INT / EXT SALMON LADDER - DAY

OPENING CREDITS play over SLOW-MOTION footage of SALMON, beat to hell by their long journey, struggling mightily to throw their bodies up the steps of an INDUSTRIAL SALMON LADDER. SPAWNSERS struggle, rest, and in some cases, die, on every side. We SUPERIMPOSE the TITLE-

LIMBO

We hear a VOICE intoning a poetic travelogue-

ALBRIGHT (V.O.)
Welcome to America's Last Frontier.

INT / EXT VARIOUS SHOTS

As the rap continues we CROSS-CUT between travelogue-style shots of an enormous TOUR BOAT discharging its PASSENGERS into the dockside shopping area of Port Henry, Alaska, and SALMON being sorted, cleaned, gutted, processed and canned by WORKERS in a large CANNERY-

ALBRIGHT (V.O.)
Where the final, lumbering remnants of the Ice Age, the massive and awe-inspiring glaciers, calve cathedral-sized icebergs into the sea. Where Nature's bounty unfolds in a panoply of flora and fauna the like which is seen nowhere else on the planet. From the ocean depths plumbed by ageless cetaceans to azure skies where the mighty eagle soars, this land abounds with creatures great and small, strange and majestic. It is a land steeped in tradition, its mists redolent of the hardy souls of men who have gone to sea- Tlingit and Haida, Inuit and Aleut, Russian and Norwegian- their languages and deeds lingering on in the names of our countless islands and passageways. A land that for centuries has lifted its siren call to the bold and adventurous, to men and women willing to risk their lives for the promise of untold fortune, be it from fur or fin, from the Heaven-pointing spires of old-growth spruce or from the buried treasures of yellow gold or black, energy-rich petroleum.

The voice CROSS FADES with ANOTHER rougher, more ironic VOICE-

ALBRIGHT AND HARM
A land visited each year by the relentless and mysterious salmon as it completes its great cycle of life, each river and stream welcoming home the king and sockeye-
HARMON 'HARM' KING, a foreman at the plant, stands behind several MEN and WOMEN who are cleaning gurry off salmon and sliding them on toward the next step in the process. Only one of them, RICKY, is really listening to his oration.

HARM
-coho and dog, the pink or humpback that is smashed into cans and quick-cooked to give the colorful local folk something to do other than play cards and scratch their nuts all day. A land where that nice old lady from Fort Lauderdale who had the stroke three cabins down was probably parked next to the thawed halibut you're eating on board tonight while your floating hotel chugs through the Hecate Strait to deliver its precious load of geriatrics to the hungry, Visa-card-accepting denizens of our northernmost and most mosquito-infested state.

Harm stops talking and gives Ricky a look. Ricky keeps sliming fish-

HARM
So?

RICKY
What's 'redolent'?

HARM
'Having or emitting an odor.'

RICKY
People are gonna want to come here because it smells?

HARM
'Pleasantly fragrant.' At least that's what the crossword puzzle said.

RICKY
Not talking about this place.

HARM
Course they're not. The minute we shut down they'll make this place into a tourist attraction. They'll disinfect the joint and you can get a job in one of those cases, like in a museum, those displays-

Harm's wife, AUDREY, who is sliming fish, speaks up-
AUDREY
Dioramas.

HARM
In one of those dioramas. They'll cover you with fake fish guts and put a label underneath- 'Typical Filipino Cannery Worker'. You just have to keep still and hold your breath till the tour group moves on.

RICKY
Probably pay better than this.

HARM
I'll be out on the water in my boat and every time I make a set there'll be one of those floating nursing homes with five hundred sonsabitches and their cameras, capturing the moment.

AUDREY
And what boat is that?

HARM
My boat.

AUDREY
You don't have a boat, honey. Remember?

HARM
Oh yes I do. I'm gettin it back. Today.

EXT PARTY GROUNDS - WEDDING RECEPTION

NOELLE, a high school girl dressed in a white steward's uniform, circulates among WEDDING GUESTS with a tray of hors d'oeuvres. An outdoor wedding RECEPTION is in progress, a BAND singing and playing from a bandstand in the BG-

NOELLE
Would you like some hors d'oeuvres? Excuse me, would you like some hors d'oeuvres?

JOE GASTINEAU, a handyman in his 40's, passes with a case of wine. He and Noelle have a friendly, flirtatious relationship-

JOE
Hey. Nice uniform.

NOELLE
The bride's parents said they wanted uniforms, so Frankie and Lou rented these. I look stupid.
JOE
You look like an angel.

NOELLE
I look like a little white maggot.

Noelle sees a GUEST approaching-

NOELLE (shifting gears)
Would you like some hors d'oeuvres?

The guest grabs a handful and a napkin and fades back into the crowd-

NOELLE
How come you don't have to wear one?

JOE
This is the official unemployed pulp mill worker's uniform-

NOELLE
Right.

We FOLLOW as Noelle wades back into the crowd. Joe continues with the wine-

JOE
Keep smiling.

NOELLE
Would you like a cheese ball?

Noelle brings us to the father of the bride, ALBRIGHT, and a logging executive, BAINES-

ALBRIGHT
Thank you, darling. What I'm saying is, you have to look at the big picture. You clear-cut the trees, what do you have?

We HOLD with the men as Noelle circulates-

BAINES
Hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of timber-

ALBRIGHT
But it's ugly-

BAINES
The point is to get the trees down without spending a fortune.

ALBRIGHT
You're thinking short-term, Phil. Like my mother always told me- You Don't Shit In Your Front Yard.
BAINES
Your mother said that?

ALBRIGHT
Constantly. Our people cruise by an island, got their binoculars out, the ones that can still see, God bless them- what do we show them? We show them a little Indian fish camp, some totem poles maybe, we show them a black bear foraging for breakfast in the early morning mist. We do not show them deforested hillsides and logging equipment, Phil. Heavy machinery they can see in New Jersey.

BAINES
The loggers have as much right-

ALBRIGHT
We all have to make our living, I'm not arguing that. Cut the trees in the interior, make it into a parking lot- just quit with the chainsaws when you get to where people can see. We're trying to develop themes for each area up here- 'The Whales' Causeway', 'Island of the Raven People', 'Kingdom of the Salmon', 'Lumberland'.

BAINES
That's us-

ALBRIGHT
That's a turn-of-the-century sawmill with a little water-powered generator and a gift shop. That's history, Phil, not industry. History is our future here, not our past.

Albright sees his daughter go by in her wedding dress-

ALBRIGHT (beaming)
Will you look at her? She looks like a million bucks.

NOELLE (returning)
Would you like some more, gentlemen?

ALBRIGHT
Find the little girl with the shrimp and send her over this way, would you? Thanks, honey. It's like with these kayak outfitters, Phil- I know the jellybean colors are easy to spot if there's trouble, but it spoils the ambience-
Noelle looks to the stage as the GUESTS APPLAUD as the band finishes its number. The woman singer, DONNA DE ANGELO, steps to the microphone-

DONNA
Thank you. Thank you very much.

STAGE

Donna, in her early 40's, is smiling but clearly upset about something-

DONNA
Thank you. This is kind of a special day for me- I know it's a special one for all of you- this is my last appearance with Randy Mason and the Pipeline-

POLITE APPLAUSE from the audience. The accordion player, glares at her as the other BAND MEMBERS exchange surprised looks-

DONNA
I'll be continuing my run as a solo performer at the Golden Nugget saloon and pocket billiard emporium, downtown Port Henry's answer to Carnegie Hall-

She looks daggers at the accordion player-

DONNA
While Randy will be rapidly sinking back into the relative obscurity that he so richly deserves.

A few NERVOUS TITTERS from the guests close to the bandstand-

DONNA
The time we've spent together has seemed- much longer than it probably was, and with that in mind I'd like to dedicate this next song to him.
Fellas-

Donna turns her back to the audience, tells the players what she wants, and then turns back to launch into a SONG about a man who has broken a woman's heart one time too many. She is very good, able to control her strong, emotional voice, despite the obvious tension on stage. The accordion player sulks as Donna looks him straight in the eye-

NOELLE

We watch over Noelle's shoulder for a moment, then she turns to us, nearly in tears-
NOELLE

Dammit.

We FOLLOW Noelle toward the prep tables to refill her tray. Her employers, FRANKIE and LOU, are having a heated argument with Harmon King, in his street clothes now, as they rapidly prep bread baskets and side dishes for the meal-

LOU
I don't see where we have anything to discuss.

HARM
You're not gonna take that attitude if I show up with a lawyer-

LOU
A lawyer?

Noelle grabs more hors d'oeuvres and hurries away, realizing she shouldn't be hearing this-

LOU
You're threatening us with a lawyer? In schools now when they teach estates, when they teach contracts, you know who they use? Francine, here, that's who- she wrote the fucking book!

FRANKIE
It's not really a text book, Louise-

LOU
I, on the other hand, was a criminal attorney. Some of the business practices that you engaged in-

HARM
That's bullshit-

LOU
You see a couple dykes wander up from Seattle, you figure here's easy pickins-

FRANKIE
Louise-

LOU
When we bought these properties, which you had run to the ground-

HARM
That is not true-
LOU
When we bought them from you,
promises were made about plumbing,
about dry rot, about roofing
materials-

HARM
I had a cash-flow situation-

LOU
Promises which you did not keep-

HARM
I gave you my boat.

LOU
Yes, as collateral-

HARM
It's worth more than those repairs-

LOU
It is worth relatively little on the
market. We've had it appraised-

HARM
I gave you my license. That's worth
a--

FRANKIE
We're not fishermen, Harmon.

HARM
Exactly. That's why I'm saying I
take the boat, I go out, make my
limit, the cash goes to you, I get my
boat back.

FRANKIE
Whoah, whoah, whoah- we paid the
docking fees all winter, we had the
engine overhauled, and now that
there's fish again you expect to
waltz in, take our boat as if you
still owned it, like you never
defaulted on any of this stuff-

HARM
You're worse than the damn bank-

FRANKIE
We let you take advantage of us like
this, what does that say to everybody
in Port Henry? It says do not take
these women seriously-

HARM
You come up here, you bust people's
balls-
FRANKIE
If your balls are being busted, Harmon, it's because you stuck 'em in a vise and you yanked the handle-

LOU
The screw.

FRANKIE
What?

LOU
The jaws of a vise are moved by a screw or a lever. You don't call it a handle.

FRANKIE
Thank you, Louise. The point being, Mr. King, if you're feeling pressure on your testicles, you have only yourself to blame.

HARM
So you're just gonna take the hit, let my boat rot in the harbor-

LOU
You misrepresented the properties to us, Harmon. You tried to swindle us into keeping your boat from being repossessed by the bank by assigning the title to-

HARM
Look, you gals already said you're not fishermen-

FRANKIE
The last I heard there was no shortage of guys moping around town willing to work for a piece.

LOU
A share.

FRANKIE
What?

LOU
On a boat, in, you know- nautical terms, it's called working for a share.

FRANKIE (curt)
Thank you.

LOU
Francine, if we're going to do this, we should get the terminology right.
FRANKIE
In carpentry, Louise, I bow to your superior knowledge. You are a person who reads tool catalogues for enjoyment. Boats, however, you know as little as I do, which is next to nothing.

HARM
You think you're gonna find somebody in this town to take my boat out and fish on my license? You're both fucking crazy!

STAGE
Donna finishes her song and walks tight-faced off the stage. The accordion player instantly leads the band into a ZYDECO SONG.

NOELLE
Noelle watches from the crowd, unhappy.

EXT RECEPTION - PICKUP TRUCK - JOE
Joe slides cases of wine off the back of his pickup truck. He turns and finds Donna standing there, looking at his truck. We hear the BAND playing an instrumental in the BG-

DONNA
This your truck?

JOE
Uh-huh.

DONNA
You working here?

JOE
Yeah- got this wine to load in. Got to help break things down after.

DONNA
Think you could give me a ride?

There is an intensity about Donna that Joe finds a little scary-

JOE
I guess- after I- how far is it?

DONNA
Just into town.

JOE
Let me know when you're ready.

He lifts up a case of wine-
DONNA
I'm ready now.

JOE
I thought you were the singer.

DONNA
I was.

JOE
You're really good.

DONNA
Thanks. Listen, I just broke up with this guy I've been living with and he's here and if I'm gonna keep my shit together and not make a scene I've got to go right now.

JOE
Okay- I'll-

He indicates the cases. Donna nods, pulls out a lighter and a pack of cigarettes-

DONNA
I'll wait here.

EXT RECEPTION

The meal has started and the guests are mostly sitting eating the opening course. Frankie and Lou stand at the prep table with their backs to the guests, prepping the next round. Lou is in tears-

LOU
They hate us. They all hate us.

FRANKIE
Who hates us?

LOU
These people. They think we're carpetbaggers.

FRANKIE
If anybody is a carpetbagger, Louise, it's these people. The father is from Portland, the groom is-

LOU
Not these people-. I mean like Harmon King, the people in town-

FRANKIE
What people in town?
LOU
The guys at the boat dock, the people
who hung at the lodge before we
bought it, the people who used to
fish here-

FRANKIE
That's like a handful of losers.
Listen, you-

LOU
Don't hand me that fucking eggs and
omelets routine!

FRANKIE (very gently)
Louise, would I insult you with a
cooking metaphor when you're this
upset? Look at you, he's got you
crying-

LOU
Twenty years I'm in court, my clients
get sent away for life, they get the
max, whatever, not a fucking tear.
But here-

FRANKIE
Harmon King is fish-slime, come on-

LOU
It's not him. It's my fault.

FRANKIE
How is it your fault?

LOU
I want them to like me!

FRANKIE
They will grow to like you. They
just don't know you yet.

EXT ROAD
We see Joe's pickup traveling toward town-

INT. PICKUP
Donna is brooding, angry and upset. Joe steals a glance at
her-

JOE
I meant that before. You're really
good. Singing.

DONNA
Thanks.
JOE
Especially since I- like- I never heard of you or anything.

Donna gives him a look-

DONNA
You watch sports?

JOE (shrugs)
Basketball-

DONNA
There must be basketball players who are really good that you've never heard of.

Joe thinks for a moment-

JOE
No.

DONNA
No?

JOE
If they're professionals and they're really good everybody has heard of them.

DONNA
Well singing is different. It's a matter of taste. And-- luck. Whatever.

JOE
Oh.

Indicates her lit cigarette-

DONNA
You mind if I smoke?

JOE
No- go ahead.

Joe looks at her again. She is fighting not to cry-

JOE
You okay?

DONNA
Couldn't be better.

JOE
Your boyfriend was the guy with the band? Randy whatsit?
DONNA
Mason.

JOE
I never heard of him either.

DONNA
Good.

A silence-

DONNA (points)
Stop here.

Joe looks out at a funky little house-

JOE
This is it?

Donna is already out of the truck-

DONNA
I'll be right back.

EXT RECEPTION - GLASSES
We see GLASSES being tapped with silverware, then TILT to see Albright standing with glass in hand, making a toast-

ALBRIGHT
When we came up to this country fifteen years ago, Margie was eight years old and convinced that we would all be eaten by grizzlies.

Laughter-

CLOSER

ALBRIGHT
I'd like to say that so far none of us has lost anything other than the occasional backpack to the bears and that this has been for us, like for so many other people before, a land of opportunity. A land where-

EXT RANDY MASON'S HOUSE
Donna steps out of the house, lugging too big a load of clothing and appliances. She dumps them on the ground, heads back in-

DONNA
There's just a couple more things.

