

TRAIN CHOIR

screenplay by Jon Raymond & Kelly Reichardt

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EXT. KELLY POINT PARK - DUSK / NIGHT

On the outskirts of a town in Northern Oregon, WENDY, a slightly disheveled woman in her late 20s, can hear her dog, LUCY, racing through the long grass in the darkness. The dinging tags and chafing stalks give away every burst of speed and change of direction.

Wendy, alert, sings a sweet uplifting tune to herself.

The dog sprints toward the train trestle up ahead, a low bridge connecting two square bluffs outlined against the high plain night sky, and then doubles back.

The sounds stop, most likely for an investigation of a molehill or a sprout of pigweed only to pick up again, tracing a path back toward the road shoulder right to the spot where Wendy is walking.

Lucky emerges from the grass and plows into Wendy's legs, carrying in her smiling mouth a broken branch. The last light of the day glows on her small, muscled body, turning her yellow coat pale forest.

Wendy wrestles with the stick and then relinquishes it, and the dog plunges back into the meadow for another sprint.

WENDY

I don't want that old stick anyway.
We're only out here for a little
while. Don't go too far. Lu? Are
you listening?

The wind through the grass mixes with the whisper of traffic on the boulevard well behind her; in the distance, the yearning whistle and rumble of a passing train rises from the night like the voice of the earth itself.

Down the road, Lucy emerges from the grass and stops perfectly still, sensing some subtle stirring of sound or motion. She lifts her front paw, pulling it close to her body. She stands statue-like assessing the situation...

And then, crazily, she bounds off, galloping toward the next electrical pole, and the next pole after that, making her way toward the looming, nocturnal shipwreck of the trestle.

WENDY (CONT'D)

Hey! No! Cut it out, Lu.

The dog disappears into the darkness, well beyond Wendy's comfort zone, a scream's length from humanity. Wendy is alert to the dangers at the margins of an unknown town. But as always, Lucy has her way.

Wendy's footsteps pick up on the gravel shoulder. She walks along the tracks into the gloaming. Within a few yards she's able to see a firelight playing on the crossbars of the bridge, and hear faint yelps and laughter overlapping with tinny music from a radio.

CUT TO:

EXT. BONFIRE - NIGHT

The land dips, and the orange light of an open bonfire emerges into view. Through the low brush Wendy sees A GROUP OF TEENAGE KIDS feeding busted chair frames and the remains of a mattress into the flames. The sound of their conversation is sharp but indistinct.

They're a proudly dirty bunch, their fingernails blackened, their hair clotted with knots, some with studs in their cheeks and even facial tattoos, part of a dispersed tribe that Wendy had always considered slightly ridiculous, but, here in the dark of night, bathed in firelight, takes out a sinister cast.

KID 1

Beyonce!

Some KID yelps to hearty laughter.

It was apparently some kind of joke among the group. Through the brush, Wendy can see Lucy, that minx, huddled in the arms of SADIE, a girl with ropy dreadlocks and black, pegged jeans, crouched in the weeds at the edge of the clearing.

From behind the trees, Wendy watches a moment, taking in the sight of her dog in someone else's arms.

Sadie is barely sober enough to remain balanced, but Lucy's hind legs thumps on the ground from her expert scratching.

Wendy enters the ring of flickering orange and lurks on the perimeter.

Sadie is not at all surprised by Wendy's arrival. Her cheeks are flushed with youth...

SADIE

Great dog, what's her name?

The rest of the HOBOS are uniformly disinterested.

WENDY

Lucy.

SADIE

She's a sweetheart. You're a
sweetheart, Lucy!

Wendy watches her dog for some spark of affection, but Lucy is too engrossed in the young girl's attention to look up, too busy giving herself away. She pants heavily and her eyes are half closed.

Across the cleaning, a boy begins scaling the trestle with a beer pinned in his armpit. The others huddled in pairs and threesomes chat about politics and the week's train schedules.

SADIE (CONT'D)

What is she?

WENDY

Not really sure. Some kind of mix
of hunting dog and retriever.

Wendy plots her escape route should the hobo scene turn ugly.

SADIE

What's the closest store around
here?

WENDY

No idea. I'm just passing through.

SADIE

Yeah? Where to?

Wendy is not pleased by all the questions, fearing the eventual query for a ride, but figures it better to answer the girl than not.

WENDY

Alaska.

As if that might distinguish them.

SADIE

(disappointed)

Oh. I'm going south. (to Lucy) Are
you riding shotgun?

Sadie nods at Icky, a short, scruffy, densely-packed boy trying to break a two-by-four with one foot and one hand.

SADIE (CONT'D)

Icky worked the canneries last year. Hey Icky! This lady's going to Alaska!

ICKY

Whoo! King Salmon!

Icky drains his beer and kicks the empty can with his huge boot into the bushes.

ICKY (CONT'D)

It's awesome up there. You going to work? (she nods) Where you going?

WENDY

Ketchican.

He comes trotting over.

ICKY

Ketchican's good for greenhorns. Cooper River is pretty good, too. Farther north. But lots of work on the slime line. Really, you should check out the Northwestern Fishery. The housing is fucking awesome. Tell Mike Murphy you met me. He's all right.

WENDY

I might.

ICKY

They pay the best, too. Like, five grand. No expenses, you know? You walk with everything.

Wendy files the information away. DIGGER comes by asking for beer money.

DIGGER

Beer money, beer money. Get your orders in.

Wendy passes. Icky stuffs a few dollars in the guy's hat.

ICKY

Whatever you do, don't mention me to Old Man Brutus, though. He was a bit upset with me when I left in somewhat of a hurry.

Icky, clearly a storyteller, is now speaking at a volume that can be heard by all.

ICKY (CONT'D)

I would have stuck around longer if there hadn't been a certain complication while driving a two ton earth mover one night in a state slightly less than sober. Some buddies of mine were out goofing around and we got the thing started, I put it in gear and that was that. We drove all over the construction site. Getting it to stop, though. No one told me that. We finally had to jump off and it rolled all the way across the construction site. We couldn't stop the thing. I tried everything. It snapped the retaining wires. Boosh! This huge spray of sparks. It was fucking amazing, man.

With all eyes on Icky, Wendy pulls a leash from he pocket and shakes it once. Lucy breaks away from Sadie and ambles to her side. Wendy hooks the leash to Lucy's collar.

ICKY (CONT'D)

The Cat went over the hill head over heels, ass over tit, all the way into the water. It was probably a hundred thousand dollar piece of equipment, gone in four fucking seconds. They couldn't pin it on me, though, man I was gone...

Wendy and Lucy exit the clearing without a word, back into the darkness that had delivered them, the sound of Icky's bragging fades behind them as they go.

CUT TO:

WALGREENS PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Wendy's car is a 1996 Camry with a dent in the driver's side door panel and three missing hubcaps. It's the only car parked in the Walgreen's parking lot.

CUT TO:

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Lucy scrambles into the back seat, taking her place among the piles of blankets and sweaters, burrowing into a nook beside the cooler and some wadded sweat pants.

Wendy follows after her, settling into the driver seat and locking the doors.

WENDY

You made some friends tonight. You sure aren't too picky, are you? You little tramp.

Wendy pulls out her driving log. By the dim glows of the car's interior light, she adds the days' gas receipts to the bottom of the column marked Expenses. She calculates a new subtotal. She considers the new figure. She pulls up her shirt, opens the money belt strapped to her stomach and counts out the bills and coins.

She puts a ten dollar bill and small change in her inner jacket pocket for easy access.

In her log, next to the day's date, she writes \$525.00.

WENDY (CONT'D)

Cutting it close, Lu. You're not paying your way.

She zips her money belt, sets the log aside.

She swings her legs onto the passenger seat and opens the atlas on her knees.

WENDY (CONT'D)

We made pretty good time today.

Wendy guides her finger along the worn map from the spiny, brown mountains south of Salt Lake City across central Oregon and the Cascades to I-5, and north toward Wilsonville, south of Portland.

WENDY (CONT'D)

We went all the way from here to here.

Using her thumb and pointer finger, she measures the remaining distance to Canada's border.

WENDY (CONT'D)

If we push we could probably make the ferry tomorrow. Then another day or two before the run starts.

Lucy is asleep, curled in a ball, her snout on her paws.

WENDY (CONT'D)

What was the name of that place
that guy said?

She writes the name on top of the driving log Northwestern
Fishery.

She lets the atlas and driving log fall to the floor and
switches off the overhead light.

She reclines her seat and lies there thinking, her hand
squeezing the money belt through her skirt.

She drags her coat from the backseat and arranges it around
her shoulders like a blanket.

WENDY (CONT'D)

You're going to like it, Lu. Gonna
like it a lot. It's a real clean up
there. Nothing like home.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

INT. CAR - DAWN

Someone is banging on the window.

Lucy begins to bark.

The windows are fogged with breath and Wendy can't see
anything beyond the hulking, silvery shadow behind the glass.

A quick check tells her the doors are safely locked, and the
sound of traffic on the street tells her there are other
people close at hand.

A MAN'S VOICE

You can't sleep here ma'am. Wake
up. You can't sleep out here. Not
allowed.

WENDY

(peeling off her coat)
Yeah, okay.

The initial shock of the awakening gives way to something
more like grouchiness and irritation.

She checks herself in the rearview mirror. The reflection that appears is not the most lovely she has ever seen. Her face looks harder than usual this morning, and the limp, unwashed hair isn't helping matters. She tries brushing out the worst of the knots with her fingers, but there isn't much to be done.

MAN'S VOICE

Hey! Wake up.

WENDY

All right, all right...knock it off, Lu.

Wendy cracks the window. Through the slit she spies a security cop standing a few yards away. The man is pushing 60. His uniform, a gray suit with yellow epaulets, is absurd, but he wears it with a semblance of dignity, or at least resignation. Wendy senses immediately that he has no real problem with her, just a job to do.

