

TOP NOTCH

Written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL FIELD - BEHIND THE BLEACHERS -  
NIGHT

JADE LAWRENCE, (17) beautiful, dressed in an expensive designer outfit, reigns over her equally beautiful, well-dressed friends COCO, CHERIE (sher-EE), and TIFFANY.

Jade consults her iPhone.

JADE  
Cherie, you've got Greg.

Cherie GIGGLES, excited.

JADE  
Make sure you've got protection. He was completely unprepared with Tiffany.

COCO  
(to Tiffany)  
I know you didn't...

TIFFANY  
Oh, please. "Never break training."  
I sent him home practically crying.

They all LAUGH.

JADE  
Plus, I added a surcharge for the broken appointment.

More LAUGHTER.

TIFFANY  
What about me, Jade?

Jade hesitates.

JADE  
Honestly, I don't know how you'll feel about this...

FLASH FORWARD VISUALS BEGIN

The girls discuss their assignments in real time with Jade (O.S.) as they meet their clients later that night.

EXT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - PARKING LOT - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Tiffany stands outside her car, checks her phone, waits. She catches movement in a shadowy area of the lot.

TIFFANY (O.S.)

Who?

LINDA MILLER (16) steps into the light.

JADE (O.S.)

Linda Miller.

CHERIE (O.S.)

Whoa.

COCO (O.S.)

Oh. My. God.

TIFFANY (O.S.)

Hmmmm. That's different.

(beat)

Yeah, OK. It'll be interesting.

The girls get into the car, Tiffany in the driver seat.

INT. TIFFANY'S CAR

Linda and Tiffany lock eyes.

CHERIE (O.S.)

Not diggin' the Sappho thing, Jade.  
Sorry.

JADE (O.S.)

No problem.

TIFFANY (O.S.)

I'm good.

Linda and Tiffany kiss hesitantly, then passionately.

EXT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

MATT (17) totes his gym bag, wears his varsity jacket. He spots Coco waiting by the passenger side of her car for him.

JADE (O.S.)

Coco, you get Matt.

COCO (O.S.)

Omigod, Jade, thank you!

Coco greets Matt with a light kiss. He presses against her, she pushes him away, flirtatious. She opens the car door.

Matt and Coco get in the car, Coco drives away.

END FLASH FORWARD VISUALS

RETURN TO SCENE

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL FIELD - BEHIND THE BLEACHERS - NIGHT

Jade wraps up with her team.

JADE  
That's it. Remember, no weed on the job.

GIRLS TOGETHER  
Never break training!

JADE  
I'll work out the new profit margins. Everyone at my house tomorrow night, right?

CHERIE  
What are you doing tonight, Jade?

JADE  
Future forecast. I'm projecting we'll be very busy.

TIFFANY  
What's the total for this quarter?

JADE  
Let's just say we keep this up -- we could buy a third world country.

The girls find this HILARIOUS.

INT. JADE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Flat screen TV on the wall plays news WITHOUT SOUND, Jade listens to PUNKISH music We faintly hear over her earbuds.

TOP OF HER CLOSET

She takes down a shoebox stacked among many others, lifts out a tissue-wrapped Exacto knife, examines the blade closely. Is she a cutter?

Next a wooden statuette of Egyptian Queen Nefertiti, the headdress notched from the neck up. She slices three more notches into the totem headdress.

She studies it a moment, bored, tosses Nefertiti and the Exacto knife back in the box.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL COURT YARD - MORNING

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS grouped into CHATTY cliques. Jade shows ledger in her iPhone to Tiffany, Cherie, and Coco.

CHERIE

WOW! We're gonna have to set up a money laundering gig.

JADE

We can talk about that. I've got a couple ideas.

TIFFANY

(to Jade)

Your mom home yet?

JADE

Tomorrow.

COCO

I love your mom.

CHERIE

She makes it so easy!

The girls LAUGH.

Teacher, MS. GIBSON (40s), passes by, waves to girls. Jade closes her phone, stows it in her handbag.

EXT. THE SCHOOL PARKING LOT - MORNING

A red Land Rover, open top and side, pulls into the school parking lot. COACH JACK MILLER (early 30s, narcissistic cutie-pie) expertly parks his car, grabs his gym bag from the back.

Handsome, confident new student TYE JACKSON (17), slides out of the passenger side. He also pulls a sports bag out of the back seat.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL COURT YARD - MORNING

Tye and Coach Miller head for the gym, pass by Jade's group.

COCO  
Omigod, look at the new guy.

The group swivels away from Jade in unison. Jade's face betrays nothing of the others' excitement.

TIFFANY  
I want the Coach!

CHERIE  
Remember the rules, sweetie.

Tye notices the stir he's creating, waves to the girls. All but Jade wave back.

COACH MILLER  
Watch it, Tye. That bunch comes with a price tag.

Tye sharpens his glance. He and the coach head to the gym.

CHERIE  
He's the new quarterback they were talking about.

COCO  
Maybe he's the one, Jade. Your Top Notch!

TIFFANY  
He's definitely cute enough.

CHERIE  
I'll do the write-up, Jade.

Jade nods thoughtfully. She and her posse head into the building as the bell RINGS.

INT. MS. GIBSON'S CLASSROOM - DAY

Mrs. Gibson writes "Literary Devices" on the blackboard.

Jade's CELL PHONE BUZZES ON MUTE as she takes her seat, her posse around her. She checks caller ID, reads "Mom," and answers.

JADE  
(impatient)  
I'm in class.

KATHLEEN  
How was your weekend, honey?

JADE  
Quiet. No problems. How about you?

KATHLEEN  
I got the contract! I'm handling  
all the listings for company  
transfers. Exclusively!

JADE  
(bored)  
Wow! Congratulations.

Tye Jackson enters, shows a "new student" form to Ms. Gibson.

JADE  
I've gotta go.

She ends the call without waiting for her mother's goodbye.

MS. GIBSON  
It's open seating, Tye. Sit  
anywhere you like. Class, meet our  
new student, Tye Jackson.

Tye immediately moves to sit next to Jade in the one empty  
seat her protective posse has left open. Ms. Gibson gives  
Jade a look, "I'm not surprised."

INT. SCHOOL CAFETERIA - DAY

The girls sit across from each other at a small round table  
with lo-cal lunches on trays in front of them.

Cherie hands Jade a packet of papers stapled together.

CHERIE  
There was a ton, actually. He's a  
big deal. Scouted for at least  
three scholarships. Honor student,  
Eagle Scout. His dad's an attorney.  
No mention of his mom. But get this  
- he was Youth Pastor at his  
church!

The girls go wide-eyed.

TIFFANY  
Ooh, a trophy fuck! Definitely Top  
Notch material, Jade.

Jade gives the sheets a brief glance. She pulls out her iPhone and opens her ledger files.

JADE  
I was thinking we need a good  
portfolio --

TIFFANY  
Jade! Don't change the subject!  
What do you think?

JADE  
OK. He's interesting.

Her friends are excited.

CHERIE  
When he was sitting next to you --

COCO  
What did he say?

JADE  
Nothing.

Tiffany looks across the lunchroom.

TIFFANY  
That's about to change.

Tye approaches the table.

Jade folds the research packet, slips it under the iPhone,  
reaches behind her and tucks both items into her purse.

TYE  
Hi, there, ladies.

Jade appraises him coolly. Tiffany, Cherie, Coco all chorus  
in response.

CHORUS  
Hi, Tye.

The girls GIGGLE at the rhyme.

Jade's eyes are locked on Tye's.

TYE  
(to Jade)  
Can I talk to you?

JADE  
Sit down.

TYE

Alone.

Jade nods and the girls immediately get up, take their trays and move to the next table.

TYE

Wow. That's eerie. They do what you say all the time?

JADE

We're best friends.

Tye sits down at the table.

TYE

I've heard about you. First hour I was here, actually.

Jade sips her iced tea.

JADE

Yes?

TYE

Top Notch?

Jade shrugs.

JADE

It's just a game.

TYE

C'mon, it's a business. According to Coach, you're one of the smartest, most popular girls in school.

Jade eyes him silently, waiting to see where he's headed.

TYE

(admiringly)

Number one. The best. The most beautiful. Highly selective.

Jade acknowledges his accolades with a small modest smile.

JADE

That's me.

Tye leans intimately across the table. She leans in.

TYE

Too bad you're just a whore.

Shocked breathless, Jade rears back, staring at him.

TYE

The whole team knows about you.  
Yeah, you're highly recommended,  
Jade.

(beat)

Such a waste.

He gets up and leaves the table without a backward glance.

Jade sits stunned for a moment, blind to everyone watching her, including her girlfriends staring in concern.

Her posse leaps up to return to the table.

CHERIE

Jade! What's wrong?

TIFFANY

What did he say?

Jade's iPhone RINGS. She checks caller ID, reads: "Mom 2."

INT. COACH MILLER'S OFFICE - DAY

Coach Miller pulls the blinds to his love nest. Jade stands defiantly in front of his desk.

JADE

We need to talk.

The Coach walks behind her, slides his arms around her, nuzzles her neck. She pulls away.

COACH MILLER

What?

A KNOCK on the door. The Coach and Jade freeze.

TYE (O.S.)

Hey, Coach -- you in there?

Silence. Jack pushes Jade away.

COACH MILLER

Shit. I forgot, I'm supposed to  
have his scholarship app ready.  
It's due today.

JADE

Listen to me. Tye's going to be a  
problem.

COACH MILLER

Tye? What are you talking about? He wants my help he'll do what I tell him.

JADE

You don't get it --

COACH MILLER

Listen, I don't have time right now. I'll catch you later.

(beat)

Hey, sorry about the...

(he gestures at his office)

... in-school thing. I know you don't like it.

He touches her hair.

COACH MILLER

Just something about you -- I think about you, I gotta have you.

(off Jade's expression)

Hey, that's a compliment!

He opens his wallet, throws cash on his desk. She hesitates.

COACH MILLER

Buy yourself something nice.

(beat)

Wear it for me next time, OK?

Jade takes the cash, stuffs it in her bag. Miller rummages in his drawer, pulls out paperwork.

JADE

Tye doesn't like me. He said...

She can't bring herself to say it.

COACH MILLER

(absently)

He will.

EXT. COACH MILLER'S OFFICE - DAY

Jade steps out of the office. Tye lounges against the hallway wall, watching.

TYE

I knew you were in there. Shades down... just you two.

JADE

So?

TYE

So I think it's reasonable to ask for a discount.

JADE

You already get a discount, Tye -- special for first string.

TYE

Good point. Let's make it a freebie.

JADE

(beat)

OK, one freebie.

TYE

With you.

JADE

I'm not available anymore.

TYE

You are for me.

JADE

I don't think Coach will approve.

TYE

Tell you what -- let's take it to Harper. Let her decide.

(off Jade's expression)

What? The only one who doesn't already know is the principal.

(beat)

Face it, Jade, you just blew your cover --

He touches her face. She shakes him off.

--- I believe our Mrs. Gibson would call that a "pun."

INT. SCHOOL BATHROOM - DAY

Jade shivering, CRYING in a closed door stall.

INT. JADE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jade, Coco, Cherie, Tiffany sprawled around the room.

TIFFANY  
So what do we do?

JADE  
I'm going to report him.

COCO  
Oh, hell no! Are You insane?

JADE  
I can keep you out of it if I just  
make it on him.

CHERIE  
And everybody keeps their mouths  
shut.

COCO  
(to Cherie)  
And you believe that?

JADE  
Or we leave it up to Tye.

COCO  
Listen, girl, would it be so bad  
to... you know, do him?

JADE  
You need to get this. We were in  
charge. Now we're not. We give in  
to Tye and he's the first in an  
endless line -- a free line. Do you  
want that?

CHERIE  
What a shit-show.

JADE  
Maybe Tye doesn't want to screw up  
his scholarship app, he'll stay out  
of it.

TIFFANY  
Until they crucify Jack Miller.  
He's done forever if you tell...

COCO  
We are, too, even if you play the  
victim, Jade.

JADE  
Look, I'm telling you -- say  
whatever you need to say to blame  
me. No matter who says what, it's  
going to be bad.

Tiffany crawls over to hug Jade, followed by Cherie and Coco.

TIFFANY  
Are we going to jail?

JADE  
No. Blame Coach.

Coco pulls back.

COCO  
Honestly, Jade... is that the best  
you've got? I mean...

TIFFANY  
Shut up, Coco. Unless you've got a  
bright idea?

CHERIE  
What about your mom? She's coming  
home tomorrow, right?

JADE  
What about her?

CHERIE  
Well, what's she gonna do?

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY

Jade and her mother KATHLEEN (early 50's), beautifully  
groomed, expensively dressed, sit at a conference table.

Principal JANICE HARPER (60s) and Jade's guidance counselor,  
GEORGE BECKER (60s) sit across.

PRINCIPAL HARPER  
Mrs. Lawrence, I'm afraid we're  
getting nowhere. Jade simply cannot  
remain here.

COUNSELOR BECKER  
We believe Jade is obviously and  
seriously maladjusted socially --

KATHLEEN  
Now, just a minute --

COUNSELOR BECKER  
 -- and she's corrupted girls from  
 several fine families at this  
 school.

JADE  
 This should be about Coach Miller,  
 not me and not my friends. I told  
 you...he started this last year. I  
 was still 15.

She gives a theatrical SOB.

He bought me a pair of shoes at the  
 mall... afterwards.

PRINCIPAL HARPER  
 And instead of telling anyone, you  
 decided to go into business.

MAGUIRE  
 (muttering)  
 Sociopath!

PRINCIPAL HARPER  
 (to Kathleen)  
 We have determined that despite our  
 public silence on the matter, we  
 are obligated to turn over  
 information about Jade's illegal  
 activities to juvenile authorities.

JADE  
 What about the Coach?

PRINCIPAL HARPER  
 That's none of your concern at the  
 moment.

Jade stands up.

JADE  
 Enough.

KATHLEEN  
 If this is your idea of how to  
 helpful...

PRINCIPAL HARPER  
 No, Mrs. Lawrence. Jade is quite  
 beyond any help we can offer.

COUNSELOR BECKER  
 I have a list of therapists...

JADE

Bite me.

Kathleen stands up, grabs Jade's arm to quiet her.

Jade shakes her off, moves to the door with dignity. She casts a scornful glance around the room.

JADE

Fucking hypocrites.

She exits, her mother scrambles after her.

INT. JADE'S HOUSE - HER BEDROOM - DAY

Scattered clothes, empty hangars, two open suitcases in the princess-bedroom-from-hell.

Jade fashionably dressed, sits on the floor with her iPhone. Kathleen, pulled together even in crisis, yanks clothes from Jade's closet.

JADE

I don't see why I have to give up  
my summer for some Florida shit  
hole. I'm the victim here.

KATHLEEN

You should be grateful that judge  
had a shred of sympathy for you.

JADE

Anybody discussing statutory rape  
charges?

KATHLEEN

Your testimony is more than a bit  
tainted but he's on suspension for  
now.

She pauses, a wad of clothing in her arms. Jade never looks up from her i-Phone.

KATHLEEN

So, was it payback? Tell me. I left  
you alone too much? I gave you too  
much? Not enough? What?

JADE

I told you, it was just business.  
You inspired me.

KATHLEEN

You never said anything to me,  
Jade. I could have stopped it.

JADE

But that would have made some nasty  
headlines, Kathleen. Same reason  
you're sending me away now.

KATHLEEN

And you're gonna leave the  
electronics home, dammit. Look at  
me!

JADE

(wearily)  
Oh, shit.

KATHLEEN

Watch your mouth.

JADE

You're quite provoking, Kathleen.

Jade fires up a vape. Kathleen grabs it.

KATHLEEN

Stop calling me Kathleen. I'm  
sick of it. I'm your mother by  
god...

JADE

Yes, yes, mummy dearest... I'm  
watching those hangers, by the way.

KATHLEEN

Listen, tough girl, keep this up,  
you can taxi over to juvenile  
detention right now.

