hear them. She is trembling, visibly, horribly, choking back a wellspring of tears. She sets her mouth, gathers her strength, reads on...

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

'...it was his final wish before leaving the United States to permanently reside abroad...'

And her eyes flicker. What?

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

Jesus, God, is he alive?

Anger, disbelief, tearing through the rest of the letter...

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

In the space of a single heartbeat, I prayed the first prayer of my life...let him be with a wife and children and thirty concubines, but dear God let him be alive...

And stops. Blinks. Reads...

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

'We regret to advise that we have no forwarding address or other knowledge of Mr. Kincaid's present whereabouts.'

She stares. Stares.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

'If we may be of further service, please do not hesitate to contact us. Sincerely, Allan S. Quippen, Attorney at Law.'

12

The eyes close. We can feel her heart racing.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

Thank you, God. Now take all lawyers.

Breathing. Breathing. Slower. The eyes come open. Fixed now...

...on the box. Unwraps it so carefully. As if she would save the brown paper. Opening it to find...

...two smaller boxes, packed in styrofoam popcorn. One with a padded envelope taped to the top. She opens this first...

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

I'd like to pretend I had a premonition. But actually, I was astonished...

...a silver chain. Through a MEDALLION. And now we are close enough to see. The word FRANCESCA, etched in script. She is lost, looking at it...

...brings it to her lips. When her eyes close, they squeeze tears which wander slowly down her face. Trains are being called. She is alone in a universe.

Holding her breath, she turns the medallion in her hand...

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
On the back was etched, 'If found,
please send to Francesca Johnson,
RR2, Winterset, Iowa, USA.'

The air comes out slow.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
Sell the farm, indeed.

She shakes the padded envelope gently. Out falls...

...his heavy silver bracelet, with delicate scrollwork. Wrapped in tissue.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
It hadn't been polished in
sixteen years.

...next to it. In her lap. A weathered gold Zippo lighter. Her hand runs smoothly over its surface. She draws a breath of pleasure. Then, reaches in the envelope...

...one thing more. A slip of paper. Her handwriting. She reads...

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
'If you'd like supper again when
white moths are on the wing, come
by tonight after you've finished.'

Her fingertips touch this. The most precious of all. She studies it...

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
It was stained and curved. As if
carried in a billfold for a long
time.

She holds it up to light.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
How many times did he read this?

Turns it in her hands. A relic, sacred.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
...the little overhead lamp of a
nonstop jet...the floor of a bamboo
hut in tiger country...

12

Her first smile. Thin and wise.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
I wanted to count them all.

She replaces the items in the padded envelope. Lifts one of the boxes from its styrofoam nest. Opens it to find a camera with a lens attached, scratched and scarred. It says Nikon.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
It was the camera I handed him
at Cedar Bridge.

She runs her hand now, through the popcorn, and comes up with...

...an envelope. Her eyes flicker, electric. This is the grand prize. She looks at it, slides it open carefully, loosening the flap from its dried paste. One breath. Unfold the pages...

KINCAID (V.O.)
Dear Francesca. I hope this
finds you well.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
Finds me well? Robert, this
makes me well.

KINCAID (V.O.)
Forgive the roundabout routing,
but I felt it was safest for you.
I've moved on to other cameras
now, and I wanted these to have a
home...

She nods slightly, but with firm conviction, on...

KINCAID (V.O.)
Yours is the only one we have.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
I didn't sell it. Did you know
I wouldn't?

KINCAID (V.O.)
As for the note from the bridge,
I've had it for sixteen years. So
will you by the time you're seventy...
then maybe you'll give it back...

She has to grin. Joy and agony. In the smallest smile.

KINCAID (V.O.)
And we can just keep trading off
like that, every sixteen years
or so.

She's nodding. Sounds like a plan.

12

BMC

KINCAID (V.O., softly)
What the heck. Something to look
forward to.

A twinge on that one. But she swallows against it.

KINCAID (V.O.)
I'm writing this on our six thousandth
day. I waited for a round number,
so you wouldn't think it was just
impatience.

FRANCESCA (whispers)
It's all right. Be impatient.

KINCAID (V.O.)
Which brings me to the reason.
For writing at all.

She bites her lip.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
Get to the point, my love. I'm a
very busy woman.

KINCAID (V.O.)
I got to wondering...if you thought...
time had made things...smaller. In
my memory.

