

PROMISED LAND

Written by

John Krasinski and Matt Damon

Story by Dave Eggers

1 INT. ORNATE RESTAURANT, NYC - DAY

1

We open on a mirror in a beautiful, ornate bathroom. Suddenly a man comes up from below frame with water dripping off his face. A bathroom attendant leans in and turns the faucet off for him as he hands him a towel. The man says "Thank you". This is STEVE BUTLER. A man in his late 30's, handsome, and reminiscent of a guy you went to college with. As he dries his face he looks at himself. After a long beat he takes a deep breath. And walks out into:

An enormous beautiful main room of a restaurant. We follow Steve as he walks through the restaurant that drips with gold leaf and marble. As we take in this almost surreal room... the title card comes up across the screen.

PROMISED LAND

We follow the man as he finally arrives at his table. There a man sits checking his blackberry. This is David Churchill, a man in his early 50's and the CFO of Global Crosspower Solutions; one of the largest energy corporations in the country. An impeccably dressed waitress comes to the table behind Steve.

WAITRESS

Can I get either of you gentlemen anything else?

DAVID

You want another drink?

STEVE

I'm fine thanks.

DAVID

(To waitress)

We'll have another bottle of the Chateau Margaux.

Waitress leaves.

DAVID

You'll be fine!

David checks his watch.

DAVID

Listen, I'm sorry Michael isn't here yet. His plane was delayed getting into Teterboro.

STEVE

Oh, that's no problem.

DAVID
He likes to meet every executive candidate, it's kind of a tradition... or a neuroses.

STEVE
Well, that's nice of him.

DAVID
It is actually. Until he does his one joke. "I thought you said he wasn't handsome."

Steve laughs.

DAVID
An oldie but a goodie.

The waitress comes back with the bottle of wine and shows David the label. He nods.

DAVID
What time you heading out tomorrow?

STEVE
Well, Sue's already there. I was actually going to catch the last bus tonight. Be there to get started first thing tomorrow morning.

DAVID
Sue Thomason, right? Jesus! That was the first thing they said about you two. You don't stop.

STEVE
Well, I don't know about that.

DAVID
I do. It's why we're talking right now.

DAVID
(Tastes wine. To waitress)
Great. (to Steve as she pours)
When we called the office out West you were the only name they gave us.

STEVE
Well, that's really nice.

Waitress exits.

DAVID
Listen, Steve, this is a 9 billion dollar company. If someone is recommending you? It's not nice... it's numbers.

STEVE
I appreciate that.

DAVID
You are the only person from the field we're interviewing.

This lands on Steve.

DAVID
Let me ask you something. You guys have closed more towns than the team behind you by triple digits. And your total price point on what we pay out on your leases is almost half of everyone else's. How do you do that?

STEVE
I mean, I grew up in Eldridge, Iowa.

DAVID
... Meaning?

STEVE
It might as well have been Rifle, Colorado; Dish, Texas or Lafayette, Louisiana. Any of the places we've sold. They know me. And I know them.

DAVID
Well, unfortunately it seems the rest of our road teams don't see it as quite so easy.

STEVE
... I grew up in a large farming community. (He rolls his eyes) Football Fridays, tractor pulls, cow tipping, all of it.

David smiles.

STEVE

I was also one of two in my graduating class who went to college-- well, who decided to pursue something other than agriculture. Biggest fight my grandfather and I ever had.

DAVID

There's just a pride, I guess.

STEVE

It's delusional self mythologizing. And it's bullshit. We had a Caterpillar plant down in Davenport a few miles away.

David nods.

STEVE

My junior year in high school they closed it down. I remember thinking nothing of it. By the time prom came around I got to see, first hand, just how little legs we had to stand on. The whole farming town fantasy was shattered. And what became real clear was that without that plant, without that industry? We had nothing. And the town was just...

David is nodding.

STEVE

I'm not selling them Natural Gas. I'm selling them their only way to get back.

DAVID

... Well, that brings me to my second question which is why the hell would we take you off the road???

Steve laughs. David looks behind Steve and notices something. He raises his glass.

DAVID

(To Steve)
Best of luck, Steve.

They cheers. Suddenly from behind Steve:

VOICE
Is this the guy?

A man in his 50's walks up to the table. This is Michael Downey, the obvious CEO of Global.

MICHAEL
I thought you said he wasn't handsome!

Steve smiles. Michael sits down in the booth.

MICHAEL
Sorry I'm late. Had to stop at home on my way. My 11 year daughter dissected a frog in science class today. She will not stop crying.

All the men chuckle.

MICHAEL
11 years old, can you believe it? Is that too young? I didn't dissect a frog until senior year in high school. I mean is that even necessary?

The men acknowledge that's true.

MICHAEL
(To David)
Ah, what are ya' gonna do?

After moment... David turns to Steve. Now both men look at Steve. Was this a legitimate question? In a fraction of a second:

STEVE
It's absolutely necessary. It's the pursuit of knowledge. Sure, the frog is sacrificed. But, in the name of progress. If your daughter doesn't dissect a frog, how will she ever learn to perform a triple bypass?

Beat.

STEVE
Her tears notwithstanding, this has to happen whether she understands it or not.
(MORE)

STEVE (CONT'D)

Like getting a vaccine, your kid
might cry a second from the jab,
but she ain't gonna die of polio.

Beat.

STEVE

Tell her the good news is it gets
easier.

After a beat... Michael smiles.

BEGIN CREDITS

2 EXT. FARM - EARLY MORNING 2

In the first minutes of a cool Spring day we see a idyllic landscape of a blood orange colored sky hanging above the tree covered mountains of McKinley, a small town at the foot of a mountain. In the distant foreground of this picturesque still life we see two windows illuminated in a charming, but slightly run down, farm house. To the right and left of the house we see seemingly unending land, low lit to an almost surreal color and covered in perfectly placed hay bales. An unusual sound can be heard... a grunting.

3 EXT. FARMHOUSE - MORNING 3

A charming older woman in her 70's exits the squeaky screen door carrying a cup of coffee. She wears an apron and walks with confidence. By the barn we see a pick up truck. Suddenly a man in his late 70's exits the barn. He wears a flannel shirt with sleeves rolled up and very lived in jeans. From the back of the truck he grabs an enormous bag of feed with the ease of a sack of potatoes. He immediately disappears once again into the barn. After a moment, the woman arrives outside the barn and waits. As the man exits,

MAN

Well... any other horses and I'd
say that should last the rest of
the month.

WOMAN

So we'll need more by Friday.

MAN

(Smiling)
Sounds about right.

The woman hands him the cup of coffee.

MAN

Thank you.

The woman smiles and pats the man on the back. As he heads to his truck.

MAN

I'll bring this one back.

WOMAN

Oh yeah? Bring the other five while you're at it.

She holds up a powder blue mug.

WOMAN

This is the only one I've got left!

MAN

Yes ma'am.

He gets into his truck and pulls away.

EXT. BUS - LATER

From up above we see the bus as it rolls through beautiful farm land.

INT. BUS

Steve sits on a bus looking out the window at the pastoral landscape as it passes by.

4

INT/EXT TRUCK - DRIVING - DAY

4

The man is drinking his coffee as the truck drives through this incredibly beautiful farmland. He waves out the window to a couple of men standing in a pasture with a large number of cattle.

As the truck pulls up to an intersection and turns right we see a very small church on the corner... the slight beginnings of a town center.

Arriving to a stop light the truck pauses. Then with the audible flick of a green light the truck turns onto the top of Main St., the epicenter of this area. In the low light of the morning the small stretch is almost picturesque, but as the truck rumbles on we see the reality of the more modern small town America.

Interspersed with the more common necessities like a coffee shop and barber shop are a number of boarded up windows and empty store fronts.

The truck finally rumbles out of frame as we hold on the exterior of a motel.

5 EXT. MOTEL - PARKING LOT - DAY

5

Steve exits from the motel and begins to walk across the parking lot. He is checking his blackberry. He looks up as we cut to:

A woman in her 50's standing in front of a very used Ford Bronco. This is SUE THOMASON. She's attractive, put-together and Steve's leasing partner for the past 6 years... But more often than not she feels like his big sister. She wears jeans and a light sweater over a plaid shirt.

STEVE
Good morning.

SUE
Do I have to call you 'Boss' now?

STEVE
Will you stop.

Beat.

STEVE
They'll let me know.

Sue smiles.

STEVE
(referencing the car)
This is the best you could do?

SUE
No. But, I wasn't looking for the best, was I?

STEVE
You know what I mean.

He heads past her toward the driver's side door.

SUE
Stick!

Steve immediately stops, familiar with this moment, and in one motion is heading back around to the passenger side... he doesn't drive stick shift.

STEVE
You do it on purpose.

SUE
You're right, I do... boss.

They get in. In a wide shot we hear Sue try to start the car. It doesn't turn over.

STEVE (O.S.)
Worth it?

The car starts.

SUE
Suck it!

6 INT/EXT BRONCO - ROB'S GUNS, GROCERY, GUITARS AND GAS - DAY 6

Sue and Steve are driving. Steve looks at a map, drinking a bottle of water.

SUE
Girl at the hotel said it's right
around here. Has everything.

Steve looks up as Sue pulls into a small parking lot. They look up at the sign that says 'Rob's Guns, Grocery, Guitars and Gas.' Sue reads aloud:

STEVE
"Rob's Guns, Grocery, Guitars and
Gas."

SUE
(marveling at the sign)
God, I wish I thought of that.

7 INT. ROB'S GUNS, GROCERY, GUITARS AND GAS - DAY 7

Steve and Sue walk through to the back of a small local store that seems like it might actually have everything.

SUE
Where'd they put you up? Four
Seasons?

STEVE
The Pierre.

SUE
JeSUS!

They keep walking. Steve smiles.

STEVE
And, I was right, this is the entry
point for the whole state.

SUE
I love it! Feels like dominoes.

STEVE
It is.

They arrive at a few racks of clothes and begin carefully
picking out clothes. Sue grabs a few flannel shirts.

STEVE
What season is this? Do they even
still wear flannel now?

SUE
Oh please, up here, they always
wear flannel.

STEVE
... Or camo.

SUE
I'm not wearing camo.

STEVE
How was Houston? How's Danny?

SUE
He's 15. He's gone... but he
started baseball. Made varsity.

STEVE
As a freshman? Sue, that's huge!

SUE
I guess. His first game is this
weekend and my missing it will go
to the top of the list of things
he'll cover with his shrink at 45.

STEVE
I'm sorry.

SUE
Hey, someone's gotta pay for his
xbox.

Steve picks up a pair of work gloves.

STEVE
You need a new pair?

SUE
I never use them.

STEVE
That's a yes. Ok, you ready?

SUE
Boots!

Steve looks down at his boots. They are Caterpillar work boots.

STEVE
I'm not going over this again, Sue.
These are the best boots money can
buy and they're made in America.

Sue looks at him confused.

SUE
Yeah, but yours are old.

Sue walks away to the check out counter, which is actually a gun case. Steve follows. Behind the counter is one rack of larger guns and sure enough... a rack of guitars.

SUE
(Staring at the guitars)
Wow, you really have them.

The man behind the counter looks up from a book. This is ROB. He is about 40, and in his black jeans, collared shirt and vest he doesn't look like what you'd imagine a local to look like.

ROB
So I take it you're not here to buy
a guitar.

Sue smiles and looks for a credit card in her wallet.

ROB
You're the natural gas people.

Sue is taken aback.

SUE
I'm sorry?

ROB
Apologizing right off the bat, I
like it! It's endearing and
vulnerable and yet... honest and
direct.

Sue doesn't know what to say. She almost looks back at Steve but thinks better of it.

ROB
 (Pointing at her wallet)
 The ID card is kind of a dead give
 away.

Beat.

ROB
 'Bout time you all showed up.

SUE
 Yeah?

ROB
 Well, hell yes. What other choice
 we got? We can't sell the scenery!

SUE
 Wow... wanna come work for us?

ROB
 What... and leave all this?

He sarcastically gestures to his weird store. Sue smiles.

8 INT/EXT BRONCO - DRIVING - DAY

8

Sue is driving. They are both now wearing brand new clothes.
 Steve is drinking from a bottle of water.

SUE
 I can't believe this so close to
 the city. Looks like Kentucky.

STEVE
 Two hours outside any city is
 Kentucky. You should know that.

Sue notices a group of horses by the road.

SUE
 Hey... Does something seem weird
 about those horses?

They both look out to the side of the road. There are 6 or so
 horses, with long, almost decorative, manes.

STEVE
 No. Not really.
 (squinting)
 Wait. Are they small?

SUE
They seem very small. Could they be
that small? My eyesight's going.

STEVE
Maybe they're ponies?

SUE
(emphatically)
They're not ponies!!...
I mean I guess they could be
ponies...

STEVE
Remember new region, so we can go
as high as 5000 and 18%. But it
doesn't mean we have to.

Beat. The car is slowing down.

SUE
Don't ponies have big heads? Like,
proportionally?

Sue pulls over to the side of the road. She hands Steve a clipboard with a complicated looking list of names, addresses and other figures. He is checking his blackberry again. He hops out.

9 EXT. FARMHOUSE ROAD - DAY 9

We see the Bronco is parked at the base of a long dirt driveway leading up to a rather dilapidated farmhouse. The Bronco and the house seem like mere specks in the middle of the seemingly endless landscape around them.

10 EXT. FARMHOUSE - DAY 10

Steve walks up to the house where a young girl is pushing a small toy lawn mower out front.

STEVE
Hello there! Are you the owner of
this place?

GIRL
No, sir.

STEVE
No? Well then how come you're
doing all the work?

GIRL
(Smiling)
I don't know.

STEVE
Well, who do I talk to about that?

The girl laughs and begins to lead him into the house.

GIRL
My Dad.

STEVE
Well, alright then, let's go inside
and straighten all this out!

Steve smiles and gently pats the girl's head as the two walk toward the stairs. At the top, a man opens the screen door. This is DREW SCOTT.

DREW
Didn't they already finish the
census?

STEVE
No, I'm not from the census. I'm
from a Natural Gas company. You
have a second?

Steve and the girl get to the top of the steps.

DREW
Oh, hell! Why didn't you say so!
Come on in!

STEVE
Thank you.

DREW
You just go shopping?

Steve looks up at him. Drew gestures to his neck.

DREW
You got a tag stickin' out of your
collar.

He reaches over and yanks the tag from Steve's collar.

DREW
There ya go.

STEVE
So much for looking local.

As Steve crosses the threshold Drew looks down.

DREW
Nice boots.

Steve's smile is bigger than it should be.

STEVE
Thank you.

11 INT. CLAPBOARD HOUSE - DAY

11

Sue sits in a sparse living room with a woman in her late 20's. She is naturally pretty and very sweet. This is CLAIRE ALLEN. Suddenly a 10 year old comes by and sets down 2 glasses of red Hi-C for the woman and for Sue. He is wearing a t-shirt with YANKEES written in marker on the front and the number '15' written on the back along with his last name, ALLEN.

CLAIRE
Thanks Carson.