(beat)

You're lucky your grandfather would  
even consider taking you on.

JADE

I think the jury's out on that one,  
Kathleen. Didn't you run away from  
him when you were my age? For all I  
know he's a child molester.

KATHLEEN

As if I would send you... you  
little bitch. Know what? I don't  
care what you think. Finish up by  
yourself.

Kathleen tosses Jade's clothing on the bed, exits.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - DAY

A battered old pickup truck GRINDS into the driveway.

INT. JADE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Jade swings into action -- piles clothing over her i-Pone, i-Pod, laptop, chargers, closes the suitcases.

She knocks over a lamp, a plant, shoves clothing, kicks everything into a mess on the floor, exits with suitcases.

A moment later, she re-enters the room, grabs the box with the totem from her closet. Dropping the box into the heap around her, she studies the notched Queen Nefertiti totem, pockets it, leaves again without looking back.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - DAY

Kathleen and her father, GRANDPA HARTWELL (70-plus) tall, slim, healthy, dressed in work jeans, boots, and a short-sleeved cotton shirt, obvious tension in the air.

Jade appears carrying two suitcases.

JADE

Let's go.

She hurls the suitcases in the bed of the pickup truck, yanks open the passenger door.

LUCKY, a three-legged mutt, lunges from the back, BARKING. Jade flings herself away.

JADE

That dog looks rabid!

GRANDPA

Bullshit, baby, Lucky wouldn't hurt a flea.

JADE

Kathleen --

GRANDPA

You just don't smell right to him yet. He'll get used to you. 'S a long drive to Florida.

Grandpa steps past Kathleen into the house.

GRANDPA

'Sides he don't have the balance to  
rip the throat outa a tittymouse.

INT. JADE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Kathleen and her father sit across from each other.

Jade visible through the picture window, sits on a suitcase  
in front of the truck, Lucky guards the cab.

GRANDPA

Looks like you've done all right  
for yourself, Kit. What's it been,  
15, 20 years?

Kathleen nervously lights a cigarette.

KATHLEEN

Yes... probably. About that.

(beat)

I don't know... what I'd do if you  
weren't willing to take her. I  
really... I'm very grateful.

GRANDPA

I expect you'da figured out  
somethin' eventually.

KATHLEEN

Right now I'm ready to kill her. I  
can't believe she --

GRANDPA

Oh, Jesus, Kit, don't get all  
dramatic. You just muddy the water.  
The real evil bastard is that  
coach.

KATHLEEN

If it's true. I wouldn't put a  
major lie like that past her.

GRANDPA

Maybe she was smart enough to  
charge instead-a just givin' it  
away. She ought-a qualify for a  
Junior Achievement Award.

KATHLEEN

If that's some kind of cheap  
shot...

GRANDPA

Aw, hell, Daughter, I'm sorry. I  
didn't mean... look, this is just a  
blip in her biography. She's got  
her whole life ahead of her. Look  
how you turned out.

KATHLEEN

All right, I'm not going to get  
into it with you. I'm grateful,  
let's leave it at that. I just  
can't deal with it now, my hands  
are full trying to handle this new  
contract...

GRANDPA

She's not an "it."

KATHLEEN

Oh, you're right, you're right, I  
forgot. You're always so goddamned  
right. I'm the rotten mother, it's  
all my fault.

GRANDPA

Aw, Kit... Hell, I could prob'ly  
piss chlorine myself, I'm so full  
of sour stomach and bitter thoughts  
about the past. Maybe you and I'll  
talk about that someday.

Kathleen stares at him in surprise.

GRANDPA

Right now, we better hit the road.  
I got a couple hours left in me,  
Jade and me might as well get past  
the awkward stage.

He turns away, hesitates, turns back to open his arms to her.

Kathleen tears up, refuses his embrace. Grandpa sighs.

GRANDPA

I love you, Daughter, I do. And  
don't worry, I'll take good care of  
her. She'll be fine.

EXT. FRONT PORCH - MINUTES LATER

Jade notices her mother's tears.

JADE  
Always about you, isn't it,  
Kathleen?

GRANDPA  
(to Jade)  
You sure inherited your mother's  
dramatic streak. Let's saddle up,  
young'un.

Jade turns her back on her mother, climbs into the truck.

Grandpa tosses the suitcases into the rear, waves to  
Kathleen, and they're off. Jade never looks back.

INT. GRANDPA'S TRUCK - DAY

Grandpa drives confidently on a busy highway.

Lucky WHINES, thrusts his nose forward. Jade pushes the dog  
away. Grandpa ignores the battle between girl and dog for  
territory.

GRANDPA  
Got one question for you, Jade.  
You're a smart girl. Why the hell  
would you think you wouldn't get  
caught?

He looks over and against her will, catches her eyes.

GRANDPA  
Almost like you wanted to.

She jerks her glance away.

INT. GRANDPA'S TRUCK - DAY - HOURS LATER

Grandpa spots a Dairy Queen, pulls into lot and parks.

GRANDPA  
Think I'm gonna get us some ice  
cream.

Jade ignores him.

GRANDPA

Yep, nothin' better after drivin' a couple hours than a stop for some ice cream. Whatcha think?

Jade continues to ignore him.

GRANDPA

My favorite used to be orange-pineapple, but you can't get that in soft serve. So I act'ally developed quite a taste for Dairy Queen. Kind-a surprisin', cause I used to swear I'd never --

JADE

Do you ever shut up? I don't want to talk to you, I haven't been talking to you, anyone else would understand I will not be talking to you under any circumstances, but you keep talking to me. What is it with you?

GRANDPA

Hell, I'm talkin' to Lucky. He never answers me, either. Guess I didn't notice you were holdin' back.

(beat)

Well, that's OK with me. Like I said, Lucky and me got a good enough relationship where he don't have to talk, I kind-a know what he's thinkin' anyway...

TIME TRANSITION

LUCKY SLURPS ICE CREAM FROM A CUP.

Grandpa licks an ice cream cone. Jade, no ice cream, reacts to Lucky's slobber.

JADE

God, that dog is so gross!

GRANDPA

Well, Granddaughter, whadja expect? Tea cups and linen hankies? Hell, he's just a dumb animal.

JADE

I hate dogs. They stink and they shed.

GRANDPA  
You kiddin' me? They don't come any  
better than old Lucky dog.

JADE  
My point exactly.

EXT. GRANDPA'S TRUCK - DAY

The day is darkening. They exit off the highway onto a  
commercial strip looking for a place to eat.

JADE  
There's Wendy's.

GRANDPA  
Nope.

JADE  
Why not?

GRANDPA  
Lucky don't like it.

JADE  
What? Why not?

GRANDPA  
Don't know. All I know is he turned  
his nose up last time I offered him  
a Wendy's burger. I figure any  
burger my dog won't eat I sure as  
hell should avoid like the plague.

JADE  
Well, I like Wendy's.

GRANDPA  
Well, Lucky and me are goin' to  
save you from yourself.

INT. GRANDPA'S MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Grandpa empties a carry out box in a dog dish. Lucky feasts.  
Jade into her adjoining room, SLAMS the door.

INT. JADE'S MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Jade in bed, flips through a torn magazine. Grandpa knocks on  
the connecting door between their rooms.

GRANDPA (O.S.)  
You decent?

JADE  
What do you want?

INT. GRANDPA'S MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

GRANDPA  
I want you to answer my question.

JADE (O.S.)  
Yes. I'm decent.

INT. JADE'S MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Grandpa opens the door, Lucky's on a leash.

GRANDPA  
We'll leave this door open so Lucky  
can relax. Don't want him worried  
about what's goin' on over here.

JADE  
You don't want Lucky to worry.

GRANDPA  
Yep. He gets worried, he wakes me  
up. I'd just-a soon get a good  
night's sleep.

JADE  
Why don't you just say you don't  
trust me?

GRANDPA  
Oh, I trust you, Jade. I trust you  
to do some damn foolish thing like  
try to sneak out of here and thumb  
your way to god knows where. Ain't  
gonna happen on my watch.

Grandpa fastens Lucky's leash to the bed.

GRANDPA  
You gonna keep up the Ice Princess  
act all the way to Gainesville?

JADE  
Fuck. You.

Grandpa chuckles.

GRANDPA  
Guess it's gonna be a long, hot  
summer. 'Night, Jade.

Grandpa returns to his room, closes the adjoining door. Jade tosses the magazine at Lucky. Unfazed, he stares at her.

INT. GRANDPA'S TRUCK - DAY

Endless boring highway. Grandpa dressed in the same clothes since day one. Jade in short shorts, a strappy tee, sandals.

GRANDPA  
Say, Jade, we just crossed the  
Mason Dixon line. Know what that  
means?

Jade ignores him.

GRANDPA  
Why, that means we're officially in  
the South. Now-a course we're  
Yankees, so we're never gonna be  
totally accepted, but our family's  
got a lotta rich history here.  
Didja ever hear of the Civil War?

Jade tosses him an irritated glance. Grandpa CHUCKLES.

GRANDPA  
Well, it turns out your great-great-  
great grandpa was in the Michigan  
19th. Lyman Hartman. Met him once  
when I was a small boy, just before  
he blew his brains out on the  
family farm. 'Course he was an old  
coot then, but when he was a young  
man, him and a bunch-a Union  
soldiers was captured down around  
the battle of St. Petersburg and  
thrown in a prison camp. Cahaba. He  
was there a number of years and  
from what I've read about it, the  
sufferin' there was unimaginable...

JADE  
I'm going to be totally insane by  
the time we get wherever the hell  
we're going.

GRANDPA

Well, Jade, it just goes to show what happens when you lose the fine art of conversation. I suspect the affliction goes way beyond you as one individual. Prob'ly a curse on your entire generation...

Jade pulls a travel pillow over her head.

EXT. WALMART - SOMEWHERE IN THE DEEP SOUTH - DAY

Grandpa's truck pulls into a Walmart parking lot, parks under shade trees dripping Spanish moss.

INT. GRANDPA'S TRUCK - DAY

Grandpa opens the door to step out. Jade suddenly alert.

JADE

What are we doing here?

GRANDPA

You keep paradin' around like that, you're gonna end up snake bit with skin like a 'gator. Either way, gotta get you some safe clothes.

JADE

(horrified)

In Walmart?

GRANDPA

Macy's-a the South. C'mon.

EXT. GRANDPA'S TRUCK - DAY

He exits the truck. Jade sits inside. Lucky leaps into the driver's seat, his lolling tongue drips on Jade's knees. Grandpa shrugs.

GRANDPA

Suit yourself. You can keep Lucky company.

Jade concedes the point, trails Grandpa into Walmart.

INT. GRANDPA'S TRUCK - DAY

WALMART SHOPPING BAGS

piled behind Jade's seat. Grandpa drives.

JADE

I told you I am not wearing that  
crap. I have plenty of clothes and  
you just wasted your money.

GRANDPA

When you change your mind, I will  
be gracious enough to not say I  
told you so.

Grandpa turns the truck off the highway.

JADE

Where are you taking me?

GRANDPA

Why, Cahaba, a-course. No point in  
wastin' an educational opportunity  
when we're passin' so close nearby.

Jade

I didn't see a sign.

GRANDPA

Ya know, I think the problem with  
these road signs is Southern pride.  
They just won't admit the average  
Southerner is dumb as a box of  
rocks. But up north, it's just  
plain obvious how many stupid  
people there are and they don't  
mind admittin' it. They put up  
extra signs and make 'em big enough  
so you can't miss 'em. Gives stupid  
people a fightin' chance.

EXT. A SMALL, HARD LUCK GAS STATION - DAY

A single pump in front of a building left behind from past  
decades. Grandpa unfurls a map on the hood of the truck.

Jade enters the gas station.

INT. GAS STATION - DAY

Light from a single, dirty window. Jade gets the once over  
from YOUNG MAN at a counter littered with greasy car parts.

JADE

I'm looking for a water, please.

YOUNG MAN  
Ain't got it.

JADE  
You don't have water?

YOUNG MAN  
'S what I said.

JADE  
Well, do you have anything cold to  
drink? Where's your cooler?

He gestures at a closed picnic cooler on the floor. Jade  
opens it cautiously to see cans of beer on a bed of ice.

On top of the cans, a layer of upright covered Styrofoam  
cups, holes punched in the sides.

YOUNG MAN  
Them's is worms, but I reckon  
they're cold enough to chill ya  
proper.

Jade drops the lid and exits.

EXT. GRANDPA'S TRUCK - DAY

Grandpa joined by MARCUS(30s) bib overalls, a torn tee shirt,  
a genial smile highlighted by a gold grille. He outweighs  
Grandpa by at least 100 pounds.

GRANDPA  
This here's Marcus.

MARCUS  
Howdy.

Grandpa folds up the map. Marcus eyeballs Jade's figure.

GRANDPA  
So maybe a half hour.

MARCUS  
Easy.

GRANDPA  
Well, thank you, Marcus. Hate to  
get lost out here. Been a while  
since my last visit.  
(to Jade)  
Get that cold drink?

She ignores him, climbs into the truck. Marcus cocks an eyebrow.

Grandpa climbs into the driver's seat.

INT. GRANDPA'S TRUCK - DAY

Jade finally starts a conversation.

JADE

You apparently get along with the perverts and genetic defects down here.

GRANDPA

Ah, they're just good old boys. Marcus come up to help when he saw me tryin' to figure the map.

JADE

Gave me the creeps.

EXT. GRANDPA'S TRUCK - CAHABA STATE PARK - ENTRANCE - DAY

Shadows are lengthening at the end of the day. The truck turns off the state blacktop onto a dirt road.

A sign reads "CAHABA STATE PARK," next to burned out small building.

GRANDPA

Damn. That used to be the ranger station. We'll just take a quick look around. Startin' to lose the sun anyway.

EXT. CAHABA STATE PARK - CONTINUOUS

The truck winds down the dirt road to a small cemetery.

INT. GRANDPA'S TRUCK - DAY

Lucky yawns, falls asleep. Grandpa continues his lecture on Cahaba and family history.

GRANDPA

It ain't much now, but you gotta imagine a big open stockade crammed with thousands-a men, lot of 'em sick, injured, no medicine, shitty food. Your granddad was one of 'em. Hard to believe he made it out-a there.

He gestures to the grave yard.

GRANDPA

Lot of 'em didn't. Actually, old Lyman was a passenger on the river boat *Sultana*. Blew up on the way home after the war was over. Ever hear-a that?

Jade shakes her head "no." She looks around anxiously.

GRANDPA

Aw, that's a good story to tell you later. He was a tough old bird, all right. You got good genes, kid.

JADE

It's getting dark.

GRANDPA

Yeah, all right, that's enough history lesson for the day.

EXT. GRANDPA'S TRUCK - DAY

He pulls the truck around, heads toward the exit.

EXT. GRANDPA'S TRUCK - CAHABA STATE PARK - ENTRANCE - DAY

At the abandoned ranger station intersection, a multiple-passenger mini-bus pulled sideways blocks access to the main road. Tinted dark windows obscure the occupants.

Printed across the side of the mini-bus: "GREEN GROVE SENIOR CENTER".

INT. GRANDPA'S TRUCK - DAY

Grandpa takes in the situation. Jade watches him anxiously.

GRANDPA  
Well, I'll be goddamned.  
(to Jade)  
Open that glove compartment.

A HUGE HANDGUN

Her jaw drops. Grandpa pulls the gun out, takes her hand, fashions it around the gun.

GRANDPA  
Grip it here, your trigger finger goes here. Put your other hand here to balance you. It's gonna have a helluva kick. OK, now nice and steady.

He positions her hand with the gun next to her on the seat. He reaches under his seat and pulls out another handgun.

GRANDPA  
Jade, honey, you keep that Colt out of sight 'til I tell you different.

JADE  
Oh, shit, oh, shit. Is it loaded?

GRANDPA  
Just stay steady, now, we don't know there's a problem. But you might-a been right about old Marcus.

EXT. GRANDPA'S TRUCK - DAY - CONTINUOUS

The door to the mini-bus slides open.

