

CASCADIA

Written by

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WHITE TEXT ON BLACK SCREEN

"Less than five percent of the land area of the United States shows signs of human development. Aside from arid desert or fruited plain, over one third of the total area is forested. Much of this beautiful wilderness is still untamed and some parts remain unexplored. Others contain treasures known only to a few."

TEXT FADES

EXT. WILDERNESS (THE CHASE) - NIGHT

The full moon casts a chilled glaze. Large evergreens rise to the heavens.

On the forest floor, darkness and fog creep through the wooded maze.

HOOT! HOOT! A perched owl aloft a branch cries out.

RUSTLE! RUSTLE! Something big quickly makes its way through the brush.

Deep behind the rustle, distant quick voices sound out in commotion.

ATHERTON (O.S.)
It went this way! Hurry!

TERI COOPER (O.S.)
This could be it!

CRACK! SNAP! A large figure shrouded in the darkness and fog barrels through the Wilderness.

It remains hidden in the leaves and branches of the forest plant life. It hurries through the growth.

Far, far behind, flashlights cut through the darkness, but can't find the creature.

TERI COOPER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
It's getting away!

ATHERTON (O.S.)
Let it. I'm about to have proof!

GRUNT! The creature trips over a mess of wires hitched to 1990s era surveillance/sensor equipment.

The Beast hurls the tech.

CRUNCH! The tech smashes into a tree.

Against the backdrop of the full moon, the silhouette of the creature bows up and let's out a mighty ROAR!

TERI COOPER (O.S.)
Was that it?!

ATHERTON (O.S.)
We have it now!

The figure disappears into the Wilderness.

As the shadowed pursuers approach, flashlights cut through the growth and shine on the wrecked equipment.

ATHERTON (O.S.) (CONT'D)
No, no, no! That's another one destroyed!

TERI COOPER (O.S.)
Anything could have done that.

Suddenly, a beam of light rockets up above the treetops from the horizon. It's a spinning flying disc.

The disc stops in the middle of the sky. Then, the craft zips around in many directions at unimaginable speed and fluidity.

The craft stops instantly again.

TERI COOPER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
What is that?!

It darts straight up into the night sky and disappears in the stars.

The flashlights hit the sky like searchlights.

A disembodied voice sounds out.

SHERIFF CRENSHAW (V.O.)
Wait a moment. Slow down, partner.

CUT TO

INT. NYE VALLEY SHERIFF'S OFFICE - DAY

SHERIFF BILL CRENSHAW, 55, gentleman with rustic charm, sits behind a desk in a log cabin themed room flanked by fish on the walls. He's heard an incredible tall tale passed as truth.

SHERIFF CRENSHAW

So this creature you mentioned. It hopped aboard a flying saucer and blasted off into outer space. And the reporter, Miss Teri Cooper. She can verify this?

Across the desk, WALLACE ATHERTON, 55, PhD Anthropology, hesitates before clarifying his statement.

ATHERTON

The point is Sheriff, strange things are going on in the woods. What do you think destroyed my equipment?

Atherton holds up the remains of his tech.

ATHERTON (CONT'D)

A ground squirrel?!

The Sheriff tips his hat and leans back in his chair.

SHERIFF CRENSHAW

A ground squirrel. Not this far north. But a grizzly bear or moose could very easily go sniffing around and not take kindly to any contraption. Aw shoot, one time I was hiking and-

Atherton scoffs as he interrupts.

ATHERTON

As charming as that is, Sheriff, this creature needs to be found and studied.

The Sheriff tactfully continues.

SHERIFF CRENSHAW

It's bad luck that your equipment was destroyed. It looks rather fancy. But right now, there's not much to go on. If you keep blazing trails in the wilderness around these parts... Just be careful.

Atherton shakes his head with frustration.

Sheriff Crenshaw leans forward, steeples his hands, and continues diplomatically.

SHERIFF CRENSHAW (CONT'D)
 Doctor Atherton, I understand how you feel. But this is a nice, peaceful community. There is no mythical creature roaming the wilderness. Sometimes nature can just be enjoyed.

Atherton rises with his busted equipment and storms out of the office.

ATHERTON
 This is impossible. Good day, sir.

Sheriff Crenshaw hides a slight grin.

SHERIFF CRENSHAW
 Try and take 'er easy, Doc.

The Sheriff shakes his head and enjoys a sip of coffee.

SHERIFF CRENSHAW (CONT'D)
 Mmmm. That is good.

Crenshaw flicks on the intercom.

SHERIFF CRENSHAW (CONT'D)
 Dorothy, we got any more coffee?

DOROTHY (V.O.)
 (over intercom)
 Just brewed a fresh pot. You should have a cup.

The Sheriff shakes his head and gives a wry grin.

SHERIFF CRENSHAW
 Thank you, Dorothy.

DOROTHY (V.O.)
 (over intercom)
 Any time.

CUT TO BLACK

Sound of RADIO SWITCHING ON and dial turn through STATIC before finding a station.

GRUNGE DJ (V.O.)
 This is Mookie and you've found the left of the dial. 89.9. KNYX. The Subterranean. We're flying the flannel high here. Big surprise.
 (MORE)

GRUNGE DJ (V.O.) (CONT'D)

People ask me all the time, "Hey, Mook, is that some sort of fashion statement?" No. It's what we wear. Here's another thought for ya. What does it take to be a sell out, and more importantly, isn't that the goal? These are the important questions that plague our times. We'll ponder them together after our next commercial break, but first this little ditty.

EXT. FLYOVER OF CASCADIA - DAY

CUE SONG: Grunge Rock

The Pacific Northwest of the United States: forested rolling mountains undulate like waves across the horizon.

Blue rivers and waterfalls cut paths through the greenery.

The sun creates a mystical aura around all that it graces.

SUPER: "The time"

SUPER: "Not too long ago"

SUPER: "The place"

TITLE: CASCADIA

A road creates an asphalt river that cuts through the towering Douglas firs.

A truck with a 1992 Missouri tag and a sticker of the Gateway Arch hauls an Airstream home. It drifts along this passageway.

A snowpeaked mountain towers in the distance.

SUPER: "Chapter One: Our Time in Eden"

EXT. NYE VALLEY SIGN - DAY

A tall rustic sign proclaims "Welcome to Nye Valley, Washington". It depicts the wonders of the landscape. A snow peaked mountain overlooks a town nestled in a valley. Tall fir trees stretch to either side. An elk stands on the side of the mountain, looking out to the horizon. An eagle flies in the sky. Fish jump out of a stream.

Below that, a sign in vibrant cursive suggests, "Where magic and mystery entwine".

The truck and Airstream pass the sign heading into Nye Valley.

INT. JOHN'S TRUCK - DAY

JOHN REGAN, 30, veteran in a flannel jacket, looks to the sign for a moment as he drives.

JOHN
Where magic and mystery entwine.
What does that even mean?

ROSE, 27, free spirited "hippie-ish" wife, sketches the landscape. She shades in the tall mountain peak. She playfully scolds him with a sense of whimsy.

ROSE
Don't change the subject.

John points at her sketch of the mountain.

JOHN
Wow! That looks exactly like the mountain. Uh, what is it? Uh. Arbel (ar-bell).

Rose becomes adamant.

ROSE
Well, there you go again. Trying to butter me up and change the subject.

John turns off the radio and focuses on the road.

JOHN
Babe, listen. I think you're great. You got a lot of moxie and are, dare I say it, (beat) spunky.

Rose love taps John.

ROSE
You can be such a smartass.

John looks to her with a seriousness.

JOHN
Hey! That's reformed smartass!

Rose tries to stifle laughter.

John wiggles his eyebrows.

ROSE
You think you've got it all figured
out.

JOHN
No one here is going to understand
putting fruit on pizza.

Rose retorts.

ROSE
One day, you'll try it. And you
know what, you'll love it!

John smirks.

Rose smirks back.

ROSE (CONT'D)
You're going to love it.

John calmly scoffs.

JOHN
Mark my words. I. Will. Never. Try.
Fruit. Pizza.

Rose tears her sketch out of the pad. She rolls it up.

Rose puts it in a LONG METAL CANISTER for safe keeping.

With blank page open in her pad, she rips a small piece of
the paper out and starts writing on it.

JOHN (CONT'D)
What are you doing?

Rose finishes writing on the paper.

ROSE
You can sign and date this later.
For the official record.

JOHN
Sign what?

Rose reads the paper.

ROSE
"I will never try fruit pizza."
John Ulysses Regan.

John cringes.

JOHN
Did you have to throw in the middle
name?

Rose beams back.

ROSE
Your words have been marked.

JOHN
Now who's being a smartass?

ROSE
Takes one to know one.

John shakes his head and smiles.

JOHN
I don't want to change the world.

ROSE
And I don't want the world to
change me.

JOHN
I think the galleries in Seattle
will love what you create here.

Rose shifts.

ROSE
Don't tease. You know I haven't
found "it" yet.

John stoically continues.

JOHN
I'm serious. You have the ability.
All you needed is the scenery.
Whatever "it" is, it's close.
Magic, mystery, entwining. This is
the place. I can feel it.

Rose brightens.

ROSE
Honey, you need to know something.

JOHN
What's that?

ROSE
You're not that reformed.

Unfazed, John continues.

JOHN
I might even catch a fish or two.

ROSE
Now that would be a miracle!

JOHN
Hey!

Rose sticks her tongue out and grins widely. She turns on the radio and twists the dial before landing on an upbeat number.

CUE SONG: Alternative Pop

The truck approaches the town Nye Valley.

EXT. FLYOVER OF NYE VALLEY - DAY

A bustling small American town that has wholeheartedly adopted its pioneer roots. The buildings possess a modern "frontier" look and reflect the mountain landscape and wildlife.

Small shops and boutiques line the main street. People happily go about their day.

Scattered about in front of the buildings are colorful "bears as people" statues. Each one engages in a different human activity.

A movie theater marquee shows *Aladdin*; *Encino Man*; *Lethal Weapon 3*; and *Basic Instinct*. "Coming Soon *The Bodyguard*"

EXT. NYE VALLEY SHERIFF'S OFFICE - DAY

Looking more like a forest lodge, a couple of trucks are parked in front.

IRA BLACKSTONE, a well to do Native American gentleman, and Sheriff Crenshaw stand in front, looking out over the town.

BLACKSTONE
We got a problem. In-

Blackstone pauses as Atherton drives by in a van full of grunge rock college interns. He clears his throat and continues his sentence.

BLACKSTONE (CONT'D)

(Ahem) The interlopers. They are not in balance like in seasons past.

SHERIFF CRENSHAW

They mean no harm. We both know that. Let them run around.

BLACKSTONE

I'm worried. You know how dangerous things can become.

SHERIFF CRENSHAW

That makes two of us. In all these years, we haven't had any real trouble. Let Atherton and his people go on a wild goose chase. Nothing will come of it.

BLACKSTONE

Have you ever encountered a wild goose?

Crenshaw looks down and solemnly understands.

DOROTHY, the kind-hearted receptionist with a knowing glance, exits the police station carrying a cup of hot coffee. She offers it to Blackstone.

DOROTHY

Ira, I was hoping I would catch you. Here's a little something to get you through your day.

Blackstone smiles as he takes the gift. The Sheriff, wondering where his coffee is, puts out his hand and then lowers it.

BLACKSTONE

You're too good to me, Dot.

Blackstone takes a sip and makes a delighted sound. Dorothy smiles as she returns to the building to carry out her duties at the front desk.

DOROTHY

Anytime.

Crenshaw tips his hat back.

SHERIFF CRENSHAW
 Fifteen years and I still have to
 get my own coffee.

Crenshaw reaches out for the cup. A rather sheepish
 Blackstone "guards" the cup. Crenshaw chuckles.

John and Rose with the Airstream in tow drive by.

EXT. NYE'S PIES - DAY

CUE SONG: ALTERNATIVE POP

An artisanal pizza parlor with a dining patio.

John's truck and the Airstream are parked close by.

Signs in the window proclaim the coming "Nye Valley Pioneer
 Days" celebration next month.

A flier for the drive-in is displayed advertising Thursday
 Night Three Stooges Marathon followed by *Camelot* and
Dragonslayer Friday.

INT. NYE'S PIES - DAY

The restaurant displays a frontier mountain vibe. The place
 thrives as a local hot spot for social activity. John and
 Rose stand in line to order. They're next.

Rose nudges John. He shakes his head and mouths "Don't do
 it".

The PROPRIETOR smiles to the couple.

NYE'S PIES PROPRIETOR
 Well, little lady, what would you
 like?

Rose approaches the counter and cheerfully asks a burning
 question.

ROSE
 Do you have fruit pizza?

The Proprietor cheerfully responds.

NYE'S PIES PROPRIETOR
 Oh, you mean the Straight Outta
 Garden fig leaf special.

Rose triumphantly smiles at John. John lowers his head in "defeat".

The Proprietor continues.

NYE'S PIES PROPRIETOR (CONT'D)
 Figs, apples, and pears with a hint
 of blue cheese for that little
 extra zest. It's one of our most
 popular sellers.

Rose proudly orders.

ROSE
 I'll have a slice of that.

The Proprietor rings that up then looks to John.

NYE'S PIES PROPRIETOR
 One fig leaf. And for you, partner?

John has a very specific order that he states matter of factly.

JOHN
 Ok, pal, get this. I'll take a
 slice that is dripping with sauce
 and cheese. That's loaded with meat
 and veg. The way it's meant to be.

The Proprietor matter of factly responds.

NYE'S PIES PROPRIETOR
 One traditional old school supreme
 coming up.

Rose laughs. John nods in triumph.

A DISAFFECTED YOUTH hits an arcade cabinet in the corner.

DISAFFECTED YOUTH
 Pac-Man keeps running to the left
 again!

The Youth heads to the counter.

DISAFFECTED YOUTH (CONT'D)
 That thing ate my quarter.

The Proprietor hands him a quarter.

NYE'S PIES PROPRIETOR
 Sorry about that.

DISAFFECTED YOUTH
 You need newer machines in here. No
 one plays Pac-Man. Get some
 fighting games.

JOHN
 Nothing matches the intensity of a
 good game of Pac-Man.

The Youth scoffs.

DISAFFECTED YOUTH
 I'd rather play Tetris.

NYE'S PIES PROPRIETOR
 We have Galaga, too.

JOHN
 Now you're talking.

The Youth walks off waving his new shiny quarter.

DISAFFECTED YOUTH
 (sing-songy)
 Shiny happy quarter laughing.

The Proprietor shows a twinge of frustration.