Joe jumps out of the pickup to help-
JOE
I thought this was your house?

INT HOUSE

Joe enters the living room, concerned, to find Donna already rolling up an Indian rug. Other things have been piled into one section of the room-

DONNA
See if he can survive without the fucking microwave-

JOE
You're taking his stuff?

DONNA
My stuff. My daughter's stuff.

JOE
You're sure?

DONNA
Look around you- you see everything that looks like shit? That looks like somebody with no taste and bad personal hygiene would have it in their house? That's his stuff. The rest of it is out of here. Grab the other end-

Joe obediently helps with the rug-

JOE
How long did you live here?

DONNA
Three weeks.

EXT RECEPTION

We start on the WEDDING CAKE, about to be cut. The cake is in the shape of a multi-storied cruise ship, with 'SS MATRIMONY' printed on the side and lots of candied lifeboats and other details adorning it. A plastic bride and groom stand at the top of the candy gangplank-

WIDER

The actual BRIDE and GROOM pose with the knife poised, smiling as CAMERAS FLASH!

EXT HOUSE

We FOLLOW Joe and Donna as they load household items from the front lawn onto the pickup-
DONNA
I used to gig with him when I was working in Spokane - he had this anorexic girl singer who'd get too shaky to go on stage, so I'd fill in. My booker talks me into a year up here, the money's real good, blah blah blah, and I run into Randy in Sitka and we hit it off.

JOE
So you move in.

DONNA
No - I tell him keep your distance, I got a kid, I'm older than you, I don't smoke as much dope as you, don't think I'm moving in or anything.

A pause as they continue to load-

JOE
So how does your stuff end up in his place?

Donna considers the answer-

DONNA
Unforeseen circumstances.

JOE
Oh.

Donna turns her attention on him, wanting to get off the defensive-

DONNA
You married?

JOE
No.

DONNA
Live with somebody?

JOE
No.

She gives him a suspicious look-

JOE (shrugs)
Sorry.

Donna looks at the house-

DONNA
Ten years ago I would have trashed the place.
JOE
That would be a bad idea.

DONNA (ironic)
I was still dealing with my anger.

JOE
Anger at who?

DONNA
At whatever jerk I was leaving ten years ago.

JOE
Uh-huh.

Joe lifts up an ironing board and iron-

DONNA
I told him he was gonna get bored, I
told him he was gonna get itchy and
start chasing little club girls, I
told him my kid was gonna get on his
nerves. I was right on every fucking
count.

JOE
So why'd you move in?

DONNA
He said he thought he was a better
person when he was with me.

She tosses something into the pickup-

DONNA
How can you turn that down?

EXT RECEPTION - DINING AREA

Guests are up and mingling, a few dancing to the BAND.
Noelle and STACY, another teenager on the staff, move through
collecting plates-

STACY
The guy is a climber.

NOELLE
A social climber?

STACY
Rock climber. You know- mountains,
glaciers, whatever you can fall off
of and break your neck. The best man
and all his friends work up at
Denali, guiding climbs for tourists.

NOELLE
I don't like heights.
Stacy's attention has gone to the band-

STACY
What happened to the singer?

EXT ROAD - TOWN
Joe's truck rolls into the outskirts of Port Henry-

INT TRUCK
Donna is watching Joe as he drives-

DONNA
You work for those two? Franny and Zooey?

JOE
Frankie and Lou. Yeah.

DONNA
How long?

JOE
Couple months. They're just starting out up here.

DONNA
Didn't think they had any men working for them.

JOE
I'm one of the few.

DONNA
Do they hit on the girls they hire?

JOE
No. Don't think so. They're a- you know. A couple.

Donna nods, thinking-

DONNA
So what'd you do before this?

JOE
Pulp mill. Till it closed.

DONNA
How was that?

JOE
How you think it was? It's a pulp mill.

DONNA
And before?
JOE
This and that, like most people.

DONNA
Trapping beavers and stuff-

JOE (smiles)

No-

DONNA
Fisherman?

I was.

DONNA
You like it?

JOE
While it lasted.

DONNA
You don't go out anymore-

JOE
No.

DONNA
Why not?

Joe takes a moment before he answers-

JOE
Unforeseen circumstances.

They drive in silence-

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EXT GOLDEN NUGGET

In the REFLECTION in a window we see Joe's truck pull up in front of the GOLDEN NUGGET. Next to the reflection is a promo card with Donna's photo and 'Donna de Angelo - Appearing Nately (2 Drink Minimum)' printed on it-

WIDER - STREET

Joe and Donna get out of the truck-

JOE
I should get back.

DONNA
If you just help me get it off the truck, the guys inside can take over-

JOE
You gonna stay here?
The Golden Nugget is the bar on the ground floor of an old DOWNTOWN HOTEL-

DONNA
We did before. This is my regular gig for the next month or so. Two shows a night.

JOE
I'll come see you. Sing.

DONNA
Great.

She watches as Joe pulls a bedside table off the back-

DONNA (moodily)
My kid is gonna kill me.

EXT PARTY GROUNDS - WEDDING RECEPTION

The reception is breaking up, guests leaving on all sides-

NOELLE

Noelle, dressed in her street clothes now, stares at something-

REVERSE

We shoot over her shoulder as she watches RANDY flirting with one of the MAIDS OF HONOR behind the bandstand-

NOELLE

She turns, troubled, and we FOLLOW her toward the parking lot. She passes Frankie and Lou, doing a party post-mortem as they help clean up-

LOU
It went fine-

FRANKIE
They didn't like the ratatouille.

LOU
A lot of people don't eat eggplant. Like me.

FRANKIE
You don't eat vegetables, Louise, and don't tell me french fries. I'm talking about normal people.

LOU (O.S.)
It went fine. Hey, the father wanted to cater it on his cruise ship till the bride put her foot down-
FRANKIE (O.S.)
We should have made more cheese balls-

Noelle brings us to Joe, who is dismantling the tent-

JOE
You out of here?

NOELLE
Time off for good behavior.

JOE
Saw all the groom's buddies checking you out.

NOELLE (a bit flattered)
Right.

JOE
I'm serious.

NOELLE
Bunch of preppie thugs.

JOE
You're a hard woman to please.

NOELLE
Catch you tomorrow.

JOE
Yeah.

EXT. PARKING LOT

Noelle steps out into the rapidly-emptying parking lot. She looks very small. She looks around, not seeing what she wants to. Stacy pulls up next to her in a battered old car, rolls the window down-

STACY
Need a ride?

NOELLE
Yeah, I guess I do.

STACY
Where you going?

NOELLE (thinks)
I'm not sure.

EXT. RECEPTION - STAGE

Joe is beginning to dismantle the portable stage the band was on. He finds a stack of flyers-
CLOSER - FLYER

The flyers are for an upcoming appearance of Randy Mason and the Pipeline, featuring Donna de Angelo. There is a photo of Donna in a circle-

JOE

Joe contemplates the picture-

INT STACY'S CAR - EVENING

Stacy drives Noelle into town-

STACY
You know what they want to bring up here? Frankie and Lou?

NOELLE
What?

STACY
Alpacas.

NOELLE
For sweaters?

STACY
For hiking trips. They want to take people out on hiking trips for a week or so and have the alpacas carry all the gear. They do it down in the Amazon or something.

NOELLE
The Andes.

STACY
Huh?

NOELLE
The Amazon is a jungle river- they'd be too hot. It's probably the mountain range- the Andes.

STACY
Whatever. They get em up here, no way I'm cleaning their cages. These are some strange people we work with.

NOELLE
I don't know-

STACY
We've got the lesbo trail guides running the place, we've got the human pin-cushion in the kitchen there-
NOELLE
Rusty-

STACY
He looks like he took a staple-gun to his eyebrows. We got Bunice, the cashier, twenty six years old and still lives with her mother. We got the handyman there, killed two people-

NOELLE
He what?

STACY
Joe Gastineau. Mr. Dark and Moody.

NOELLE
He killed people?

STACY
Got em killed. Same thing.

CU NOELLE

STACY (O.S.)
Took em out fishing on his boat and they both drowned. How'd you like to carry that around with you?

EXT DOCK - EVENING - JOE

Joe stands on the dock by Frankie and Lou's lodge, looking out at a seiner moving up the channel, lost in thought-

FRANKIE (O.S.)
We're gonna be fine. It's just a lot hassle starting things up.

LOU (O.S.)
It's so much work-

REVERSE - JOE

Joe broods. We see the SILHOUETTES of Frankie and Lou through the screen window behind him-

FRANKIE
Two more weeks, things'll be up and running, we'll take a trip. Take the tent, the Coleman, the kayaks, row out to one of the islands and just chill, okay? Like the first time we came up here- just you and me, back in the woods again.
INT HOTEL SUITE - DONNA AND NOELLE

We hear VOICES of the BAR PATRONS downstairs as Donna, cigarette in hand, surveys their stuff piled in the middle of the living room. Noelle, stiff with resentment, makes trips to and from her mother's bedroom, replacing things-

DONNA
I'm sorry you got stuck at work. I just had to get out of there.

NOELLE
I'm used to getting home on my own. I just like to know where it is.

Noelle throws a handful of clothes back into the laundry basket-

NOELLE (pissed)
Half my clothes are missing.

DONNA
I grabbed everything I could see-

NOELLE
I had a load in the dryer.

DONNA
We'll get them back.

NOELLE
I didn't want to move over there in the first place-

DONNA
I know. It was a dumb idea. I'm sorry.

NOELLE (quiet)
He wasn't that bad.

DONNA
Compared to what?

NOELLE
Compared to Lyle.

DONNA
He whose name must not be spoken. I made a mistake about Randy, I'm sorry. I'll help you move your stuff.

NOELLE (mutters)
You're the mistake.

Donna just stares at her, hurt and angry. Noelle pointedly takes something into the bedroom. Donna waits till she wanders out again, tries to strike up a conversation-
DONNA
Your ladies did a nice job with that reception. I didn't eat, but it looked really good.

Noelle ignores her, putting up door hooks-

DONNA
Do you always wear that uniform or just when they're catering?

Noelle leaves for the bedroom-

DONNA (calling)
So is the cute guy at work who likes you the one passing the shrimp things? With the hair in his eyes?

She waits. It is a long moment before Noelle comes back out. She speaks in a frosty tone, not looking at her mother-

NOELLE
I didn't say he likes me, I said he was good-looking, and no, that's not him. That's Perry. Perry wants to be a break dancer when he grows up.

DONNA
I thought that was over.

NOELLE
Disco hasn't made it up here yet-

DONNA
Oh come on-

NOELLE
How could you think I think Perry is cute?

DONNA
I don't know- for a high-school kid what do I know what you like?

NOELLE
Right. You don't.

A silence-

DONNA
So are you mad at me? About Randy?

NOELLE (shrugs)
S'your life.

DONNA
I mean did you like him?
NOELLE
It's hard enough to keep their names straight- I'm supposed to like them?

DONNA
Don't be that way with me. I feel like shit. I could use a little support.

NOELLE
That's what therapy is for.

Pause. Donna looks around at their piled belongings-

DONNA
We'll have to rent the VCR again.

FADE OUT:

INT HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

A SCHOOL BELL RINGS. Noelle steps out of a throng of milling high school KIDS. She pauses by a display case-

DISPLAY CASE

We move across several athletic TROPHIES till we settle on an area devoted to young Joe. We TIGHTEN on a PHOTO of him in his uniform-

NOELLE
Staring at the photo-

EXT LODGE - DAY

Joe does grunt work at Frankie and Lou's lodge as the women pitch an idea to him-

FRANKIE
We have this job for you.

LOU
It's kind of different-

FRANKIE
We have this ship-

LOU
Boat-

Frankie gives her a look-

FRANKIE
We have this boat-

JOE
The Raven, yeah-
LOU
We had the engine overhauled, put a
new gillnet drum on it-

JOE
Harmon King's boat.

FRANKIE
It's ours now.

JOE
Uh-huh.

FRANKIE
And he signed his license over to us-

LOU
His entry permit-

FRANKIE
To pay off some of the money he owes
us.

LOU
We want you to go out.

JOE
Go out.

FRANKIE
Go out and catch fish.

JOE
I'm not a fisherman.

Frankie doesn't understand his reticence-

FRANKIE
But you used to be. You know what
you're doing on a boat.

JOE (tight)
I suppose.

FRANKIE
So you could if you wanted to.

JOE
If I wanted to.

LOU
We'll figure out some kind of
percentage deal-

FRANKIE
We don't know if this is an asset we
want to keep or to sell, but with the
season almost over and this license
so expensive-
LOU
You're not like tight with Harmon King, are you?

JOE
Not especially, no.

FRANKIE
If you could go down to the marina and look at it-

LOU
Check it out, tell us if there's anything you'd need to be operational-

JOE
I haven't been commercial fishing for twenty-five years.

FRANKIE
Has it changed that much?

JOE
More technology. But I just don't-

FRANKIE
This is really terrific. You're really bailing us out on this.

LOU
It's a matter of credibility. If we just let people walk all over us-

JOE
I have to think about it.

FRANKIE
Think about it. Go look at the ship-the boat- figure out who you want to have on your crew-

LOU
You think people will do that? Knowing it's Harmon's boat?

JOE
You can always get somebody.

INT GYM - DAY - DONNA

We TRACK IN at Donna, furiously stepping away on a Stairmaster machine. An AEROBICS CLASS runs through its paces in the BG. Donna starts to cry. Angry at herself, she grabs her towel and wipes the tears from her face-

INT LODGE, PANTRY - EVENING

Joe and Noelle are stacking food supplies from crates onto the shelves in the walk-in pantry-
JOE
If the temperature of the water in
the stream changes a couple of
degrees, if it gets slightly more or
less acid, any little change, it can
mean the salmon won't return there.

NOELLE
Where do they go?

JOE
Probably they just keep looking along
the coast till---

He shrugs-

NOELLE
So the whole run disappears?

JOE
It's been known to happen. They're
pretty much hard-wired, fish, not
many options. People, though,
they've got bigger brains, they can
guess at the future, make decisions-

NOELLE
They just do a really lousy job of it.

Joe smiles-

NOELLE
I hate it when they're stranded out
in the air and their gills are
working and they have that desperate
look-

JOE
They're drowning. In air.

Noelle shoots a look at Joe, watching him work-

NOELLE
What do you think it feels like to
drown?

Joe stacks a few more items before he answers-

JOE
I don't know. Never had the
experience.

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INT CANNERY

WORKERS with STEAM HOSES attack every surface of the cannery,
blasting fish guts and grime down into the drains in the
floor. One by one they turn the STEAM OFF-
VARIOUS SHOTS

We see various of the work stations- sorting tables, gutting tables, canning belts- all still and quietly dripping-

HARMON - WORKERS

Harmon and a half-dozen workers stand looking at the quiet, motionless cannery as the water settles-

HARM
That's all she wrote.

RICKY
They say the Chinese might buy it. Pack the whole thing up, ship it over-

HARM
They're welcome to it. Who needs a drink?