MARCUS SMILES

MARCUS  
Howdy.

GRANDPA  
Howdy, Marcus. Got a problem with your vehicle?

MARCUS  
Nope, it's right where I want it. You and your girl step down out-a that truck cab right now.

GRANDPA  
Now, why would I do that?

MARCUS

'Cause I want to rob you, old man.  
And I wanna have a little fun with  
the girl, too.

CLEAVER (mid-20s) raggedy, unshaven, clutches an ancient  
revolver, sneaks toward Jade's door from the back end of  
Grandpa's truck.

INT. GRANDPA'S TRUCK - DAY

Grandpa points his gun at Marcus.

GRANDPA

Jade, put up your gun.

Jade rests the barrel of the Colt on the window frame.

GRANDPA

Well, I don't feel like being  
robbed today, Marcus, but shootin'  
off a good bit of your ass is  
soundin' mighty attractive.

Marcus takes a step backwards, his hands going up in the air.

GRANDPA

I don't know how many boys you got  
in that van, but I promise you,  
I'll blow several holes in you  
before they get out that door.

Cleaver reaches Jade's door, yanks it open, grabs her.

Jade SCREAMS, the gun wobbles in all directions.

Lucky sails past her onto Cleaver, who falls backward. His  
gun DISCHARGES.

Grandpa FIRES a shot into the ground in front of Marcus.

GRANDPA

Jade, get your gun on that  
reprobate.

Jade pulls herself together, aims the gun at Cleaver rolling  
to defend himself against Lucky's teeth.

GRANDPA

(to Marcus)

What's it gonna be, Marcus? We got  
a bead on your boy here and I'm  
just gettin' warmed up.

MARCUS  
Robert! Eldridge! Get out from  
behind there!  
(beat)  
C'mon now.

ELDRIDGE and ROBERT, two nondescript young men, shuffle out from behind the van. Eldridge carries an old .22 squirrel rifle, Robert winds a length of rope.

GRANDPA  
(to Lucky)  
Lucky! Back in the truck, boy.

MARCUS  
(to his boys)  
Get in the van. Pull it out of the  
way. Cleaver!

Cleaver scrambles into the van. Lucky BARKS ferociously.

INT. GRANDPA'S TRUCK - DAY

Jade pushes the door wide open.

JADE  
Lucky, come!

Lucky scrabbles up on the running board, teeters. Jade steadies him.

He pauses to lick her face before he jumps into the back seat. She tries to dodge his "kiss."

EXT. GRANDPA'S TRUCK - DAY

Eldridge decides to argue.

ELDRIDGE  
Hell, Marcus, we could take 'em. We  
got a rifle, they only got...

MARCUS  
Get your scruffy ass in that van  
and I mean move it.

Eldridge spits on the ground.

ELDRIDGE  
Shit.

Eldridge and Robert climb into the van. Cleaver backs up the van and clears the road. Marcus makes a move toward the van.

INT. GRANDPA'S TRUCK - DAY

GRANDPA  
Hold it right there, Marcus. You  
wait til we're out of the  
neighborhood.  
(to Jade)  
Keep your gun on him.

EXT. GRANDPA'S TRUCK - DAY

Grandpa pulls the truck forward slowly.

INT. GRANDPA'S TRUCK - DAY

Jade lays the gun gingerly on the back seat, climbs in back next to Lucky, aims at Marcus out the back window.

The van disappears behind them. Grandpa pulls over and stops.

GRANDPA  
OK, get back up here.

Lucky licks her hand. She wipes it on the back of Grandpa's seat on her way front. She lays the gun on the passenger seat before climbing over, sitting gingerly next to it.

GRANDPA  
Put the Colt back.

She does.

GRANDPA  
You OK?

Jade nods "yes."

GRANDPA  
Well, you did fine, girl. Looks  
like Marcus is an accomplished  
highwayman. No tellin' if anyone  
would have ever found our bodies.

He glances over at her.

GRANDPA  
Welcome to Dixie.

Jade LAUGHS and can't stop, starts to SOB against her will.

Grandpa reaches for her but she shrinks away. Finally, she pulls herself together, QUIETS.

GRANDPA

Takes some gumption to deal with  
this kind-a world, Jade. I'm proud-  
a you.

JADE

I can't believe you got us into  
this... trusting that creepy... Are  
you crazy?

GRANDPA

Yeah? Well, sorry to inform you of  
life outside TV land. You kept your  
shit out-a your pants and you  
didn't drop the gun. That's  
somethin'. Aces.

Grandpa puts the truck in gear again.

GRANDPA

Whatever's buggin' you, Jade,  
you're strong. You're smart. You'll  
figure it out.

(beat)

That's my blood in you, for sure.

Lucky WHINES for attention, Grandpa strokes his ears.

GRANDPA

(to Lucky)

You took a likin' to Jade, I guess.  
Saved her bacon, didn't you, boy?

EXT. COUNTY SHERIFFS' OFFICE - DAY

Grandpa, Jade and the SHERIFF stand outside.

GRANDPA

Yeah, he was a biggun. Stood out  
like a shirt in a sock factory. You  
find 'em, let us know the court  
date. We'll be back.

SHERIFF

Damn, you were lucky. Others might  
not be. Sure appreciate you comin'  
in.

GRANDPA

Don't rely much on luck. Got my  
carry permit, and that's what saved  
the day.

SHERIFF

You got a brave granddaughter, too.

Jade shifts uncomfortably.

GRANDPA

Now there's where I got lucky.  
(to Jade)  
C'mon, Jade, let's hit the road.

EXT. GRANDPA'S TRUCK - DAY

The truck stopped at the intersection of a ramshackle general  
store across from the Beaver Creek post office.

An ironic traffic light turns red over empty traffic lanes.

Jade stares out the window, Lucky's head rests on her  
shoulder. She brushes him off, but he resettles. She gives up  
and let's him rest.

A pickup even more battered than Grandpa's pulls up on the  
road shoulder next to Jade's side of the truck.

The traffic light turns green.

EXT. PONY'S TRUCK - DAY

A rifle racked behind the driver's seat, double dice and a  
high school grad tassel swing from the rear view mirror.

PONY RANDALL, (18) sun-bleached hair, tee shirt and cowboy  
hat, stares at Jade from the jacked up cab over huge tires.

He WHISTLES at Jade appreciatively.

JADE

(to herself but audible to Pony)  
Wow! A cave man driving a pickup.

INT. GRANDPA'S TRUCK - DAY

Grandpa leans past her, cranes his head upward.

GRANDPA

Hey, Pony.

EXT./INT. THE TWO TRUCKS - CONTINUOUS

Pony leans out his window.

PONY

Afternoon, sir. Looks like you brought another Yankee into paradise.

GRANDPA

You gotta excuse her manners. She just got here. Don't know much about nothin' too important yet.

Grandpa ignores the green light, Jade's pissed expression.

GRANDPA

Say, I got those solar panels stacked in my yard. What about tomorrow?

PONY

Got duty.

GRANDPA

Oh, hell, I forgot. Later this week then?

PONY

I'll be there.

GRANDPA

Come for breakfast early. Too damn hot to work much after that.

The red light returns. Grandpa drives through the empty intersection. Pony falls in behind.

JADE

Hey, you just went through the red light. That's against the law.

GRANDPA

My admiration grows for your powers of observation.

JADE

Well, why is it OK for you to break the law?

GRANDPA

You mean for me and not you? Well, why do you think?

JADE

Because you could get away with it.

GRANDPA

Yep, wouldn't argue that.

JADE

So much for justice.

(beat)

Actually, that's a stupid place for a traffic light.

GRANDPA

Now you're thinkin'.

JADE

So it's OK for you to break a stupid law... just not me.

GRANDPA

Well, in one respect you are totally correct. All the laws we live by, humans made 'em up 'cause they seemed to make sense at the time even if they don't anymore.

(beat)

'Course, you broke laws that go way beyond the books.

JADE

(to herself but audible)

Omigod, the cryptic bullshit!

GRANDPA

(placidly)

Now in your case, if you was born a couple hundred years ago, you were pretty much breed stock. The best babies come from the strongest male and the healthiest female. Justifiable homicide to find your woman with another man -- weakens the line, see?

JADE

Omigod, shut up! I totally understand the roots of the women's movement.

GRANDPA

You think that's just the good old days? You run up against human nature, you're askin' for trouble.

Yep, it's mass hysteria when you step on one-a them ancient laws. Hell, you're lucky they didn't stone you, Jade.

JADE

What does that have to do with a traffic light? And the only reason I'm asking is I'm so fucking bored.

GRANDPA

Well, you gotta connect the dots, girl. Droppin' a traffic light in the middle of goddamn nowhere and tellin' people to sit for no reason while the thing ticks along just don't make sense. Once again -- against human nature. Nobody pays it any attention whatsoever.

JADE

That's not true. We were sitting at the red light until that guy drove up.

GRANDPA

What can I say? I used to be a cop. Me and red lights, well, it's sort-a like trainin' up a Catholic to believe in hell. Can't shake it entirely no matter what common sense tells ya.

Jade clutches her forehead.

EXT. GRANDPA'S TRUCK - DAY

Grandpa turns the truck off the highway onto a narrow two-track into wilderness, thick semi-tropical scrub and forest.

The road winds back to a padlocked gate.

Grandpa exits the truck, unlocks the gate, gets back in the truck, drives through, exits the truck, locks the gate and gets back in the truck.

INT. GRANDPA'S TRUCK - DAY

He tosses Jade the gate key.

GRANDPA

That's gonna be your job.

EXT. GRANDPA'S HOUSE TRAILER - DAY

Grandpa pulls the truck up under a car port adjacent to an old but tidy house trailer. Faded wooden steps lead up to a screened-in porch. Solar panels cover part of the roof.

An unopened box of solar panels next to the porch.

The front yard slopes to a large pond. A large water tank, a pole-barn machine shop, sun tracker panels in the back yard.

INT. GRANDPA'S TRUCK - DAY

Jade opens the truck door as Grandpa switches off the engine.

GRANDPA

Hold up, Jade. Let me take a look around first. This yard's been empty for near a week now.

EXT. GRANDPA'S TRUCK - PASSENGER SIDE - DAY

Grandpa jumps back.

GRANDPA

Shit!

He grabs a metal rod with a flat, sharp end propped next to the porch, stabs it into the dirt.

JADE

Omigod, is that a snake?

GRANDPA

Yeah, a little baby rattler. Not much right now, might not be able to kill-ya... yet.

JADE

Omigod!

GRANDPA

Don't get all excited. I saw a couple of these out here just 'fore I left. Figured there must-a been a hatch somewhere close by. Always worth double checkin'. That's why you gotta dress for the wilderness and keep your wits about you.

Grandpa kicks the small snake body aside. Lucky jumps out, BARKS viciously over the corpse, grabs the snake's dead body, shakes and tosses it.

GRANDPA  
Yeah, Lucky, you'll protect us,  
won't you boy?  
(to Jade)  
C'mon, get out.

Jade, still in her open-toed sandals, jumps from the truck running board to the first porch step. Grandpa hauls Jade's luggage out of the truck.

INT. GRANDPA'S TRAILER - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Stifling hot, dark interior enfolds Jade and Grandpa.

JADE  
Oh!

GRANDPA  
Yeah, it's a little stuffy.

JADE  
You live in this?

GRANDPA  
We'll get the fans going.

JADE  
What about air conditioning?

GRANDPA  
For sissies. You'll be amazed how  
fans cool it right down.

Grandpa pulls up window shades, reveals a small living area with rocking chairs, a TV, a bookcase, a dog-hair-covered blanket draped over a sofa.

A mini-Christmas tree sits on the dividing kitchen counter. Dark halls on either end of the trailer lead to rooms beyond.

Jade slams outside to the porch, PANTS in the thick heat.

EXT. GRANDPA'S TRAILER - FRONT PORCH - DAY

Grandpa exits the trailer WHISTLING. He tosses the Walmart shoebox to Jade. She opens it, pulls out the high top boots, shoots a glance at Grandpa deliberately ignoring her.

EXT. GRANDPA'S TRAILER - DAY

Night is approaching as Grandpa exits the machine shop with two pails filled with dried corn kernels. Jade watches from the porch.

JADE

Now what?

GRANDPA

Time to meet our welcome committee.

He hands one bucket to Jade, walks past the pond. Jade nervous, semi-jogs in her new boots to keep up.

EXT. A SMALL CLEARING - DAY

Leaves shake on surrounding shrubs. Grandpa pours heaps of dried corn on the ground.

A SMALL HERD OF WILD TUSKED PIGS

surges into the glade.

Jade drops her pail, runs back toward the trailer as the pigs harmlessly feast on the corn. Grandpa shakes his head, scoops up her pail.

He pours the corn into elevated wood troughs, backs away.

SEVERAL DEER

step out of the wilderness to the troughs. They feed as the shadows deepen.

EXT. GRANDPA'S TRAILER - FRONT PORCH - DAY

Jade watches enchanted from the porch. Grandpa joins her.

GRANDPA

They hear the truck pull in, they know they get dinner. Been feedin' 'em for years. Shouldn't. Just makes 'em vulnerable at huntin' season. But I like to think they know the difference between me and some bonehead with a rifle. They're safe here.

He looks at Jade sideways.

GRANDPA

'Course the world ever comes to an end, I'll have a ready source of meat.

EXT. SOLAR BATTERY STORAGE SHED - DAY

Jade watches Grandpa unlock the shed door to a bank of batteries, a mishmash of wires and circuits.

He turns switches and dials until engines kick on.

GRANDPA

I just turned on the pump. Solar panels put energy into these babies every damn day. I tell you, it's a beautiful system, Granddaughter. Our water tower will fill up pretty quick. You can take a hot shower in an hour or so.

JADE

I'm more interested in ice.

GRANDPA

Got that, too.

EXT. GRANDPA'S PORCH - NIGHT

Jade and Grandpa sit on the porch in cheap aluminum lawn chairs, sip tall glasses of ice water. A fan blows over them from a low table in front of them.

Lucky pushes the screen door open, limps to join them.

GRANDPA

Well, I don't have to go lookin' for cripples. Seems they just come to me.

Jade shoots him an angry glance. Gets up, but there's no place to go but inside. She hovers. Grandpa ignores her, seems to speak to himself.

GRANDPA

Vet said from the look of it, a 'gator tried to snatch him.

(beat)

One night, he come limpin' and screechin' into the yard with his leg prit near hangin' by a thread.

I couldn't stand to see him suffer,  
so I had a vet whack off the part  
that didn't work any more.

(beat)

I decided to keep him. 'S why I  
call him Lucky.

JADE

(to herself)

If he were really lucky, he'd still  
have his leg.

And suddenly they're conversing.

GRANDPA

Well now, you got a point. I won't  
deny it. But he'd-a never got to  
live this grand life with me.

(beat)

Time to fertilize my acreage.

Jade notes the pitch dark surrounding them, gives him a "You  
are seriously crazy" look.

Grandpa reaches over to a small boombox on the table. He  
inserts a CD, "Mozart's Greatest Hits" and hits play.

Opening strains of "The Marriage of Figaro" float out over  
the wilderness.

GRANDPA

Nights like this I send out old  
Mozart or maybe the Blue Danube and  
I imagine the critters all cockin'  
their heads goin', "What is that?  
Why do I feel like twitchin' my  
legs?" My trees are growin' three  
times faster because of it.

Jade temporarily forgets she is ignoring him.

JADE

Because of music?

GRANDPA

It was an experiment. When I first  
moved here, there was nothin', just  
flat scrub from past the pond. And  
look at the woodlot I got now! Must  
be 50 feet high and still growin'.

JADE

When did you move here?

GRANDPA  
Since your Grandma died. Nearly 15  
years now.

JADE  
Don't you think trees can grow 50  
feet high in 15 years?

Grandpa eyeballs her.

GRANDPA  
Your point?

JADE  
Well, you can't prove it. What's  
the point of saying you did an  
experiment if you don't control for  
all the variables?