NYE'S PIES PROPRIETOR
 That blasted machine. I'm going to
 have to scrap it. It's a shame,
 too. All original.

John pipes in to help.

JOHN
 We had a few arcade cabinets off
 base. They were always shorting out
 like that. Probably a loose wire.
 As long as it's not a faulty
 microswitch, it shouldn't be too
 much of a problem. I'd be more than
 happy to take a look at it.

The Proprietor shows a sign of relief.

NYE'S PIES PROPRIETOR
 Be my guest. I'd hate to trash an
 OG Pac-Man. More of a challenge
 than that Mortal Street Kombat
 Fighter the kids like now. So
 violent.

ROSE
Someone should do something about
those violent games.

John bites his lip as he takes out a pocket toolset and heads to the machine. Rose looks on and smiles.

EXT. NYE'S PIES - DAY

John and Rose are seated at a picnic table patio enjoying their meal.

ROSE
This place is nice. I'm so glad we
made it.

John readies a bite of his pizza.

JOHN
You're just happy they have fruit
pizza.

Rose finishes a bite.

ROSE
Mmmmm. That's just a bonus. I'm
serious. I'm glad we did this.

She takes his hand and squeezes.

JOHN
I think you'll make amazing
paintings here. You know why?
Because you're good enough, you're
smart enough, and-

ROSE
Don't you doggone dare!

They stare into each other's eyes and simply drift away.

Rose suddenly pulls away and starts rubbing her temples with both hands.

ROSE (CONT'D)
(Ouch)!

John immediately leans forward, ready to jump up and help in any way he can.

JOHN
What is it?

Rose relieves pressure on her temples and starts rubbing her neck.

ROSE

I'm ok. Just a headache. I feel a little better now. I'll be right back.

Rose gets up to go to the bathroom. John begins to rise per his dining etiquette training.

Before he can say anything, Rose softly puts a hand on his chest.

ROSE (CONT'D)

You don't have to do that.

JOHN

Force of habit. Gotta stand when the lovely lady does.

With a big smile, she takes out the folded piece of paper with John's proclamation on it.

She unfolds it and places it in front of him.

ROSE

You can sign that whenever you're ready. But I'll have you know, that pizza is delicious.

John "smugly" leans back in his seat and smirks.

JOHN

I'll never know.

Rose sets a pen next to him.

ROSE

Then go ahead and sign.

Rose leaves for the bathroom. When John thinks she is out of earshot, he picks up her pizza and takes a bite. Slowly chewing, he is amazed at the taste. He mutters to himself.

JOHN

She's right. That does taste good.

Rose calls out before entering the eatery.

ROSE (O.S.)

I heard that!

John hollers back.

JOHN
That was the wind!

He shakes his head and thinks aloud.

JOHN (CONT'D)
She's got the hearing of a bat.

He sets down her pizza and rips up his proclamation.

Seated near John, Sheriff Crenshaw has overheard the frivolity.

He tips back his hat and gives a friendly "warning" to John.

SHERIFF CRENSHAW
That's how it all starts. Next
thing you know, it's turkey bacon
and matching pajamas.

John chuckles and nods in introduction.

JOHN
Oh, we're definitely a long way
from that. John Regan.

The Sheriff returns in kind.

SHERIFF CRENSHAW
Bill Crenshaw. Good job getting the
Pac-Man machine up and going. One
of the deputies got too big for his
britches and kept bumping my high
score.

JOHN
Whoa! You can't let that slide.

The Sheriff grins.

SHERIFF CRENSHAW
Not anymore thanks to you. So where
were you stationed?

JOHN
That obvious, huh? I get around
like a Beach Boys song. I was in
West Berlin before the big party.
It's back to one Berlin now. One
Germany. And the Commies threw in
the towel. Can you believe it?
After that, went to the Gulf. Now
me and the missus are enjoying the
honeymoon.

(MORE)

JOHN (CONT'D)

Loaded up the Airstream, left St. Louis, and thought we'd see the country before planting roots in Seattle.

SHERIFF CRENSHAW

Well, you picked a fine town. Always something to do there.

JOHN

We'll get there eventually. We're renting some land west of town for a couple of months. It has a place we can hitch up to for a while. Rose can paint and I can get some fishing in.

The Sheriff smiles and rises from his chair to leave.

SHERIFF CRENSHAW

Make sure and throw back the little ones. Give them time to grow. Before you know it, they'll be as big as Ole Art there.

JOHN

Ole Art?

The Sheriff nods toward Mount Arbel.

SHERIFF CRENSHAW

That's what we call the mountain. Mount Arbel. Has no life to it. But Ole Art's seen a thing or two from up on high.

JOHN

Him and me both.

SHERIFF CRENSHAW

That's the spirit.

The sound of a commotion erupts in the distance.

ATHERTON (O.S.)

Careful! Careful!

John looks across the street to see THE SEEKERS, the group of GRUNGE ROCK COLLEGE STUDENTS led by Dr. Wallace Atherton. They load equipment into a van parked in front of Patterson Electronics store.

SHERIFF CRENSHAW

That there is the seasonal migration of critter hunters. They come here every year to catch a jackalope, or some such beast. They're mostly harmless.

John chuckles.

JOHN

Mostly, huh. I wish them luck.

SHERIFF CRENSHAW

You hear about the killer beast in the fog. It "mist".

John shakes his head at the bad pun.

JOHN

That's terrible.

Rose exits the building to return to her seat.

The Sheriff gives John a nod.

SHERIFF CRENSHAW

Take 'er easy, friend.

John nods back.

JOHN

See you around, Bill.

The Sheriff tips his hat to Rose as she returns.

SHERIFF CRENSHAW

Enjoy your time here, ma'am.

Rose is pleasantly taken aback. The Sheriff exits.

ROSE

Oh, thank you. That's the plan.

John half rises as she sits at their table. She gives him a wry smile while shaking her head. John shrugs.

JOHN

I know. I know.

ROSE

We're not in trouble are we.

John wryly smiles.

JOHN

He says I am. Before I know it,
you'll be feeding me turkey bacon
while picking out my pajamas.

This "shocks" Rose.

ROSE

How did he get my playbook? My
master plan is ruined. For now,
anyway. (Funny "evil" laugh)!

JOHN

Is it too late to get an annulment?

Rose "hits" him.

ROSE

Hey!

JOHN

Got ya!

She sifts through the ripped pieces of paper.

ROSE

I knew you'd like it.

John plays it off.

JOHN

I still don't know what you're
talking about. That was the wind.

ROSE

More like hot air!

JOHN

We need to call it something other
than pizza. That is not a pizza.

Rose smiles and shakes her head.

ROSE

After we leave here, let's find a
bookstore. I need to buy that new
one. You and I might be from
different planets.

John wryly chuckles.

JOHN

Speaking of new books, what was that thing you wanted to try. You know, the book by Madon- (Ow)!

Rose kicks John under the table mid-statement. He rubs his shin.

The Proprietor appears with two big pieces of cherry pie for the couple.

NYE'S PIES PROPRIETOR

In honor of saving my favorite cherry chomper, fresh out of the oven, I give you our fantastic Cherry Beary Pie-tacular.

JOHN

We can't accept that. I'd just hate for there to be any high scoring disputes.

NYE'S PIES PROPRIETOR

Bill told you about that, huh. He's a kidder. Anyway, you two enjoy. It's my treat. Really.

ROSE

Thank you!

Rose waves as the Proprietor exits.

JOHN

That was mighty kind of him.

Rose closes her eyes and takes a deep smell of the pie.

ROSE

That's magical. Do you know what I think of when I smell this pie.

JOHN

Pac-man. You and me. One on one. No holds barred. Winner take all.

Rose lights up.

ROSE

I am now. Challenge accepted. You're going down.

Rose briefly rubs his hand.

JOHN

Don't think that's gonna work. This is serious, cut-throat stuff.

They continue with their pie.

EXT. THE LAKE - MAGIC HOUR

A pastoral idyllic setting. Fish jump up for dinners of fireflies. Birds sound in the trees. All is tranquil and serene.

The truck and Airstream enter into the new pastoral kingdom.

EXT. AIRSTREAM BY THE LAKE - NIGHT

The ambient sound of an ACOUSTIC GUITAR fills the air.

A full moon lights up like a beacon in the sky.

A gentle fog shrouds the lake. An occasional fish jumps up to catch a bug.

John and Rose have setup their site. The Airstream is unhitched from the truck and settled into the ground. White Christmas lights adorn its sides and emit a festive glow.

A campfire casts a warming aura around it. John finishes playing guitar and sets it down.

JOHN

For the record, I let you win.

Rose nestles into John.

ROSE

Mmm-hmm. I'll accept any rematches.

He covers her shoulders with a blanket. She snuggles in close, as she roasts a hot dog.

John puts a hot dog on a fork and roasts it over the fire.

John sees something, an animal, rooting around the Airstream. It's sniffing for something.

JOHN

It looks like we have a visitor.

Hiding behind the Airstream, a shy stray dog that appears as though it hasn't had a meal in a long time looks on with pitiful eyes.

It approaches, but keeps back a distance.

Rose's eyes grow big as her heart goes out to the creature. She has to help.

ROSE

Oh, John. Poor thing is probably hungry.

JOHN

If we feed that mangy mongrel, we're never getting rid of it.

Throwing off the blanket and using John for leverage, Rose forces the fork into John's free hand and jumps up to feed the dog. SPLAT! John falls over and hits the ground, but keeps the hot dogs in the air.

CUT TO BLACK

BEGIN "TRUNK" SHOT FROM INSIDE BOX

Rose opens a box. An open black sky full of stars shrouds her head. She rummages in the box and pulls out a glass vase. The orange glow of the campfire lights up the vase with a golden hue.

END "TRUNK" SHOT FROM INSIDE BOX

Rose sets the vase on the table. She pulls out a bowl and puts two cut up roasted hot dogs into it.

Rose puts the bowl of roasted hot dogs in front of the dog. It happily eats them up.

Rose beams pride at feeding the unfortunate animal.

ROSE

Oh, you're so hungry. I bet you haven't eaten in a month.

John prepares another hot dog for roasting.

JOHN

I'll get another one ready just in case there's another hungry varmint.

Rose is unfazed at the comment.

ROSE

Good thinking, hon. We wouldn't want anyone left out.

John shakes his head.

JOHN
You know, that's not exactly what I
meant.

Rose "tackles" John and snuggles in close.

ROSE
I was thinking about that sign from
earlier. A place where magic and
mystery entwine. I know what it
means.

JOHN
What?

ROSE
Anything can happen here.

John hands Rose a hot dog.

ROSE (CONT'D)
Thanks, honey.

JOHN
Just feeding another hungry
varmint.

Rose taps him.

The dog comes and rests next to them by the fire.

A bright, starry sky opens all around.

EXT. ARCADIA MOTOR INN - NIGHT

CUE SONG: GRUNGE ROCK BALLAD

A flashing neon light entices visitors to come stay at "The
ARCADIA Motor Inn". "Air Conditioned Rooms/ Color TV". An
addendum plastered beneath jingles "Now with Cable!".

The bungalows have various cars parked in front of their
doors. One of those is the Seeker van.

The Seekers are seated sprawled out in front of their room
listening to a boombox. Donnie walks up with a Nye's Pies
pizza box.

DONNIE
Dinner is served.

The box rips away. Pizza disappears.

DONNIE (CONT'D)
Save me some.

The Seekers calmly continue as their mellow will not be harshed.

SEEKER 1
Whoa, dude! Relax.

SEEKER 2
Chill, man. We're all here to kick back and enjoy some pie. The day is done and this night is young.

Donnie takes a piece of pizza and finds a seat. He let's out a sigh of relief.

TERI COOPER (O.S.)
I hope you guys have time to talk to a meddlesome reporter.

Enter TERI COOPER, field reporter ready for action. Seeker 1 nudges Seeker 2 and whispers.

SEEKER 1
Check it out, We're about to be interviewed by Barbara Walters.

Teri Cooper takes everything in stride and pulls up a seat.

TERI COOPER
That's a compliment.

Seeker 1 nods and says "Yeah!" under his breath like that was his intention all along.

Seeker 2 holds up the pizza box with one slice left and offers it to Cooper.

TERI COOPER (CONT'D)
No, thank you.

Cooper takes out a notepad and starts scribbling away. Meanwhile, Donnie has a mouthful of pizza, almost oblivious to what's going on. Cooper points her pen at him.

TERI COOPER (CONT'D)
You're Donnie, right?

Donnie freezes like a deer in headlights, caught mid-chew. He dry swallows a chunk of pizza and then washes it down. He coughs a little before responding.

DONNIE
Yes, uh, yes ma'am.

Teri smiles and continues.

TERI COOPER
It's ok, Donnie. We're just
chatting. I want to know what
brought you here. Why you signed on
for Professor Atherton's...

She checks her notes.

TERI COOPER (CONT'D)
Field Study into the Discovery of
North American Simians.

Donnie goes bright eyed as he recollects his tale.

DONNIE
I know what people say, but it's
something different, you know. What
we're doing is cutting edge stuff.
If we find an unknown apelike
ancestor here in Washington, it
completely changes everything we
know about where we as a species
came from and where we're going. In
a lot of ways it's like breaking
ground in a new frontier.

Teri writes down his response and beams back at him.

TERI COOPER
Wow, Donnie. I didn't expect such a
profound and meaningful response.

Donnie blushes and "aw shucks" looks away. Compliments have
been few and far between lately.

Cooper looks at the other Seekers and waves her pen.

TERI COOPER (CONT'D)
What about you two?

In unison, Seeker 1 and Seeker 2 look at each other then back
at Cooper.

SEEKER 1, SEEKER 2
(nodding in unison)
It was the last thing available.

Donnie spits out his beverage. Teri smiles weakly at the duo.

INT. AIRSTREAM BY THE LAKE - MAGIC HOUR

Errant sunbeams pierce the curtains over the windows. They wash over the couple as they sleep.

John awakens next to Rose. She soundly slumbers.

As he rises, she reaches out for him. He takes her hand and kisses it. She contently moans as he leaves bed.

EXT. AIRSTREAM BY THE LAKE - MORNING

John fries up bacon and eggs in the skillet over the campfire. The crack and sizzle sounds appealing.

John looks down to see the most loyal dog in the world seated at his feet.

JOHN

Sit.

The dog remains seated watching John cook. It wags its tail.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Good boy.

John throws the dog a piece of bacon. It catches it mid-air.

JOHN (CONT'D)

We're going to have to give you a name.

The dog wags his tail in approval.

John thinks for a moment, then snaps his fingers as the idea comes to him.