SUE
Thanks. Wild color, right? (puts the glass down without touching it. This does not go unnoticed by Claire)

Sue points at Carson's watch.

SUE
Is that Thor?

CARSON
No, it's IRONMAN.

He shows her.

SUE
Oooh, my son would love that!

She pretends to take it. Carson laughs.

CARSON
Nooo!

He walks away.

CLAIRE
You have kids Ms. Thomason?

SUE
(pulls out phone) Yes I do. Danny.
15 and ornery.

CLAIRE
He looks sweet.

SUE
Yours is sweeter.

The two women laugh. Carson re-enters.

SUE
Mom, can I play xbox?

CLAIRE
Just for a bit. And only because
you're going outside for baseball
in an hour.

CARSON
Sweet!

CLAIRE
(For Sue's benefit)
Sorry about that. I know I
shouldn't let him...

SUE
Are you kidding! Of course! From
the minute we meet them and see
their little squishy faces we'd do
anything for 'em!... Anything.

Carson nods and leaves. Claire turns back to Sue. We can
see Carson in the background playing Xbox for the rest of the
scene.

12 INT. FARMHOUSE - DAY

12

Steve now sits at the kitchen table with DREW. His daughter is coloring at the table as well.

DREW

Oh man, have we been waiting on you!

STEVE

Oh yeah?

DREW

It's unbelievable! I was just reading in the paper THIS MORNING about all that gas drillin' goin' on in Pennsylvania.

He looks at the paper.

DREW

This your outfit? 'Stanton Gas'?

Steve glances over casually.

STEVE

No, there are a bunch of companies. We're with 'Global Crosspower Solutions'.

DREW

Well, you guys are probably the best!

STEVE

You wanna come work for us?

The two men laugh.

13 INT. CLAPBOARD HOUSE - DAY

13

Sue sits with Claire.

SUE

Here's the thing, Claire. And it's important that you know this... The initial phase of development for drilling is ALSO the initial phase of the town's tax revenue. Which means money will be injected into the town and its infrastructure immediately!

CLAIRE

That sounds impressive.

SUE

I know, a lot of fancy words. But here's what it means to me. The number one reason I chose to live where I do is for the school that my boy goes to. I just want what most parents want for their kids. Everything. And that everything starts with his education.

CLAIRE

You sound like a good mother.

SUE

Far from good. Honest maybe. Do you think your town's school system is underfunded?

CLAIRE

Yes.

SUE

In a school system like yours, the chances of Carson going to college are too low. And in today's market, without a college degree, the only jobs available are manual labor... and those jobs are going... if not gone. TECHNOLOGY is our sons' future.

CLAIRE

Yes!! We tried to get a computer system for the kids last year but it never happened.

SUE

Well, there's no reason why your town shouldn't have a state of the art high school and your son guaranteed an education that allows him to compete on the highest level. He'll have a chance...

Beat. This registers with Claire.

14 INT. FARMHOUSE - DAY

14

Steve and Drew at the kitchen table.

STEVE
Our leases start at \$2000.

DREW
Wait... that's it?

STEVE
That's right.

DREW
Well, that's not necessarily life
changing money, is it?

STEVE
Per acre. And you have 20. Now,
there are a lot of people around
here that would say \$40,000, well,
that's pretty good money...
Especially for doing nothing.

Drew wipes sweat off his face. Looks at Steve.

STEVE
But, the real reason I'm here in
this early stage is because our
research shows that your particular
plot of land has a potentially
"high yield". That means that not
only the size of the deposit, but
the quality of the shale is in the
top tier.

Drew, as if watching a thriller movie.

DREW
Mm Hm...

STEVE
Now we at Global don't want to be
tenants... We want to be partners.
That's why we offer an 12 and a
half percent share in any and all
profits we see from your wells.

DREW
And with this... this top tier
level of shit, what kind of figures
are we looking at?

STEVE
Well, it's hard to tell until we
get down there, but--

DREW
Ballpark, man! Like other people
who have had a similar situation?

Beat...

STEVE
Millions...

DREW
Wait.. What do you mean? Like, you
guys... uh...

STEVE
You..... Could be. A
millionaire.

Drew's look is ... elated? Scared? Dead?

15 INT. DINER - DAY

15

Steve walks into the nearly empty diner that looks like a
time capsule. He sees a man wave his hand and joins him in a
vinyl booth in the back. The man is GERRY RICHARDS, he's
about 60 years old and one of McKinley's three town
supervisors. Steve introduces himself and sits down.

STEVE
Supervisor Richards? Steve Butler.

RICHARDS
Call me Gerry for God's sake.

A waitress comes over to the table and drops 2 menus.

WAITRESS
Anything to drink?

RICHARDS
Steve?

STEVE
I'll have a cup of coffee.

WAITRESS
And, you, sir.

RICHARDS
I'm fine thanks.

She exits.

RICHARDS
Well, listen, I appreciate you sitting down with me here, I know you're busy so I just thought it might be nice to meet before the town hall tomorrow so we can get to know each other a little bit.

STEVE
Of course! Listen, as the most senior member of the supervisors board thank YOU for sitting down with ME. Appreciate it.

Richards laughs.

RICHARDS
It's exciting all this natural gas stuff.

STEVE
It is! Very exciting!

RICHARDS
(Leans in and whispers
with a smile)
A whole lot of money down there!

Steve laughs.

STEVE
That's also true, yes!

RICHARDS
How much do you think? (He gestures) How much money we got down there?

STEVE

Well, our research department hasn't finished their analysis yet but I'd say somewhere between 15 or 20 million dollars!

Beat.

RICHARDS

Is that right?

STEVE

Could be!

Lynn returns with a cup of coffee and a creamers.

RICHARDS

So, I've been doing a little research about all this, gone online a little bit. And well, I've read all these rumblings of Natural Gas possibly contaminating water sources? Killing crops and what not?

STEVE

I understand your concern. I've read all those stories myself. And let me assure you--

RICHARDS

People lighting their water on fire? People getting sick? That sounds nasty.

STEVE

These are just scare tactics--

RICHARDS

I have a responsibility to protect these people. To ensure their safety. And, well, to be honest I'm just not sure I'm too comfortable telling my constituents to allow you folks into our town. No matter how much money you have.

STEVE

Mr. Richards--

RICHARDS

There's a lot of people counting on me, Steve and not just in this town.

(MORE)

RICHARDS (CONT'D)

People look to me in the next town and the next town. You see, I have the opportunity to set a precedent here.

STEVE

Look, there are answers to everything you just brought up--

RICHARDS

Now, I know you all have quite an operation in the works, here. Plans to set up all throughout the state. I'd hate to be the guy to jeopardize all that for you.

Steve looks up. Richards is looking directly at him. He has a smile on his face... a different smile.

RICHARDS

To lead this one little "podunk" town to reject your company. To reject natural Gas. I mean I can't even imagine what that would mean for you guys. (Richards changes) And if that story got around? In the papers? On the news? Can you imagine? What that would do to your balance sheet?

There's a long beat. Both men stare each other down.

STEVE

It's 30,000.

RICHARDS

What's that?

STEVE

We can offer you 30,000 dollars.

The waitress comes back to the table.

WAITRESS

Can I get you anything else?

RICHARDS

(Without breaking his stare at Steve)

You know what, Lynn, I think we're done here. Just the check please.

She exits. Richards grabs his jacket. Then he pulls out a small note pad.

RICHARDS

(Reading)

The Marcellus shale. Estimated at 2 TRILLION dollars. With BILLIONS in potential tax revenue to individual states.

Back to Steve.

RICHARDS

Google. First one that came up... First sentence... Now do you wanna re-think that joke number you mentioned earlier?

STEVE

Mr. Richards, I'm just being straight with you here. It's simple math. Best case scenario there's 30 million dollars under your town. .1% of that is 30,000 dollars. They want me to offer as low as 10 in these situations. But, you seem like a smart guy so I'm telling you we have 30.

Richards reaches for his jacket. Steve sips coffee.

STEVE

... But, I'm also telling you this is a one time offer.

Richard stops and looks at Steve.

STEVE

Don't do this. I've been here before and it doesn't end well. You don't wanna be last. You're right, we have teams in place in towns all over this state... and the next state. And the next state. We're all the way up to Maine now. And every one of those towns are signing fast.

Richards smiles, saying nothing.

STEVE

Look, I don't fault you for trying. But, I'm telling you-- hell, I'm begging you. Don't do this. Because the truth is we will walk away. We always do...

(MORE)

STEVE (CONT'D)

And then after every single town within 3 states has signed up and the blows of this economy are almost unbearable... we'll come back. And we'll offer you nothing. We'll offer this town nothing. Every lease we've signed, every piece of the pie we've offered. It all goes away... and we buy this place for nothing.

Richards' face has changed.

STEVE

Let some other guy be last.

The waitress comes back to the table with the check. He hands her a 20 dollar bill.

STEVE

Thank you.

Steve stands up.

STEVE

So, I'll see you tomorrow?

RICHARDS

I'll see you tomorrow.

Steve exits leaving Richards there to contemplate what could've just happened.

16 INT. MOTEL - HALLWAY - DAY

16

Sue and Steve walk down the hallway. Steve is, once again, checking his blackberry. Sue stops at a door and opens it.

SUE

Nice job today.

STEVE

Thanks.

SUE

Kind of anti-climactic. I thought it'd harder. This one's easy!

STEVE

They always are.

SUE

Well, good let's wrap this up and
get the hell out of here early.
Maybe I can fly home for the
weekend game before we head
upstate.

Steve is still looking at his blackberry. Suddenly... he freezes. Sue notices.

SUE

What?

Long beat. He turns back to her.

STEVE

(quietly)

I got it.

Sue smiles. After possibly a moment too long she walks over and gives him a hug. With her face over his shoulder, we can now see... her conflict.

SUE

... That's great.

She gives him a motherly kiss on the cheek. Then snuffles and turns back to her door so Steve doesn't see her tears.

SUE

I'm proud of you.

STEVE

Sue!

She turns back.

STEVE

Buy the plane ticket tonight. I'll even pay for it.

SUE

Cocky bastard.

She goes into her room.

Steve turns and walks down the hallway. As the news finally sinks in, he smiles huge.

Music begins to play as we:

17

INT. BUDDY'S - NIGHT

17

Welcome to 'Buddy's', the center of social life in McKinley. It's warm and welcoming, a cross between hunting lodge and dive bar. There's a long bar and an adjacent dining area, U-shaped around a small stage. About a dozen animals, mostly deer and moose, are mounted on the wall. The place is full of beer signs and photos of locals with big catches and hunters with one foot on dead 10-point bucks.

Steve is at the bar, drinking a scotch. Next to him is his plastic bottle of water. The bartender, an enormous man in his 60's who is obviously the leader of a motorcycle gang, pours him another scotch from a very dusty bottle.

BARTENDER

You want me to leave the bottle?

STEVE

Uh... yeah, sure. Thanks.

He takes a sip.

WOMAN (O.C.)

Three more, Jesse.

BARTENDER

Well, goddamn.

Steve turns to see a young woman at the bar.

WOMAN

Don't judge me Jesse, it's my birthday.

BARTENDER

I didn't say nothin'.

This is ALICE. There's a part of her that's likely still the Girl Next Door, but the part we meet is a bit rough around the edges. She's pretty without trying and she knows it. It is her birthday, a fact that is quite apparent from how tipsy she is.

Alice looks over and sees Steve looking at her. He immediately turns away.

ALICE

Lemme guess. 40. Marketing.
Married. 2 kids.

Steve doesn't look up.

STEVE

38. Stripper/Waitress but was
"born" to be a singer.

ALICE

Hey, asshole I'm a teacher!

Steve finally turns to her for the first time.

STEVE

I was talking about me.

Alice wants to laugh but doesn't.

ALICE
You're a waitress?

STEVE
Times are tough.

Beat. Without taking his eyes off of her.

STEVE
Do you want a dance? 100 bucks per
song.

Alice finally laughs.

ALICE
That's insane. I wouldn't pay 30!

Steve still not giving in.

STEVE
You haven't seen my moves.

ALICE
Ok, now you're creeping me out.

Steve finally laughs. Reaches to shake her hand.

STEVE
Steve.

ALICE
Alice.

Jesse brings back 3 Budweiser bottles and 3 Jack Daniels
shots.

STEVE
You're goin' big for a school
night.

ALICE
It's my birthday.

STEVE
Really?

ALICE
Really. Well, tomorrow.

STEVE

Do they give you the day off for your birthday? Or do you just tell the kids you've got a stomach bug.

ALICE

First off, I resent the implication that I can't hold my liquor... And secondly... the first two periods we watch videos.

STEVE

AH!

ALICE

So?...

STEVE

So what?

ALICE

What brings you to our booming metropolis?

STEVE

Well, I'm from a small town myself so it feels a lot like home.

ALICE

Oh yeah? Where's that?

STEVE

Eldridge, Iowa.

ALICE

Ah, you're a buckeye!

STEVE

That's Ohio, actually.

ALICE

Same thing.

STEVE

Ok.

Steve smiles. From off camera we hear a group of girls yell.

GROUP

Alice, let's go!

Steve looks over to see three girls at a table against the wall. They are Alice's friends, the one yelling is GWEN, full-figured and loud -- she thinks she's Bette Midler.

STEVE
Well, it was nice meeting you.

ALICE
You even gonna buy a girl a
birthday drink?

STEVE
That would communicate the wrong
thing.

ALICE
(smiling)
You're an asshole.

STEVE
Of course I'll buy your drinks.

ALICE
Absolutely not, you lost your
chance.

Gwen yells again from the table. As Alice looks, Steve
stares at her and smiles.

GWEN
What are we doin'? We drinkin' or
not?

Alice looks back at Steve.

ALICE
How long you in town?

STEVE
Uhh-- a bit. I'm gonna be around
for a bit.

ALICE
You're gonna be "Around for a bit?"
... You're a terrible liar.

STEVE
I'm not lying!

Alice smiles, skeptical.

ALICE
Well, you wanna give a girl a real
birthday gift?

Steve smiles. Seems a little forward, but hey!

STEVE

Sure.

Alice doesn't break eye contact with Steve. After a beat.

ALICE

Jesse, we're playing ABSOLUT
MADNESS.

Steve, still smiling, is confused.

STEVE

What's ABSOLUT MADNESS?

ALICE

It's pretty much what it sounds
like. You and Jesse both drink 5
shots in 5 minutes and if you can
get closer to the bulls eye on that
dartboard we drink for free and you
get your Polaroid on the wall.

She points behind the bar to a line of Polaroids of men
completely annihilated.

STEVE

That's not at all what it sounds
like. I'm in.

Jesse begins setting up shot glasses. And slams down a
bottle of Absolut vodka. Other people in the bar start
gathering to watch. Steve notices.

STEVE

How bout this! We drink 8 shots in
8 minutes and EVERYONE here drinks
for free!

Jesse looks to Alice concerned. She laughs knowingly.

ALICE

Sure!

Every one cheers! Jesse shakes his head.

ALICE

Good luck!

