

DUST VALLEY

Pilot

Written by

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A retro **MICROWAVE** hums its familiar hum, but where the timer beep would sound, the hum stops.

The microwave's light softens to a pitch black. In the silence, its door opens.

INT. LODGE - MAIN HALL - NIGHT

A mid-century modern ski lodge. Past a fireplace's chain mail curtain, an iron poker jabs a smoldering fire.

JAMES, 17, pokes the embers in aimless patterns, drawing a picture out of vexed boredom. Or loneliness, perhaps. A series of dark lumps behind him occupies various couches.

A whimper sounds in the darkness.

Another whimper. James glares back.

A hound kicks in its sleep, dreaming. Meet sweet LUCY.

James surveys the surrounding lumps beside Lucy, sleeping bodies, kids his age. He doesn't look kindly on them --

A thrashed bar cart nearby, mixed with James' sobriety, maybe that has to do with it.

-- He stands over them, charged. Like he might *actually* do something.

He settles to give Lucy a pet. Eyes open, Lucy watches James as he walks away.

INT. UNKNOWN ROOM - NIGHT

Furnished, comfortable, impersonal. A well-lit, yet vacant room.

A pitter-patter approaches, soft footsteps perhaps. As it nears, the sliver beneath the door remains clear.

The pitter-patter stops. Here.

A *click* and, across the room, a window slides open...then closed and latches locked.

Two nail-polished hands flip a record player's record, place its arm down, and Frankie Valli's 1967 hit "Can't Take My Eyes off You" begins.

We catch only glimpses of a GIRL as she slips her shoes off, drops her headband, and raises her hands. *Dancing*.

EXT. LODGE - NIGHT

The back of the charming multistory lodge. Quiet hours.

James considers a pack of Lucky Strikes by the pool, steam coming off its surface from the chilly air. Snow all around.

His second to last cigarette, James lights up.

As he smokes, he gazes ahead and dons a strange look. Squinting, his anger reduces to confusion.

INTERCUT GIRL/JAMES

As the girl's silhouette dances, new touches illuminate --

-- A lip gloss tube on a nightstand.

-- A stream of LIP GLOSS KISSES on a mirror.

-- Scribbled-on stationary about the floor and leading to --

A notepad sits on the desk, its "Valley Lodge" logo kissed and page crowded with incoherent notes at a glance -- Minus four legible numbers at the beginning of a line, '11:56'.

JAMES watches what looks like a DOLLHOUSE across the way, the house being mostly window from his view.

Lights on in some of the dollhouse's rooms, we see that the girl we've been catching glimpses of isn't in the dollhouse, isn't who or what James is watching.

But as James continues to watch, he just looks more and more perplexed, disturbed even.

We HEAR the MUSIC STOP -- Fastidious scratching from pen to paper replaces it.

James turns his head, almost like he hears it with us.

By the window, **THE GIRL** scrawls on the notepad in the dark:

"12:03 - James is in tonight, he and friends stayed over in the wake...wearing my favorite jacket of his, again...maybe he knows! Does he know? (p.s. 2nd night...)".

The girl peers outside as she writes...and down below --

James is being watched.

With James' head turned towards the lodge, and *this* window in his peripheral, the girl moves out of view.

The curtain sways in the breeze created by her movement --

James clocks the movement, looks directly up at the window. He puts his cigarette out looking, still, straight up here.

JAMES hesitantly pockets his hardly-used Lucky.

He glances in at the lodge's still-present sleeping bodies, the comfort of them, then elsewhere. A thought come to mind.

A smirk creeps onto his face.

INT. WOODSHED - NIGHT

A line of axes, James takes one off the wall. Feels its grip.

INT. LODGE - MAIN HALL - NIGHT

Axe dangling from James' grasp, Lucy perks up. James puts a finger to his lips, *quiet*. Lucy quietly whines to herself.

INT. LODGE - CORRIDOR - NIGHT

James leans the axe beneath a room's copper-painted plaque, #15, as he takes a master key and puts it in the lock.

INT. LODGE - ROOM #15 - NIGHT

Dark. Silent. James steps inside. Axe in one hand, he flicks the light on with his other to reveal the familiar room.

Except, nothing is out of the ordinary here:

-- Zero stationary on the floor and desk.

-- The lip gloss tube absent.

-- The mirror wiped clean.

James walks the room, disillusioned...until he happens upon the record player and smiles -- it's still spinning.

He sets the arm down. As the track resumes, James checks --

Behind the doors...under the bed...inside the closet.

-- Turning up nothing each time.

James stops at the desk, giving the room one last cursory glance, when he eyes the CURTAINS. He quietly sets his axe on the desk, its blade touching a section of the left curtain.

He YANKS the right curtain!

Revealing -- The *closed* window. He fingers the latch, locked.

James drags his axe off the desk and turns for the door, when the curtain flutters from his axe's removal and --

A large RUFFLE illuminates.

James lifts his axe, practices swinging it into the ruffle --

-- In one swift motion, James LODGES THE AXE right beside it.

He peels back the curtain's other side, pausing.

With a breath, James rips the curtain back. No one present.

INT. LODGE - MAIN HALL - NIGHT

Comforting her, a hand pets the nervous Lucy on the couch, then kisses her forehead.

Leaves a *LIP GLOSS STAIN*.

TITLE CARD:

"SAINT VALENTINE'S DAY, 1967"

INT. MALT SHOPPE - MORNING

Checkerboard floors and pine-shaded stools and booths, the shoppe glimmers cream, green, and morning sun.

A RED SHEET of CANDY dazzles a dozen colors as BLACK DUST sifts over it -- *a light show*.

The sheet stretches and stretches and -- a hole ruptures in its middle. The sheet returns to its original red.

TITLE CARD:

"DOLL HOUSE"

INT. DOLLHOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Wall-to-wall, framed posters of choice bands refine the space: Cream, Simon & Garfunkel, The Mamas & The Papas, etc.

A LITTLE GIRL patiently sits criss-crossed on the floor, playing with three Barbies as her FATHER braids her hair.

Her gaze intent, she stares down at the pearly shag carpet between her dolls as she 'plays'. Meet --

KELLY C., 11. Plain and sweet in appearance, a reckless intensity not far beneath.

Many a cat around, MOTHER on the landline twirls the phone cord as she scoops Metrecal meal replacement into a blender.

FATHER
Donna left yet?

Father pats Kelly's shoulder, her braid complete, as Mother turns the blender on and puts her free hand up, 'what?'.

As Kelly frolics through the **HALL**, a TEENAGE GIRL rushes past and pulls on Kelly's braid. Never too late for mischief.

INT. DOLLHOUSE - KELLY'S ROOM - MORNING

"Sugar and spice and everything nice; that's what little girls are made of" -wallpaper lines the dresser's drawers.

Kelly takes multiple layers of clothing from each drawer. She glances back at the sliver beneath her door --

Clear, Kelly sneaks something from her closet.

As she stuffs whatever she's sneaked into her backpack, we linger on the THREE BARBIES on the floor:

-- Gashes in their plastic skin.

-- Lead-markings from pencil stabbings.

-- One of their heads caved in.

From her window view, Kelly meets up with two friends on the street corner. They exchange lollipops, then embark.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - MORNING

Neck-high lockers separate the room into a series of rows; groups of girls pass through them on their way out.

The teenage girl we just briefly met enters from a back room, folded jersey in her clutch, #19. This is --

DONNA C., 17.

In a culture of hip vs. square, she's on the outskirts of the latter. Not rebellious enough to fully make the shift, something might just make it for her.

Inside her locker, Donna trades her jersey for a RED ENVELOPE with her name on it.

As Donna tears open the envelope and reads its letter --

Two hands creep over the top of her locker, slithering towards her. They get to the edge and --

CLANG! Slam the locker shut. Donna startles.

SHARON

We're meeting Roy at the Shoppe.
You ready?

SHARON R., 17 -- An undone quality about her, a girl loaded with self-assurances and a bit of the 'rough-and-tumble' rock & roll counterculture -- towers over the lockers via a bench.

Sharon sticks her tongue out, candy conversation heart on it:

The words shift from "sweet heart" to "screw you" as a BOB-HAIRED GIRL, 17, passes by in the background.

Sharon offers Donna a box of the candy hearts as Donna sets the letter atop the locker for Sharon to see.

SHARON (CONT'D)

No. God, what happened to good old-fashioned hobbies?

Donna beams at a large blurb of cursive in the letter.

DONNA

'Dear Donna' --

SHARON

Because the semantics of your
vanity we really should clear up.

DONNA

You're telling me someone sends you
an anonymous love letter you don't
read it?

SHARON

I'm telling you someone sends you
three, you no longer indulge
 it...let alone surrender your shame
 for the sycophantic discrepancies
 of you they etch in.

Donna nods obsequiously, *condescendingly*. Sharon nods back.

DONNA

Indulge me. You catch someone
 staring at you. What's your first
 impulse? Go.

SHARON

Make sure I don't stare back?

Rat-a-tat, Donna and Sharon serve each other. Game-like.