Her head already shaking. Her eyes wet.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
Never thought it. Only feared,
but that doesn't count.

KINCAID (V.O.)
And I couldn't bear that.

The breath hisses from her lips. And ~~her~~ eyes shut tight. She
will not cry here. She will not. And in a moment, when it is
safe, the eyes open...

KINCAID (V.O.)
Just know that every few hours,
I'm tempted to come and take you.
On a good day, it's a little worse
than that.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
What's a good day, Robert? Do you
have those?

KINCAID (V.O.)
I've picked up telephones. I've
dialed numbers. But I've never
let it ring...

Shakes her head. No, you haven't.

KINCAID (V.O.)
...because I know. Every ring,
you wonder. I know that.

The muscles in her face tremble with that. She can't quite control her mouth now.

KINCAID (V.O.)
I've lived two lifetimes. One was
62 years. One was four days. Only
one counts.

She takes her eyes away now. Up to the ceiling of this crowded station. Hold. Hold. Back to...

KINCAID (V.O.)
I live with dust on my heart.
There were no women after you.
That wasn't from some pledge of
loyalty. Just a profound lack
of interest.

All the air comes out of her. Right there. This one, she has to read again...

KINCAID (V.O.)
I live with dust on my heart.
There were no women after you.
That wasn't from some pledge of
loyalty. Just a profound lack
of interest.

A small smile. Of pure light. Murmurs aloud...

FRANCESCA
Cut the trivia, Robert. Get to
the good stuff.

Her fingertips caress the page. As if she can feel his skin.

KINCAID (V.O.)
I remember. Everything.

The smile fades. The eyes deepen.

KINCAID (V.O.)
How you smelled.

Oh, God. There is no way she will cry in this place.

KINCAID (V.O.)
How you tasted like the summer.

It's in her breath now, ragged, rolling. But she will keep it from her eyes.

12

BML

KINCAID (V.O.)
The feel of your skin against mine.

The struggle ends. The tears come.

KINCAID (V.O.)
And the sound of your whispers.
As I loved you.

A woman in a station. Crying helplessly. As soft and as small as she can. Until...

...a throat CLEARS. And she looks up.

The BOY is five years old. Large neutral eyes. Holding out a bag of candy. The woman chokes back her sobs. Sniffing, she dries her face with her fingertips. The boy holds the candy forward, timid, but urgent. The woman shakes her head...

FRANCESCA
...that's all right, sweetheart.
I'm okay.

She's missed the point.

BOY
Could you open this, please?

It's a closed bag. His eyes glance across the station to where...

BOY
My mommy's making an important call.

Oh. As she reaches for the candy, the woman's smile is ¹²free and beautiful, that the boy is a little transfixed. She tugs at the bag... BMC

...but it won't open. So she uses her teeth. Voila. She reaches it back...

BOY
You could take one. You could take...three.

And she does.

INT. PICK-UP TRUCK, HIGHWAY - DUSK

Gathering dark, a woman driving. Her gaze seems fixed on the road. But it is locked into words...

KINCAID (V.O.)
God doesn't recognize earth-time.
To the universe, four days is no different from four billion years.

The eyes set. Resolute. The thrill of the letter is gone. The aching of reality has begun.

KINCAID (V.O.)
I try to keep that in mind.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

A dimly-lit kitchen. A cupboard. A woman's hands reaching to open, reveal...

...a brandy bottle. Two glasses waiting. The words continue...

KINCAID (V.O.)
But I am, after all, a man.

She takes the objects down. Carefully, calmly...

KINCAID (V.O.)
And all the rationalizations I
can conjure up...

Brings them to her table. Their table.

KINCAID (V.O.)
...do not keep me from wanting
you...

She sits. Opens the bottle. Her eyes have a dreamlike serenity.
But there is nothing close to a smile.

KINCAID (V.O.)
...every day, every moment...

She pours. Two glasses. Carefully.

KINCAID (V.O.)
...the merciless wailing of time,
time I can never spend with you...

Lifts one. Takes a sip. Closes her eyes.

KINCAID (V.O.)
...is deep within my head.

And sets the glass down. Her patience now exquisite. As if the
ritual will never end. The letter lies on the table...

KINCAID (V.O.)
So I'm leaving Maryland...and
the States...to get some distance.

...next to an unopened pack of Camels. She takes that up now.
Pulls off the wrap. Opens the pack with delicate fingers...

KINCAID (V.O.)
Old men get weak in the will, and
I'm guarding against that...