As the men grab their first shots and cheers each other we:

CUT TO:

18 INT. HOUSE - MORNING

18

Steve is dead asleep on a couch that is too small for him. He is covered in what looks like a hand made blanket. He is jarred awake... by nothing.

He takes in his surroundings. All of a sudden we see Alice sitting at a small table. She is completely dressed and ready for the day. She drinks a cup of coffee as she reads the morning paper online.

ALICE

Oh thank God, you're still pretty handsome.

He stares at her for a moment putting the pieces of his head back together.

ALICE

You're late.

STEVE

What?

ALICE

Your phone hasn't stop buzzing for the last half hour.

Steve checks his phone. Sees the missed calls and more importantly, he sees the time. He is very late.

STEVE

SHIT!

He immediately jumps up... that wasn't a good idea. He flinches for a split second. Then begins quickly getting dressed. (He is wearing the same shirt but just boxers.)

STEVE

Listen, I had a really great time.

ALICE

Did you?

STEVE

Well... I just mean--

ALICE

Nothing happened, Steve.

Beat. Steve is confused.

ALICE
Well, actually you did kiss me just before you threw up the first time.

STEVE
Oh my God! I'm really sorry. Thank you... for letting me stay.

ALICE
It's fine. I was gonna let you sleep in your car, but you couldn't remember which one was yours.

STEVE
I didn't drive.

Beat.

ALICE
Well then it's a good thing I didn't let you sleep in your car.

Steve is now basically dressed. A dreaded part of the morning.

STEVE
So... can I take your number?

ALICE
You're gonna be "around for a bit", right?

STEVE
Uh---

ALICE
It's not that big a town. You'll see me again.

Steve is still putting everything together.

STEVE
O-- Ok. Is the-- Is the door--?

ALICE
At the front of the house. When you get to it, you'll find a knob. Turn the knob and --

STEVE
Oh god. Too early for that.

Beat.

STEVE
Well... Thanks.

ALICE
Your welcome.

In a daze, Steve goes to leave. Then comes back again.

STEVE
Hey, happy birthday!

He leaves. Alice smiles.

19 EXT MOTEL - DAY

19

Sue, in the car, is in the foreground talking on the phone.

Out the driver side window we see a tiny blurry figure that we are not paying attention to. As Sue continues to talk on the phone, the blurry figure gets closer and closer, then stops... is it bending over to catch his breath? Or retching?

SUE
What's wrong?... Because you called me 3 times... What?... What do you mean you were burned?... Why were you using an iron?.... He asked YOU to do it? Fantastic!... I highly doubt it's burned OFF, Danny. What did the nurse say? Throwing hand or catching hand? So can you play this weekend? What you mean pitch? When did the coach say that? Danny, that's AMAZING!

Finally the blur continues to come closer until he is right up at the window exhausted... and nauseous. It's Steve. Instinctually, Sue slowly turns her head and stares at him. Steve pops up. Through the glass we hear:

STEVE
5 minutes!

He pauses, taking one more second to recover. Then runs out of frame.

SUE
No, no, I'm just at work. Hey, guess what? I'll be there! I booked it last night... Hello? Danny, can you hear me?... I'm losing you.

She hangs up.

20 EXT. HIGH SCHOOL GYMNASIUM - DAY 20

People file into a large high school gymnasium.

21 INT. HIGH SCHOOL GYMNASIUM - DAY 21

At half court there are 3 people sitting in folding chairs; the town supervisors. In the bleachers facing them are about 400 people finding seats. Supervisor Richards is standing in front of the crowd. He briefly looks over by the door to the side of the bleachers where tucked away, just out of view, Steve and Sue look on. Steve holds a bottle of water.

A man is whispering in Richards ear. Richards acknowledges and speaks:

RICHARDS

Ok, if everyone could find a seat we'll begin in a moment. Thank you.

Steve is typing on his blackberry. Sue looks at Richards and drinks a lemonade.

SUE

He all set?

STEVE

Yeah, he's on board. What is that?

SUE

Lemonade.

STEVE

Is it good?

SUE

GREAT! Fresh squeezed. There's a kid selling it out there. She's cleaning up! You want one?

STEVE

(Holding up bottle of water)

No.

People are still filing in by Sue and Steve. Most of them carry lemonades.

SUE
How many do we have.

STEVE
Signed 14 today. So that's 27.
Think we'll only need the one more
day.

SUE
I still can't believe that's why
you were late this morning? We got
back from dinner at 930!

STEVE
She was very cool. You'd like her.

SUE
You don't want to make statements
like that just yet. Name?

STEVE
Alice.

SUE
Alice? ...

Sue stops and looks over.

SUE
... Was she elderly?

Steve shoots her a look as Richards begins to speak.

RICHARDS
Ok, I appreciate you all coming
today. Unfortunately there seems
to have been a scheduling error so
we'll have to make this quick...
Well, this is quite a turn out!
We're not used to standing room
only. I must be doing something
right!

Richards gives a politician's smile. People murmur a
response.

RICHARDS
Ok, let's get right to it. Now, I
know some of you have been hearing
dribs and drabs about all this
natural gas stuff. Maybe some of
you even have family or friends who
have had natural gas come to their
town.

(MORE)

RICHARDS (CONT'D)

In which case, I'm sure you've heard, then, what a life changing opportunity it is. Creating HUNDREDS of jobs, and therefore millions of dollars in revenue and large injections of funding into town infrastructure.

Beat.

RICHARDS

Well, I am very happy to announce that we will be bringing natural gas to McKinley!

There is a burst of applause. Sue and Steve notice.

Suddenly a voice bursts out from the crowd.

VOICE

How do they get the gas??

Everyone looks for the voice, including Richards and Sue. Steve looks up for a brief second but finishes whatever e-mail he's working on.

Richards spots the source of the voice. This is FRANK YATES. He is about 70 years old, but his level of physical strength... and calm strength of spirit, is apparent immediately. We recognize him as the man who drove the truck in the credit sequence.

SUPERVISOR RICHARDS

Ah! How are ya, Frank? If you wouldn't mind just holding on for one minute, there'll be time for questions at the end. Now, the company we'll be working with is called Global Crosspower Solutions and--

FRANK

I apologize, I was just wondering how it all works, that's all.

We can see members of the crowd now turning back to Richards to hear his response. Steve, again, looks up. He is completely confident in his new employee.

SUPERVISOR RICHARDS

Well, its a rather complex process...

Beat. People wait for a response.

SUPERVISOR RICHARDS
But I will, uh, explain it as simply as I can... There are, uh, rock deposits underground. Deep, under ground. MILES underground! And what they do is create these drills that go 2 or 3 miles down and break up the rock... shale, it's called shale. And that breaking of the rock is what actually releases the gas--

FRANK
Its called Fracking.

SUPERVISOR RICHARDS
Excuse me?

FRANK
The process. Its called Fracking.

SUPERVISOR RICHARDS
That's right. That's right. Now, Frank if you'd just let me finish please I--

FRANK
I would encourage all of you to go home and Google this word and see what you find. Unfortunately, it's not nearly as simple as what Supervisor Richards just laid out. Now, listen, it's true there is some money to be made having this industry coming in, but can we at least not pretend that it is not without cost.

Without taking her eyes off Frank, Sue hits Steve's arm, who has finally looked up from his blackberry.

STEVE
Just...hold on.

SUPERVISOR RICHARDS
Frank, now, I'm gonna have to ask you to stop this. This is completely inappropriate. And not at all the forum to have this conversation.

FRANK
Gerry, we've all known this was a possibility. And now it's here.
(MORE)

FRANK (CONT'D)

So, seems to me this is the ONLY
forum to have this conversation.

Drew turns around from a row or two in front to talk to Frank respectfully.

DREW

Frank, I'm sure we all appreciate
the point you're trying to make,
but there really isn't any decision
here. We need this.

There are grumbles of support for Drew. Frank looks around
and then slowly stands up. Next to him, his wife attempts to
keep him seated for a moment. People stop to listen.

FRANK

I'm sorry. But, this thing here.
It may not be the saving grace you
all want it to be. Now, Gerry
started this thing by saying that
Natural Gas coming here is life
changing... and it is. It's a
clean and efficient resource, but
the way we go about getting it is
some dirty business.

RICHARDS

With all due respect I think you're
out of your league.

Steve and Sue look on. Richards tries to maintain control.

FRANK

And the potential for error is just
too high and the results can be
both horrible and irreversible.

RICHARDS

Thank you, Frank.

FRANK

There are reports from all over the
country of people's water being
contaminated.

SUE

No, no, no...

FRANK

People who have to haul their own
water from miles away. It's harder
to get enough for your crops and
cattle-- Let alone to drink.

RICHARDS

Ok, Frank. I've absolutely had
enough of this! We don't have to--

All of a sudden Steve steps out from behind the bleachers.
Sue reaches to grab him.

SUE

Steve--

STEVE

(cutting her off without
looking.)
I've got this.

SUE

Goddamn it.

Steve arrives next to Richards completely calm.

STEVE

Sorry I'm late, Mr. Richards. What
did I miss?

Everyone looks down to Steve... he has never been so public
in his career. Steve looks up at Frank.

STEVE

Oh, I'm sorry I think I interrupted
you Mrrrrrrrrr?

FRANK

Yates.... My name is Frank Yates.

STEVE

Oh, Mr. Yates, are you connected
with an environmental group?

Frank chuckles.

FRANK

No.

STEVE

Oh, what line of work you in, Sir?

FRANK

I'm a teacher here at the high
school.

STEVE

A teacher.

FRANK
I teach science. What about you,
Mrrrrrrrrr?

A few people chuckle at Frank's confident retort, including Steve.

STEVE
My name is Steve Butler. I'm a
consultant, here, for Global
Crosspower Solutions.

FRANK
Ah, then you're the man we have to
thank for all that money.

STEVE
I wish! No, I'm just the guy that
works for the guy that works for
the guy that may have had something
to do with all that money.

There are some laughs from the crowd.

STEVE
I only heard the last part of what
you were saying, but you sound like
a man that's certainly done his
homework! Where, may I ask did you
get all your information?

FRANK
Mr. Butler, you and I both know the
information I'm referring to is
vast and detailed.

STEVE
You're probably right. And I'm
sure I'm not the guy who has all
the answers.

FRANK
Oh, then you'd be the perfect guy
for them to send to deny
everything.

Beat. Steve smiles and chuckles again.

STEVE
Listen, I'm not going to deny that
this issue has been made very
complicated by a number of
companies that have had their fair
share of incidents.

(MORE)

STEVE (CONT'D)

But, natural gas is not a new issue. We've been drilling in this country for over 50 years. And like any industry, you evolve. My company alone has invested millions and millions of dollars. Now why would we do that? If we're this 'evil machine' that cares about nothing but the bottom line, why would we invest in something that is fatally flawed? Because instead of being one of the companies that is working to make the process "faster", we chose to make it "right"!... For this exact moment. Because we knew if we figured out how to do it right... we'd be the only ones on the field.

Frank smiles.

FRANK

But Global is being sued. Is that right, Steve? By numerous parties. Dealing with this exact technology.

STEVE

Sure we are. Like any other company our size in every other industry. And we stand up to those people because we're not in the business of handing out free money to people who make false claims. And we haven't lost once.

FRANK

Well, you can't lose a game that's still being played.

Beat.

FRANK

Look, Mr. Butler, I'm sure even you can admit that Fracking is far from a perfect process.

STEVE

Perfect? (smiles) No, maybe not.. But with all the government restrictions they put on us and hoops we have to jump through, it's pretty close to perfect.

(MORE)

STEVE (CONT'D)

Heck, the only reason why natural gas is so big right now is because it's finally the clean alternative TO the incredibly dangerous industries like coal and oil. If you know of another industry that's cleaner than this and can have this big an impact on our country right now, please tell me, cause I'll go work there.

Crowd smiles.

FRANK

If it's such an incredible alternative why do they need a man standing off to the side of the room to make sure we all go for it? Seems like it should be able to sell itself.

Beat. If Steve stutters for even a moment we can't see it.

FRANK

But you're not the man with the answers.... So, who is? Because I still have questions...

STEVE

I can certainly try.

FRANK

Well, good, I have questions about Fracking water; where they put all that water they shoot into the ground when it comes back up? That is highly toxic stuff. The air pollution from the well tanks, the potential for ground water contamination, the deadly effect on live stock and basically how would we live here when this is all over?

Steve still somehow appears unflappable, hiding his all but lost composure.

STEVE

... And I'm happy to answer all those questions. There's no such thing as a neutral position here. If you're against natural gas, you're FOR coal and oil. Unless we talk about cutting our consumption.
(MORE)

STEVE (CONT'D)

And so far that's a conversation none of us are willing to have.

Frank smiles. There's a long pause.

FRANK

Steve, I just came here to point out that this issue is a bit more complicated than it seems.

STEVE

Well, you've certainly done that.

FRANK

Great, so I think we should take a vote?

STEVE

Wait, what?

FRANK

In a few weeks, once everyone has had a chance to think this whole thing through, I think we should put it to a vote.

STEVE

But that's not--

He turns to Richards, confident this isn't possible.

RICHARDS

Oh for God's sake. Frank, unfortunately this isn't an issue that is in the realm of a town vote.

FRANK

Gerry, the law states it is completely within the board's power to relinquish any major decision to the will of the people... If they so choose.

The crowd starts grumbling, seemingly with support for both sides of the conversation.

STEVE

Mr. Yates, with all do respect, I've talked to a lot of folks here who really need this. And I don't think anyone here is going to be swayed by one man.

FRANK
You're right.

Frank looks to the crowd. There's a long beat. Suddenly, as if on cue, a swell of people begin standing up. At first glance it would appear to be a majority of the crowd... we now know the reason for the big turnout.

As they rise we see the rush of blood to Steve's head. Off to the side, Sue's eyes are wide.

FRANK
These people and I got together to say we strongly believe that this is NOT in the best interest of this town.

A man runs up to Richards and whispers in his ear. This is the coach of the high school basketball team. We now see at one of the doors of the gym, the team has entered and are standing off to the side ready for a practice.

SUPERVISOR RICHARDS
Uh... Yeah... yeah, sure thing, Stan. Go ahead.

The boys immediately flood into the gym and go into lay up lines.

Richards turns back and tries to compose himself.

SUPERVISOR RICHARDS
Well, this isn't everybody, Frank. You know not even half the town is here today.

FRANK
Exactly! And I think all those people would hate to be left out of such a big decision.

SUPERVISOR RICHARDS
Frank--

FRANK
Let's face it, Gerry, money can often lead to bad decisions. You've seen the same numbers I have and with the recent figures on the deposits in this area at 150 million dollars, let's all take some time to think it through.

Richards looks over at Steve.

SUPERVISOR RICHARDS
150 million dollars?

FRANK
Those are the latest numbers out of
the university.

Steve says nothing... and that says everything. This registers like a freight train on Richards. He's been duped and is immediately furious! Staring straight at Steve:

SUPERVISOR RICHARDS
Well 150 million dollars IS a lot
of money....

Beat.

SUPERVISOR RICHARDS
Let's have a vote!

Steve goes to say something...

SUPERVISOR RICHARDS
Say, three weeks. We're adjourned!

