

EXT. DANIEL'S MOVING CAR - EARLY MORNING

DANIEL (36) SPEEDS down a narrow road squinting at something in the distance. Sagebrush and the occasional dried-up tree dot the flat land.

EXT. PAUL'S MOVING CAR - SAME TIME

PAUL (20) drives. FRANCES (woman, 20) stares through the window. Low sagebrush flashing by.

The car veers in the opposite lane. Frances grabs the wheel.

FRANCES

Hey, Paul! Pay attention, man!

PAUL

Huh?

FRANCES

Wanna switch? You look tired.

PAUL

What?

FRANCES

If you tired, let's switch, baby.

PAUL

No, that's not it, at all.

FRANCES

(distracted)

What?

PAUL

I'll tell you what it is. It's like I'm a kid who's drifted far from home and now realizes he can't find his way back. What's the word for that?

Frances looks through her bag and pulls out a book.

FRANCES

I thought that was the idea. Get the hell away from home.

PAUL

Yep. You can't win, can you. You bored with home, you trapped and, what the fuck was the word.

FRANCES  
(while reading)  
Anxious.

PAUL  
Yeah. You bored stayin' home, you anxious goin' out in the world.

Paul glances at Frances and sees her reading.

PAUL (CONT'D)  
Now, hon. See, that's it.  
(rips the book from her;  
tosses it out the window)  
We talkin' feelings here, and you just readin'.

FRANCES  
Paul, what the hell is it-  
(calms herself)  
Fine. Let's talk feelings.

It's hot. Paul wipes his brow. Something rustles in the backseat. Paul looks back at a WHITE BUNNY, in the backseat. Its ears and head jerk around nervously.

FRANCES (CONT'D)  
Well, how do you feel, baby?

PAUL  
Like I'm a goddam rabbit. A rabbit on a busy road. Cars zoomin' by. Horns blaring. I'm frozen, I don't know what to do.

INT. DANIEL'S MOVING CAR - SAME TIME

Cars moving slowly up ahead. Daniel slows down. Takes out a GUN from inside his jacket. Checks the clip.

EXT. MOVING CAR - EARLY MORNING

Paul looks in the rearview mirror. A car is FOLLOWING them.

FRANCES

You nervous about us getting married,  
Paul?

EXT. HIGHWAY -- CONTINUOUS

Daniel's car is stuck in traffic. Cars and people on foot surround him. A huge pick-up truck with "ALICIA'S BUNNY FARM - WONDERBUNS TO GO" lettered across leads the way. In the back, people with tam-tams, trumpets and flutes. Singing and dancing. A girl is in the middle, naked. There is something in her hand. A rabbit? She holds it high and BLOOD drips from it. Daniel is impatient, revving the car, waving at people. A man holds up a gigantic compass broken in two. A sign hangs on his neck: "BREAK YOUR MORAL COMPASSES". The truck and the cars are painted in slogans. "WICCAN FOREVER"; "THE END IS NIGH, NO REALLY, IT IS ". As Daniel drives by, a man in rags jumps at him.

MAN IN RAGS

Where to, man? No lifeguard on duty  
here on in.

Daniel passes them and speeds up.

EXT. HIGHWAY - EARLY MORNING

FRANCES

You feel anxious 'cos you're settlin'  
down with one woman. No fuckin'  
round in bars no more.

PAUL

I don't know.

FRANCES

No, no. You can't not know, man!  
That's why we up and ran, babe! Get  
married, build us a family. You know  
that, right.

Paul bangs on the wheel in frustration.

PAUL

Why you even bother talkin' marriage  
or family, huh! I know you with me  
just 'cos I can make you a kid!

FRANCES

Hey, what about you, cowboy! Why you with me, huh? I tell you why. You just wanna get some.

PAUL

Fuck me. I thought I loved you.

INT. PAUL'S MOVING CAR -- A LITTLE LATER

Paul looks in the rearview mirror.

FRANCES

Paul, what are you looking at?

She turns to look. The car behind BUMPS them.

PAUL

What the fuck!

A man in the other car aims a weapon at Paul's car. FIRES. The back windshield shatters. Another SHOT whizzes by Paul's head. Paul steps on the gas, but the car stalls. The other car comes round to the side and BROADSIDES them.

Paul swerves off the road and stops.

INT. STOPPED CAR - EARLY MORNING

Frances is hysterical.

FRANCES

What the fuck? Oh, my God.