DONNA

Why, would that ruin the fantasy?
 Second?

SHARON

Fix my hair, straighten my posture?
 Is my participation grounds enough
 for my gold star now?

DONNA

But why not just let it all go to
 hell? What's stopping you?

SHARON

My dignity?

DONNA

Really? I think it's your vanity.

SHARON

I think you mean pride.

DONNA

(shakes her head, 'no')
 Because, my guess, just like you
 wouldn't want someone seeing you at
 your worst, you probably would,
 however, want them seeing you at
 your best.

Sharon grimaces, disgusted by Donna's use of the cliché.

SHARON

I can't believe you just said that.
Fifty points gone, lost, down the
drain. 'Fact, I should get a gold
star just for having to hear that.

DONNA

Ask me what's wrong with that.

Per Sharon's silence, Donna plays charades: *"two words"*.

SHARON

Your point?

DONNA

Just that while you can say you
think it immodest, wrong, or vain
to enjoy being the object of
someone's desires, you, Sharon, can
not say you'd do anything to change
it when given the chance. Gold
star, please?

SHARON

Because I won't muss my hair?

DONNA

Because voyeur to your own
observation and you act like you
don't enjoy it. Now read my note.

Sharon scoffs at Donna's reduction of her, taking offense.
She skims the letter, then lowers it.

SHARON

You're kidding.

Signed, the letter reads: *"Let's meet. 5:30. The lodge."*

DONNA

I got an address.

Sharon lingers on the letter as Donna folds it back into its
envelope, a question on her lips (*"you're not going?"*).

Donna smirks (*"no"*).

SHARON

And how would you even know where
to go? Lodge is massive.

DONNA
Follow my heart?
(off her scoff)
Hey!

Donna elbows Sharon in the side.

Sharon returns the jab, less playfully than her counterpart, her cheer stilted since Donna's reduction of her.

Donna drops the envelope into a trash as the duo passes by.

INT. MALT SHOPPE - DAY

Old-school in everything sans neon signage ("*The Malt Shoppe*" and "*Malt & Melt*" menu), the shoppe's only oddity --

-- Rows and rows of JARS filled with wondrous COLORS. Dusts.

Donna and Sharon eye the back of a GUY at the counter --

ROY, 17. The presence of a swaggering jock, sans varsity jacket, and *if only* when he's not the third pea to this pod.

The girls share mischievous smiles, when Roy turns.

ROY
Happy Valentine's Day...what are
you guys doing?

Roy notes the girls' hands, inches from his gelled hair and their mischief. Donna deflects, notes the fries before Roy.

DONNA
You didn't wait for us? When did
you get here?

Roy goes to explain --

SHARON
You didn't wait for us??

DONNA
And what are we doing at the
counter? Should we get our regular?

And before Roy can make his protests, the girls are up.

In a **CORNER BOOTH**, the trio sits with a tray of, what were once Roy's and are now communal, fries.

DONNA (CONT'D)
It's not like that.

SHARON

I'm pretty sure it's like that.

A string between his fingers, Roy weaves a web with it over his biology homework. Bystander to the conversation.

A neglected NEWSPAPER to his side, its front page a picture:

A snowy slope's base, taped off. A clash of uniforms, police and ranger. Smoke in the sky characteristic of an explosion. Direct quotes litter its story, *"artillery is precious; we don't take it lightly"*, etc.

DONNA

Roy, you have to settle something for us. If someone sent you a Valentine and you didn't know who it was from but had the chance to find out, would you not be the least bit curious to go and see?

SHARON

No, that's not fair. What are the chances Roy can't handle himself and it's some Kemper, Gein, Bates -psychopath --

Between his weaves, Roy manipulates the web's center to illuminate specific words in his homework. The first -- 'my'.

DONNA

'Handle himself'? 'Handle'? You don't think I can handle myself??

The next words illuminate within Roy's web: 'life', 'is'.

SHARON

No, it's just the way you do. But let's say, Roy, someone sends you an anonymous letter with a time and place and you don't know it at the time but they're insane, do you go?

Roy lowers his web, incidentally ending his word game early.

ROY

I think I can handle myself.

SHARON

And somehow, that's not the question. Do you go?

Roy takes a beat to consider. Sharon rolls her eyes.

SHARON (CONT'D)
Your two's sense of self-
preservation is deafening.

Donna abruptly rises, lifts the fries in question: *refill?*

Roy notes the fries, plenty there, as Donna heads to the counter without so much as a response.

The bob-haired girl (seen in the lockers) passes their booth.

COUNTER

Donna waits for her fries.

A jar of GLEAMING RED CANDIES to Donna's side, "2 Cents Each" label affixed, something about the jar holds her attention.

Donna glances around.

She slips a handful from the jar, pockets them.

The fry refill comes back. Donna smiles her thanks.

CORNER BOOTH

Roy watches the bob-haired girl at the register, ordering. Beside her, James argues at the counter trying to keep calm.

JAMES (O.S.)
What do you mean you don't have
that either? It's a Malt Shoppe. A
malt -- how do you not have malt?

Roy opens his mouth as if to ask about the bob-haired girl, but before he can, Sharon shifts to his homework and drones.

Roy shifts his attention --

ACROSS THE SHOPPE

MATCHING BOWS in their hair, Kelly, feisty JO X., and nervous MARY S., all 11, sit at the counter and talk in whispers.

KELLY
But that's not how they do it in
the movies. It's not a bloodfest!

MARY
Kelly! Someone could hear you!

KELLY

Listen, Jo, have you ever seen a western?

(off Jo's pause)

Like with the *pow pow* and the boots with the spinny things --

JO

-- I know what a western is.

Kelly then waits for a response: Jo shakes her understanding, no; Mary timidly nods hers, yes.

MARY

Well, everybody dies. Well, not everyone, but the good guys do.

JO

The good guys don't die.

Mary and Kelly vehemently nod.

KELLY

But that's not the point. The point is when people die in those pictures, they don't actually die in real life.

MARY

That's what we're talking about?

JO

Wait, how have either of you seen any westerns? Your parents let you?

Mary gulps. Kelly smiles. The answer: no, their parents do not let them. Jo pouts, envious.

KELLY

*But Jo...*today? It's kind of like we'll star in our very own.

Mary nods encouragement.

JO

Yeah? In what desert? We live in the mountains.

KELLY

Exactly. We have something they don't.

Kelly points to the sole mountain in view from the shoppe. The girls can't help but exchange mischievous smiles.

Mary glances down, tucks her hands beneath her seat.

MARY

But are we sure it's a good idea? I
mean, what if I just told my mom --

Kelly and Jo shush Mary. The girls lean in, quiet:

KELLY

Promise we won't tell anyone.
Promise.

It's not a question. Three pinkies hit the table.

KELLY (CONT'D)

(to Jo)

You're up.

Jo gets off her chair, crawls across the shoppe's floor to her mark -- a booth with textbooks galore and some customer absorbed in them -- and crawls underneath.

Kelly and Mary count their change and drop it on the counter.

Kelly's extra change in hand, she unzips her stuffed backpack and drops it inside --

A pair of SKI GOGGLES drops and dangles out from Kelly's bag.

Kelly looks up to see Roy, watching --

Kelly smiles, oops, lifts her finger, and draws a line across her neck -- Roy plays along, twitches his neck and lets his head fall to the side. *Dead silent.*

SHARON

...Roy?

Sharon glances up at Roy from his homework. His attention elsewhere, she waits for it.

The shoppe bell chimes.

Waiting in vain, Sharon tries Roy's soda, previously off limits, then glances the bob-haired girl in a booth --

Only to find, she's already looking at Sharon.

The bob-haired girl sends her sympathies Sharon's way, apparently aware of her current neglect. *Apparently, nice.*

Donna returns.

DONNA

So I think I'm gonna get outta
here, see a movie, go for a ride,
run some errands...

Roy takes his soda back, with it Sharon's attention.

ROY

You don't have a car.

SHARON

But dangerous optimism...

DONNA

Oh, shush. You shouldn't assume the
lodge is the only place I have to
go. Plus, for your information, I
already threw the danged letter
out.

ROY

(to Sharon)

A stab to her ego, you think?

SHARON

Donna, if you can't remember two
little details as simple as a time
and place, we've got bigger fish.

DONNA

(on her way out)

...No fish!

Sharon glosses over Donna, sending air kisses, pointedly onto Roy.

ROY

...What?

Sharon dismisses Roy. Meanwhile, eyes on Sharon, the bob-haired girl waves down a waitress.

EXT. MALT SHOPPE - DAY

On his way back in, James takes a beat to smoke. Twelve cigarettes in his pack, he removes one as Donna exits.

DONNA

James. Are you leaving?

James gives Donna a curt glance, flickering to her bumpy (candy-filled) pockets; Donna removes her hands from them.

JAMES
...No. But Larry is. He could
probably give you a ride.

James nods to the parking lot.

LARRY W., 17 -- cocky, charming, and disarming for the fact
his presence is more cerebral sigma than it is, say, alpha --
hums to himself by his 64' yellow Ford Thunderbird.