Richards glares at Steve as he walks past him.

SUPERVISOR RICHARDS
Asshole...

Time seems to have slowed down for Steve who has no idea how to process what happened in the last 3 minutes. He looks over at Sue who is furious.

The basketball team immediately rushes out around Steve, all dribbling balls, as people begin to file out.

From up above we see Steve just standing there at half court as he is completely surrounded... By this basketball team... by this town.

22 INT/EXT. BRONCO - DRIVING - DAY

22

Sue is behind the wheel driving furiously and fast.

SUE
Holy shit.

Beat.

SUE
Holy SHIT!

STEVE

Calm down, Sue.

SUE

Don't tell me to calm down! What was that? Stepping out on that court? What the hell were you thinking?

STEVE

I was trying to fix things!

SUE

Bull SHIT! You didn't want to lose! You saw an old man beating up on your newest investment and you took that as some personal slight to YOU? He was just trying to score points on a town official, until you played right into him and handed him the whole game!! "Natural gas isn't perfect?" What were you thinking? And what happened with the politician?... Why was he so pissed???

STEVE

... I told him the number was 30 million.

SUE

Jesus Christ! Well, once again, you came in below the price point! Was it worth it??

STEVE

I'm sorry, Sue....

SUE

Steve! I don't give a shit about your numbers or your promotion! I don't! My son is in fucking Houston with his stupid fucking dad. I don't give a shit about being number one, I'm here to do a job and go home.

STEVE

I'm sorry, Sue...

SUE

Stop with the fuckin' sorries!

SUE
 ... the plan is the same! But
 starting now we sign EVERYONE! I
 don't care if they have 100 acres
 or 1 acre. We go door to door and
 we lease it all! We don't lose.

Steve nods, but is obviously rattled.

SUE
 Nothing's changed. They still need
 the money.

23 INT. MOTEL - NIGHT

23

Sue and Steve are in Sue's hotel room. They are Skyping with some people at the corporate offices. We recognize the man in the forefront as David Churchill, the man Steve interviewed with.

DAVID
 What are you telling us??? Are you
 telling us that we could actually
 LOSE this thing?

STEVE
 That won't happen. We just have to
 move quickly.

DAVID
 Jesus Christ! Do you have any idea
 what happens if this vote doesn't
 go our way? It's like a goddamn
 wildfire straight up the corridor!
 (Close to hysterical) If this gets
 out... the environmental groups get
 into this? Everything changes for
 us!

STEVE
 I understand.

DAVID
 DO you??? Do you have any idea how
 this will play at the shareholders
 meeting?? It'll be a blood bath!
 A goddamn blood bath!! We're
 sending the back up team now.
 We've just got to do an all out
 push on this town.

STEVE

Not a chance.

SUE

With all due respect, if you send in more people from the company we immediately look like we're running scared.

DAVID

(Looking to try and see)

... Who is that?

A voice off screen answers "Sue Thomason".

SUE

Steve and I can handle this.

DAVID

Well we have to do SOMETHING!!!
Jesus Christ! What happened,
Steve??? You were supposed to get
in, get out! Why the hell would
you step out there and expose the
whole goddamn thing?

Beat. Steve looks at the screen.

STEVE

It was a judgement call. I don't
know, I guess I thought--

SUE

Sir, it's obvious they had planned
this long in advance. The
politician was buckling, that's
when Steve stepped in to try and
put out the fire. This Yates guy
is just a wild card.

STEVE

He's the high school science
teacher.

DAVID

Well, we have him pulled up
online... he's a lot more than
that! Frank Yates. MA,
engineering, MIT. PhD from Cornell
in Physics. Jesus Christ, the guy
worked R and D for Boeing for 32
years? He retired, Steve! He's
teaching for fun!

STEVE

I'll handle this, sir. This was my
mistake. It's a setback. Nothing
more--

SUE

I can have this entire town committed on paper before he can get one more supporter.

STEVE

Give me the chance.

DAVID

Well, we've got a lot to discuss here, Steve... I don't think I need to tell you how important this is... this one's all or nothing. We understand each other?

STEVE

...I understand.

The Skype clicks off, immediately lessening the amount of light coming from the screen. With no other lights on, Steve and Sue just sit silently in the glow of the computer. Sue puts a hand on Steve's shoulder.

FADE TO BLACK

- | | | |
|----|--|----|
| 24 | INT. MOTEL - STEVE'S ROOM - MORNING | 24 |
| | Steve opens the curtains letting in the morning sun. | |
| 25 | INT. MOTEL - STEVE'S BATHROOM - MORNING | 25 |
| | From the room we see Steve in the bathroom brushing his teeth. Takes a small sip of water from a small plastic hotel cup and spits it out. There's one last sip and he drinks it. | |
| 26 | EXT. MAIN STREET - MORNING | 26 |
| | Steve walks down an oddly quiet main street. He is obviously in his own head. We follow him for a long beat until he comes to the Diner. Without looking up, he goes to open the door. As the door opens a wall of noise erupts from inside. | |
| 27 | INT. DINER - MORNING | 27 |
| | Steve enters and immediately looks up to see a bustling diner buzzing with heated debate. | |

Steve walks up to the counter of the retro diner to wait for coffee through a mob of 10 others, shouting and arguing various opinions and feelings about the potential new industry. He is taking it all in as he stands stunned at the register. Suddenly a voice.

VOICE
Coffee, handsome?

Steve turns to see Lynn, the waitress from his meeting with Richards.

STEVE
Uh... two.

LYNN
Cream and sugar?

STEVE
Yeah, thanks.

Lynn hands him his coffees. Steve goes to pay. She touches his hand.

LYNN
No no, these are on me... Don't you worry about Frank Yates, darlin'. We all know it's not true.

She winks. Steve doesn't know what to say.

STEVE
Thanks.

LYNN
Those folks can scream and shout all they want... they still need money.

Steve exits.

28 EXT. MAIN STREET - MORNING

28

As the diner door slowly closes behind Steve, the sound fades into a complete silence once again. Steve walks along collecting his thoughts.

A car is parked at the lone stop light. Steve looks up casually and then looks again. The man behind the wheel looks at Steve, smiling. There is a logo on the side of his car that reads 'ATHENA'. As Steve gets across the street, he turns back to look again, as the light changes and the car drives on.

Off Steve's look:

29 EXT. MOTEL - PARKING LOT - MORNING

29

Sue stands leaning against the hood of the Bronco checking her phone. Steve walks up with the 2 coffees.

STEVE

Hey, did research say anything about an environmental presence?

SUE

None of the usual suspects. Nothing locally.

STEVE

Huh.

He hands her a coffee.

30 INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

30

We see Frank Yates wiping down a blackboard. Suddenly in the doorway appears... the man that was in the car on main street. This is DUSTIN NOBLE. He is a tall man in his 30's and can immediately be identified as "outdoorsy." He gives a warm smile.

DUSTIN
Mr. Yates?

Frank looks over.

FRANK
Yes?

Dustin walks in.

DUSTIN
My name is Dustin Noble, I'm from an environmental group called ATHENA.

FRANK
What can I do for you?

DUSTIN
Well... I heard about the vote. And I'm here to help out in any way I can.

Frank smiles.

FRANK
Look, I don't think anyone in this town considers themselves to be members of some kind of movement or on the front lines of some great environmental revolution... I have a feeling we can win this.

Dustin smiles.

DUSTIN
With all due respect, sir, you've picked a much bigger fight than you think... so you have to win.

Beat.

DUSTIN
And I have the one thing you don't... Evidence.

Dustin drops down 2 8x10 photos of a farm with dead cows in front.

31 EXT. SMALL HOUSE - DAY

31

Steve walks up a driveway, just as he did before, only this time the house is noticeably smaller than the ones we've seen before and the land much less expansive.

Steve walks onto the rickety porch and stands in front of a screen door. He pauses and takes a deep breath then rings the bell. A 6 year old boy appears at the screen door.

STEVE

Hey there, are you the owner of
this place?

BOY

(Smiling)

Noooo!

STEVE

Then how come you're doing all the
work?

32 OMITTED

32

33

INT. ROB'S GUNS, GROCERY, GUITARS AND GAS - DAY

33

Sue walks up to the counter carrying soap, toothbrush, toothpaste, deodorant and a bunch of cans of soup and Spaghetti O's. Rob looks up.

ROB

There a storm coming I should know about?

SUE

Looks like we're gonna be here for a while.

ROB

Not necessarily a bad thing!

Sue smiles at him as he starts to bag her items. Sue glances over and is shocked to see one of the windows has been shattered.

SUE

What the hell happened?

ROB

Ah, I got into a bit of a heated discussion last night at the bar... I'm assuming that's not a coincidence.

SUE

A heated discussion? About what?

Rob looks at her to say "I think you know."

SUE
You gotta be kidding me.

ROB
It's no big deal. Listen, they all
need the money. Some of them just
aren't ready to admit it, yet.

Sue just looks at him.

SUE
I'm sorry.

34 INT/EXT BRONCO - ROB'S GUNS, GROCERY, GUITARS AND GAS - DAY 4

Steve is sitting in the truck, playing with the radio. He is frustrated that there is no station. Suddenly you can barely make out a U2 song, then immediately returns to the aggressive sound of static.

STEVE
Jesus! (to the radio) Come ON!!

Suddenly Steve looks up and, in the rear view mirror, sees Dustin filling his car with gas. Dustin looks over at him. Steve gets out of the car just as Dustin finishes up.

STEVE
Excuse me.

Dustin gets in his car.

STEVE
Excuse me!

Dustin drives away.

35 INT. ROB'S GUNS, GROCERY, GUITARS AND GAS - DAY

35

ROB
Hey, you sing?

SUE
What?

ROB
You look like you'd be a singer.

SUE
What does that mean?

ROB
Girls I knew in high school who
sang in the choir had hair like
yours.

On his own body, he gently pats the area just above his
shoulder.

SUE
I do sing, but I...

ROB
Told you. It's in the hair. Think
about it -- Diana Ross, Cher, Dolly
Parton. They all had good hair.

SUE
You're right... But, I don't sing
in public.

ROB
What? What's the point of having
good hair if you don't sing in
public? You should come with me
tonight.

SUE
To karaoke?

Rob smiles.

ROB
We don't call it that. It's just
open mic. You tell the band what
you want to sing, they play it, you
sing.

SUE
Not a chance.

She gathers the bags of items on the counter.

ROB
Listen this whole door to door
thing just isn't gonna cut it. You
wanna sell to these people? You
gotta get 'em all together or not
get 'em at all.

Sue looks at him.

ROB
 C'mon, I shouldn't have to tell you
 this. Show your face tonight. Make
 yourself seem friendly. Embarrass
 yourself a bit.

SUE
 And if I do, you gonna sign your
 lease?

She holds up a clipboard and points to his name on a list...
 He smiles.

36 EXT. ROB'S GUNS, GROCERY, GUITARS & GAS - DAY 36

Sue comes out of the store. She's smiling.

STEVE
 Hey, did you see a guy in there?

SUE
 I'll let you figure out how stupid
 that sounded.

STEVE
 I think there's an environmental
 presence here.

SUE
 What?

STEVE
 Cuz there was just this guy and...
 I don't know.

SUE
 I gotta get a outfit.

Steve looks over, taken aback! What does that mean?

37 EXT. BUDDY'S - NIGHT 37

Sue has changed... not only physically, wearing an outfit
 that is neither to fit in, nor for business, but she seems to
 also be in a different state of mind. Steve has changed his
 clothes too. They sit for a moment.

STEVE
 So is this guy handsome?

SUE
 (Immediately insecure) What?

STEVE
No, you just look nice.

SUE
Shut up.

STEVE
Scene of the crime.

SUE
Oh God, this is where you were?

STEVE
So am I sitting with you?

SUE
No, I'm gonna be with Rob.

STEVE
Who's Rob?

SUE
The handsome guy.

Beat. Steve can see she's nervous.

SUE
God, the things we do--

Sue goes to get out of the car.

STEVE
Wait!

Beat. Sue looks to Steve for encouragement.

STEVE
What song are you gonna sing?

SUE
Oh, kiss my ass, Steve!

She jumps out and slams the door.

38

INT. BUDDY'S - NIGHT

38

Sue spots Rob, who waves her over. He's got a table near the stage. Steve heads to the bar.

ROB
I signed you up!

SUE
For karaoke??

Rob smiles.

ROB
Yes. Drink?

Rob gets the attention of the waitress. She starts coming over. Sue stares at the band... and the microphone standing there in front of them.

SUE
Maybe get me two.

Rob laughs.

39 INT. BUDDY'S - NIGHT

39

Steve stands at the bar waiting for a drink.

VOICE
Am I interrupting something?

Steve turns to see... Alice.

STEVE
Hey!...

ALICE
(referencing herself)
Alice.

Steve laughs.

ALICE
Now you go. We'll try this again.

STEVE
Steve.

ALICE
Pleasure to meet you, Steve.

Beat.

ALICE
So it looks like you'll be here a lot longer than you thought.

Steve looks up at her.

ALICE
The town hall? Didn't look like
that went the way you wanted it to.

STEVE
Yeah... I'm sorry I lied to you.
We were only supposed to be here 2-
3 days.

ALICE
That's ok. We don't actually play
a game called ABSOLUT MADNESS.
Jesse's shots were water.

Right at that moment Jesse comes and sets the dusty bottle of
scotch in front of Steve. He smiles at Steve. Steve is
totally confused.

STEVE
...What's ABSOLUT MADNESS?

Alice smiles at him, knowingly. Then hands him a napkin with
her number on it.

ALICE
In case of emergency only.

She gets up to leave.

ALICE
See ya' around, Steve. Oh, and
congratulations, you got your
picture on the wall.

She leaves. Steve stares at her, smiling... still confused.
Just as he's about to call out to her... we hear a noise.
It's coming from the stage. Steve quickly turns to see...
Sue singing 'I SAW THE LIGHT'. She sings the 1st line...
silence... she sings the second. It is not good... but
determined. Suddenly, the bar begins to slowly clap... only
politely. Steve looks to Sue, mouth agape.

Sue finishes to mild applause. She walks off stage to Rob.

SUE
I thought that would've gone
better.

ROB
Really?

SUE
Don't people go to church here?

ROB
Yeah... on Sundays.

Beat.

ROB
Hey look at it this way, now you
have their sympathy. They'll never
forget the woman who sang the Jesus
song at open mic night.

He smiles... she does not... then drains her third gin and
tonic. She looks back at Steve who gives her a completely
sarcastic thumbs up. Sue wants to kill him. Suddenly we
hear a voice on the mic. Steve turns to see:

DUSTIN
Hello? Hello? Testing. Could I
have everyone's attention for one
second please? My name is--

There's a squeak from the mic.

DUSTIN
Whoa! Hot mic!

Dustin laughs. The room is dead as they all look up at him
quizzically. Dustin is holding a stack of leaflets.

DUSTIN
I uh-- I just arrived in town and
wanted to introduce myself to all
of you and uh-- Oh man, this seemed
like a much better idea when I was
standing in the back.