EXT GOLDEN NUGGET - NIGHT

29

We hear VOICES of the BAR PATRONS inside-

INT GOLDEN NUGGET - NIGHT

30

It is mostly LOCAL PEOPLE in here tonight, but we start with DENISE, a cruise-line employee guiding a knot of ELDERLY TOURISTS around the periphery of the bar-

DENISE
This is the Golden Nugget Saloon, founded back in 1881 when Port Henry was the gold mining center of the Northern Territory. Prospectors, mining engineers, fishermen and loggers would congregate here for a stiff drink and a friendly game of cards-

She brings us to Harmon King, sitting with Audrey and Ricky and another worker from the cannery-

HARM
They say nobody eats canned salmon anymore-

AUDREY
Do you eat it?

HARM
Why would I eat canned when I can get fresh?

AUDREY
The people in Peoria are saying the exact same thing.
HARM
That's a hell of a fucking note. What am I gonna do?

AUDREY
What am I gonna do? Think you're the only person up here out of a job?

DENISE AND TOURISTS

Denise passes the pool tables with her charges-

DENISE
The first legal prizefight in the territory and the only recorded bout between a domesticated wolf and a black bear were staged in this very room. The reknowned English actress Mabel Sinclair once visited Port Henry, and it was in the Golden Nugget that a fur trapper offered her a thousand dollars worth of mountain goat hides for her hand in marriage-

She brings us to SMILIN JACK and X-MAN, a pair of bush pilots, shooting pool-

SMILIN JACK
He's in that little Cessna of his, coming in with the wind steady and the water is like glass and he's doing the usual rap, the wilderness, the wildlife, the glaciers- trying to impress these two girls- he's still got his wheels down-

X-MAN

Shit-

SMILIN JACK
Floats hit the water- WHAM! Those wheels dig in and he flips tail over head- SMACK! The Beaver is lying belly up in the channel, the two girls are unconscious and he's upside down hooked in by his belt with water pouring in from all sides-

HARM AND FRIENDS, VIC

VIC, the bartender, is holding forth about the charter business-

VIC
-so I drop these people off the boat- corporate executive, second-wife, two kids by the first marriage. (more)
They got heated tents, they got freeze-dried gourmet dinners, they're wearing four thousand dollars worth of Gortex- this is gonna be a bonding experience, right? Two hours they lasted, two hours before the exec gets me on the radio and says they've had it. I gotta call in a chopper from Anchorage, air-lift em off the island before they eat each other alive-

SMILIN JACK AND X-MAN

X-MAN
-Snuffy's up there spotting herring with every other bush pilot in the state, calling down to his boats in code if he spots something when WHAMMO! Head-on with some honcho in a Piper-Cub who's got his eyes down on the water too-

AUDREY
Audrey's turn to tell a story-

AUDREY
-it's so cold your spit's frozen solid before it hits the ground. And the metal on the truck has that tinny sound when you slam the door- like the whole thing's gonna shatter? So this is the day Pop chooses to make his run up to Barrow-

DENISE AND TOURISTS

DENISE
No, I don't believe there have been any shootings in here recently, but the Golden Nugget has been the setting for many a desperate confrontation-

SMILIN JACK AND X-MAN

SMILIN JACK
I can't see the front of my own damn plane, this fog is so thick, and I know there's mountain peaks all around me. But the minute I try to climb above it the wind catches hold of me, and with the stabilizer gone-
HARM

Harvest the goddam resource my ass. A man goes out and he sets and he catches fish goddammit, he's not a goddam farmer. Got more regulations than Carter got liver pills, got the Russians and the Japanese out there scooping up all our crab-

JOE

Joe passes through, beer in hand-

SMILIN JACK (O.S.)

Hey, Joe-

Joe turns to see Smilin Jack by the pool table-

SMILIN JACK

Long time no see-

JOE

Smilin Jack. What you doing down at this altitude?

SMILIN JACK

Flew some medical supply salesmen in from Cordova. There's a thousand of em over at the Convention Center.

JOE

There's always something. Where you living these days?

SMILIN JACK

Two steps ahead of the finance company.

JOE (smiles)

See you around-

Smilin Jack watches Joe walk away. We see Donna setting up with her players beyond him-

SMILIN JACK

Jumpin Joe Gastineau.

X-MAN

Friend of yours?

SMILIN JACK

Not exactly.

STAGE - DONNA

Donna is on stage, fixing her mike-
DONNA
Hello everybody, welcome to the
Golden Nugget. For you out-of-town
visitors, this is not the Gay
Nineties Singalong Revue, that's at
the Klondike Palace on Race Street-

She sees Joe sitting down, gives him a small nod-

DONNA
-so if anybody breaks into "Oh, Them
Golden Slippers" during our set,
you'll be escorted from the premises.
Casey?

CASEY, the guitar player, starts off and Donna begins to SING-

JOE

Watching Donna-

INT HOTEL SUITE - NOELLE

We can hear Donna SINGING distantly from downstairs. Noelle
is arranging things in her mother's room. She catches sight
of herself in the dresser mirror, pauses. She finds a pair
of scissors on the dresser, picks them up. She opens them,
then, watching her reflection all the while, brings the point
very close to her eyeball. She presses a blade hard against
her cheek for a moment. She pulls it away, leans close to
examine the mark it has left, frowning. She runs her finger
down along the mark-

EXT GOLDEN NUGGET - NIGHT

Later. Harmon and Audrey exit the bar, Harm a bit unsteady-*

AUDREY
Don't torture yourself.

HARM
I don't intend to torture myself. I intend to torture them.

AUDREY
That boat was nothing but a money pit
and you know it.

HARM
Fuckin she-men think they can come up
here, take over the joint. People
aren't gonna stand for that.

AUDREY
Joe Gastineau is working out there.

HARM
Biggest fuckin loser in the Southeast.
We watch Harm and Audrey walk away-

HARM (orates)
Welcome to America's Last Frontier-

AUDREY
Give it a rest, Harmon-

HARM
-where the minute a white man gets a pot to piss in they create a new Federal agency in charge of yanking it away from him. Where mighty bureaucracies creep glacier-like across the earth, levelling everything in their path-

INT GOLDEN NUGGET

We watch Donna, done with her set, making her way through the audience. She stops to chat with a CUSTOMER for a moment-

JOE

Sitting alone, watching her-

POV - DONNA

Donna looks around, finds Joe, then crosses over to stand by him-

DONNA
Mind if I sit?

JOE

Please-

He moves a chair and Donna sits by him. He doesn't say anything at first-

DONNA

So?

JOE

Terrific.

DONNA

Who do I remind you of?

JOE

Remind me of?

DONNA

Singers. People always go "You're sort of like Judy Collins, but your voice is deeper, or you're sort of like Emmylou Harris, but your hair is curlier-"
JOE
Screamin' Jay Hawkins-

DONNA (smiles)
Really?

JOE
But I think he usually wore a bone in his nose.

Joe indicates the stage-

JOE
Can you make a living doing this?

DONNA
Sort of. You make a living working for the lodge ladies?

JOE
Sort of.

DONNA
It can be nice— one summer I did a cruise ship in the Caribbean, got to take my daughter-

JOE
You take her with you?

DONNA
Pretty much, yeah.

JOE
Her father is-

DONNA
Out of the picture.

JOE
Uh-huh.

DONNA
That was his choice.

JOE (nods)
So you've sung in a lot of places.

DONNA
Thirty six states and the territory of Puerto Rico.

JOE
Wow.

DONNA
How bout you?
JOE
I been to Seattle a couple times,
Canada along the coast-
(shrugs)
It's real big up here, you go a long
ways without leaving the state.

DONNA
Right.

An awkward pause-

DONNA
So you must like it.

JOE
Don't think I'd do so well down south-
you know, cities.

DONNA
How come you're not married?

Joe laughs at her directness-

DONNA
Sorry, if you don't want to say-

JOE
No, no- it's probably the same reason
you're not married-

DONNA
Because such a high percentage of men
you meet are jerks?

JOE (smiles)
No-

DONNA
Because women are scarce and winters
are long-

JOE
That's true, but-

DONNA
Because you're looking for someone
fun to be with who understands your
bullshit but is still crazy about you-

JOE
That's a bit much to ask for.

DONNA
No it's not.

She means it. There is a brief silence-
JOE
So have you like- recorded songs?

DONNA
I made a lot of demos. I'm not exactly up here to try and be discovered. At my age--- it doesn't make a whole lot of sense- my so-called career.

JOE
Why do you still do it?

She struggles to give him an honest answer-

DONNA
Almost every night, doesn't matter where I'm singing, which song it is- all of a sudden I'll hook into it- I'll be feeling whatever it is the song is about and I can hear my voice, feel it, I can tell that I'm putting it across--- Moments of grace.

JOE
Uh-huh.

DONNA
You know what I'm saying?

JOE
I do.

DONNA
It's totally selfish.

JOE
Tough to walk away from something you feel that way about.

DONNA
I've put my kid through a lot- moving all the time. But when I take a straight job- bank teller, waitressing, whatever- I'm so-defeated- I don't want her to look at me.

JOE
But she thinks it's cool, you singing-

DONNA
She's convinced my only purpose in life is to cause her embarrassment and pain.

JOE
Teenager-
DONNA

Yeah.

Another silence. Joe takes the leap -

JOE

So would you like to do - something?

DONNA

Something.

JOE

It's real pretty country around here, I could take you -

DONNA

I gotta warn you, there's certain things - the one with the long skinny boats and the paddles?

JOE

Kayaking -

DONNA

I don't do that one. Or anything where if the spike pulls out of the cliff you plunge to your death.

JOE

Climbing -

DONNA

In general, things where you wear gear instead of clothing - I don't do it.

JOE

Oh.

DONNA

I went out with this guy in Wisconsin, he'd take me camping? He had those rubber pants with the boots attached -

JOE

Waders -

DONNA

I liked the walking around in the woods part and I was a really good sport about the rest, but I'm not really the Outward Bound type.

JOE

That's good to know. What do you - in the day, when you're not working -
DONNA
I read a lot-

JOE
Uh-huh-

DONNA
Go to the gym, punish myself on the Stairmaster-

JOE
Uh-huh-

DONNA
If I'm involved with a guy I make pathetic attempts to ingratiate myself, often involving cooking and cleaning activities. I listen to music-

JOE
Mmmn-

DONNA
When my daughter was little I'd do stuff with her.

JOE
And you don't anymore?

DONNA
No.

Donna doesn't want to think about this. She tries to be cheerful-

DONNA
So, if you're willing, let's work on this thing- this doing something idea. You try to think of stuff, I'll try to think of something-

JOE
Sure.

DONNA
Keep trying, really, okay?

JOE
I will-

The house band has tuned up and are doing somewhat impatient riffs. Donna gets up-

DONNA
You know where to find me. Two shows nightly.
Donna gives him a smile and Joe watches her walk to the bandstand.

**FADE OUT:**

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**EXT. DOCK - DAY**

We see a huge CRUISE SHIP docked in front of town-

DENISE (O.S.)
It was called 'Gold Fever'.

We TILT DOWN to see BOBBY GASTINEAU, some fifteen years younger than Joe, standing on the dock as Denise leads more elderly TOURISTS past-

DENISE
-and in 1897 the first wave of fortune-seekers swept through Port Henry on their way to Skagway, the Chilkoot Pass and the Yukon gold fields.

Bobby pushes through the stream of tourists into a CU. He seems nervous, checking around to see if anybody is watching him-

DENISE (O.S.)
They were desperate men, men willing to perish in search of the one Big Strike that every prospector dreamed of-

Bobby moves past us out of the shot as Donna follows a CRUISE DIRECTOR back toward the ship-

CRUISE DIRECTOR
It could be the entire cruise, yes, or we might have you just do one leg, lay over at one of our stops, then work the next leg on a different ship-

DONNA
How much time would I spend at home?

CRUISE DIRECTOR
We like to think of our vessels as a kind of home-

DONNA
Not much, huh?

CRUISE DIRECTOR
It's a nomadic lifestyle, no question about that, but the rewards are-
EXT CHANNEL - MORNING - HARMON

There is MIST hanging over the water. We PAN with a dozen KAYAKERS in day-glo colors as they paddle across the the water, then COUNTER-PAN as they make way for Harmon King in his motor skiff. Harmon kills the motor, drifts, then tosses an anchor overboard. He grabs a six pack of beer, crosses to his fishing gear and sits on some cushions. He carefully pushes earplugs into his ears, then turns a large BOOMBOX RADIO up full volume, a tape PLAYING country-western MUSIC. He begins to jig for halibut-

INT LODGE - MORNING

Lou is watching out the window. We hear the MUSIC, see Harmon drifting off anchor just a few hundred feet from the lodge-

    LOU (calling)
    He's back.

    FRANKIE (O.S.)
    There's nothing we can do about it.

    LOU
    He's going to make a feud out of this thing with his boat.

Frankie steps in next to her, looks out-

    FRANKIE
    Our boat. Doesn't he have a job?

    LOU
    They shut the cannery down. Dammit, there's a law against stalking-

    FRANKIE
    Stalking is on foot.

    LOU
    Skulking, then. There must be an anti-skulking ordinance.

    FRANKIE
    I'm starting to like that song.

INT HOTEL LOBBY

A hotel clerk runs a credit card through his machine-

    BOBBY (O.S.)
    Listen, if there's any calls for me, if anybody comes by asking if I'm here-

REVERSE

Bobby watches the lobby to see if he's been followed-
BOBBY
-just say I'm not registered, okay?

He turns and gives the clerk a charming smile-

BOBBY
I'm trying to surprise somebody, and
I don't want the word to get around.
Can you do that?

EXT STREAM - SALMON

We see SALMON throwing themselves up a stream, a few corpses
washed up to the sides-

DONNA (O.S.)
You get points for originality.

JOE AND DONNA

Joe and Donna stand watching the fish-

DONNA
You're the first guy who's ever asked
me to come and watch fish thrash
around and die-

JOE
It's-

DONNA
I'm not complaining, it's really
cool. I've seen it on TV, but in
person like this- they're so beat-up
looking-

JOE
They stop eating when they head in-

DONNA
My daughter did that for a while.
Almost had to put an IV in her.
Jeez, it's relentless, isn't it?
They don't stop.

JOE
Some of them do. They wear out, give
up-

DONNA
I'd make it.

JOE
Yeah?

DONNA
No sweat. I do this much every day
at the gym.
JOE (smiles)
I'm going to be gone a couple days.
It's sort of a job, sort of a favor-

DONNA
Uh-huh?

JOE
When I get back - it'd be great to see you again.

DONNA
Okay.

JOE
Yeah?

DONNA
Yeah.

Donna is definitely pleased to be asked-

DONNA
So what's this trip, like a polar expedition?

INT BANK - DAY

Bobby sits in a bank office with a LOAN OFFICER-

BOBBY
That's all?

LOAN OFFICER
A boat like yours, Mr. Gastineau, is an unusual property. Its value depends on its use in a certain type of business. If nobody experienced in that business is interested-

BOBBY
I don't want to sell it, I just want to take a mortgage-

LOAN OFFICER
In view of your past financial difficulties-

BOBBY
That was in San Diego.

LOAN OFFICER
A poor credit rating is a poor credit rating, it follows you wherever you go-

EXT GOLDEN NUGGET - NIGHT

Establishing shot-
INT GOLDEN NUGGET - NIGHT

Harm and Audrey sit at the bar with Ricky, surrounded by REGULARS. Vic muses as he works the counter-

VIC
It's just out there, waitin for the chance to fuck you over.