She's nodding slowly, pulling a single cigarette free...

12

KINCAID (V.O.)
They tend to say, 'Aw, hell...
one more dance.'

Her hands, her eyes, stop moving.

KINCAID (V.O., softly)
Remember that?

And with no one to hear, she murmurs...

FRANCESCA
Vaguely.

A sad, dry smile. She lifts the Zippo. CLICKS it to life.

KINCAID (V.O.)
It's a pretty shameless letter.
But I'm not ashamed of it...

Lights her Camel. Draws slowly...

KINCAID (V.O.)
...because it leaves no address.
No easy way to tempt you...to
act on an impulse you'd regret.

The smoke billows. The eyes are old here. And alive with regret.

KINCAID (V.O.)
Anyway, my address is going to
be everywhere from here on out,
I expect.

One single nod. She expects so.

KINCAID (V.O.)
I won't write again.

BMC

12

No tears, not even close. The pain is far too deep.

KINCAID (V.O.)
I've told you everything I can.
And if you really think about it...

And she is. With all she's got.

KINCAID (V.O.)
...everything I need to.

There is something there. She doesn't have it yet. As her glance
returns to the letter...

...we CLOSE on it.

KINCAID (V.O.)
I love you completely. Completely.
And I always will.

HOLD on the words...

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

...and as we PAN back up, there are tears on the face of the woman reading them. It is the same kitchen. But a different woman.

And as Carolyn Johnson cries. Her brother watches.

CAROLYN

Oh, Michael...can you even believe it...?

Spread across the old formica table. The letters, the photographs. Their mother's journal in three bound volumes, two of which lie open. Carolyn composes herself, lifts a letter of many pages...

CAROLYN (reads)

'I know children are most comfortable thinking of their parents as asexual. So I hope this will not shock you, or affect what we have together in any negative way...'

Across the table, Michael has picked up an old Nikon. Examining it, as if this exempts him from hearing...

CAROLYN (reads)

'In our old kitchen, Robert and I talked and danced by candlelight. And, yes, we made love there...'

Transported by tender feeling, Carolyn does not look up to see the flicker across her brother's eyes...

CAROLYN (reads)

'...and in the bedroom and in the pasture grass and just about anywhere else you can think of

12

AMC

Her eyes are dry now, but they shine all the more.

CAROLYN (reads)

'It was incredible, powerful, transcending lovemaking, and it went on for days, almost without stopping...'

Michael's jaw is set. His eyes flat, as he turns the Nikon in his fingers.

CAROLYN (reads)

'...because everything we did, whether talking, or singing, or cooking side-by-side. Was making love.'

That brings the catch back to her voice. She stops, thinks about this. Murmurs...

CAROLYN

My God, Michael. And I was saying...have you ever seen Ma do one romantic thing in her whole life...?

And she looks up. His face composes for her, neutral once more. He even manages the thinnest smile with...

MICHAEL

No. I never saw her.

The tone is pleasant enough on the surface. Still, her eyes linger a beat, before returning to...

CAROLYN (reads)

'I only wish both of you could experience what I have, but that may not be possible...'

A slight smile plays at her lips...

CAROLYN (reads)

'Unfashionable as this may be to say, I doubt any woman could possess the peculiar kind of power Robert had. So Michael, that lets you out...'

Getting harder for Michael to sit still, to keep still.

CAROLYN (reads)

'As for Carolyn, I'm afraid the bad news is that there was only one of him, and no more.'

Michael stands up. A little fast maybe, but she is too engrossed to notice that.

12

CAROLYN (reads)

'If not for your father and the two of you, I would have gone; anywhere with him, instantly...'

Michael is pacing now. Slowly, his heels sounding on the old kitchen floor.

CAROLYN (reads)

'But when I told him I could not go, he was too decent a person to ever interfere in our lives after that.'

A sound escapes from Michael. A short, sharp breath, of which she takes no notice.

CAROLYN (reads)
'The paradox is this: If it had
not been for Robert, I'm not sure
I could have stayed on the farm
all those years...'

And with this. Michael stops. Turns to his sister's back.

CAROLYN (reads)
'In four days, he gave me a
lifetime, a universe, and made me
whole. I have never stopped th...'

MICHAEL
Jesus. Fucking. Christ!

And her head SNAPS around. As her father's had once, at a highway
crossing. When his wife cried out in the rain.