Someone yells out!

VOICE
Sing something!

DUSTIN
How bout this? If you give me just
30 seconds of your time, I'll even
let you pick the song!

There's a few cheers and whistles.

DUSTIN
My name is Dustin Noble and I work
for a small environmental group
called Athena.
(MORE)

DUSTIN (CONT'D)

We travel around the Northeast to protect environmental habitats and wildlife.

CROWD

Boooo!

Steve and Sue look on a bit confused. Alice is now standing by the bathroom door.

DUSTIN

I grew up in a small town in Nebraska, my family was a 5th generation farming family. Dairy.

There's murmurs of frustration in the bar. This is not what they're here for.

DUSTIN

All our cows are now dead.

The room is quieted slightly.

DUSTIN

In March of 2008, my dad found 12 dead cows down by a creek a half a mile from our house. By April 80% of his herd was either sick or dead. And by Christmas he had defaulted on his payments and the bank eventually took his house. 9 months. 150 years that farm was in our family and it only took 9 months to lose it. It wasn't just us. 16 other farms in that county went under. All the land just died. Shrivelled up and turned brown. Making it very easy to see the only things left standing. Giant green tanks that said GLOBAL.

The room begins to turn as people take this in. Steve and Sue notice. Sue gets up and heads for the bathrooms. Steve takes his cue and follows her.

DUSTIN

So, when I heard that you all were going to put this to a VOTE? Well, I had to come down here personally and tell you my story. This isn't some environmentalist conspiracy. This is my life. The simple truth is... One day the farms were there.

Dustin holds up the leaflets.

DUSTIN
And one day they weren't.

SUE
What the hell is happening right
now?

STEVE
That's the guy!

DUSTIN
My name is Dustin Noble. I'm just
a hick from Nebraska and I'm here
for you!

SUE
How much money do we have left? I
got this.

She turns and leaves. Steve stands looking on for one more
moment.

VOICE
BRUUUCE!!

DUSTIN
What's that?

There are a few chuckles.

VOICE
Springsteen! Sing!

There is a small amount of laughter. That leads to clapping.
Dustin looks around at the crowd.

DUSTIN
Oh man! I don't know about that.
That's sort of sacred ground to--

The keyboard player begins to play lightly 'DANCING IN THE
DARK'. Dustin turns to her.

DUSTIN
You gotta be kidding me!

The rest of the band jumps in immediately! The crowd reacts,
goaded him more. He is screwed. Weakly he tries:

DUSTIN

... I get up in the evening. And I ain't got nothin' to say.

The crowd cheers. Dustin smiles.

DUSTIN

I come home in the morning, I go to bed feeling the same way. I ain't nothin' but tired, man I'm just tired and bored with myself. Hey baby, I could use just a little help.

Crowd joins in.

DUSTIN

YOU CAN'T START A FIRE, YOU CAN'T START A FIRE WITHOUT A SPARK. THIS GUN'S FOR HIRE EVEN IF WE'RE JUST DANCING IN THE DARK.

Now the bar is full-on cheering Dustin on. Steve looks over and sees Alice watching Dustin. He walks right up to her. and takes her arm.

STEVE

Hey, none of that stuff-- the things he said. It's just not true.

She looks at him.

STEVE

I'm not a bad guy.

ALICE

I don't think you are.

After sharing a beat. He heads to the door, looking back at Dustin. The ENTIRE bar is on their feet. People are dancing and singing along. He has the entire bar in the palm of his hand.

DUSTIN

They say you gotta stay hungry.

Dustin, in full swing, grabs a girl.

DUSTIN

HEY BABY, I'M JUST ABOUT STARVING TONIGHT!

The place ERUPTS!!! At the door, Steve has had enough. He grabs a leaflet and walks out. We stay on Dustin and the bar for a few more moments. He is a huge hit!

40 EXT. MOTEL-- PARKING LOT - NIGHT

40

Steve and Sue stand outside in the parking lot. Steve is holding the leaflet which depicts a poorly xeroxed picture of what looks to be a dead animal with gas wells in the background. On the bottom in block print it reads... GLOBAL GO HOME.

STEVE

"Global go home", what a crock of shit.

Steve slaps his neck.

STEVE

Can we go inside, Sue? I'm getting eaten alive! How do you even know he's staying here?

SUE

Where else is he gonna stay, Steven?

STEVE

None of that shit can be true, right?

SUE

Of course not! We would've heard about it. They're not going to send us in blind.

STEVE

I should have just confronted him at the bar.

SUE

In front of the whole town?... on open mic night???

Dustin's car pulls up. Sue gives a know-it-all look to Steve.

SUE

Play nice.

As Dustin gets out of the car, Steve walks up.

STEVE

Hey man! What's going on?

DUSTIN
Not much. How you doin'?

STEVE
What are you doing here?

DUSTIN
What's that?

STEVE
What... are... you doing here?
Athena? I've never even heard of
that company. What kind of name is
that?

DUSTIN
It's Greek, originally. Athena is
the goddess of--

STEVE
Dude-- I fucking know who Athena
is!

DUSTIN
Ok, you just said you didn't-- And,
I'm sorry, who are you?

STEVE
You're kidding me, right? I'm
Steve!... I'm the guy you were
just talking shit about at open mic
night!

DUSTIN
Ah! You're with Global.

STEVE
Do you have ANY idea who you're
dealing with? Is this some kind of
game to you? Somethin' you and your
stoner buddies can--

Sue puts a hand on Steve's arm.

DUSTIN
I know exactly who I'm dealing
with. I know all about your
company. I've seen what you do and
I know how to beat it.

STEVE

Oh really? By telling bullshit sob stories and singing fucking Springsteen? You gotta be kidding me!

SUE

Listen. You seem nice enough, but I hate to tell you you're way out of your league, here. We've signed more than enough leases to move forward with our development.

DUSTIN

I wouldn't underestimate these people. They're--

Sue steps toward him.

SUE

Trust me, they're poor. They need the money. I know why you think you're here and I admire your commitment. But your presence here is only going to confuse people.

Beat. Dustin looks up at her. She looks at him firmly. As he looks back down, Sue reaches into her pocket and pulls out an envelope.

SUE

But, we do appreciate what you're doing and would like to make a donation to your fine organization.

After a beat. Dustin takes the envelope!

SUE

We appreciate your cooperation. Okay?

DUSTIN

Okay.

SUE

Great!

Dustin picks up his bag and heads toward the motel.

Steve shares a triumphant look with Sue.

STEVE
He's actually a nice kid.

SUE
Very nice.

STEVE
Just confused.

SUE
Right.

41 INT/EXT BRONCO - DRIVING - DAY

41

Sue and Steve are driving through town not far from the hotel. We know this because though there is some land in between, the houses are closer together. Sue sees something in one of the few fields out the window. She points.

SUE
Okay. Check out the horses.

Sue slows down. There are three horses off in the distance. Steve and Sue squint.

STEVE
They do seem small.

SUE
Next to the goats, see?

It's hard to tell for sure, but standing next to a few goats, the horses do look unusually small.

STEVE
They should be bigger next to the goats.

SUE
Right???

STEVE
You're right!.... Unless the goats are big.

SUE
C'mon! Those goats are normal!

Sue starts to accelerate. Steve is beaming. Then suddenly:

STEVE
Holy shit...

In the front lawn of the upcoming house there is a sign posted out front. It reads GLOBAL GO HOME. It is an enlarged and slightly clearer version of Dustin's leaflet. They drive by. Both Sue and Steve seem confused. Then, a few houses up, they see another one... and another one.

STEVE
What's going on?

Steve looks back to see the signs as they pass. As he turns back to face front:

STEVE
Son of a bitch!

At that moment Steve sees, parked in the driveway of the upcoming house... Dustin's car.

STEVE
Pull over. Pull over!!!

42 EXT. HOUSE - DAY

42

The Bronco pulls over to the side of the road, as Dustin walks out of the house with a large sign in his hand. It is a large blown up version of the leaflets he's been handing out which show a large photo of dead cattle and the words GLOBAL GO HOME on the bottom. A couple waves as he walks down the walkway. He is carrying a large cardboard poster with him. Steve launches out of the car, trying unsuccessfully to hide his fury. Dustin sees him.

DUSTIN
(Full volume to spite
Steve)
Hey, Steve!

STEVE
(To Dustin under his
breath)
What are you doing?

Steve gives an overly cheerful wave to the couple on the porch.

STEVE
HELLO! (To Dustin) What the fuck
are you doing here?

DUSTIN
I'm telling these people the truth.

Dustin sticks the sign in the ground.

STEVE
We had an agreement.

DUSTIN
Did we?

Dustin leans on sign. The couple looks on.

STEVE
We sure as (whispers) shit did.

DUSTIN
Well, I guess I woke up this morning and realized I should do what I came here to do.

STEVE
You WHAT?

DUSTIN
Yeah, I just feel morally obligated to stay.

Indicating the sign.

DUSTIN
Oh, I put that donation to good use! Thank you!

Dustin waves to Sue.

DUSTIN
Hey Sue!

STEVE
Are you fucking insane? Do you have any idea what you're up against? We are a 9 billion dollar company. Do you have any idea what we're capable of?

DUSTIN
Do you?

Beat.

DUSTIN
Because all I see here is you and me. And one of us is a lot more confident than the other.

STEVE

You're absolutely right, and one of us is going to punch the other one in the face.

The couple goes back in the house, a bit nervous. Dustin looks back and watches them go then turns back to Steve, concerned.

DUSTIN

Steve, stop. Listen to me. You're doing all the things you've done in the past... and they're not working. Why is that?

STEVE

Not working? We already have 60% of the land in this town bought and paid for. It's over.

DUSTIN

Steve, you can buy 80% of the land... that's only 40% of the vote. Wake up, Steve, we're not fighting for the land. We're fighting for the people.

Steve actually looks like he's going to hit Dustin.

STEVE

You son of a bitch! Do you have any idea what you're doing to these people? These people need help. We're trying to give it to them. What the fuck are you doing?

From the truck:

SUE

Walk away, Steve.

DUSTIN

Your wrong, Steve. These people? They changed. It's not just about the money any more.

SUE

Get in the car.

He pats Steve on the shoulder.

DUSTIN
Listen, none of this is your fault.
This is just your time. You're
going to lose.

He begins to walk to his truck.

STEVE
Really? To what? What are you
selling?

DUSTIN
See ya around, Steve.

As Dustin gets in his truck.

STEVE
Yeah, let's just run everything on
rainbows and laughter!... Dip shit.

Steve walks to the truck, pissed.

43 INT/EXT BRONCO - DRIVING - DAY

43

Steve is stewing. After a moment.

SUE
Look, we've dealt with this before.
We're fine.

Beat.

SUE
We just have to be smart, come up
with a way to--

STEVE
(quietly)
Turn around.

SUE
Ok, you've GOT to stop! What are
you gonna do beat the shit out of
this guy?

STEVE
Turn around, Sue.

SUE
This is completely infantile!

STEVE
Turn the car around, Sue!!!

Sue goes quiet and looks at him. After a moment... she begins to turn around.

44 EXT. ROAD - DAY 44

We see the car turn around and watch it drive off down the road.

45 EXT. FIELD - DAY 45

In a large wide shot we see Steve and Sue from behind standing seemingly in the middle of nowhere. After a long beat.

STEVE

Well, we've definitely got the space.

Beat.

STEVE

Food and games to the left, animals and bathrooms to the right. We might even have room for a tractor pull behind the ferris wheel back there with the whirly... thing. What am I missing?

SUE

I don't know.

STEVE

Come on, Sue.

SUE

I've never even BEEN to a town fair, Steve. I'm not in P.R.! This is for the back up team.

STEVE

We ARE the back up team, Sue. And this is how we win. When I was growing up people would talk about the town fair for months. If we can't sign everyone, let's at least show them what its like to have some money.

She looks at him as he stares off.

STEVE

What am I missing?

SUE
Bouncy castles...

Steve smiles.

STEVE
 Congratulations, you just got a job
 in P.R.

46 INT. MOTEL - HALLWAY - NIGHT 46

Steve walks up to his room after a long day and puts the key in the door. When he looks up, he sees that one of Dustin's leaflets is taped to his door.

STEVE
 Asshole.

47 INT. ROOM - DAY 47

We come up on an indecipherable background. A greyish wall. After a beat:

Dustin enters from out of frame as we pull out to reveal... a black board.

DUSTIN
 Good morning, everyone! My name is
 Dustin!

We immediately reveal... a classroom of kids.

KIDS
 HI DUSTIN!!!

As we pull out more we see that in front of him is a brown bag of unknown supplies and on the floor is a large box. He's talking to Alice's 5th grade class. She stands off to the side, admiring.

DUSTIN
 How many of you live on a farm?

Almost all the hands go up.

DUSTIN
 Alright!

From behind the desk he pulls up a large clear bag full of dirt and places it on the table. He then reaches into the bag and pulls out a few toy figures of cows and horses.

DUSTIN

Now, let's say THIS is your farm!

5TH GRADER

That's a bag of dirt!

DUSTIN
 I know, I know! Geesh! Thought
 5th graders were supposed to have
 imaginations. (He smiles) Ok, how
 about this!

He picks up a pencil and waves it over the bag of dirt.

DUSTIN
 In Spectro Peculium! Poof! Now
 it's a farm! Ok?

The kids laugh!

DUSTIN
 Whew! Thank God for Harry Potter!

We see that one of the children laughing is... Carson Allen.
 Claire's son.

CUT TO:

48 EXT. SMALL HOUSE - DAY

48

Steve is standing on a porch waiting. The door finally opens
 and a large man stands inside the screen door.

STEVE
 Hey there! My name is Steve Butler
 and--

LARGE MAN
 I know who you are. You outta be
 ashamed of yourself.

STEVE
 Look, the information you're
 getting from this ATHENA guy is not
 true. If you look at--

The large man slams the door.

49 INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

49

DUSTIN
 And this...

From behind the desk he pulls up a big clear Tupperware
 container and pours in a large bottle of water.

DUSTIN

And THIS is all the water in town!
The water you drink, the water the
cows drink, the water your puppies
and kittens drink and all the water
in the river for the fish.

Alice looks at him warily, a bit perplexed.

DUSTIN

Now let me show you what happened
one day in my home town, in a state
called Nebraska, when this company
GLOBAL, tried drilling for Natural
gas.

He holds the bag over the container of water. Suddenly he
begins puncturing the bottom of the bag with a pencil.

DUSTIN

See, they wanted to drill into the
land, like this.

The kids laugh at the rather destructive action. Little bits
of dirt start falling into the water.

DUSTIN

But unfortunately they don't just
use a drill like the ones some of
your daddies have. No, they use
ones that shoot water and sand!

Dustin takes a sports bottle and begins to shoot water into
the bag of dirt. After a moment the bag begins dripping
dirty water out of the bottom. The kids cheer!

DUSTIN

But hold on, hold on! That's not
all! In order to do all that
drilling they need to use...

From the brown paper bag he pulls out 5 or 6 bottles of home
cleaning products, etc.