JOHN (CONT'D)

I got it! Charles BARK-ley?

The dog groans and covers its eyes.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Not a Suns fan.

The dog groans and tilts its head towards Ole Art.

John follows its gaze.

The mountain is out today. The snow capped peak glistens in the morning light.

John looks back to the dog.

JOHN (CONT'D)

That's it!

Art barks and wags his tail.

CUT TO

EXT. AIRSTREAM BY THE LAKE - MORNING

John picks a tick off of Art and throws it into the fire. Art wags his tail happily.

Rose exits the trailer stretching. She can't believe her eyes.

ROSE

Mangy mongrel, huh?

John covers Art's ears and nods to her breakfast on a little picnic table overlooking the lake.

JOHN

Shhh! He can hear you. Your breakfast is getting cold.

ROSE

You could have cooked in the kitchen.

Rose sits at the table and sniffs the fresh bacon, eggs, and coffee before digging in. She happily hums "Mmmmm".

JOHN

I didn't want to wake you. I figured you could use the rest.

Rose is not amused, and takes a bite of breakfast.

ROSE

Ha ha. This is really good, honey.

John finds another tick and throws it into the fire. Art wags his tail.

JOHN

Well, Art might not be mangy, but he is a mongrel. Aren't ya, Art?

Art barks in agreement.

ROSE

You named him Art? I figured it would be something like Barky Bark and the Puppy Bunch.

John quickly admires the brilliance and quickly defends his little buddy.

JOHN

Even though that is perfect and I'm kicking myself for not having thought of it first, don't make fun. Art's going to be as big and strong as that mountain. And the good news is he only had two ticks.

John finishes tick hunting and finds one last one to flick on the fire.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Three. I'll check at the vet and the pound to see if anyone lost a dog. If not, I'll pick up a collar and dog food.

Rose has a slight wince from a headache. She hides the pain behind her napkin.

ROSE

Can you get aspirin, too. We're out.

John pats the dog.

JOHN

Sure thing, honey.

INT. GENERAL STORE - DAY

John walks the pet and feed aisle. DONNIE THE INTERN, 22 yo college student, goes through some of the items in a hurry.

John picks up a bag of dog food and a flea/tick collar.

Further down the aisle, Donnie knocks over a display of pig's ears.

DONNIE

My bad!

Donnie scrambles to pick stuff up.

JOHN
It's ok, bud. No harm done.

Donnie finishes with the display.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Aren't you one of the jackalope
hunters?

Donnie sulks, "defeated".

DONNIE
Very funny. Those don't exist.

JOHN
Not if you believe.

Donnie looks around to make sure prying ears won't hear and then opens up about his mission.

DONNIE
It's no joke. We're looking for
something big. We have found
evidence of a creature thought
extinct for thousands of years.
There's word of sightings along the
Kranz River, past Gimlin Point.

At the end of the aisle, Wallace Atherton appears holding
pounds of raw meat.

ATHERTON
Hurry up, Donald. We must be
moving.

Donnie scrambles with packs of pig's ears to please Atherton.

JOHN
Best not keep the boss waiting.

ATHERTON
I'm not his boss. I'm his mentor.

Donnie sheepishly looks away.

DONNIE
I'm an intern.

JOHN
Is there any pay in that?

Atherton interjects before Donnie can respond. Donnie shrugs.

ATHERTON

The experience is priceless.
Knowledge is it's own reward.

JOHN

Whatever you say, chief.

Atherton and Donnie grab gear and go.

John shakes his head and chuckles.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Anything for science.

John finds the aspirin. He picks up a bottle.

Next to that, his eyes catch a rainbow display of pinwheels of all colors.

EXT. GIMLIN POINT - DAY

A tree covered hill rises above the thick forest canopy. A river snakes through the valley.

A still mist covers the ground. The sound of rummaging in the growth faintly ruffles out.

Something rustles the foliage. Hidden behind a wall of green, something moves about by a tree.

It's Donnie. He hitches up surveillance equipment to a tree. He pulls a pig ear from his pack and attaches it to the equipment.

DONNIE

Another one down.

Donnie pulls out a map and double checks his location. He marks the spot off of on the map.

He collects his things and heads down the hill.

The equipment runs and WHIRS, taking readings long after Donnie has left.

PLOD! PLOD! The sound of the Beast approaches.

A giant hairy arm reaches down and grabs the pig's ear. It disappears from the equipment.

SNIFF! SNIFF! The pig's ear flies through the air as it is tossed away and becomes lost in the mist.

SMASH! SPARKS fly as a giant fist smashes the equipment. The WHIR abruptly stops. It "hiccups" slowly to start back up, but fades to stop.

PLOD! PLOD! The sound of the Beast grows faint as it leaves the area.

EXT. AIRSTREAM BY THE LAKE - DAY

John returns in his truck. The campsite is more organized. A freshly bathed Art runs up, happy to see him.

John scratches him behind the ears.

JOHN
I'm back, buddy! Looking good!

Art barks and wags his tail. He spins in circles in excitement.

JOHN (CONT'D)
I wasn't gone that long.

John sets the bags on the table. The pinwheels flow out of one.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Good news! We're adding to the Dream Team! Art is ours!

Art barks and happily wags his tail.

ROSE
That's great!

John picks up a pinwheel and gently blows through the spokes. It turns.

Rose skips up and takes a handful of pinwheels from John.

ROSE (CONT'D)
These are wonderful.

JOHN
What's a little wonder without whimsy.

She puts yellow and blue and purple and white pinwheels in the glass vase.

ROSE
Everything's coming together perfectly.

JOHN
That is the general idea of the
honeymoon, right?

Rose playfully chastises him.

ROSE
Oh, grow up.

JOHN
You said it. And in front of Art.

Art remains happy, oblivious to the foolishness.

EXT. AIRSTREAM BY THE LAKE - DAY

John casts a line into the waters and slowly reels it in.
Art, having grown used to his flea collar, watches
attentively at his side.

SNAP! A fish runs with the line.

JOHN
Here we go!

Art BARKS and jumps excitedly as John reels the "monster" in.

SPLASH! Art jumps in the water as the fish approaches the
bank.

JOHN (CONT'D)
No, Art. No, there's a hook. Leave
it be.

Art stops mid-splash and looks at John. He swims back to the
shore.

John and fish are locked in a climactic struggle of wills.
The rod bends left. Then right.

SPLASH! SPLASH! Torrents of water are whipped up in a frenzy.

JOHN (CONT'D)
This is the big one! Watch this
Art!

Art is fixed on the conflict. Tail wagging with excitement.

John reels in the fish and raises it high above the water.
It's a glorified guppy.

Art tilts his head to the side and groans.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Where'd the rest of you go? The part that put up all that ruckus? I guess it's not the fish in the fight. It's the fight in the fish.

John unhooks the fish and says farewell.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Until we meet next time, little friend.

John releases the fish into the water. SPLASH! It swims away. Art watches it go. John scratches his head.

EXT. AIRSTREAM BY THE LAKE - DAY

CUE SONG: Adult Alternative

A boombox plays by Rose's "studio".

Rose finishes a painting of the Airstream resting by the treeline with Mount Arbel towering in the background.

Her quick deliberate strokes bring life to the landscape.

The last thing she fills in are the pinwheels in the vase.

John and Art return from fishing. John hugs Rose from behind. She kisses his arm.

JOHN

Another masterpiece. That looks beautiful, baby!

ROSE

I think it really says something about man in relation to nature.

John takes a long look at the painting.

JOHN

I just think it looks really good.

ROSE

Really?

JOHN

Really.

They kiss.

Rose brightens up.

ROSE
I know what we're going to do
today! We're going exploring!

JOHN
Hold on there, Amelia Earhart. Did
you see the size of that monster me
and Art just caught. It was huge!

Art puts his head down between his paws and groans.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Use your imagination, buddy. Put
your paws out. It was "this big".

Art groans again.

ROSE
That's adorable. Teaching an
innocent dog to lie.

John defends his position and a spirited discussion begins.

JOHN
I take offense to that. This is
simply a question of perspective.

ROSE
Umbrage or not-

JOHN
Ooh, fancy word.

ROSE
Let's see what's on the other side
of that mountain.

JOHN
The same thing that's on this side,
just over there.

ROSE
Where's your spirit of adventure?

JOHN
Back in St. Louis.

Rose cheerily continues.

ROSE
Try closer.

John smugly replies.

JOHN
It's here, isn't it.

Rose's exuberance remains undaunted.

ROSE
That's right. And do you know what
it's about to do?

JOHN
Go on a journey into the
wilderness?

ROSE
You got it!

John looks to his little canine buddy.

JOHN
What about Art?

A duck flies over the Airstream and lands in the lake. Art barks excitedly. The duck remains unfazed.

Squirrels scamper across the ground by the Airstream.

BARK! BARK! Art chases after them. So excited, he flips over during his pursuit. The squirrels were already long gone.

ROSE
He can come with us.

JOHN
Are you sure that's a good idea?

Rose gives John a grin that he knows all too well. He nods in acceptance.

John calls his little buddy.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Art! Art!

Art excitedly runs up. John kneels down and checks his flea collar, then rubs him behind the ears.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Here that, buddy. We're going
exploring. When does this
expedition start?

Art looks to John and barks in agreement. John finishes the ear rub. He slowly rises.

A couple of birds fly over the treetops, headed for Mount Arbel way off in the distance.

TRANSITION DAY TO MAGIC HOUR

EXT. AIRSTREAM BY THE LAKE - MAGIC HOUR

Mount Arbel still looms in the distance.

John and Rose return in the truck. Art stands by eagerly waiting.

Rose opens her door to step out. Art leaps by and runs around.

ROSE

Hey, boy. I bet you're glad to be home.

John exits the truck and heads for the bed.

JOHN

That's how I feel.

ROSE

That was amazing. We need to go back tomorrow. In fact, we need to see what the view is like from on the mountain.

John feigns enthusiasm.

JOHN

Woo-hoo. More hiking.

Art runs over to John. He plays with the dog for a moment.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Hey, buddy. You did good today. We're real proud of you.

Art barks happily and runs around.

John rummages through the truck bed. Rose stands by waiting for something special.

ROSE

I had a really good time.

JOHN

I wouldn't change a thing.

With care, John slides up a covered canvas. Rose slowly unloads the canvas from the truck bed.

ROSE

You know, the dirty little secret is that you are actually a giant dork.

John unloads hiking provisions.

JOHN

It takes one to know one.

ROSE

That's not a denial.

Rose sets the canvas down on an easel. She twinges and rubs her temples. She takes an aspirin out of her pocket and swallows it while John still focuses on the gear.

JOHN

If I'm whatever you said, it's only to keep up with you.

ROSE

It's ok. Last I heard, dorks are cool now.

Rose unveils her latest painting: Under a bright blue sky and surrounded by a green forest and rolling mountains lies a sea of wildflowers. Yellows and blues and purples and whites flow over the land like oceanic prism of color.

JOHN

Ok, then. What about Art?

Art happily barks at pinwheels spinning in the vase.

ROSE

He's the biggest dork of all.

John can't believe his ears.

JOHN

He's a noble warrior. Fierce. Look at him.

Art chases his tail.

JOHN (CONT'D)

See the coordination. The reflexes. Sick her, Art. Don't let her say that about you.

Art runs up to Rose for scratches. She obliges.

ROSE
Does this fearless warrior want his
belly rubbed?

Art flips over. Rose rubs his belly.

JOHN
You're killing me, dog.

Art enjoys his belly rubs.

EXT. AIRSTREAM BY THE LAKE - NIGHT

CUE SONG: Adult Alternative

SIZZLE! Fresh fish hit a frying pan.

John fries the filets. Art watches, hoping something will drop.

The Airstream is lit up in Christmas lights. Rose lights candles on either side of the site.

ROSE
That smells great, babe.

John flips the filets.

JOHN
This will be a feast for all time.

Rose continues lighting candles.

John cooks the filets as they rest in the skillet over the rig above the campfire.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Baby, you wouldn't believe the
crazy stuff that was on the radio
last night. There's this guy out of
Nevada...

Suddenly, Art stands and starts barking.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Don't worry, bud. We'll share a
little.

Art runs away barking. John looks to see what the commotion is.

Art stands over Rose. She lies shaking on the ground. Art nudges her. He barks and groans to no response. Rose continues convulsing.

All of the fun and good times flash from John to be replaced with concern and a call to action. He runs to Rose.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Rose! Rose!

John kneels beside her and lifts her head. He focuses on assessing the situation but struggles with it.

Rose's eyes are rolled up in the back of her head. A GURGLE comes from her throat.

Calmness fades as John tries to snap her out of it.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Rose! Rose! Can you hear me! It's John!

Still no response. She's losing color.

John continues to no avail. He cries out in vain to bring her back.

JOHN (CONT'D)

ROSE! ROSE!

Art nudges her to help. But still no response. Art puts his head down and whimpers in sadness.

Cradling her head, John picks Rose up from the ground and carries her to the truck.

CUT TO BLACK

INT. HOSPITAL ER ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Sheriff Crenshaw and NURSE MORGAN are discussing an admitted Deputy.

SHERIFF CRENSHAW

A sprained ankle. The way he was carrying on, I thought they were going to have to amputate.

NURSE MORGAN

(Giggles) What was he chasing after again?

SHERIFF CRENSHAW

Strange lights in the sky. I told him it was nothing but flying squirrels. The moonlight reflects off their bellies. But you know Dick Sanchez. Always some otherworldly explanation.

NURSE MORGAN

Just another typical day in Nye Valley.

John busts through the doors carrying Rose. Her color is gone and she is out of it.

JOHN

You've got to help my wife!

Nurse Morgan springs into action and hits the bell.

ORDERLIES appear with a gurney. Sheriff Crenshaw helps John place Rose on the gurney.

They wheel Rose to the ER doors.

NURSE MORGAN

Sir, what happened?

JOHN

We were fixing dinner and she just fell down. Shaking, eyes in the back of her head. I couldn't snap her out of it.

NURSE MORGAN

What's her name?

JOHN

Rose Regan.

Nurse Morgan focuses on Rose as they pass through the double doors.

NURSE MORGAN

Mrs. Regan. Mrs. Regan, you are at the hospital. Rose, we are going to help you.

As Rose and the nurse disappear behind the doors, an Orderly puts his hand up to stop John.

ORDERLY

Sorry, sir. You can't go back there.

John pushes his hand away.

JOHN
I need to be with my wife.

The Orderly does not move. John stares through the Orderly.
Standing behind John, Sheriff Crenshaw speaks calmly.