GUARD

You can't sleep here.

Behind him, the street that had been obscure the night before is now visible in the morning light.

WENDY

Yeah. All right, we're going.

Wendy turns the key in the ignition. The engine fails to start up. There is no sound, no spark.

She twists the key again and again but there is no response, just a barely audible whine, and a dampened click deep under the hood.

WENDY (CONT'D)

Lucy, what did you do?

The security guard stands waiting, his hands in his pockets. Wendy checks the gear shift to make sure the car is in park. She pumps the gas a couple of times, and tries the key again. Still nothing happens.

She rolls down her window feeling the bite of the morning air vacuum in.

WENDY (CONT'D)

The car won't stop.

The guard leans over.

GUARD
You got gas?

WENDY
There's enough gas. Plenty of gas.

GUARD
Electrical?

WENDY
Fine.

GUARD
Well, you can't park here. That's
the rule.

WENDY
Yeah, I get that.

A car honks in the intersection and the fluorescent lights
inside the beige walls of Walgreens stutter to life.

GUARD
You just have to get off the
property.

He glances at the store across the empty parking lot.

GUARD (CONT'D)
That's just the way it is.

WENDY
Okay. How far is the property?

GUARD
To the street. The street's public.
You just have to get out of the
lot.

Wendy checks the distance to the street.

DISSOLVE:

EXT. WALGREENS PARKING LOT - EARLY MORNING

Wendy pushes while steering. The guard pushes from the rear.
Lucy races from window to window like she has never been
inside a moving car before.

As they reach the street, Wendy hops into the driver's seat
and steers the car safely to the side of the street.

The guard is a bit out of a breath.

The strip of storefronts holds two check cashing offices, a pawn shop, and a restaurant called King Burrito. Diagonally across the intersection is a darkened garage called On The Go Auto, and next to that is Annie's Doughnut Shop.

WENDY

You know anything about that garage over there?

GUARD

Seems to get business. A lot of cars come and go. Never talked to them, though. He's the closest. He's got that going for him.

WENDY

Is there a grocery store around here?

GUARD

Down the road there's Jack's. They're pretty good. And cheap. That's where I usually go.

Wendy looks around...

GUARD (CONT'D)

Good luck, now.

The guard hurries to his post beside the front door of the drug store, under the neon mortar and pestle sign.

Wendy continues fiddling with the car. She gives it another try, again pumping the gas but has no luck.

She lifts the hood and stares at the occult machinery of the engine.

WENDY

Shit.

She slams the hood.

She puts Lucy's leash on and lets her out of the car.

She digs two dog bowls out of the truck and sets them on the ground. She pours bottled water into one. She unrolls a big bag of dog food and shakes it over the other bowl. A few remaining nuggets make their way out of the bottom-most wrinkles into Lucy's bowl.

WENDY (CONT'D)

Shit.

Wendy rolls the empty bag back up and returns it to the trunk. She takes a handful of corn chips for herself as she tries to get a grip on the situation. She looks across the street towards On The Go Auto...

Lucy licks the bottom of her empty bowl.

CUT TO:

EXT. INTERSECTION / ON THE GO AUTO - 8AM

Wendy and Lucy cross the intersection to On The Go Auto, a bleak, brown cinderblock cube set on a balding, oil-stained lot, with two garages and a helmet-like roof of corrugated metal. The building is surrounded by cars in differing states of disrepair, themselves surrounded by a new cyclone fence topped with razor wire.

Wendy goes closer. The handwritten sign, taped to the front glass door, lists the garage hours: Weekdays 10AM-6PM.

She checks her watch. The garage doesn't open for another two hours.

WENDY

Lazy.

She looks up the street. The whistle of a distant train goes unnoticed as she contemplates how to kill the next two hours.

WENDY (CONT'D)

Come on, Lu. Let's find some food.

Lucy wags her tail, happy for the morning side.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - THE MAIN DRAG - MORNING

Wendy and Lucy head down the sidewalks, passing the storefronts - a cellphone store, bank, Blockbuster, nail salon.

CUT TO:

EXT. SHELL - MORNING

A GAS STATION ATTENDANT stands on a ladder maneuvering a long pole as he changes the gas prices on the towering sign above him.

Wendy watches the man carefully remove a plastic number 2.

Wendy ties Lucy to a pole outside the bathroom door.

CUT TO:

INT. SHELL BATHROOM - MORNING

Wendy lets the hot water run for a long time, scalding the filthy sink basin as best she can.

She washes her face with soft soap and dries herself with a handful of rough, brown paper towels.

Standing on top of her sneakers, trying to keep her feet from touching the dirty floor, she changes into a clean pair of underwear.

CUT TO:

EXT. SHELL - MORNING

Untying Lucy, she notes with displeasure that the number 2 has been replaced with a number 4, bringing the cost of regular to \$3.49 a gallon.

WENDY

Nobody asked me about it.

They run across the street.

WENDY (CONT'D)

Good thing we filled up last night.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - THE MAIN DRAG - MORNING

Wendy keeps her eyes out for bottles and cans on the shoulder, picking up what she can along the way. She rejects one as being too sticky to bother with.

CUT TO:

EXT. FRED MEYERS RECYCLING STATION - MORNING

As she approaches the store she heads to the recycling machines. The scene is overwhelming. MEN IN WHEELCHAIRS AND MOBILITY SCOOTERS have the run of the place. The WOMAN currently feeding the recycling machines has three giant clear bags of cans in her cart and everyone working the place look like a professional. SHE SEES THE KID WHO COLLECTED BEER MONEY THE NIGHT BEFORE. He collects his money and heads to the sidewalk to beg for more.

She leaves her sad collection of cans in a wayward grocery cart and heads off.

CUT TO:

EXT. JACK'S FAMILY MARKET - MORNING

The grocery store the guard suggested is an old-fashioned, medium-sized place, with bright, hand-painted signs on butcher paper in the windows and a coin-operated pony near the front door.

Wendy ties Lucy to a bike rack.

WENDY

Don't bother anybody. I'll be right back with a treat.

As Wendy leaves, Lucy barks. Wendy grabs her snout and clamps her jaws together.

WENDY (CONT'D)

Hey. What did I say? Don't be a nuisance. We don't want that.

Wendy waits as a rattling, silver train of shopping carts rolls in the front door, pushed by a STOCK BOY.

CUT TO:

INT. JACK'S FAMILY MARKET - CONTINUOUS

Wendy is greeted by the sounds of Neil Diamond's I'M COMING TO AMERICA from hidden speakers.

She goes to a taste table where thumb-size paper cups of coffee are being offered. She swallows one and helps herself to another. Out of habit, she sticks a couple packs of sugar in her coat pocket. The stock boy glowers at her and she feels compelled to leave.

CUT TO:

She takes her time locating the dog food section.

The largesse of the inventory is vaguely pleasant. The aisles of waxy vegetables, the deep rows of fresh milk cartons, the multicolored boxes of breakfast cereal. All the food on the shelves, the fastidiously arranged products, imply some well-organized system in place, the notion that someone, somewhere, is taking care that everything find its proper path.

CUT TO:

INT. DOG FOOD AISLE

The dog food aisle is number six. The section is well-stocked, with upwards of ten brands, divided into the different stages of a dog's life development.

She locates the 17 pound bag of IAM'S that she is used to buying. It's listed at \$28.00 which is more than she can rationalize spending. She considers resorting to a small sized bag, something to tide Lucy over, or possibly even a few cans.

Wendy loiters in the dog food section reading the labels, comparing the different prices and weights and ingredients of the cans. Every fourteen-ounce can runs anywhere from a dollar-nineteen to a dollar-fifty.

At the end of the aisle the stock boy is loading pints of ice cream into the freezer. In the front of the store two check-out girls are working the registers.

Casually, without looking in either direction, Wendy reaches out and slips five 5.8oz cans of dog food into her bag. The ones with the flip lids, that don't require a can opener.

The trick to shoplifting, she had found long ago, was in forgetting that one was doing it.

A certain kind of amnesia could hypnotize a whole room, and turn one almost invisible to the public eye. She continues to browse the animal products as she walks down the pet aisle.

CHIP AISLE

She stops at the chip aisle and makes a show of examining the air-puffed packages, rejecting a series of possible purchases; from there she moves on to the magazines.

MAGAZINE RACK

She stands for a few moments flipping through the perfumed pages, discovering that Nichole Richie loves junk food and Jennifer Aniston is still, even in her late 30s, wanting a baby.

When Wendy is fairly sure no one is paying attention, she heads for the front doors.

Through the window she can see Lucy grooming herself in the sunlight, tweezing with her front teeth a small patch of hair near the base of her tail.

REGISTER

The point of purchase items drift by, and she enters the alley of an empty cashier lane, her mind blank of all recent memory.

ELECTRIC DOORS

Just as Wendy is stepping onto the pad of the electric doors a hand tightens around her upper arm, followed by A MAN'S VOICE speaking close to her ear.

MAN'S VOICE

Excuse me? Ma'am?

WENDY

Huh?

MAN'S VOICE

I think you might be forgetting something.

WENDY

Uh... no. Don't think so.

Instinctively, Wendy struggles to break free, but the man's hand refuses to let go.

MAN'S VOICE

You're sure you're not forgetting something?

Wendy tries once more to shake loose but the grip only tightens, pressing into the soft tissues of her bicep. The man sighs.

WENDY

Hey, let me go, all right?

MAN'S VOICE

I'm sorry, I can't just let you go. I think you have something.

PRODUCE AISLE

Expertly without revealing himself, he maneuvers her backwards into the produce section. When they reach the oranges he releases his grasp, and she is finally able to turn and get a good look at her apprehender.