DUSTIN

Chemicals! Now these chemicals
that they use seem harmless when
they're contained right? In fact a
lot of the bad stuff up there you
can find right here in the bottles
under your sink at home. But they
don't use one chemical at a time.
They use all of them.

Dustin starts to pour all the products into the bag. Alice pulls away a little from the smell. After a moment a gross concoction of dark ooze starts dripping from the bag.

KIDS

Ewwwww!

They're all a bit horrified.

50 EXT. MOTEL PARKING LOT - DAY 50

Sue and Steve walk to the Bronco not paying attention. When they get in Steve looks up.

STEVE

God DAMN IT!!!

The windshield is covered in the Athena leaflets with the photo of the dead cows and GLOBAL GO HOME written on them.

51 EXT. HOUSE AND TRAILER - DAY 51

Steve exits a house saying goodbye to the older couple.

STEVE

Well, I appreciate your time. If you change your mind, you let me know.

They shake hands and smile. Steve walks down the walkway disappointed. Suddenly he hears a voice.

PAUL

There he is!

Steve looks around and sees a man in his late 20's sitting on the porch of a neighboring trailer. He waves.

STEVE

Hey!

Steve keeps walking.

PAUL

I've been waitin' on you folks!

Steve looks up at him.

STEVE

Uh... Well, unfortunately I don't think you're, uh--

Steve looks into his folder.

PAUL
Paul Geary. 442 Henley.

On Steve's list it is clear this man's land is unusable. It is listed at only 2 acres, which isn't big enough to house a well. Steve clears his throat.

STEVE
Oh, yup! There you are Mr. Geary,
I apologize.

PAUL
No worries. Come on in, come on
in! Where do I sign?

Steve smiles. As he walks to the trailer his smile fades.

52 INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

52

DUSTIN
Now...

He reaches into the box and pulls out a lighter. A few gasps.

KIDS
Whoa.

ALICE
Oh, I don't think--

DUSTIN
It's ok.

Dustin lowers the lighter to the discolored water. After a moment it IGNITES! Then burns gently.

KIDS
WHOA!!!!!!

They all cheer.

53 EXT. GEARY'S TRAILER - DAY

53

Steve is trying to leave. The door is open. We can see down the walkway... where Sue is standing. She gestures "What the hell?"

STEVE
Well, thanks again for your time.

PAUL
You didn't even finish your coffee!

STEVE
Oh man, if I had any more, I'd
bounce out of here. But thank you!

They shake hands.

PAUL
Whoo! No, sir, thank YOU! You
folks are doin' a good thing here.
We sure need the helpin' hand.

Steve feels a little sick.

STEVE
Alright!

Steve turns to the street where he can see Sue waiting in the
neighbor's driveway next door.

PAUL
Hey, Steve! You got a good
feelin'?

Steve turns.

STEVE
About what?

PAUL
This well. You think it'll be a
gusher? Do they even call it a
gusher?

STEVE
Well, Paul there's no way to tell
til we do some tests--

PAUL
But just your gut! Whatdaya think?

STEVE
I think you seem like a lucky guy.

PAUL
Whoo! Alright, well come back
whenever with that contract!

STEVE
Alright.

Paul goes back inside. After a moment's pause:

54 INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

54

The kids are cheering.

DUSTIN
Why are you cheering?

KIDS
It's so cool!

DUSTIN
But that's the water you drink.

KIDS
Oh yeah./ I guess.

Needing a big finish, Dustin looks around the room and sees... on the windowsill is an aquarium. Inside is a very unlucky turtle.

DUSTIN
What's the turtle's name?

KIDS
Trigger!

DUSTIN
Does his water look like it's as clean as this water?

A few kids answer quietly...

KIDS
No. No way.

Silence. In a flash, Dustin has pulled the turtle out and is back in front of the flames..

DUSTIN
Well, let's see if Trigger here can survive in his new home.

BLOOD CURDLING SCREAMS FROM THE KIDS!!... and Alice.

Dustin stops. He's given the greatest presentation ever.

55 INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

55

The kids are filing out. They all high five Dustin! Dustin gives them all sticker versions of the leaflet on the way out.

DUSTIN
Stick these anywhere you can! Get
in trouble!

ALICE
(Laughing)
Absolutely not! Wow, that was
great! So vivid.

Dustin smiles, joking.

DUSTIN
I am good!

Alice and Dustin laugh. A moment. The bell rings.

ALICE
Well, thanks again.

DUSTIN
No, thank you!

They shake hands.

He turns and runs down the hall. Alice watches him go. Suddenly we realize that a group of kindergartners have been coming down the hall, all led by their teacher... Gwen. As she walks by with the train of children she stares after Dustin too.

GWEN
Goddamn it! It's your birthday
everyday, isn't it?

56 INT/EXT BRONCO - GEARY'S TRAILER - DAY

56

SUE
What are you doing?

STEVE
Let's just go.

SUE
How much land does he have?

STEVE
1.8 acres.

Sue looks over. She knows what this means.

SUE
How much?

STEVE

5000...

Sue looks back at the house.

STEVE

And told him 15%.

SUE

(Chuckles)

That's funny. Smart.

STEVE

Let's just go.

SUE

Listen, that's five grand free for that guy!

Sue goes to start the car, it doesn't turn over again.

SUE

(Smiling)

Don't say anything!

Steve still looking out the window, isn't even paying attention. They drive away.

57

EXT. SMALL FARM - AFTERNOON

57

Steve knocks on a door. After a moment we reveal... Alice.

ALICE

Well, hello.

Alice smiles.

STEVE

Hey!

Steve smiles. Long moment where the two wait to see what this is. Steve smiles.

STEVE

Are you the owner of this farm?...
Are youuuu-- Alice Neary?

Steve holds up a clipboard and points to her name. Reaction from Alice as her heart falls for a moment. Steve's here to pitch. She hides her disappointment valiantly.

ALICE

Yes I am.

58

EXT. ALICE'S HOUSE - LATE DAY

58

We are wide as we see look out on an INCREDIBLLY beautiful vista in the perfect light of early evening. This is the land behind Alice's house. Alice sits on a small bench right at the top overlooking the view. Steve stands giving an energetic pitch to Alice. We can very softly hear the sound of running water.

STEVE

See you can tuck the wells in down behind that group of trees to the right.

Steve looks at an aerial photograph on his clipboard of Alice's land.

STEVE

And because of the way your property is laid out we could put an access road clear on the other side so you wouldn't even hear the trucks.

Beat.

STEVE

(Jokingly)

And we could actually put the cash machine right next to the couch I slept on.

Alice smiles.

ALICE

This farm has been in my family for over one hundred years.

STEVE

Exactly, and this money will keep it in your family for another hundred. You wouldn't see any of this from the house!

ALICE

(Smiling)

... But I'd see it from here.

STEVE

Look, you don't have to decide now. Think about it.

Beat. Steve turns to her.

STEVE
 (knowingly)
 I can always come back.

He smiles. She smiles. They both know what this is.

ALICE
 Yeah, cuz you're gonna be around
 for a bit!

Steve laughs. They look out at the land. We hold on the two
 of them... a second too long.

58A INT. MOTEL - STEVE'S ROOM - MORNING 58A

The clock reads 4:30 am. Steve is awake. After a beat he
 gets up and walks out of frame.

58B INT. MOTEL - STEVE'S BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER 58B

Mirroring the first shot of the movie in the restaurant
 bathroom, Steve comes up into frame splashing water on his
 face. He looks at himself in the mirror.

58C EXT. FAIRGROUNDS - EARLY DAWN 58C

Steve walks into frame carrying a pile of lumber. He drops
 them down. Takes a second to look out over the land and then
 picks up a shovel and walks out a few feet and begins to dig.

58D INT. DINER - MORNING 58D

Steve is once again at the coffee counter of the retro diner.

There is dirt on his clothes as he waits. Lynn comes up and
 hands him his coffee. Is her energy different? She doesn't
 even look up at Steve.

LYNN
 Two dollars.

STEVE
 Thanks, Lynn.

She won't even look at him. Steve follows her as she walks
 back to join a group that sits by the counter.

He looks down the bar and sees Dustin sitting with a bunch of people telling a story. He sees Steve and waves. Off Steve's face.

59

EXT. DENNON'S FARM - DAY

59

Next to a small dilapidated house is a beautiful expanse of land with a stream running through it. Steve stands by a fence with a man. This is Jeff Dennon, mid thirties. He is repairing a part of the fence that keeps the animals out of the stream. Suddenly Steve grabs one of the fence poles and helps Jeff. Steve's ability is completely second nature.

STEVE

We send more than one BILLION dollars overseas every DAY to fuel our need for oil. Now that's just insane. To be spending so much money to buy oil? FIGHTING for so much oil? When we have one of the largest natural energy sources right here in our back yard! Now this guy from Athena's going around lying to everybody and--

JEFF

Mr. Butler, you seem like a good enough man so I'm going to be straight with you so as to not waste your time... That little boy you saw when you came to the door?

Steve nods.

JEFF

He lost his father, my brother, 6 years ago in Fallujah... So you don't need to lecture me on the whole foreign oil dependency routine. But let me ask you one question, Steve. If I do this... what do I say to that boy? What am I telling him? What am I telling him about this farm that my daddy gave me and his daddy gave him? What am I telling him about what his daddy went to the desert to fight for? See, you and I both know that the only reason you're here, is because we're poor.

Steve doesn't respond.

JEFF
 How many wells you got up near
 Manhattan? What about
 Philadelphia? Or Pittsburgh?

Steve still says nothing.

JEFF
 It's alright. I get it. That's
 what we're here for. Nothin' new.

Beat.

JEFF
 But, you'll never get what you came
 here to take from me... and to be
 honest, I don't even like the fact
 that you're here trying.

Off Steve's look.

60

EXT. FAIR GROUNDS - DAY

60

Steve works in the hot sun bringing bails of hay from the back of the Bronco and stacking them. He makes it look effortless. We finally see the farmer he once was. Where he's stacking them we see several fully built animal pens. There's a mule in one of them. A large cart next to it. Sue arrives carrying a lemonade.

SUE
 I've only been handing out flyers
 for like two hours and I want to
 die. I don't know how that Athena
 guy does it. (Noticing Steve's
 progress!) Oh my God! How'd you
 do all this? Is that a donkey?

Steve begins to walk through the area he has just set up.
 Sue follows.

STEVE
 A mule, yeah, the guy down the
 street let me borrow him to help
 dig out the course.

SUE
What course?

STEVE
Pig races.

SUE
I don't like that you said that
without even a smile.

Beat. Steve has arrived at a little well. He expertly hand pumps some water to splash water on his face. He then takes a long drink.

SUE
You alright?

STEVE
Yeah... I'm just sick of this shit.
This thing will close them. Let's
end this and get the hell out of
here.

Sue pauses for a second, seeing his change.

SUE
Alright, then.

Suddenly a pick up truck pulls up with two men in the front and 4 men in the back. They get out and walk up. The driver... is Rob.

ROB
Thought you could use a little
help.

Steve is taken aback.

STEVE
Uh, yeah-- Yes. Thank you. You
could work on putting up those food
tents.

ROB
You got it. Let's go.

The men walk past. Sue looks at Steve and smiles.

Steve finishes up getting ready and goes to head out the door. He looks back to see if he's left anything as he opens the door. When he turns back to leave...

He runs right into what seems like a wall. As he steps back we realize what it is... Like a college dorm prank, Dustin has stapled a huge version of the poster across Steve's entire door. Steve has finally had it!

STEVE
God DAMN it!!!!

Without even looking at it, grabs the poster and, as if in a street fight, wrestles with it, finally ripping it down the middle. Sadly exhausted, Steve throws the crumpled and bent pieces of poster into his room. Furious, he leaves and slams the door!

62 EXT. CLAPBOARD HOUSE - PORCH - DAY 62

Sue sits on the front porch with Claire Allen. She is signing a lease. In the yard in front of them, Carson is throwing a baseball with a friend. They are both wearing their homemade baseball t-shirts. Sue watches them.

CLAIRE
Is that it?

Sue snaps out of it.

SUE
That's it!

Claire puts her hand on Sue's.

CLAIRE
... thank you.

Sue takes this in and smiles.

63 EXT. FAIR GROUNDS - DAY 63

The work site is buzzing. There is now a large group of people working together to help Steve. Without any hesitation Steve unloads horses out of a truck, raises tents with several other people, puts up fencing for the pens. All the while he is... happy. We see now that he is completely in his element.

64 EXT. BASEBALL FIELD - DAY 64

Sue is sitting in the stands of a little league baseball game. Close on her, we can see that there is something different about her. She is completely at ease... almost like she's somewhere else. Suddenly she begins clapping.

We pull out to reveal that there is a change of innings happening. Sue is sitting on the right field line. As one team heads towards Sue, the team from the opposite dugout is taking the field. We track the boy heading towards first base. As he comes closer we realize... it is Carson Allen... we can now see his shirt.... A brand new YANKEES jersey professionally done. He finally reaches first base and turns back to the field. On the back of his shirt we see the number '15' and above that?.... GLOBAL written in bold letters.

65 INT. GEARY'S TRAILER - DAY

65

Steve sits with Paul Geary. Paul finishes signing the final page in a flourishing last signature. He laughs out loud and looks across the table to Steve. Then suddenly he jumps up and heads to a cabinet under the sink and pulls out a bottle that's only a third full.

PAUL
For special occasions!

He pours into 2 cheap, non matching, glasses and hands one to Steve and clinks his glass. As Paul laughs in celebration, Steve finally laughs too. It's genuine. Paul's energy is infectious.

66 EXT. TOWN FAIR - DAY

66

The fair is now nearly complete, there are pigs in the pen, food tents are up, even the ferris wheel is up. It looks great. Steve is now covered in dirt and sweat. He is directing several people where to put the port-a-potties, as SUE walks up sipping on a lemonade. Steve looks at her drinking.

STEVE
Again with the lemonade?

SUE
You don't understand, it's insane!

Steve looks behind Sue. On the sidewalk is an 11 year old girl at a lemonade stand.

STEVE
Jesus, she's everywhere.

SUE
Well... Everywhere the people are,
Steve.

(MORE)

SUE (CONT'D)

She's a little raging capitalist...
You should hire her now, while you
can afford her.

Sue smiles.

STEVE

It's weird that you crack yourself
up.

Suddenly Steve sees something.

STEVE

Holy Shit...

Walking up to Steve... is Frank Yates.

FRANK

This is a great idea, Steve. Lotta
people looking forward to this.
Thank you.

Beat.

STEVE

What are you doing here, Frank?

FRANK

Thought you could use some help.

STEVE

This-- Look at the signs, Frank.
This whole thing is sponsored by
Global.

Steve points to signs hanging over the various areas of the
fair.

FRANK

It's still a town fair, Steve...
I'm not a communist. Now, where do
you need me?

Long beat.

SUE

Wanna help blow up the bouncy
castles?

Steve points him in a direction of the bouncy castles.

FRANK

Sounds good.

He walks away as Sue and Steve just stand awestruck.