GRANDPA  
You know what Einstein said about  
that? Some things that count don't  
need to be counted. And some things  
counted don't count. Get it?

Jade rolls her eyes, remembers she is ignoring him.

INT. GRANDPA'S TRAILER - JADE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

A small fan whirs a steady stream of air over Jade lying in  
her underwear on top of the bed, sweating.

A tear escapes and runs down her cheek.

JADE  
Shit!

INT. GRANDPA'S TRAILER - KITCHEN - DAY

It's early morning. Grandpa, dressed in an old tee shirt and  
plaid Bermuda shorts, heats up a skillet, mixes pancake  
batter at the stove. A table set for two.

Jade enters dressed in a Walmart seer-sucker long sleeved  
shirt over sleeveless T-shirt, shorts, and boots.

GRANDPA  
Mornin', Granddaughter.

She studies a shelf full of family photographs - a younger  
grandpa with grandma and baby Kathleen, her mother's  
graduation photos on the wall.

Grandpa expertly pours batter into a blackened skillet.

JADE

What did you do to screw up  
Katherine?

GRANDPA

(chuckles)

Well, ain't you the junior  
psychiatrist? Most people would say  
you're the one with the problem.

JADE

I don't give a shit about what most  
people say.

He flips the pancakes, turns to her.

GRANDPA

Look, Jade, you want to ask me why  
things are the way they are with  
your mother, I'm willin' to answer.  
But I'm not about to put up with a  
vulgar, sulky bitch in my own home.  
'Specially not this early in the  
day.

JADE

You don't have to. I --

GRANDPA

Let's cut the crap, Jade. You're  
out here in the middle of nowhere  
and unless I say so, you ain't  
leavin'.

Grandpa flips perfectly rounded flapjacks from the skillet  
onto an enameled tin tray, carries it to the table and sits  
down. He points for her to sit down across from him, and she  
does.

JADE

(quietly)

I hate you so much.

GRANDPA

Yeah? Well, unlike you, Jade, your  
mother faced some real challenges  
in life. She's a survivor, so there  
could be hope for you. We'll see  
how it goes.

He flips a pancake on her plate. Pours syrup on his and  
starts to eat, ignoring her.

Being human, Jade decides she must eat as well. The pancakes are wonderful. She stops after a few heavenly bites.

JADE

(hesitantly)

OK. I want... I need some answers.  
She told me once... she ran away  
from you and Grandma.

GRANDPA

(matter-of-fact)

From me, not your grandmother. I  
was the one fell down on my  
parentin' job.

(beat)

She tell you what happened?

JADE

She just said you were a bastard  
and we should leave it at that.

GRANDPA

Well, I didn't hatch with all this  
wisdom I carry today. Compared to  
back then, I should be sittin' on a  
mountain top right now with a beard  
down to my kneecaps.

(beat)

She say anything about your dad?

JADE

She told me I didn't have one and  
to get used to it.

GRANDPA

He deserved that.

(beat)

OK, so did I.

Jade notices her laptop, iPod, iPhone, and charger on the counter. Her suitcases are stacked underneath.

JADE

You went through my stuff.

GRANDPA

Yep.

JADE

You had no right to go through my  
things!

GRANDPA

You're under my roof and I got every right. And forget about usin' those power suckers. I ain't drainin' my solar batteries so you can keep up with JC Penney sales.

(beat)

You want to get the bug dope for your hands and face before we leave.

JADE

Why? Where are we going?

GRANDPA

You start your 90 days at the ranger station and nobody's mowed the lawn there since the turn-a the century. Grasshoppers big as your ankle. Just as soon chomp on your tender parts.

Jade loses appetite, settles her fork.

HER BEAUTIFULLY MANICURED NAILS

JADE

Shit.

(beat)

I forgot.

(beat)

OK, the power dynamic is in your favor, I get that.

GRANDPA

Then we understand each other.

She looks at him, nods. He nods.

GRANDPA

And get some decent pants on.

EXT. GRANDPA'S TRUCK - FLORIDA WILDLIFE PRESERVE - PARKING LOT - DAY

An assortment of old cars and pick-ups parked in the lot.

Grandpa dressed in a uniform of cotton khaki, a shoulder patch identifies him as a park volunteer.

He and Jade both wear long sleeved shirts, tucked trousers, carry a canteen. Jade pulls on work gloves. Grandpa snaps a leash on Lucky.

GRANDPA

We'll be out in the bush most of the morning. Your canteen's full. Keep yourself hydrated and you won't get sunstroke.

PONY, GREY, ARLENE, and LEROY, all in their late teens or early 20s, dressed in shorts, tees and tattoos, stand around, smoking, waiting.

They all turn to watch Grandpa walk up with Jade and Lucky.

JADE

(to Grandpa)

Are you supposed to drop me off?

GRANDPA

Nope. I mentor this bunch. Part of my volunteer service.

A standard pick-up truck with an official state seal on the side turns into the lot, pulls to a stop.

BEAU RANDALL (22), handsome, confident, dressed in a state park ranger uniform, steps out of the truck with a clipboard.

BEAU

Mornin' y'all. Glad to see you're all here on time. No demerits for a change.

(to Grandpa)

Mornin' Hart.

GRANDPA

This here's my granddaughter, Jade.

Beau consults the clipboard.

BEAU

Yep, got her.

(to Jade)

My name's Beau Randall. You can call me Beau. This here's Arlene, LeRoy, that's Grey --

PONY

And you already know me.

BEAU

OK, that's roll call.

He makes a notation, tosses the clipboard back in the truck.

BEAU  
We're working the river trail  
today. Gotta replace some ties and  
clear back the brush. Hart, you and  
me gotta split up this team.  
Everybody else, grab somethin' from  
the back.

He gestures toward the truck bed, the young people drift over  
while Grandpa and Beau review a map.

EXT. BEAU'S TRUCK - DAY

The truck bed filled with brush cutting tools. Jade reaches  
for a machete, but Arlene SLAPS her hand away.

ARLENE  
That's mine.

JADE  
What's your problem?

ARLENE  
What are you doin' here anyway?  
Ain't they got Yankee reform  
schools?

JADE  
(smiling)  
Touch me again and I'll slap the  
shit out of you.

Beau catches the tone if not the content.

BEAU  
Problem over there?

Jade grabs the machete, keeps her eyes locked on Arlene.

JADE  
Just making new friends.

Arlene saunters past Jade, lifts out a small hatchet, feints  
chopping it on Jade's hand. Jade flinches.

ARLENE  
(sweetly)  
Oops!

Beau walks over and catches on.

BEAU

I'm only gonna to say this once.  
Anybody who can't keep their minds  
on the task at hand can go sit in  
Judge Steven's jail cell. You don't  
have to be here.

(to Jade)

And that goes for you, too.

JADE

(outraged)

But I --

BEAU

I don't play favorites.

ARLENE

(innocently)

Jade and me was just gettin' to  
know each other.

Beau casts a skeptical eye on the group.

BEAU

OK, let's get a move-on while we  
got some cool left in the mornin'.

EXT. RIVER TRAIL - DAY

The sun is not fully up but young people sweat heavily as  
they hack away at the underbrush.

Grandpa swings a weed scythe nearby, notices Jade's pale  
face, her hands shake.

GRANDPA

Jade!

Beau and Grandpa hustle over to Jade. Everyone else stops to  
watch. Jade drops the machete, leans over and VOMITS.

BEAU

Damn!

Beau and Grandpa lift Jade to a nearby shaded bench where  
Lucky is tethered. Lucky wakes up, WHINES.

JADE

What...?

BEAU

Near heatstroke.

Beau pours water on a clean handkerchief, lays it across the back of her neck.

GRANDPA

(to Jade)

No way you're used to this climate yet.

BEAU

Well, I'm callin' it a day.

(to rest of the work crew)

Get them tools back to the truck and wait there.

BEAU

(to Grandpa)

I don't believe this is wise, Hart. She can't take it.

JADE

I can take it. I didn't have a problem until just now.

BEAU

That may be so, but I can't take a chance that you --

JADE

I'm not sitting in some Southern hell hole of a jail. I'll be back tomorrow.

She picks up the machete, forces a stride to the parking lot.

BEAU

Well, she's got gumption.

GRANDPA

Blew breakfast, though. Poor kid. Ain't the easiest way to impress that bunch.

EXT. BEAU'S TRUCK - DAY

Jade stows the machete in the truck, joins the rest of the work crew waiting for Beau.

ARLENE

You think you ain't gonna be working as hard as the rest of us, you better think again.

PONY  
C'mon, Arlene, lay off her.

ARLENE  
Well, I ain't fooled and I ain't  
impressed, either. Anytime you want  
to try to slap my shit around,  
honey, you just...

Arlene waggles her hand as in "call me." Jade gives Arlene  
the finger. Beau and Grandpa approach the truck.

BEAU  
Same time tomorrow morning.  
(to Jade)  
We'll see how you do.

The work crew breaks up.

BEAU  
(to all)  
Stay outta trouble.

INT. GRANDPA'S TRUCK - DAY

Jade sits in stony silence. Lucky leans his head on her  
shoulder from the back seat.

GRANDPA  
Well, you better say whatever it is  
stuck in your craw.

JADE  
Surprise, I hate this place.

Grandpa reaches over, shakes her canteen. It's full.

GRANDPA  
What did I tell you?  
(beat)  
I said I wouldn't rub it in, but I  
ain't gonna stand by and let you be  
Yankee stupid.

JADE  
I'm actually sick of hearing how  
smart you are. You practically got  
us killed on the way down here.

GRANDPA  
That's how you see it?

JADE

Oh, I'm sure you're the hero of  
some fucked up head game you're  
playing.

GRANDPA

Well, the world's plenty fucked up.  
Look at you and me -- and we're the  
cream-a the crop. But if you think  
evil was invented down here, you're  
forgettin' what you went through up  
north.

JADE

My life was never threatened back  
home.

GRANDPA

Depends how you look at it. You  
don't have to take a bullet to ruin  
your life.

Jade too beat to argue. Grandpa lets her rest.

INT. GROCERY STORE - DAY

Grandpa pushes a grocery cart with an assortment of food.

Jade eyes the other shoppers: MEN and WOMEN with skin  
mottled, leathered, generally ruined by sun exposure.

At a section labeled "Fun in the Sun," she throws a couple  
bottles of sun screen, travel size and regular, into the  
basket. Grandpa nods at her wisdom. They move on.

EXT. FLORIDA WILDLIFE PRESERVE - DAY

A clearing outside the office building where a corrugated tin  
cylinder about 8 feet long and 4 feet in diameter rests on  
the ground.

Beau stations LeRoy, Grey, Arlene, Pony, Jade, and Grandpa  
where they safely can see the pull-up hatch at one end of the  
cylinder.

MIKE, HANK, and TOLSEN, park rangers in position at the pull  
up hatch.

Mike lifts a small panel at the side of the cylinder. A big,  
hairy paw with long claws shoots out, swipes at the air.

The young people recoil reflexively.

TOLSEN  
He's a young 'un.

Hank aims a tranquilizing dart gun into the opening, fires.

BEAU  
(To his charges)  
Only about 15 hundred in the whole  
state. They been poached and over-  
hunted and road kills are going up.  
We try to keep an eye on what's  
left. You're lucky to see this  
today.

Mike opens the front hatch. Tolsen and Hank haul out a long  
metal shelf on which a YOUNG BLACK BEAR sleeps peacefully.

Beau snaps pictures as the three other rangers quickly tag  
the bear's ear, record the bear's weight, size, temperature.

The bear stirs.

HANK  
He's coming around.

The rangers quickly push the shelf with the bear back into  
the cylinder. Mike closes the hatch.

BEAU  
(to his charges)  
OK, everybody stay back.

Mike pulls up the hatch. The bear stumbles out groggy.

Hank shoots a special padded projectile into the bear's rump.

The bear winces, runs.

BEAU  
We don't want him to get friendly  
with people. That'll only bring him  
to harm.

Jade turns to look up at Grandpa, her eyes shining.

JADE  
(softly)  
Wow!

Then she realizes her reveal, and turns away.

INT. GRANDPA'S TRUCK - DAY

Grandpa drives as usual. Jade stares at him.

GRANDPA

What?

JADE

You think you've got me... my  
little problems... figured out,  
don't you?

GRANDPA

Do I?

JADE

Get me out in nature, the "Real  
World," turn me into some "normal"  
little teenager, right?

(beat)

Trying to make up for how you  
messed up with my mother.

Grandpa hunches over the wheel, listening.

JADE

I'm not that easy.

GRANDPA

Well, Hell's fire, girl, you just  
blew up my whole nefarious plot. I  
guess I have to come up with some  
other less obvious scheme.

(beat)

I just had no idea you would be  
such a tough nut to crack.

He CHUCKLES, clearly enjoying himself. Jade pissed.

INT. GRANDPA'S TRAILER - KITCHEN - DAY

Jade in white long sleeved cotton shirt and khaki slacks. She  
watches Grandpa as he mixes pancakes.

Grandpa, dressed in his old tee shirt and plaid Bermuda  
shorts, heats up a skillet on the stove.

JADE

I'm not eating those again.

GRANDPA

You say that now, but wait 'til it  
hits your plate.

(beat)  
Why don't you skip down to the gate  
and open it up for Pony.

JADE  
Why me?

GRANDPA  
Unless you can make the best damn  
pancakes in the hemisphere, you  
can't have my job.

JADE  
I don't understand why you want  
someone from that chain gang  
hanging around here.

GRANDPA  
Ever hear of the pot callin' the  
kettle black?

JADE  
I'm nothing like them. And I  
sincerely hope you're not setting  
up play-dates for me with a bunch  
of backwoods rednecks.

Grandpa CHUCKLES.

GRANDPA  
Honey, you think I got nothin'  
better to do than worry about your  
teenage social life? Hell, I'm  
going to spend time on that  
foolishness, I'll worry about mine.

She turns to leave.

GRANDPA  
Take Lucky with you.

JADE  
I thought you already took him for  
a walk?

GRANDPA  
He can spot a rattler quicker than  
you can.

Jade hooks up Lucky's leash without further comment.

EXT. TRAILER - DAY

Outside, she pauses. Lucky sits waiting. She pulls a travel size tube of sunscreen from her pocket, quickly dabs a bit on face and hands.

She pockets the tube and they move out.

EXT. GRANDPA'S GATE - DAY

Pony's pick-up splashed with huge goutts of dried mud waits for her to open the gate.

Jade unlocks the gate, Pony swings open the passenger door, reveals mud-splashed dash board, seat, and floor.

PONY

Hop in!

JADE

Are you crazy? It's filthy.

PONY

Suit yourself.

He drives off. Jade locks the gate.

INT. GRANDPA'S TRAILER - KITCHEN - DAY

Pony and Grandpa chow down on a stack of pancakes with bacon and eggs on the side. Jade enters, frees Lucky from the leash.

GRANDPA

Spot any wildlife?

JADE

No rattlers if that's what you mean.

Jade pulls up a chair, helps herself to a pancake, pours a cup of coffee from the pot on the table.

PONY

What about Old Bull?

JADE

No bulls either.

Pony and Grandpa LAUGH.

JADE  
(Irritated)  
What?

Grandpa refills his cup. He stirs in a blob of honey.

GRANDPA  
Old Bull's a 'gator. Lives in the  
pond out front.

PONY  
What is he now? Eight feet or  
better?

GRANDPA  
That's about right.

JADE  
You have an eight foot long  
alligator in your pond and you  
didn't tell me?

GRANDPA  
He won't bother you none.

PONY  
Not since your granddad planted  
some salt in his behind.

GRANDPA  
Yeah, he was comin' up onto the  
lawn here to visit just a little  
too often. A couple rounds and he  
skittered back into the water. He  
never come out since.

Pony and Grandpa enjoy another hearty LAUGH. Jade glares.

INT. GRANDPA'S TRAILER - KITCHEN - DAY

A couple days' worth of unwashed dishes stacked in the sink.