AUDREY
You personally.

VIC
Whoever. One second you're skimmin over the surface, not a care in the world, then one little thing goes wrong-

HARM
Like Rudy Bannister-

VIC
Rudy Bannister- he's up in a fiord longlining when the whole front of the glacier breaks off- it makes this wave- four, five stories high by the time it hits his boat. Gone.

RICKY
Fucked.

HARM
Fucked from a height. And Stretch McCarthy-

AUDREY
Stretch-

HARM
Gets caught in the riptides trying to shortcut through Rimski Channel. They hit the rocks- two guys jump, two guys stay on board. Stretch and the other guy who stood on board bought it. Could have gone the other way.

RICKY
Luck.

VIC
Luck, nothing. The ocean wanted him. Hell, I'm glad I'm not going out there anymore. It can be quick, like that deadhead Timmy Grogan hit, punched through his bow and sunk him in five minutes, or it can sneak up on you when you're not even looking.
AUDREY
Like Joe Gastineau-

HARM
Joey- fuck- if ever there's a guy had the world by the balls it's Joey. He was out haulin web by the time he was ten years old. His old man, Claude, run the Ice Maiden for Old Man Torgeson-

AUDREY
Till he drunk himself out of a job.

RICKY
This is the basketball player, right?

AUDREY
Best one that ever come out of Port Henry-

HARM
Headed for a full-jolt scholarship to some university in California, then he tears his knee up senior year. Kiss that goodbye.

AUDREY
Had a jump shot that'd make you weep-

DONNA
Donna sits at a table a couple yards away, a drink and a bowl of pretzels laid out in front of her, eavesdropping with her back to the bar-

VIC
He gets on with one of Torgeson's crab boats up north, back when that was a fuckin gold mine, makes enough in one season to put a down-payment on this little gill-netter, the Arctic Dawn-

HARM AND FRIENDS

VIC
Gets a couple friends of his, Lester Pope, who used to work with his father, and this kid Oley-

AUDREY
Jack Johannson's little brother-

VIC
Who'd never been out fishing, he's just like a high school buddy, played hoop with Joe. They're gonna go out with Joe and make a big score.
EXT MARINA - NIGHT

We see Joe on the float, staring at something-

VIC (V.O.)

He gets the gill netter into the water, it floats, he's got an entry permit for the silvers coming in from Icy Strait.

We PAN to see the object of his gaze. It is the Raven, Harm's old fishing boat-

VIC (V.O.)

They get out there with the usual crowd, I was on the Cape Fox then, and we hook into this run- we're barely moving, just throwing fish into the hold as fast as we can so we can set again.

INT BOAT - ENGINE

A floor panel is lifted. A FLASHLIGHT BEAM plays over the rebuilt ENGINE of the Raven-

VIC (V.O.)

Everybody's makin out, even Joe with this little gill-netter.

JOE

Joe examines the engine-

VIC (V.O.)

By nightfall we're plugged and waitin in line to download into the tender. There's six boats in front of us, maybe eight behind, and Joe is the last one, and it's party time.

INT GOLDEN NUGGET - VIC

VIC

Everybody who's not unloading drops anchor and we start boat-hoppin, the beer comes out, Joe figures he's made his year and then some, he can pay off the boat, really get into business fishing. A day like that, you feel like you're gonna live forever.

EXT RAVEN

Joe examines the drum, the net-
VIC (V.O.)
Joe gets back on board his outfit, it's one, two in the morning, he and the Johansson kid go below to sleep it off and Lester racks out on deck. They figure it'll be morning before the tender gets to them. So—maybe the boat was out of the water too long, things dry up, you get cracks, maybe they were just so plugged the water-line rode up where it had never been before, whatever—Without a sound, the boat fills like a sponge and sinks.

INT GOLDEN NUGGET
Ricky reacts to the story—

RICKY
Damn—

VIC
Joe wakes up and he's down in the cabin and it's black and he's under water, right, he's banging around, but he knows the boat and he bangs into something that gives him like a reference and he swims out through the hatch and yells loud enough to wake me up on the Cape Fox—we fished him out okay, but other two—not a trace.

DONNA
Donna listens—

RICKY (O.S.)
Lost—

VIC (O.S.)
Lost his friends, lost the catch, there's no insurance on the boat, that's gone, and Joe—

EXT RAVEN
Joe stands at the helm, hands resting on the wheel, lost in thought—

VIC (V.O.)
—Joe, he's not the same guy—

INT ROOM ABOVE SALOON - NOELLE
We start on a pad of lined paper covered with a story Noelle has written. PLOP! A drop of BLOOD falls onto it, instantly soaking in.
We TILT to see Noelle, a razor blade in hand, studiously examining the underside of her upper arm, where she has made three parallel cuts into the skin. She watches the blood roll down, then drip onto the paper-

FADE OUT:

EXT MARINA, FUEL PUMPS - EARLY MORNING

It is four in the morning, the float and moored boats rocking gently-

PUMP

Joe stands with KOSLOW, a weathered man in his sixties, who writes out the bill as Joe pumps fuel. Beyond them his mate preps the Raven for the day's work-

JOE
Gastineau. G-a-s-t-i-n-e-a-u.

KOSLOW
Related to the Gastineau who sank the Arctic Dawn?

JOE (hesitates)

Nope.

KOSLOW
Whatever happened to that guy?

JOE
Just disappeared, I guess.

INT. HOTEL SUITE - DONNA

Donna comes out of the bathroom in her nightgown. She peaks into the living room. Noelle is awake, sitting up in her t-shirt, looking out at the eerie northern light-

DONNA
You can't sleep, baby?

NOELLE
It doesn't get dark.

DONNA
Yeah. It's tough to get used to. You okay?

NOELLE
Yes.

DONNA
You want to talk?

NOELLE
No.
DONNA
I wish you did.

A moment. Noelle keeps her voice flat, unyielding-

NOELLE
I know.

Conversation over. Donna, worried, goes back to bed-

EXT CHANNEL - DAY - VARIOUS SHOTS

We hear Donna SINGING as we watch Joe at the wheel positioning the Raven to set, watch him working in tandem with his mate, hurrying back to pick the net and help clear the deck of writhing, flopping salmon. He is totally into the work, with no time to doubt himself or his abilities-

INT GOLDEN NUGGET - NIGHT

Donna FINISHES her SONG. She steps down of the stage to a smattering of APPLAUSE. Smilin Jack raises a drink from his table-

SMILIN JACK
I already got you one.

Donna looks at the drink, considering-

DONNA
How'd you know?

SMILIN JACK
Been keeping my eye on you.

Donna sits, takes the drink-

SMILIN JACK
Like your singing.

DONNA
Thanks.

SMILIN JACK
You really class up this joint.

DONNA
I've played worse.

Smilin Jack offers his hand-

SMILIN JACK
Jack Johannson-

Donna shakes, lights up a cigarette-

DONNA
I've been warned.
SMILIN JACK

Uh-oh.

DONNA
A lot of formerly-married women took flying lessons from you.

SMILIN JACK (laughs)
Yeah, well- a lot of formerly-married women are suing me for alimony. I'm thinking of getting out of the bush pilot game, find something more lucrative.

DONNA
Let's see- fast food service, camp counselor-

SMILIN JACK (smiles)
You live here?

DONNA
One year tour of the Frozen North.

SMILIN JACK
Out on your own?

She considers for a beat, then shuts him down gently-

DONNA
No- I'm- I'm hooked up with a guy.

SMILIN JACK
Musician?

DONNA (shakes her head)
He's a fisherman.

EXT RAVEN - NIGHT

Joe walks the deck of the boat at anchor, checking that everything is fine. He looks out at the water, the sky. He seems, for the first time since we've met him, to be at peace-

FADE OUT:

EXT CHANNEL - MORNING - HARMON

Harmon is on his skiff in front of the lodge, reeling something in with great effort, the RADIO BLARING-

HARM

Christ-

The head of an enormous HALIBUT appears above water, Harmon's line taut with its weight. He reaches down for something-
INT LODGE - DAY

Lou is watching from the lodge, a screwdriver in her hand.

LOU
Oh my God-

HARMON

Harmon has a PISTOL in his free hand. He hauls the halibut a little further out of the water- POP! Shoots it between the eyes-

LODGE - LOU

Lou, shaken, crosses to find Frankie at a table going over the menu-

LOU
He just shot a fish.

FRANKIE
Shot it?

LOU
A halibut. It was like a gangland execution.

FRANKIE (considers)
We could use some fresh halibut. When's Joe getting in?

55A EXT STAIRWAY - DAY

Bobby climbs up a long wooden stairway toward Joe's house. He pauses to rest-

55B EXT JOE'S HOUSE

A modest wooden house built into the side of a steep hill. Bobby stands on the porch deck rapping on the door-

BOBBY
Joe? You home? Joey!

He crosses to peer in a window-

56 INT DINING ROOM - LODGE - AFTERNOON

A pretty good crowd for lunch. We start on Noelle, pausing next to the agonized face on a decorative TOTEM, then FOLLOW as she brings four plates of fresh halibut to a table. She passes Bobby, seated talking to his waitress, Stacy-

BOBBY
But he still works here?
STACY
On and off. He's out on a fishing boat right now.

BOBBY
Fishing? Joe?

STACY
Uh-huh. Can I tell you about our specials?

Noelle brings us to the next table where Albright is entertaining a trio of INVESTORS-

ALBRIGHT
What are you buying when you get on a roller coaster? Not risk, because nobody but fringe consumers want that, but the illusion of risk—being hurled to the edge of danger but knowing you'll never have to cross it.

Noelle lays the plates out--

ALBRIGHT
Mr. Disney's innovation was to put those carnival rides and attractions into a story context, where you could imagine yourself a character in one of his cartoon epics as you floated through a Plaster-of-Paris jungle. The obvious next step—and this is the core of our proposal—is not bigger and better facsimiles of Nature, but Nature itself.

EXT MARINA - EVENING

We see the Raven pulling into the dock-

ALBRIGHT (V.O.)
Think of Alaska as one big theme park-

Frankie and Lou are waiting on the float as Joe eases the gillnetter into the slip-

LOU (calling)
How'd we do?

JOE
All right.

The mate jumps out to tie the boat off and Joe steps down onto the deck-

FRANKIE
We caught something?
JOE
Made our limit.

FRANKIE
In three days?

JOE
They were running pretty fair-

LOU
Oh my God-

Joe hefts a huge salmon-

JOE
Kept a few out for the restaurant.

INT GOLDEN NUGGET - NIGHT

Bobby blows into the bar flashing a confident smile at the late-night crowd. The bartender, VIC, recognizes him-

VIC
Bobby-

BOBBY
Jesus, look at this place. You're all right where I left you six years ago- same barstools, everything. Hey, Harmon, Audrey, lookin good- does somebody come in and dust you once a week?

HARM
How's the charter racket, Bobby?

BOBBY
Can't complain. I'm thinking of bringing my Glacier Bay clients in here- 'See Port Henry's Wax Museum, amazingly lifelike figures posed in various stages of drunken stupor-

(to bartender)
Set up a round for these characters, Vic.

(to patrons)
I just come up from Baja- chitchat the clients, lay on the cerveza, go out and harrass a few whales-

HARM
You like that?

BOBBY
I like not freezing my nuggets off here all winter, waitin to see who goes shacky wacky and blows their brains out first-
AUDREY
You know Roscoe Karnes?

BOBBY
Roscoe with the voice box?

He sticks his thumb against his trachea-

BOBBY
Drinks like this so it doesn't leak out of his windpipe?

AUDREY
Blew his brains out February.

BOBBY
I rest my case. Vic, I heard my brother's been coming in here-

HARM
Fuckin sellout-

AUDREY
You would have done the same thing.

HARM
No fuckin way. Shoved a stake right into my heart-

VIC
He's right in the corner, here, Bobby.

Bobby turns and sees Joe-

BOBBY
Jumpin Joe. The man himself.

JOE
Joe sits back by the pool table, beer in hand, waiting for Donna to come on-

BOBBY (O.S.)
Hey, bro.

Bobby stands across the pool table from Joe-

JOE (cautious)
Bobby-

BOBBY
Hear they shut the pulp mill down.

JOE
And the cannery.

BOBBY
Tough break.
JOE (shrugs)
Town smells better.

BOBBY
They told me you were out working for
a couple of button nibblers at Harm
King's old lodge-

JOE
That's right. How you been?

Bobby comes around, sits on the edge of the table closer to Joe-

BOBBY
Terrific. I've been terrific. Took
this National Geographic crew out to
do a piece on the sea lion rookery
just before I came up. Getting lots
of repeat clients, computerized my
navigation-

JOE
Teresa-?

BOBBY
Teresa and the kids are cool, Joaquin
hits kindergarten at the Montessori
this year-

JOE
Great.

BOBBY
You got to come down some time,
expand your horizons.

JOE
Some time.

BOBBY
Listen, somebody said you were out
fishing-

JOE
Yeah. I just got back.

BOBBY
What's the story?

JOE (shrugs)
Frankie and Lou have a boat, got a
license, they asked me to go out.

BOBBY
Back in the saddle again.

JOE
So to speak.
BOBBY
So things are okay with you?

JOE
Can't complain.

Bobby nods, sits in a chair next to Joe-

BOBBY
I'm sorry I couldn't get up for the Old Man-

JOE
No problem-

BOBBY
I had these people- Hollywood real estate honchos-

JOE
You couldn't make it. I didn't have a ceremony or anything. Just did the paperwork and put up a headstone-

BOBBY
You got my check-

JOE
Yeah, thanks.

BOBBY
I called my mom, let her know-

JOE
How'd she take it?

BOBBY
Changed the subject.

JOE
He was who he was.

BOBBY
Died in bed, man. I always figured he'd freeze to death in the parking lot outside some joint-

JOE
You know the laundromat over in Wrangell where you can take a shower?

BOBBY
The guys who come off the boats-

JOE
Two, three years ago I was in there, got my soap, got my towel- and back in the steam I see this old guy.

(more)
JOE
I say to myself 'That is one beat-to-hell human being'. The guy looks up and it's the Old Man.

BOBBY
He talk to you?

JOE
He said stuff. The last years- he wasn't really with the program any more. That's the last time I saw him.

BOBBY
The Old Salt. The Old Prospector. I tell my clients stories about the Old Man- colorful shit, you know, the tour guide part of the job. How he lost those fingers, how he got through the quake and all the tidal waves on that tender- you've heard em all-

JOE
Yeah-

BOBBY
But the guy I was scared shitless of when I was little, nobody wants to hear about him.

JOE
No.

BOBBY
Joey, I got to ask you a favor-

JOE
Me?

BOBBY
Have I ever asked you for anything?

JOE
What is it?

BOBBY
I got a situation- it's a finesse thing with a client. I got to go pick him up in Skagway? I need somebody to crew for me, bring him back down.

JOE
You always run your operation on your own.
BOBBY
This is just for appearances. It's a business deal, see, and I need to impress this guy, I need to look less like a captain and more like- like-

JOE
Like an admiral.

BOBBY
Exactly. It's a milk run, and since you're on the water again-

JOE
I've gone out once-

BOBBY
I can trust you. This deal- business deal- it's sensitive. Word can't get out.

JOE
When would we go?