67 EXT. PICK-UP TRUCK/ROAD INTO TOWN - DUSK 67

Similar to the first introduction to the town, we follow a pick up truck full of people as it drives down the road. There are 3 people jammed in the front and a whole bunch packed in the back. We pan through all the tired and dirty faces and then come upon... Steve. We hold on the whole group laughing about something and then hold as we watch the truck turn down main street.

68 INT. BUDDY'S - NIGHT 68

The entire team working on the fair walks in and takes a seat in a group. Steve takes a head count and then walks to the bar. Jesse comes over.

STEVE

Hey, Jesse. We'll start with a couple pitchers, just leave the tab open.

Jesse walks away as Steve wipes his face with a bar napkin. He is... happy. Suddenly:

VOICE

Nice work, Steve.

Steve turns to reveal... Dustin.

DUSTIN

The fair idea was... smart.

Steve looks at Dustin.

STEVE

Well, thanks Dustin, I'm sure that was hard for you to say.

Beat. Dustin stares at Steve.

DUSTIN

You like this job, Steve?

Steve looks over.

DUSTIN

You love what you do?

STEVE

On days like this I do.

Jesse, holding 2 pitchers of beer in two hands puts them on the bar.

STEVE

And buy him a round on me. One of those fancy imported ones... and a granola bar if you have it!

Dustin smiles and shakes his head.

DUSTIN

...You think you have what it takes, Steve?

STEVE

To beat you? Absolutely.

Dustin smiles.

DUSTIN

Who know's? You just might...
(MORE)

DUSTIN (CONT'D)

STEVE

I'll drink to that!

He raises his pitchers and cheers' Dustin. Dustin smiles and takes a swig. Suddenly, we hear the door open. Both Dustin and Steve turn to see... Alice. She stops in her tracks.

DUSTIN

Hey!

ALICE

Hey...

DUSTIN

You ready to go?

ALICE

Yeah.

Steve just stands there trying to process.

DUSTIN

Thanks again for the beer, Steve.
Was really sweet. I'll take it to
go!

Dustin gets up and walks to Alice who still looks uncomfortably to Steve.

DUSTIN
You guys have a great night!

Dustin and Alice start to walk. Alice turns back to Steve.

ALICE
Hey, I'm looking forward to the fair tomorrow... should be fun.

STEVE
Yeah.

ALICE
'Night.

They walk off. We hold on Steve who is still frozen, holding his pitchers like a jackass.

69 INT. MOTEL - SUE'S ROOM - NIGHT

69

Sue sits on the bed. She is Skyping with her son. She's putting on a happy face, but something is hurting. There is a commotion on the other end of the computer.

SUE
Well, I don't know what to say. A no hitter?

DANNY
It was only 2 innings.

SUE
I don't care! Did anyone get on base?

DANNY
... No.

SUE
Then that's actually a perfect game! That's amazing!

DANNY
It's not the whole game, Mom.

From the other side we hear other kids' voices yelling "COME ON Danny!"

SUE
Well, you shouldn't be on the
computer with me!

Suddenly another kid's face pops into the frame.

BOY
Hey MS. T!

SUE
Hi, Colin!

The boy disappears.

SUE
Ok, go, go! Where you guys headed
tonight?

DANNY
I don't know... Sarah Dayton's
having a party I think.

Sue is trying her best to keep it together.

SUE
... you look really nice.

DANNY
Ok.

SUE
I love you very much.

DANNY
Ok, mom.

Long beat. Then, with a wave, he's gone. Sue just stares at
the remaining glow on the screen.

70 EXT. BUDDY'S - NIGHT

70

Steve exits the bar... a little drunk. There is a giant man
finishing a cigarette outside. Steve takes a deep breath.

The man holds out the pack of cigarettes.

STEVE
No thanks, I'm good.

He looks back up to the sky. Suddenly a car pulls up in front. It's a brand new Corvette. The lights blind Steve, then go off. A door opens and we hear:

VOICE

STEVE!

Steve squints to see who it is as his eyes adjust. It's Paul Geary.

PAUL

It's Paul!

Steve can't believe what he's seeing.

STEVE

Is that your car, Paul?

PAUL

Yes sir! Picked it up over in Barton 2 days ago! Isn't it beautiful? Figured I'd treat myself! Right???

He laughs. Steve is horrified... He tries to make conversation.

STEVE

Is that... What is that color? Champagne?

PAUL

Haha! No sir! That's why I had to go all the way to Barton. That there is a very special color. They call it Gold Mist!

Steve is speechless.

PAUL

Whatchu drinkin', scotch? I'm buyin'!

As he heads inside. Steve stands staring at the car looking like he could be sick.

71 INT. BUDDY'S -- LATER THAT NIGHT

71

It's late. Paul is gone. Only a few people remain in the bar. Steve sits staring off into space it seems.

After a moment we here a loud voice yell:

VOICE

Hey!

Steve spins in his stool and through blurred vision sees the source of the noise. 4 men, obviously farmers sit at a nearby table... One of them is Jeff Dennon, the man whose brother died in Fallujah. Steve looks away.

JEFF

HEY!

Steve doesn't turn.

JEFF

I just heard you're a-- someone told me you're from Iowa?...

Steve doesn't react.

JEFF

And your daddy he was-- your daddy's a farmer!

STEVE

... Grandfather.

JEFF

What?

STEVE

Doesn't matter.

JEFF

Now lemme aska... how do you sleep at night?

Steve turns slowly, un-fazed.

JEFF

No, I wanna know. How's it that you come through these towns. You seen these places, you seen these people. You look 'em right in the eye... And you sell this shit.

Beat.

JEFF

You know it. Oh, you know all about it. The gas... the water... the poison. You know it ALL. And you bring it right to us, you put it right in our faces and say drink.

(MORE)

JEFF (CONT'D)

And the worst part, the WORST part is you ain't some slick suit wearin' city shark. No sir... you know these people. You seen these people. You come from these people. And you still go for the kill.

STEVE

... it's not true.

Steve looks away.

JEFF

Look at me.

Steve doesn't.

JEFF

I said look at me.

Steve does.

JEFF

I want you to look me right in the eye--

STEVE

--Right in the eye.

JEFF

--when you do it. Yeah, I want you to see me when you do it. Do I look like your daddy? You gonna sell this shit to your daddy--

Steve looks away. And laughs. All the farmers now stand up and move toward Steve.

JEFF

You have somethin' to say?

Beat. Tensions are high. Steve turns to them finally.

STEVE

You people baffle me... How you just don't get it.

JEFF

Well, why don't you explain it to us. What the hell are we missin' here?

STEVE

Money. And I'm not talking about little pay increases. I'm talking about "Fuck you" money.

Some of the men shift their weight but say nothing.

STEVE

Don't want to apply for college loans for your kids? This money says "Fuck you", loans. You worried about car payments? "Fuck you", payments. The bank's gonna foreclose on your family farm? "Fuck you", bank. "Fuck you" money is the ultimate liberator. And underneath this town is "fuck you" money. You think long and hard about all those brutal days workin'. And the bullshit checks you get from whatever goddamn frozen peas company that's buying. You think about how much you made on your best day... and then you think real hard about how much you made on your worst. Cuz let's be real honest with each other, they're all starting to look like that more and more aren't they? These people? This town? This life? It's dying and damn near dead. And you all see it coming! And you just won't get the hell out of the way. Why??? Pride? Of WHAT??? What have you got? And for fuck's sake, how much of it is even yours??? Hell, I bet all four of you are collecting subsidy checks from the government. Well, when they stop comin'? When all that help stops comin' and you've got nowhere to go? You'll remember this conversation and remember the guy who looked you right in the eye and said "Fuck you".

In a flash the biggest, quietest farmer walks forward and punches Steve in the face, immediately dropping him to the ground. We see it's the LARGE MAN that shut the door on Steve earlier. The farmers stand over him and we can see they're furious... but they also listened. It's intense.

LARGE MAN

You're an asshole.

The farmers walk out. Slowly Steve gets up and sits back in his chair. He takes a deep breath. For the first time we see what Steve has been staring at before the Farmers came over to him...

Behind the bar, under all the bottles he notices a series of Polaroid pictures lined up. Above the pictures is written in big glittery letters "ABSOLUT MADNESS". At the end of the row of pictures... is Steve. For the first time we get a glimpse into the horror that was Steve's first night in town. In the picture, Steve is ruddy faced and sweating... he almost doesn't look human. He's in mid-scream and holds up his hands in metal-fan fashion, fingers posed in the shape of horns. He looks ridiculous... but in his head... he looks awesome. Underneath each picture is the name of a state or city. Under Steve's it says 'IOWA'

71A INT. MOTEL - STEVE'S ROOM - NIGHT

71A

Steve sits on the bed staring off. We hold on him as he contemplates what just happened... and what is happening. Suddenly the phone rings. He looks over to it quickly. It rings again... he picks it up.

STEVE

... Alice?

SUE (O.S.)

No, but our rooms connect if you're that desperate.

STEVE

Jesus, Sue...

SUE (O.S)

Just wanted to make sure you were behaving. Tomorrow's a big day.

STEVE

Yeah, I got it.

SUE

Get some sleep, Steven.

STEVE

Ok, I got it!

SUE

Steve...

STEVE

YEAH?

SUE
Great job...

STEVE
...You too.

Steve hangs up.

As Steve stares, we hear the pre-lap of thunder.

72 EXT. TOWN FAIR - AFTERNOON

72

Rain pours down on the town fair... Lights have fallen and dangle over the ground. The bouncy castles are half deflated. The banner at the front is heavy with water as the ink runs off.

Across the street, we see Sue and Steve's Bronco.

73 INT. BRONCO - AFTERNOON

73

Steve is sitting in the passenger seat. He and Sue stare silently out at the wreckage, illuminated by the headlights.

STEVE
...We lost.

SUE
Let's go.

Steve stares a moment longer. Sue turns the key... the truck is dead. Sue leans back and sighs.

Suddenly Steve reaches over and turns the key again... and one more time holding the key through a horrible sound. The truck is dead.

SUE
Stop.

He doesn't let go.

SUE
Steve! Stop!

Steve begins turning the key over and over furiously. Then he begins punching the steering wheel, until finally... he screams and jumps out of the truck.

STEVE
FUUUUUUUUUUCK!!!

He begins kicking the truck over and over until he's exhausted. He just stands in the middle of the street in the dim glow of the headlights. Sue stares at him from inside. She says nothing.

Suddenly headlights come up on Steve standing in the rain getting soaked. He looks over. A car stops in front of him and the window rolls down to reveal... Frank.

FRANK

Nice day!

74

INT. FRANK YATES' HOUSE -- LATE DAY

74

Sue and Steve sit at the kitchen table with Frank and his wife Arlene. They're finishing a warm and hearty meal -- turkey, potatoes, salad, homemade cranberry sauce, carrot cake. The red wine has been flowing, too... most of it going to Steve. He seems a bit dark.

SUE

God! That was so good.

STEVE

Really nice. Thank you.

ARLENE

You're more than welcome.

SUE

I have to get the recipe for those potatoes, Arlene.

ARLENE

Of course! You cook, Sue?

SUE

I do. My son and I-- well, I make him help me.

Sue pulls out her iPhone and shows her a picture.

SUE

He used to stand on a chair next to me, but now he's so tall. He likes cutting things, vegetables and all that. That's how I get him to talk - stand side by side, you know, working on something.

Steve's eating the last of the carrot cake.

ARLENE

So your husband watches him while you're traveling for work?

SUE

My ex-husband watches him, yes, while I agonize.

ARLENE

(getting up, clearing dishes)

Divorce is a monster. You just have to work double-hard, I imagine. Frank's father died when he was only 8. His mother always talked about the clarity of purpose. How helpful that was. There's just you and the kid... nothing else. You know exactly what you have to do every day.

Sue's eyes reflect absolute recognition. Frank hasn't taken his eyes off Steve... who is fairly drunk already. As Frank talks we begin to push in on Steve.

FRANK

What about you Steve? Where did you say you were from? Iowa?

STEVE

Eldridge.

ARLENE

(laughs)

Oh yeah? Any family still up there?

STEVE

... no.

FRANK

Wait a minute did you say Eldridge? Didn't they have a-- a plant up there?

STEVE

Caterpillar plant.

Steve nods. He's in his own world.

FRANK

Yeah, that's right. Had a friend from Boeing who was from there. I remember that. Wasn't pretty.

STEVE
 When they closed it, that was
 it.... The town was hollowed out.

Sue looks at Steve. If she's heard this information before,
 it's never revealed Steve in quite the same way.

FRANK
 What, and no pretty lady to hand
 out free money and save you?

Sue smiles... a half smile. Steve doesn't respond.

SUE
 Yeah, Steve, and what if there had
 been?

STEVE
 (Quiet)
 I'd move so fuckin' fast.

Pause.

STEVE
 I'd take that money and leave...
 (Pointed) Just leave.

The room is silenced. After a beat.

FRANK
 (Gently)
 ... And where would we all go?

This lands on Steve. He says nothing. The room says
 nothing. Suddenly Steve excuses himself and walks out onto
 the back deck. The other three just remain seated.

75

EXT. FRANK YATES' PORCH (MOMENTS LATER) - LATE DAY

75

Steve stands looking over the rail of the porch onto the
 expansive land behind Frank's house. In the dwindling light
 it is not only beautiful... it's close to perfect. After a
 long moment Frank exits the house carrying 2 cups of coffee.
 Steve is staring intently at something. As Frank joins
 Steve, we finally get to see what he's looking at... It's a
 horse, perfectly proportioned but very small, standing out by
 Frank's barn.

FRANK
 Miniature horse.

STEVE

Oh my God, we thought we were losing our minds. We kept seeing them from a distance, and couldn't tell -- it was altering our whole sense of perspective.

The horse grazes on a bale of hay. A dog sits nearby.

FRANK

A lot us breed them. They eat like rhinos. Some people think they're some kind of abomination. Big industry up here.

STEVE

What do they get for 'em?

FRANK

Not enough, Steve.

Steve finally smiles. Frank smiles with him.

FRANK

You're a good man, Steve.

Steve looks over. Frank continues looking out.

FRANK

You have so many of the qualities we need more of these days.

Steve doesn't know what to say.

FRANK

I just wish you weren't doing this.

This hits Steve like a brick. He looks at Frank, perhaps to say something... but is completely disarmed.

FRANK

You know, I used to work up at some stables just north of here. They used to have a poker game every Friday night, the farm hands and the stable boys. One of the favorite stories in town was the night I took 50 dollars from the owner, Russ Clayborn. I had raised him 20 dollars. And scared him into folding a full house. That was 2 weeks pay!

(MORE)

FRANK (CONT'D)

I was 18 years old and I ran all the way home holding three months of our mortgage. I was so damn proud. (Frank chuckles. Steve smiles.) I ran into the house, threw the money on the kitchen table and told my mom I bet everything on a pair of 3's and won.

Beat.

FRANK

She took one look at the money... and kicked me out of the house. Had to stay at my aunt's for a week... When I asked her why she just said "You could have lost".

Beat. Steve looks over at Frank, but says nothing.

FRANK

In those days it was harder to find a man that was willing to bet it all.