GRANDPA  
I'm gonna keep an eye on Pony. See  
he gets those solar panels  
installed right. You take care of  
those dishes. That's another of  
your jobs.

JADE  
I take it there's no dishwasher?

GRANDPA  
'Course there is.

JADE  
Where?

GRANDPA  
I'm lookin' at her.

JADE  
Ha. Ha. Do you have any rubber  
gloves?

GRANDPA  
Well, hell no, girl. You're doing  
the dishes, not major surgery.

Jade looks at her formerly manicured hands.

JADE  
But I just...

She catches Grandpa's amused look.

JADE  
Never mind.

JADE'S HANDS HOLD SOILED DISH

between her palms, dips it into the sink full of soapy water.  
The egg won't budge.

JADE  
Dammit.

She stares at Grandpa visible through the kitchen window as  
he directs Pony. They wrestle the solar panels to the roof.

She picks up all the plates, lowers the bunch into the sink.

Grandpa turns, CALLS to her from outside.

GRANDPA  
Jade, leave that for now and get  
out here.

Relieved, Jade complies.

EXT. GRANDPA'S TRAILER - SIDEYARD - DAY

The big Colt revolver on a tea table several paces away.  
Several empty tin cans along a felled tree.

Pony watches from the trailer roof.

GRANDPA

Aside from the way down here, you ever use a gun before?

Jade shakes her head "no."

GRANDPA

That's OK, you didn't need it for anything more than show, and sometimes that's all you need. But you gotta master the situation. Understand?

JADE

I'd rather avoid any situation that involves a handgun.

GRANDPA

That's a fancy way to say you ain't got a clue for how the world works. Now this here's a .44 caliber Colt, one of the most powerful handguns ever made. You treat it with respect, Jade. And when you point it, you aim to kill somethin' or practice killin' somethin'. Period.

JADE

Is it loaded?

GRANDPA

'Course. Safety's on, though. It won't fire. Here, heft it.

Jade takes the gun. A thought occurs to her.

JADE

Was the safety on at Cahaba?

GRANDPA

'Course. You never store a gun without the safety on.

JADE

But you had me aim at that guy!

GRANDPA

Once you flashed that piece of hardware, old Marcus would have to be crazy to come within a hundred yards-a you.

JADE

I couldn't have shot him if I had to!

GRANDPA

And I ain't about to have you blow a hole in my floorboards. Now pay attention. Here's the safety. You flip it off here. Now hold it like I showed you before... that's good. Now stiffen out your arms, keep a little kink in the elbows... good.

JADE

It's so heavy!

GRANDPA

You'll get the hang of it. Squeeze the trigger when it feels right. See if you can hit one-a them cans.

Jade steadies herself, fires. The gun ROARS, kicks.

JADE

Shit!

Grandpa peers at the still standing cans.

GRANDPA

Nope. You need some practice all right.

Jade fires again, miraculously hits a can. Pony, cigarette hanging from his mouth, calls down from the roof.

PONY

Hell, even a blind dog finds a bone once in a while.

GRANDPA

You better remember who's holdin' the .44.

He winks at Jade. She ignores him, takes aim again and fires.

EXT. GRANDPA'S PORCH - DAY

Jade, Pony, and Grandpa sip ice water.

PONY

(to Jade)

Well, I'd be surprised how you handle that cannon except for you come from this old dog and he's full of surprises. Maybe you'd like mud-boggin.'

GRANDPA

I seriously doubt it.

JADE

What is it?

GRANDPA

Even I think it's pretty bone-headed.

PONY

That's 'cause Yankees have no respect for Southern ways.

JADE

What are you talking about?

GRANDPA

He knows I'm too damn old for that shit.

JADE

What?!

GRANDPA

It's where red-necks like our friend Pony here go racin' their trucks through swamps hell-bent for leather, tearin' up all sorts of animal habitat for a night of so-called fun.

PONY

Now you sound like my brother.

GRANDPA

Well, Beau's got a good head on him.

PONY

Well, a Yankee ain't in position to say.

JADE

I'll check it out.

Grandpa eyeballs her in surprise.

GRANDPA

Really?

JADE

Girls drive, too, right?

GRANDPA

Oh, I get it.

(to Pony)

This here's a twenty first century woman, Pony. She pretends to wash the dishes 'cause she ain't yet figured out how to make us do it.

PONY

We can go tonight.

JADE

I'm not getting in that filthy truck.

GRANDPA

Oh, hell, Pony, it ain't too late to back out your offer, you know?

EXT. PONY'S TRUCK - DAY

Jade, dressed in work boots, khaki shorts, and a long sleeved white shirt over her tank top, gets into Pony's truck. A fairly clean blanket thrown over the seat where she sits.

Grandpa comes up from the night feeding of animals carrying an empty bucket. Grandpa hands Jade her iPhone.

GRANDPA

Your mom and I agree. You use it if you need it.

JADE

You talked to Kathleen?

GRANDPA

Charged it myself.

PONY

I'll take care of her, sir.

JADE

I'll take care of me.

GRANDPA

Don't be gettin' too big for your britches, Jade. That's a cell phone, not a gun.

(to Pony)

No mistakes. I won't forgive 'em.

PONY

Yessir, I promise.

INT. PONY'S TRUCK - DAY

Pony smokes as he drives, Jade perches on the seat.

PONY

So what did you do?

JADE

You're assuming it's time to share.

PONY

I assume my truck, my rules.

(beat)

What did you do?

JADE

What did you do?

PONY

Oh, I gotta show you mine first?  
Got a DUI on my 18th birthday. What about you?

JADE

Classified.

PONY

Wow, you an ax murderer or something? Weed bust?

JADE

I'd have to kill you.

PONY

Yeah, well, maybe you would, too.  
Now your grandad, you're lucky to have him.

JADE

You obviously think so.

PONY

He gives me a couple days worth-a work every week. He loves that place, tries all kind-a newfangled stuff out there. Them solar panels...

JADE

Yeah, no A-C.

PONY

Just never heard of nothin' like it 'til he done it. Most old dudes I know pack it in long about 40. He ain't like that. Plus, he's kind-hearted. He took you in, didn't he?

JADE

I chose to come here. I didn't have to.

PONY

Oh, 'at's right, I heard your granddaddy's house trailer is bigger'n Cancun this year.

JADE

Just shut up and drive.

EXT. SWAMP TRAIL - DAY

The sun is dropping behind the trees in a semicircle around a small pond. Trucks jacked high or higher than Pony's.

Young MEN and WOMEN mill around, drink bottled beer from crammed coolers. The women in shorts, sandals, halter tops.

RUFUS (20), lanky with a ruffian air, wears chopped off cargo pants, wife beater tee-shirt and tats.

RUFUS

Hey, Pony! Over here! Who's your friend?

PONY

This here's Jade. Hart's granddaughter "visiting" for the summer.

Rufus eyes her boots and shirt.

RUFUS

You cold, honey?

He LAUGHS along with several onlookers. HEATHER (20) honey blonde, tan, short-shorts and tank top, walks over.

HEATHER (OS)  
Shut up, Rufe! That ain't a nice  
way to welcome strangers.

Heather walks to Jade's side of the truck, holds out her hand. Jade takes it.

HEATHER  
Name's Heather.

JADE  
Hello. I'm Jade.

HEATHER  
Ever done this before?

Jade shakes her head, "no."

HEATHER  
You come ride with me. These boys  
are crazy.

PONY  
Hey... shit!

INT. HEATHER'S TRUCK - DAY

A flashy pink pick-up, clean inside and out. Jade's enemy Arlene already seated inside. Jade halts outside the cab.

HEATHER  
Move over, Ar, we got a passenger.

ARLENE  
What the hell? This Yankee?

HEATHER  
Yeah, this here's a mud bog virgin,  
Ar, you believe it? Ladies, we're  
gonna kick some country boy ass  
tonight! Jade. You up for that?

JADE  
Oh, yeah.

Arlene sulks as Jade squeezes into the cab.

EXT. SWAMP TRAIL - DAY - CONTINUOUS

The jacked up trucks slosh single-file into the low-lying swamp, kick up waves of mud and water, dig huge trenches with the oversize tires. The crowd HOOTS and CHEERS.

Jade exhilarated, LAUGHING. Even Arlene loosens up. Heather drives with windows closed to keep the mud outside.

RUFUS

(shouts)

Heather, you pussy, roll down the windows.

Heather gives him the finger.

SOMEONE gets stuck midway into the bog.

HEATHER

Seems like this always happens two minutes before dark.

JADE

What then?

HEATHER

Some girl too smart to be doing this shit pulls the dumbass out.

Heather pulls a gear under the dash board, a winched cable WHINES from under the fender housing.

SEVERAL GUYS grab the cable, wade out to attach it to the mired truck.

Heather pulls the truck out of the swamp to CHEERS and JEERS for the hapless DRIVER.

BEAU'S PICK-UP TRUCK

barrels into the scene, skids to a stop. Beau jumps out of the truck in uniform. Everyone gets quiet.

BEAU

What did I tell you last time?

RUFUS

Hey, man, it's after 5. Don't you ever quit?

PONY

Dammit Beau, this here is private property.

BEAU

And 20 steps over is public. Now I warned you before, you can't run this swamp. It's right on the edge of state park land.

He takes out his citation pad.

PONY

C'mon, Bro.

BEAU

For the last time, clear out. Anyone here in five minutes gets a citation -- and that's a fifty dollar fine.

A mad scramble to depart.

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Heather's truck drives the empty road.

INT. HEATHER'S TRUCK - NIGHT

Heather offers Jade a cigarette, Jade waves "no thanks."  
Arlene takes a pull on her can of beer.

ARLENE

She ain't gonna have a beer either.  
Too high class.

HEATHER

Jesus, Ar, give it a rest. I'm tryin' to get to the bottom of our friend Jade here.

JADE

Yeah, I've got hidden depths, Ar.

HEATHER

You never mud bog up north?

JADE

Not in my neighborhood.

ARLENE

What's with you and Pony? You sweet on him?

JADE

Hardly.

HEATHER  
(coolly)  
Too good for him?

JADE  
I think you just dissed me for a  
snobby bitch.

ARLENE  
Ya think?

HEATHER  
Yeah, I ain't quite made up my mind  
one hundred per cent yet.

JADE  
Same here. But...

HEATHER  
I'm listenin'.

JADE  
I've signed off. Men are only  
interested in fucking. I'm not.

HEATHER  
Whoa! Jade. Back down, girlfriend.

ARLENE  
Wow, did-ja hear that, Heather? So  
news to me, men like sex, huh?  
What, you a lesbian?

JADE  
I'm just sick of men. I need some  
space. A lot of it.

HEATHER  
Maybe somebody kicked you around  
some. You find the right man,  
you'll feel different.

JADE  
I'm not looking.

ARLENE  
Pony could ever get steady work  
again, he'd be real good husband  
material.

HEATHER  
That brother of his... one of the  
most uptight dudes you are ever  
gonna meet. Too bad he's so cute.

JADE

Seem like complete opposites.

ARLENE

Trust me, Beau likes critters better than girls, far as I can tell.

HEATHER

'Course if your Momma named you Pierre T. Beauregard, you might be evil-tempered, too.

JADE

Why on earth did she do that?

HEATHER

Confederate General. Half the people down here are still fightin' the Civil War. The other half think we won. Hey, I gotta ask - why the boots and shirt? Aren't you hot as hell?

JADE

The sun and the snakes. God, I hate 'em. I almost stepped on a baby rattler the first day I got here. I never even saw it.

ARLENE

So you're a pussy in many ways.

JADE

You might be called pretty. For now.

HEATHER

More trouble from snakes on two legs. Hang out with Pony for a while 'til you get the lay of the land. He likes your granddad. Just about everybody does.

ARLENE

Even if we ain't too sure about you.

HEATHER

Give me your cell.

JADE

Why?

HEATHER  
Your cell. Hand it over.

Heather quickly taps in some numbers steering with one hand.

HEATHER  
OK, I got me and Pony in there.  
That's your 9-1-1 out here, you got  
that?

JADE  
That's really nice of you.

HEATHER  
(exaggerated drawl)  
Yeah, I'm fuckin' "awesome." Ain't  
that what you Yankees say all the  
time?

They both LAUGH. Arlene takes another pull on her beer.

EXT. HEATHER'S TRUCK - NIGHT

Heather pulls onto the two-track into Grandpa's property,  
stops in front of Grandpa's truck where he's waiting.

Heather sticks her hand out the window, they shake.

HEATHER  
Evening, sir. I'm Heather.

GRANDPA  
Thanks for bringin' her home.

HEATHER  
No trouble.  
(to Jade)  
You got the makin's of a good  
little swamp rat! See you next  
time.

JADE  
Thanks, Heather.

Jade gives peace a chance, turns to Arlene.

JADE  
Next time, Ar.

Heather nudges Arlene, she half-waves.

INT. GRANDPA'S TRUCK - NIGHT

GRANDPA  
Those red necks give you any  
trouble?

JADE  
They were all pretty friendly.

GRANDPA  
Just remember you're a stranger in  
a strange land, Jade. Don't be too  
trustin'.

Jade slides the iPhone into her pocket. If Grandpa notices,  
he doesn't say.

EXT. FLORIDA WILDLIFE PRESERVE PARKING LOT - BEAU'S TRUCK -  
MORNING

Beau grabs his clipboard out of the cab.

Pony and Arlene smoking, waiting. They turn to watch Grandpa  
walk up with Jade and Lucky.

Jade walks to the truck bed, grabs the machete. Arlene tosses  
her cigarette, starts for Jade.

Jade turns to Arlene, hands her the machete. Arlene  
hesitates, takes it. Jade nods, turns back for the ax.

Arlene looks at Pony, Beau looks at Grandpa, "How about  
that?"

TIME TRANSITION

EXT. RIVER TRAIL - DAY

The young people hack away at the underbrush, sweating. Jade  
stops, takes a long pull on her canteen.

TIME TRANSITION

EXT. FLORIDA WILDLIFE PRESERVE PARKING LOT - BEAU'S TRUCK -  
DAY

The sun is up full. The sweaty group staggers back to the  
truck. Jade pulls off her gloves, studies her hands. The  
manicure is long gone. She catches Arlene watching her.

Jade shrugs, "What're you gonna do?" Arlene almost smiles.

EXT. SUWANNEE RIVER - WILDLIFE CENTER BOAT DOCK - DAY

Early morning mist swirls above the river. A long skiff tied to the dock. Jade has Lucky leashed. Grandpa wears a holstered gun on his hip.

Beau gasses up the outboard engine.

GRANDPA  
Morning, Beau.

BEAU  
Morning, Hart.

Beau tips his cap to Jade. He scratches Lucky's ears.

JADE  
I saw you the other night.  
Mud-bogging. You warned us off.

Beau freezes, tosses a cold glance at her over his shoulder.

BEAU  
You run with that crowd, you're  
gonna go foul of the law once  
again.

Grandpa breaks in.

GRANDPA  
Thanks for tankin' 'er up, Beau.  
Looks like we're all ready to head  
into Shangri-la.

BEAU  
(relaxes)  
Good thing you're out early. It'll  
be a sizzler today.

EXT. SUWANNEE RIVER - DAY

Jade faces Grandpa as he steers, his hand on the outboard rudder. The boat PUTTS along softly. Lucky with his muzzle across Jade's boot.

GRANDPA  
You forget to mention the little  
run-in with Beau?

JADE  
It wasn't that important.

GRANDPA

Beau takes his job seriously. He won't hesitate to jail you behind you give him reason. He already warned you once.

JADE

I said it wasn't that serious. He told us to get away from the park boundary and everybody left.

(beat)

So Pony is Beau's brother.

GRANDPA

Yep.

JADE

Is his name really Pony?

GRANDPA

Naw, his real name is Jubal Early, which he don't like. Named after one of them...

JADE

Southern generals.

The skiff rounds a bend in the river.

GRANDPA

OK, quiet now. We're comin' up on a nestin' area. I just put these boxes in about six months ago. Workin' to bring back ospreys here.