SHERIFF CRENSHAW
John, I know how you feel. But
there's nothing you can do back
there. She's in good hands. Doctor
Patel has been doing this a long
time. Come on, let me get you a cup
of coffee.

John relaxes a little bit and nods.

JOHN
Ok. Ok.

The Orderly stands down. John and the Sheriff go the opposite
direction.

John and the Sheriff walk down the hallway. John stops
Crenshaw and tries to convey his thoughts. He holds back the
floodgate of emotion as best he can.

JOHN (CONT'D)
She was so happy. She'd made this
beautiful... We were going to...

Defeated, John stops talking. He starts to say something he's
dreaded saying.

JOHN (CONT'D)
If anything happens...

With calm understanding, Sheriff Crenshaw softly puts his
hand on John's shoulder.

SHERIFF CRENSHAW
We're not there yet.

TRANSITION

INT. HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM - NIGHT

SILENT

John and the Sheriff conclude a conversation. Crenshaw squeezes John's shoulder and nods. John nods in reply. Crenshaw exits.

TRANSITION

INT. HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM - NIGHT

Hunched over, head down, John stares into his cup of coffee. It's grown cold. He sets it to the side.

DOCTOR PATEL (O.S.)

Mr. Regan.

John jumps up.

Doctor Patel stands at the doorway. John rushes over.

JOHN

How's Rose? How's my wife?

Doctor Patel continues in a conciliatory manner.

DOCTOR PATEL

Mr. Regan, your wife has suffered a massive stroke. A blood vessel burst in her brain. You brought her here just in the nick of time. It was a tough road, but we performed emergency surgery. We stopped the bleeding and managed to stabilize her condition. However, and I cannot stress this enough, she is not out of the woods just yet. We've induced coma for the time being.

John absorbs the blow of information.

JOHN

For how long? Will Rose get better?

Doctor Patel states the facts.

DOCTOR PATEL

There is no way of knowing. The brain has to heal itself. Rose has been through a lot. Unfortunately, she might not recover from this.

John sinks lower, processing the information.

DOCTOR PATEL (CONT'D)

If she does, she won't be able to speak, there will be trouble walking and other basic functions. Those things might improve. They might not. The important thing for right now is to remain positive.

John looks back to Patel.

JOHN

She's the positive one.

Patel nods in understanding.

TRANSITION

INT. ROSE'S HOSPITAL ROOM - MORNING

In critical care, Rose lies motionless in a hospital bed hooked up to machines to monitor everything and perform basic bodily functions. Her head bandaged from the surgery.

John stoically sits beside her holding her hand.

JOHN

Rose. Rose. It's John. I'm right here. I'm right here with you.

TRANSITION

INT. ROSE'S HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Sweet, somber acoustic guitar music fills the air. Rose lies in a coma on a bed hooked up to machines.

A well-worn pamphlet titled "Memory, the Senses, and Hope" lays to the side.

Stonefaced, an unkempt and unshaven John plays a melody known only to them.

The machines remain steady, but unresponsive.

John puts the guitar down and gently takes Rose's hand.

JOHN

Rose, do you remember how we met?
You were waiting tables at the
Shifty Gear.

John brightens as he tells the story.

JOHN (CONT'D)

You were terrible at it. I don't know how, but that Kenny Rogers and Dolly Parton song started playing on the jukebox. From out of nowhere, you spilled a gallon of water on me. I was all wet. You weren't even waiting my table. Your eyes got real big and you said, "Oh no! I'm terribly sorry, sir." I said, "That's ok. I needed to cool down, anyway." And then you smiled. And it was the most beautiful smile I had ever seen.

John concludes the story with a moment of tenderness.

JOHN (CONT'D)

But that was when I knew who I wanted drowning me for the rest of my life. It was you, Rose.

Rose shows no change. As she lies motionless, John grips her hand and lowers his head.

The machines remain unresponsive.

FADE TO BLACK

The BEEPS and WHIRS of the machines fade to SILENCE.

WHITE TEXT ON BLACK SCREEN

"Chapter Two: Automatic for the People"

EXT. APPLE ORCHARD - MORNING

The rising sun shines through rows and rows and rows of apple trees. Ripe fruit dangles from the branches and glisten in the light.

Two children, a BOY and GIRL, chase each other in play through the rows. The girl tags the boy.

GIRL

Tag! You're it!

The girl takes off running in the opposite direction. The boy gives chase.

BOY

I'm going to get you!

The girl unleashes a burst of speed as she looks over her shoulder.

GIRL
No, you're not!

An apple falls from a tree overhead and rolls on the ground in front of the girl.

She stops and picks it up and takes a bite. A smile at the fruit's sweetness fills her face.

The boy runs up and tags her.

BOY
Ha, your it!

She hands him the apple.

He reaches out for it, then freezes in terror.

Puzzlement fills the Girl's face for a moment as the LARGE SHADOW of the Beast flows across the ground, then over the children.

The Boy cannot move.

The Girl looks up at the source of the shadow, the Beast. She looks down to the apple in her hand and then offers it up to the Beast.

As the Beast takes the apple, the girl holds the Beast's free hand and smiles. Her hand disappears as the Beast's giant hand closes around it.

FADE IN

EXT. AIRSTREAM BY THE LAKE - NIGHT

The only thing piercing the darkness is the campfire.

A freshly hewn wooden whistle and dog figurine send dancing shadows across the ground.

Art solemnly resting by his side, John focuses on whittling away at a long tree limb. He's fashioning something, but first the stick needs to be de-twigged and de-barked.

He throws the wood shavings on the fire. The pamphlet catches his eye.

The "Memory, the Senses, and Hope" pamphlet lands on the fire. It smolders and slowly burns away.

John becomes lost staring into the pamphlet turn to ash. The last thing to char and fade is the word "Hope".

Art tries to break him from his trance with a low groan. John solemnly pats Art.

JOHN

I know, buddy. I know.

He stokes the fire.

A piece of a log breaks off and lands in a gray and white pile of ashes.

POOF! The ashen cloud wisps into the air.

John follows the airborne ashes with his eyes and then stares at the pile of ashes that remain before him.

John picks up a handful of ashes. He sifts the ashes through his fingers. His eyes well up.

The wind picks up. John hears things RATTLING.

He looks over to the table.

Next to the vase of pinwheels rests one of Rose's metal canisters. A gentle wind blows through the pinwheels causing them to sway. The canister rolls off of the table onto the ground.

John scratches Art behind the ears and then rises to get the canister.

The airborne ashes descend to Earth.

The burnt pile of ashes grows.

EXT. AIRSTREAM BY THE LAKE - MORNING

Carrying Rose's canister, John walks toward his truck.

He passes Rose's painting of the wildflowers.

Art runs beside him and almost knocks him over.

John stops and kneels to his canine buddy.

JOHN

There's something I have to do,
Art. You can't go this time. I
won't be gone long.

Art tilts his head.

Stonefaced, John looks to something out of frame and then back to Art.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Don't let anything happen while I'm gone.

Art seems to understand. John scratches Art's head.

John rises and continues to his truck.

EXT. FLYOVER OF CASCADIA ROADS - MORNING

Slicing through the fog shrouded ground, John's truck navigates the winding rivers of asphalt cutting through the green, wavy ocean of trees.

INT. JOHN'S TRUCK - MORNING

John switches on the radio.

CUE SONG: Lively Pop

John turns the dial.

GRUNGE DJ (V.O.)

You're back with Mookie here to the left of the dial. 89.9. KNYX. The Subterranean. Somme big brouhaha is happening in town this weekend. Something about Lois and Clark and Rocketeer Days. Anyway, as a goof, get all gussied up, as they say, and check it out. Maybe something cool will happen. Or whatever.

John shakes his head.

GRUNGE DJ (V.O.)

Now it's time for more of that buzz from Puget Sound. Enjoy. Or don't. Like I care.

CUE SONG: Grunge Rock

John turns up the volume.

EXT. FLYOVER OF CASCADIA ROADS - MORNING

John's truck drives through the foggy roads. Nothing but Wilderness stretches to either side.

EXT. LOG CABIN GAS STATION - DAY

An island of man stands in a green sea of trees cut through by a river of pavement.

The gas station is themed like a log cabin. A typical convenience store with a little bit of rustic flair. A picnic table is on one side.

The pickup truck pulls out front by the pumps.

John exits the truck and walks into the station. A poster in the glass reads "NYE VALLEY PIONEER DAYS THIS WEEK".

BEGIN FLASHBACK

EXT. LOG CABIN GAS STATION - DAY

By the station at the picnic table, the sun shines a little brighter. John and Rose sit at the table. They are carefree and happy, engaged in spirited discussion while enjoying beverages. Rose is lively and vibrant.

JOHN

I don't know why I let you talk me into this. I could be fishing right now.

Rose tilts her head and bats her eyes.

ROSE

You know why.

John strokes his chin, showing his wedding ring.

JOHN

Hmmm... Let's think. It's not your "unique" personality. So it must be those big 'ole eyes.

Fake offended, she puts her hands on her hips.

ROSE

Unique personality!

JOHN

Definitely one of a kind.

Rose play hits him.

ROSE

Bless your heart! None of that means anything good.

JOHN

No, bless your heart. It doesn't mean anything bad either.

ROSE

You're going to have fun, you big galoot.

JOHN

Oh no! Not fun. Anything, but fun!

ROSE

Don't tease!

JOHN

I'm only kidding you.

He puts his arm around her. She snuggles in close.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Or am I?

She looks up to him and smiles. They share a quick kiss.

ROSE

You're going to like this. I promise.

John wryly smiles.

JOHN

You know, I've heard that before.

Rose smiles back.

ROSE

And you liked it. In fact, you might enjoy yourself a little too much.

John deadpan retorts.

JOHN

Not possible. Any joy is joy in the right amount. You can't put a cap on that.

ROSE

Imagine it. We'll see what's on the other side of the mountain. It will be glorious.

JOHN

You're right. We could discover the fountain of youth and vitality.

Unfazed, Rose exclaims.

ROSE

That'll just be the beginning!

John smiles at her happiness.

They sip their drinks and bask in the sun.

END FLASHBACK

EXT. LOG CABIN GAS STATION - DAY

John exits the station as the Nye County Sheriff's truck drives in and parks.

The Sheriff gets out of the truck and waves down John.

They back slap for a brief moment.

SHERIFF CRENSHAW

Hey there, Johnny! How's civilian life treating ya?

John answers, trying to look on the bright side of life but retaining a solemn calm.

JOHN

With a view like this. And the air. Tough to complain. Wherever I go, there I am.

John begins pumping gas.

The Sheriff takes off his hat and rolls it in his hands.

SHERIFF CRENSHAW

John, I want you to know if there's anything-

John waves away the condolence.

JOHN

I'm much obliged to you for looking after Art when you did.

The Sheriff puts his hat back on.

SHERIFF CRENSHAW

No thanks necessary. He's not very obedient. Definitely not quiet. But you know what, he's a good dog.

JOHN

A damn good dog.

John finishes pumping gas and replaces the handle.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Well, I best roll on out. It would be a shame to waste another beautiful day in the neighborhood.

SHERIFF CRENSHAW

Did you know he was a sniper in Vietnam?

JOHN

Fred Rogers. No, you're thinking about Bob Ross.

SHERIFF CRENSHAW

The happy little accidents feller with all those squirrels. That's right. That's right. He was a sniper in Vietnam. Fred Rogers was in Korea. Taught Bob Ross everything he knows.

JOHN

These conversations are always a delight, Bill.

SHERIFF CRENSHAW

Did you know that beavers go crazy for peanut butter. Eric Nelson and myself were fishing on the Rogue River, or maybe it was just some lake somewhere. Eric was chowing down on a peanut butter sandwich, when he gets this bright idea-

The Sheriff's comm sparks up.

DOROTHY (V.O.)

(over comm)

Sheriff. Trent O'Leary's been blowing up the phones. Says something raided his apple orchards this morning. His kids saw it. They say it was something big.

SHERIFF CRENSHAW

(to the comm)

Everything is big to children. Especially, their imaginations. It was probably the Flannigan boy and his friends playing a prank. I'll look into it.

DOROTHY (V.O.)

(over comm)

Copy that, Sheriff.

John readies to go.

JOHN

Take 'er easy, Bill.

The Sheriff slightly waves parting wisdom to John.

SHERIFF CRENSHAW

Be careful, John.

John slightly nods.

He gets in his truck and starts the engine. The Sheriff double taps the bed. John rolls out.

EXT. WILDERNESS DEVELOPMENT SITE - DAY

The truck turns down a dirt road surrounded by trees.

A large realty sign reads "Wilderness open for development". A thick "SOLD" ribbon cuts the sign in half.

John drives down the road to a clearing.

From across the clearing, a well to do cowboy looking developer RONNIE CHURCHILL and Ira Blackstone look over blueprints. They wave John down.

The truck approaches. John rolls down his window.

CHURCHILL

Marty! Hey, Marty!

John shakes his head that he is not Marty.

JOHN

You must be thinking of someone
else.

Churchill takes the letdown in stride. They approach John for
a friendly chat.

CHURCHILL

Can you give us a hand with
something?

CUT TO

The Three Shields of the Buick logo glisten like those of the
knights of yore.

A tow strap tied to the front of John's truck crawls across
the ground into a ditch where it connects to the Buick.

JOHN (O.S.)

Here we go!

The truck reverses. The tow strap pulls tight.

Churchill gives it some gas.

The Buick rocks, but remains stuck.

John eyes his RPMs and holds steady.

Churchill gives it a little too much gas.

KA-CHUNK!

The Buick jumps from its hole and heads for the truck.

Blackstone leaps forward to stop the car.

BLACKSTONE

Whoa! Whoa! Whoa!

John stops the truck and watches, ready to react.

Churchill pumps the brakes then stomps.

The Buick stops inches from colliding with the truck. It
wobbles back and forth on its suspension.

John backs up a little.

Churchill and John exit their vehicles.

JOHN
Any closer, we'd be trading paint.

CHURCHILL
It's all in the reflexes.

John looks under the car as he undoes the straps.

JOHN
You're still in good shape. I'd
avoid taking it off road in the
future.

John throws the tow straps in the truck bed.

BLACKSTONE
That's the thing about a Buick.
Float on a cloud. Bottom out like a
rock.

CHURCHILL
I was sure hoping you were the
surveyor. We've got to go over the
plans for this land. Big things are
a-coming.

John puts out his hand. Churchill shakes it.

JOHN
John Regan, reformed smartass.

CHURCHILL
Then you are in good company here.
Ronnie Churchill, Churchill
Development. Building the way to
the future.