Beat.

FRANK

We have nothing left to sell and we can't afford to buy anything. You came here to help us. Offer us money... All we had to do to get it was be willing to scorch the earth under our feet.

Beat. Neither man says anything.

FRANK

Don't get me wrong, Steve, I'm not better than my neighbors -- hell, I need the money too.

Beat.

FRANK

(Chuckles)

I guess I'm just lucky... lucky to be old enough to have a shot at dying with my dignity.

Beat. Frank heads inside. Turns at the door.

FRANK

Let me know when you're ready to
head back.

We hold on Steve's face. Frank walks to the door. He
suddenly stops... and without turning back:

FRANK

I'm so worried for us, Steve...

75A INT. MOTEL LOBBY - NIGHT

75A

Steve and Sue walk in the front door. Steve is still in a haze.

SUE

Get some sleep, Steve.

She walks off. Steve turns to a make shift coffee maker and pours himself a cup. Suddenly the woman behind reception says.

WOMAN

Excuse me. Excuse me, sir?

Steve doesn't respond.

WOMAN

Steve?

Steve turns... but says nothing.

WOMAN

There's a package here for you.

Steve walks up and gets it. It is a poster canister package with GLOBAL return address sticker in the corner. Instead of an address it just says his name.

STEVE

Thank you.

75AA INT. MOTEL - STEVE'S ROOM - NIGHT

75AA

We are close on Steve as he opens the package on his bed. He pulls out the contents and we immediately see a note written in bold that says URGENT!!!: FROM RESEARCH DEPARTMENT. SUBJECT: DUSTIN NOBLE. Underneath the note is paperwork of an insurance claim and other statistics. All of which Steve breezes through until he gets to... a large photo. We immediately recognize something familiar... the dead cows. As Steve looks harder we see the building behind the cows and recognize it as the same building in the background of Dustin's leaflets. But this photo is from a different angle and much wider, now showing the surrounding farm and land rather than just the cows and the barn behind it. Red circles are around objects in the background. After taking it all in and processing as fast as he can...

STEVE

Holy shit!

Steve jumps off the bed and runs out of frame with the poster.

76 INT. MOTEL - HALLWAY - NIGHT 76

Steve thunders down the hallway.

77 INT. MOTEL - RANDOM HOTEL ROOM DOOR - NIGHT 77

Steve is frantically banging on a door. He waits a beat, then pounds again. After a moment the door opens to reveal... Sue. Steve bursts into the room.

STEVE

We got him. We GOT him!

SUE

Don't ever do that again.

STEVE

His whole sob story is bullshit!!
I knew it! It was the only way he
could beat us!

Steve throws some paperwork on the bed and begins to open a poster.

SUE

What are you talking about? What
is that?

STEVE

Research ran a check! They found
this! He lied! It's some bullshit
claim that has nothing to do with
us!

SUE

Why, what does it say??

Sue reaches for the paperwork on the bed, but just then Steve fully unveils the poster.

STEVE

Sue!... What is this?

SUE

It's the photo of his farm.

STEVE

And where is this farm?

SUE
What?

STEVE
Where is this farm?

SUE
Nebraska.

STEVE
And what's this?

Steve points to something in the background of the photo.
Sue looks at it.

SUE
A silo.

STEVE
... Look closer.

Sue squints... then:

SUE
... Holy shit.

Steve smiles HUGE!

STEVE
THAT is a fuckin' lighthouse!

SUE
Holy Shit.

STEVE
Now geography was never my strong
suit, but I'm pretty sure there are
no oceans in Nebraska.

SUE
... He made the whole thing up.

STEVE
And when this town finds out? That
he lied? That he manipulated these
people to get their vote? They're
gonna have fucking FIELD day with
this guy.

Sue looks at Steve.

SUE
We win.

STEVE
... We win.

77A INT. MOTEL - HALLWAY

77A

Sue and Steve bang on a door. No response.

STEVE
Dustin!

They both bang again.

STEVE
Gotta talk to ya' man!

No response.

INT. RICHARD'S OFFICE

Richards sits in his low lit office. The phone rings. After a moment he picks it up.

RICHARDS
Hello?... Hey, Steve... What??...
Jesus!!...

EXT. ALICE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Steve knocks on a door. He is holding the poster. After a moment, Alice opens. She can see something is wrong. There's a long pause as they stare at each other.

STEVE
Dustin's a liar...

Steve hands her the poster. She begins to look at it.

STEVE (CONT'D)
He lied about everything.

ALICE
What are you talking about?

He points to the lighthouse. He knows she'll get it.

STEVE
I just came from Richards'. The whole town will know by morning. But I wanted you to hear it from me.

She looks up at Steve.

STEVE (CONT'D)
You deserve someone who tells the truth.

ALICE
Why did you come here, Steve?

STEVE
I told you... I'm not a bad guy.
Good night, Alice.

He turns and begins to walk. Suddenly her turns.

STEVE (CONT'D)
Hey, if I HAD asked you out--

ALICE
-- I would've said yes.

Pause. Steve finally smiles.

ALICE (CONT'D)
Good night, Steve.

Smiling, she shuts the door. Off Steve's look:

78 EXT. MOTEL PARKING LOT - NIGHT

78

Steve walks up the street to the parking lot. He is deep in thought. Suddenly, we hear a door close. Steve looks up to see... Dustin. They stare at each other, frozen for a moment.

STEVE
What you did is going to hurt a lot of people.

Dustin walks to the car without speaking.

STEVE (CONT'D)
What were you thinking, man? I mean, how does somebody do that? You base your entire case against us on a lie?

DUSTIN
Look, I just talked to Richards.
Just let me leave.

STEVE

Did you not think we were gonna find out? I mean, Jesus. You just guaranteed us the win.

DUSTIN

You're gonna lose, Steve.

STEVE

What?

DUSTIN

It might not be Athena who does it, but one of these days, you'll lose. I just hope I'm there to see it!

STEVE

Well, I can guarantee it's not gonna be Athena. Do you have any idea how bad this is? Athena's done. It's over for you.

DUSTIN

What else was I supposed to do, Steve? This isn't a fair fight. Jesus Christ, I go around doing what? Handing out leaflets and posters? I'm out there on my own! I've got nothing man! This vote meant everything! I had too!

STEVE

No. You didn't have to. You fucked up.

DUSTIN

Then what else am I supposed to do? You tell me, Steve. In a world where nobody cares. Where a company like yours can do that in Lafayette, Louisiana. Or here in Mckinley. Or the next place you go. Because you know it's gonna happen again and again. So you tell me, Steve, What am I supposed to do?

Long Pause.

STEVE

I never said this farm was in Lafayette, Louisiana...

DUSTIN
What?... What are you talking
about???

STEVE
I never told you this happened in
Lafayette, Louisiana. How could
you know that?

DUSTIN
Those people needed my help, Steve.
They called ME!

STEVE
No, they didn't. You said yourself
we're too clever. We make sure in
all that fine print that they're
never allowed to call anyone.
Definitely not an environmentalist.

Pause.

DUSTIN
Ok, Steve...

STEVE
Dustin, how did you know where this
farm was?

Pause. Dustin looks off.

STEVE (CONT'D)
Jesus Christ, where did you even
get these pictures for your
posters.

DUSTIN
Steve.

STEVE
Jesus Christ, Dustin-- why are you
here?

Long beat.

DUSTIN
Fuck!... That was stupid. I
should've just gotten in the car.

Beat.

DUSTIN
We were never gonna let them vote.

Steve is completely taken aback. After a long moment... It hits him.

STEVE

... You're with Global. Jesus Christ, you're with global.

DUSTIN

Did you really think a they were going to leave something like this in your hands? After you let them bring it to a vote? Come on, companies like Global don't rely on anyone. That's how they win. They win by controlling every outcome. They do that by playing both sides...

STEVE

But I've been--

DUSTIN

What?... What did you do, Steve? What is it you think you did? I did everything. All this is me. Athena is me. This story is me. Getting you the package to take to the politician... is me. See, you've only done what I've allowed (expected) (Supposed to) (wanted) (Knew you) (predicted) you to do... And you did your job. It worked. It's done. We win.

Beat. Steve says nothing.

Steve looks up.

STEVE

So, this farm--

DUSTIN

Oh come on Steve, stay with me. This farm doesn't matter. They've already dealt with this. That's done.

STEVE

They said it was a false claim.

DUSTIN

Steve.

STEVE

But, this happened... this happened.

DUSTIN

Of course it happened... And now, let me give you a bit of advice... you're gonna want to stop asking questions. You're at the big kids table.

Beat. Dustin looks into Steve's eyes.

DUSTIN (CONT'D)

You're a good choice for this, Steve. You'll do a good job. Good luck in New York.

Dustin walks to the truck and opens the door. He starts the car and in a moment he's gone.

Steve just stands alone in the parking lot, devastated... still holding the poster.

After a moment he turns to the door of the motel. Standing behind the screen door... is Sue.

SUE

Funny. Smart.

79A INT. ROB'S STORE - AFTERNOON

79A

Sue is walks up to the counter with a pack of gum. Rob looks up and smiles.

ROB
That's it?

SUE
That's it.

ROB
Sorry, I can't make the vote.

SUE
 (Knowingly)
 I think we'll be ok.

As Rob rings her up:

ROB
 (Smiling)
 I've got you figured out.

SUE
 Oh yeah?

ROB
 You don't really care about any of
 this. You only want to get home to
 your kid... And I think that's
 terrific.

This reaches Sue more than she'll ever show. Rob looks at her and smiles.

ROB
 Well, that's that.

SUE
 That's that.

They both know this was their goodbye. Sue turns and leaves.

79B INT. HIGH SCHOOL - AFTERNOON

79B

We see a mirror. One again, Steve pops up into the frame splashing water on his face. We widen out to reveal... he is in a high school bathroom. He looks at himself in the mirror. We can hear the rumblings of a large group of people in the background. We hold on Steve. The sounds get louder as we cut to:

80 INT. HIGH SCHOOL GYMNASIUM - AFTERNOON

80

In the stands, once again, a crowd is gathered... much larger than the first time. Once again many of them are holding lemonades. Steve enters through the door holding the taped together poster. He looks out to center court where Richards is getting ready to begin.

RICHARDS
 Ok, so if everyone can take their
 seats please? We have a lot to get
 to today.

Steve seems tense... nervous. Suddenly:

VOICE
Lemonade?

Steve turns to see, just a few feet away from him is... the lemonade girl.

STEVE
Is it good?

GIRL
Really good.

Steve looks and sees she has set up right in between the door and the stands.

STEVE
You got a good spot here.

GIRL
I know.

The girl smiles. Steve smiles back and picks up a cup. He takes a sip... tasting it for the first time.

STEVE
... Wow.

GIRL
I know.

She smiles. He places a dollar on the table and picks up the poster, readying himself. We suddenly hear the sound of coins.

GIRL
Mister?

Steve turns.

GIRL
You forgot your change.

STEVE
Oh, no, no. That's for you!

The girl is confused... and then puts her arm out holding the change.

GIRL
The sign says it's only twenty five cents. So... it's only twenty five cents.

This honesty and purity hits Steve... he reaches his hand out and takes the change. Looking down at her looking at him...

STEVE

... Really good.

81 INT. GYMNASIUM - AFTERNOON

81

A man comes up and stands next to Richards. He indicates the basketball team at the other door, now in uniform.

RICHARDS

(To the coach)

I know, I know. We're just gonna be a few more minutes.

(Back to the crowd)

Now before we get to the vote, Steve Butler just wanted to say a few words.

Steve arrives at center court and looks out to the bleachers. Sue sits in the front row. Steve looks around and takes some of the familiar faces he has come to know; Drew, Jeff, Claire, Arlene, Frank, etc. He lands on Alice. She looks back at him. He gives her a small smile.

Steve holds up the poster.

He looks out at the crowd. After a long pause:

STEVE

I know there's been a lot of talk about this poster. So I figured I'd just show you all.

He shows them.

STEVE (CONT'D)

I was looking at this picture for a while last night. A long while... But, I found myself staring at this barn. The wood on the side is buckling. Probably from all the salt water in the air. The paint's chipping and the flag is fading. It reminded me of my grandfather's barn... That barn was the bane of my existence... it was immaculate. It seemed like every other summer we were out painting that thing. Hours and hours... in all that heat. And I remember asking him why. Why do we have to do this? And he'd just look at me and say "It's our barn. Who else is going to do it?"

STEVE (CONT'D)

I always thought he was crazy... And stubborn... and Proud.

Pause. Steve looks to Alice.

STEVE (CONT'D)

But I think he was just trying to teach me how to take care of something.

Beat.

STEVE (CONT'D)

You all know Dustin lied... That he made up a story to get you to vote the way he wanted you to and in the end... that's exactly what he did. Dustin isn't an environmentalist. Dustin works for Global. Global couldn't afford an environmental presence... so they created their own.

(MORE)

STEVE (CONT'D)

They wanted to make the decision for you... and they were betting that you'd let them.

Beat.

STEVE (CONT'D)

They were doing all this to protect themselves. Because this isn't Dustin's farm... but it did happen. This is a Global farm. Now, I'm not saying this would happen here. But they know the only reason we're all in this room... is to ask... what if it did.

Beat.

STEVE (CONT'D)

I don't know what the answer is anymore... But at this point? Where we are? We're betting a lot more than we think. Everything we have-- everything we are is on the table now... And it's just not ours to lose.

STEVE (CONT'D)

This is still our barn. No matter what they do... no matter what they think... it's still our barn... that'll never change.

Steve just stands. No one says anything. Sue just stares at him. After a moment, he sees the players in the doorway.

STEVE (CONT'D)

... Go Pioneers.

Steve heads for the door, a man with purpose.

Sue leans on the front end of the Bronco. Suddenly she looks over to see... Steve walking out of the gymnasium. She's finishing up a phone call.

SUE
... I understand.

She doesn't even look at Steve as he walks up to the Bronco. She hangs up.

STEVE
Was that them?

SUE
Yes... You're definitely fired.

STEVE
And you?

SUE
... They want to see me in the city tomorrow...

Steve smiles. Sue walks around the car and gets in. Steve comes around to the passenger side door.

STEVE
Congratulations.

Beat. Sue is processing all of this at once.

SUE
Can I give you a lift somewhere?

STEVE
C'mon, Sue.

Beat. She looks up at him.

STEVE
It's open mic night!

Sue smiles. Then her smile fades. She pauses and looks forward...

SUE
It's just a job...

She starts the car. Looks back at him.

SUE
... Oh, for the love of God, at least get some new boots.

Steve smiles.

STEVE
... Not a chance.

She drives off.

Steve just stands and watches the car drive away... Then take a turn and disappear.

He is now alone. Quietly we begin to hear music...

Steve finally turns and walks across the street. As we follow him we finally see... Buddy's. The music begins to build.

Steve looks to the bar and barely, but enough, we can see a sign... OPEN MIC NIGHT.

The camera widens... as Steve enters the bar. And as the camera continues to rise we see ... for the first time... a shot of this main street... the first full picture of this town.

WE HARD CUT TO
BLACK:

THE END