The boat glides past big boxes filled with straw perched on tall poles.

A fat ALLIGATOR plops into the water. Jade reacts to the sight.

JADE

(excited shout)  
Oh, look!

The ospreys panic, fly from their nests, Lucky BARKS. Despite the uproar, Grandpa notes a strange lump on the riverbank.

GRANDPA

What the hell...

He steers the skiff where blood drips into the river from a humped figure. Lucky strains to leap out of the boat. Jade grabs his collar.

JADE

What...

GRANDPA

Don't know yet.

Grandpa puts his gun on the seat, pulls out his cell phone.

GRANDPA

(into the phone)

Beau, I'm about half a mile down  
river by the osprey boxes. Looks  
like we might have some poachers.

He listens, then ends the call.

GRANDPA

He's on his way.

Jade gestures at the gun.

JADE

Why...

GRANDPA

Still bleedin' out. He didn't die  
that long ago.

EXT. RIVER BANK - DAY

Beau's skiff tethered to the bank. He crouches over the body  
of a dead black bear. He fingers the tag on the bear's ear.

BEAU

Poor little bastard. We just tagged  
him a couple days ago.

Grandpa and Jade watch sadly from their boat.

Beau examines the paws noting the claws removed, peels back  
the lip on the bear. The teeth are missing, too.

BEAU

Yeah, they're all gone. Fuckers.  
(to Jade)  
Pardon me.

GRANDPA

(to Jade)

They take the gall bladder and his  
teeth and claws. Sell 'em for love  
potions and shit overseas.

Jade looks sick.

BEAU

Team's on the way out here. Thanks for staying off the scene.

GRANDPA

Figure we surprised them?

BEAU

Possible. Maybe they decided to keep the meat. They'd need a bigger boat, though.

GRANDPA

Easier for us to spot.

BEAU

Might come back if they don't know we know.

GRANDPA

Must-a figured this little cut-in would make it easier for 'em to load. Otherwise, they sure as hell would have left the carcass in the bush.

BEAU

Lucky thing you decided to take a little pleasure cruise down river today. The bastards still might get away with it, though.

GRANDPA

Give red necks a bad name for sure.

JADE

How did the bear die?

Both men turn to look at her for the first time.

JADE

I mean, we didn't hear a gun shot and you said it was killed not long ago.

GRANDPA

Damn, Granddaughter, that's a thought-provokin' question. Beau?

Beau studies Jade with interest.

BEAU

From the looks of it, the bear was trapped.

He raises one of the legs and gestures at cruel gashes.

BEAU

They come up on it from behind and put two bullets directly in its brain. Prob'ly used a handgun, big one, maybe .45 caliber with a silencer of some sort.

Beau's INVESTIGATION TEAM arrives at the site in two state wildlife skiffs.

GRANDPA

We'll head back. Keep watchful.

Beau raises a hand in farewell, turns to deal with his team.

EXT. GRANDPA'S PORCH - NIGHT

Jade and Grandpa sit on the porch. Grandpa enjoys a tall rum and coke. Jade sips ice water. Lucky lies quietly.

The .44 caliber on the table close to Jade, a rifle propped in the corner by Grandpa's chair.

GRANDPA

Let's give the wood sprites some dance music.

"The Blue Danube" soars out from the porch boombox. The deer feast on corn as the sun disappears.

JADE

OK, I've been thinking.

GRANDPA

OK. I'm ready to hear it.

JADE

I know she wasn't married when she got pregnant with me. She told me... she wanted to keep me from having sex... if you can believe the irony.

(beat)

So I know I was never welcome in the first place.

GRANDPA

Oh, Jade...

JADE

Why didn't you help her?

GRANDPA

I was an asshole. I said a lot of stuff I blush to think about. She never forgave me and I don't blame her.

JADE

She didn't need you again until -- yeah, I get it. Little old me, the bad seed.

Grandpa lost in his memories doesn't correct her.

GRANDPA

Your father, an even bigger asshole, never did hear what happened to him. Don't care.

JADE

So I'm here because you feel guilty. You feel like you owe my mother.

Light from a pair of headlights sweeps across them on the porch. Lucky barks. Jade reaches toward the handgun.

JADE

Who...?

GRANDPA

Most likely Beau. I gave him a gate key some time ago. Gotta have someone who could find my carcass if I croak out here.

It is Beau indeed, Lucky settles down.

BEAU

Evenin'.

GRANDPA

Step in out of the skeeters.

Beau enters, leans down to scratch Lucky's ears.

GRANDPA

Catch 'em?

BEAU

No, they must-a got wise. We hauled the body in. Bobby's still out there keepin' watch in case they come back.

He hands Jade a small match box.

BEAU

Thought you might like a nicer memory of the river than a dead bear.

Jade lifts out a single, tiny, flawless white feather.

JADE

It's beautiful.

GRANDPA

Osprey. Not many people got one-a those, Jade.

JADE

Thank you.

Beau tips his hat to her.

BEAU

Just thought I'd check in on you two.

He gestures at the guns.

BEAU

But I can see you thought ahead like always.

GRANDPA

Well, it ain't likely trouble drops in when you're ready to whup its poacher ass.

BEAU

(to Grandpa)

You a two-handed gunslinger now or...

GRANDPA

Jade's certified.

Jade pats the Colt possessively.

JADE

This one's mine.

BEAU

Then I'll head back to see how  
Bobby's doin'. Have a quiet night.

GRANDPA

You, too. Thanks for droppin' by.

Beau pulls away in his truck.

GRANDPA

So when did you decide you like  
guns? If you don't mind having a  
real conversation?

JADE

(thoughtful)

I admit I like knowing how to use  
it if you need it, like we did at  
Cahaba. I like being a pretty good  
shot, too.

Grandpa thinks it over.

GRANDPA

Something I want to say, Jade, cuz  
there's somethin' to what you've  
been sayin'... you know, about why  
you're here... what I was hopin'  
for. Are you willin' to hear me  
out?

Jade looks at him thoughtfully, nods "yes."

GRANDPA

(mildly)

Well, yeah. I didn't know what I  
was gettin' myself into... you and  
me total strangers, me bein' such a  
spectacular failure first time  
around with your mom.

(beat)

So maybe I do see myself gettin' a  
second chance. If I can be useful  
to you, Jade, I want to be...  
somehow. If that second chance  
might be happenin'... you know,  
like I said, on my watch... well, I  
need to thank you for that.

Jade examines the feather, runs it along her cheek thinking  
over his gratitude.

She looks up at him and nods, "yes."

EXT. GRANDPA'S TRAILER - DAY

Grandpa, Jade and Pony in front of the solar energy storage system that runs the trailer. All of them sweat rivers.

PONY  
(to Grandpa)  
I kept those goin' while you were gone. Energy never flagged.

GRANDPA  
You did good, Pony.

Grandpa fastens the cover over the batteries.

GRANDPA  
OK, that's it. Before we're all grease spots.

EXT. GRANDPA'S PORCH - DAY

Pony and Grandpa sit sipping ice water. Jade target practices with the Colt. She hits the target every time.

PONY  
That girl's gone gun-crazy.

Jade steps onto the porch, flops in a chair.

PONY  
Say, Hart, where'd you learn to shoot? You ex-Military?

Grandpa launches into one of his favorite tales with gusto.

GRANDPA  
Well, when I was your age, maybe a hair older, I was on a train out-a Kalamazoo, headed to Chicago, enlisted to be a pilot in the Air Corps durin' W. W. Two. I got on a troop transport to Ft. Sheridan, got my orders there over to Biloxi. And then the damndest thing happened -- pissed me off for a long time -- Germany surrendered. And they didn't know what was gonna happen with Japan, but they didn't think they'd need to train a whole new crop-a pilots, so they made me an M-P and shipped me to Yuma.

JADE  
What's an M-P?

GRANDPA  
Military Police. I'd have to come along at the end of the night and clear out the cane breaks -- get the drunks back to the base sobered up, and I hated it. I saw just about the lowest the human race can go. See, the Indian Daddy's 'ud drive their old junkers down to the cane breaks outside the base and do a little business with the service men. Had their young daughters in the back seat.

Pony notes Jade's face sicken, Grandpa lost in his tale.

PONY  
Uh, Hart...

Grandpa rattles on.

GRANDPA  
The little whores would actually ride the buses back to the base with the service men thanks to the camp Provost makin' everything so convenient. I used to cast an eyeball on the crowd -- I just couldn't get excited about all the diseases I could-a contracted.

Jade gets out of her chair shakily.

GRANDPA  
Hell, I'm not saying I'm superior, I'm just goddamned finicky.

PONY  
Jade. You OK?

Jade stumbles inside the trailer. Grandpa finally notices.

GRANDPA  
Jade, what the hell...

PONY  
Is she OK?

GRANDPA  
Jesus, Pony, don't ask so many  
questions. Look what you got me  
into already.

EXT. JADE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Grandpa stands outside the closed door to Jade's bedroom.

GRANDPA  
Jade. Jesus, Jade, I'm sorry. I  
didn't mean...

Jade yanks the door open. Tears stream down her face.

JADE  
I can't believe you let a whore  
like me stay here!

GRANDPA  
Now, Jade that story had nothin' to  
do with you. It was a long time  
ago...

JADE  
When little whores made you sick.  
The lowest forms of humanity.

GRANDPA  
I was talkin' about their  
daddies...

Jade looks past Grandpa. Pony in the hallway, thunderstruck.

JADE  
(screams)  
Get out of here!

Jade SLAMS the door shut.

GRANDPA  
Pony, take a hike.

PONY  
I ain't saying nothin' about this  
to nobody, sir.

GRANDPA  
I appreciate that, Pony, 'specially  
'cause you don't know shit about  
what's happenin' or why.

PONY

Yessir.

INT. JADE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Jade on the cell phone.

JADE

Right now. It's an emergency. I  
wouldn't ask otherwise.

She listens, looks relieved.

JADE

I'll meet you at the road.

She grabs her handbag, tosses in her cell, runs down the hall  
past Grandpa.

GRANDPA

Jade, stop. Where you goin'?

Jade slams out of the trailer.

INT. HEATHER'S TRUCK - DAY

Heather drives, sends anxious glances at Jade, stone silent.

HEATHER

Just please don't tell me he tried  
to hit you or some twisted shit  
like that. I'd hate to have figured  
him wrong.

JADE

He hates me.

HEATHER

Why the hell would you say that?

Heather pulls the truck to the side of the road.

HEATHER

I'm not goin' one foot further 'til  
you tell me what's going on.

JADE

It's personal.

HEATHER

No fuckin' kiddin'.

JADE  
You don't know me... really.

HEATHER  
So fill me in.

JADE  
Why I came here...

Jade shakes her head "no," climbs out of the truck.

JADE  
Go on. I'm not far from town. I  
just need to clear my head.

HEATHER  
I'm not leavin' you out here.

JADE  
Look, I don't need one more  
goddamned red neck telling me what  
to do.

HEATHER  
Fine. I don't need some city bitch  
pissin' on my hand of friendship.  
Fuck you.

Heather slams the truck into gear, peels away.

Silence settles around Jade. She sees an oncoming vehicle,  
steps off the road into the surrounding thick brush.

The vehicle stops. Beau jumps out.

BEAU  
Jade!

No answer.

BEAU  
Dammit, Jade, I know you're here. I  
just saw you. C'mon out.

Jade steps out slowly.

JADE  
What do you want?

BEAU  
Seems I got half the county callin'  
me about you.

He takes out his cell and dials.

BEAU  
Yeah, I got her. Pass the word,  
will you?  
(to Jade)  
Get in.

JADE  
I don't need a ride.

BEAU  
You need a keeper. Get in.

Jade with no options. They both climb in the cab. Beau keeps the engine running and the AC flowing while they talk.

BEAU  
You want to tell me what all this  
is about?

JADE  
No.

BEAU  
I've seen your file, you know.

Jade looks like she's been kicked.

BEAU  
So Hart said something about whores  
in World War Two and you go running  
off into the bush. What the hell  
are you thinkin'?

JADE  
Look, I just want everyone to leave  
me alone. I didn't ask you to chase  
after me.

BEAU  
You don't have anything to say  
about it.

JADE  
What's it to you? Seriously, why do  
you care?

BEAU  
Aside from the fact that I'm  
supervisor for your court-ordered  
community service?

JADE  
So no points today for good  
behavior?

BEAU

Jesus, Jade, knock off the attitude. Listen. You're young, you're pretty, you're smart. You want to see all that go to waste when you have your whole life ahead of you?

JADE

You want to fuck me, too?

BEAU

Girl, You're tryin' every shred-a my patience.

He studies her. Tears roll down her cheeks.

BEAU

So you really think that's all there is between men and women?

JADE

You should know. You read my file.

BEAU

And it's a sad statement of the evil some men do.

(beat)

You played some pretty bad-ass games, Jade. People found out. Then what? You think you can just keep runnin'?

(beat)

At some point, you grow up, girl.

He pulls a paper towel out of the glove box, hands it to her. She wipes her face.

BEAU

Maybe you never heard of intimacy, Jade? Or maybe at least you've learned sex is boring without it.

JADE

Really? I never heard a guy complain before.

BEAU

So you never met a man with high standards.

(beat)

Listen hard. Learn something out of this mess.

You can build yourself a decent life with someone who loves you -- who'd die for you. What's that worth to you?

JADE

Beau... I can't go back. I've got a restraining order against ever seeing my girlfriends...

BEAU

So you go forward, Jade. Figure out some reason to be alive besides hangin' out at the mall and earn yourself some self-respect.

Jade gives in to tears, Beau refuses to comfort her.

BEAU

Yeah, you think about it. You're way overdue for a logical thought.

He puts the truck in drive and heads back to Hart.

EXT. BEAU'S TRUCK - DAY

Beau drives onto the two track into Grandpa's property. Grandpa waits by his truck.

INT. BEAU'S TRUCK - DAY

Beau turns to Jade.

BEAU

I got one last thing to say about this circus and you better pay attention. You upset a whole lot-a people today who truly want to like you, you prit' near gave your grandfather a heart attack and I guess you haven't noticed he deserves a lot better out of you. Now, I hear about any other shenanigans even close to this escapade and you'll be facin' the judge. You got me?

JADE

Yes. I'm sorry, Beau.

BEAU  
Show me, don't tell me. And start  
with your grandfather. He seems to  
love you even if you give him no  
good reason.

EXT. BEAU'S TRUCK - DAY

Jade exits the truck, walks to Grandpa. He puts his arm  
around her and opens the truck door, helps her in. She  
doesn't pull away.

Beau waves to Grandpa and drives off.

INT. GRANDPA'S TRAILER - JADE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Jade enters, shuts the door, flings herself on her bed.

She opens a side table drawer, pulls out the carved Nefertiti  
totem, studies it.

EXT. GRANDPA'S PORCH - DAY

Grandpa sits with Lucky. Jade steps onto the porch wiping her  
hands on a damp dish towel. She hangs the towel on the back  
of her chair, sits down.

GRANDPA  
Mornin,' Granddaughter. Feels good  
to break with routine. We'll just  
lay around today.

JADE  
I could use a little boredom,  
Grandpa.

Grandpa grabs at his heart.

GRANDPA  
Oh, my lord!

JADE  
What's wrong?

GRANDPA  
You just referred to me for the  
first time implyin' a familial  
relationship -- liked to stop my  
heart!

JADE

Oh, yeah. Don't make me regret it.

GRANDPA

Well, we're makin' progress is all.  
Never hurts to acknowledge a  
benchmark.

JADE

And now we know where the family  
drama gene comes from.

GRANDPA

Speakin' of theater, you  
understand... I mean, let's talk  
about...

JADE

I'm sorry I went off like that.  
I'm... actually sorry about a lot  
of things.

GRANDPA

I was a horse's ass tellin' that  
story, not seeing you gettin'  
upset.

JADE

In a way, that's why I feel OK  
about it now... after I thought  
about it, I mean, you obviously  
didn't connect your story to me.

(beat)

But I did.

GRANDPA

Whatcha mean?