The man, it turns out, is not the powerful, intimidating figure she had expected him to be. Rather, it's the stock boy from the bulk food section, a skinny kid in his early twenties. The tag on his blue supermarket shirt says his name is Andy.

ANDY

Now. Do you have something to tell me? It would be much better if you just told me now.

WENDY

What are you talking about? I'm just trying to get out of here.

Across the produce section some of the other CUSTOMERS have begun to stare.

ANDY

You're sure you're telling me everything?

WENDY

Look, get off me.

ANDY

Okay. We can do this your way then. I'm going to have to ask you to come with me, ma'am.

WENDY
Come on. Let go of me.

ANDY
Please ma'am.

Before the eyes of the entire store, Andy herds Wendy down the Mexican food aisle, straight through a pair of swinging doors in the brick wall.

WENDY
Oh, no way. This is a big mistake.

CUT TO:

They march down a dingy stairway smelling like rotten milk.

Wendy struggles but the young man is serene. Finally she seals her lips and gives in.

He stares straight ahead, gripping her arm, refusing to let go.

CUT TO:

INT. MANAGER'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

They end up in the manager's office, a small windowless cell in the basement. The furniture is sparse, a metal desk and a few folding chair. On the wall, a pristine calendar boasting an American flag.

Caught off guard, MR. HUNT, the store manager, quickly shoves the magazine he's reading into his desk drawer. He attempts to look busy.

Andy points to a chair in the corner.

ANDY
Sit here please, ma'am. This is your seat.

MR. HUNT
What kind of problem are you having, Andy?

ANDY
Code 99. I saw the whole thing. I watched her all the way from the start.

Andy takes a seat on the front corner of the desk, crossing one leg over the other.

WENDY

No. That's not true.

The more Wendy watches Andy, the more she despises him. What does he care if she takes a few cans of dog food? Does the money come out of his pocket?

MR. HUNT

What exactly are we talking about here?

ANDY

This.

Andy reaches over and pulls the five cans of dog food from Wendy's bag, one at a time, he stacks them up on the desk.

Appealing to Mr. Hunt...

WENDY

I wasn't done shopping yet, sir.
This is all a mistake.

ANDY

I'm afraid that's not true, Mr. Hunt. It was very clear what was going on.

Mr. Hunt chews on a hangnail.

MR. HUNT

Okay, okay. We have two opinions here. I need a little more information.

WENDY

Sir, this really isn't what your employee thinks it is.

ANDY

What I think isn't the issue. The rules apply to everyone equally. There's no way around it.

WENDY

I just made a mistake is all.

ANDY

I caught her red handed, Mr. Hunt.

MR. HUNT

Okay. Yeah. I see that.

ANDY

You said we needed to be more proactive about our policy enforcement. It's not fair to the other customers. I thought that was something we talked about.

MR. HUNT

Just let me think.

Mr. Hunt continues chewing his nail, staring at the cans of dog food, unable to bring himself to look at Wendy at all.

WENDY

Sir? I really apologize for the inconvenience, sir. This is really just a misunderstanding, though.

MR. HUNT

Ma'am. We have a process.

As much as she's hating Andy, and wants to make her case, she recognizes the best course of action in a situation like this is groveling, obsequious obedience to Mr. Hunt's authority.

MR. HUNT (CONT'D)

Okay. I guess we should call Jamie. Have to draw the line somewhere.

ANDY

I've got it.

Andy dials the phone.

Mr. Hunt pulls the magazine back out from the top drawer and begins flipping through the pages, and sighs...

ANDY (CONT'D)

(into the phone)

Yes. This is Andy Mooney from Jack's on Lombard. We have a situation down here... Yeah... That's right... Okay.

Wendy fixes her face in a pose of abasement, emanating as much remorse as she can muster. With her eyes on Mr. Hunt she tries using her mind to influence him through telepathy, planting the idea of her innocence, her goodness, her incompetence, in his brain.

Mr. Hunt avoids her persuasions by keeping his eyes buried in his magazine.

Andy hangs up.

ANDY (CONT'D)
He'll be here right away.

Then Andy is standing before her with a Polaroid camera in his hand.

ANDY (CONT'D)
Up against the wall, please, ma'am.

Without looking up Mr. Hunt turns a page...

MR. HUNT
Better go ahead, miss.

Wendy stands up against the paneled wall.

Andy takes the picture.

Wendy slinks back down into her chair.

Before the image has even clouded into view, Andy is pinning it to a wall of similar portraits, an ungainly grid of previously apprehended shoplifters, their faces blanched and almost unrecognizable in the hard light of the flashbulb. The photos are dated on the bottom border. There are at least Wendy's image coves into view.

CUT TO:

MANAGER'S OFFICE - LATER

JAMIE, a police officer, takes in the situation with a glance.

JAMIE
Is that what you stole?

Wendy is encouraged by his tone of disinterest and his thinly veiled dislike for Andy.

She imagines a whole history of bad relations between them, an ongoing feud that might lead to a final splitting of judgements on this day. Her release and Andy's humiliation seem very much possible.

WENDY

It was all a mistake, officer. I'm very sorry for what happened. I just walked out the door by accident without paying for those cans. I wasn't done yet. I was just checking on my dog.

ANDY

I'm sorry, but if a person can't buy dog food they shouldn't have a dog.

MR. HUNT

Easy, Andy.

Wendy pushes her advantage with the two sympathetic men.

WENDY

I'm very sorry. It won't happen again.

The apologies flow easily from her mouth, she is good at them.

ANDY

The food isn't the issue. It's about setting an example.

WENDY

I'm not from around here. I can't be an example.

JAMIE

Do you have some ID?

Wendy retrieves her driver's license from the inner lining of her jacket.

The officer scrutinizes it and hands it back.

JAMIE (CONT'D)

Indiana. Long way.

WENDY

Yes, sir. I'm just passing through.

The three men move to the far corner of the room and talk quietly amongst themselves. Judging from their mannerisms they are divided on what to do. Andy remains adamant about punishing Wendy's crime. Mr. Hunt and Jamie seem unhappy to be bothered by the incident at all, resigned to whatever the other decides as the right course of action.

Again, Wendy tries to use her mind to influence the men.

Jamie shakes his head a few times, and keeps putting on his hat and taking it off again. He seems to be trying to reason with the other two.

Finally the three men part and Jamie approaches her.

JAMIE
(hanging over her bag)
Come on, ma'am. Time to go.

WENDY
Go where?

She stands, shouldering her bag, exuding further awful shame for her behavior.

JAMIE
The store's decided to press charges. Zero tolerance. We're going to the station now.

WENDY
(stunned)
What? I didn't even do anything. I never even made it out of the store.

JAMIE
Come on along.

WENDY
But my dog is tied up out front.

Jamie prods her through the office door.

CUT TO:

(NO 17)

INT. COP CAR - DAY

Wendy sits in the back seat.

Jamie puts the radio back in his holder and starts the car.

WENDY

Sir, my dog is tied up out front.

Jamie raises his hand for silence.

JAMIE

This will just be a quick U-turn.
Just relax.

Wendy stares at the shotgun wedged in the front seat and decides the time has come to shut up and give in.

The car creeps around the building, past the graffitied walls, the abandoned milk crates. On the way into traffic Wendy turns and catches a glimpse of Lucy.

Still tied to the bike rack, Lucy dumbly watches the front door for her return.

CUT TO:

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

a flash goes across wendy's face as he mug shot is taken.

OFFICER (O.S.)

Face forward.

She turns straight ahead. Another flash.

OFFICER (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Turn left.

She now faces the clock on the wall. The time reads 12:30 and a third flash goes off.

CUT TO:

INT. POLICE STATION / FINGERPRINTING ROOM - DAY

Jamie attempts to take Wendy's finger prints on a new homeland security digital fingerprinting machine. The three dimensional image of her hand comes up on a computer screen.

Jamie struggles with the new machine.

JAMIE
That should do it.

WENDY
Now what?

JAMIE
We shoot these over to the home office and when they're approved you'll be set. You'll be in the system and you can go.

CUT TO:

INT. POLICE STATION / CELL - DAY

Back in her cell Wendy continues to wait.

A female cop unlocks her cell and she steps out.

WENDY
Can I get my bag back?

COP
Not yet.

The cop escorts her back down the hall.

CUT TO:

INT. POLICE STATION / FINGERPRINTING ROOM - DAY

Jamie is alone at the fingerprinting machine. A manual in his hand.

JAMIE
We've got to try this again. They couldn't read what I sent them at the home office. Let's take it step by step.

Jamie repeats the high-tech fingerprinting procedure, occasionally referring to the manual.

Wendy checks the clock. The time is 2:10.

Jamie takes images of her hands which appear immediately on the computer monitor.

CUT TO:

INT. POLICE STATION / CELL - DAY

Wendy sits alone in the cell.

Jamie passes by catching a glimpse of her.

JAMIE
You still here?

He motions to the female cop to unlock the door.

JAMIE (CONT'D)
She's good to go. That second round
of prints passed muster with the
home office. Thought I had told
them up front.

Wendy steps out of the cell.

JAMIE (CONT'D)
(to the father cop)
Can you process her out?

CUT TO:

INT. POLICE STATION / CHECK OUT WINDOW - DAY

An ADMINISTRATOR slides her bag and money belt across a counter. She twirls a receipt pad around for her to sign.

ADMINISTRATOR
Sign at the bottom. Make sure all
your stuff is there.

Wendy opens her money belt and counts the bills.

ADMINISTRATOR (CONT'D)
Fifty dollars.

WENDY
Excuse me?

ADMINISTRATOR
You can pay your fine now or you
can come back in two weeks for a
trial with a judge. Then you pay
the fifty plus the court fees.

WENDY
But I'm just passing through.

ADMINISTRATOR

(shrugs)

You get stopped in another state
you're going to end up back here
anyway.