MICHAEL
How the hell can you go on
reading that!

But her eyes narrow, hard as his own...

CAROLYN
And what's this? Ma 'cheated'
on Daddy?

This is not baby sister's voice. And that sets him back, just a
beat.

MICHAEL
Well, for starters, yeh. Did
that part of this escape you?

12

CAROLYN **BMC**
You think he never had an affair?

The tone of it, the flash in her eyes, she's taking him on all the
way.

MICHAEL
...I'd bet my life on it, he
loved her with all his heart!

CAROLYN
...well, that's good to hear.

That was strong and quiet.

CAROLYN
...because watching him do it,
was less than inspiring.

Go ahead, pal. Challenge that.

MICHAEL

And this was not some four-day affair, it was a lifelong obsession!

CAROLYN

I know. Isn't it beautiful.

That was soft, rich. He can scarcely believe she's ignoring...

MICHAEL

She lied to us, Carolyn. She lived a lie her whole life!!

Don't you get it?

MICHAEL

Everytime she slept with Dad, she was thinking of him! Everytime she cooked a meal in this kitchen, or walked through that pasture, or...

CAROLYN

...why, Michael Johnson. You have more poetry in you than I ever imagined.

Ominous, knife-edged, quiet words. She's fighting from a gut level he could never understand.

MICHAEL

...and what is that supposed to mean?

CAROLYN

It means you are a pig.

He's standing, she's only sitting. But she is positively frightening.

CAROLYN

You are heartless and ungrateful, and bone-stupid like...

And stops.

MICHAEL

...like my father, say it.

CAROLYN

She gave up a LIFETIME of happiness for US, and THIS is your thanks! You should be on your KNEES that you ever KNEW this woman!

It's like a flame scorching his body, what unleashed this? He swallows, changes course...

MICHAEL

And why are we hearing this big confession all of a sudden?

The fight's gone out of him. She's won. She doesn't care.

CAROLYN

I don't know. Because she went away. Maybe she's not coming back. Or maybe, she thinks...

Nodding to herself...

CAROLYN

...it's a lot to absorb. While she's away, we can come to accept this, underst...

MICHAEL

...without having to confront us.

CAROLYN

At least she told us while she was alive, that took some guts. You want to confront her, you'll get your chance.

MICHAEL

Don't think I won't.

He sets his jaw. Consistent to the end. She only nods...

CAROLYN

In the meantime. Get out of her house.

She says that straight from her soul. He glares defiantly, fuck this. And...

...STALKS through the kitchen, flinging open the screen door, through it, crashing VICIOUSLY behind him. His footfalls disappearing down old porch steps.

Silence. He is gone from her mind. She turns back to what matters. And alone now, as she reads, she can hear...

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

Carolyn. Remember the horrible argument we had once about the light pink sundress in my closet?

She does, instantly. It is a knife in her heart.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

Why, you asked, couldn't it be made over to fit you? Since I never wore it.

My God.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
This was the dress I was wearing,
the moment he fell in love with me.

Her eyes fill. She can't help it.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
I've never looked as good in my
entire life as I did that night.

Hear her breathing.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
The dress was my small and foolish
memory of that time.

And hear one thing more. Footfalls on an old wooden porch.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
I never wore it again.

Tears fall.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
That's why I said, no, darling.
Not that one.

A screen door opens. Carolyn unaware, enjoying her silent tears.
But when the door closes...

...quietly. She looks up.

Her brother looks sorry. He doesn't know how to say it, but it's
there. It is all she wanted.

MICHAEL
I could, uh...I could use a
drink. How 'bout you?

12

BMC

She nods. She could. He crosses to the cupboard, as she resumes
reading aloud...

CAROLYN (reads)
'Robert has no family, as far as
I know. I am asking you to make
him part of ours.'

Michael reaching, thinking, pulling down the brandy bottle. The
two glasses.

CAROLYN (reads)
'At least I had a family, a life
with others. Robert was alone.
That was not fair, and I know it.'

He returns to the kitchen table. Sets down the glasses.

CAROLYN (reads)
'I am in no way ashamed of any
of this. Quite the contrary.'

He uncorks the bottle. Begins to pour.

CAROLYN (reads)
'I beg your understanding.'

She stops at those words. The glasses quietly fill.

CAROLYN (reads)
'If you love me. Then you must
love what I have done.'

She stares at the letter. She lifts her glass. Turns to her brother...