The shoppe door opens with James' exit.

LARRY
Where you headed?

DONNA
The lodge.

LARRY
...Want a ride?

Larry opens the passenger door. Donna does a mini curtsy.

BEGIN MONTAGE:

INT. LODGE - DRESSING ROOM - DAY

Kelly, Mary, and Jo sit on a bench, all leaning down as they
simultaneously latch different buckles on their ski boots.

EXT. SILVER SLOPE - DAY

The three girls trudge up to the GONDOLA LIFT PLATFORM.

THROUGH BINOCULARS

From somewhere up the slope, and from a distance, someone
spies -- Mary, Kelly, and Jo as they enter a gondola.

Kelly turns and looks straight at the lens, then enters.

INT. GONDOLA - DAY

This one seats four. Mary watches her skis shake and wobble
outside on the rack as Kelly and Jo chatter indistinctly.

Mary's fingernails dig into either side of her seat.

BAROMETER

A BAROMETER on the wall, its measure abruptly PLUNGES.

END MONTAGE.**EXT. PARK HOUSING NEIGHBORHOOD - DAWN**

Stormy. Park Service Housing: This is an enclave of cabins, all similar builds with the main difference being in size.

INT. CABIN - DAWN

A two-room living situation, currently lit by a window's clear shot of the next door neighbor's much-larger, lit-up living room, but otherwise dark. Music echoes nearby.

KIT REES, 36 --

Thoughtful. A natural ease in his bearing that, when in the comfort of solitude, translates to self-assurance...when in the company of others, can make him seem like an odd-ball.

-- enters, coffee in tow. He stops and scowls --

Through the window, a COUPLE DANCES into view, doing the swim, doing the twist, *having fun*. The red beams of a clock's reflection turn from "00:4" to "10:4" (*backwards*).

KIT (V.O.)

Yeah, well, originally it was
"artillery is precious; trust we
don't take it lightly". But they
thought the 'trust' gave it the
opposite impression.

EXT. MOUNTAIN - DAWN

An ABSURD amount of GUNSHOTS.

Mid-storm: wind, snow, *smoke* flies everywhere, wafts about. A small opening in the mountain, a CREW inhabits it, all donning a single, unanimous badge: "National Park Service".

Exercising its guns, the crew takes a brief intermission.

Kit chats with a fellow, though disinterested, ranger, as the rest of the crew makes conversation behind a 105 mm howitzer.

The fellow ranger politely leaves Kit to join the group.

ROBBIE

...She wants to be a dancer. Don't really have the heart to tell her, though.

ROBERT (ROBBIE/ROB) CAMPBELL, 32. This crew's star, he's agreeable, just easygoing enough to hide he's overstrung and as uncommitted as his name implies. (We can surmise Rob is one-half of the dancing couple; the other half will be referred to as 'ANGIE').

CREW MEMBER #1 (RICK)

Tell her?

The crew enjoys itself with the exception of Kit, who would like to. As Rob goes to speak, Kit spoils his joke --

KIT

-- Sorry, and this is who? Come on, every season is Jane season. Who's the new Doe?

Corny or just unsure how it applies, the crew doesn't respond to Kit's attempt to join the fun, save for a pity laugh.

Rob doesn't appreciate the jab.

On further notice, there's an undercurrent of quiet apprehension here. The circulation of unsaid rumors.

RICK and LEE, 20s, load the cannon and prepare to fire as --

Robbie and Kit hold each other's gaze: both bloodshot, curiously, sleep-deprived.

Rob gives the go-ahead to Rick and Lee. The cannon fires.

Snow tumbles on the parallel mountain.

The crew loads the cannon again, another round of 'fire'. The crew turns the howitzer 15 degrees NW, loads it, and --

Rob squints where the cannon aims as the crew waits to fire.

ROBBIE

Sorry, you see that? That -- look, there! Just south of that ridge.

The crew glances at the general vicinity, visibility low. An uncomfortable beat, particularly for Kit. He glances at Rob.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)

All right. Let's, let's do another run, that's -- what is that? Silver Ridge? Yeah, let's do another. Kit?

Another voice of authority here, the crew looks to Kit.

KIT

Sure. But next storm we're going to want to do Silver Ridge, yeah.

Rick and Lee turn the cannon further to the right.

INT. '66 BRONCO - MORNING

Robbie shotgun, Kit driver, the heat blasts between them a warmth their current bond lacks. An added pressure simmers.

ROBBIE

You sick...twisted...know-it-all...

Here, with Rob, Kit takes patronizing as his calling card...something which both bothers and confuses Rob.

KIT

You run out of adjectives?

ROBBIE

Bastard. I like Angie, God dammit! I don't need you double entendre-ing your thoughts on my character like that in front of the crew!

KIT

Well, I just figured I'd do us both the favor and call attention to the problem that is your maturity.

ROBBIE

Kit, if ever there is a time to be friendly, to be -- Christ! likable, I implore you to find it in you.

KIT

Well, isn't that an idea: change my status quo to fill some kamikaze urge you have. You look bad by the way, you should've slept.

A dozen books on the floor, Robbie sifts through them with a shoe. He picks one up, *The Feminine Mystique*, unimpressed.

ROBBIE

She shows up on my porch at two in the morning, what am I supposed to do? You let your girl leave these in the car like this?

KIT

What makes you think I have a girl?

ROBBIE

What? You read Betty Friedan?

KIT

Rob, I've seen what comes to your place --

MAGAZINE COVER

'SHOW MAGAZINE', the cover's topic: "Women's Sweaters".

ROBBIE

-- No, no. Now, that was for Angie.

KIT

Angie lives in town.

(off his 'could argue
that' look)

Rob, I haven't even met the girl and she's taken over your life.

ROBBIE

I know, I know, but, you know, she's nice, she's decent. What --

KIT

What's wrong with her?

ROBBIE

What's -- ? Why do you ask *that*?

KIT

You make certain concessions, I get this Robbie, and perhaps I'd understand them if I knew the girl, but, truth of the matter is, you don't like her, Robbie.

They drive in silence a beat. A notably feminine rosary draped over the mirror, Kit is acutely aware of its presence, Rob less so. Kit averts his stare.

ROBBIE

That -- not blowing Silver, that wasn't just on a whim, all right? I thought I saw lights.

KIT

And that's great Rob, you seeing lights, but, and call me crazy, I don't think you have a proper appreciation for our situation here. And if we're lucky, neither does our lunch-date.

Kit tightens his grip on the wheel. Rob shifts in his seat.

INT. MALT SHOPPE - DAY

Kit, Rob, and chief ranger, ELLIS, 50s, sit inside a circle booth, lunches before them and tea for Ellis.

ELLIS

I heard you two took the team out last Saturday for avalanche control? How was that?

ROBBIE

Good. It was -- you know, this isn't -- this isn't about me not giving the order, is it?

ELLIS

No, no, I'm just curious about the operation. When's your next launch? Maybe I'll suit up, come along.

KIT

Sure, next storm's next Sunday, so.

ELLIS

...So day of rest, mm. I --

A WAITRESS stops by bearing a tray with a malt shake on it.

WAITRESS

Would you like a malt shake?

ELLIS

Oh, we didn't order a shake, miss.

The waitress doesn't budge. The men smile tightly at her.

WAITRESS

But it's a sample.

KIT

...We're good, thank you Sandra.

SANDRA, per her name tag, exits with the shake.

ELLIS

...I presume you're aware of last Friday's incident? Not the coffee machine debacle, I mean on Route 3.

KIT

Yeah, we heard the crash from 8.
You know what happened?

ROBBIE

I assumed it had something to do with a faulty hand-held, set off by who knows, or some kids decide to have fun with whatever they find in their parent's shed, you know?

Kit takes a sip from his coffee. Rob fidgets.

ELLIS

And I hate that of all the weeks I take a break, this is the one someone decides a chunk of the mountain is at their leisure.

All too quiet. Neither Kit nor Rob reply, taking Ellis' position in. Fault or not, impunity is no longer a question.

ELLIS (CONT'D)

And, to tell you the truth men, lately I've been hearing concerns over some tension. Between you two.

KIT

Concerns? In our unit? Refer them to me, I'll take care of it.

Apparently not the time for jokes, Kit's doesn't land well.

ROBBIE

Honest Ellis, we've been working pretty great together. But that, that tension, you called it? I think I might know what that's about, sir.

Rob glances at Kit, almost as if asking for permission, which Kit doesn't quite sense.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)

Well, recently, I found a certain magazine on Kit here's doorstep and, of course, at no character fault of his own, some Freudian thing you could no doubt chalk it up to, I believe Kit was feeling perhaps a tad embarrassed with my newfound knowledge.

ELLIS

...What magazine?

As Kit's denial escalates into laughter, Rob refuses Ellis an answer out of feigned courtesy for Kit.

ELLIS (CONT'D)

Here's the thing: any other day you two decide your bond ought now to have some strain, I'd care less about. But the day my heads of 'lanche control can't properly control said crew's members, artillery, whatever set off the *explosion*, I find myself questioning the efficacy of their management.