The other car stops behind them. A man steps out and walks up to Paul's car. Only his legs are in frame. Frances tries to get out. Fumbles with door handle.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

CARD: A MONTH AND A HALF EARLIER

EXT. CHURCH YARD - MORNING

State of Maine. Lush vegetation. Hilly landscape. Wetness. Small town tucked away by the Androscoggin. At the edge of town - a little church. Parishioners stream in. FATHER GABRIEL (60s) greets everybody. The placard in front of the church

reads: A SERMON FOR TO FORTIFY THE CHRISTIAN AGAINST THE DEVIL'S WIFE. JOHN (early 40s) and Frances, walk into the church holding hands. Paul trails behind STARING at their clasped hands.

INT. CHURCH PULPIT - A LITTLE LATER

Father Gabriel's voice rings over the seated.

FATHER GABRIEL

Now if I say unto you, Who trust ye most? Who love ye dearest? Will you not answer and say, why, Father, I trust my wife and I trust my husband. Father, I also trust my brother and my sister.

John looks at Frances. She looks back and smiles shyly. Paul stares at the back of John's head.

FATHER GABRIEL (CONT'D)

(with booming voice)

But who wast beside our Lord and stood by his throne? Who, but Lucifer, the cherub covered in stones, in sapphire, onyx, topaz, beryl and the jasper. The brightest angel and to God the closest. Yet, didst he not sin and rise against the Lord of everything? And in the race of men, did not Abel slay his closest.

John glances back at Paul. The men look at each other.

FATHER GABRIEL (CONT'D)

Evil lives in the best of us, the closest to us. I say unto you, beware the wicked for they walk in darkness. I say, trust ye the dear Lord and His light only.

Loud ORGAN MUSIC comes on. John turns away from Paul and lowers his eyes in pious reverence.

INT. PATRICK'S AUTOWORKS -- NOON

Daniel, dressed in coveralls, works on two cars simultaneously. Shuttles between their engines and the gigantic tool kit in the corner. He is very efficient and shows the nimble actions of

a supremely experienced and gifted mechanic. PATRICK SHAUGHNESSY (50s) comes up behind him and watches him for a spell. Daniel turns around and sees him. Patrick smiles at him and points at his watch.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

INT. DINER -- LATER

Patrick and Daniel in an alcove by themselves. Patrick finishes a plate of pancakes in front of him. Daniel drinks from a Root Beer bottle.

PATRICK

(chewing)

Don't mind telling you, Danny! Been with us, what, one year now and I still can't get over you miracle hands, lad. I hope I have told you that before?

DANIEL

Only every Sunday, boss.

PATRICK

Good, 'cos I'll keep saying it for the next few hundred Sundays, I hope.

Daniel looks away. Takes a sip from his Root Beer.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

INT. CHURCH -- NOON

After the service, people stream out. John and Frances go up to Father Gabriel. They kiss his hand respectfully.

FATHER GABRIEL

Oh, Johnny, dear child. And Frances, your beautiful bride.

JOHN

Father, what a great sermon today. I felt the holy spirit run me through as with a spear.

FATHER GABRIEL

Thank you, son.

Paul comes up behind John.

FATHER GABRIEL (CONT'D)

(puts his glasses on)

That Paul? Your little brother,  
Johnny? Haven't seen him in ages.

Paul whispers in John's ear.

JOHN

(to Frances)

Francie, be a doll and help Paul light  
a candle for Mom, ok.

Frances nods and leaves with Paul in tow.

FATHER GABRIEL

(off Paul leaving)

I know I'm old and wrinkled but I'm  
not that scary.

JOHN

(laughs nervously)

Yeah, would've been Mom's 50th today  
is the only reason he is here.

Grabs the priest by the elbow and walks him to the altar.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Father, I need to talk to you  
privately! I have had bad thoughts.

FATHER GABRIEL

(snickering)

Johnny, you been married, what, five  
months, you looking at other girls  
already!

John stares at him seriously and whispers in his ear.

INT. DINER - LATER

Daniel is alone with the empty Root Beer bottle. Stares out the window at the church across the street. Daniel POV: A bunch of choirboys come running out, their white cloaks still on. A priest brings up the rear. He calls out to a boy and the boys

stays back. The priest kneels and straightens out the boy's clothes. Then he pets him on the head. Holds his hands. Daniel tenses up. Cold sweat comes over him. He grips the table.