CAROLYN
To the night she wrote this...

It is a toast. And she waits.

CAROLYN
...the night she read his letter.
That said he would never write
again.

Her eyes fill. She urges the glass slightly forward, murmurs...

CAROLYN
Don't be lonely, Ma.

And he lifts his glass to that. And as they drink...

DISSOLVE TO...

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

12

...the night they drink to. Kincaid's letter on this table, in flickering light. There is an old record player that sits beside it, now. Empty turntable spinning slowly, waiting.

Francesca finishes lighting the second candle, the only light in the world, as she takes the album from its jacket. Places it so carefully, sets the needle...

...Ornette Coleman begins. Elegant jazz from the limits of melody. Hardly dancing music. And yet, she turns, clasps her hands lightly behind her back...

...and begins to dance alone. Graceful, perfect, her head tilted slightly back, lovely face raised up. In dreams of being together. And as she spins, the fluid saxophone melody becomes...

...Autumn Leaves. And Kincaid is there, spinning with her, hands behind his back, their bodies almost touching. He is his old self in this vision, younger than she is now, with khaki shirt, and orange suspenders, and kind, knowing eyes. And he...

...reaches for her. Pulls her to him, and her arms lift in a dream around his neck. She leans her face up to rest against his...

...and we let them dance. They've waited so long, we just watch them. Swaying, turning, one body, until...

...our record CLICKS, scratches, begins to repeat an atonal phrase from the real track. Kincaid has disappeared, and she stops her dance, unruffled. As she turns to fix the record, her eye falls on...

...the jacket. ORNETTE COLEMAN. TOMORROW IS THE QUESTION. And her gaze stops. She stares at it so oddly, as if it could speak to her. And...

KINCAID (V.O.)
Wherever I am. If there's a club
where a guy plays saxophone, if
he's any good...

Her face. Frozen to stone.

KINCAID (V.O.)
...I'm there.

SMASH CUT TO...

EXT. TRAIN STATION, ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND - TWILIGHT

Graceful old station in fading light. Travelers, commuters, pass beneath the lettered sign ANNAPOLIS. As a train arrives, slowing, slowing, not quite at a stop by the ramp...

...she is OFF, striding fast, clutching her single bag which seems her sole possession, trotting now, nearly running, to...

...a phone stand. The Yellow Pages, quick, eager fingers...

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
'Jazz', first...janitor...jewelers, 12
nothing. 'Clubs', next 4.3

Turning pages, alive. Finds...

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
...too many, none of them right.
But then...

Turning. Scanning. Stopping.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
...night clubs.

INT. JAZZ CLUB - NIGHT

Small, smoky club. Dark and comfortably aged. The evening is young, and the place mostly empty, when...

...the dark-haired woman enters. She still has her bag. Looks around, a little tentative. Finds a table, off to the side. She sets her bag down. Drapes her coat over a chair. And sits.

A waitress comes and smiles. Francesca orders, and the waitress goes. She sits, eyes adjusting to the dark, hearing the recorded jazz that plays before sets begin. It is vintage Parker, and she listens as her eyes roam the place, and...

...stop. Stop. She rises, slowly, in a dream, and...

...through the tables. To the wall. To stare at a photograph. It is Roseman Bridge. And as she stares, in the dark, we can just make out...

...a scrap of WHITE. By the bridge's entrance. The sweet smile cannot stay from her lips. She murmurs aloud...

FRANCESCA

When white moths. Are on the wing.

And her fingers reach. Touch the white. Rest there.

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

'Scuse me, Miss...'

She doesn't turn right away, so deep is the reverie. But when she does...

...she sees a man, small and black, could be seventy. His head is bald or shaved. His eyes are light in color, striking. He is JOHN 'NIGHTHAWK' CUMMINGS, and he offers politely...

NIGHTHAWK

You happen to be watchin' my favorite photo.

Her eyes linger on him a beat.

FRANCESCA

Well, I know the artist. I mean, the photographer.

12

He doesn't seem surprised by any of this.

NIGHTHAWK

You must be his sister Alice, he said might show up.

His smile is genuine, but his eyes are really watching her.

NIGHTHAWK

I'm Nighthawk Cummings, may I buy you a drink...?

As they shake hands, as she nods pleasantly...

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

He had no sister. I did not know why Robert chose to invent a disguise for me, but I would keep his confidence.

She follows Nighthawk to a table. And there they sit.