ROBBIE

Respectfully, sir, we checked our bases: everything, everyone was accounted for that night.

KIT

Also, we were told you delegated this to the local police.

ELLIS

Yeah, I'm re-delegating. And reconcile your differences, I don't care, but I get another complaint? I'm not sure I will, men.

Ellis exits. Once out of earshot --

KIT

Jackass. Pawning me off like that like you don't read your girl's weekly more than she does.

Rob taps his hand against his face, jittery, as Kit still reels from Rob's false and defamatory claim.

ROBBIE

He knows.

KIT

He does not know.

ROBBIE

And I just covered for you, you're welcome. You know, for reading a bunch'a feminist, bunny's tale, yada yada, you're quite fragile.

KIT

What did you just say?

ROBBIE

Oh, no, I didn't mean it in a --

KIT

"*Bunny's Tale*"?

(and then)

That was in Show Magazine.

Kit removes his wallet per the bill as Rob deflates.

ROBBIE

John asked us to give Grace and her sis a ride home, you mind wrangling them while I go powder my nose? We can figure a plan on the drive.

Robbie exits. Kit scans the shoppe, then turns.

KIT

Hey kid, pack up. Where's your sister? What are you doing?

In a booth, the bob-haired girl (GRACE X.) sits before an array of textbooks, notes, and flashcards.

GRACE

Exploring my detrimental side.

Grace holds up an embroidery wheel, her needle and thread hanging from a blue and red bullseye.

GRACE (CONT'D)

Home economics. Think I'll pass?

With Kit's blank stare, Grace surveys the shoppe.

GRACE (CONT'D)

Jo! Jo! Have you seen Jo?

Grace turns to the table behind her, then blindly searches beneath her table as Rob returns.

GRACE (CONT'D)
She's probably just --
(and then)
Her backpack's gone.

A wet snowflake slaps the booth's window.

A SNOW STORM rolls in through main street. Not a light storm.

INT. YELLOW T-BIRD - DAY

Donna and Larry sit in comfortable silence as Larry drives...until Donna starts to pay attention to the road.

DONNA
Larry. We're going a back way.

LARRY
That we are.

DONNA
For a specific reason?

LARRY
Relax, Donna, I take this way every time I go to the lodge. It's my preferred route. Anyway, the better question is why you're going there in the middle of a Friday...*alone*.

DONNA
Only for the same reason you're giving me a ride there, *alone*.

Larry shiftily glances in the rear view.

LARRY
...A gentleman's conscience?

DONNA
No, don't tell me they sell those at the store now?

LARRY
And a-dime-a-dozen dolls, too.

As Donna's jaw hangs from the playful offense --

Larry slows the car to a stop. Through the windshield wipers, everything FADES to WHITE. Visibility zeroes.

Donna and Larry stare out at the weather at a loss -- Larry pulls the car over. They wait in silence a beat.

DONNA

You know something funny, Larry? I think maybe if we hadn't taken a detour, we may have just bypassed the whiteout.

LARRY

That is funny.

Donna stares at Larry in disbelief. He puts the car in park.

INT. GONDOLA - DAY

Ice grows on the glass as the outside blurs with white weather and the gondola continues to shakily rise.

Endless talk continues between Kelly and Jo when Mary hears a quiet, constant, high-pitched *whistle*.

MARY

...Do you guys hear that? Hey, do either of you hear that?

Kelly and Jo quiet, then look up.

In a corner where ceiling meets wall, a stream of outside air howls through a crevice. Wind.

MARY (CONT'D)

...Did you guys notice that before?

The gondola jerks to a STOP.

The girls exchange glances. A consensus of alarm.

KELLY

Maybe it's maintenance...?

JO

Maintenance! We're stopped in mid-air! Don't they know we're still up here?

Jo panics attempting to scan the ground down below as Kelly discretely makes a mental note of their bags on the floor.

Mary turns in her seat, slowly sits up. The calm of shock.

KELLY

Look at the other lifts! See, it's
probably just -- !

They face the other lifts, where Mary's been facing --

NO ONE IS IN ANY OF THEM.

As they look down the line of gondolas, each sways more and more than the last. Like charms on a bracelet.

The end of the line before it all fades to white --

TWO GONDOLAS VIOLENTLY SWING side by side on parallel cables.

A creaky steel CACOPHONY ensues.

The panic sets in.

Jo and Kelly beat their hands against the glass, yelling and crying for outside help, all while Mary sits frozen.

The gondola swings like a pendant with their movements --

-- And KNOCKS Mary into a wall.

And apparently that's all Mary needed; she drops to the floor.

Mary unzips a bag and dumps its contents. Trembling, she rummages through the clutter.

Another bag, Mary shakes out its contents.

The last backpack -- She sifts through the carnage.

Mary lifts a flashlight.

EXT. SILVER SLOPE - DAY

Dark sky. Harsh winds. Whiteout on the slope.

The line of gondolas jangles and rocks rapidly in the wind. One in particular rocks more than the others. In it --

-- BURSTS OF HANDS -- FLAILING ARMS -- open yet eerily soundless FLASHES of MOUTHS fill the foggy glass.

THE GONDOLA LIGHTS UP!

As the cabin illuminates in hectic directions of light, a gloved hand scrawls across the glass --

--"S" -- "O" -- and the beginnings of another "S".

Hardly visible in this climate, let alone any distance, the girls' calls go unheard and unseen.

INT. GONDOLA - DAY

Shouts abound as Mary takes Jo's place pounding on the glass, Kelly takes Mary's shining the light, and Jo takes a seat as she registers just the severity of the situation.

JO

We have to stop. We have to stop!

Mary stops calling. Kelly stops, too, but not because of Jo.

JO (CONT'D)

We don't -- we don't know how long
the storm'll be, when people might
see us --

Kelly lets the flashlight fall from her hands.

KELLY

They've come.

A calm in the blizzard.

A DARK FIGURE emerges from up the slope.

A SERIES of DARK FIGURES follows, skiing into sight.

The girls resume their yells and frantic waves, ecstatic, until Mary starts to look dubious.

MARY

Hey. Hey, where did they come from?

Mary's shoe knocks into the flashlight on the floor, its light fully obscured by a bag.

KELLY

Up the slope! My God, they see us!

Jo considers Kelly's answer. Mary considers the flashlight.

The figures begin to come this way.

It's eerie. Too *uncanny*.

MARY

Stop.

A jarring *GRATING* rattles down from the cable to the cabin...
 ...As Kelly continues to alert the outside to their presence.

JO

Stop!

KELLY

Jo! They've found us!

ANOTHER GRATING SCREECH --

The GONDOLA JERKS DOWN!

Like some invisible force pulls it.

Mary and Jo exchange looks, a show of solidarity --

-- Mary finds and flicks off the flashlight.

-- Jo pushes Kelly down.

The trio cowers on the floor. Kelly fights against them.

KELLY (CONT'D)

What are you -- they're trying to
 save us!

The GONDOLA'S DOWNWARD PULLS throughout this --

Kelly tries to get up. Mary and Jo make sure she doesn't.

Kelly tries to shout --

Jo covers Kelly's mouth and, for a moment, it seems like
 Kelly might *bite*.

But Jo removes her hand and Kelly stays silent, not scared,
 but conscious of the fact her friends are.

-- The gondola's pulls STOP.

Like even the wind has vanished, the gondola hangs still.

Jo peeks outside. The girls stay down awaiting her report.

JO

They're gone.

As Mary stands to get a look...a faint, high-pitched *NOTE*
 sounds. So quiet, the girls don't quite hear.

The sound of cable stretching, splintering.

THE GONDOLA JOLTS DOWN --

-- MARY HITS THE CEILING.

Kelly and Jo gape in horror, holding on --

-- MARY SLAPS THE FLOOR.

Jo crawls out from under the relative safety of her seat to rush to Mary, crumpled in a corner --

KELLY

Jo!

The gondola tilts -- Jo crawls back while she still can.

JO

Mary -- Mary! Wake up!

A sharp off-key metal *SCREECH* -- Kelly and Jo glance up.

MARY

Jo...?

EXT. SILVER SLOPE - CLEARING - DAY

SCREAMS filter through the glass as the GONDOLA PLUMMETS to the ground -- Mary's silhouette rises towards the ceiling.

The GONDOLA HITS THE GROUND -- Mary's silhouette smacks down.

And suddenly, the sky -- the environment -- is all very dark. Silence follows. Stillness ensues.

JO (V.O.)

Mary? Mary?

The touch and weight of hands and knees crawls across the cabin's floor, in what can only be Jo making her way to Mary.

And while the dark figures are gone --

FRESH SKI TRACKS surround the gondola in an immediate circle, and then a larger and more complex one and so on.

Like an intricate and heavily-used *racetrack*, with neither movement *nor offshoots* on the track.

Through the cabin's fogged glass, Kelly's silhouette stands. She washes the fog from a spot --

KELLY'S FACE ILLUMINATES with a FANTASTICAL LIGHT.