Wendy thinks it over.

ADMINISTRATOR (CONT'D)

You can use a credit card.

WENDY

No. I'll pay cash.

With great reluctance, Wendy pulls fifty dollars from her
money belt and gives it to the cop.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET / MAIN DRAG - LATE AFTERNOON

Wendy steps off the bus at the edge of the main drag.

She walks, hurrying, running, walking again, the last half
mile to the grocery store.

CUT TO:

EXT. JACK'S FAMILY MARKET - 5PM

When she finally makes it back to the store it's almost 5pm.

The bike rack is empty. Lucy is gone.

With rising panic, Wendy walks around the store whistling
familiar calls, then calling Lucy's name in varying degrees
of worry and sweetness.

She checks under the dumpster and in the blackberry bushes,
hoping Lucy has burrowed into some hiding place and is
waiting patiently for her return.

Lucy is nowhere to be found.

CUT TO:

INT. JACK'S FAMILY MARKET - LATE AFTERNOON

Wendy is not yet ready to entertain the notion that Lucy is
truly missing.

She strides inside the store.

The first person she encounters is a CASHIER.

WENDY

Has anyone here seen a dog outside?

The woman shrugs, but the GIRL at the next register has a dim recollection.

WENDY (CONT'D)

She was out there this morning. A medium-sized yellow dog.

CASHIER #1

Like a German Shepherd or something?

WENDY

No. She's about this big, floppy ears, kind of yellow-gold.

CASHIER #2

I sort of remember a white van taking a dog.

WENDY

You do? What time was that?

CASHIER #2

Around noon?

CASHIER #1

Noon? You didn't even start work until two.

CASHIER #2

Oh. Well, it felt like noon. Maybe it was later.

CASHIER #1

Definitely later. You didn't even come on until two.

WENDY

A city van?

CASHIER #2

I don't know. I might be totally wrong.

CASHIER #1

She didn't see anything.

Cashier #2 shrugs. Wendy is already leaving the store.

CUT TO:

EXT. JACK'S FAMILY MARKET - LATE AFTERNOON

Wendy is making one more trip around the building.

WENDY

Come on out now, Lu.

She whistles.

She stands near the back entrance of the store, her calls becoming sterner.

WENDY (CONT'D)

Lucy! Come. Right now!

The back door opens and Andy appears, bearing a neatly stacked pile of flattened boxes.

ANDY

Oh, what are you doing here?

He stacks the folded boxes inside the Dumpster.

WENDY

Looking for my dog. She's gone. I hope you're real happy.

Andy refuses to respond. He stands beside the Dumpster and stares at the trees, pretending Wendy is not there.

Wendy continues calling for Lucy, angrily.

A pair of headlights sweeps through the lot, followed by a wheezing Reliant driven by an older, addled-looking woman in a threadbare, powder blue bathrobe.

Andy climbs into the passenger seat.

WENDY (CONT'D)

Have a great night.

Andy slams the heavy door and the car rattles off into the dark.

WENDY (CONT'D)

Your son is a real hero!

But it's too late for the woman to hear.

Wendy kicks over the pile of boxes and knocks over a stack of milk cartons for good measure.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - THE MAIN DRAG - EVENING

It's a simple straight line from the grocery store to the Walgreens parking lot.

Wendy hurries down the road, passing the power station, the video store, the nail salon, scanning for Lucy in every yard and alleyway.

WENDY

Lucy! Lu-cy?

The few people she passes dutifully ignore her.

CUT TO:

EXT. WALGREENS PARKING LOT - EVENING

By the time Wendy turns the corner into the Walgreens parking lot she is brimming with exception.

The car is exactly where she left it on the side of the street. She closes the distance with a harried stride. But no Lucy.

Wendy stands beside the dead car, casting about for a new strategy, a new plan, but she can't think of anything.

On The Go Auto is closed. Apparently she and Lucy missed its entire window of operations.

The white-haired security guard is still standing near the front door right where she left him. He kindly pretends he hasn't noticed her arrival.

WENDY

(calling to the guard)
Have you seen my dog?

GUARD

(shaking his head)
Not since I saw you. Nope.

WENDY

Is that fucking garage ever open?

GUARD
 (ignoring her profanity)
 Most days. Yep.

Wendy sits down on the hood. Against her will a sob works its way from her chest into her nose and mouth, and passes from her body like a stone.

She climbs her lips shut and swallows hard and takes a deep breath.

WENDY
 (calling to the guard)
 You know where the pound is?
 There's a pound here, right?

GUARD
 Not too far.

He strolls over to where she is sitting.

GUARD (CONT'D)
 You all right, honey?

WENDY
 (wiping her eyes)
 Yeah. I just need to get to the pound is all.

GUARD
 Sure. It's easy. You just take Peninsular down thataway and when it dead ends you head right about three miles. You lost your dog, is that it?

WENDY
 Looks like it.

GUARD
 Real shame. Somewhere around here?

WENDY
 That store.

She flips her wrist in the direction of the despised grocery store.

GUARD
 Hmmmm.

He gives her room to elaborate.

WENDY

I had to leave her for a little while. She was right in front.

GUARD

Oh. Well, I'm sure someone's got her. She couldn't have gotten too far.

Wendy realizes the guard's optimism is utterly unfounded, but she appreciates the sentiment.

WENDY

I was gone a long time.

GUARD

I'm sure it wasn't that long. I'm sure she'll turn up.

Wendy struggles to control the spasming of her shoulders, and when it's over, she slides off the hood. She scans the area somewhat blindly, prepared to being walking in the direction of the pond.

WENDY

So I go that way? And then right?

The guard scowls, first at her and then at her broken car on the curb. He glances at his watch.

Distant laughter from a group exiting the barbecue restaurant drifts across the street.

GUARD

Pretty sure it's closed by now. I think you're going to have to wait until morning. The number four goes right there. You can catch it on the corner there. Starting at six.

WENDY

I think I'll just go now.

She begins crossing the lot toward the street.

GUARD

It's definitely closed.

WENDY

Jesus fucking Christ!

She harshly slams her foot on the ground, not knowing what to do next.

GUARD

If she's there she'll be there in
the morning. A night in the pound
never hurt anybody.

Wendy stands with her back to the guard, holding her elbows,
not wanting to hear anymore.

GUARD (CONT'D)

If I see anything I'll let you
know.

He retreats back to his post near the front door.

Moments later, Wendy returns to her place on the hood of the
car, and she and the guard enter the mutual fiction that the
other doesn't exist.

The guard breaks the fiction to call out...

GUARD (CONT'D)

Hey, There's a hotel down the road.
The Palms. They keep the rooms real
clean.

WENDY

Thanks.

She will not be sleeping in any hotel tonight, but is glad
anyone thinks she might.

CUT TO:

EXT. PAY PHONE - EVENING

Wendy is on the pay phone.

WENDY

Hey, Dan.

DAN

Wendy? Hold on let me turn off the
TV. (Long pause as he fiddles with
the TV) Where are you?

WENDY

Oregon.

DAN

Raining?

WENDY
No. Real dry.

DAN
What's up?

WENDY
Nothing. I'm just calling. Just,
you know...

DAN
Nothing?

WENDY
The car broke down. And... It's
kind of bad here. I just... Lucy's
lost.

WOMAN'S VOICE
(breaking in on other
line)
Who's that?

DAN
It's your sister. She broke down in
Oregon.

WENDY
Hi Deb.

WOMAN'S VOICE
Oregon? What does she want us to do
about it?

WENDY
Nothing. I'm just calling.

DAN
She's just calling.

DEB
We can't do anything. We're
strapped. I don't know what she
wants.

WENDY
I don't want anything. I'm just
calling.

DEB
I can't talk with everyone on the
phone. I'll talk when you're done
with Dan. Bye, honey.

Deb hangs up.

DAN
Everything's all right?

WENDY
Yeah. Everything's great.

EXT. WALGREENS PARKING LOT - LAST LIGHT FADES

Wendy sits on the back bumper as the last light fades from the sky, hoping Lucy might appear from the shadows, building scenarios in her mind that might rationally lead to Lucy's safe return.

CUT TO:

A PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Gradually the parking lot empties. The foot traffic tapers off and Wendy herself is forced to eat some corn chips for sustenance.

At 8:00PM, the store closes.

In the distance, a Lincoln Continental crosses the parking lot, the guard gets in and goes home.

Wendy doesn't notice anything going on around her. She is lost in deep worry as the street lights come on.

CUT TO:

INT. / EXT. CAR - NIGHT

Lying on the back seat, in Lucy's spot, Wendy can't sleep. Her stomach hurts and her chest aches.

The street lamp fills the car with piss-colored light, streaming raindrops throw tear-like patterns over the seats and dashboard.

The night passes with excruciating slowness.

Plains of aggravating silence interrupted by bursts of unexpected, scary noise. Sirens wail. Planes descend. The ripping noise of rubber on asphalt.

The darkness deepens and folds in on itself.

Every few minutes she is certain she hears Lucy padding on the pavement or scratching at the door.

CUT TO:

EXT. LOMBARD AVE NEAR WALGREENS - NIGHT

She stands in the dark, wet street calling Lucy's name.

CUT TO:

INT. CAR - 2AM

Around 2AM a group of TEENAGE BOYS materialize outside her window. They are laughing and talking about a boy named Josh who apparently slept with a girl named Tina.

Wendy remains still on the backseat, waiting for them to pass. A boy bumps into her car door.

BOY

Oh, shit, dude, there's a lady in there!

The boys shriek with laughter and hurry away.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

EXT. WALGREENS PARKING LOT - DAY BREAK

Finally, the sky gains some color. The dome of darkness warms to a dull gray, and the sound of birds return.

The Camry sits alone on the sleepy street, outside the empty parking lot.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - THE MAIN DRAG - DAY BREAK

Wendy walks along a deserted sidewalk.