John shakes Blackstone's hand.

BLACKSTONE
Ira Blackstone, unfortunate
investor in this project.

CHURCHILL
He's only joking.

BLACKSTONE
You must be up here doing a little
hiking?

John nods.

JOHN

I was thinking about it.

Blackstone continues.

BLACKSTONE

Enjoy it today. If we can clear the permits, we break ground next month. A whole new community, full of progress. Hydroelectric generates most of the power. We're even looking into solar panels producing the rest. Fantastic devices. This community will be energy independent.

CHURCHILL

Now if we can just figure out the electric car.

JOHN

Building a bridge to the 21st century. Before we know it, that'll be yesterday. (Beat) Still it will be a shame to see all this go.

John looks to the treeline.

BLACKSTONE

Nothing lasts forever. Things change. We're only developing a few acres here. You can't stop progress. And what we do use, we use wisely.

JOHN

It was good meeting you all.

Churchill reaches into his pocket and hands John a card.

CHURCHILL

The honor is ours. If you're looking for a crew to join, give me a call. We're always doing something.

John looks at the card and puts it in his jacket pocket. He gives Churchill a nod.

JOHN

My dad always said never turn down an opportunity. I appreciate the offer. I might have to take you up on it.

CHURCHILL
Your dad sounds like a wise feller.

JOHN
He was.

BLACKSTONE
Safe journeys, my friend.

John gives Blackstone a nod.

John gets in his truck and drives towards the treeline.

CHURCHILL
(to Blackstone)
I'll see if Marty is still at the
office.

Churchill takes out an early 1990's flip cellular phone to make a call. He places the call in vain.

CHURCHILL (CONT'D)
No reception.

BLACKSTONE
I'm surprised the battery lasted
this long.

Churchill does a double take on the phone and taps it a few times. He has an "Oh, no" moment. Blackstone grins.

BLACKSTONE (CONT'D)
He'll be here soon.

The rolling tree tops create a green, wavy ocean all the way to the horizon.

HOOT! HOOT! An owl sounds in the distance.

EXT. CLEARING BY THE FOREST - DAY

A clearing lies off the dirt road. A path leads into the woods. John's truck drives up and parks.

John gets out of the truck.

He reaches behind the seat and grabs a combat knife.

He secures the knife to his waist.

He pulls out a snub nose .38 caliber revolver and puts it in his pocket.

John takes a marked map from the visor. He looks at it for a second and puts it in his back pocket.

John reaches in deep and takes Rose's canister.

He cradles the canister with his arm and adjusts a strap attached to both ends.

He slides the strap over his shoulder as the canister holds in close.

John closes the truck door.

John sets out to the Wilderness.

EXT. WILDERNESS - DAY

There is light fog everywhere. The sun is out overhead, but can't be seen through the thick canopy of trees.

Errant sunbeams shine through here and there.

Roots and rocks and plants and moss dance along the forest floor.

John hikes through the woods, while clutching the strap.

BEGIN FLASHBACK

EXT. WILDERNESS - DAY

On a bright sunny day in the same woods, a healthy, beaming Rose, with a covered canvas on her back and easel as hiking stick, leads the way through the woods. Things seem brighter, cheerier.

John with a loaded backpack follows behind. He marks their progress on a map. He stumbles a little bit. Art follows along sniffing everything.

JOHN

(Sighs)!

ROSE

Do you want to lead the way?

JOHN

Aw no. This is your expedition. I can document things from here. Besides, this way I get to complain. Are we there yet?

John puts the map up.

Rose frolics onward, swinging a picnic basket.

ROSE

Ha, ha. Very funny. I thought you would be used to hiking.

JOHN

Those were forced hikes against my will, much like this one now. I'm just here to carry the pack. Pack Mule Regan they call me.

ROSE

Oh, my hero!

JOHN

Don't worry. I'll fend off any zombies. Did you see the one with the zombies that ran around eating brains?

ROSE

Ha! Running zombies. That makes no sense. And if anything attacks us out here, it'll have a good reason.

John swats a mosquito on his neck.

Rose shakes her head and smiles.

ROSE (CONT'D)

John, have you thought about the future?

JOHN

I am right now. Soon this will all be over.

ROSE

I'm serious.

Art goes winging by happy as a lark. He leaps and bounds and disappears in the growth.

JOHN

(Ahem) This place isn't so bad. Art loves it.

ROSE

Art loves everything. Nothing ever gets him down.

JOHN
Is that a bad thing?

ROSE
Can you believe somebody called him
a mangy mutt?

JOHN
That idiot didn't know what he was
talking about. That's my little
buddy they're slandering.

ROSE
Mmm-hmmm. Art's definitely taken to
you.

JOHN
Now, now. He's fond of you, as
well.

Rose turns around and smiles.

ROSE
Oh, you silly goose! Fly with me!

JOHN
Did you just call me a silly goose?

She takes his hand and pulls him forward as they rush into
the woods. Art pops his head up, tail wagging excitedly, and
follows.

END FLASHBACK

EXT. WILDERNESS (THE DEER) - DAY

John walks through the thicket of the underbrush.

A rustling and a weak bleat catches his attention.

In a dense thicket, a baby deer is trapped. Its legs have
become entangled in wires connected to a homemade piece of
surveillance sensors.

The deer sees John and briefly struggles, but can't get free.
It stops and pulls back in defeat.

While slowly approaching, John comforts the animal.

JOHN
Hey buddy. It's ok. It's ok. Shhh.

As he gets closer, the deer shrinks back.

John looks for a safe place to set Rose's canister. With the utmost carefulness, he sets it down in a spot he thinks it won't get damaged should things go wrong.

John reaches out to the deer.

JOHN (CONT'D)
It's ok, buddy.

John slowly pets the deer.

JOHN (CONT'D)
There. See. It's ok.

The deer begins to ease up a little and feel comfortable.

JOHN (CONT'D)
It's ok. What are you doing here
all by yourself. You must have
gotten lost.

John continues petting the deer. It is comfortable now.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Let's see what we've got here.

John examines the deer's legs. Any tighter and wires will draw blood.

JOHN (CONT'D)
What kind of fool did this. It's
just one big tangled mess.

The deer jumps.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Whoa. It's alright. It's alright. I
know it doesn't feel good.

The deer calms but is eager to be freed.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Let's see if we can get you free.

John unsheathes his combat knife.

JOHN (CONT'D)
So, you know Smokey the Bear?

He picks up the equipment. It has been smashed by something or someone. There's no way the deer did it.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Is he really as humble as in the
ads? He seems cool.

He cuts the device from the wires, then holds the remaining
cluster of wires away from the deer's legs.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Here we go, little buddy. Cross
your hooves.

He slowly uses the serrated edge to snap through the wires.

With the wires cut, John sheathes the knife.

JOHN (CONT'D)
We're almost done. So far, so good.

He gently undoes the knotted mess from the deer.

JOHN (CONT'D)
There you go. All done.

The deer struggles to stand.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Easy now.

It finds its footing.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Take it slow.

John pets the deer one last time.

JOHN (CONT'D)
You're free to frolic.

The deer looks to John, then the woods.

A loud ROAR from across the forest booms out from a distance.
The deer's ears perk up.

A responding ROAR from opposite ends of the Wilderness calls
back. The deer looks that way.

JOHN (CONT'D)
What was that?

Frightened, the deer lands next to Rose's canister as it
exits deeper into the Wilderness.

John looks to Rose's canister. It begins to roll away.

John lunges for the canister.

JOHN (CONT'D)
No, no, no, no!

Rose's canister gains momentum. It begins to roll down an incline.

John scrambles for it. He takes a tumble.

He grabs Rose's canister while they are tumbling and puts it in a vice grip.

John reaches the flat ground, still holding Rose's canister.

CRACK! John hits his head on a rock.

John lies unconscious, sprawled out on the ground. Rose's canister firmly clasped in his hand.

CUT TO BLACK

CUE SONG: Grunge Rock

EXT. WILDERNESS (THE SEEKERS) - DAY

Donnie, the Seekers, and Teri Cooper stand over John. A bandage has been applied to John's forehead. He's stirring from being knocked out. Seeker 1 has a Walkman playing the song, headphones around neck.

SEEKER 1
He took one hell of tumble.

SEEKER 2
It looks like he's waking up.

TERI COOPER
Give him room. Turn that thing off.

Seeker 1 turns off Walkman.

John opens his eyes. He quickly sits up.

DONNIE
Hey. Hey. It's Donnie. From the store. You took a bad fall.

John gets his bearings. He touches his head on the bandage and pulls his hand away at the pain.

JOHN
Donnie. What are you doing here?

DONNIE
You fell and hit your head. We
bandaged you up. Here's some water.

Donnie holds out a canteen.

John looks around for Rose's canister.

JOHN
Where is it? Where did it go?

Seeker 2 holds up the canister.

John snatches the canister.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Be careful with that!

SEEKER 2
Whoa!

TERI COOPER
It's ok. It's ok.

John pulls the strap over his shoulder and tightens the
canister to his back.

Donnie holds out the water again.

DONNIE
Here. You could use some water.

John slowly takes the canteen and drinks.

JOHN
Much obliged.

He hands the canteen back and slowly rises to his feet.

ATHERTON (O.S.)
Ruined. It's ruined!

From the top of the incline, Atherton holds up the destroyed
surveillance equipment and cut wires.

He begins to slowly walk down the incline, but slips and
falls on his butt. He slides the rest of the way down.

At the foot of the incline, Atherton collects himself and
angrily approaches John shaking the equipment.

ATHERTON (CONT'D)
This is just great!

The team jump out of his way.

ATHERTON (CONT'D)
Did you break this?!

JOHN
That thing was busted long before I
got here. A deer got tangled up in
the wires. I had to cut it loose.

Atherton switches gears.

ATHERTON
Well something purposefully broke
it. This is heavy duty equipment.
It doesn't just fall apart because
of some prancing deer.

To punctuate his sentence, a ring pops off of the destroyed
tech and a spring flies out.

Atherton storms off, muttering to himself.

ATHERTON (CONT'D)
Years of research in jeopardy. And
for what? Bambi.

Atherton heads to field packs and equipment set up to the
side.

ATHERTON (CONT'D)
Give me a hand. Let's see if we can
fix this.

Donnie shrugs to John. He and the Seekers go to aid Atherton.

Teri remains behind to talk with John.

TERI COOPER
You took quite a tumble. Hit your
head pretty hard. Are you sure you
are alright?

John plays it off.

JOHN
I've had worse. This noggin can
take anything.

He knocks on his head, but draws away with a slight wince.

JOHN (CONT'D)
(Ow)!

John adjusts the strap to Rose's canister.

TERI COOPER
What's in the canister?

John doesn't respond.

TERI COOPER (CONT'D)
I apologize for my forwardness.
Occupational hazard. Teri Cooper,
investigative journalist.

John shakes his head.

JOHN
It's ok. This is something I have
to do.

In the distance, the Seekers fumble with the equipment.

ATHERTON
Another fine setback!

John nods towards the Seekers.

JOHN
Are you out here hunting jackalopes
with the Groovy Ghoulies?

Teri smiles.

TERI COOPER
Believe it or not, this is serious
research. Someone has to document
it.

John smirks.

TERI COOPER (CONT'D)
It's not jackalopes they're
searching for. It's a large
primate.

JOHN
What? Like a monkey?

TERI COOPER
More like a great ape. Called
Gigantopithecus (jai-gan-tow-pi-
thuh-kuhs). Much bigger than any
human being, or even a gorilla.
They were thought to have gone
extinct thousands of years ago.

(MORE)

TERI COOPER (CONT'D)

But Atherton and his people believe the Pacific Northwest is still a home to an as of yet undiscovered pocket of the creatures. Evidence of their existence would change everything we know about human evolution and anthropology.

John politely nods.

JOHN

You know this giant Beast sounds an awful lot like Bigf-

Teri cuts him off.

TERI COOPER

Shhh. Don't say that. They hate that.

John smiles and shakes his head.

JOHN

Ok. Ok. What do you believe?

TERI COOPER

I think it's fascinating. I really do. Whether or not they find it, just the pursuit is noteworthy. Pushing forward into the unknown is worth the effort in and of itself. No matter what happens, at the end of the day, it still makes a good campfire story.

John agrees.

JOHN

No argument there. Let me see if I can help them out.

Teri tacitly nods.

They head towards the Seekers. Atherton laments at the equipment.

ATHERTON

It's useless.

Teri stops John and whispers.

TERI COOPER

Whatever you do, don't mention UFOs.

(MORE)

TERI COOPER (CONT'D)

The leading theory is this creature
might have escaped from an
intergalactic zoo.

John gives a look of bemusement.

Stonefaced, Teri nods in seriousness.

John takes a breath to say something, thinks better of it,
and nods understanding.

They continue to the Seekers.

CUT TO

EXT. WILDERNESS (THE SEEKERS) - DAY (MOMENTS LATER)

John fiddles with the newly repaired tech with his pocket
toolset.

JOHN

It's not good as new, but it should
get the job done. Please keep
Thumper in mind when you set it up.

He hands the equipment to Atherton.

ATHERTON

That's beautiful.

Atherton hands the equipment to Donnie.

ATHERTON (CONT'D)

Donald, put this up in that
treeline over there. And be
careful. Make sure the wires aren't
exposed.

DONNIE

Yes, sir.

Donnie takes the equipment and follows orders.

ATHERTON

That was the third rig this month.
Something keeps destroying our
sensors before we can collect the
data.

John opines.

JOHN

Mighty Joe Young.

DONNIE (O.S.)

Got it!

Atherton answers seriously.

ATHERTON

No, nothing that big. Forget limbs. There would be broken trees and giant footprints everywhere. That's not even taking into account the droppings the creature would leave behind.

John listens in bemusement.

ATHERTON (CONT'D)

No, this creature is vaguely human, but also ape. And so far, we just can't seem to find it. The Gigantopithecus is a worthy foe.

JOHN

Maybe it doesn't want to be found.

Teri instantly takes out a notepad and begins jotting.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Then again, a wild animal that roams the country on a destructive rampage before completely disappearing into thin air. It could be Axl Rose.

Donnie stifles a laugh. Teri smiles and jots some more down.

Atherton takes that in. He solemnly nods. Then perks back up.

ATHERTON

Science stated that the gorilla was a myth before Paul Du Chaillu proved their existence almost a century and a half ago. Its mountain cousin was only discovered 90 years ago by Robert von Beringe. No, we've come too far only to give up now. Gigantopithecus still lives and we shall find it.

Donnie approaches.

DONNIE

All done, Doctor Atherton. We still have the Gimlin Point data to collect.