Like from an orb, but its source remains unseen.

KELLY'S SILHOUETTE TURNS and REACHES FOR THE DOOR'S HANDLE.

JO (V.O.) (CONT'D)
...Kelly?

We HEAR the DOOR FOLD OPEN.

TITLE CARD:

"WESTERN MOVIES"

INT. MALT SHOPPE - DAY

"HIGH PRIORITY", "LOW PRIORITY", and "MID P..." -labelled server notes lay on different sections of the counter.

The longest list being the "LOW P" category, Robbie adds another note to it from his notepad, courtesy of Sandra.

In a corner, Kit talks on the landline out of earshot.

BEHIND THE COUNTER

The making of two shakes:

-- Thick white shake fills two glasses; whip cream tops them.

The MALT-MAKER skips over cherries in lieu of a shelf of colored dust-filled jars.

A perfume-like bottle in hand, the malt-maker squeezes a bulb separate from it and attached to a jar of DEEP RED DUST.

-- CRIMSON DUST SPRAYS from the bottle onto a shake's top.

The malt-maker reaches to another shelf with *special* jars.

One *glitters*...one *swirls*...one *sparks*...etc.

The malt-maker presses the bulb of a jar with TWINKLING DUST.

-- SILVER DUST SPRAYS over the second malt shake.

With a drop of a hand, a cherry fashions the top of each shake and, simultaneously, their DUSTY TOPS DISAPPEAR.

CORNER BOOTH

Enjoying the spontaneity of being trapped somewhere cozy and warm, somewhere vibrant, Roy notices Sharon doing the same.

ROY
You're awful.

SHARON
Stop it, I know.

Sandra, the two now-identical shakes on her tray, hands one to Sharon. Sharon acknowledges Grace's kindness from across the shoppe, undecided whether or not to entertain it.

Roy remains oblivious to this interaction as he haphazardly watches a BOOTH filled with BOYS his age.

ROY
Why'd you look at me like you did earlier? Right after Donna left. What was that?

SHARON
What was what? Me noticing you playing up something you're not, was it that?

Roy takes himself away from sizing up the boys in the booth.

ROY
What??

SHARON
...Never mind. It's...you're not an airhead, but whatever.

ROY
Well, of course I'm not an airhead. Why would I be an airhead?

SHARON
Airheads pander.
(beat)
You notice we never have anything to talk about. Doesn't that bother you?

ROY
We talk all the time.

SHARON
Yeah, about inconsequential crap.

ROY
 Okay, take your pick: money,
 politics, or religion?

SHARON
 Come on. What'd you do today?

Roy chuckles, the implication this is *not* inconsequential talk. Sharon blows the paper end of her straw at him.

ROY
 I got the new Jefferson Airplane
 record to listen to tonight and I
 did a walk.

SHARON
 Did you? Let me listen with you
 tonight.

Roy pauses, like the fringes of a boundary have been crossed.

ROY
 ...Why?

SHARON
 Because. Maybe I'm a little sick
 playing rag-doll to someone's every
 whim myself? Maybe I want a night
 off.

ROY
 (warming up)
 ...Do you even like Jefferson
 Airplane? And what about that
someone?

SHARON
 She's with Larry.

ROY
 Oh, Christ. That's who she went
 with?

SHARON
 What's wrong with Larry?

Roy fidgets, more troubled than he lets on.

ROY
 Nothing. Just, guy's an ass. Guy's
 -- I'm just not a very big fan.

Sharon eyes Grace's booth, Grace absent from it. She takes her first sip from the shake.

Sharon glances up. Her eyes fill with ecstasy as her mind goes elsewhere.

SHARON

I hope Donna's okay. You think the lodge will get snowed in?

Roy has a grim realization.

INT. YELLOW T-BIRD - DAY

Cozy with the blasting heat, Donna and Larry have made themselves comfortable on their opposite sides of the car.

Shifty glances and constant fidgets, Larry's an advert for ADHD medication. And perhaps it's just the storm, but if so, then why is Larry acutely aware of Donna's every move?

LARRY

I have to confess something.

Donna shifts in her seat, self-conscious. She distracts herself with a candy, unwraps it to a devilish shine.

LARRY (CONT'D)

You are not how I remember you.
You're very...definitive now.

DONNA

Definitive? What does that mean?

As Donna tries the candy, she scrunches her eyes like they strain from the bite. A reaction.

LARRY

...You don't know what definitive means?

DONNA

No, I know what definitive means. I mean how do you mean it.

Donna glances at the wrappers funny, then dismisses them.

LARRY

I just remember you being more or less...God, I don't want to say shapeless --

DONNA

Shapeless?

LARRY

No, not that you were exactly flaky either, though. You were just sort of...up in the air. Yeah. Wishy-washy.

DONNA

Uh-huh. Larry, did you just call me shallow in four different ways?

LARRY

Shallow? That's completely off base, Donna.

DONNA

Off -- ? Wishy-washy, up in the air, flaky, *shapeless*. For someone who prides themself on being first in class, I'm not sure I believe the common ground there was entirely lost on you, Larry.

LARRY

(teasing)

...If it's any consolation, I think you're darling now.

Larry glances in the rear view mirror.

At what, Donna can't tell. But with that sanguine smile and strange glare in his eyes, Donna pretends not to notice.

Larry cracks his window.

DONNA

What are you doing? It's freezing out there.

LARRY

Making sure they can rule out carbon monoxide poisoning when they get to us.

DONNA

And the hypothermia?

LARRY

Some of us pick our battles, Donna.

Donna rolls her eyes and pops the LAST CANDY in her mouth.

INT. MALT SHOPPE - DAY

Robbie returns to a table, server pad and pen in hand.

ROBBIE

...Just came out of nowhere, why
I'm going around now, seeing if
anyone knows anyone who might need
help: elders, neighbors, pets...?

Robbie glances at the restroom in the back as he continues to the next booth, a group of boys inside, including:

JAMES

Who are you? Honest question.

Robbie turns, unsure of James' tone. He opens his jacket to flash his shirt.

James waits, faintly smiling.

Rob looks down at his badge-less shirt, smiles tightly.

ROBBIE

I'm a ranger. And part of Search
and Rescue, if you heard my spiel.

Robbie passes to the next table. As he heads to the following booth (its occupants, Roy & Sharon, mid-chat), inside --

Sharon takes a sip of her shake and looks up to see Robbie.

Her hair untucked and posture questionable, she simply stares back, then does something peculiar for her: she leans back.

SHARON

...You think the lodge will get
snowed in?

An oddly protracted moment. Robbie almost smiles, but glances away, suddenly tense. Sharon finds interest in his reaction.

It's a weird energy. Robbie glances around for an escape --

The restroom door swings closed; Grace beelines to him.

GRACE

She's not there.

ROBBIE

And you don't think she might've
just gone home early? Gone to a
friend's?

GRACE

No, no, we have family dinner
tonight. I'm dead, aren't I?

Rob guides Grace to an empty spot at the counter.

ROBBIE

No, no, you're not dead. No one's
in trouble, Grace. Just, if you
could maybe tell me when you last
saw her and what she was doing.

GRACE

(laughs, she *is* dead)
Oh God. I don't know, I saw her --
Two? They were just here!

ROBBIE

Listen, Jo, she's probably holed up
in some shop somewhere, or playing
or, or doing whatever little girls
do, all right? You know if she was
talking to anyone? Anyone maybe she
shouldn't have been? A stranger?

As Robbie speaks, Sandra passes by and hands Grace the sole
shake on her tray. Grace immediately drinks the shake to calm
herself...but has no visible reaction to the drink.

GRACE

Jo's not an idiot.

ROBBIE

Jo's not here.

In his corner, and between calls, the landline rings at Kit.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)

...Who did you say she was with?

OFF Robbie writes down the names: "KELLY C. & MARY S."

ON Robbie sets his notepad beside Kit and airs a grievance
he's been holding onto:

ROBBIE (CONT'D)

(children are near)
Why the -- aren't we in uniform?
What's going on?

Robbie's casual manner catches Kit off-guard, its indecency.

KIT

Mother just called looking for her daughter, Mary Stone, said she should've been back an hour ago. Chances she's friends with Jo?

ROBBIE

You call neighbors? Stores on Main they might've passed?

As Kit goes to reply, Rob involuntarily grins. A lapse in his professionalism for whatever's left him with a knowing look.

It pushes a button with Kit. His nerves relieve him of giving Robbie the satisfaction of a reaction.

KIT

Hey, Robbie.

(and then)

I know SAR's going to be swamped, but I think we might want a team on this. On the girls.

Roy walks up to the pair, his voice down.

ROY

I don't want to cause a panic.

INT. YELLOW T-BIRD - DAY

As fronds of frost build on the windshield, Larry turns the key in the ignition. The car jumps on, heat with it.

LARRY

How's it work?

Donna shivers as she folds a candy wrapper like a flag into a triangular pillow, keeping herself mildly entertained.

DONNA

It works like this: you sing a line from a song and I guess the song.