BOBBY
Day after tomorrow. I just got to set a few things in motion-

JOE
I'll see if I can get off work-

BOBBY
Hey, you're saving my ass, man, I appreciate it. You and me, we're-

JOE
Practically strangers.

BOBBY
We're the Gastineau brothers, man.

JOE
Half-brothers.

BOBBY
Right.

And awkward moment between them, then Bobby gets his second wind-

BOBBY (rising)
Listen, I got to run, bro- I'm on a schedule here. I'm down at the South Marina-

JOE
The Orca Princess.
BOBBY
Sunday morning, seven sharp, we catch
the tide-

Joe watches him cross to the bar. We hear the band warming up-

BOBBY
-it'll be a blast.

BAR

Bobby lays a fifty on the counter, nods at the patrons on the stools-

BOBBY
Water the plants again for me Vic.
One more round-

HARM
Stoly on the rocks!

BOBBY
Fuckin-A. Take it easy, folks.

AUDREY
See you, Bobby.

They watch Bobby walk out of the bar-

VIC
Kid always had a lot of pizazz.

DONNA (O.S.)
Good evening ladies and gentlemen-

DONNA
Donna stands with microphone in hand, surveying the sparse
first-set audience-

DONNA
-I'm Donna de Angelo and this is the
Golden Nugget.

She sees Joe, smiles-

JOE

Joe watches from his corner-

DONNA (O.S.)
I see some familiar faces in the audience-

DONNA
Very happy to see him again-
DONNA
Welcome back.

FADE OUT:

59
EXT BUILDING - MORNING - NOELLE

Noelle sits on a stone stairway in front of a house, school books in her lap. We hear SCHOOL KIDS yakking in the distance. She turns to peek over the stair wall-

POV - SCHOOL, KIDS

HIGH SCHOOL KIDS gather in groups of two or more, talking before they have to go into the building. The BELL RINGS, and they start heading for the door-

NOELLE

Noelle stands, hesitates, preparing to make the plunge-

60
EXT JOE'S HOUSE - DAY

The modest house on the side of the hill-

61
INT JOE'S HOUSE - DAY

Donna is checking out Joe's living room for clues as she talks to him-

JOE
There's a lot of factors. There's tide- is it with you, are you plowing into it, is it slack, where's the moon in its cycle- there's wind, which can jump around on you when you're ducking in and out of these islands- there's the size of the channel you're going through, the configuration of the bottom-

DONNA
You still know all this stuff?

JOE
Yeah- as much as you can know it. It's like you spend enough time with somebody, even if you don't see them for a long while, you still recognize their moods.

DONNA
Mmmn.
(indicates room)
This isn't what I expected.

JOE
What'd you expect?
DONNA
Some guys, they live alone, it can get--

JOE
I had the Health Department over this morning, they sprayed the walls down.

She smiles, indicates his CD collection-

DONNA
You listen to a lot of different stuff.

JOE
Yeah.

DONNA
That's good. I mean, you see a whole wall of nothing but the Butthole Surfers-

JOE
Or Beethoven-

DONNA
Yeah, that can be its own problem. And you read books-

JOE
Some.

DONNA
So you're either a very nice, quiet guy who lives alone or you're a serial killer.

Joe laughs-

DONNA
I mean, my track record for conciously choosing men is so horrendous- if I ever hook up with somebody good it'll be pure luck.

She steps to Joe, kisses him, steps back to look at him-

DONNA
But the odds have got to be in my favor by now-

They kiss again, rapidly getting excited and making out standing up. They waltz over to a wall for some support, starting to breathe hard and pull at clothes till Donna breaks for air, looking at Joe again-

DONNA
Careful. I'm being careful, okay?
JOE
Okay. Me too.

They resume, a little more cautious-

INT CLASSROOM - NOELLE

Noelle sits at her desk-

TEACHER (O.S.)
Noelle, why don't we start with yours. Noelle?

Noelle seems to snap out of a trance. She rises and self-consciously steps to the head of the room. She takes her story from the teacher's hand, turns to face the class-

NOELLE (softly)
'The Water Baby. The midwife knew at first look it wasn't a normal delivery-

TEACHER (O.S.)
A little louder, Noelle-

NOELLE (speaks up a bit)
'The midwife knew at first look it wasn't a normal delivery. The newborn was cold as it struggled and gasped in her arms, wet and cold with a bluish pallor that did not change once she cleared its throat with her finger. It fought for air but did not open its mouth. The mother, sweat-soaked in her bedsheets, the father, video camera dropping away from his apprehensive face, her assistant, already on the phone to the life support unit- all seemed to move in a heavy slow-motion, as if under water. The midwife was halfway down the hall with the newborn before she noticed them- a tiny, half-moon slit below each ear, lined with a deep crimson membrane. Gills-

INT HALLWAY, SCHOOL

We TRACK with Noelle as she walks through a crowded hallway. There is NO SOUND but her breathing-

POV - KIDS

We TRACK through the KIDS from Noelle's paranoid vantage, every glance and laugh seemingly directed at her-
NOELLE

We FOLLOW Noelle as she ducks into the GIRLS' ROOM, heading straight to the stalls. She enters, slams the door on us-

INT JOE'S BEDROOM

Donna and Joe lie on Joe's bed after making love, not totally undressed. Donna is thinking, sniffing a bit and wiping her eyes. She speaks out of the blue-

    DONNA (reflective)
    I never slept with a drummer.

    JOE
    Is that good?

    DONNA
    Probably. It probably indicates a certain level of self-respect that I've never sunk below.

    JOE
    So ex-fishermen rate higher than drummers?

    DONNA
    There are certain kinds of fungus that rate higher than drummers.

Joe nods, ponders-

    JOE
    What brings this up?

    DONNA
    I don't know if my daughter is a virgin or not.

    JOE
    She's going out with a drummer?

    DONNA
    No. I was just-you know-thinking.

    JOE
    Have you asked her?

    DONNA
    I don't want to know that badly.

    JOE
    Oh-

    DONNA
    If I ask her if she needs new underwear she considers it invasive.
JOE
Mmmn.

DONNA
She's been a major babysitter since she was thirteen, always wanted her own money, her own room-

JOE
Independent.

DONNA
Yeah. It's good, I guess. You don't have any kids, do you?

JOE
No.

DONNA
But you were married?

JOE
Yeah.

DONNA
I knew it.

JOE
I was twenty-seven, she was twenty-
(shrugs)
Bad idea.

DONNA
She was too young-

JOE
Yeah, and I was - there's a whole decade back there that's pretty fuzzy-

DONNA
Substance abuse -

JOE
Major-

DONNA
Why'd you stop?

Joe has to think about this-

JOE
I didn't have the guts to ride it all the way down.

Donna files this bit of information-

DONNA
It's good you didn't have kids to fight over.
JOE

Mmmmn.

DONNA

When's the last time you were involved with somebody?

JOE

Bout a year ago.

DONNA

Somebody from the pulp mill?

JOE

Aerobics instructor.

DONNA

Not Corky-

JOE

You know her?

DONNA

She works at my gym. So who dumped who?

JOE

She thought I was too- downbeat.

DONNA

She used that word?

JOE

Among others.

DONNA

Well, she's a real sparkplug, that Corky-

Donna gets up, sniffs, starts to button up to hit the street again-

DONNA

Listen, Joe, there's something I have to tell you-

JOE (with trepidation)

Yeah?

DONNA

I'm allergic to wool.

JOE

Oh.

DONNA

Like a carpet, even if it's a blend, or in a blanket or clothes-
JOE
I can get rid of whatever-

Donna
No, you don't have to- just if you see me itching-

Joe
It's not that big a deal. I already bought new sheets- in case you came over-

Really?

Donna (pleased)

Joe
Yeah.

Donna considers him, the wheels turning-

Donna (quietly)

Uh-oh.

INT HOTEL SUITE - DONNA AND NOELLE - NIGHT

Noelle, still in her work clothes, hooks up a rented VCR to the hotel TV set as Donna paces behind her, smoking, dressing for her set. Their stuff is pretty much in order by now-

Donna
So maybe this is a terrible idea, you can veto it if you want-

Noelle
Some guy.

Donna
He's very nice.

Noelle
They're all very nice, right up until you say they're scum and shouldn't be allowed walking the streets-

Donna
This will be fun- it's like a Nature thing-

Please-

Noelle (put upon)

Donna
You like him, you don't like him, whichever, you don't really have to deal with him again. It is totally my business.

Noelle
Then why do I have to go on a trip?
DONNA
Consider it a favor to me. It's important he knows you're more than a rumor-

NOELLE
I'd rather stay a rumor.

DONNA
Anyhow, you already know this guy- at least you've seen him around- you work with him-

Noelle tightens, staring at her mother-

DONNA
Joe Gastineau? Who works for-

Donna feels the instant frost from her daughter-

DONNA
Is there some problem with him? He seems really nice.

Noelle just turns away, shaking her head. She is really upset-

DONNA
Is there something I should know?

NOELLE (quietly)
He's fine.

Donna tries to get around and see Noelle's face. It dawns on her-

DONNA
He's not the guy you liked out there? Noelle?

Noelle stonewalls her-

DONNA
Honey, he's my age. Older. What did you think could happen?

Nothing from Noelle-

DONNA
Nothing did happen, did it?

NOELLE (put upon)
Give me a break.

Donna sits, trying to figure out how to deal with this-
DONNA
Maybe this is good, maybe it's a sign-
we don't usually go for the same
type guys-

Noelle gives her a stifling glare-

DONNA
If I had known you were interested in
him, honey, I- but I didn't know,
did I? So you can be mad at me, but
not too mad, okay? This is not a
willful boyfriend-swiping type of
thing, it's- it's something
different.

Noelle settles in a chair far away from her mother, moodily
looking out the window-

DONNA
If you do this for me, I'll love you
forever.

66  INT  HOTEL ROOM - BOBBY

Bobby is packing his suitcase. He lays a PISTOL on top of
the clothes. He sits, stares at it-

FADE OUT:

67  EXT  MARINA - MORNING

Donna sits on Bobby's boat, the Orca Princess, watching Joe
get it ready to take out-

JOE
I don't know- I work with her. She's
a nice kid. She's-- funny-

DONNA
Really?

JOE
In a morbid kind of way, yeah.

DONNA
So you find her attractive?

JOE
I never gave it much thought. She's
a kid. Noelle!

He waves to Noelle, who comes down the float carrying a bag
with her stuff for the trip-

NOELLE (waves)

Hey.
DONNA (sotto voce)
Am I sharing sleeping quarters with you or with her?

JOE
Up to you-

DONNA
You two know each other. I'm going to get things squared away below here-

Donna climbs into the hold, too nervous to hang with Joe and Noelle. Joe can tell that Noelle is mad at him as she steps aboard-

JOE
Some coincidence, huh?

NOELLE
Yeah.

JOE
You like boats?

NOELLE
I don't know. Never been on them much.

JOE
We're just gonna cruise up north a ways, maybe see some whales, there's seals, sea lions-

NOELLE
My mother hates boats. Anything you do outdoors that's fun, she hates it.

JOE
Uh-huh-

NOELLE
And she's allergic to wool.

JOE
Yeah, she told me.

Noelle is still sulking, working hard at it-

JOE
You allergic to anything?

NOELLE
My mother's boyfriends.

Joe takes this in stride. Donna pops back up between them-

DONNA
It's terrific down there.
JOE
Yeah. Bobby's got a nice operation going.

She looks to Noelle, trying to be cheerful-

DONNA
I love boats

FLOAT - BOBBY

Bobby looks back behind him to see if anybody is watching, then turns and hurries down the float toward his boat, lugging his overnight bag and a sack full of supplies. He slows as he sees Joe on deck with Donna and Noelle. Joe sees him, sees the confused look on his face-

JOE
Bobby-

BOBBY
Hey, terrific, you made it-

JOE
This is Donna de Angelo- her daughter Noelle-

BOBBY
How you doing?

DONNA
Hi.

NOELLE
Hi.

Joe grabs Bobby's gear and Bobby steps aboard-

JOE
They're going to come along for the first leg of the trip.

BOBBY (surprised)
Oh- great, terrific- we'll go the scenic route-

JOE
I brought some extra groceries.

BOBBY (recovering)
Guy's been reheating beans on a hotplate for twenty years, I hate to see what he bought. You ladies can stake out your territories below while I get my charts on-line. Nice to have you aboard.
EXT WATER - DAY

We watch the Orca Princess motoring out from the marina, Port Henry in the background.

ON BOARD

Bobby starts by the wheel, talking to the others-

BOBBY (well-rehearsed):
Okay - safety lecture. Falling overboard is highly discouraged here on the Orca Princess, however if for any reason you should unintentionally enter the water, scream your lungs out and thrash around as long as is feasible. If you observe one of your shipmates taking the plunge, please do not attempt to dive in and save them. Throw one or more of the various floatable items you see around you toward the swimmer and inform your captain or your first mate - that's Joe. If the immersed party has been reasonably good company on the voyage we will come about and attempt a rescue at sea. Life preservers are located-

EXT SEA - DAY - VARIOUS SHOTS/COMPUTER CHARTS

We see the boat passing through channels, by glaciers, great scenery, etc. The natural world is very big up here-

EXT BOAT - BOW - AFTERNOON

Under sail. Joe, Noelle and Donna sit up in the bow, eating lunch. They're all tense. Joe tries to make conversation-

JOE
The first night maybe you throw some water on your face, take your clothes off, crawl under the sheets-- it seems like minutes before they yank you out of bed again. You pick the money fish out of the web, ice em down, make another set- the second night you sleep in your boots, maybe take your jacket off, on top of the rack. The third night you might not make it below- by the end of the week you just find someplace safe to lean on and close your eyes for a few minutes. I've slept on fish.

DONNA
Sounds like Hell.

Joe shrugs, a bit embarrassed-
JOE
People get hooked on it.

DONNA
God knows why.

JOE
It's the thing itself- you know? You go out, you find the fish, you pull 'em out of the ocean. You're right there with it. Everything else is like second-hand- people work in canneries, they sell real estate, they sell t-shirts, whatever. What if you couldn't sing anymore, you had to- what- work in a record store?

DONNA
So you liked it.

JOE
Yeah.

DONNA
And it's dangerous, you got off on that.

JOE (reflective)
Yeah. I guess I did.

Donna looks over to where Noelle sits, raises her voice a little-

DONNA
Noelle's studying to be a nuclear physicist.

NOELLE
Very funny.

DONNA
You could if you wanted to. You're smart enough.

NOELLE
Right.

DONNA
She kind of gave up on math and science-

NOELLE
They're boring.

DONNA
Almost every year she's been in a different school system. She's a really good writer.
NOELLE
How would you know?

DONNA
I've read your stories.

NOELLE
When I was twelve-

DONNA
But you still write, don't you?

No response from Noelle. Bobby calls, starting to take the sails down-

BOBBY
Weather service says we got a gale coming down at us. We're not going to make it to the Narrows.

DONNA (to Joe)
Is that bad?

EXT SEA - ORCA PRINCESS - LATE AFTERNOON

The Orca Princess plows ahead through gale winds and high seas-

CABIN

Joe and Bobby stand by the wheel, the roof zipped over their heads. Bobby is scrolling through the computer charts of the islands and passageways ahead-

BOBBY (pointing)
If we can put in back around here the mountains will knock down a lot of the wind-

JOE
Not a great anchorage-

BOBBY
You been in there?