JADE

I felt bad about what people could  
be saying about me... really bad.  
And I was scared you were saying it  
about me.

GRANDPA

Well, I take that as a compliment.

JADE

(considering)

I had a game... Top Notch...

She pulls the notched wooden statuette of Egyptian Queen  
Nefertiti from her pocket, places it on the table.

GRANDPA

I know, Jade. I know about your file, too. I had to before they let you come here.

Grandpa picks up the totem, studies it.

JADE

I feel like I'm in two worlds. Back home I laughed all the time about running guys instead of them running me. I called it "business." But I was a...

She shakes her head bitterly.

GRANDPA

(matter of fact)  
Say it and get it over with.

JADE

(whispers)  
... whore.

GRANDPA

Yeah, a whore. But listen. If there's one thing I ain't gonna do, it's sit here and let you draw all the wrong conclusions about your past.

JADE

You don't have to try to make me feel better, Grandpa.

GRANDPA

Thank you and listen. First off, you did all that. All that bein' clever, runnin' a business, makin' a profit.

JADE

But I think there's something... I don't know, really sick about me.

GRANDPA

Naw, you ain't sick. Far from it. See, in a way, blaming you and you alone for your situation is sort-a like blaming a poplar that grows up bent to the left of a big old oak tree just to reach the sunlight.

JADE

So I'm bent.

GRANDPA

Bent, not twisted. You're 17.  
There's plenty of sunlight down  
here to grow you up straight.  
You'll be fine.

JADE

You don't think I'm a... a  
sociopath?

GRANDPA

A sociopath truly can't feel what  
other people feel, much less care  
about it. Hell, you just learn the  
hard way, like me.

JADE

Beau says I have to go forward...  
but honestly, I don't know... I  
mean, how can I feel this way and  
turn into a different person...

GRANDPA

It hurts to crack the shell around  
who you really are, Jade. You ain't  
broken...

JADE

Just a little bent.

GRANDPA

You're just breakin' free-a the  
past. Give the future room to open  
up for you... all shiny, new...  
what makes you happy?

JADE

I don't know yet, Grandpa.

GRANDPA

Well, for Christ's sake, make it  
count, girl. You only get one turn  
around the dance floor.

Grandpa takes Queen Nefertiti in two hands, breaks her  
neatly, tosses the pieces in the waste basket. Jade watches  
with tears in her eyes.

After a moment, she stands up, takes his hand, pulls him up  
and hugs him.

They both have tears in their eyes.

EXT. GRANDPA'S GATE - DAY

Jade climbs in Heather's truck, AC running.

JADE  
Thanks for giving me another  
chance, Heather.

Jade notices the tube of sunscreen on the dashboard. She taps it, shoots a smile at Heather, who smiles back, shrugs.

HEATHER  
Are you ever gonna tell me what  
happened?

JADE  
I think so. But if it's OK, not  
tonight.

Heather studies her, then nods.

HEATHER  
Guess now I'm a hundred percent.

JADE  
Me, too.

They hug.

Heather drives, plays with her necklace. A charm dangles from a leather thong, catches Jade's eye.

JADE  
What is that?

HEATHER  
Bear claw. Rufus gave it to me.  
Talkin' about takin' me to dinner,  
someplace fancy. He wants into my  
pants big time.

Jade studies the bear claw.

JADE  
(absently)  
Was he successful?

HEATHER  
Hey, I got my secrets, too.

JADE  
Did he tell you where he got it?

HEATHER  
A bear claw?

JADE  
You know killing one -- that's  
against the law.

HEATHER  
Jesus, Jade, you sound like Beau.

JADE  
I saw the bear. It made me sick  
what they did to it.

HEATHER  
Aw, shit, why'd you have to say  
that.

EXT. A SWAMP TRAIL - DAY

Heather's truck joins the usual crowd of mud-boggers.

EXT. HEATHER'S TRUCK - DAY

Rufus ambles over, Heather gets out of the truck to meet him.

HEATHER  
Hey, Rufe.

RUFUS  
Hey, baby.

Rufus pulls Heather close. Heather shows him the bear claw.

HEATHER  
You kill a bear to get this?

RUFUS  
Maybe. What if I did?

INT. HEATHER'S TRUCK - DAY

Heather gives a slight nod. Jade dials her iPhone.

JADE  
Pony, tell Beau. Rufus gave a bear  
claw to Heather.

If he didn't kill that bear  
himself, he probably knows who did.

EXT. HEATHER'S TRUCK - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Rufus spots Jade on the phone.

RUFUS  
Hey, who's that little rich bitch  
callin'?

Rufus runs to Jade's side of the truck. Heather jumps back in  
the cab, drops the locks.

Rufus grabs the door handle, bangs on the window.

RUFUS  
Who you talkin' to?

Rufus runs to his truck, grabs a tire iron.

HEATHER  
Shit!

Heather drives onto the swamp two-track. Light fades around  
them.

Rufus runs back to his truck, tears off after them.

The crowd decides to participate. Horns HONK, people YELL  
trash talk, innocent of Rufus' intention.

Trucks take off following Rufus following Heather.

INT. HEATHER'S TRUCK - DAY

Jade's phone RINGS.

JADE  
Who? I can't hear... oh, Beau!

Jade hands the phone to Heather, she listens.

HEATHER  
(to Beau)  
It's the old lumber two-track, runs  
along Cyprus Swamp.

Heather hands the phone back to Jade.

HEATHER  
He's comin'.

EXT. HEATHER'S TRUCK - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Heather runs out of two track in a thick stand of cypress.  
Failing light shades the trees into a solid wall.

Rufus' truck comes up behind them, he leaps out, a tire iron  
in one hand and a .45 caliber handgun in the other.

HEATHER  
Shit! Shit! Shit!

Jade flings open her door and jumps out.

HEATHER  
Jade!

Jade disappears into the cypress thicket.

Rufus tosses the tire iron at Heather's truck, runs into the  
thicket behind Jade.

The rest of the crowd pulls up. Truck radios BLAST, people  
LAUGH, coolers open, partying starts.

BEAU'S TRUCK

careens into the scene. Beau runs to Heather who is in near  
hysterics.

BEAU  
Where's Rufus?

HEATHER  
Beau, he's got a gun! He followed  
Jade into them trees! He knows she  
called you!

Beau tears into the thicket.

PONY'S TRUCK

pulls into the melee, with Arlene next to him. Arlene runs to  
Heather, hugs her.

ARLENE  
Heather, honey, calm down, calm  
down. She'll be OK.

GRANDPA'S TRUCK

pulls up next to Pony's. Grandpa quickly takes in the  
situation.

GRANDPA

Pony, get everybody to turn their  
truck lights into the thicket.  
Hurry, boy!

Pony leans out his truck window, blows on his HORN.

The crowd turns toward him.

PONY

Turn your lights into the cypress!  
C'mon everybody, do it!

Drivers comply, but can't see much into the dark stand.

EXT. INSIDE THE CYPRESS THICKET - DAY - CONTINUOUS

The headlights penetrate weakly.

Jade perches some 20 feet off the ground on a fallen cypress  
tree trunk cantilevered against other trees.

Rufus walks underneath her, his gun at the ready.

A branch cracks under Jade's foot as she shifts her weight.  
Rufus spots her, raises his gun.

Beau barrels out of the underbrush, tackles Rufus, the .45  
goes flying.

Jade drops out of the tree and grabs Rufus' gun.

The two men roll on the ground pummeling each other.

JADE

All right, stop it. I've got the  
gun.

The men ignore her.

JADE

I'll shoot!

Still nothing.

Jade aims past the tussling men, pulls the trigger. Nothing.

She checks the gun, flips off the safety.

Rufus gets the upper hand against Beau, throwing him to the  
ground.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE CYPRESS THICKET - DAY - CONTINUOUS

A GUNSHOT. Then SILENCE.

Grandpa opens the truck door and steps out, watching.

Heather and Arlene next to Pony, he hugs both.

People cut off their radios. A DEATHLY SILENCE settles.

RUFUS IN HANDCUFFS

Beau pushes handcuffed Rufus ahead of him, both covered in mud.

Jade steps out behind them with Rufus' handgun.

Grandpa rushes to her, scoops her into a hug she returns.

GRANDPA

Jade, are you hurt? Jesus, Jade!

JADE

I'm OK.

BEAU

(to Grandpa)

Unless she broke her leg in the last 30 seconds, she's fine.

Jade hands Rufus' gun to Beau, butt first.

JADE

He had the safety on.

BEAU

(to Rufus)

That right? You had the safety on?

RUFUS

Hell, yes! I ain't a murderer!  
Just thought I'd scare her some.  
Shut her up.

GRANDPA

What about that gunshot?

JADE

That was me. Fired into a tree to get Rufe's attention.

Beau studies Jade with something more than respect.

BEAU

That was real smart, gettin' up in the tree like that. He never would have seen you without that branch givin' way.

Grandpa watches with a small smile. The crowd disperses as sky darkens.

EXT. GRANDPA'S PORCH - DAY

Jade and Grandpa sit on the porch, Lucky next to them. Beau and Pony pull up in Beau's official truck.

Lucky BARKS a welcome as the brothers approach the porch.

BEAU

Sorry to interrupt your morning.  
Can we join you?

GRANDPA

Yep, c'mon in. I'll get some extra coffee cups.

BEAU

(to Jade)

You ready to make a statement?

JADE

Yes.

INT. GRANDPA'S TRAILER - KITCHEN - DAY

Pony, Beau, Grandpa and Jade sit around the kitchen table.

The handwritten statement lies in front of them.

PONY

Damn! I wish I'd seen all the action.

BEAU

(to Pony)

You and Hart did exactly the right thing at the right time.

GRANDPA

Scared the shit out of me when I heard that gunshot.

BEAU

Jade could-a taken him down. He sure wasn't expectin' that.

PONY

Maybe from one of our homegrowns, but not a Yankee gal!

JADE

I feel sorry for Rufus. Maybe if he had a job...

BEAU

Yeah, maybe. But he still brought a gun. If he hurt you, he'd be a lot sorrier than he is right now.

Pony shoots a knowing glance at Beau.

PONY

Why Beau, you're soundin' kinda sweet on old Jade, here.

JADE

Old?

Beau throws Pony an exasperated look.

GRANDPA

I'm just proud of you, Jade, through and through. You got a mile-wide streak of spirit in you. Tell ya what -- I think you earned a little reward.

INT. GRANDPA'S TRAILER - KITCHEN - DAY

Grandpa washes the cups, saucers and cutlery while Pony dries. They watch Jade and Beau through the window.

EXT. GRANDPA'S DOORYARD - DAY

Beau and Jade stand by his truck.

BEAU

You kept your head, Jade, I appreciate that. Made my job easier.

JADE

Well, that's what it's all about, isn't it? Making your job easier?

She stares at him directly. He meets her eyes.

BEAU  
Occasionally, I do have thoughts  
beyond the job.

JADE  
About me?

BEAU  
So far I've had to think about  
savin' you from sunstroke or  
gunfire. Does take up quite a bit-a  
my time.

Jade leans into Beau, he almost kisses her.

INT. GRANDPA'S TRAILER - KITCHEN - DAY

Pony gives out a WHOOP and slaps Grandpa with the dish towel.  
Grandpa doesn't react but continues to watch them.

EXT. GRANDPA'S DOORYARD - DAY

Beau steps back from Jade, touches her cheek gently before  
his hand drops to his side.

INT. GRANDPA'S TRAILER - KITCHEN - DAY

Grandpa smiles. Pony looks confused.

EXT. GRANDPA'S DOORYARD - DAY

Jade traces his touch on her cheek.

JADE  
That's it?

BEAU  
I'm five years older than you, and  
sworn to administer your court  
order. That's what I have to think  
about now. Period.

Jade flashes a mixture of hurt and irritation.

JADE  
But --

BEAU  
I'd be worse than that coach. Think  
about it, Jade.

Jade's face clears.

JADE  
It won't always be like this.

BEAU  
'Course not. Grow into yourself,  
decide where life takes you. And  
when the time is right, you'll see  
your friends again.

She looks a question at him.

BEAU  
Yes, trust me, you will.  
(beat)  
See now, this here conversation is  
truly intimate. Nobody but us will  
ever have this moment. That could  
mean something, maybe not. We'll  
see.

They share a smile.

Beau gestures at the kitchen window.

BEAU  
Pony! Get out here!

Beau tips his hat to Jade. He and Pony get in the truck,  
drive away.

EXT. GRANDPA'S TRAILER - TWO-TRACK - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Lucky leashed, pulls Grandpa forward as he and Jade walk down  
the two-track some distance from the trailer.

GRANDPA  
You understand about Beau?

JADE  
I have a feeling if and when, you  
know? Like when I'm older and if he  
isn't married. Or maybe not, but I  
felt... just... like I know what it  
means to move forward.

GRANDPA  
Sounds about right.

JADE

The thing is he knows me. What I am.

GRANDPA

He knows who you can be, too.

JADE

I'm giving that lots of thought, Grandpa. I am. So... what's on the agenda for today?

GRANDPA

Well, I been thinkin', Granddaughter. Maybe we should grow some honeybees. I go through honey by the gallon, and it seems like a staple we should cultivate.

A low BUZZ off the two track, but close.

JADE

Are we close to a hive? What's that buzzing?

Suddenly, Lucky BARKS violently, yanks Grandpa forward. Grandpa fumbles for his gun, pulls it free from his holster.

GRANDPA

Jade, stay put.

Grandpa hauls Lucky back from a huge coiled rattle snake at the side of the two track, its tail BUZZES a strike warning.

Grandpa takes aim, BLOWS the snake in half. Lucky YAMMERS.

Grandpa reaches to Lucky's collar to pull him back.

About a foot of snake, head still attached, leaps reflexively at Grandpa, buries fangs in his hand.

Grandpa stunned, the snake's mangled body drips blood.

GRANDPA

Shit!

Jade runs to him.

GRANDPA

Goddammit, girl, get back. This fucker might still be alive.

Grandpa shakes his hand and the snake drops off, it's eyes glazed in death.

Grandpa aims at the head, SHOOTs again, splattering it in the dirt. He hands the leash to Jade.

GRANDPA  
Get the truck. I'll put a  
tourniquet on.

Jade runs for the truck, pulls Lucky along behind her.

Grandpa takes out his knife, pulls out his shirt tail and slices off a strip. He wraps it around his wrist one handed and pulls it tight with his teeth.

The truck appears, Jade at the wheel.

INT. GRANDPA'S TRUCK - DAY

GRANDPA  
The nearest hospital is about 20  
miles. Take it easy, we got plenty  
of time.

JADE  
It's a good half hour and you know  
it.

Jade SLAMS the truck in gear and hauls ass.

EXT. GRANDPA'S TRUCK - DAY

The truck barrels down Main Street.

INT. GRANDPA'S TRUCK - DAY

Jade on her iPhone. Grandpa slumped against the passenger door.

JADE  
(into the cell phone)  
I'm about 5 minutes out. I don't  
think he's conscious.

EXT. LOCAL HOSPITAL - DAY

Jade pulls the truck into the emergency bay.

INT. GRANDPA'S TRUCK - DAY

Grandpa leans against the wall of the cab, LABORED BREATHING.  
His hand swollen, discolored.

EXT. LOCAL HOSPITAL - EMERGENCY BAY - DAY

An EMERGENCY TEAM waits with a gurney. They load Grandpa on  
the gurney into the ER.

INT. LOCAL HOSPITAL - ER WAITING ROOM - DAY

ER DOCTOR enters. Jade leaps up.

JADE  
How is he? Can I see him?

ER DOCTOR  
He can't talk. We need someone who  
can authorize treatment.

JADE  
I'm his granddaughter.

ER DOCTOR  
You 18?

JADE  
Almost.

ER DOCTOR  
Not good enough. What about your  
parents?

JADE  
In Michigan.

ER DOCTOR  
Call. The sooner the better. This  
could go either way at the moment.

Jade pulls out her iPhone and speed dials.