EXT. SHELL BATHROOM - EARLY MORNING

She takes off her shirt and washes her armpits with a wet hand towel. She splashes her face with warm water and brushes her teeth.

CUT TO:

EXT. BUS KIOSK ON LOMBARD AVE - MORNING

Wendy sits at a plastic kiosk decorated with white slashes of graffiti.

Across the street, the tomb-like garage remains locked.

40 minute time lapse

Wendy waits at the kiosk. The traffic thickens. Men and women sail by on their way to work, drinking their coffee, listening to their music. Wendy feels utterly out of synch with all of them.

CUT TO:

WALK TO POUND - MORNING

INT. CAT ROOM / POUND - MORNING

A dozen or so cats lay around a glassed-in room designed like a living room - complete with fireplace, armchairs and bookshelves.

A man and his little girl watch the cats.

PAN TO:

INT. POUND LOBBY / CAT ROOM - DAY

The pound's lobby is an antiseptic room. Wendy stands at the counter speaking with a volunteer.

WENDY (OS)
 She's medium size. 39 pounds.
 Yellow-gold in color.

(MORE)

WENDY (OS) (CONT'D)

Her name is Lucy and she was tied up outside Jack's Grocery Store on Lombard Ave at Morgan street.

The pound employee looks through a stack of index cards as Wendy recites her story.

WENDY (CONT'D)

She was tied to the bike rack and when I came out of the store she was gone.

POUND EMPLOYEE

What time was it?

WENDY

Maybe between noon and five?

The woman looks up at her.

WENDY (CONT'D)

I'm just not exactly sure of the time.

The woman lets her off the hook, and continues fingering through the recipe box of three by five cards for an intake matching Lucy's profile.

POUND EMPLOYEE

I don't see anything that matches. But come on, let's take a look in the back. You never know. Follow me.

CUT TO:

INT. POUND HALLWAY / KENNEL - DAY

Wendy follows the woman down a short, bright hallway into a large, hanger-like room adjacent to the lobby.

The room is cold and fluorescent-lit, divided into a maze of plastic cells.

Wendy scans the rows of cages where for the most part, single animals huddle to the rear, awaiting discovery.

Wendy and the pound employee walk a pathway that winds in front of each dingy cell, checking the inmates along the way.

They pass a greyhound with a scabbing wound on his leg, and an Irish setter.

But they don't see Lucy.

POUND EMPLOYEE
(clapping her hands)
Front and center, kids.

A few dogs trot up to the wire, but most lie still.

Wendy does her best to block out her innate sympathy for them, her basic affinity for all caged things. She has room for only Lucy's suffering this morning.

CUT TO:

INT. POUND LOBBY - DAY

Wendy finds herself coming back through the double doors that lead to the lobby.

A mutt has just vomited on the floor.

Lucy is most definitely not among yesterday's captures.

WENDY
Is this the only pound?

POUND EMPLOYEE
Humane Society. Only one for fifty miles. If any dog gets picked up, this is where it would be. Sometimes it takes awhile to find them, though. You want to check back with us every three days or so.

The woman hands Wendy some paperwork to fill out and Wendy stands at the desk to do the answering.

Wendy fills in as many of the blanks as she can about Lucy's statistics: her breed, her sex, her color, her age, whether she has a chip implant, if she is neutered.

Wendy manages to fill in everything except for two important lines at the top. Their blankness sucks at her like twin black holes. Without contact information it's hard to see how the system can work.

Wendy moves back down in front of the pound employee who gave her the form.

WENDY

I think I need to find another way
of doing this.

The woman inspects Wendy's form.

POUND EMPLOYEE

No address?
(frowning)
No phone either?

WENDY

Not right now. I'm passing
through.

The woman hums, expressing something between irritation and
sympathy.

POUND EMPLOYEE

How about a previous address? We
need something here.

WENDY

My sister and her husband live in
Munice, Indiana, 73 E. Jackson
Street, 00976. You can use that.

POUND EMPLOYEE

Huh.

The woman date-stamps the papers and clips them together. She
shifts them to the stack of papers in an outgoing bin. She
makes no sign of having heard anything but the address.

Wendy waits while the paperwork is processed. The muffled
sounds of barking dogs come from behind the walls. Every form
is stamped and processed.

WENDY

We're going north. I tried living
with them for awhile but it didn't
work out. (shrugs) They have their
own life. We were making pretty
good time. Until yesterday.

Finally the woman rounds up a blank Lost Dog poster and a
worksheet for looking for a missing pet for Wendy to take.

POUND EMPLOYEE

(handing Wendy the colored
papers)
Keep checking in, hon. It'll be
your job to stay in touch now.

WENDY

You think you'll find her soon?

One of the dogs in the waiting room begins barking. The woman gives Wendy a brief sympathetic look.

POUND EMPLOYEE

They all get found sooner or later.
That's the best I can tell you.

Wendy girds herself to leave. On her way out the door, she hears a woman call number twelve.

CUT TO:

INT. BUS - DAY

Wendy is dumbstruck. In a daze she rests her head against the glass as the city rolls by.

She breaks from her daze as the bus passes On The Go Auto.

POV: the garage doors are open and work is going on.

Wendy pulls the bell and gets off at the next stop.

CUT TO:

A KIOSK AT WALGREENS ON LOMBARD - DAY BREAK

The next stop is on Lombard Ave. Just in front of the Walgreens. Wendy gets off the bus and walks back to On The Go Auto.

INT. ON THE GO AUTO - DAY

A DISTRACTED MAN is tinkering with the chassis of the upraised car. Wendy ignores him and follows a voice that emanates from inside the office.

THE MECHANICS, a fleshy-faced man in a jump suit is seated at a desk, making grunting sounds into the receiver of a phone. The tag on his shirt reads Bill.

Wendy pauses in the doorway and Bill waves her in.

BILL

Uh huh? Uh huh? No. That's not what I said.

(MORE)

BILL (CONT'D)

What I said is each of the three phases has its own windings in the alternator. You know what I'm saying? Its own pair of diodes. Each one of those can fail and the alternator can still charge the capacity. (a beat) What? (a beat) Nah, I don't think so.

The Bill's voice is almost absurdly deep, with the warm, phlegmy resonance of a late night DJ.

Wendy stands near the door, waiting. Bill narrows his thumb and first finger to suggest the imminent end of his conversation, but there is no spark of emotion on his face, no welcome.

BILL (CONT'D)

Set the Voltmeter to the DC scale, all right? You measure the voltage across the battery terminals. The voltage should read around fourteen volts, okay? If it reads less than twelve you might have a problem... What?

Bill shakes his head as he listens.

BILL (CONT'D)

Just turn on the heater, the defogger, the radio, whatever draws power. Then rev up the motor. If the Voltmeter reads lower than fourteen your alternator's probably no good.

Wendy is aware that she is entering a realm ruled entirely by this man's authority, where her own intelligence is basically useless. The danger of being fooled or intimidated is extreme.

BILL (CONT'D)

Good luck.

Bill finally hangs up, and scribbles something on a yellow legal-sized sheet of papers, and promptly buries it under a stack of manila folders. Without glancing at Wendy, he opens a filing cabinet and flips through some hanging folders.

WENDY

Excuse me.

BILL

What's up? (examining a folder)
Start talking. I'm listening.

WENDY

I think my, umm, Serpentine belt is cracked.

She is hoping to display some baseline competence regarding her own car, but somehow the effect is just the reverse, a broad declaration of ignorance.

WENDY (CONT'D)

Someone in Reno said it might go soon. They said it would run about a hundred fifty dollars for a new one?

BILL

You were driving with the air conditioning on? The engine jerked? Steam came out? That kind of thing?

WENDY

No. It just won't start.

Bill sucks on his lip, opening a new folder.

The phone rings and Bill picks up.

BILL

Yeah?... You're killing me... Yeah, yeah. All right. Fifty on Trade Show... No, that's it. I said you're killing me... Yeah, yeah. See you later.

Bill hangs up, taking a deep breath.

BILL (CONT'D)

What kind of car are we talking about?

WENDY

Camry. 1996. It's there (pointing through the glass) across the street.

Bill stands up and peers out the dirty window.

BILL

So what's the problem exactly?

WENDY

I turned the ignition yesterday and nothing happened. It's just dead.

BILL

No response? No grinding?

WENDY

Nothing.

BILL

You check the battery?

WENDY

The batter is okay. The electrical works.

BILL

And you think it's a problem with the S-belt?

WENDY

The last guy said it was cracked. He thought it might hold out a little longer though.

BILL

Easy enough to replace the S-belt. I don't know why the ignition won't fire. Who knows. Could be the S-belt. I guess.

WENDY

How much would a new S-belt be?

BILL

About a hundred bucks. A hundred twenty-five. Depends if we have to order a new one. I'll have to check stock. And fifty for labor. That's the best you'll find. I promise that.

The price is no bargain, exactly, but it's close enough to what she'd been expecting.

WENDY

Okay.

BILL

We'll have to tow it over, too, I guess. That adds another fifty.

WENDY

But it's just right there across
the street.

BILL

It's always fifty. Plus mileage.
But there's no mileage here. So
it's just fifty.

Wendy ponders the added fee. She touches the money belt under her shirt. What choice does she have? The towing fee would likely be the same anywhere else, with more miles to rack up. And the idea of pushing the car across the street herself seems impossible.

BILL (CONT'D)

Thirty bucks. I'll give you a deal.

The phone rings and he picks up.

BILL (CONT'D)

Bill's... Yeah, hold on. (To Wendy)
That work for you?

Wendy nods.

BILL (CONT'D)

Good. We'll pick up the car this
afternoon and take a look and we'll
give you a call. (clicking his pen)
Where can you be reached?