Atherton nods.

ATHERTON
Thank you, Donald. All right
everyone, let's get ready to head
out.

The team begin packing their equipment and gear.

Atherton makes a welcoming gesture to John.

ATHERTON (CONT'D)
You're free to join us.

John kindly refuses. He shuffles Rose's canister on his back.

JOHN
As it turns out, I'm on a quest of
my own.

ATHERTON
I wish you well, then.

JOHN
Good luck.

Atherton nods.

ATHERTON
Ok team. Let's head out.

The Seekers gather the gear. John heads further into the
Wilderness.

Seeker 1 pushes play on his Walkman.

CUE SONG: Grunge Rock

EXT. TREE COVERED MOUNTAIN SIDE - DAY

John reaches the base of a rolling mountain. He looks around
and sees a broken tree limb.

He picks the limb up and strikes the narrow end into the
ground to test its strength. The limb is sturdy. It is a good
walking stick.

John takes out his knife and in fluid motions shears the
excess branches from the limb. He sheathes his knife.

John begins hiking up the forested incline. He plants the
stick firmly and climbs up.

Then, he plants it in the crags again and climbs. John makes his way to a level plane and continues through the Wilderness.

BEGIN FLASHBACK

EXT. WILDERNESS (THE MOUNTAIN LION) - DAY

Rose and John walk along their own path through the forest. Light breaks through the trees to shimmer along their way. Art leaps forward ahead of them.

ROSE
Art, stay close, honey.

JOHN
He's just excited. Next stop, hop on over the Misty Mountains to Mordor.

ROSE
I knew you read them.

JOHN
Read what?

ROSE
You know.

JOHN
My Led Zeppelin liner notes?

ROSE
Now you're joking.

JOHN
I never joke about Led Zeppelin.

ROSE
But you can "read" that magazine with girls in bikinis.

JOHN
I didn't get a subscription to Sports Illustrated for the swimsuit issue. That was just a bonus.

ROSE
(quick aside)
Not helping.

JOHN
(continuing unfazed)
I got it for the free football
phone.

Rose sighs.

JOHN (CONT'D)
So these books. Is there at least a
battle with a dragon in the end?

Rose beams a radiant smile.

ROSE
I wouldn't want to ruin it.

Art frolics ahead of John and Rose. He suddenly stops dead in his tracks, his body stiffened to high alert. He GROWLS.

ROSE (CONT'D)
What is it, boy?

SNAP! The sound of a twig.

A mountain lion skulks from the brush a few yards away from Rose. A pig ear lies on the ground next to it.

BARK! BARK! Art sounds loud at the mountain lion.

HISS! The mountain lion growls at Rose.

John reaches down and puts his arms around Art. He hugs him in close to keep him from attacking the cougar and getting hurt. John tries to block Rose from the mountain lion's view.

JOHN
Don't freak out. Get behind.

Rose steps out from behind John. She places her easel firmly in the ground and puffs up, the canvas on her back looming bigger.

ROSE
Go on, now. Git!

HISS! The mountain lion hunches down and shows its teeth.

Rose stands her ground and sizes up.

ROSE (CONT'D)
Git! Git out of here!

HISS! The mountain lion growls again, but shrinks back a little.

ROSE (CONT'D)
Git! You big cat!

The mountain lion turns, scoops up the pig ear, and quickly runs away.

It stops before some trees and turns back to look at Rose.

ROSE (CONT'D)
I like Odie better, anyway.

The mountain lion disappears in the brush.

Rose watches to make sure that the mountain lion is gone.

She turns back to John. He is impressed.

ROSE (CONT'D)
Are you ok?

JOHN
That cat didn't know who he was
messing with. We can turn back if
you want to.

Rose drives the easel into the ground again.

ROSE
Nice try. We're just getting
started.

Rose pats Art. The dog calms and John lets him go.

John holds up his hands in a placating motion.

JOHN
Whatever you say, Shera.

Rose raises her easel to the sky like a sword.

ROSE
For the honor of Grayskull!

JOHN
Good thing you're here to protect
us.

Art barks in agreement.

Rose beams. They continue on their way.

ROSE
Go on now, critters. Shoo! Shoo, I
say!

JOHN
(Walter Brennan
impersonation)
Shoo, ya varmints!

Art barks to shoo away varmints, too.

John and Rose go deeper into the Wilderness. With every step growing smaller, until they disappear in the trees. Art frolics along.

END FLASHBACK

EXT. WILDERNESS (THE RUSTLING) - DAY

Fog covers the forest floor.

John slowly makes his way through double checking the map before he puts it up.

An apple core rolls from the brush to John's feet. He picks it up and studies it.

In the fog and scarce light, there is a rustling in some large plant growth close by.

John squares up and listens.

JOHN
Hello. Anyone there?

The sound of silence greets him.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Achtung, baby!

The rustling grows loud. A large figure about the size of a small bear obscured by the foliage appears to rise up.

His eyes locked onto the figure, John drops the apple and puts his hand in his pocket. He grips the gun and stands ready.

JOHN (CONT'D)
You the Flannigan boy? Or Johnny
Appleseed?

The obscured figure lets out a loud ROAR.

John pulls the revolver from his pocket. He points the gun at the ground.

BOOM! He fires a warning shot. YELP! The creature startles at the sound and ducks down.

The sounds echo through the Wilderness. BOOM! YELP! Boom! Yelp! boom! yelp!

The creature disappears in the shaking foliage, YELPING scared as it goes.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Must have been a bear. Or maybe it
was the Beast O' Beyond.

John chuckles. He continues on his journey.

EXT. THE RIVER - DAY

Gently rushing water flows along the Wilderness. The clear stream flows over silted banks.

Step. Step. John's boots leave tracks in the silt along the riverside.

John follows the stream along the bank.

The sound of CASCADING WATERFALLS drop in the distance.

EXT. THE WATERFALL - DAY

Water crashes down from the falls into a pool. The spray from the cascade sends white mist into the air.

EXT. THE RIVER - DAY

John makes his way along the bank.

POW! A big furry arm cracks him on the head putting him in a daze.

John spins around. He stares in disbelief.

He is face to face with the BEAST, a creature towering over eight feet tall. Matted hair covers the simian-like creature. An almost gorilla-like face glares back at him and roars. John recoils from the hot breath.

The Beast reaches out with both arms and lifts John up.

His feet dangle over the ground.

The Beast and John stare eye to eye.

Wide-eyed disbelief with a twinge of fear wash over John.

JOHN
What are you?

The Beast brings John in close and rapidly sniffs his scent.

ROAR! The Beast let's out a loud, guttural growl.

John snaps into focus for survival. He takes his walking stick and lodges it straight up between the Beast's arms.

He brings one hand up top and with a swift motion, he twists the stick wrenching the Beast's arms. The Beast drops him.

John lands on his feet. Clutching up on the makeshift weapon, he rears back with both hands and swings at the head of the Beast.

CRACK! The stick breaks in two. The Beast stands unfazed.

John drops the stick and gives the Beast a right hook. POP! Then a left hook. POP! The Beast is unfazed.

John clasps both hands together and swings upwards. CRACK! The Beast's head barely moves with the blow.

John stares in disbelief.

JOHN (CONT'D)
I'm beginning to think you're not
the Flannigan kid.

The Beast stares back at John and slowly tilts its head in a very brief moment of confusion.

It reaches out with one arm and grabs him by the neck. It lifts John off the ground. The Beast brings John in close and ROARS.

The Beast throws John along the bank. John lands and tumbles onto the ground.

John jumps back up.

The Beast rushes toward John.

John draws his pistol and fires at the Beast.

BANG! BANG! A bullet lodges in its shoulder. Another in its arm. The snubnose has little effect.

The Beast's thick body still lunges forward.

John takes careful aim in the quick situation. BANG! John fires straight at the Beast's massive head.

FWIC! The bullet ricochets off of the Beast's skull and skips across the water.

The Beast grabs John's arm. He drops the revolver. The pistol disappears in the current.

The Beast raises John off the ground. With his free arm, John pulls his knife and slices the Beast's arm.

The Beast ROARS in PAIN and drops John. John slices at the Beast. The Beast retreats.

WHOOSH! WHOOSH! John slices into thin air as the Beast retreats.

The Beast swings its arm up and sends John flying back, dropping the knife.

John hits the ground along the bank and slides, leaving a trail in the silt.

The Beast rushes towards John.

John takes a handful of silt and throws it into the Beast's eyes.

Blinded, the Beast ROARS in confusion.

John scrambles for the knife. He swipes it from the ground.

John rushes the Beast. He stabs the Beast in the side.

ROAR! The Beast cries out in pain. Still blinded, the Beast punches out.

CRACK! John flies into the river. Rose's canister comes free.

ROAR! The Beast pulls the knife from its side.

Bobbing along the surface, Rose's canister approaches the falls.

John trudges through the water and grabs it as they both go over.

JOHN (CONT'D)
I've got you!

EXT. WATERFALL - DAY

John goes over the falls.

John splashes down into the base of the waterfall. He disappears.

The Beast stares down from the top of the falls.

There is no sign of John.

Rose's canister pops above the surface of the pool of water.

John emerges from the water, gasping for air. The waves of the pool wash him to the bank.

At the top of the falls, the Beast lets out a LOUD ANGRY ROAR. The Beast heads for the other side of the stream.

The ROAR echoes through the Wilderness.

EXT. THE DROPPINGS - DAY

A giant pile of dung rises like a mountain from the forest floor. Atherton, Cooper, and the Seekers look down on it.

Atherton approaches it and kneels down to take a sample.

TERI COOPER

Now that's a big pile of-

The ROAR of the Beast echoes through the trees. Atherton jumps and his hand goes deeper into the pile. He grunts in frustration. He removes his hand and shakes the residue from it.

ATHERTON

It doesn't matter anyway. This is moose scat.

Teri Cooper excitedly runs up to him and helps him up.

TERI COOPER

Did you hear that?

ATHERTON

What? An unlucky bear in a beehive.

Cooper shakes some sense into him.

TERI COOPER

Whatever it is your looking for,
that is it. We need to find it
quick.

Atherton wipes his hands clean and looks off into the
direction of the roar.

ATHERTON

By jove, you're right. Team, let's
head out.

The Seekers gather the gear as Atherton marches into the
brush. Teri smiles and jots some things down and then
continues.

EXT. WILDERNESS DEVELOPMENT SITE - DAY

Blackstone, Churchill, and MARTY go over the plans for the
community.

Hoot! Hoot! The faint sound of an owl.

MARTY

Did you hear that?

CHURCHILL

Hear what?

MARTY

It sounded like an owl.

CHURCHILL

No owls here, partner.

MARTY

It was something else.

Blackstone looks away as a wind passes through the trees.
Something is not right.

The ECHOED ROAR of the Beast sounds through the site.

A concerned look fills Blackstone's face.

Marty snaps to attention.

MARTY (CONT'D)

Now I know you heard that.

Unfazed, Churchill deflects.

CHURCHILL

It was no owl.

Blackstone plays it down.

BLACKSTONE

That's nothing to worry about. It's a mountain lion, but it's very far away.

MARTY

I've never heard a mountain lion roar like that.

BLACKSTONE

(Beat) Mating season.

Marty shrugs acceptance and looks back to the plans.

MARTY

This park here. The canopy from the new tree growth might block access to the sun during the day for the homes along this row.

Blackstone gives Marty a backslap.

BLACKSTONE

Good thinking, Marty. Covering all the angles. You guys continue without me.

CHURCHILL

You gotta run, amigo?

BLACKSTONE

Keep me posted.

CHURCHILL

You got it.

Blackstone exits.

Hoot! Hoot! Faintly sounds. No one notices.

EXT. WATERFALL - DAY

John makes landfall across the water pool.

Weakened and gasping for air, he crawls further onto the bank.

John finally catches his breath.

Rose's canister washes up and rests next to him.

John looks over to see Rose's canister.

Smiling, he drifts away to a happier moment.

CUT TO BLACK

WHITE TEXT ON BLACK SCREEN

"Chapter Three: Sweet Oblivion"

BEGIN FLASHBACK

EXT. WATERFALL - DAY

The sun shines through the spray of the falls. Light glistens through the mist.

PLAYFUL LAUGHTER can be heard.

John and Rose swim in the pool of water beneath the waterfall. Art swims in circles.

She playfully splashes water at him. He splashes her back.

They make their way to the pool's edge.

Grabbing towels, they dry off while running towards a blanket set up along the bank. Art follows them onto the shore, decides he still wants to swim and beelines it back into the water.

John and Rose lay on the blanket. They share a kiss and lay back.

John rests with his hands behind his head. Rose lays her head on his chest and snuggles in close.

Rose props up.

ROSE

See, you're having a good time.

John playfully scoffs.

JOHN

Ok, you got me. Don't tell anyone, though. It could damage my street cred and all.

Rose leans in close.

ROSE

We're close to something even better. I have a good feeling about this.

John smiles in response.

JOHN

Wild animals and waterfalls. What's next?

Rose leans in to kiss him. She then snuggles up to him. John smiles.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Some people go to Tahiti or Niagara. Here we are, frolicking through FernGully.

ROSE

I knew you'd feel the magic.

The sun shines brightly through the canopy.

JOHN

You were right. It's like anything can happen here.

ROSE

It's like being a kid again.

JOHN

Maybe you finally found your inner child.

ROSE

I thought you didn't believe in that sort of thing.

John looks around "to make sure they're alone". When he sees Art swimming out of earshot, he continues.

JOHN

I don't. Bunch of hippie mumbo jumbo. But that doesn't necessarily mean it's always wrong.

Rose smiles.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Definitely don't tell anybody I said that. Not even Art. That dog is a blabbermouth. He can't help it, though.

ROSE
Your secrets are safe with me.

JOHN
I kind of figured they were.

Rose looks to the bright blue sky above.

ROSE
It would be great if this would
never end. But I know it will.

JOHN
Right now, we're having a fun time.

Rose beams with wide-eyed, open mouthed "shock" at what she's just heard.

ROSE
Did you just use the "f" word.

John fakes seriousness.

JOHN
What? "Feelings"? No, I never use
that word.

Rose laughs.

ROSE
What about Art?

JOHN
Art's here to stay. He's part of
the family now.

Rose cuddles up to John.

ROSE
You know, dogs are just a start for
a family. He's going to need a
little friend to play with and
protect.

JOHN
What? Like a chihuahua?

Rose play hits John in the chest.

ROSE
No, silly. A-

John takes her hand.

JOHN

I know, honey. We'll keep moving forward one day at a time. Art will have a whole litter to play with before it's over.