JOE
Nope.

BOBBY
If we stay out here we're gonna get hammered. How's the kid?

INT CABIN - DONNA AND NOELLE

Donna sits with Noelle, who holds her head between her legs-

DONNA
You want some water? Wash your mouth out?
NOELLE

No.

DONNA

We could try another one of those pills-

NOELLE

No. I'll be alright.

Donna notices something on the inside of Noelle's arm-

DONNA

What are these cuts?

NOELLE

What?

DONNA

These-

NOELLE

Just cuts.

DONNA

How'd they get there?

Noelle shrugs indifferently, not wanting to get into it-

NOELLE

Maybe I got them at work.

Bobby pops down, dripping wet-

BOBBY

We're gonna pull up into an inlet here and drop anchor for the night. When it calms down a little I'll throw some steaks on the grill-

Noelle ducks her head again-

NOELLE

Oh God-

EXT INLET - BOAT - NIGHT

The wind has abated but there is still a rolling swell. We see the Orca Princess anchored near shore in a protected inlet-

INT GALLEY

Donna sits watching as Bobby puts steaks in the little broiler-
BOBBY
'Frosh Phenom Cans Thirty in Overtime Upset'. 'Soph Sensation Leads St. K Cagers to State Finals' -

DONNA
He's got those scars on his knees -

BOBBY
Hey, this is Jumpin Joe Gastineau we're talkin, the Houdini of the Hardwood, the Beethoven of the Bank Shot -

DONNA
He was good?

BOBBY
John Wooden sent a scout up to look at him -

DONNA
That's somebody I should know?

BOBBY
In basketball that's like God sending the Angel Gabriel down to check out your moves. Joey graduated, they retired his number, they retired his locker, they bronzed all his old jockstraps and put them in a trophy case -

JOE (entering)
High school.

BOBBY
Hey -

JOE
Game's changed a lot since then. Now I'd just be another guy.

BOBBY
Right. This tofu burger thing - she likes it mealy, medium mealy, black and crispy - ?

DONNA
I don't think she's hungry.

BOBBY
When this was still a Territory, it was a hanging offense to eat anything made of bean curd -

DONNA
She's picky with food -
BOBBY
No meat?

DONNA
No meat, no fish, no dairy-

BOBBY
Food Nazi. I could scrape some of the green stuff off the anchor chain, heat that up for her-

75 INT FORWARD BEDROOM
Noelle sits on the bed, listening-

DONNA (O.S.)
At home, I scramble eggs in the morning, she makes me feel like a criminal.

BOBBY (O.S.)
Hey, if your own kid can't make you feel like shit, what's the point, right?

76 EXT DECK
Bobby sits up on deck after dinner, looking out over the water, uneasy. He glances up as Joe joins him-

BOBBY
Listen-

Joe listens to the night. Nothing but waves and breeze-

BOBBY
You hear anything?

JOE
No.

BOBBY
I thought I heard a motor.

JOE
Nobody comes back here.

Bobby looks toward the companionway-

BOBBY (sotto voce)
We got a problem, Joe. The girls there-

JOE
I'm sorry, I should have asked-
BOBBY
Don't get me wrong, they're really nice, they're terrific- but this guy I'm meeting- guys, actually-

Bobby doesn't want to spit it out-

JOE
What's going on?

BOBBY
It's complicated-

JOE
Tell me.

BOBBY
I was in a situation- I invested in some real estate, it didn't come out the way I hoped- there was a cash-flow squeeze. I had these clients- they own an organic food business? I took em all the way up from Baja to Glacier Bay, they're high the whole time but nice, right? We got along really good, and at the end they give me a bonus- it's a pound of hash-

JOE
Bobby-

BOBBY
Primo stuff. They say how if I wanted to, if I was that kind of guy, how easy it would be for me to- you know-

JOE
Oh, Christ-

BOBBY
So they connected me with somebody who connected me with somebody else and I brought a couple loads up the last few years. It's a piece of cake, right, and the money gets me out of a jam. It's just hash- it's not crack or heroin, it's something I might do myself, recreationally. Lots of good people do it-

JOE
Are you carrying drugs on board?

BOBBY
No, I'm not Joe, and that's the problem.

(more)
BOBBY
The last time up, I'm off Cape
Caution, the Canadian patrol boat
comes racing out at me, I get
paranoid. I dump the whole batch.

JOE
Aww-

BOBBY
Hundreds of thousands of dollars, I
get nervous and it's fish food.
Turns out they had me confused with
another boat, somebody reported them
running too close to a pod of
humpbacks.

Bobby is very shaky now-

BOBBY
These guys, Joe, I don't know that
much about them, but they don't fuck
around. They think I sold it on the
side, that I'm holding out. They
arranged a meet in Baja, I got
nervous again, I smelled a set-up,
and I didn't show. I come up here-
my home turf- I contact them, arrange
a meeting, tell them we'll work it
out.

JOE
That's where we're headed?

BOBBY
I got it all worked out- a payment
schedule, mortgage on the boat,
mortgage on the house- I figure
they'd rather get their money back
than- these are businessmen, right?

JOE
What am I supposed to do?

BOBBY
I told Teresa, Joe. She left me.
Took the kids, went across to Tijuana
to stay with her sister. You got to
help me out of this thing-

JOE
You bring me on board, you don't tell
me shit-
BOBBY
I can't- I can't do this alone. I need somebody to back me up- just for them to see somebody behind me, I got family, whatever. Who else can I trust?

Joe doesn't answer this. He looks toward the cabin, light coming up from the galley-

BOBBY
But the women- we go by Tenakee Springs first thing tomorrow, right, we drop them off. They were gonna fly back anyway, you have the plane pick them up there.

Joe continues to brood-

BOBBY
Joe?

JOE
Stay up here for a bit. I'll figure something out to tell them.

BOBBY
You're saving my ass on this, Joe.

JOE
You don't deserve it.

Joe heads for the cabin. Bobby listens to the night-

INT FORWARD BEDROOM

Donna and Noelle arrange things so they can fit in the bed-

NOELLE
Why don't you go in with him?

DONNA
I feel funny-

NOELLE
Cause of me?

DONNA
I don't know. I just feel funny.

NOELLE
Not as funny as I'm gonna feel sleeping in the same bed with you.

DONNA
You used to all the time. It wasn't that long ago.
NOELLE
It was that long ago. It was in another lifetime.

DONNA
It could be kind of fun-

NOELLE
Look, if we weren't trying to impress some guy we wouldn't even be here.

DONNA
What do you mean 'we'?

NOELLE
You know what I mean-

JOE (O.S.)
Hey?

DONNA
There's no room, but come on in if you want.

Joe opens the door and looks in-

JOE (to Noelle)
How you feeling?

NOELLE
A little better.

JOE
The wind's coming down, so it should be pretty calm tonight. Tomorrow we're going to swing over to Tenakee, drop you off there-

DONNA (hearing)
What's that?

JOE
It's this little town with a-

DONNA (pointing)
No, that- upstairs-

Joe turns and they hear VOICES, raised and angry-

DONNA
Somebody came on board?

JOE
No--

POP! A GUNSHOT rings out and Joe immediately pushes into the little room, shutting the door behind him-
DONNA
What's happening?

POP! POP! Two more shots!

JOE
Follow me! Just- whatever happens,
follow me-

He is up kneeling on the bed unlatching the little square
plexiglas hatch overhead-

DONNA
Donna peeks out the door-

POV - LEGS

A man's LEGS, not belonging to Bobby, start down the ladder
from the cabin-

DONNA
She shuts the door, looks to Joe, who is climbing up through
the hatch-

78
EXT DECK - JOE

Joe stays as low as he can, crawling out from the hatch, then
reaching down and grabbing Noelle to pull her up-

79
INT FORWARD BEDROOM

Donna pushes to help Noelle out, then takes Joe's arm-

VOICE (O.S.)
They're in the back here!

80
EXT DECK

Joe helps Donna through and pulls them both by the hand to
the side of the bow closest to the shore-

VOICE (O.S.)
Shit! They're up here!

Joe pushes Noelle, then Donna, then dives- POP! POP! as
more SHOTS are fired-

81
EXT WATER - NIGHT

SPLASH! Joe hits the water and comes up, finding the two
women treading water-

JOE
Swim! Come on!

POP! POP! POP! The three swim for shore as GUNSHOTS ring
out over the black water.
About halfway to shore a FLASHLIGHT BEAM begins to play over the water, searching for them-

EXT SHORE

Joe reaches the shore first and helps the others up over the rocks. POP! POP! Wild SHOTS are fired from the boat. Joe hurries the women into the trees. Noelle doesn't have shoes-

EXT TREES - NIGHT

Joe, Donna and Noelle move back into the thick woods, climbing awkwardly. Finally they stop, breathless, wet and shivering, supporting themselves against the bole of a fallen tree. Joe immediately starts pulling his clothes off, wringing them out and laying them on the tree-

DONNA
What the fuck is going on?

JOE
Somebody shot Bobby.

DONNA
Who shot him? Why?

JOE
I don't know- he told me he was in trouble, just now- I don't know how they found us-

DONNA
What are we gonna do?

JOE
Take your clothes off-

DONNA
What?

JOE
We've got to get the wet things off and huddle up together or we'll freeze. Hurry-

DONNA
We have to get help!

JOE
There's nobody on this island. Help Noelle-

Noelle is shivering uncontrollably-

NOELLE
I'm cold.

Donna bends to help take Noelle's clothes off-
JOE
If they come after us we're going to have to move, so put your shoes back on-

NOELLE
I don't have any-

DONNA
I don't believe this. This can't be fucking happening-

They get the last of Noelle's clothes off. Joe wrings them out and lays them out on the tree. Donna lifts Noelle in her arms, hugging her close. Joe puts his arms around both, sandwiching Noelle-

JOE
The night doesn't last too long this time of year. We're gonna be alright.

WIDER
We see the three people crouching, huddled together up against the tree-

FADE OUT:

84
84

EXT INLET - BOAT - MORNING

The Orca Princess sits anchored in the early morning mist, water calm now. A CHARTER BOAT is anchored beyond it. We see two MEN stepping down into a little SKIFF. We SHIFT to see that we are looking over the shoulder of Joe, crouching behind a tree-

REVERSE
Joe, wearing only underpants and shoes, creeps back into the woods-

WOODS
Joe returns to the fallen log to find Donna and Noelle starting to dress in their damp, cold clothes. They are all drawn and shivering-

JOE
They're coming in.

They all turn as the WHINE of SKIFF MOTOR starts up. Joe goes to one knee-

JOE (to Noelle)
Hop on.

Noelle gets on his back and he stands, then begins to climb diagonally through the trees. Donna grabs the rest of the clothes and follows-
EXT SHORE

The prow of the skiff bumps the little beach. LEGS appear as the MEN drag it ashore-

EXT WOODS - VARIOUS SHOTS

Shots of the men, separately and together, searching through the woods. We never see above their waists. One carries a handgun, the other a hunting rifle-

WOODS

The legs of one of the men pass through the frame. We HOLD, then TRACK IN till we see Noelle, terrified, lying under a fallen branch, trying not to shake-

VOICE (O.S.)
Hey-

VOICE 2 (O.S.)
Yeah?

VOICE (O.S.)
This sucks. I've had it with this shit.

VOICE 2 (O.S.)
One more sweep.

VOICE (O.S.)
Fuckin mosquitos eatin me alive-

Noelle closes her eyes. The man, turning back, steps only inches from her face-

VOICE 2 (O.S.)
Let's go back a different way than we came.

WOODS - SUN

We see the SUN high in the sky, framed by TREETOPS. We TILT DOWN to see Donna and Noelle sunning in an open patch, looking beat. They have staked out some of their clothes on sticks to dry better. Joe steps into the clearing, kneels by them-

JOE
The boats are gone.

He sits and pulls off his shoes and socks-

DONNA
You think they'll come back?
JOE
No way to know. Listen, I'm sorry--
I had no idea till last night that
something was wrong-

NOELLE
You think they killed him?

JOE
Yeah.

DONNA
Where are we?

JOE
Little inlet on the backside of
Kuleshov Island-

DONNA
And that's like up Shit Creek without
a paddle?

JOE
Pretty much. I figure we should head
around toward the channel while it's
still light, hope we run into a
stream. We'll be okay without food
for awhile, but water-

He wads a sock into the toe of one of his shoes and hands it
to Noelle-

JOE
Try this.

NOELLE
What are you going to use?

JOE
I'll be careful where I step. Go
ahead.

Noelle sticks her foot into the shoe, starts to lace it up.
Donna holds her head in her hands-

DONNA
This is not happening to us. This is
only a dramatization of somebody
else's pathetic story.

JOE
It could be worse. It's not so cold
yet- I've got my knife-

Donna digs in her pocket and produces her cigarette lighter-

DONNA
We can have a fire tonight.
Joe takes the lighter, rolls it in his fingers-

JOE
I don't know-- the smoke. They might not be too far.

DONNA
I'm not gonna let her freeze like that. Not again.

EXT WOODS - AFTERNOON

Joe, Donna and Noelle walking through the woods, the water visible just down the slope beyond them. Noelle has Joe's shoes on. Joe steps carefully, watching the ground-

EXT WOODS - STREAM

A stream a few yards wide runs down the side of the hill. We PAN, following the current, till we come to Joe and Noelle on their knees, drinking-

DONNA (O.S.)
There's a place to cross down here!

Joe stands and we FOLLOW him down to where Donna stands at the foot of a rotted plank-and-rock bridge spanning the stream-

DONNA
We don't have to get wet again.

Joe kneels to examine a rotted plank-

JOE
These have been milled.

DONNA
People made this thing, right?

JOE
A long time ago.

EXT WOODS - PENS

Overgrown, falling down PENS stand under the trees, bits of wire and wood tangling as the walls sag this way and that. We PAN to see Joe and Donna checking it out-

JOE
People used to raise foxes- for the pelts. It was a big deal for awhile.

DONNA
Why come out here?
JOE
Land was available, I guess. People would hunt, fish, try to grow some things-

NOELLE (O.S.)
Over here!

NOELLE
Noelle stands at the edge of an overgrown clearing, staring at something. Donna and Joe appear behind her, seeing-

REVERSE
We shoot past Noelle toward a falling down wreck of a HOUSE-roof caved in, debris scattered on and around the rotted-through porch. Weedy trees have grown up all around the fireplace and chimney, which are still standing-

NOELLE, OTHERS

NOELLE
Somebody lived here.

EXT HOUSE - NIGHT
90
We see FLAME through the boards and sections of roofing that have been fashioned into a kind of lean-to, anchored by the fireplace-

INT HOUSE
91
A FIRE of sticks and splintered wood laid in an old washtub smokes and CRACKLES. Noelle sits as close to the fire as she can while Donna fans the smoke away with a shingle. Joe has his knife out and is trying to make a pair of sandals from piece of ruined carpet. The interior of the house is a chaos of gutted furniture and sagging walls. Donna coughs from the smoke-

DONNA
Tomorrow they'll miss us. Noelle won't be in class-

NOELLE
Nobody'll miss me in school.

DONNA
They'll miss you at your job. And Joe. And I'm supposed to sing at the Nugget.

JOE
Be a few days before anybody's likely to start calling around for us. Bobby wasn't keeping radio contact, nobody knows he cut over this way.
NOELLE
How long does it take you to starve?