LARRY

How do I know you'll know the song?

DONNA

I'll know the song. I'll start:
*'When the twilight is gone, dun
dun, and no songbirds are singing'.*

LARRY
 (finishes the line)
 -- 'Dun'. Twilight Time, The
 Platters -- easy.

DONNA
 My Prayer -- apparently not. Go.

LARRY
 Okay. Okay, I'm gonna hum it
 though. Else it'll give it away.

Larry hums some line from *some* song -- Donna's clueless.

LARRY (CONT'D)
 You said you'd know the song.

DONNA
 And I do, just give me a hint.

Donna eyes sweat beads on Larry's neck as she tugs on her own
 sleeve, cold; and for him being so cool-mannered, it's odd.

LARRY
 Well, your name's in it.

DONNA
 My name's in it?

And then Donna gets it.

With his nerves, odd glances, overall mannerisms...Donna
 stares at the corner of the LETTER she 'threw out' poking out
 from her pocket.

LARRY
 I'll give you a minute, collect
 your thoughts.

Larry notes Donna's sudden aversion to him, averts her gaze.

He surveys the folded wrappers and distracts himself with
 one, folds it his way.

LARRY (CONT'D)
 There, something to aspire to.

The wrapper sits on Larry's palm -- a perfectly folded flag.

As Donna glances at the flag, something strikes her. She
 spins her finger over the wrapper, like in a game.

She lands on a callus on his palm, points:

DONNA

Callus.

She's sussing him out. Larry copies her, spins his index, and lands on -- her.

LARRY

Callous.

Donna pelts Larry with a wrapper. The death of her suspicions the casualty of his remark.

DONNA

How dare you! I am not!

LARRY

Not what I hear.

DONNA

Oh? And what's that?

Donna tucks the letter back into her pocket as Larry quiets.

DONNA (CONT'D)

That's what I love about you guys. You'll dish, dutifully share, and savor the thought, but just when it comes time the girl wants to know, you all clam up. Does that take courage or...?

LARRY

Maybe a group of guys like that, no one wants to be the offender.

DONNA

Heroic! And just what a world of right and wrong needs, more soldiers. Stand in line, right?

Larry doesn't take Donna's sarcasm in stride, but staves off any express display of his offense.

LARRY

Okay, while we're at it and in this 'world' of so-called 'right and wrong', what exactly are you? Hm?

DONNA

Maybe I'm just a girl who'd rather look for a moral code than the blame. Hm?

'Hm?' like 'And you?', Donna waits for Larry's reply.

LARRY

Virtue and vituperation, what can I
say? The blame game's a little more
interesting, isn't it?

Donna gives 'vituperation' a double take, the insult of its
implication, as Larry hums his song back up.

LARRY (CONT'D)

You're gonna like my song.

Larry's just too unserious. Donna brushes off her company,
unsure what to make of him, when --

A series of DARK FIGURES walks from one side of the road to
the other amidst the whiteout.

DONNA

Turn the car off. Turn the car off.
Larry, turn off the car.

Larry turns the key in the ignition. The headlights go out.

INT. MALT SHOPPE - RESTROOM - DAY

Roy, Kit, and Robbie commune by the sinks. Despite the
environment's separation, and often the vulnerability that
goes with that, Robbie and Kit's strain takes a backseat.

In a corner, the room's wallpaper is cracked and peeled away.

ROY

...No, they left right before the
storm. Twenty minutes, half hour
before? Just the three of them.

Beneath the wallpaper, an underlayer of words and names
sharpied in black shrouds the original warm paint.

Kit eyes the ragged cursive of the sharpie; the letters
become more spheric than legible as they affect shapes,
mosaic-like.

It unnerves Kit. The sharpened limbs of the various letters.

Simultaneously, the SOUND of GASOLINE splashing over the
ground sounds. Unseen. Like from a memory, it stops as --

Roy's fidgeting brings Kit back, his tapping on the sink. Kit
absently twists the gold band on his ring finger, a tic.

KIT

Any idea where they were headed?

ROY
Yeah. Yeah. Kelly, Kelly might be
at the lodge.

ROBBIE
The lodge? That's where she say she
was headed?

ROY
No I, I saw ski goggles in her bag.

INT. MALT SHOPPE - DAY

In his booth, Roy bites his straw as his gaze wanders to the boy booth.

Completely unbothered by outside events. Enjoying themselves, maybe in poor taste, but not overt in their fun.

From the boy booth, James catches Roy staring.

And, for a moment, their attitudes towards one another pend judgement. For a moment.

James remarks something to his booth that elicits *laughter*.

Roy glances away, flustered --

-- Except no one from the booth glances back at Roy, he can't be sure they're talking about him.

-- A derisive smile from James, sent like a threat, implies otherwise.

Roy turns away, chews his straw amidst James' menacing gaze. The glass to Sharon's malt shake empty beside him.

ACROSS THE SHOPPE

Kit on the landline, Robbie waits beside him. Kit hangs up.

KIT
Three young girls last seen in line
for the gondola. Liftie said he
didn't let them on with the wind,
another guy said he saw three kids
going down Silver Ridge,
coincidentally one of the first
runs after the lift.

Robbie pauses at '*Silver*', sharing in Kit's reserved panic.

Outside, light emits and flickers from each STREETLIGHT. One after another, the streetlights -- *wink -- off*.

An acute EXPLOSION crashes in the distance.

THUNDER follows.

The shoppe fills with a static buzz -- The LIGHTS extinguish.

An AVALANCHE cascades down SILVER SLOPE, the sole mountain in view. The mountain the little girls pointed to.

INT. YELLOW T-BIRD - DAY

Larry squints outside, aimlessly scanning amid the whiteout, as Donna ducks. He hesitantly follows suit.

DONNA

Do you see that? I think -- Larry,
I think there are people out there.

LARRY

People? Maybe I should go check it
out.

DONNA

Are you crazy? No one should be out
in this. I mean, why are they,
anyway? Larry?

Larry unbuckles his seat belt.

DONNA (CONT'D)

Wait, what are you doing?
(and then)
No, don't leave me alone in here!

LARRY

Chill, Donna. Maybe they need help?
Look, you just stay here. I'll go
check it out.
(off her protests)
Donna, relax. I'll be right back.

Larry opens his door. Donna turns the key in the ignition.

DONNA

Lights. You're welcome.

The door closes. The car beeps for the ignition being half-on. Donna waits in the chilling, beeping-otherwise silence.

In the rear view mirror --

A FIGURE MATERIALIZES as if from the ground up.

At closer glance, it's human-like, but the limbs point *wrong*.

The figure cracks its neck and, before Donna can notice --

THE FIGURE VANISHES.

The car jolts slightly up, like a weight is lifted from it.

Donna jumps, turns in her seat --

Nothing in the backseat, nor anything outside, she can see.
Hear, on the other hand...

Thump. Thump. Thump.

Like walking in the snow, the quiet crunch of it underfoot.

She presses her door's lock down.

Donna reaches for the driver's side when she catches a
GLIMPSE of the FIGURE in her side mirror --

Its limbs almost-perfect, it pops an arm back into place.

Donna slams the driver's lock mechanism down; it goes down
only halfway, but Donna has moved on.

She glances in the rear view -- It's clear.

DONNA (CONT'D)

Larry, I swear, I swear, I swear if
this is you.

Donna scours the car, the dash, compartments, etc.

She finds a SWISS ARMY KNIFE on the floor, flicks its biggest
blade up.

Donna waits in the silence, her breath taking up its bulk.

In the passenger's side mirror -- The figure approaches.

Donna turns towards her window.

The swiss army knife falls to the floor.

INT. MALT SHOPPE - DAY

Window-view and a set of tires tears out of the parking lot,
"US PARK RANGER" on the Bronco's body.

TITLE CARD:**"TWILIGHT TIME"****INT. MALT SHOPPE - DAY**

Pre-blizzard. Larry sits in a booth with FRIENDS, including James, restless and jumpy, and KEVIN, 17.

The booth (sans an oblivious Larry) smiles under wraps as Kevin exits and Sandra appears -- or returns, based on her forced smile and its attempt to hide her exasperation.

LARRY

Yeah, I'll take a -- just a plain
shake is all. To go.

Sandra writes the order down -- "*stupid*", underlines it.

SANDRA

Whip with that?

The booth teases Larry as Sandra exits and James rises.

Sandra trades the written order at the counter for her tray. James approaches her, noting her tray. He speaks discreetly.

JAMES

Hey, hey, hey Sandy. Got a sample
for me there?

(off her look)

Sandy, look, hell of a day I'm
having and it's only one. You're
not going to be decent and help me
out?

James returns to his booth all glare and empty-handed.

LARRY

Gotta jet. Lucky me, I get to drop
Kev off at home.

EXT. MALT SHOPPE - DAY

Larry leans against his car, sipping his to-go shake as he hums along to Dion's "Donna the Prima Donna" on the radio. (The same song he hums to Donna).

Larry glances back at the time in his car. He squints at a shoppe window, waves someone out from it.

A moment later. James makes his way to Larry.