NIGHTHAWK
I play in this club, tenor
saxophone. Have for years.

FRANCESCA
You must be very good.

His eyes ask why.

FRANCESCA
Because he listens to you.

Ah. Well...

NIGHTHAWK
So, Alice, one day this dude in
jeans and orange suspenders wanders
in...takes out these old beat-up
cameras I didn't think would even
work....

The smile. The twinkle of it.

NIGHTHAWK
And he says. Can you play
Autumn Leaves...?

The dark-haired woman only smiles pleasantly. As if she likes that
tune.

NIGHTHAWK
I play it for ten minutes, while
he starts shooting me, shot after
shot. Then he leaves...comes back
next day...

Shakes his head, just remembering. BMC

12

NIGHTHAWK
Best shots of me ever, by far.
Charges me only fifty bucks.
And after that...

FRANCESCA
...he starts coming in.

NIGHTHAWK
...two, three nights a week. I
mean, for years. We got pretty
knowledgeable 'bout each other.

FRANCESCA
I can imagine.

He nods on that. A little slowly.

NIGHTHAWK

He knows jazz is like magic.

Does she get that? Maybe not.

NIGHTHAWK

You're playin' some tune for the thousandth time, and suddenly there's a whole new set of ideas comin' right through your horn. Like magic. He said photography was like that...

Slower...

NIGHTHAWK

...and life in general.

Slower...

NIGHTHAWK

...and making love. To the right woman.

The right woman. His smile apologetic here, hopes he didn't offend. Seems like he hasn't.

NIGHTHAWK

So one day, I ask about that silver medallion. He shows it to me, and it says 'Francesca'... you know about this....?

12

FRANCESCA

I've seen it. But we've never discussed it.

Oh

NIGHTHAWK

He asks how much time I got, I say all he wants, and he starts talkin'...

She settles back. If her eyes are somewhat keener, he doesn't notice.

NIGHTHAWK

...all afternoon, most of the night. Like he'd kept this inside him for a real long time.

Then...

NIGHTHAWK

He was a poet. When he talked about her.

Am right here. She begins to lose it.

NIGHTHAWK

And, man, he cried while he talked. Big tears.

Jesus. Her eyes are wet, she knows that for sure.

NIGHTHAWK

He put that woman in my heart so deep, I fell in love with her.

She's actually trembling. Why can't he see it?

NIGHTHAWK

So I wrote this tune, for him, but for me, y'know?

She nods, sure. She knows.

NIGHTHAWK

Simple, but elegant. Like he said she was. A song for a lady.

For a lady.

NIGHTHAWK

So one night, he's sittin' there, listenin' hard like he always does. And I say into the mike...I'm gonna play a tune I wrote for a friend of mine...

He sits back...

NIGHTHAWK

...it's called 'Francesca'.

His smile is so wonderful.

NIGHTHAWK

...and, man, he bawled all the way through it. And so did I. Just like you're doin' now...

Because she surely is. He leans forward, puts his hand on her arm...

NIGHTHAWK

I know who you are, darlin'. I just made up that 'Alice' stuff, so I could tell the story right, okay?

She snuffles and nods. It is okay.

NIGHTHAWK

He said, only one chance in a billion you'd walk through this door...

He's pulling a billfold from his pocket...

NIGHTHAWK
But if you did...

Taking something from it...

NIGHTHAWK
I could show you this.

And holds it toward her.

NIGHTHAWK
I been carryin' it around.
Cos I liked the odds.

We see the photo with her. Soaring white MOUNTAINS, breathtaking blue-green VALLEY, and...

SMASH CUT TO...

INT. TRAIN, KASHMIR PROVINCE - DAY

The mountains. The valley. The rickety station, as we slow, slow, and...

...her fingers reach for the handle of her single bag. Close around it. The train jars softly to a stop, and she gazes through the window... 12

...a few locals on the platform. BMC vendor frying something hot to eat. Nothing more. And she is...

...ON her feet, head high, moving through the corridor. Breath coming faster, life rising in her, off the train...

The air is cold. She looks to her left. No one is there. And then...to her right...

He is waiting. They stand now, remembering each other with their eyes. As if, truly, this would be enough. He comes toward her, the bag slips from her fingers, she is rooted, paralyzed, until he...

...is there. She reaches out, her palm flat, toward him. He does the same. Their fingers reach...twine...

...she GRASPS him.

CUT TO BLACK. ROLL END CREDITS.