Joe glances at Noelle-

JOE
I don't know- depends on what shape you're in, what else you're doing.

DONNA
Remember I did that fast when we were in Idaho? How many days was that?

NOELLE
You cheated.

DONNA
I did not. I had some tomato juice-

NOELLE
Then it isn't a fast.

DONNA
Well I'm starving now. How far do we have to walk?

JOE
Couple days, maybe more-

Days-

DONNA (dismayed)

JOE
I think we should hang here where we've got some shelter for a while, make sure those guys don't come back, then make a signal fire on the shore.

DONNA
People come in here to fish?

JOE
No. Nobody does anything on Kuleshov.

Donna looks around the ruined interior-

DONNA
Except the lunatics who built this place.

FADE OUT:

EXT SHORE - MORNING

Joe scrapes mussels off the rocks with his knife as Donna wades thigh deep in the water, pulling up seaweed-

DONNA
How bout this stuff?
JOE
I don't think so. Just take that
batch you've got and rinse it in the
stream.

She heads for a pile of darker green seaweed left on a rock-

DONNA
We gonna make that signal fire?

Joe looks out at the inlet-

JOE
I think we can risk it tomorrow. We
find a spot that doesn't go under
when the tide is in.

EXT HOUSE

Noelle steps out with an armful of trash that she tosses to
the side of the house. She heads back in-

INT HOUSE

Still a mess but they've cleared more space for themselves on
the solid part of the floor. We FOLLOW Noelle to a sodden
mass of rags and papers, stuffed into the fireplace, that she
begins to toss wad by wad onto a section of carpet. She
pauses, coming up with a small, leather-bound book with a
clap on it. She undoes the clasp. The pages are damp but
still intact-

NOELLE (reading)
'My Diary-

She looks around, crosses to a spot on the floor where light
is slanting in from a hole in the roof, sits and begins to read-

EXT HOUSE - DAY - CU SEA CUCUMBER

Joe knife slices into a dull purple sea cucumber, a long,
turd-like creature, cutting it into strips-

DONNA (O.S.)
We gonna eat that thing too?

WIDER

Noelle and Donna sit on sections of the ruined porch, chewing
on mussels and washing them down with stream water from a
battered metal pan. Joe is butchering the sea cucumber on a
plank-

JOE
Sea cucumber. Lots of protein.
DONNA
Right.
(to Noelle)
Pass me some of that algae-

NOELLE
Kelp.

DONNA
Kelp. These mussels are like rubber.

NOELLE
Frankie steams them in white wine with ginger.

Donna gives her a look-

NOELLE (shrugs)
On a bed of saffron couscous. It's one of the appetizers. I memorized them.

JOE
If we're here for a while I'll rig something up for cooking.

Donna makes a bitter face and coughs out something green-

DONNA
Sorry.

He hands Noelle a small piece of the sea cucumber-

JOE
Chew this, really slow-

EXT INLET - NIGHT
Ripples in the water-

EXT WOODS - NIGHT
The trees stir slightly with the breeze-

INT HOUSE - NIGHT
Noelle's face is lit by FLAME as she reads-

NOELLE (reading)
"My name is Anne Marie Hoak, and this is my diary."

JOE AND DONNA

Joe and Donna sit on the floor on the other side of the smoky basin fire from Noelle, listening-
Noelle (reading, O.S.)
"Papa and Mother and I have come here to make a go at the fox farming trade. If this pans out, says Papa,"

Noelle

Noelle (reading)
"-next year I can go back to finish with school. I offered to get on at the cannery to help out when we were in town, but Papa says there is too much trash working there. He was a logger but fell while he was topping and now has headaches and dizziness that prevent him from many of the trades other men pursue. This way, he says, we can live in the Great Outdoors and operate our own business at the same time, which is every man's true desire. Mother doesn't care for it."

Wider

Noelle (reading)
"We have transported a dozen breeding pairs of the blue-pelt foxes and put them in their pens. They are lovely to look at but nervous and I need to mind my fingers when I am near them. When the vixens are ready to bear we will separate them to be alone with their litter. Papa is building a fish trap in the stream, as he hopes to catch the returning chum for foxfood. I expect it will be a hard life, but work is scarce back in town and Papa's spirits were getting low. The people who built our little house tried to make it fishing and rowing out for stray logs to sell back to the mill, but they gave up after a few seasons. Mother goes on about how she will miss female company and that I will have to be her special friend. I know that Papa thinks he has been a disappointment to her, and sometimes she doesn't do much to hide it. I will be lonely here, I can tell, but it should be a great adventure, like Caddie in Caddie Woodlawn. I will try to be a faithful writer, Dear Diary, and tell you my innermost thoughts."

Noelle puts the diary in her lap looks at them-
DONNA
Wow. Read some more.

NOELLE
Tomorrow night.

DONNA
We may not be here tomorrow.

NOELLE
I found it. I'll read it when I want to.

They stare at each other for a moment. Neither blinks.

JOE
We'll have something to look forward to. Like a soap opera.

DONNA
Whoah. It sounds like we're moving in-

JOE
There's no telling how long it's going to be.

DONNA
Wonderful.

She looks at Noelle, at the ruin around her, fighting back tears-

DONNA
We're going to be alright, aren't we? We're gonna be fine.

Nobody seconds her. The fire crackles-

FADE OUT:

EXT SEA - BLACKNESS

We slowly FADE IN from complete BLACKNESS to see the surface of the sea at night. WHOOSH! Joe, younger, bursts to the surface, gasping to fill his lungs with air. He treads water, looking about frantically, then calling-

JOE
Lester! Oley!

Nothing. We drift around to see a FISHING BOAT, the Cape Fox, anchored thirty yards away-

JOE
Hey! Somebody! Help! Help me!

It is Vic, younger, who raises his head over the side of the boat. He is drunk and sleepy-
VIC
Who the fuck is that?

JOE
They're on the boat! Lester and Oley!

Vic stands unsteadily, looks past Joe, puzzled-

VIC
What boat?

CU JOE
Joe treads, circling. No sign of his boat or his friends.
He takes a deep breath, dives under. BLACKNESS-

INT  HOUSE - NIGHT
Joe wakes with a gasp, as if he's been holding his breath.
Donna wakes beside him. All three are sleeping around the
embers of the fire-

DONNA
You okay?

JOE
Yeah-

Donna looks over to Noelle, still sleeping, huddled up
against her under Joe's jacket-

DONNA
All I want is for her to be happy and
safe. She's not either.

Joe disentangles himself from them, squats to feed the fire-

DONNA
People must have always smelled like
smoke.

She watches Joe for a long moment-

DONNA
What's the matter?

He doesn't answer, brooding-

DONNA
What?

JOE
You can't always save people.

They exchange a look, then Joe moves to cover Noelle's feet-
Noelle struggles to drag driftwood across the rocks. We PAN to see Joe and Donna piling wood and trash from the house at the edge of the woods-

CLOSER

Joe lights a stick with some dry moss wrapped around it with Donna's lighter. Noelle arrives and lays the wood down. Joe lights several sections of the pile. It begins to smoke, then flames start up-

JOE
We need to feed this a couple times a day. When the sky's like this it won't be easy to spot, but on a clear day-

DONNA
What if it rains?

JOE
It rains, or the tide comes in too high, we'll probably have to start from scratch.

DONNA
And we hope somebody sees this and wonders what the story is.

NOELLE
Somebody who doesn't want to kill us.

Donna gives Noelle a hard look-

JOE
It's a possibility.

DONNA
You two are a great match. Gloom and Doom.

NOELLE
There's no use pretending-

DONNA
Yes there is. We're camping here. Like survival school camping. This is what they mean by quality time, right? No distractions, no media stuff, we get to know each other, gnaw the bark off the trees- people pay money to go on trips like this.

They are both looking at her now-
DONNA
You assume that bad shit is gonna happen, bad shit happens.

She roughly throws some more branches of the fire-

DONNA (mutters)
I don't see the point.

102    EXT WOODS - AFTERNOON

Joe is trying to make a fish-trap from pieces of the old fox pens as Noelle looks on-

JOE
The fish go in through here, then they can't turn around and get out. That's the idea, anyway. This wire is kind of brittle.

NOELLE
Where'd you learn all this stuff?

JOE
My old man taught me.

NOELLE
You did lots of stuff with him?

JOE
When he had something to do and he needed somebody to swear at he took me along.

Not the answer Noelle wanted to hear-

NOELLE
My father's a composer. My real father.

JOE
How long did you live with him?

NOELLE
I didn't. She split up with him- you know- before.

JOE
Oh.

NOELLE
Bobby was your half-brother?

JOE
Uh-huh.

NOELLE
You ever live together?
JOE
No. We saw each other around. He was a lot younger-different friends, different life.

NOELLE
I've got two half-sisters and a half-brother.

JOE
What are they like?

NOELLE
I never met them. They're pretty little, still. I saw them in a picture- he was in *People* Magazine, my father.

JOE
So you don't visit?

NOELLE
She doesn't want me to.

JOE
So you write letters, phone calls-?

NOELLE
No.

Joe glances at her, doesn't pursue it-

NOELLE
You don't think we're gonna get rescued, do you?

JOE
We have to stay strong until somebody comes. We need to stay warm, find things to eat. Just concentrate on that.

She fingers the mesh on the trap-

NOELLE
Think we'll catch anything?

103 INT HOUSE - NIGHT

Diary time again. A fire in the fireplace. Each of them has some kind of improvised seat-

NOELLE
"The house is small, but cozy now that we have cleaned it up and made it our own.

(more)
Noelle lays the diary down-

DONNA
Sounds like Mom's not the Wilderness Family type.

JOE
Sounds like it might be in the Depression. That's what—fifty, sixty years ago—

DONNA
You gonna read us more?

Noelle considers, then opens the diary again—
NOELLE
"The terrible birthing has begun. We think one of the vixens has eaten her litter. The kits, the ones that survived, are lovely once their eyes open. Papa told me not to handle them but when he is off sometimes I do. Their heads are squarish and fluffy."

She closes the diary and shuts the clasp with finality-

DONNA (smiles)
Fox babies.

FADE OUT:

104 EXT SHORE - MORNING

Noelle is picking her way across the tidal mud, poking into air holes with a long stick to dig out clams. We see the plume of SMOKE from the signal fire far behind her. She suddenly CRIES OUT, almost stepping on something. She steps back, frightened, then approaches slowly. We see that it is Bobby's corpse, half-buried in the mud, CRABS chewing on it. Noelle contemplates it for a long moment. She flicks one of the crabs away with the stick. Feeling shaky, she sits on a rock-

105 INT WOODS - AFTERNOON

We FOLLOW Joe, lugging a large rock. He bends and places it on a pile of similar rocks, filling up a depression in the forest floor. Donna and Noelle stand watching-

DONNA
Isn't that enough?

JOE
Don't want the bears to dig him out.
(to Noelle)
I'm real sorry you had to see that.

DONNA
Killing somebody for money-

JOE
By the middle of the winter up here people kill each other cause they're bored. He took a risk and it didn't work out for him, that's all.

He lifts up another stone, heaves it onto the pile-

106 EXT SHORE - DAY

We hear Noelle read softly from the diary, her voice flat as we watch Joe walking moodily along the shoreline-
NOELLE (V.O.)
"Winter has locked us in its icy embrace. The pelts of the animals are thick and bluish and our home is blanketed with snow. Papa calls it Limbo, because it sure isn't Heaven and it's too cold to be Hell. Mother wondered about Purgatory, but he said no, Purgatory has an end to it. Don't torture me so, said Mother.

NOELLE
Noelle sits up by the treeline, crying, watching Joe in the distance-

NOELLE (V.O.)
The salmon we dried have run out. The kits are eating solid food now and it is hard to keep up with them. Papa went to the far side of the island and shot a pair of sea lions, but could only bring one back without tipping over in the skiff. I had to help him with the cross-cut saw, breaking it down to pieces that we keep frozen in the shed. Papa said it's just meat but I tried not to look at what I was doing. The other sea lion had been gotten to by a bear when Papa rowed back.

DONNA
Donna sits by the signal fire, watching the sky-

NOELLE (V.O.)
We put a piece of the frozen meat in each of the pens and the foxes fight over it and gnaw at it and the outside melts from the heat of their little tongues. Mother won't deal with them anymore. She has grown silent with the shorter, darker days, and only now and again will she break out into one of her Bible songs. She asks me to join her, but we don't harmonize well.

INT HOUSE - NIGHT
Noelle reads by the fire, Joe and Donna listening in moody silence-

NOELLE (V.O.)
I have a dream about Fox. He is a young man who comes for me on snowshoes, dressed in the blue pelts. (more)
NOELLE (V.O.)
His skin and hair are dark but His
eyes are ice-blue. All the others
here are paired, He says, Papa and
Mother, the sirens and the vixens, but
I am alone and He can't let that
continue. Sometimes in the dream He
stays with us, but usually He picks me
up and carries me to His own island.
Papa says if we can get the
animals through the winter they are
a Gold Mine. He says fortunes have
been started on less. He says if he
keeps having his dizziness I will
have to go hunting with him the next
time. The burns from where Mother
hit him with the bacon grease are
only pink now, healing, though the
hair doesn't grow on that part of his
jaw. I am sewing a sampler."

She closes the diary. Donna and Joe watch the fire, thinking-

EXT STREAM - MORNING

Time has passed. Noelle, standing thigh-deep in the stream,
yanks the jerry-rigged fish trap to the surface. There is a
very large salmon caught in it, flapping desperately as it
hits the air. She CRIES OUT and drops the trap, then gets
her courage and hauls it up again. She smiles-

EXT WOODS - MORNING

Joe and Donna embrace leaning up against a tree, holding
tight, rocking a little, clinging like their lives depend on
it-

NOELLE

Noelle stands back in the trees, watching mutely, the salmon
slung over her shoulder with a cord through its gills-

EXT SHORE - AFTERNOON

Joe pulls a flat stone out from the embers of the signal
fire, blows the ash off it. He lays thin strips of the
salmon meat on it-

JOE
You don't worry about burning it up
this way-. just flip it over after a
minute-

We SHIFT to see Donna and Noelle. Noelle sits away from
them, sulking, shivering slightly-

JOE (to Noelle)
You laid the trap back in?
NOELLE
Yeah.

JOE
Indians used to smoke everything they couldn't eat, hope that it lasted the winter.

Donna is looking at the sky-

DONNA
Good day for planes.

NOELLE
Nobody's coming.

DONNA
Don't be negative-

NOELLE
In two weeks how many planes have we seen? Zero.

DONNA
We heard that one.

JOE
There would have been more if they were searching for us here.

DONNA
What does that mean?

JOE
Bobby may have told people at the dock we were headed in a different direction. He thought people were after him-

NOELLE
People were after him-

JOE
Yeah. Anyway, they may be searching in a totally different area.

NOELLE
Stupid-

DONNA
Noelle-

NOELLE
Trying to impress your boyfriend, drag us out on a boat-

DONNA
That's enough.
NOELLE
It's true.

DONNA
Look, I am cold, I am hungry, I am dirty, and I am scared shitless, just like you. But I'm trying to help us get through this thing-

NOELLE
I shouldn't be here. I shouldn't be in this state, I shouldn't-

DONNA
Nobody is to blame for this-

NOELLE
Yeah, right-

DONNA
When you are of age, Noelle, you are free to go fuck your own life up. Until that day, I'm afraid, it's my job to fuck it up for you!