WENDY

I don't have a phone right now but
just go on and fix it. I'm sure
it's the S-belt and I'm kind of in
a hurry.

BILL

We should have it ready for you
first thing in the morning.

WENDY

The morning? Isn't here any way of
getting it sooner?

Bill shakes his head but he is into his next call.

BILL

No. He's gone. He didn't work
out... Hell if I know...

Wendy turns and leaves the garage.

BILL (CONT'D)

I'd like to know myself. So if you
hear anything let me know.

CUT TO:

EXT. CAR AT WALGREENS - DAY

When Wendy returns to the parking lot everything is more or less as she left it. Her car is still in place, a new splash of birdshit on the windshield and the men in wheelchairs are still clustered at a bench, sharing the contents of a brown paperbag. The security guard is still standing against the wall a few paces from the front door.

Wendy collects some items she'll need over night. She takes her jewelry box, a quilt, and a pillow, all of which she stuffs in an army back pack that she pulls from deep within the truck.

She peels a picture of Lucy from a mildewed photo album.

She closes the trunk and then spends a few minutes cleaning out the car. She throws away empty food wrappers and attempts to remove any personal items that suggest she has been living in her car.

Finally, she closes the doors, swings the army sack onto her shoulder and heads over to where the guard stands.

CUT TO:

EXT. WALGREENS - DAY

The guard's hands are deep in his pockets. He watches Wendy approach, waiting until she is in earshot...

GUARD

How's the dog?

WENDY

No news yet.

She drops her bag.

GUARD

No luck at the pound?

His interest would be more touching if he wasn't just clearly bored out of his mind, but Wendy will accept whatever sympathy she can get.

WENDY

Not yet.

GUARD

I once had a Collie gone for two weeks before he came back. They'll find her. They always get their dog.

WENDY

I hope so.

Wendy searches her pockets for loose change turning up a few nickels and dimes.

WENDY (CONT'D)

You have any quarters I could trade you? I need to check in with the pound and that pay phone only takes quarters.

GUARD

Hmmm? Oh. No change, but...

John pats himself down and extracts a silver cell phone from his breast pocket.

GUARD (CONT'D)

Here. Lots of hours. Feel free. No one uses a pay phone anymore.

Wendy inspects the phone, wondering if she will have to pay for this gesture someday, but she doubts it.

WENDY

Thanks.

GUARD

Hate to think a dog's out there. That's not right.

Wendy takes the cell phone and dials in the number marked on her forearm.

John opens the door for a customer.

WENDY

This is Wendy Harris I lost my dog Lucy - yes hi. I'm just checking to see if you've heard anything? Okay then. I'll check back.

Wendy hangs up and brings him back his phone and slides down the brick wall.

WENDY (CONT'D)
(holding her head)
Damn it.

She pulls the Lost Dog posters from her backpack.

WENDY (CONT'D)
So how late are you out here,
anyway?

GUARD
Eight. Everyday. Eight to eight.

WENDY
Huh. Okay.

GUARD
Better than the last job. I'll tell
you that. That one was all night,
every night.

WENDY
Not that many jobs around here, I
guess.

GUARD
(laughs)
I'll say. I don't know what these
people do all day. Use to be a
mill. But that's been gone a long
time now. Don't know what they do.

WENDY
You can't get a job without an
address anyway...without a phone.

GUARD
You can't get an address without an
address. Can't get a job without a
job. It's all fixed.

WENDY
That's why I'm going to Alaska.
They need people.

The two stand and watch the traffic.

GUARD
Supposed to be pretty up there.

Together, they watch a Mazda pull into a parking space near the trash cans.

GUARD (CONT'D)

You know, if you need a contact for the pound or anything, I'm just standing here all day. You can use this phone if you want.

Wendy watches the light in the intersection change from red to green.

WENDY

Yeah? I might do that. That might be good.

CUT TO:

INT. ANNIE'S DOUGHNUTS - DAY

Wendy sits in a booth picking at a doughnut. She fills out the Lost Dog poster to the best of her ability, using John's phone number as her contact information. Her writing is not pretty, but the important data is all there: name, breed, color, size. The picture of Lucy is faded and features a birthday cake - Lucy is only in the shot by happenstance. Wendy makes a circle around the dog's image.

CUT TO:

EXT. SWAN COPY SHOP - DAY

Wendy deposits a dime into the copy machine. She holds the lid down and a copy of the Lost Dog poster spits out onto the tray.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE MAIN DRAG / NEIGHBORHOOD STREETS - DAY

CANVASSING MONTAGE:

Wendy spends the rest of the afternoon canvassing the neighborhood. She hangs a poster in the supermarket and all the storefronts along Lombard Avenue, with a few forays into the more populated residential streets to either side.

CUT TO:

EXT. WALGREENS PARKING LOT - DAY

When Wendy returns to the parking lot John is standing at his post near the store entrance. Wendy makes her way to him.

WENDY
Anything?

GUARD
Afraid not.

She pulls her duffle bag out of the bushes. Exhausted, she slides down onto it. Her car is gone.

GUARD (CONT'D)
They came and hauled your car away about an hour ago.

She sees it slotted in among the other cars across the street at Bill's garage. She takes a seat on her duffle bag.

GUARD (CONT'D)
You know, I was remembering today, back when I was a kid when we would go hunting and our hound would get away from us - my father used to just leave his coat out in the woods in the spot we'd last seen the dog. Then after dinner he'd go back to collect his coat and most often come home with the dog too.

WENDY
Would you mind if I use your phone?

John hands her his phone and Wendy calls the pound.

WENDY (CONT'D)
Yes. I'm calling to check on a dog I reported missing. Lucy. Sorry. I just thought I'd check. I was away from my phone. Yeah, okay.

She hangs up and stares at the empty space where her car would be.

WENDY (CONT'D)
Really? The dog would come back to the coat?

JOHN
That's how I remember it.

CUT TO:

EXT. TRAIN TRESTLE - 6pm

Wendy repeats the walk she made with Lucy that first night. She whistles and calls Lucy's name as she goes.

There is a rustling in the bushes. She's frightened, but it turns out to be two birds.

The meadows that had seemed so mysterious in the dark are revealed as bland, vacant lots. The trestle in a trestle and not a shipwreck or the bones of a dead dinosaur.

She locates the charred remains of the mattress but that's all. No kids, no dog.

In the distance, a homeless couple ducks under a tree where they're living.

CUT TO:

EXT. JACK'S FAMILY MARKET - EVENING

From her duffle bag, Wendy pulls out a pile of dirty clothes. She places a pair of jeans at the base of the bike rack where Lucy was last seen.

CUT TO:

EXT. WALK TO PARK - MONTAGE - EVENING

Wendy lays a trail of clothing as she goes.

At the edge of the Walgreens Parking Lot, she lays a shirt on the hedge next to where the car has been parked.

She tries a string of knotted socks to a telephone pole, a tree trunk and lays a pair of shorts over a rock.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARK - EVENING

Wendy arrives at the park. Almost out of clothing, she rips a long-sleeved tee shirt into shreds and ties a piece on the swing set frame.

As she goes deeper into the park she leaves a trail of pink tee shirt behind her.

She selects a camping spot at the park's far edge, just over the lip of an embankment, a shallow slope overlooking the train yards, dotted with stunted oak trees to shelter her from the wind and most prying eyes.

She drags flattened boxes to the base of an oak tree, pretending she's a child camping in a back yard. While she arranges things she whispers to herself.

WENDY

Please, please, please.

As the sun goes down she attempts to eat the second half of her burrito from King Burrito. She picks around the edges but has no appetite.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARK - NIGHT

Despite her exhaustion, she sleeps fitfully. Numerous times during the night she is awakened by the sound of low rumbling trains. The traffic in the train yard never seems to stop entirely - the coming and going horns of slow-moving engines fill the air.

When she does sleep, her eyelids twitch, as she dreams of Lucy in despair.

The harmonic sound of a passing train whistle is like a resplendent church choir. Wendy wakes slightly and falls back asleep.

CUT TO:

Scattered clouds pass across an almost full moon. Sounds of breathing and rustling...

CUT TO:

EXT. PARK - PRE DAWN

Wendy is half awake again. Immediately she knows that someone is there with her. She can hear the person breathing, rustling in the grass, and she knows without thinking that it's a man. She can smell the reek of sweat and stale alcohol.

Wendy jolts awake, immobilized with fear. Her cells turn to helium and the sound of her own blood churns in her ears. Out of the corner of her eyes she can see the MAN'S hunched form moving. The noise of her backpack unzipping is deafening, each tooth decoupled from its partner.

She can see his hand dipping into each pocket, brushing the seams for whatever he can find. He pulls out her clean socks, her toothbrush, and her sweatshirt and scatters them onto the ground. All the while Wendy remains still, replicating the breath of a sleeping person. In her mind she is already projecting herself deep in the future. Whatever happens in this desolate place is already over and done with. She is already well into forgetting the event has even occurred.

As the search goes on the man becomes more careless. He loses his balance, pitching from his squat onto his side.

MAN
(to himself)
Fuck. Bull fucking shit.

The man stands and brushes himself off and at last Wendy gets a clear look at him. He's clean shaven, hair combed into a hard shell, with small reptilian eyes sunk deep into his head. Clearly drunk and disturbed. In his stubby hands he's holding his jewel box.

The moon comes from behind the clouds.

The ground brightens.

He sways, barely keeping upright.

MAN (CONT'D)
You don't have shit, huh?

Wendy can't speak.

Her hand clutches the quilt under which the money belt cinches around her waist, burning into her skin.

She chokes on her dry breath and feels the double pump of her heart in her ribs.

MAN (CONT'D)
Don't look at me.

Wendy obeys, shifting her gaze onto a patch of dirt near her nose.

An ant digs at the dark dirt. Wendy stares at the ant so hard she thinks she can see the moon reflected in its eye.