LARRY
Kevin inside?

JAMES
That's what you called me out for?

James turns back around.

Larry grows impatient, then glances at the shoppe's entrance, rather James, as he nods Donna in his direction.

James covertly gestures a driving motion to Larry. Larry politely smiles at Donna.

INT. MALT SHOPPE - DAY

Grace eyes Donna outside with James. A slight quiver in Grace's brow --

INT. UNKNOWN CLOSET

A high-pitched SCREAM, intertwined with whines and groans, Grace --

-- SLASHES a SHIRT with a kitchen knife.

-- LIGHTS the end of a SKIRT with a lighter. Donna's outfit.

-- RIPS a striped jersey apart at the seams, #19.

-- Runs her nails through a set of black tights. *A mad woman.*

INT. MALT SHOPPE - DAY

-- Grace bites her nail, then notes Sharon across the shoppe. A shift in her attitude, Grace waves a passing Sandra down.

LARRY (V.O.)
...Want a ride?

EXT. MALT SHOPPE - DAY

Larry opens the passenger side to CLUTTER on the seat. He grabs the clutter in one heavy load as Donna sits shotgun.

Larry pops the trunk --

-- Kevin smiles at Larry from inside.

LARRY

The hell Kevin? What are you doing?

KEVIN

Turns out you can't open this trunk
from the inside. But, uh, pretty
little voice you got there.

Kevin imitates Larry singing to Dion; Larry drops the load of
clutter atop Kevin as retaliation.

DONNA (O.S.)

...Larry?

Larry and Kevin panic.

Kevin closes the trunk. Larry goes to the driver's side.

INT. YELLOW T-BIRD - DAY

Larry and Donna drive out of the Malt Shoppe's parking lot.
Donna notices Larry repeatedly glance in the rear view.

DONNA

What? Have we got a tail?
(turns around)
Poor bunny.

LARRY

...Hey, how far back you think the
heat goes in this thing?

Later. Mid-blizzard. Donna ducks as she stares, petrified,
outside. Meanwhile, Larry taps his shoe in beat to his worry.

DONNA

I think there are people out there.

LARRY

People?

Larry scans the solid white outside, then regards Donna,
genuinely scared. He ceases tapping his shoe.

He glances in the rear view one last time.

LARRY (CONT'D)

Maybe I should go check it out.

EXT. BACK ROAD - DAY

Fragments of Donna's protests ('Are you crazy?', 'No, don't leave me alone in here!') echo through the storm.

Larry waves back at the car's foggy lights; barely able to make them out, he assumes the rule he's just as hard to see as he steps seamlessly out of view.

Taking a wide berth around the car, Larry ducks as he gets to the trunk. He sweeps the snow off, then tries to open it.

It's *jammed*.

As Larry tries again, a *THUD* escapes from inside the trunk.

The trunk pops open.

Inside, Kevin lays curled up gripping a quilt's corner.

KEVIN

Freaking cold. What are we doing?

Larry eyes the quilt, a large rip in its corner.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

Darn thing was stuck, had to...

Kevin motions pulling the quilt from the trunk's side.

LARRY

That was my great...okay, all right, Jesus. Whatever, come on.

As Kevin gets out, Larry pushes down on the back of the car so as not to let it lift from the absence of weight.

Kevin stands and stretches, cracking his neck, before Larry notices and shoves him down out of view --

-- The car lifts from the sudden shift in weight.

LARRY (CONT'D)

Jesus! Are you kidding me? What are you, trying to get us caught? Stop!

(Kevin stops stretching)

Here's the story, I found you on the road walking back and forth, okay? Now we get in the car.

KEVIN

Why am I on the road walking back and forth? I sound like a moron.

LARRY

What you sound like is not important. What's important is she buy it, and she'll buy that.

KEVIN

Does she think I'm a moron?
(off his uncertainty)
It's -- Two hours we've been stuck out here and my name hasn't come up? Serious? I'm insulted. My God, you insult me! Two hours??

Larry ignores Kevin and nods for him to follow as he goes to the driver's side...when he's pulled back.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

Hold on, hold on -- why don't I just go up to the window, say I saw the lights or something.

LARRY

Because that's not believable.

KEVIN

And the freaking road story is?
What the --

LARRY

Kevin, Kevin, just shut up and get in the car.

Larry heads to his door and, before he gets there, turns to find Kevin absent.

Kevin walks to the passenger side, then pauses -- pops his arm -- and continues when he snaps his fingers, remembers:

KEVIN

It's a coupe.

But now he's in the side mirror, and in Donna's possible view. Kevin raises his hand and knocks on the window.

INT. YELLOW T-BIRD - DAY

Larry opens his door to Donna, passed out, and Kevin, tapping on the window pointing down at the door's lock.

LARRY

The hell just happened?
(unlocks, opens the door)
What happened?? Oh, God.

Blood trickles down Donna's chin, her lip busted.

LARRY (CONT'D)

What did you do??

Larry finds the swiss army knife on the floor, tentatively wipes its blade on a bloodstained spot on Donna's jacket.

KEVIN

What'd I do? I didn't -- she just jumped and bam! Went down. You serious? *'What'd I do?'*. Christ!

(and then)

At least the storm's clearing up.

Moments later. Donna lies across the backseat as Kevin sits shotgun and Larry drives.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

So, you and Donna.

Kevin awaits Larry's reply, then goes to repeat himself --

LARRY

Hey, Kevin? I'm going to try and be polite because I'm aware of your predilection for taking offense, but Kevin? Keep feeling chatty and I am going to attack you.

KEVIN

Yeah. It's just, this doesn't look too good, Lar. In fact, if I were to say how good this looks --

LARRY

I'm going to let you decide right now whether or not you should keep talking. I'm going to let you decide that, okay? Okay.

KEVIN

Okay, I'd say I'm a tad concerned. And have questions. Like, why someone in the backseat keeled? Like, what we're going to do about it? Like, maybe I ought to return to the trunk sooner rather...

LARRY

I'm...going...to...pull...over.

KEVIN

Great. Thanks. And, another here, why is she not waking up? I mean, so she fainted. She did a little faint. Great, but what does that tell us? And what is that currently not telling us?

Larry gives Kevin a double take, then glances back at Donna.

LARRY

She's not faking it.

Kevin shrugs, *she might be*, then turns back and assumes his best bedside manner.

KEVIN

Hey Donna, I don't know if you're up, but you don't need to worry. You're going to the lodge. Donna?

A beat. Larry shoves Kevin's head, in disbelief he went for that; Donna's asleep. Kevin sits, confounded.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

Should we maybe, I don't know, take her to a hospital or something?

LARRY

Kevin, my God, Kevin. I have got a girl in the backseat of my car, bloodied up, passed out, and not waking up. Now let's forget those optics. Let's forget the fact that I don't even have a bad reputation. If I take her anywhere but the hospital in her state, you know what that means? That means I'm going to end up in the hospital. That means my precious car that I do so love, the 'getaway' car, and which just so happens to bear the same color scheme as Bonnie and Clyde's is likely also going to share its fate. But gee, Kev, if someone or something is going to end up hole-punched, I sure hope it's not the nice friend who didn't shut up when I politely asked. Got it?

Larry slows the car and beats his hand on the steering wheel, exasperated -- A downed power line blocks the road ahead.

KEVIN

Got it.

INT. LODGE - MAIN HALL - EVENING

Civilians and Search & Rescue (SAR) members and volunteers fill the lodge. Some with bags...small children...leashed pets...the power being unaffected here, it's claustrophobic.

Roy and Sharon take refuge on a couch. Sharon's stillness, wandering stare, her childlike indifference, only adds to Roy's nerves. As Roy goes to speak, Sharon meets his gaze.

SHARON

Want to get out of here a minute?

NEARBY HALL

Roy and Sharon lean against the walls of a quiet corridor, the main hall still in sight.

ROY

You know something funny? You know when we'd babysit Kelly and them, well, she bit me one time. Just bit me. Left an indent, too. And when I asked her, 'why'd you do that?', you know what she did?

As Roy speaks, Sharon examines her hair from the corner of her eye. She spots a split end, plucks it from its strand.

ROY (CONT'D)

She bit herself back. I had to get her a Band-Aid.

Roy surveys the packed lodge.

ROY (CONT'D)

Lucky the lodge didn't lose power, bet they're not hating this storm.

Sharon lets her hair go, focusing on Roy.

SHARON

Did you?

ROY

Lose power? You look...are you alright, Sharon?

SHARON
I look what?

Roy shrugs. Sharon digs in her pocket for gum.

SHARON (CONT'D)
Want a piece?

Roy doesn't understand Sharon. He takes the piece, anyway.

Roy notes James, semi-near the main hall's entrance and oblivious to Roy's presence...for now.

Antsy to go, Roy glances the closest side exit.

ROY
You'll call me if there are any updates? We'll -- I'll save you another record. A better record. One you actually won't mind.

SHARON
I'll call you.

Roy pats Sharon's shoulder on his way out. Sharon waits back a beat, then eyes Robbie, holding the door for volunteers.