A silence. Donna looks to Joe-

DONNA
You could help me with this-

NOELLE
He's not my father.

DONNA
Thank God for that.

NOELLE
What's that mean?

DONNA
Your father would have gone off picking berries or something and that's the last we'd have heard from him.

NOELLE
That's not true.

DONNA
How would you know? He was in the same room with you maybe twice-

NOELLE
You wouldn't let him-

DONNA
If you cross his mind once a year, max, I'd be surprised-
NOELLE
Every Christmas-

DONNA
Oh Noelle-

NOELLE
He sent me a bike, he sent me a
watch, he sent me a dollhouse-

DONNA
I sent the watch!

This shuts Noelle up. She had no idea. Donna isn't happy
she let it out-

DONNA
I sent the bike- all of it. I
figured when you were little, you had
Santa Claus, the Easter Bunny, you
might as well have a father in
California who sent you stuff.

Noelle glares at her, tears in her eyes. Joe flips the
salmon, hoping to stay out of the crossfire-

NOELLE (muted)
I hated that dollhouse.

DONNA
I know, honey, but you wouldn't let
me exchange it, cause it was from
him. Remember?

She sees that Noelle is shaking-

DONNA
Are you okay?

NOELLE
I'm great. I'm kickin-

DONNA (moving)
Let me feel your forehead-

Noelle pushes her hand away-

NOELLE
Leave me alone!

Donna backs off. She uses a piece of seaweed to pick up the
hot stone, offers Noelle the salmon-

DONNA
Eat something.
Noelle reads solemnly, slowly. She is by the fire and wrapped in Joe's jacket, but still trembling with a fever-

NOELLE
"I was the one who found them. It was time to clean the scat from the pens so I had the shovel and the buckets and then there was blood everywhere in the snow. All of them torn and smashed, even my little kits. A bear, says Papa, though when has a bear got into a half-dozen different pens without breaking the gates? Mother says nothing, but she is only a black spot these days, and refused to celebrate Christmas. The pelts are ruined, of course, worthless, and our long care is for naught. Papa couldn't speak when he saw them. He says his head hurts trying to think a way out of our dilemma.

Joe shoots a look at Donna to see how she is taking this-

NOELLE
I dreamed that Fox came and was angry for what we let happen, that He held me down on the snow and I felt His hot breath on my face, felt it bitter in my throat, and felt his ice-eyes cutting into me. I wish He would come soon.
Mother sleeps with me now and it is cramped and tense. You would think another body under the covers would bring warmth, but I wake feeling drained, like she has pulled all the heat from me. I am doing the cooking now and my eyes are always red from the smoke. The wood is too big for the cookstove, but the axe has gone missing and we can't break it down.
Mother says Hell is a cold place. Maybe I am the soul not of a she-wolf, but of a soaring bird that flies south every winter, and my heart is so sick because I am not supposed to be here in this cold, this dark, this wet. Maybe I am like the air in this house, the air that does not move when Papa and Mother pass in silence, dead, smoky air that smells of wool and old bacon.

Tears begin to roll down Noelle's cheeks as she reads-
NOELLE
We threw the animals on the rocks for the tide to deal with. Papa cried."

FADE OUT:

112 EXT SHORE - DAY

Noelle is feeding the signal fire. She hears something, stands shakily to look up, shading her eyes-

WIDER

Over Noelle's shoulder we see a FLOAT PLANE flying over the other side of the inlet. Suddenly it banks and heads right toward her-

NOELLE

Excited, she starts to yell-

NOELLE

'Its coming! Its coming!

113 INT WOODS - AFTERNOON

Donna is dragging fallen branches toward the shore. She hears Noelle's VOICE, drops the branches and begins to run-

114 EXT SHORE

Donna breaks out of the woods and begins to run toward the signal fire. Joe comes out of the woods behind her, looks to the sky, then follows running-

JOE

Donna! Careful!

NOELLE - PLANE

Noelle is in the FG as the float plane lands in the inlet and taxis straight toward her-

115 INT PLANE - POV

We see through the windshield as the shore approaches. A young girl by a fire, joined by an older woman and man-

116 EXT SHORE - TRIO

Noelle and Donna are beaming, Joe worried-

REVERSE

The little float plane slows as it nears the shore. Joe wades out into the water to grab hold of the float tether as the engine cuts off and the prop stops turning. Smilin Jack steps out onto the float on his side-
SMILIN JACK
You folks picked a hell of a spot for a clambake.

DONNA (stepping forward)
We've been stuck here forever! We've been stranded!

SMILIN JACK (looking past them)
Any more of you?

DONNA
Just us. We were on Bobby's boat-Joe's brother? And he was- murdered.

Joe shoots Donna a look. It's clear he doesn't totally trust Jack. Jack looks at Joe-

JOE
I'm not sure who did it. We jumped off at night-- there were a couple fellas came in looking and we hid, then they pulled anchor-

He shrugs-

SMILIN JACK
Damn. How long you been here?

DONNA
A week and a half? We found what was left of an old house, we've been holing up there at night.

SMILIN JACK (shakes his head)
And I was hoping you people could help me. My radio's shot, I'm low on fuel and I'm heading into bad weather.

JOE (suspicious)
Your radio's gone?

SMILIN JACK
Crapped out on me a half hour back. Not even static.

He looks to the sky, looks at the water-

SMILIN JACK
Tide's going out fast. I'm gonna have to turn this thing around and try to get out of here, send help-

DONNA
Take my daughter, then. She's sick-

SMILIN JACK (grave)
I'd love to, but I can't handle the weight. Believe me, it'll be safer here-

DONNA
She barely weighs a thing-

SMILIN JACK
I got to jettison whatever I can to have a fighting chance. Sorry ladies.

He pulls off his jacket, tosses it to Noelle-

SMILIN JACK (to Joe)
You want to give me a hand with this?

He reaches in and starts tossing things on shore-

SMILIN JACK
I got a first aid kit in here- no food though-

DONNA AND NOELLE
Noelle is shaking again. Donna puts her arms around her, grim-

DONNA
We'll have to spend one more night out here. honey, that's all. Then they'll come and get us-

JOE AND SMILIN JACK
Joe helps Jack wrestle the tiny plane around to face out to sea. They speak quietly enough that the women can't hear-

SMILIN JACK
I'm real sorry to hear about Bobby, man. I used to party with him up in Haines-

JOE
What's the story?

SMILIN JACK
What's what story?

JOE
Who sent you?

Jack meets Joe's eyes for a long moment, then gives a furtive look toward the shore-
SMILIN JACK
Couple guys- Mr. Smith and Mr. Brown-never seen em before but I don't
think they're up here to save the
whales. They laid some serious money
on me to poke around, see if I could
spot three people roughing it in the
boonies.

JOE
And if you saw them?

SMILIN JACK
Just go back and tell them where.

JOE
Why'd you land, then?

SMILIN JACK
I'm on the level about the radio and
the rest of it, Joe. I was hoping to
find some sport fishermen with a
short-wave and a cooler full of brew.

DONNA AND NOELLE
Donna and Noelle watch, Donna reassuring her daughter-

DONNA
We'll sit in a hot bath for a day or
so while people bring us everything
we want to eat and drink and then
we'll get into a soft bed with clean
sheets and just hibernate-

PLANE, MEN
Smilin Jack gets into the pilot's seat and buckles up-

SMILIN JACK
If I'd known the deal with Bobby I'd
of turned em in- you have to trust me
on that.

JOE
Right.

Jack leans out and calls out to the women on shore-

SMILIN JACK
Hang in there, ladies! I'll be back
with the cavalry tomorrow!

He looks to Joe-

SMILIN JACK
Wish me luck, buddy.
Joe says nothing. Jack grins, shuts the door, gives Joe thumbs up. Joe steps off the float and moves away as Jack revs the engine and begins to taxi away-

SHORE

Joe joins Donna and Noelle as the plane gathers speed and takes off from the water-

DONNA
We're saved. We're gonna make it.

JOE
Yeah.

INT HOUSE - NIGHT

The three sit around the fire. Joe speaks carefully, not wanting to dishearten them, but deeply troubled. It has begun to RAIN outside-

JOE
The last I heard he was flying out of Anchorage, kicking square halibut out of a cargo plane-

DONNA
What's that?

JOE
Marijuana bales. You fly over a spot on the water, somebody signals with lights or gives you a code over the radio, and you dump your load. The people in the boat below fish the bales out and take them to the next stage.

DONNA
He's a drug dealer.

JOE
He's whatever pays best and he can get away with. He's got balls and he's never gotten caught or bought the farm. Bad weather, bad company— you got the cash Smilin Jack's your man.

DONNA
He hit on me a couple times at the bar. He seemed like a nice guy.

JOE
I didn't say people don't like him. I said I don't trust him.
NOELLE
You think he might tell those men? And bring them back here?

JOE
I don't know. I didn't believe him about the radio— and we've got some personal history—

DONNA
Like what?

JOE
His brother drowned on a fishing boat. It was my fault.

Donna ponders this a moment—

DONNA (deciding)
He wouldn't do that to us. He's not a killer.

NOELLE
How do you know?

DONNA
I've looked in his eyes. I can tell things about a person—

NOELLE
Like you could tell that Dwayne in Colorado Springs wasn't cheating on you with the cocktail waitress—

DONNA
This is different—

NOELLE
Or that Lyle would never hit you—

DONNA
Once, he hit me once and I walked—

NOELLE
But you didn't see it coming, did you?

DONNA
We don't have any choice! You're sick, it's getting colder, we can't stay here!

She turns to Joe for support—

DONNA
Can we?
JOE
Nobody's coming for a while if it keeps up like this. Not in a boat, not in a plane-

Donna looks at the rain pouring down outside-

DONNA
It doesn't look so bad. They'll be getting the rescue team together by now.

DISSOLVE TO:

118 EXT SHORE - DAY
RAIN blasts the signal fire pile, no longer even smoldering, as high seas blast the rocks in the BG-

119 EXT WOODS - DAY - VARIOUS SHOTS
RAIN beats down-

120 EXT HOUSE - DAY
We see the little lean-to house through a torrential DOWNPOUR-

121 INT HOUSE
Noelle, wearing Smilin Jack's jacket, sleeps by the fire, WHEEZING in the early stages of pneumonia. Donna crouches by the opening to the outside, watching the RAIN blast down-

DONNA
It's got to stop sometime.

JOE
Sooner or later.

DONNA
Humor me, okay?

JOE
It was worse yesterday. And the day before. We just have to hang on.

DONNA
The signal fire is probably out-

JOE
As soon as it clears we'll get it going again.

Donna crosses to Noelle, feels her forehead, worried. She sees something, digs- comes up with the diary. Joe watches as she opens the clasp, starts to thumb through the pages. She frowns-
DONNA
It's blank.

JOE
What?

DONNA
The pages are blank after the first couple entries. The foxes haven't even had their babies yet.

They both look at Noelle. Donna closes the diary, clasps it shut, carefully replaces it-

122 INT HOUSE - NIGHT

We start on the FIRE, a bit smoky but comforting against the sound of the RAIN still pelting down. We PAN to Noelle, wrapped in as many layers as possible, eyes bright with fever as she ceremoniously opens the diary and fixes Joe and Donna with a look. She reads softly-

NOELLE
We won't bury her on the island. She made me promise. She whispered it, hissed it in my ear one night when she was laying hard beside me in bed. "Promise me". She wouldn't listen to anything else. We had come back from looking for deer, Papa and me, signs at the salt lick but nothing to shoot at. I was putting his rifle back where he hid it in the shed roof when I heard him cry out. He wouldn't let me in at first, though I hollered and struck at the door. He opened up when he'd got her down on the table, but I saw the black mark around her neck where the cord was. The fire had gone out, so our breath was showing, Papa and me, and it was like long white sighs of grief in the room and her mouth open and hair crispy to the touch. We wrapped her in the afghan, then I got the fire going while Papa just sat. Nothing to say. Later we found the note and she told how the animals were Satan's handmaidens, how their sharp little eyes would not give her peace so she killed them and threw the axe in the woods. 'We have looked into ourselves,' she wrote, 'and what is there condemns us.'

We'll take her off the island come first thaw. If Fox comes then, padding through the trees to be my mate, He will find us gone.
Donna and Noelle lock eyes for a long moment-

DONNA
That's it?

NOELLE
That's it. The last entry.

Donna nods-

DONNA
Poor thing.

NOELLE
Who?

DONNA
Litte Anne Marie there. Her mother didn't love her enough to stick around.

NOELLE
She was crazy.

DONNA
She still left her daughter in the lurch. I'd never do that. No matter what.

Donna and Noelle stare at each other. Noelle fights not to cry-

INT HOUSE - NIGHT

Joe sits by the fire. Donna SINGS softly as she holds Noelle asleep on her lap. She stops, strokes her daughter's hair--

DONNA
I kind of look forward to her being sick. It's the only time she lets me hold her anymore.

JOE
It's some kind of fever.

DONNA
It's in her lungs. We have to get her out of here. 

(sad)
You really think he might bring people to kill us?

JOE (nods)
I hope I'm wrong.

DONNA
If we- when we get back- I've still got these tour dates up north. I'd only be gone for-
JOE
She could stay with me.

Donna looks at him-

JOE
You both could- if you wanted-

DONNA
You're not sick of us?

JOE
If you're not sick of me.

DONNA (considers)
Hey- there's nobody in the world I'd rather be stranded in desperate circumstances with. Really. But we should- take our time with the furniture-moving part. We come with a lot of baggage-

JOE
Hey-

DONNA
She pretends not to, but she gets her hopes up for me. You know? And when it doesn't work out---

JOE
I'll take care of her.

They look at each other, closing the deal-

124
EXT SHORE - MORNING

A clear morning, finally. Calm water. The signal fire is burning again-

WOODS

Donna, Joe and Noelle stand at the edge of the woods, bodies half behind tree trunks, watching the sky. Noelle is shivering, wearing Smilin Jack's jacket. Donna sees, points-

DONNA
There it is.

POV - SKY, PLANE

A float PLANE is a tiny dot in the sky at first. We hear a distant BUZZ-

TRIO

Watching with a mixture of fear and hope-
DONNA
It's bigger.

JOE
Yeah.

DONNA
Room for all of us.

NOELLE
Or those men.

Donna looks at her daughter, then at Joe. The BUZZ of the plane gets louder. Donna looks to the plane, approaching, and makes up her mind-

DONNA
The hell with it. I'm not staying here.

She steps out into the open-

JOE
Donna-

DONNA
Donna marches out and stands in front of the signal fire-

INT PLANE - POV

Still quite a ways off, we see a small figure standing in front of a tiny fire-

EXT SHORE - DONNA

Donna tries to keep a firm jaw as she watches the plane-

WOODS

Joe hesitates, then starts out for her-

SHORE

Joe steps up by Donna. They exchange an uneasy look, then look back to the plane. The BUZZING gets louder. Noelle appears between them, shivering. Donna puts her arm around her. Joe does the same. The lost family watch the approaching plane as the BUZZING gets louder. We SLOWLY FADE TO WHITE. The BUZZING gets louder, louder, louder-

END CREDITS - MUSIC