The wind blows through the trees.

The clouds glide across the sky.

The shifting trains bang in the yard.

The man lowers himself into a squat a few steps from her quilt, remaining ominously calm.

MAN (CONT'D)
This is a steep hill, ain't it?
Those kids sliding down on
cardboard are having some fun. You
know what I mean? If the cardboard
wasn't so worn out they'd slide a
lot better, right?

Wendy tries to nod but is unable. Her voice is a dream whisper.

MAN (CONT'D)
I don't like this place.

He rocks back on his haunches.

MAN (CONT'D)
It's the fucking people that bother
me. God, they have attitude. I'm
out here trying to be a good boy
and they just don't want to let me.
They treat me like I'm trash, like
I don't have no rights. They've got
to know I've killed over seven
hundred people with my bare hands.

Wendy gulps as the man reaches into his back pocket. She thinks, it's over. But he only pulls out a flash of cheap rye from his back pocket and takes a sip.

MAN

Everywhere I go, man, the cops are just rude. Move it along, move it along. Fuck you. I just spend three weeks in jail in Nebraska. Wasn't that bad. Pretty good to have a place to sleep, quite honestly. I told them, be nice and I won't have to kill you. I had to teach one boy a lesson. You don't want to get fucked with you make an example. That's the way it is. I didn't make the rules. They can smell the weakness on you. This boy, he got in my space. Mouthing off. Taking me down. I started by ripping his ear off. Believe me, it ain't that hard. The body's ninety percent water. After that he didn't want to fight me so much. If he did, then it's his eyes. If you can't see me, can't fight me.

Wendy has the quilt over her mouth and nose. Only her eyes are visible.

MAN (CONT'D)

We're never gonna win this war (watching the stars) Fucking A no. Those people, they don't want us over there, man. They're gonna keep fighting us until we leave or every one of them is dead. Doesn't matter what we do. I know what I'm saying. Down in El Salvador I cut off a baby's head and what did that get us? It comes to me in my dreams. And what did it get us? Bullshit. We lost, man. Fuck if I know.

The man stops talking. The sound of Wendy's shallow breath elapsing is the only thing marking time. Somewhere in the dark, a branch shakes with the weight of a settling bird.

Then, without a word, the man sounds again, she hurriedly collects her things, grabbing the sweatshirt off the ground and shoving it into her dufflebag, tucking her pillow under her arm...

walking and then losing hold of her quilt and pillow as she runs through the park.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - DAWN

The streets are grimy and obscure. She walks in the middle of the road, keeping space on all sides.

CUT TO:

EXT. WALGREENS - PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

She returns to the Walgreens, the closest thing to home she can think of. She walks across the deserted parking lot.

CUT TO:

EXT. ON THE GO AUTO - CONTINUOUS

She crosses the empty intersection and visits her car locked securely behind the cyclone fence. The car's body is coated in fine droplets of mist and the starburst of a streetlight's reflection whitens the roof, every spindle and crosshatching perfectly distinct in her vision.

A car passes, washing her with its headlights, and her shadow grows wildly on the wall.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - THE MAIN DRAG - CONTINUOUS

Still lugging her backpack and duffle bag she heads towards the Shell station.

CUT TO:

EXT. SHELL STATION - CONTINUOUS

The Shell appears as a hard oasis of white fluorescence in the midst of pitch desert blackness. Wendy creeps along the wall and slips into the bathroom.

INT. SHELL STATION BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

She bolts the door behind her. Under the rancid, overhead light she splashes water on her cheeks and stares into the reflection in the mirror, but the mirror is just a slab of metal, and only a blotch of pallid whiteness is visible.

Alone, Wendy finally succumbs to the blind panic she has been holding inside her. Black terror descends like bats, sucking her breath away. She finds herself gasping for air, with sweat streaming over her forehead and back.

Wendy braces herself against the sink. Gradually, with effort, her breath returns to normal. The heat recedes from her brow. She steadies herself by staring at the white shape on the metal.

WENDY

(in a whisper)

Hang on, girl. Don't give up. I'm coming. I'll be there soon. Okay?

CUT TO:

EXT. WALGREENS PARKING LOT - EARLY MORNING

When the sun rises Wendy is already at the Walgreen's, exhausted and the disheveled, waiting for John to make his appearance. The events of the night before feel like a dream.

CUT TO:

Wendy pulls her watch with it's busted band from her pocket. Her watch reads eight-thirty. Still no sign of John.

CUT TO:

EXT. WALGREENS PARKING LOT - MORNING

A few minutes past nine o'clock a Lincoln Continental bounces into the parking lot. In the passenger seat is a PALE WOMAN with long blonde hair. In the driver seat, revealed as the glare vanishes from the windshield, is John, both hands firmly gripping the wheel. Gracefully, he pilots the car to a space and turns off the engine.

John gets out of his car and heads over to Wendy. He jingles the change in his pocket.

He is not wearing his uniform this morning, but rather a pair of creased blue jeans and an olive tee shirt. His hair is unhidden, and shines in the open light.

JOHN

You all right? You look a little stricken.

WENDY

I was here at eight. Where were you?

John pauses, just long enough to acknowledge that Wendy has taken a liberty, but not so long as to shame her.

JOHN

I had to take Holly's kid to school. (pointing to the car) It's always a production over there, you know, just getting everything done. It's my day off today.

Wendy glances at the woman in the car, feeling vaguely betrayed by the life John has outside the parking lot, the life he has been hiding from her.

She has come to imagine they shared something, that perhaps they might even have something to offer each other in a larger way. But now she can see that that's not the case. She can see that he is not nearly as bad off as her. He is not nearly as bad off as she had hoped.

JOHN (CONT'D)

You got a call after you left here last night. I didn't know where to track you down but I told them I'd get you the message soon as I could.

WENDY

Really?

JOHN

Yes, indeed. I told you they'd call.

Wendy takes the lozenge from his palm and steps a few feet away for some privacy. She knows it's too early to celebrate but it's hard not to have expectations.

She dials the pound without hesitation, having committed the number to memory.

WENDY

(eagerly)

This is Wendy Harris. I got a call from you all last night. My dog's name is Lucy. Are you positive? Wow. Where is she exactly?

She turns to face John. For the first time she smiles.

WENDY (CONT'D)

Off highway 30?

John nods in recognition of the place.

WENDY (CONT'D)

210 NE 45th Ave...

The whole world seems to brighten around her. Maybe she has reached higher ground at last. Maybe the worst is behind her.

WENDY (CONT'D)

Fine. I'll be there soon.

She hangs up and hands the phone back to John, who is beaming at her.

JOHN

All right? Good news.

WENDY

Really good. She's fine. She's in a foster home. Someone took her home the day she came in. That's why they couldn't find her. I guess it took them awhile to make the connection.

She pulls a pen from her backpack and scribbles 210 NE 45th Ave. on her forearm.

JOHN

I told you they would find her. Let that go on the record.

WENDY

It's on the record.

JOHN

Now to get to Morning Glory. You gonna be driving?

WENDY

(Checking her watch)

Yeah, that's the plan.

JOHN

Okay. You're going head thata way
and go all the way over the bridge
and turn right. That's highway 30.

Wendy writes it all down, using her skin as notebook paper.

JOHN (CONT'D)

You want to keep going until you
pass the cement factory. That'll be
on your right. Then it's just up to
Germantown. Germantown drops you
right there. You won't have any
problems finding the place.

WENDY

(reading her arm)
Over the bridge to 30 to
Germantown. Thank you so much!
Really.

JOHN

Well, I guess that's it then.
You'll be heading out?

WENDY

Yeah.

JOHN

Well I hope it all works out. I
know it will. (He presses something
into her hand.) Here. Take this.
All right? Don't argue. Don't let
Holly see.

WENDY

Thank you. (She closes her hand and
doesn't look.) I hope it all works
for you too.

JOHN

Take care and if you're ever
through again, be sure to stop by.

WENDY

I will.

Wendy watches John go.

There is more she wants to say, but the time is all wrong.
She misses him already. He is a rare kind.

The pale woman, applying lipstick in the rearview mirror, begins talking as soon as he closes the door. The engine coughs to life and with a final wave he pulls into traffic and is gone.

Wendy looks in her hand. John has given her six dollars.

CUT TO:

INT. ANNIE'S DOUGHNUTS- MORNING

Wendy sits at the counter, her leg is jumping with eagerness. She scans her map and marks the route to the interstate.

Wendy lifts her shirt and counts out two-hundred and five dollars for the car repairs and places it in her jacket pocket for easy access.

She pulls out her ledger page and unfolds it on the counter. Northwestern Fishery is scribbled across the top. Under the expense column she writes Fine \$50.00, S-belt and tow \$205.00. She subtracts the \$255.00 from her old total of \$525.00. She calculates her remaining money to be \$270.00. She makes a question mark by the \$220.00 and contemplates the reality of her dwindling funds.

She watches the garage.

WENDY

Come on.

Her train of thought is interrupted when, finally, the mechanic comes shuffling along the sidewalk in his blue jump suit. Wendy watches as he unlocks the front gate and loops the chain around the post, shifting a white paper sack from hand to hand. She gives him a few seconds head start before following him. She picks up her duffle bag and leaves the doughnut shop.

CUT TO:

INT. ON THE GO AUTO - CONTINUOUS

Wendy locates the mechanic at his desk, preparing to eat a breakfast sandwich with egg and bacon. The white bag is flattered as a placemat, and his napkins and plastic utensils are arranged neatly on either side.

He does not look pleased that his meal is being interrupted, but he waves her in, kindly ignoring the fact that she is wearing the same clothes as the day before, and that her face is still specked with dirt.

BILL
Morning.

WENDY
Morning.

BILL
You're up early. You want some coffee? I think the first pot's ready.