DANIEL'S  
FLASHBACK:

Daniel, 12 years old, runs out of a building scared. He is naked from the waist up. He runs under a large neon sign "The Little Mustang Ranch - Gents Welcome Round the Clock". Daniel trips over a stone and falls. Before he hits the ground a hand catches him. He looks up and sees a PRIEST. Daniel SHRIEKS.

The priest shakes him up.

VOICE (O.S.)  
Danny. DANNY!

BACK TO PRESENT  
SCENE

Patrick is shaking Daniel.

PATRICK  
Danny? What's the matter, son? I go to the loo a minute, next thing I see you're convulsing like a madman.

DANIEL  
I'm fine, Patrick. Must be an allergy or something. Never happened before.

PATRICK  
Danny, look at me. Look at me.

Daniel avoids his eyes.

PATRICK (CONT'D)  
You should get some help, son. I have seen you like this before. Get help, Danny. I'll pay for it.

Patrick tries to put his palm on Daniel's head. It is a kind and fatherly gesture, but Daniel cringes and gets up.

DANIEL  
See you back at the shop.

Daniel leaves in a hurry.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN: EXT. FRONT LAWN -- EARLY EVENING

A rabbit in the grass, tied to a pole. Shivering all over. Paul comes up to it and kneels. Feeds some lettuce to it. Pets it with LOVE.

INT. KITCHEN

Paul makes himself a sandwich. The TV is on. He stops to watch. It's a documentary about the Southwest.

TV VOICE

(over 19th century images)  
Nevada, Arizona, New Mexico. Those were the wildest territories in the West. Renegades, criminals, but also free-thinking folk, fiercely independent men teemed the states - the Wyatt Earps, the Wild Bill Hickocks, the Ike Clantons and Doc Holidays. To this day Nevada remains, in a manner of speaking, the freest and wildest state in the union. Prostitution, gambling, lack of state taxation... Paul watches mesmerized.

PAUL

Yeah, baby. Nevada.

The clock on the wall STRIKES 7 pm.

EXT. FRONT LAWN

Paul comes out of the house. He unties the bunny's collar and tries to pick him up.

PAUL

Let's get you back to the cage, honey-bunny. Had your air for today.

The rabbit bounds off before he can catch him.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Wait, Bibbi! Stupid bunny!

The bunny hops off into the street and freezes. A car speeds toward it. Paul LUNGES and grabs it in the nick of time. The car whizzes by.

PAUL (CONT'D)  
Bibbi! Stupid animal. Wanna end up  
a roadkill! You owe me a life,  
buddy.

INT. HOUSE -- LATER

John walks in. The house is quiet. He has a red jacket on. The name tag announces "STORE MANAGER". There's a RHYTHMIC CREAKING SOUND FROM THE BEDROOM ABOVE. Footsteps. John tiptoes up the stairs. Comes up to the bedroom door. Flings it open. A muffled cry.

FRANCES  
Johnny, you scared me!

John looks around. Frances is alone on the bed. There is a draft from open window. John looks out of it. Darkness.

JOHN  
I thought there was somebody with  
you.

Sits on the edge of the bed.

JOHN (CONT'D)  
Paul still around?

FRANCES  
No, babe, he went on his shift. It's,  
like, after 9 o'clock.

John rubs his neck. He's had a long day. His eyes FALL ON SOME BILLS on the night table.

FRANCES (CONT'D)  
I'm gonna go get ready for bed.

Goes into bathroom.

John leafs through the phone bill. His eye stops at a number in Nevada.

JOHN  
(to himself)

These telemarketers! Look at this.  
Nevada?!

(to Fran)

BABY! Francie, we get charged for  
calling these scumbags. No more  
Nevada calls, ok!

Frances is washing her face. She can't hear John.

INT. BEDROOM -- LATER

John and Frances are in bed.

FRANCES

Johnny, I been wonderin'. God knows  
we love each other, right?

JOHN

Of course.

FRANCES

Johnny, how does God know we love each  
other?

JOHN

Well, he sees us being tender with  
each other. Holding each other  
tight.

FRANCES

(cuddles up to John)

Johnny, I wanna be tender and be  
holdin' you, baby.

Kisses his face, neck. Her head is under the covers.

JOHN

Francie, stop. Don't do that, ok!

Pulls away from her.

INT. BEDROOM - LATER

Frances' eyes are red. She is about to cry.

FRANCES

But what about love! You said that's  
love.