Sharon crosses the hall past --

James slides his shoe among the muddy, snowy, wet footprints on the floor. The lodge walked all over.

James seethes as he watches the lodge's MANAGER guide Ellis to the main desk. A semi-buried NOTE on the desk:

"James -- your parents, verbatim 'morning James! Can't make it home :(weather's too good! Be back next week, xoxo!' :(".

INT. LODGE - MAIN HALL - EVENING

Robbie gives the last volunteer a double take as she exits, Grace.

-- The door shuts in Sharon's face.

EXT. LODGE - EVENING

Post-blizzard. Shovels, supplies, et cetera in tow, SAR begins their excursion, dogs leading the charge.

Robbie and Kit load a snowcat as Robbie scans the groups of volunteers. He doesn't find who he's looking for.

EXT. SILVER SLOPE - EVENING

Flashlights shine into empty gondolas. A snowcat passes parallel to the gondolas as it ascends the slope and approaches a clearing --

-- Where the girls' gondola fell, yet with no fallen gondola.

As the Cat passes by, Robbie glances up from inside at the lift's cable -- very much *intact*.

The gondola the girls were once in hangs suspended up above.

EXT. LODGE - PARKING LOT - EVENING

A T-Bird flies into the packed parking lot. Kevin tentatively scans the lot as Larry drags Donna out from the car and props her up like a rag doll against it.

Larry taps Donna's cheek repeatedly. She doesn't budge.

KEVIN

...She is breathing, yeah?

Larry slowly turns towards Kevin, not even going to dignify that with a reply. Larry tries to pick Donna up, struggles.

LARRY

Jesus. Jesus! Kevin, you gotta -- you gotta help me with this.

KEVIN

You can't carry her on your own?

LARRY

No, I -- she's dense or something, I don't know! Come on, help.

As Kevin helps, James appears from the lodge's side and ushers them over.

And before Larry can explain, James recognizes the girl in tow and begins to *laugh*.

LARRY (CONT'D)

She just, I don't know, she just passed out! You think there's a doctor around somewhere?

James stops chuckling at 'doctor', suddenly earnest.

JAMES

Doctor? I'm sure there is but no,
no, no, no, no, no, you don't want
a doctor, Larry. Look at how this
looks, man. Uh, look I'm sure we've
got an extra room here somewhere.

LARRY

...Yeah?

Larry hesitates; Kevin urges him along.

JAMES

Yeah. Do yourself a favor, Larry.

INT. LODGE - CORRIDOR - EVENING

A room's door swings open, #15.

INT. LODGE - ROOM #15 - MOMENTS LATER

Donna wakes in gingham sheets, Lucy the dog waiting on her by
the door. Lucy whines at Donna's waking, promptly exits.

Indistinct chatter carries into the room.

Donna touches her lip, *winces*.

She rises, bare feet on the cold floor.

Donna glances at her shoes by the door, the type of shoes
socks tend to accompany. Any sign of sock absent from them.

Donna slips her shoes on anyway, surveying the impersonal
room -- Her jacket also absent from it.

She takes a moment to reconcile herself -- her blood-smudged
chin, her unease -- in a mirror.

INT. LODGE - MAIN HALL - EVENING

Fellow CLASSMATES whisper, snicker, leer as they all glance
up at Donna, descending the stairwell.

James greets Donna with an overly empathetic, and false,
concern as she enters the crowd.

JAMES

Donna, you feeling okay? Your hair.
Your lip. You look rough, Donna.

Donna takes in the crowd, its every eye on her. Overwhelmed.

DONNA
...What time is it?

Donna sees Larry with friends ahead. Larry regards her from a distance but doesn't smile, does nothing.

JAMES
Six.

Larry dismisses Donna, returning his attention to his friends. Before James follows suit, he points Donna ahead.

DONNA
Dad? What's going on? Where's mom?

Donna joins her Father.

FATHER
Mom's taking care of Sarah, Donna.

INT. DOLLHOUSE - KITCHEN - EVENING

An assortment of cookies on the island, SARAH, 4, eats icing from a beater as Mother stands by, anxiously smiling.

TELEVISION noise BLEEDS into the kitchen --

INT. DOLLHOUSE - LIVING ROOM - EVENING

A 23-inch color TV plays to the vacant room -- then statics.

It skips -- A PICTURE OF THIS VERY ROOM FILLS THE SCREEN.

The TV statics again -- and goes completely BLACK, until...

THE SCREEN PULSES back to LIFE and into some bizarre DIMENSION. It peers into --

AN OPERATING ROOM of sorts. Outside. Trees overhead.

The remnants of a scene, a struggle -- blood spatter on the operating table -- belt binds worn thin, stretched -- a half-filled syringe on the ground --

No one around. Quiet. The sway of trees in the breeze.

The TV's CHANNEL flips again --

The back of a LITTLE GIRL strolls through a strange forest.

A lit-up circus tent to her left, shadows prance inside it; she ignores the scene, walks past it.

EXT. SILVER SLOPE - NIGHT

Kit and Rob survey the cold, dark surrounds, semi-lit by searching flashlights. The tiring echo of volunteer calls, the slope's expanse, any lasting hope rapidly receding.

ROBBIE

What are you thinking about?

Kit unconsciously pulls at the skin on his ring finger.

KIT

Me? What about you? How are you doing?

(beat)

I know Jo's your niece, but she's a smart kid. We'll find her. Her and those friends.

ROBBIE

My brother's wife's daughter. But yeah.

(beat)

To think, it's Valentine's Day.

Rob walks on as Kit glances down at himself mid-tic, a realization. He cracks a smile at his own expense.

The BURST of an EXPLOSION SOUNDS as Kit glances out at the serene slope. A fragment of a memory.

Kit catches up to Robbie.

KIT

You had anything special planned for Angela?

Across the run, a WOMAN, mid 20s, attractive, dressed for an extended search yet sans flashlight, chats with volunteers.

Rob spots the woman from across the run and tenses.

Robbie glances warily back at Kit, Kit's focus elsewhere, then back at the woman in disbelief -- (Notably, she is not the woman Rob danced with in the beginning).

The woman walks alone into the treeline.

ROBBIE

I'll be right back.

KIT
Where you going?
(beat)
Hey, buddy system. Where you going?

ROBBIE
Just be a doll and wait back, won't
you? Thanks.

Robbie walks across the run into the treeline. Kit waits
back...then has a change of heart.

FOREST

Crunches of snow, steps on sticks...Kit walks into the
forest.

No sign of Rob to be found.

As Kit treks further in, scanning for footprints with his
flashlight, he pauses.

The forest is dead silent. Eerily silent.

Kit clicks his flashlight off.

An errant light shines through a tree onto a sliver of Kit.

Ahead, more flashlights shine through trees. But for so many
lights, i.e. so many people, it shouldn't be *this* quiet.

Kit treads cautiously ahead...

CLEARING

...With an EXPLOSION of SHOUTS, it's like Kit has stepped out
from a *vacuum*.

A CROWD of volunteers, Kit traverses his way to the front as
Robbie does the same from another side.

Sharon at the crowd's head, she peers ahead into --

-- A DEEP CAVITY IN THE SNOW.

One of the little girls' bows undone and left in the lurch.

-- CRAWLING MARKS LEAD OUT FROM THE TUNNEL.

EXT. LODGE - NIGHT

Later. James lights up by the pool. He glances through a window into the lodge --

A liquor cart trashed, James' friends lay passed out on various couches, even Lucy.

He moves onto the random pattern of lit up rooms, vexed. He flicks ash into the pool as their lights go out.

James occupies himself with the DOLLHOUSE --

-- In one room, Father gets in bed when Sarah play-runs into the room.

-- In another room (this one we have yet to see) -- not a toddler's room, not Kelly's, this must be Donna's.

Its light on, its bed unmade, Donna is absent.

-- Kelly's room. Vacant. Lights out.

James glosses over the house when something occurs to him. He retraces his steps through the house, counting as he finds:

-- Father -- Sarah -- Mother in...ah, the guest room.

JAMES

One...two...three.

He's short. James regards the dollhouse in full, squints --

A GLOWING LIGHT illuminates in the otherwise dark KITCHEN.

INT. DOLLHOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

A rising hum. The MICROWAVE GLOWS an all-encapsulating, ethereal orange to the vacant kitchen.

As its empty plate revolves in circles --

INT. LODGE - ROOM #15 - NIGHT

A record spins silently on its player.

Two hands flip the record over, skip the arm past the FIRST THREE TRACKS, and place it down on the FOURTH TRACK.

EXT. LODGE - NIGHT

James lowers his cigarette as he watches the kitchen --

The glow fades. In the dimming light --

A FIGURE SLITHERS out from the MICROWAVE, stands. It's Kelly.

-- James glances back at the lodge, suddenly self-conscious.

A curtain sways in a dark room above. James sees it.

James takes one last drag, gives the dollhouse one last look.

JAMES

Screw it.

INT. WOODSHED - NIGHT

James grabs an axe.

END OF EPISODE