Rose takes back her hand.

ROSE

I may have a unique personality. But you have a unique way of saying things.

JOHN

I calls 'em like I sees 'em.

John wiggles his eyebrows.

Rose smiles and coos. They kiss.

Rose suddenly pulls back.

ROSE

(Ow)!

Rose sits up and rubs her temples. John sits up and rubs her back.

JOHN

Another headache?

Rose clenches her eyes tight. She presses in on her temples. As she releases pressure, the tightness relaxes.

ROSE

I'm ok. It'll pass. Don't let it ruin our perfect day.

John rubs her back and puts his arm around her.

JOHN

Nothing can do that.

Art comes up and leans into Rose, offering comfort.

JOHN (CONT'D)

There's no need to fear, Art the dog is here.

Art leans in close. A pained smile of joy crosses Rose's face. She laughs as the headache leaves her.

The sun shines through the trees. A dark cloud looms far away along the horizon.

ROAR! A Loud booming noise echoes. Not thunder, but the Beast.

END FLASHBACK

EXT. WATERFALL - DAY

The ROAR of the Beast echoes through the Wilderness. It is far away, but sounds like it is getting closer.

John awakens.

Rose's canister lies next to him.

He slowly rises. He's battered, but gaining his strength.

John takes off his flannel jacket and ties it around his waist.

John picks up Rose's canister. He looks it over. It's undamaged.

John slides the strap over his shoulder.

John pulls out the remains of the water soaked map. At best, it has turned into paste. The soggy remnants falls through his fingers.

JOHN

Come to the Northwest. Get lost in
the scenery.

ROAR! The Beast cries out.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Get jumped by King Kong.

John quickly looks around at his surroundings.

Mount Arbel rises in the distance.

John quickly nods in psyching himself up for what comes next.

He slowly begins shuffling towards the mountain.

ROAR! The Beast is closing in.

John moves a little faster, more fluid. His constitution returns.

EXT. WILDERNESS (CABIN PATH) - DAY

John runs through the Wilderness. There seems to be an overgrown path leading somewhere.

JOHN

What's next? Pointy eared tree
hippies. Better yet, little furry
foot people.

EXT. CABIN IN THE WOODS - DAY

In the middle of a wooded clearing lies a small single room cabin from the days of the pioneers. Dilapidated and falling apart, it is a miracle it is still standing.

John emerges from the path in front of the cabin.

He stares at it in disbelief and shakes his head.

JOHN

You have got to be kidding me.

John runs to the door. He opens it and runs inside.

INT. CABIN IN THE WOODS - DAY

A Spartan existence, only the basic necessities are present. A cot and a table with chair to the side. Shelves with tins and curios on the wall. Dust particles fly in the air.

In the middle of the room, an iron stove and a load bearing wood column.

He checks under the bed. Nothing but dust bunnies.

John rips through the tins, but they are all empty.

He quickly looks around. His focus draws to the center of the room. A wide grin fills his face.

EXT. WILDERNESS (CABIN PATH) - DAY

STOMP! STOMP! The Beast tears through the trees.

Dried mud covers its wounds.

EXT. CABIN IN THE WOODS - DAY

The Beast emerges from the path in front of the cabin.

It barrels to the door and rips it away. It rushes through the doorway.

INT. CABIN IN THE WOODS - DAY

The Beast scans the cabin.

Dust specks swirl in the dimly lit room.

The old iron stove stands in the middle of the room.

The door from the stove is gone.

CRACK! John strikes the Beast from behind with the iron door of the stove.

The Beast stumbles forward. John CRACKS the Beast again.

The Beast flies into the stove.

CLANG! The stove falls over. The Beast rights itself and turns around.

JOHN

Welcome to the hootenanny, partner!

The Beast rushes John and draws back its large arm to strike.

John holds up the iron door as a shield. The Beast punches the door.

CLANG! John flies backward.

He twists to hit the wall on his side, saving the canister.

The Beast rushes John again. John hurls the stove door at the Beast's head.

CLANG! The Beast recoils, clutching its head.

John grabs the chair like a lion tamer and charges the Beast.

The four legs impact into the Beast's chest. The Beast stumbles backwards.

THUD! John pins the Beast to the wall.

The cabin CREAKS. Dirt and moss fall from the ceiling.

The Beast swipes down. The chair disintegrates into splinters.

John doubles back. He flips up the cot and tosses it at the Beast.

The Beast swats the cot. No effect.

CRACK! The Beast hits John. John flies through the support column and lands on the table.

The cabin CREAKS. More moss and dirt fall from the ceiling.

John sputters, gathering his breath. Wiping away the dirt from the cabin.

The Beast stands over John, looking down upon him.

John quickly rolls off the table. He kicks the table square into the Beast's legs.

The Beast doubles over. John flips up the table, hitting the Beast in the head.

The Beast flies back and hits the wall again. CREAK! The cabin sounds ready to collapse.

John looks around as more moss and dirt fall. He gets an idea.

John throws the table at the Beast.

The Beast punches straight through the table. The Beast's arm sticks through the table.

John runs outside.

EXT. CABIN IN THE WOODS - DAY

John slams into the side of the cabin and pushes.

CREAK! The cabin sounds ready to give.

INT. CABIN IN THE WOODS - DAY

CREAK! The cabin begins collapsing as roof beams fall.

The Beast shakes the table off of its arm and looks up at the roof falling in.

The Beast puts its arms up to brace for the fall and ROARS.

EXT. CABIN IN THE WOODS - DAY

John jumps back as the cabin collapses. Dust billows out, swirling over everything. The rubble lies still.

John breathes deep as he thinks the battle is over. He checks Rose's canister. It remains in good shape.

JOHN

We really brought down the house,
didn't we?

The rubble stirs. John looks to it.

JOHN (CONT'D)

No way. There's no way.

CRACK! The Beast's arm bursts up from the debris. Its open hand reaches for freedom from beneath the rubble.

John straps Rose's canister to his back.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Hang on.

He slowly heads away from the cabin, picking up speed.

John runs into the Wilderness to Mount Arbel.

EXT. WILDERNESS (THE HIPPIE) - DAY

CUE SONG: FAST JAM BAND JAM

John makes his way through the overgrown wilderness.

The further he goes, the more the terrain becomes untamed wilderness.

In the FOREGROUND, a HIPPIE in tie-dyed attire listens to music through a walkman. He spins and twirls across the place with his eyes closed. In the BACKGROUND, John runs like a bat out of hell through the forest.

EXT. CABIN IN THE WOODS - DAY

The Beast bursts out of the rubble. Seemingly unfazed, it climbs out.

Firmly planted on solid ground, the Beast tilts its head back and sniffs the air.

Picking up John's scent, the Beast pursues into the Wilderness.

EXT. THE MINE - DAY

John enters a mining operation in the side of the mountain. A track with carts lines the ground.

A shed stands to the side.

John stops on the track and peers into the shaft.

The mine shaft opens up dark and dank, like an entrance into the underworld.

JOHN
Think, John. Think!

John looks around and sees the shed. He runs for it.

He opens the door and peers inside. A grin fills his face.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Jackpot!

He looks back to the mine entrance and then in the shack.

EXT. WILDERNESS (THE HIPPIE) - DAY

CUE SONG: FAST JAM BAND JAM

In the FOREGROUND, the HIPPIE still spins and twirls with his eyes closed enjoying his tunes.

STOMP! STOMP! STOMP! In the BACKGROUND, the Beast barrels through the growth. It appears unstoppable.

INT. SUPPLY SHACK - DAY

Gas cans lay on the floor. A pickax rests against the wall. Helmets line the wall.

John shambles in and knocks off a helmet.

A pack of cigarettes and a box of matches falls out.

John grins. He scoops up the matches and puts them in his pocket.

He grabs the pickax and gas can.

EXT. THE MINE - DAY

Rose's canister noticeably absent, John turns to leave the shack.

The Beast stands in front of him.

John's jaw drops.

With one hand and simple effort, the Beast simply flicks John down onto the ground of the shed.

The Beast stares down at John. Without moving or breaking eye contact, BAM! The Beast simply swipes out one of the shacks's walls.

The shack teeters and crumbles down.

John covers his head. The shed comes down on top of John.

A dirt cloud swirls out.

MUFFLED COUGHING emanates from under the ruins of the shed.

The Beast rips the debris off of John.

John reconciles.

JOHN

Ok. Ok. That was fair.

The Beast snatches him up. John cries out as the Beast throws him to the side.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Oh, shiiiiii-

John flies through the air.

CLANG! John careens into the side of a mine cart.

SLIDE! The pickax and gas can skip across the ground.

John shakes it off just in time. He ducks out of the way.

CLANG! The Beast punches the cart.

The Beast grabs John and slams him into the side of the cart.

John rolls out of the way as the Beast rears back a fist.

CLANG! The Beast punches the cart.

John goes for the pickax. The Beast reaches out with one long arm and grabs John by the back of the neck.

In one motion, the Beast lifts John over its head and

THUD! The Beast throws John into the cart.

Wedge in the cart, John looks up as the Beast approaches.

WAP! WAP! John kicks the Beast in the head.

John jumps out of the cart. He pushes the cart to ram the Beast.

FLIP! CLANG! The Beast flips the cart over.

John attempts to reason with the Beast.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Hey, look, about the whole cabin
thing-

The Beast tilts its head and ROARS. Then, it rushes John.

John rolls to the side and around the Beast. The Beast swings around in pursuit.

John reaches the pickax grabs it from the ground.

Squaring up, John swings the pickax at the Beast.

WHOOSH! The Beast jumps back.

WHOOSH! The Beast jumps back again.

John brings the pickax head flat to gut level and rams the Beast with everything he's got.

SMACK! The Beast doubles over.

SMACK! John rams it straight up, hitting the Beast in the jaw.

The Beast wobbles a bit as it falters backwards.

John pulls back to strike the Beast in the head.

As the pickax comes down, the Beast punches out.

SNAP! The head breaks off the pickax.

John follows through the swing, brings the handle to chest level, and spears the Beast in the shoulder.

ROAR! The Beast cries out.

ROAR! John drives the makeshift spear in further.

John releases the spear and dodges a strike from the Beast. He turns around to the loot on the ground.

John picks up the pickax head.

He runs over to the gas can and pierces the side of the can with the pickax head.

John scrambles up the only path up the mountain.

The Beast plucks the spear from its shoulder.

John douses the area with gasoline, creating a safety perimeter.

The Beast barrels for John.

John pulls the matches from his pocket.

He lights the box on fire and throws it on the gasoline.

WHOOSH! The flames burn high.

The Beast stops at the path.

Through the flames, John stares at the Beast.

Through the flames, the Beast stares at John.

John catches his breath and relaxes a little bit. He gives the Beast a loose two finger salute.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Tell you what, we'll call this a draw.

The Beast snorts a derisive blast of air in response.

The Beast breathes heavy and stares through the flames as John scales the mountain. The Beast watches every step as John goes.

As John leaves the Beast's sight, it shakes out of its concentration. It turns around and leaves.

EXT. MOUNT ARBEL (ASCENT) - DAY

John trudges up the rocky side of the snowpeaked mountain. On and on he trudges. He takes his jacket from his waist and puts it on.

The further he goes, the more of the surrounding Wilderness he can see.

John presses on a little further.

The sun shines bright.

John looks out over the top of the Wilderness. He scans for something, but can't find it.

A twitch of a frown for a brief moment, his eyes heavy with possible defeat.

John continues along the side of the mountain.

EXT. MOUNT ARBEL (THE VANTAGE POINT) - DAY

John comes to a level cropping and looks around the area. Being open space, the Beast cannot surprise him.

John loosens as he lets out a breath of relief. He rests on a rock.

He slides Rose's canister off of his shoulder and holds it in front of him.

Head down and locked on Rose's canister, John grimaces.

JOHN

We were so close. I hate to say it,
but the fix is in. We're not going
to make it.

A gentle wind caresses John's face as it blows through the air. He closes his eyes.

The sound of a fellow hiker calls out.

BLACKSTONE (O.S.)

Mr. Regan. John. It's Ira. Are you
ok?

John snaps out of it. He looks behind him.

Ira Blackstone is descending the mountain.

JOHN

I didn't expect to see you here.

Blackstone takes a seat next to John.

BLACKSTONE

Oh, I get around. What happened to you?

JOHN

You wouldn't believe me if I told you.

BLACKSTONE

Try me.

JOHN

Ok. I'm in a no-holds barred, life or death battle of wills with an unstoppable force of nature believed to have gone extinct thousands of years ago.

BLACKSTONE

So you found Inuyani.

JOHN

More like it found me.

John puzzles for a moment trying to sound out the Beast's name.

JOHN (CONT'D)

In-uh-what? Now it has a name?

BLACKSTONE

Don't you have a name?

John shakes his head.

JOHN

I was just minding my own business. Now this thing won't stop attacking me. I've been beaten, battered, and buried. Of course, to be fair, I did drop a cabin on it. But still, this In-oo-yani won't quit.

BLACKSTONE

Inuyani is the spirit of the mountain. She does not seek out conflict. She protects what is hers, as I am sure you protect what you hold to your heart.

In a literal call too close to home, John looks to the canister in his hands and winces.

JOHN

There's a whole team of eggheads scouring these woods, and I'm the one who has the privilege of running into this Beast. Must be my lucky day.

BLACKSTONE

Yes, the honor went to you. Those Seekers run around the wilderness without appreciating what the experience has to offer. But for whatever reasons, Inuyani and you were linked today.

JOHN

Who am I? Why me? Why here?

BLACKSTONE

Most of the problems in this world come from a lack of understanding. We have more in common than what separates us.

Something wells up inside John. He lets it out.

JOHN

My wife had a stroke. Thirteen days. She lay in a coma at the hospital for thirteen days before....

John looks at Rose's canister.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Now...

He looks out to the horizon. It is beautiful and tranquil.

JOHN (CONT'D)

She would love this view.

Blackstone solemnly nods.

BLACKSTONE

The sky. The trees. This mountain. From here, we are all one.

John takes in the view. He begins to show a twinge of regret at not having completed his mission.

BLACKSTONE (CONT'D)

We're not far from the main trail.
I can take you back to your truck
if you need.

John hangs his head in defeat, his eyes lock on Rose's canister. He exhales and then takes a deep breath to accept. But before he speaks, a CAW sounds out.

John looks out over the horizon.

A bird flies gracefully and sounds out again.

CAW! CAW! The bird flies toward a clearing in the trees.

John's eyes follow it. A resolve fills him.