JADE  
Mom?

INT. HOSPITAL - INTENSIVE CARE - WAITING ROOM - DAY

The Doctor talks to Jade and her mother. Kathleen, dressed  
down to casual in fashion jeans and sweater.

DOCTOR  
Here's what we're dealing with. The  
necrosis is spreading.

JADE  
What's necrosis?

DOCTOR  
Dead muscle tissue. It can clog his  
kidneys. There's a strong  
possibility of renal failure.

KATHLEEN  
Oh my god.

DOCTOR  
We're not giving up. But you need  
to know it's not going well.

TIME TRANSITION

JADE AND KATHLEEN SIP COFFEE  
in the deserted waiting room.

JADE  
Mom...  
Kathleen looks up at her and smiles.

KATHLEEN  
You haven't called me that in a  
long time.

JADE  
Another benchmark.  
Kathleen looks confused.

JADE  
Later. Do you think he's going to  
make it?

KATHLEEN  
I think we need to prepare for the  
worst.

JADE  
I'm glad you came. I'm kind of  
afraid.

KATHLEEN  
Me, too. But you seem... peaceful.  
Even now.

JADE  
Yeah, coming to Cancun will do that.

Kathleen looks confused again.

JADE  
Someone made a joke a while ago.

Kathleen nods, accepts there is much she will never know.

INT. HOSPITAL - INTENSIVE CARE - GRANDPA'S ROOM - DAY

Jade and Kathleen stand by Grandpa's bed holding his hands.

KATHLEEN  
Dad, we have bad news.

GRANDPA  
I ain't gonna make it, that about it?

KATHLEEN  
They can't reverse the damage, Dad.

GRANDPA  
I want to go home.

KATHLEEN  
Dad, moving you will only make things worse.

GRANDPA  
I'm headed to worse one way or another. Take me home.

KATHLEEN  
Dad --

JADE  
OK, Grandpa. We'll make it happen.

Kathleen gives Jade a long look, then nods.

EXT. GRANDPA'S TRAILER - DAY

Jade and Kathleen pull their rental car into the carport.

An ambulance behind them continues to the front door.

INT. GRANDPA'S TRAILER - LIVING ROOM - DAY - CONTINUOUS

The living room with a hospital bed.

JUAN and ROY carry Grandpa's gurney into the trailer, gentle and efficient.

JUAN

OK. Mr. Hartwell, we're going to move you now, so you're going to feel a bit unstable for just a minute here.

Juan and Roy grasp the edges of Grandpa's blanket and lift him onto the hospital bed. Grandpa lies with his eyes closed.

JADE

Thank you so much.

ROY

No problem, Miss. Our best wishes to the family.

KATHLEEN

You're very kind.

Juan and Roy exit. Jade pulls up a chair by Grandpa's side.

JADE

You're home now, Grandpa.

KATHLEEN

(to Jade)

The hospice nurse will be here soon. I'm going back to the gate to direct her in.

Jade nods, not taking her eyes off Grandpa.

Kathleen exits. Jade watches Grandpa. Gradually her head lowers to his chest. She CRIES quietly.

Grandpa's hand moves to her shoulder. He speaks with an effort but audibly.

GRANDPA

Hey, girl, I ain't dead yet.

Jade sits up, wipes her eyes.

JADE

It's not funny, Grandpa, I just found you. I don't want to lose you.

GRANDPA

Real world, Jade. Beauty of the plan. Your turn to dance now. You got everything you need.

JADE

No, I hate it! I'm not ready!

GRANDPA

Thank you, Jade. Thanks for bringin' me home.

Jade can't speak. She nods, wipes her eyes.

GRANDPA

We're all gonna get through this just fine.

He closes his eyes again.

Kathleen enters, followed by PATTY the hospice nurse carrying a shoulder bag of supplies.

KATHLEEN

Jade, this is Patty.

Jade nods at Patty.

INT. GRANDPA'S TRAILER - KITCHEN - DAY

Patty, Jade and Kathleen sit around the kitchen table, an array of supplies spread before them.

PATTY

Your granddad's kidneys have failed. You need to know that he won't be able to last long. Our job is to make sure he doesn't suffer.

KATHLEEN

What do we have to do?

PATTY

His kidneys aren't pulling moisture from his body. It'll get harder for him to breathe as his lungs fill.

JADE

You mean he's... he's going to drown in his own fluids?

PATTY  
It'll feel that way without the  
morphine.

She gestures to the syringe and bottle in front of them.

PATTY  
We give this to him regularly or  
when he expresses discomfort.

JADE  
(bitterly)  
"Discomfort."

PATTY  
I know it's hard. Prob'ly harder  
for you than for him at this point.  
But this is what he wanted. And you  
know he's grateful you're here to  
help.

KATHLEEN  
How do we give that to him?

Patty demonstrates how to fill the syringe.

PATTY  
You fill it here, no more. This is  
plenty to reduce anxiety or any  
symptoms like tryin' to catch his  
breath.

JADE  
When?

PATTY  
We'll start now. I'll make sure you  
know what to do, then I've got to  
go see another patient. I'll be  
back tomorrow.

JADE  
But what about tonight?

PATTY  
He's restin' comfortable now. I  
think we have prob'ly at least a  
day before he fails. The last  
hours, he'll likely be unconscious.

LIVING ROOM - DAY

Grandpa appears to sleep.

Patty hands a clip board to Jade.

PATTY

You write down the time and keep track of the dosages. You don't want to overdose him and it's hard to tell... he might be unconscious.

She steps closer to Grandpa's side with the syringe.

PATTY

You open his mouth and slip it under the tongue. It gets absorbed quicker that way.

Patty hands the syringe to Kathleen, who awkwardly pushes Grandpa's jaw down to open his mouth, and slips the syringe under his tongue.

PATTY

That's fine.  
(to Jade)  
You noted the time?

Jade nods "yes."

PATTY

If he doesn't show any discomfort in the next four hours, you can wait that long before givin' him another dose. If he does wake up or start to thrashin' around, give him about half this amount, and he should quiet right down.

Jade and her mother both nod "OK."

PATTY

You two gonna to be all right?

KATHLEEN

Thank you, Patty, I think we know what to do.

PATTY

'Nite, then. Try to get some rest.

Kathleen and Patty both pull up chairs next to Grandpa.

TIME TRANSITION

Kathleen comes out of the kitchen with a cup of tea in her hand. Jade's eyes are fixed on Grandpa's face.

KATHLEEN

Why don't you turn in? I'll take the first shift.

JADE

I don't feel like sleeping. You go.

KATHLEEN

Me, neither.

Grandpa opens his eyes.

GRANDPA

For Christ's sake, can't a dyin' man get some rest?

KATHLEEN

Oh, Dad, sorry!

Grandpa reaches for Kathleen's hand. She sets down the tea cup and sits on the edge of his bed.

GRANDPA

Thanks for rushin' down here, Kit. I'm kind-a glad we get to end this show together.

KATHLEEN

I wish we hadn't waited so long, Dad.

GRANDPA

Me, too, Daughter, me, too. But in a way, I got to have you back when you sent me Jade. I'm grateful, Kit, and I'm sorry for... I should-a been there for you. I love you.

KATHLEEN

You brought Jade back to me, Dad. Nothing else matters.

JADE

Grandpa.

GRANDPA

Sweetest word I ever got to hear, Jade.

JADE  
I never thanked you, Grandpa.  
But... I'll never, ever forget what  
you taught me.

GRANDPA  
Keep that gun handy.

Jade HALF-LAUGHS, HALF-CRIES.

JADE  
Grandpa... I love you. I love you  
so much.

Grandpa nods, his eyes close, his hand falls away.

GRANDPA  
(whispers)  
Love you, too.

TIME TRANSITION

Jade and Kathleen sleep in chairs, each covered with a  
blanket. Grandpa appears unchanged.

Jade wakes up first. She checks Grandpa, then goes to the  
kitchen to make coffee.

Kathleen wakes up, checks Grandpa, drifts to the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

JADE  
He looks like he could get better.

KATHLEEN  
I wish he could, too, baby.

Jade brings a cup of coffee to her chair by Grandpa.

The phone RINGS. Kathleen answers.

KATHLEEN  
(into the phone)  
Hello.

She listens.

KATHLEEN  
(into the phone)  
Well, sure one of us can pick you  
up. Faster than you renting a car,  
for heaven's sake.

She hangs up.

KATHLEEN  
Patty's car won't start. Do you  
want to go?

JADE  
No, Mom. I want to stay with  
Grandpa.

KATHLEEN  
Are you sure? You know what to do  
if he wakes up?

JADE  
Of course. I did OK last night.

KATHLEEN  
I'm very proud of you, Jade. You've  
been incredibly strong.

She hugs Jade. Jade hugs her back.

KATHLEEN  
I'll be gone a half hour at most.

Jade nods. Kathleen exits. Grandpa slumbers on. Jade opens a  
book, reads, sips her coffee.

GRANDPA  
(shouts)  
Jade.

Jade leaps to her feet. Her book tumbles to the floor.

JADE  
You're awake.

GRANDPA  
Take off this damn blanket. I'm  
fryin'.

Jade peels back the blanket, Grandpa in thin, hospital shift.

GRANDPA  
Get the fan. Get the fan. I'm  
burnin' up.

Jade lugs a rotating fan close to him, plugs it in. Grandpa  
PANTS despite the breeze.

GRANDPA  
Jesus, it's hot in here.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Jade runs cold water over a cloth in the sink.

LIVING ROOM - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Jade puts the cloth on Grandpa's head. He pushes it away, thrashing.

Jade picks up the morphine, fills the syringe, puts it under Grandpa's tongue.

He continues to toss.

GRANDPA

Jade, I can't breathe. It's too hot, I can't catch my breath. Jade!

KATHLEEN AND PATTY

enter the trailer, move immediately to Grandpa's side.

PATTY

How long has he been like this?

GRANDPA

Goddammit, someone turn on the A-C!

KATHLEEN

We don't have A-C, Dad.

JADE

Just a few minutes. I just gave him some morphine.

PATTY

Did you write it down?

JADE

Not yet.

PATTY

It's a controlled substance. You need to keep the record straight. Take care of that now, please.

Patty puts the cloth back on Grandpa's face. He struggles.

Kathleen tries to take his hand. He shakes her off.

Jade goes to the clipboard and writes.

GRANDPA  
I can't breathe!

JADE  
We need to give him morphine.

PATTY  
No. You just gave him a full dose.

JADE  
I don't care! You said he wouldn't suffer!

PATTY  
You can't give him more. You might kill him.

Jade LAUGHS a little hysterically.

JADE  
What the hell do you think is going on here?

Kathleen hugs Jade.

KATHLEEN  
Jade, honey, calm down. We can't ask Patty to break the law.

Grandpa MOANS. His chest heaves.

JADE  
What are we supposed to do?

Patty hesitates, Grandpa is going from bad to worse.

PATTY  
I'm not sure. He's a big man. Maybe we should --

JADE  
Yes. We should.

Jade steps away from her mother, fills the syringe again.

PATTY  
Wait, wait! Don't do that.

JADE  
Why the hell not?

PATTY  
Listen, I understand he's sufferin' but I can't authorize an overdose.

And if I see you doin' it, I'll  
have to take the meds away from  
you. Let me make a call.

KATHLEEN  
Who are you calling?

PATTY  
My charge nurse. Let me see if I  
can get the authorization.  
(beat)  
This might take a little while.

Patty moves into the kitchen out of sight of the scene in the  
living room.

Jade and Kathleen hover over Grandpa. He thrashes wildly.

GRANDPA  
Jesus, do somethin'. I need  
somethin'. I... help me.

JADE  
Grandpa, we have to check.

KATHLEEN  
Just another minute, Dad.

GRANDPA  
Bullshit! Give me somethin'.

Jade hesitates, looks at Kathleen, then toward the kitchen.

GRANDPA  
Now!

Jade picks up the syringe, partially fills it, puts it under  
his tongue. She pushes the plunger home. Grandpa strains.

GRANDPA  
That's not enough.

KATHLEEN  
Dad...

GRANDPA  
More!

Jade partially fills the syringe again.

From the kitchen, PATTY'S VOICE floats over the scene, words  
indistinguishable but calm.

Jade puts the half-filled syringe under his tongue, pushes the plunger.

GRANDPA  
Jesus! Again!

Jade SOBS. She fills the syringe.

Grandpa calms a bit. Jade pauses, watching him.

GRANDPA  
Better.

Grandpa's eyes are wide open, staring. His breathing slows, slows again. Jade and her mother realize he's passing.

KATHLEEN  
Dad. Look for the angels.

Jade, grateful to her mother.

JADE  
Grandpa, look for Grandma. Do you see her?

Grandpa's eyes search ahead of him. He seems to nod. Then his eyes still, his vision fades.

Patty enters from the kitchen, moves to the foot of Grandpa's bed, stands quietly, waiting.

They watch Grandpa's chest fall for the last time. Patty fits a stethoscope into her ears, listens to Grandpa's chest. She nods.

PATTY  
He's gone.

Kathleen wraps Jade in her arms. Jade bows her head and  
WEEPS.

INT. GAINESVILLE, FL - ATTORNEY'S OFFICE - DAY

Jade and her mother sit across the desk from Grandpa's attorney, JAKE LEE.

JAKE LEE  
It's yours, Jade, well over 100 acres of wilderness. There's just one caveat.

If you decide you don't want to live there, you turn it over to a land trust. That restriction will follow the deed.

KATHLEEN

Live there! I can't imagine.

JADE

I can.

JAKE LEE

There is also the matter of a cash settlement from his insurance, and a small savings account, a total all together of just under a hundred thousand dollars. The amount is specified to pay for your college education, Jade, should you decide to study a field that will help preserve the land he bequeathed to you.

JADE

Would that include engineering -- like alternative energy? Solar power systems?

JAKE LEE

I believe it would. Otherwise, if you refused the property, the amount would transfer to the land trust.

KATHLEEN

Jade, we need to think seriously about this. Obviously, your future is very much at stake here.

JADE

Not just mine, Mom. I think I know a few people who would love to work for me installing solar power systems.

(beat)

By the way, Mr. Lee, your first name wouldn't be Robert, would it?

JAKE LEE

No, I'm a northern transplant. My first name is Jacob, Jake for short.

JADE  
Just checking.

EXT. GRANDPA'S TRAILER - DAY

Jade pulls up driving Grandpa's truck, Kathleen and Lucky passengers. She parks in the yard.

INT. GRANDPA'S TRUCK - DAY

Jade turns to face her mother, takes her hand.

JADE  
I've left this way too long, but I need to tell you something. I guess you know I was mad when I left.

KATHLEEN  
I gathered that.

JADE  
I was more than mad. I was ashamed of a lot... especially how I treated you... but I couldn't admit it. Not even to myself. I need to tell you how sorry I am for all that shit I pulled. Everything I put you through.

KATHLEEN  
Thank you, Jade.

Kathleen hugs her.

KATHLEEN  
I was far from perfect. I mean, I was supposed to be the grown-up. You forgive me, too?

Jade nods "yes." They separate.

KATHLEEN  
Are you certain about staying here? It's so remote... it scares me.

JADE  
I think Grandpa built this place because he was still hopeful. He showed me there's a future here, Mom. I'm going to build on that.

KATHLEEN

I want... I hope you let me be part  
of it, too, Jade. Can I visit?

JADE

Deal, Mom. Anytime.

They hug again.

EXT. GRANDPA'S TRUCK - DAY

Jade takes a small cardboard box from behind her seat.

EXT. GRANDPA'S POND - DAY

Jade, Kathleen and Lucky stand with Beau and a few other  
familiar faces including Heather. Arlene and Pony hold hands.

KATHLEEN

Dad, your friends and family are  
here to say goodbye.

Jade takes a handful of Grandpa's ashes from the box.

JADE

(whispers)

Thank you, Grandpa.

She tosses the ashes skyward. The wind catches, spreads the  
ashes over the water. Across the pond, quiet deer watch.

FADE OUT.

THE END