Without waiting for an answer he gets up and finds a cup on the window sill and blows in its basin. He picks up the pot from a burnt ring on the heating pad and pours. He hands the hot, weak coffee to Wendy.

BILL (CONT'D)
Indiana plates. You're a ways from home, aren't you?

WENDY
Long way to go, too.

BILL
I hear Indiana's nice.

WENDY
It's okay for some people. Is my car ready?

The mechanic takes a bite of his sandwich, and chews slowly. Out the window, Wendy sees a sparrow land on an electrical wire.

BILL
(swallowing)
The guy was right about the serpentine belt. It's cracked all over the place. It was just a matter of time before it gave out on you.

WENDY
That's what he said.

BILL
He wasn't wrong. But he wasn't all the way right either.

Bill picks at a piece of congealed cheese on his wrapper.

BILL (CONT'D)

The S-belt is worn out, but that's not why the car won't start.

WENDY

No?

Her stomach begins to tighten. The mechanic's casual tone can only be a prelude to bad news.

BILL

You've got shavings in your oil.

He bends over and picks up a small plastic container from the floor and hands it to her. A layer of brown fluid coats the bottom, and silver metallic shavings collect along the edges. Her shavings.

WENDY

I don't want you to check the oil.

BILL

I'm just telling you. I hate to be the bearer of bad news.

WENDY

Bad news/

The mechanic nods his head sadly.

BILL

I hate to say it, but you threw a rod. You'd have to rebuild the whole engine if you want the car to drive again. And honestly, I don't think it's what you want to do. It would end up costing more than the car is worth, probably.

The phone rings. Bill reluctantly answers.

BILL (CONT'D)

Yeah? Yeah. I couldn't get around to it yesterday. Call be back later. Righto. Bye.

WENDY

You're sure?

BILL

Yeah. No question.

WENDY

How much?

She wants a precise number on this impediment.

BILL

Two thousand. (with a look of pity)
At least two thousand. Like I said,
more than the car's worth. On the
other hand, it's less than a new
car.

Wendy doesn't say anything. Two thousand dollars might as well be two million dollars for all she cares. She returns the plastic container to the mechanic, who places it on top of a pile of pink receipts.

For a moment she worries the whole world might disappear, but in fact nothing happens. The world remains as it is. There is no thunder. No lightning. Apparently, her problem has no discernible effect on anything beyond herself whatsoever.

The mechanic sips his coffee. He crumples his placemat and tosses it into the trash-can.

WENDY

It won't go at all?

BILL

It's frozen.

WENDY

So what happens now?

BILL

Fix the car. Buy a new one. Or I
could junk it for a hundred
dollars.

Wendy sits down. Then she stands up and drifts toward the door, pulling on her lip.

WENDY

I need some time to think about it.

BILL

Look, I know this is bad news. It's not what anyone ever wants to hear. The thing is, though, the car's taking up space out there. I won't be making any money off it. I need to know what to do. (getting up and moving to the door) Look.

(MORE)

BILL (CONT'D)

Call it a hundred even. For the tow
and the junk yard. We'll take care
of everything and that'll be it.
But I can't let you leave here
without paying the bill.

CUT TO:

INT. CAB / OUTSKIRTS OF TOWN - DAY

Wendy watches for the turn-off from highway 30. She glances
at the meter.

WENDY

Here is good.

DRIVER

We're close. You don't want me to
go all the way?

WENDY

No. Here.

EXT. OUTSKIRTS OF TOWN - DAY

She seems slightly confused, unsure of what comes next. In
her hands she carries two more bags of belongings, one blue,
one tan, that she has retrieved from her car.

She pauses on the corner to get her bearings, letting the two
plastic bags fall where they may. A blue handball rolls from
the tan bag and wobbles ominously over the concrete, coming
to rest in the dirt. She stands there and lets the sun hit
her. The sun is still free, though probably not for long.

The neighborhood is a maze of identical houses. Beige, bi-
level houses with double garages and small yards. The people
who live here are probably decent, hardworking men and women.
Maybe some are retired and living off pensions.

The address she is looking for is at the end of the block.
Just behind the house the land drops away to reveal the rail
yard, a backdrop of enormous, multi-colored cargo holders and
engines idling in the heat. Beyond that, the ancient yellow
hills wait on the horizon.

From the opposite side of the street, Wendy surveils the
yard. Inside the fence she can see a couple of dogs romping
and grooming themselves under a hirsute cedar.

In another patch of yard, Lucy shakes the life out of an already flattened rubber ball. A pert black poodle gamely tries to get hold of the ball.

At the first sight of her, Wendy's throat becomes tight with emotion. She holds back, watching her dog from a distance. Her mood has become so calibrated with Lucy's over the past weeks that it's strange to see her from a remove, unsure of what exactly is going on in her head. She looks fine, sticking her rear in the air, wagging her tail and barking at the poodle who is too afraid to grab the ball.

Suddenly all the dogs in the yard are on their feet and barking. For a moment Wendy thinks they are barking at her but then the sliding glass door opens and the foster owner emerges. The woman, in her early sixties, walks over and turns to her hose to fill the dogs water bowls. She has pockets of treats which she doles out evenly. Lucy is right in there, sitting and giving her paw in exchange for a brown biscuit. When the treat session has ended, the dogs break apart and trot off to separate quadrants of the yard. Lucy takes a patch of sunlight near the base of the cedar, and rests her head on her paws. Within moments her eyes are twitching with dreams.

Across the yard the foster woman hoses down the apron of cement, forcing the hair and dirt onto the ground, and then recoils the hose and heads back inside.

Moments later she exits the front door and drives away in a silver Subaru.

The street is silent. The sun has moved a few degrees in the sky and some of its heat has softened, but the land is still scoured with shadows, clean and placid in every direction. High above the hills a hawk rides a thermal in ever widening circles.

EXT. FOSTER HOME - DAY

Wendy crosses the street toward the peaceful scene; with a single kissing sound Lucy is awake. It is as if no time has passed at all. Nothing has changed. The dog springs to her feet and bounds to the fence, rubbing her body against the braided wire so Wendy can touch her.

WENDY

Hey, Lu. You miss me? I'm so sorry.
I never should have left you alone.
Never ever ever. You forgive me?

She rubs Lucy's floppy ears and works her way down to the base of her tail, as Lucy spins around trying to lick her hands and continue the petting at the same time.

Lucy takes a few steps backwards and barks at Wendy.

WENDY (CONT'D)

I know. I know. Don't be mad.

The dog comes back over and resumes licking her face. The two sit with each other for awhile. Wendy pets her dog through the fence.

WENDY (CONT'D)

You want this?

Wendy pulls the handball from her bag, which she holds aloft until Lucy bounds back and prances on her hind legs to try and snatch it from her hand. After two feints, Wendy tosses the ball a few feet into the yard and Lucy scrambles after it, as always, upon return, refusing to let go. Wendy is patient, playing along with the back and forth tugging.

WENDY (CONT'D)

Drop it. Drop it, Lu.

Lucy finally relaxes her jaw and lets the ball fall into Wendy's hand.

The next throw goes a little further, and Lucy has to fend off the attack of her friend the poodle. She trots back to the fence, smiling gratefully, as behind her a long chain of cars slide by on the silvery rails.

The next toss never even touches the ground. Lucy catches the ball mid-air, her whole spine snapping to return her feet to the earth. She brings it back to Wendy.

WENDY (CONT'D)

Good, girl. You're such a good catcher. Yes, you're the best catcher.

Scratching Lucy's head, she becomes overwhelmed with a sad recognition.

WENDY (CONT'D)

It's nice here isn't it, Lu? You're got a yard-

Tears roll down her cheeks.

WENDY

That lady seems nice.

Wendy realizes she is saying good-bye.

WENDY (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, Lu. I lost the car.

Their years of carrying for each other, for living for each other, are coming to an end. The one creature she truly loves in the whole world is no longer her own.

WENDY (CONT'D)

You be good. I'll be back. I'm gonna make a little money and I'll be back. Okay?

Woodenly she finds herself shouldering her backpack and turning away. Most of the dogs are too busy with their own games to notice Wendy walking alongside the fence and climbing the three steps to the front door. Lucy follows her from inside the fence and Wendy does her best to ignore her.

There, under the metal awning, she reaches through her backpack's pockets, pulling out one of Lucy's Lost Dog posters.

From her pants pocket she extracts the remaining hundred and five dollars she had intended to pay for the car repair, and folds the money into the poster. Then she slips the whole package into the foster owner's mail box, hoping it will guarantee Lucy good treatment for the foreseeable future. It is not much but it is the best she can do.

Wendy returns to Lucy.

WENDY (CONT'D)

See ya, Lu. Be a good girl.

She tosses the ball one more time.

CUT TO:

Lucy runs after the ball. When she returns Wendy is gone.

CUT TO:

EXT. TRAIN TRACKS - DAY

With eyes burning, Wendy walks along the train tracks, letting the momentum carry her along.

As she walks, the tracks begin to vibrate. She moves off the tracks and keeps walking.

In the distance, a string of empty boxcars is approaching, heading west.

Wendy waits. The train gets closer. The tracks gleam silver in the hard sunlight. The sound of the engine and the wheels on the rails grows.

The train rolls past. As the empty cargo holders sweep by, sunlight flashes through the open doors.

The wind blows Wendy's hair around her face and she closes her eyes. What is she going to do?

The din of steel on steel surrounds her.

Tentatively, and then more decisively, Wendy begins running alongside the train. She grabs hold of a ladder and puts herself aboard. The ground blurs beneath her. She watches the land scroll by.

CUT TO BLACK:

INT. TRAIN CAR - DAY

Wendy is on the train, emerging from a black tunnel.

The car is moving fast. Outside the barren hills begin to slowly change, and vibrate. The engine's whistle blowing full-throated and remorseful.

THE END