JOHN

This is as good as a promise. I'm
close. I have to finish this.

Blackstone draws a breath to say something, but pauses. He nods in understanding.

BLACKSTONE

Remember, Inuyani does not wish to
fight, but she will do what she has
to.

John straps Rose's canister to his back. He rubs his jaw.

JOHN

That broad packs one hell of a
punch.

Blackstone offers one final bit of wisdom.

BLACKSTONE

Go in peace.

John nods in understanding.

He heads down the mountain.

Blackstone watches as John goes.

EXT. BASE OF THE MOUNTAIN - DAY

John carefully makes his way back to the flat ground. Fog begins to line the forest floor.

As path of light shines through the tress, the forest beckons.

John takes a deep breath and his first step back into the forest.

BEGIN FLASHBACK

EXT. WILDERNESS (THE FINAL SHOWDOWN) - DAY

Art hops through the growth. John marks things off on the map and puts it back in his pocket. Rose makes her way through the growth.

JOHN
First things first. We're gonna need umbrellas.

ROSE
It's not that bad.

JOHN
You're right. It's worse! We'll need canoes. In a pinch, we can make one out of one of these fir trees.

ROSE
Stop it! The rain can't be that bad in Seattle.

JOHN
We'll find out together.

ROSE
We'll have to get Art a little yellow slicker. Oh, with a hat!

JOHN
Nothing worse than a soggy puppy!

Art barks happily and wags his tail . John rubs his head.

JOHN (CONT'D)
That's right, buddy. We'll go puddle jumping!

Rose takes John's hand and holds it up to her heart.

ROSE
Even if we never made it to Seattle, we would still be happy.

JOHN
Locations change. It's the company that matters.

ROSE
It doesn't matter if it's there
(beat) or here.

John nods and silently mouths, "yes".

Rose's eyes begin to well up. But something beckons. It catches her eyes through the trees.

ROSE (CONT'D)
What's that?

JOHN
Where?

ROSE
Through there.

John turns to look. They slowly move forward. Art follows along.

END FLASHBACK

EXT. WILDERNESS (THE HIPPIE) - DAY

CUE SONG: JAM BAND JAM

Atherton, Cooper, and the Seekers stand still, staring in slack jawed, wide-eyed attention at something.

DONNIE
You don't think...

They are mere feet from the hippie, who still dances in his own world with his eyes closed listening to his headphones. He is oblivious to them. Something builds up inside of him and he lets out a primal roar. It echoes and seems to grow through the wilderness.

ATHERTON
Maybe it reverberated.

Cooper shakes her head and smiles as she raises her camera and snaps a picture of the dancing woodland hippie.

EXT. WILDERNESS (THE FINAL SHOWDOWN) - DAY

John makes his way through the woods. The faintest hippie roar reaches him. He stops and perks up his ears. Then, he shakes his head. It was nothing to worry about.

The growth and vegetation becomes thick. Vines wrap around trees as John trudges on.

Brightness lights up past a line of trees.

John brightens, as well. He's been here before.

JOHN
This is it.

He tightens Roses's canister on his back.

As he makes his way towards the light, he steps on something.

SQUISH! John looks under his foot.

An apple core litters the ground. Cherry pits lie scattered about.

STOMP! STOMP! A shadow casts over the refuse.

The Beast appears, blocking the entrance into the light. The Beast bows up.

John puts up his hands to signify he is not a threat.

JOHN (CONT'D)
You and I got off on the wrong
foot.

The Beast smells the air.

John keeps his hands up.

JOHN (CONT'D)
I don't know if you like being
called Gigantic Pissant.

The Beast smells the air and snorts.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Ok. Not that. Inuyani. Inuyani.
That was it. I just need to get to
right there. Past those trees
you're at. We don't have to fight.

It appears to ease down. It begins to turn to leave.

John eases.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Good. Good.

He steps on a twig. SNAP!

YELP! A frightened sound rustles in the growth nearby.

The brush shakes as something has been startled.

The Beast instantly rears back up and ROARS!

John placates the Beast.

JOHN (CONT'D)

I thought we had an understanding!

The Beast rushes John and takes a swing to get him. John ducks back.

John rolls behind a massive tree trunk. The Beast swings again at John but hits the tree.

CRACK! Wood and splinters fly.

John looks at the damage wide-eyed through the hole of missing tree.

The Beast lunges at John. John scrambles out of the way.

The Beast crashes into the tree. SMACK! The Beast pulls back. A huge dent remains.

CREAK! The tree begins to fall toward John. John rolls out of the way.

CRASH! The tree hits the ground. Debris fills the air.

John scrambles for the light. The Beast grabs him and throws him into a vine covered tree.

THUD! John bounces off the tree and hits the ground.

John slowly rises.

The Beast approaches.

John jumps up and grabs a vine. John begins climbing up the tree.

John reaches a safe height as the Beast reaches up. The Beast almost grabs John's feet. John keeps climbing.

YANK! The Beast tears off a chunk of vines and pulls down.

SNAP! John falls to the ground.

John takes a vine and wraps it around the Beast's arms and chest. John tightens the vine. The Beast snorts.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Listen. We can end this.

YELP! A scared sound rustles in the brush.

ROAR! The Beast explodes from the vine sending John flying through the air.

John hits the ground and rolls. Rose's canister becomes loose and rolls on the ground.

The Beast runs toward John and kicks him. John flies through the air.

THUD! John lands and bounces a few times over the ground.

John lies on the ground beaten. He breathes heavy and quickly. He's bloody and busted up.

The Beast stands over John. GRUNT!

John holds his hands up for mercy and placation.

JOHN (CONT'D)
I feel your pain.

The Beast turns and walks away. It stops next to Rose's canister. The Beast reaches down.

John raises his head in futility.

JOHN (CONT'D)
No. Leave it alone.

The Beast picks up Rose's canister.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Stop!

The Beast smells the canister.

John crawls toward the Beast.

The Beast looks over the canister.

John picks up a large stone.

The Beast takes Rose's canister in both hands and holds it out to snap in two.

With both arms, John holds the stone high above his head and strikes down with all his might.

CRACK! The stone hits the Beast's foot.

ROAR! The Beast cries out in pain.

The canister drops. John catches it and slides it to the side out of harm's way.

The Beast stumbles on its good foot.

John rises with newfound determination. He rams the Beast. The Beast hunches down, trying to keep its balance.

John rears back with the stone and hits the Beast in the jaw.

The Beast ROARS in pain as it tumbles.

THUD! John has knocked the Beast down flat on its back for the first time.

John stands over the Beast. He draws in close for the final blow.

The Beast lays broken. It stares at John, accepting it's fate.

John raises the stone high.

YELP! YELP! The brush rustles.

John freezes and assesses the turn of events.

A startled and afraid child creature runs out from the brush.

LIL BEAST, scared for the life of the parent, runs towards the Beast.

The Beast's eyes well up with terror and concern for the safety of Lil Beast.

The Beast looks up and waves Lil Beast to stay back.

The Beast stares back at John in the eyes with a shared sense of concern.

Surprised and piecing it all together, John looks at Lil Beast, then the Beast. He looks over to Rose's canister. He snaps out of it.

THUD! The stone impacts the ground.

John shambles backwards as his anger leaves him. He picks up Rose's canister. He rests on a tree.

Lil Beast runs forward and buries itself in the Beast's chest. The Beast comforts Lil Beast.

The Beast struggles to stand, but makes it.

Lil Beast hugs the Beast. The Beast pats Lil Beast's head.
Lil Beast coos.

The Beast looks at John with a sense of common understanding.
Whatever animosity existed has left.

With calm reciprocity, John nods.

The Beast nods back.

The Beast fights a limp, but continues on.

Beast and Lil Beast disappear in the brush.

John breathes relief as they go.

He steps from the tree and turns back to the light. The glow
piercing the treeline is blinding.

John gathers his resolve and steps to the threshold. Cradling
Rose's canister in one hand, John makes his way through the
brush.

BEGIN FLASHBACK

EXT. THE SEA OF WILDFLOWERS - DAY

John and Rose step out of the Wilderness into the bright
light. Jaws drop and eyes go wide.

A sea of yellow and blue and purple and white opens up from
the Wilderness. A peaceful glow fills the air. The flowers
gently sway in a breeze and roll like waves on the ocean.

John and Rose take in the beautiful tranquility of the
meadow. Even Art becomes taken by the magic of the place.

Rose closes her eyes and breathes in the fragrance.

ROSE

This is it.

The sun radiates through the meadow and washes over Rose as
John takes in the moment with her.

John plucks a wildflower from the ground.

Rose turns to look at John. He holds out the flower. She smiles and brushes back her hair. He places it behind her ear.

John smiles and looks out over the meadow, understanding the magic of the place. He scratches Art behind the ears. Rose prepares her easel. She takes the canvas from her back.

END FLASHBACK

EXT. THE SEA OF WILDFLOWERS - DAY

Beat up but still going, John solemnly looks at the meadow.

The yellows, blues, purples, and whites swirl as a gentle wind carries sunlight across the field. There remains a sense of magic in the air.

He looks down at Rose's canister cradled in his hands. His voice breaks.

JOHN

We made it. (stifled pained laugh)
We made it.

He breathes deep. His body loosens and relaxes at the prospect of finally reaching their destination.

He slowly takes a step forward. Then another. And another.

John stands among the flowers. He drops to his knees.

A pained slow smile slowly fills his face. A single tear drops down his cheek.

He slowly opens the canister and removes the top.

The sun washes over them.

EXT. CASCADIA ROADS - DAY

John's truck navigates the winding roads of the Wilderness.

INT. JOHN'S TRUCK - DAY

Looking better but still bruised and busted up, John drives home. He turns on the radio.

GRUNGE DJ (V.O.)

Mookie here. Left of the dial. 89.9
KNYX. The Subterranean.

(MORE)

GRUNGE DJ (V.O.) (CONT'D)

My shift is over and we're closing down for the day. Just yanking your chain. We'll never stop. But occasionally we take it nice and slow. Time for this fairy tale to end. I'm out at five, son.

CUE SONG: Grunge Rock

John relaxes in contentment. He looks to the passenger seat.

Rose's canister sways for the ride.

John smiles and looks back to the road. He rubs his shoulder.

Curious, he notices something in his pocket. He pulls out the little white rectangle.

John holds the weathered business card for Churchill Construction. He nods his head and smiles, shakes the card a few times, and places it in the visor above his seat.

EXT. AIRSTREAM BY THE LAKE - MAGIC HOUR (BEFORE SUNSET)

John drives up to the site. Art runs out to greet him, excited at his return. John parks.

He exits the truck holding the canister.

Art excitedly jumps and wags his tail. John kneels to say hi to his little buddy.

JOHN

Hey, buddy. You miss me? You did good. You're a good dog.

John rises and walks toward the lake with Art in tow.

He passes Rose's painting of the Sea of Wildflowers. The light radiates its tranquility. Next to that, on the prop up table rests the vase overflowing with spinning multicolored pinwheels.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Baby, I'm back.

Rose sits by the lake painting a bright style of the view as the sun sets. A cane with a handle hewn in the shape of a unicorn rests next to her.

She looks up to John as he approaches. Her eyes go wide with concern as her jaw drops. She can't speak.

She picks up a pad and begins to write. John takes her hand to comfort her.

JOHN (CONT'D)

I'm alright. It looks worse than it is. I took a little tumble. That's all.

Rose calms and touches his cheek. Her eyes drop with a look of worried concern.

John takes her hand and eases her fears.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Rose. I'm ok.

They kiss.

John perks up.

JOHN (CONT'D)

I got something for you.

John opens the canister. A large, colorful bouquet of wildflowers magically appears.

A beautiful bouquet of yellows and blues and purples and whites rises from his hands as he offers them to Rose.

Rose takes the flowers and becomes lost in the beauty of the flowers from the special place they discovered and shared.

She knocks over the unicorn cane.

John picks it up and holds it close.

Rose closes her eyes and breathes in the fragrance. Rose opens her eyes. They well up. Her lips start to tremble. Rose opens her mouth to speak.

ROSE

John.

TRANSITION

The FRAME becomes Rose's finished painting of the Sunset on the Lake. In the painting BOTTOM CENTER FRAME in front of the lake and the setting sun stands a table with the vase filled with wildflowers. The sun creates a golden aura shimmering through water of the glass vase as the yellows and blues and purples and whites of the flowers radiate.

CUE CREDITS

CUE SONG: Adult Alternative

POST-CREDITS STINGER

EXT. WILDERNESS (THE DEPARTURE) - DAY

Beast and Lil Beast trudge through the forested terrain. They reach an open glen.

A flying saucer rests in a clearing.

As the Beast and Lil Beast approach, a ramp lowers.

At the top of the ramp, other Beasts await.

Playing whimsically, Lil Beast waddles up the ramp.

The Beast stands at the base of the ramp.

Breaking the Fourth Wall, it turns and looks to the audience giving a little wink.

Far away across the clearing, Sheriff Crenshaw and Blackstone lean against his truck as they watch the Beast's departure.

The Sheriff tips his hat and smiles. Blackstone completes a ritualistic hand gesture.

The Beast scales the ramp. Once inside, the ramp rises. The door closes.

The flying saucer starts spinning and humming. The craft spins faster and faster. It levitates off the ground and rises up.

Crenshaw looks on as the ship ascends. Blackstone produces a thermos and pours himself a familiar cup of coffee. Crenshaw shakes his head. Blackstone smiles as he enjoys his fresh coffee.

EXT. WILDERNESS (PIG'S EARS) - DAY

In a remote part of the Wilderness, the Seekers stand around the remains of a pig's ear. Teri stands opposite Atherton and the group.

Atherton kneels down to examine the scene..

Behind the Seekers, the flying saucer takes off and rises high in the sky.

Teri goes slack jawed. She raises her camera.

BEGIN "THROUGH THE CAMERA" SHOT

The UFO is perfectly framed hovering above the mountain. Atherton rises up holding the pig ear, blocking the UFO from view. Eyes squinted in a look of scientific curiosity cross his face.

CLICK - FREEZE FRAME

END "THROUGH THE CAMERA" SHOT

ATHERTON

Perhaps a new offering is in order.

The UFO shoots into the sky, leaving a prism of light in its wake.

Atherton looks around over his shoulder.

ATHERTON (CONT'D)

What was that?

Teri smiles and laughs under her breath at the irony of it all.

TERI COOPER

Don't worry about it. We've got our story.

Atherton shrugs.

Donnie nudges one of the Seekers, with a big grin.

DONNIE

You're not going to believe next semester.

They nod in agreement.

CUT TO BLACK

END